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Remarks, J.R. Scully Retirement Luncheon

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J.R. Scully Retirement Luncheon
May 18, 1990
Jack's Restaurant
Albany, New York

It is a rare occasion when we have the opportunity to honor a man of outstanding ability, great personal charm and old-fashioned common sense. This is not such an occasion. We are gathered today to celebrate the retirement of a dear friend, Joe Scully. As the circus owner said when the human cannon-ball retired, we shall never find another man of his calibre.

I first met Joe Scully thirty years ago when he was a member of that talented firm of lawyers, Oliver, Scully & Delaney. The members of that firm came down to Hudson to try cases against us in the Columbia County Courthouse. Joe's father was a great trial lawyer. His brother was a great trial lawyer. And Joe -- Joe also was a lawyer. He settled a lot of cases. He was a nice guy even then.

When I came to the Northern District Court, Joe greeted me with open arms -- a shotgun, I think it was. He told me to ask him for anything I might want, and I asked him for many things. His answer always was the same: "You can't have it." He told me that his office door always was open to me, and it always was. Unfortunately, he never was in his office.

Joe has seen many changes in the District Court over the twenty years he has served it, and he has fought against every one. Seriously, when he took over twenty years ago, he found the

Clerk's office a wreck. He now leaves it in shambles.

Our honoree always gave his staff a little something extra around Christmas time. One year it was ulcers. Members of the staff have told me that they really owe a lot to him -- cramps, insomnia and other ailments.

Joe of course has remained a bachelor all his life. It is said that in the battle of the sexes he ran out of ammunition. Seriously, in his younger day they wanted him for the centerfold of a well-known magazine -- Popular Mechanics. There is nothing he did at age twenty that he can't do today -- which shows you how pathetic he was at twenty.

Joe took the advice of a young lady he met many years ago. She said: "Don't get married. Take it from me." And he did. What a guy! When they made him, they threw away the shovel.

His philanthropy is legendary. A homeless person told him he hadn't tasted food in three days. Joe said: "Don't worry. It still tastes the same." Joe has prayed very hard to win the lottery. Every time a winner is announced, he prays harder and longer that he may be the next winner. Recently, he prayed so hard and long that a voice came to him from the heavens. It said: "Give me a break, Joe. Buy a ticket."

He once gave a check to charity. When the fellow from the charity asked him why he didn't sign it, he said he wanted his donation to be anonymous. A friend with whom Joe dined

frequently once said that the restaurant where they ate changed hands three times before Joe picked up the check.

Just one illustration of his wisdom! As you know, Joe wore the hat of a part-time magistrate in addition to being Clerk of the Court. In that capacity, he was called upon to do some arraignments from time to time. On one occasion, he asked the defendant if he had a lawyer. The defendant said: "The Lord will be my lawyer." Joe said: "I think you should have someone locally."

And now for some introductions.

Tom Whalen -- Present here before you today as a great lawyer and a great politician. His first election here in Albany wasn't easy. He had to overcome entrenched forces and great odds. However, with the help of his lovely wife, he struggled hard and prevailed. But enough about me and my campaign for the Supreme Court.

James T. Foley -- is our beloved Senior Judge as well as a building. He gets everybody's mail, but that's what happens when you are a building as well as a person. Judge Foley appointed Joe Scully as Clerk of the Court twenty years ago. Joe had just lost the election for District Attorney, and Judge Foley never could bear to see an unemployed Democrat. Judge James T. Foley is the greatest District Judge in the country.

Neal McCurn -- is the Chief Judge of the Northern District of New York. My colleagues in the Circuit Court hold him in high esteem. They say he is a forthright judge -- he is right about one-fourth of the time.

Joe Scully worked very hard for twenty years to learn his job. Now, just when he is getting the hang of it, he quits.

Toast -- May the road rise up to meet you, may the wind be always at your back, and may the Lord hold you in the hollow of his hand until we meet again.