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Transcript of a sound recording in MS 608, WLBZ Radio Station Records, Bangor, Maine, 1931-1973

Title: President Eisenhower's Address at Skowhegan, Maine

Date: June 27, 1955

Recording number: Reel-to-reel Tape 15

Length of recording: 36:14

[transcript begins]

[Music]

ANNOUNCER: He is just coming into view across the stage. The Governor of the State of Maine now, and of course, the President will be introduced by Senator Margaret Chase Smith, at whose home the President is a guest. Still a bit more shaking of hands, the crowd quiet as they await the President to step up to the speaking platform. He is right at the moment not within view. Crowd now all on its feet, the television cameras are grinding. There's Governor and Mrs. Muskie just moving to the platform and Senator Smith and the President right behind them. Crowd applauding, waving. The President's waving to the crowd as they break into applause. Seated now, and of course momentarily we will hear from Governor Muskie, Senator Smith and of course the President of the United States, Ike Eisenhower. The Governor, Senator Smith, and the President, chatting among themselves now, preparing their notes. The crowd seated now, quieting down, as Representative Charles Nelson, now Senator Smith, steps up to the rostrum. Tremendous burst of applause as she waves to the crowd. She is preparing her notes.

SMITH: We will listen to Reverend Johnson give the invocation.

JOHNSON: Let us pray. Almighty God, our Father, in whose hands are the issues of men and of nations, we bow in humble reverence before thee and with grateful hearts acknowledge thy [inaudible] blessings to us as a nation. Through all of the change and changing circumstances of life, thou hast preserved us a nation. Our Father, we gratefully praise and thank thee for the heritage of this good land, for the evidences of thy favor in the past. Our Father as thou has preserved us a nation, so now mold us into a people worthy of a great heritage. We invoke thy blessing upon this momentous and memorable occasion. We thank thee for the high honor and privilege which is ours this day in having with us our beloved President and these are the distinguished representatives of this great democracy. We would likewise pray thy blessing upon all those who have helped to make this happy event possible. Oh God, most heartily we beseech thee to look with favor upon thy servants, the President of the United States, the Governor of this state, our Senators and Representatives, and all others in authority. Continue to imbue them with wisdom, goodness, and truth, and so rule their heart and bless their endeavors that law and order, justice and peace, may continue to prevail. We ask this humble prayer in the name of Jesus Christ, our Lord and our Savior. Amen.

SMITH: Mr. President, Governor Muskie, distinguished guests and citizens of Maine it, is my pleasure today at this historic event to do what is normally called presenting, or introducing, the speakers. Since neither of the two gentlemen need be introduced, or presented to you, after the manner in which you showed at the polls that you consider neither of them to be a stranger, let us say that as a hometown girl, I am welcoming each of them to Skowhegan. They have what I would call 20 year men, for it took right date Eisenhower Julie need the Republicans to victory after 20 years of the feat nationally. And it took Ed Muskie to lead the Democrats to victory after 20 years of defeat in Maine. [Applause and music] They both have been faced with legislative bodies controlled by the opposite party, but our Republican President has been blessed with a cooperative Democratic Congress just as our Democratic Governor has been blessed with a Cooperative Republican legislature. [Applause] And now I welcome to the speaker's podium one of these 20 year men. He is the proof positive of the bipartisan, non-political characters of today's meeting. Governor Muskie, who will extend the official welcome of the state of Maine to the other 20 year man, President Eisenhower. Governor Muskie. [Applause]

MUSKIE: Mr. President, Senator Smith, Senator Payne, members of our Congressional delegation, other distinguished visitors and guests, and my friends and neighbors of Skowhegan, I'm sure that although this present duty falls to me, there's no need now for the President to be extended an official welcome to Maine. My friends and neighbors of Maine, from the border at New Hampshire, to Skowhegan today have demonstrated their heartfelt pleasure at welcoming the President of the United States. It is with mingled pride and pleasure, however, that I welcome you, Mr. President, officially to the state of Maine. Pride in the natural beauties and the hospitality which Maine extends to all visitors. Pleasure that we can offer them to such a distinguished visitor. There are those who might suggest that in some respects you should feel more at home in Maine than I, who was born and raised here. To this I would say that out of my own experience I can attest to the open mindedness and the open heartedness of Maine people in a more personal way than most. And may I say that all of us in Maine extend such a welcome to you in full measure. Annually we welcome more than a million visitors to our mountains, our lakes and streams, and to our shores. We choose to believe that these attractions are at least one of the reasons for your decision to vacation briefly among us. We hope that you have been able to relax and to completely enjoy the great Maine out-of-doors. We would like you to return annually, hereafter, whatever your occupation. [Laughter and applause] Naturally, we are pleased that the President of the United States should have thus pointed the way to the nation's vacationers. We are somewhat awed by your exalted position and the recognition which you have given us. More significantly however, it is sheer pleasure to rub shoulders with the warm-hearted human being you have proven yourself to be. We wish you [applause] ... we wish you good luck and Godspeed as you leave our midst to assume the heavy responsibilities which are yours. May you always have a soft spot in your heart for our homes and our hospitality. [Applause]

SMITH: A little less than three years ago, I wrote an article for the Woman's Home Companion in which I urged the election of a man I felt, said I felt, would do two very important things for our country. First, that he would bring real peace to our country and that if anyone could bring our boys back from Korea, it was he. And second, that he would run our federal government as we run our home. He was elected. He has brought our country the greatest degree of peace we have had in many, many years. In fact,

almost 20 years. He did bring our boys home from Korea and he has been running our federal government as you run your homes. He fulfilled my prediction. He has brought peace to us and more of the home attitude in our government. What greater tribute could be paid to a man than to say this: what greater achievement could a president have done than this? And so with deepest pride and feeling, I now present to you the greatest man of peace in the world, Dwight D. Eisenhower, the President of United States. [Applause]

EISENHOWER: Thank you very much. Governor Muskie, Senator Smith, Senator Payne, members of Maine's Congressional Delegation here present, and my fellow Americans. No man can receive greater acclaim than to be received in friendly fashion by a gathering of real Americans. So from the bottom of my heart, I thank you, the Governor for his official welcome, Senator Smith for all that she has so extravagantly said about my accomplishments, and each of you for the courtesy you have paid me by coming out here today that I might say hello. There is no thanks due me for coming to this section of the United States. For long, I have felt that my education was sadly lacking in that I did not have an intimate acquaintance yet with this region. I have satisfied a long felt desire to come here. And incidentally, I should like to point out one thing. The office that I hold, being what it is, I did not come alone. Now there must be millions of Americans as ignorant as I was of the beauties of this region. And think of all the newspaper people, photographers and others, that now should be educating those people and possibly they will come and get the same first hand knowledge that I have. [Applause] Now, if this doesn't happen, either the power of the press isn't what we thought it was, or these newspaper people that travel with me haven't the proper sensibilities to appreciate beauty when they see it.

I am grateful for the warmth of the welcome I have received all along the line. From young and old, from men and women, from workers and the people who seem to be on vacation. And I might say, the most touching welcome that I received was from what the guides called midges my call plain black flies. [Laughter] I am certain that building all these years when I did not come, they have been waiting on me, because they swarmed around me where they're cannibalistic tendencies, and I'm sure they'll probably starve until I get back here. My friends, as much as I have found here different, in the ways of your scenery, your glorious lakes and streams and woodlands, and piles of timber along the road such as I have never seen, I find the basic fact is this. Americans are Americans everywhere. In our basic beliefs, in our basic aspirations, in our hopes for the future and for our children, we are one. We want peace in the world, we want prosperity at home, a prosperity that's widely shared with everybody happy in his job, and we have come to realize that these two aspirations are related. We cannot have prosperity without peace, and there can be no peace unless we are prosperous. We are the world's leaders, economically, productively, and because we are this, we must also take the lead in many other ways. Morally and politically, in leading the free world, to bind itself together in a common appreciation of these basic values. The dignity of man, his right to be free, his right to exercise all of his privileges of worship, with thoughts of action and of earning, in fact, to exercise every personal privilege as long as he doesn't violate similar rights of others. Now, if we are going to be bound together in these things, we must realize that we can't do them, we can't obtain them all, without sacrifice.

As your forefathers came into this region and built their homes, their cabins, and began to conquer the wilderness, they had to sacrifice something. They had the sacrifice the safety of the lands from which

they came. They had to part from loved ones. They had to make sacrifices to give to us what we have today. If the world is going to be bound together in a system of mutual advancement, international trade, international security, with all of us sharing in that security and in that trade, here and there, we must make sacrifices. Let us make them courageously as our forefathers did so that we may enjoy real and secure and permanent peace, and not merely an uneasy cessation of the firing of the guns. We want permanent peace based upon competence, based upon justice and decency. Wherever the American government is represented, that is what we are struggling for in every Chancellery in every capital of the world. Those who are friends and those who may be hostile to us. We are coveting nobody's property. We want to assume power and move over no one else. We want to live a life that gives to each of us the utmost opportunity for spiritual, intellectual and material and economic development, for ourselves and for our children. I find in my few days that I have been privileged to travel across this northern tier of the New England states, those sentiments are as widely shared and deeply felt as they are anywhere United States. [Applause] Indeed, may I say to you that because of this, though I come among you as a stranger I have felt no more at home than in any other town or city that I have visited in this country. And so my real word of thanks is this, that you have let me feel this, that you do stand with one another, shoulder the shoulder, and shoulder the shoulder, with all of the other localities and states and regions of the United States, in order that all of us together may march along to that fuller life, strong, secure, but tolerant and ready to help the other fellow as we expect him to do his part in this great venture. Now before I leave, I would like to say thanks in a little bit more intimate way. Everywhere across this state today, I have encountered smiles and shouts, "Hi, Ike's" and waves of the hand. As I have met them here on this fairground. I can't reach each of you personally with the shake of the hand. I cannot even speak to all of the citizens I saw today. But if to you, and through you, I could let each of you know how sincerely I do appreciate the warmth of your friendliness, how earnestly I want to come back, as your Governor said, no matter what my job may be, then indeed I shall be content. And now, one final word. In every audience such as this, there are literally hundreds of people who had served in the armed services during the period I was there. Men and women, some of them have served actually in the same theater, in the same battlegrounds as I had. To them, I just want to say this one thing. During all those years that you were abroad, while your loved ones were suffering fears for you, and you were encountering the dangers that finally won the war, we were upheld by a belief that we were fighting for freedom, for the rights of men as individuals, and for peace. I believe that those aspirations, slowly and tortuously, it is true, but still, steadily are marching on toward achievement. And I believe it's a thought that all of us can take with us to our beds each night and thank our God that it is true. Good night, goodbye, and thank you. [Applause]

SMITH: Governor Muskie for the state of Maine.

MUSKIE: Mr. President, once again it is a pleasure to be here. I note that I speak before and after the President. For once, I have a Republican surrounded. As I looked forward to the President's visit to us today, I was conscious of the fact that in his trip across the northern tier of New England states, he has received many gifts, material and otherwise. And I wanted to present a token to him on behalf of the people of the state of Maine which is not so much material as it is symbolic. It is symbolic of the high office which he holds. It is symbolic of the lofty ideals and purposes which he has stated here this

afternoon and which rise above pure partisanship. It is what is called a Salem American Eagle so called because it was in great vogue about 1790 when it was used as an advertising device by ship agents. They displayed it whenever a ship was ready to sail and ready to take on goods. The craftsman is John Upton of Bremen, Maine, an internationally known sculptor who got fed up with city life in Massachusetts a few years ago, and came up to Maine and is devoting his life to carving these Salem Eagles. This is a small token indeed, Mr. President, of our affection for you, or happiness and having you here, and I like to think of it also as symbolic of the rugged independence of mind and courage of my friends and neighbors of Maine. [Applause] And may I add this? I hope that it will find a place in your Gettysburg farm as long as it is either a part-time or full-time home.

ANNOUNCER: The President posing now with Governor Muskie and Senator Margaret Chase Smith for the photographers, holding the beautifully sculpted eagle.

SMITH: Mr. [Bellevue?], one of the Town Selectmen, and a member of the committee in charge of some of the arrangements here.

BELLEVUE: Mr. President, the tribute that you have made to our town of Skowhegan by your visit with us today will, you can be sure, not be soon forgotten. With the knowledge of your active interest in painting, the citizens of Skowhegan have asked me to present to you this painting called Skowhegan Fall Flowers. It was painted by Willard W. Cummings of Skowhegan at the Skowhegan School of Painting and Sculpture which he and ten other, uh, three other artists, founded some ten years ago. The citizens of Skowhegan expressed the hope that you and Mrs. Eisenhower will find a place for the painting in your Gettysburg home to remind you of your visit to Skowhegan. Mr. Cummings, a Skowhegan native, is well known in art circles as both a portrait and still-life artist. His portrait of General Leslie McNair and General Mark Clark hang in the Army War College at Washington and his portrait of General Simon Boulevard hangs in the Pentagon building. Mr. Cummings considers Skowhegan Fall Flowers one of his best works. The painting has been shown in several exhibitions where it has received high recognition. We hope you and Mrs. Eisenhower will like it. We thank you again, Mr. President, for visiting with us today and please come back again soon.

ANNOUNCER: President Eisenhower now admiring the painting which is very beautifully done. And now Senator Smith, once again.

SMITH: Mr. President, I've been thinking for a long time of the many things that I would like to give to you and Mrs. Eisenhower. Those may come later but right at this moment I would like to give you one of Maine's little oak trees as a memento of your visit to our state. I hope that you will plant it on the White House grounds in Washington and in 1961 transplant it at your Gettysburg farms. [Applause] Father [Shabath?] will give the benediction.

FATHER: To the king of the ages, immortal and invisible, the one only God the honor and glory forever and ever, and may he the Almighty and merciful Lord, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, bless us, keep us from all evil and bring us to everlasting life. Amen.

ANNOUNCER: And with the benediction the ceremonies here at the Skowhegan Fairgrounds come to a close. Senator Smith and Governor Muskie, now along with President Dwight D. Eisenhower, leaving the platform. Senator Smith with the President as he waves to the crowd, receives another tremendous ovation as they leave the platform and enter the waiting cars. Of course all along the way the news photographers, news photographers are snapping pictures. The entourage will pass immediately in front of us as it drives down the track and out through the gate through which it entered. The crowd continues to applaud as the President gets in the car. And there goes President on and historic appearance in the state of Maine, standing up, smiling, waving to the crowd.

[Music]

ANNOUNCER: Still smiling and waving as the car moves on down the track, surrounded by Secret Service men and moving away from us now, down the track, toward the exit from the fairgrounds. The Skowhegan High School band playing. President still waving and smiling, receiving applause all along the rails. Our President accompanies Senator Margaret Chase Smith to her home where he will conduct a brief press conference. And we will, we hope to find out from there, whether or not Secretary of State John Foster Dulles has arrived in Skowhegan or whether he will await the president at Dow Air Force Base in Bangor. Now the crowd is filing out the exits. The Skowhegan High School band still playing and so this historic event comes to an end. This is Les Hubleby speaking to you from the State Fairgrounds at Skowhegan returning you now to your studio.

ANNOUNCER: This is WLBZ in Bangor. President Eisenhower will deliver two addresses today during his visit in Maine and his second address at Dow Air Force Base in Bangor will be at 8:30 tonight. This address by the President at Dow will be broadcast over this station, WLBZ. The general public planning to go to Dow Air Force Base is requested to enter Dow through the Union Street gates. The gates will be open at five o'clock this afternoon, just five minutes from now. Those are the Union Street gates for use by the general public planning to go to Dow Air Force Base for the visit of President Eisenhower.

[transcript ends]

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