

**Governor Thornburgh's remarks to Career Inc., Operation Dig, about Nate Smith, Pittsburgh, June 13, 1981 (12:12)**

>> Nate Smith: I have the honor tonight to introduce the governor, which, to me, is a big thing. I've known Dick and Ginny for a good while. I think they're two fine people. Dick, is it okay if I tell them you defended me in court?

[ Laughter ] Is it okay if I tell them?

>> Thornburgh: Yeah, I got you off.

>> Nate Smith: Yeah. I went to court for inciting to riot in 1968. And my attorney happened to be Dick Thornburgh. He worked for four days. He walked me out of there with flying colors. Let's give Dick a hand.

[ Applause ]

It's a real big night for us -- a really tremendous night for me. I've come a long way, but to have the governor come here tonight to speak at our banquet is really, really something. Dick, I'm not gonna go into anything. I'm just gonna have you come up here and tell us about the welfare cuts.

[ Laughter ]

I had to slip that one in. Somebody had to ask you that. So, it's on you now, Governor Thornburgh.

[ Applause ]

>> Thornburgh: Thank you. Thank you very much, Nate. The hour is late, and there is very little, quite frankly, that I can add by way of observation that would supplement in any appropriate way the eloquence of the lives of those that have been honored this evening. Ginny and I are particularly honored ourselves to have participated in a ceremony that has recognized the worth of contributions from so many varied sources. And it's a reminder, I think, to all of us that contributions of the type that have been noted here this evening can come from varied sources, that you don't have to be the high and the mighty or the wealthy or the prominent to make a contribution in the sense that the theme of people helping people has been expressed this evening. I can't tell you, as a native Pittsburgher, how many ways I am proud of my hometown. Even though the temporary occupancy of a particular

office has obliged us to take up lodging in Harrisburg, Pennsylvania, I remain a Pittsburgher. And I -

[ Applause ]

I lived through those Sundays in the fall and the winter and an occasional Monday night when the Steelers are out there giving it their all and the spring, summer, and fall when our beloved Pirates rise and fall. And I particularly note the quality of those who serve those two great institutions. They're more than just baseball players and football stars, as we've seen here this evening and the tremendous human qualities that Sam Davis and Willie Stargell express is typical of those two great Pittsburgh ball clubs. And I'm proud of the Three Rivers Arts Festival, where we dodged the raindrops today and see the movement downtown into a great city of a wide variety of people and expressing a wide variety of contributions to the arts and the culture of this city. And I'm proud to see the building that's going on here, the new renaissance, and the new resurgence of partnership between people from all walks of life that are always characteristic of a Pittsburgh effort. And I sat here this evening and conjured up a whole group of memories reaching back over my lifetime in Pittsburgh. Dan Pietragallo and I were classmates in law school. I'd like to say he taught me everything I know, but that would probably be a reflection on you, Danny.

[ Laughter ]

As you've heard, Nate Smith was a client of mine. And after I resumed the practice of law following my period of disbarment for undertaking that particular representa-

[ Laughter ]

Bill Moore and Harvey Adams and I were in the law-enforcement business together when I had the privilege of serving as United States Attorney in Pittsburgh and Western Pennsylvania. Dick Cyert was a neighbor of Ginny and mine at Carnegie Mellon, one of our great institutions. And in short, I have a particular sense of gratitude and recognition for those which you have honored this evening, and it's singularly appropriate that you have chosen to honor them. And I remember well, Bill, in August of 1969 when that march took place and when the ring around City Hall was there. And there were those who said, "What good does it do to protest? What good does it do to bring to the attention of a comfortable community the fact that there are people who are denied employment because of their race and who must take to the streets to indicate

their grievances?" Well, Operation Dig and the Pittsburgh Plan proved that it isn't all protests, that when men and women of goodwill, of all races and all callings unite together, protests can be turned into performance.

And this organization has, over the past 12 or 13 years, provided a particular kind of performance that holds up a beacon to all in the United States who are similarly inclined to provide the dignity and economic security of meaningful employment in the private sector to all who aspire to it because that's what this program is about. And that's what Nate Smith and the others who began to sit down and negotiate and follow that tortuous path of getting cooperation between business and labor and civil rights groups -- that's what they recognized -- that to deprive people of the dignity and economic security of a job is to rob them of a meaningful life. And the effort that's been undertaken, first in the construction trade, where an exemplary record has been built up over the years, and now, more recently, with young people and women in other meaningful lines of employment is the kind of effort that can result only when the productive forces of a community like this great community of Pittsburgh are unleashed and channeled to be of assistance. Not a job for government, which over the years has shown a remarkable inability to perform in this area, it's a job for those who are on the firing line. Those leaders of industry and business and those leaders in our great labor organization utilized the dynamic power that exists in an area like Pittsburgh for the good of all of the citizens of this area.

We in government have our responsibilities, to be sure, and I'm proud to say that we have been of assistance to Nate Smith and his operation. We've been there, I think, Nate, when you've needed us. And we've been going to sit down and work out the ways and means in which we can provide help, but we recognize that the mainspring and the wellspring of the strength of this organization and its efforts is in those folks of the type who are honored here tonight, who have that extra dimension of public consciousness that prompts them to go beyond the job description that they may have in their lives and to take on a community job description and a community responsibility.

So, at a difficult time, when the process of adjustment, inexorable as it may be, is forcing all of us in and out of government to re-examine how we can maximize the strength of this United States, thank god for the Nate Smiths of this world and for the Operation Digs and for those who worked on the Pittsburgh Plan and for the types of people that we all honor here this evening.

Because that particular combination of people and institutions and organizations that has coalesced in the providing of jobs for young black, disadvantaged men and women, through the efforts of those who are here in leadership roles and those of you who support and follow those leaders, is going to be sorely tested during this decade of uncertainty for the United States. And I think it's singularly important that we recognize and honor these people, these folks who have given of their time to be their brother or sister's keeper. Pittsburgh is an appropriate model for all of this United States in the efforts that have been undertaken to fill this need. And my hat is off to all of you who have been honored here this evening and to all of you who have joined in the effort to see that this effort -- this program retains its vitality and its forward movement. And to you, Nate Smith, former client -

[ Laughter ]

my friend and inspiration to us all, I close in quoting you yourself. You've all heard from Nate, sometimes more than you'd like to...

[ Laughter ]

but always at the bottom of that letter are the words that appear on the inside cover of your program, and I think I speak for every soul here this evening in turning them on you, my friend. I love you, admire you, and respect you. God bless you, Nate Smith.

[ Applause ]