

“Okay,” he responded faintly. “What should I expect?”

“We don’t know much about it,” the doctor admitted. “It’s a degenerative disorder.” He ran down a few of the effects that Alzheimer’s patients experienced while Nancy Reagan struggled to control her emotions. She tried her utmost to be supportive, but was overcome hearing about the devastations of the disease. . . . He acknowledged, quite bluntly, “There is no cure.”

“Can I ask a few questions?” Ryan interjected.

While he and Nancy discussed how to handle the president’s activities—his schedule, office hours, appointments, and appearances—Reagan wandered over to a small round table in a corner and sat down, staring hypnotically into the yard. After a few minutes, he picked up a pen and began to write. When he finished, he handed two sheets of paper filled with his cramped handwriting to [his staffer]. “Why don’t we get this typed up and put it out,” Reagan suggested.

It was a letter dated that November 5, 1994.

My Fellow Americans—

It began—

I have recently been told that I am one of the millions of Americans who will be afflicted with Alzheimer’s disease. . . . At the moment I feel just fine. I intend to live the remainder of the years God gives me on the earth doing things I have always done. . . . Unfortunately, as Alzheimer’s Disease progresses, the family often bears a heavy burden. I only wish I could spare Nancy from this painful experience. When the time comes I am confident that with your help she will face it with faith and courage.

And with faith and courage, indeed, President and Nancy Reagan faced the disease together.

Together, they founded the Ronald and Nancy Reagan Research Institute at the Alzheimer’s Association in Chicago, IL, focused on researching, understanding, and treating Alzheimer’s disease.

Over the past several decades, this research institute has awarded millions of dollars in Alzheimer’s research grants and has continued to see breakthroughs in our understanding of this aggressive and disastrous disease.

Congress has also rightfully come together in a nonpartisan manner to fight this disease head-on. For example, last December, just a few months ago, with legislation that was sponsored by our colleague from Maine, Senator SUSAN COLLINS, Congress passed and the President signed our BOLD Infrastructure for Alzheimer’s Act, which aims to combat Alzheimer’s through a collaborative public health framework. The BOLD Act will create an Alzheimer’s public health infrastructure at the direction of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, which will establish Alzheimer’s centers for excellence across the country, award funding to public health departments to increase early detection and diagnosis, and increase data collection, analysis, and reporting through cooperative agreements with public and nonprofit entities.

I am a member of the Senate Appropriations Subcommittee on Health and Human Services, led by my colleague

from Missouri, Senator BLUNT. I have advocated and successfully worked with my colleague Senator BLUNT and the members of the committee to provide \$2.3 billion for Alzheimer’s disease research in FY 2019, finally reaching the \$2 billion funding goal for research laid out by the National Plan to Address Alzheimer’s.

I am the cochair of the Senate NIH Caucus, and I am optimistic that these funding increases, combined with NIH initiatives to map the human brain and further develop personalized medicine, will, I hope, lead us closer to an Alzheimer’s treatment and a cure.

Eleven years after President Reagan’s death, Nancy Reagan continued her Alzheimer’s advocacy work, helping to dramatically increase the attention and resources paid to the research of this disease. She recognized that degenerative diseases like Alzheimer’s not only pose a financial burden to our Nation and health system but, more importantly and more significantly, these diseases threaten families with significant financial difficulty and tremendous emotional hardship.

As President Reagan’s primary caregiver during his battle with Alzheimer’s, Nancy reminded us of the importance of caretakers and families and the struggles they themselves go through while watching loved ones suffer.

As we continue our work to treat, cure, and prevent Alzheimer’s and other degenerative diseases, we will also continue looking for ways to ease the financial and mental turmoil on caretakers, for they suffer so much as well.

When President Reagan announced his Alzheimer’s disease, he did so much more than just admitting to having the disease. He fought it, and he destigmatized it not only for himself but for those who came after him and for those still to come who may be faced with this same circumstance.

In the closing letter that President Reagan wrote—and, incidentally, when he handed it to the staffer and said, “Type it up and send it out,” they read it and said, “Let’s just send it in your handwriting, Mr. President.” So that is what happened, and in that closing letter, President said this:

Let me thank you, the American people, for giving me the great honor of allowing me to serve as your President. When the Lord calls me home, whenever that may be, I will leave with the greatest love for this country of ours and eternal optimism for its future. I now begin the journey that will lead me into the sunset of my life. I know that for America there will always be a bright dawn ahead.

I, too, believe that America’s best days are ahead of us, and I implore Washington to reflect upon President Reagan’s enduring optimism.

Civil in disagreement and often willing to cross party lines to work toward solutions, I hope we can all remember, like President Reagan, to focus on the real issues facing our Nation, and I hope that all Members of the Congress,

from all walks of life, will be bold in leveraging their life experiences to achieve greatness for our Nation, just as President Reagan and Nancy Reagan did, deepening America’s resolve to fight this terrible disease.

I honor President Reagan and his wife Nancy. I thank them for their service to our country, and I thank them for their attention to this disease, Alzheimer’s. May we also have the courage and will to continue the battle to rid our country, its citizens, and the world of this affliction.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Alaska.

RECOGNIZING ALASKA

Mr. SULLIVAN. Mr. President, as many of my colleagues here on the Senate floor know, tomorrow is Valentine’s Day, and yesterday, my colleague and my good friend, for whom I have so much respect, Senator ERNST from Iowa, was asking Members of this body to come down to the floor and talk about love. Some of you may have seen that.

Now, I have to admit that I am very close to Senator ERNST. I think she is one of the best Senators in the whole body. But I was a little bit leery. To be honest, talking about love on the Senate floor is really not my thing. I am not sure I have done that in 4 years here. As a matter of fact, I know I haven’t done that in 4 years.

Then, I thought, well, you know, it is Valentine’s Day. I thought, of course, immediately about my family and my beautiful wife Julie, the love of my life. I thought I could talk about that. I thought I could talk about my three daughters, all young Alaskan women, strong. They make me proud each and every day.

That was easy, thinking about Valentine’s Day and love that way—Julie, Meghan, Isabella, and Laurel, who, by the way, celebrated her 18th birthday yesterday. They are the loves of my life.

But then my staff told me: Wait a minute. This isn’t that kind of speech. What Senator ERNST wanted us to do was to speak about the love of your State and how we all love our State.

Now, that is easy for everybody here because we all do love our State. Then, I realized, well, you know what, Senator ERNST wanted that. It is Valentine’s Day, and, of course, it is toward the end of the week, and I typically do my “Alaskan of the Week” speech every Thursday or Wednesday.

This is a little bit of a jazzed up Valentine’s Day version of Alaskan of the Week, with the ERNST hashtag “homestatelove,” which is what she put out, and I think some other Senators did.

I thought this would be a combination this evening of a little bit of a love story to Alaska, my constituents, combined with the Alaskan of the Week, and, of course, to support what Senator ERNST wanted a bunch of us to do.

I certainly love coming down to the floor every week to talk about the

Alaskans of the Week. It is one of my favorite things to do. So, today, I just want to say a little bit about some of those Alaskans of the Week, not really one or two but just kind of a combo—literally, dozens and dozens of Alaskans, since I started here in the Senate 4 years ago, where I have had the opportunity to come down and talk about them.

They are as old as 100 and as young as 8. Last week we had an 8-year-old. Boy, was he really a fine young man from Juneau. They come from the Far North, the Arctic, and the misty temperate southeast of Alaska. They live surrounded by tundra, by the churning seas, by mountains, by rainforests. These are all those who have earned the title Alaskan of the Week. They come from what we call urban Alaska and from some of the 200 small communities and villages that dot my State, which are not connected by roads. It is a big challenge we have in Alaska.

They are librarians, artists, former Governors, reporters, healthcare workers, whalers, counselors, pastors, lawyers, athletes, students, teachers, and nearly every profession imaginable. Some of them have retired. Some of them are just starting school and aren't even of working age.

They are a diverse group of people, as you can imagine, but they all have one thing in common. They love Alaska. They love their country. They have the fire, the drive, and the heart to use whatever skills they have, whatever experiences they have to help others.

Isn't that what Valentine's Day is all about, what the hashtag "homestatelove" is all about, and, certainly, what the Alaskan of the Week is all about?

Now, when I talk about the Alaskan of the Week, sometimes these people have seen and gotten and deserve a lot of attention in Alaska and even nationally. Other times, they are less well known but no less impactful. Let me give you a couple of examples: someone who has been picking up trash on the side of the road for years, just doing it every day; helping people to find a pet to love; making meals for the sick; starting and contributing to non-profits; writing beautiful prose; helping people overcome addictions; establishing iconic businesses; working their whole lives to do what they think is right for their community, for their State, and the communities they love.

Of course, they are all inspiring to us, and what I try to do once a week is to come down and not just inspire the pages, who, I know, look forward to this speech, but anyone in America who is listening. By the way, you have to come up to Alaska and you, too, will love, and I mean "love" Alaska when you come up to visit.

Now, they are inspiring to all of us in Alaska, but, as I mentioned, all around the country last year. For example, I got to talk about the Alaska Pacific University's ski team—world renowned, gold medalists, Olympic med-

alists—inspiring young people all across the globe to race faster and race better.

Last year, I had the opportunity to talk about a young teenager from Gambell, Chris Apassingok. He made national headlines for his insistence, despite tremendous backlash from some extreme groups outside of Alaska, to continue his cultural heritage of hunting whales to feed his community through subsistence.

Here is another example that will go straight to the heart of my colleague, Senator ERNST from Iowa. In December, Carol Seppilu from Nome, who has overcome tremendous difficulties and disabilities and pain in her life, ran 85 miles of a 100-mile race in Council Bluffs, IA, and she is training for another race.

That kind of training isn't easy in Nome, where she has to walk through blizzards just to get on a treadmill. Carol has the racing community—the long racing community, 100-mile races—in Alaska and Iowa and, literally, around the country in awe of her, if you know her story, and rooting for her.

Sometimes we have a lot of negative news here in DC. I always say there is a lot more going on bipartisan that our friends in the media, who sit above the Presiding Officer's desk there, don't often report, but it can be negative. I think sometimes it can be easy to forget that we live in the greatest country in the world—no doubt about it—the greatest country in the history of the world, in my view, filled with good people who wake up every morning determined to do what is right, to give back to their communities, whether in Alaska or North Dakota, like the Presiding Officer.

I want to thank Senator ERNST for bringing us down to the floor yesterday and even today to talk a little bit about love—good initiative there for Valentine's Day. I thank all of the people of my State. This is a love story, not just of my wife and daughters but of all these great Alaskans of the Week who have been doing such a great job for Alaska and their country. So, to all of them, Happy Valentine's Day.

I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The senior assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

MORNING BUSINESS

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate be in a period of morning business, with Senators permitted to speak therein for up to 10 minutes each.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

NOMINATION OF DONALD W. WASHINGTON

Mr. GRASSLEY. Mr. President, I do not object to the nomination of Donald W. Washington, PN202.

SENATE COMMITTEE ON RULES AND ADMINISTRATION

Mr. BLUNT. Mr. President, the Committee on Rules and Administration has adopted rules governing its procedures for the 116th Congress. Pursuant to rule XXVI, paragraph 2, of the Standing Rules of the Senate, on behalf of myself and Senator KLOBUCHAR, I ask unanimous consent that a copy of the committee rules be printed in the RECORD.

There being no objection, the material was ordered to be printed in the RECORD, as follows:

RULES OF PROCEDURE MEETINGS OF THE COMMITTEE

Rule 1. The regular meeting dates of the Committee shall be the second and fourth Wednesdays of each month, at 10:00 a.m., in room SR-301, Russell Senate Office Building. Additional meetings of the Committee may be called by the Chairman as he may deem necessary or pursuant to the provision of paragraph 3 of rule XXVI of the Standing Rules of the Senate.

Rule 2. Meetings of the committee, including meetings to conduct hearings, shall be open to the public, except that a meeting or series of meetings by the committee on the same subject for a period of no more than 14 calendar days may be closed to the public on a motion made and seconded to go into closed session to discuss only whether the matters enumerated in subparagraphs (a) through (f) would require the meeting to be closed followed immediately by a recorded vote in open session by a majority of the Members of the committee when it is determined that the matters to be discussed or the testimony to be taken at such meeting or meetings:

(a) will disclose matters necessary to be kept secret in the interests of national defense or the confidential conduct of the foreign relations of the United States;

(b) will relate solely to matters of the committee staff personnel or internal staff management or procedure;

(c) will tend to charge an individual with crime or misconduct, to disgrace or injure the professional standing of an individual, or otherwise to expose an individual to public contempt or obloquy, or will represent a clearly unwarranted invasion of the privacy of an individual;

(d) will disclose the identity of any informer or law enforcement agent or will disclose any information relating to the investigation or prosecution of a criminal offense that is required to be kept secret in the interests of effective law enforcement;

(e) will disclose information relating to the trade secrets or financial or commercial information pertaining specifically to a given person if:

(1) an Act of Congress requires the information to be kept confidential by Government officers and employees; or

(2) the information has been obtained by the Government on a confidential basis, other than through an application by such person for a specific Government financial or other benefit, and is required to be kept secret in order to prevent undue injury to the competitive position of such person; or

(f) may divulge matters required to be kept confidential under the provisions of law or