

**December 4, 2018**  
**Prepared remarks presented by Casey Woodard**

**PeaceHealth Cottage Grove Medical Center and Clinic Annual Gala**

Tim, thank you for that very generous introduction.

On May 25, 1961 President John F. Kennedy, before a joint session of Congress, gave what has become known as his, "Moon Shot Speech to Congress". Among his words he said:

***"First, I believe that this nation should commit to achieving the goal, before this decade is out, of landing a man on the moon and returning him safely to the Earth. No single space project will be more impressive to mankind, or more important for the long-range exploration of space; and none will be so difficult or expensive to accomplish"***

One year later, on September 12, 1962 at Rice University, during what has become known as the Rice Stadium Moon Speech, he said:

***"We choose to go to the moon. We choose to go to the moon in this decade...., not because [it] is easy, but because [it] is hard, because that goal will serve to organize and measure the best of our energies and skills, because that challenge is one that we are willing to accept, one we are unwilling to postpone and one which we intend to win...."***

The two speeches by President Kennedy contain some of the most memorable lines spoken in modern political history, not unlike two-decades later when President Reagan said:

***"General Secretary Gorbachev, if you seek peace, if you seek prosperity for the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe, if you seek liberalization: Come here to this gate! Mr. Gorbachev, open this gate! Mr. Gorbachev, tear down this wall!"***

The story of healthcare in South Lane and North Douglas Counties may not include traveling 240,000 miles to the moon and re-entering the earth's atmosphere at a speed of 25,000 MPH; or toppling a one-hundred mile, 25' high concrete wall with electrified fences and guard posts. But at times, to many in this community, it certainly felt so.

Our story does include writing, garnering bipartisan sponsorship and introducing federal legislation requiring the signature of the President of the United States. For the small, greater community of Cottage Grove, this was our moon shot; this was our tearing-down of a 35-mile preverbal ‘wall’ separating solvency (cost based reimbursed) health care from, well, no local health care. For the small, greater community of Cottage Grove, this was our “**Mr. Gorbachev, tear down this wall!**” moment.

‘In 1998, when our hospital closed, who would have believed we could open a new, state of the art “Critical Access” hospital within five years? Even the optimists among us knew it would be a daunting effort. We knew that to succeed, a team must imagine what they want, believe it possible and work for it in unyielding unison.

And so, our community formed a relay team to run the long-distance race, the race of a lifetime, required to restore local healthcare services.

The first people to sign-up for the challenge were members of the original Cottage Grove Community Hospital board of directors who, facing the national effects of changes in Medicare reimbursement as dictated by the Tax Reform Act of 1997, looked to partner with a regional provider and signed on a new recruit, Curt Roberts, CEO of PeaceHealth. Curt immediately recruited Alan Yordy as the on-site administrator.

During that same time, Paul Goldberg took a turn at bat and with approximately 250 Cottage Grove residents, formed “Citizens Supporting Health Care” determined to demonstrate their commitment to restoring local health care services. Paul wondered if a federal designation known as “Critical Access” could be applied to our hospital. If so, the hospital would receive reimbursements based on actual cost for care given to Medicare patients.

But there was a hitch. The “Critical Access” designation was limited to hospitals that were at least 35 miles from another hospital. For Cottage Grove to be eligible, we would need an Act of Congress to pass legislation lowering the distance requirement to 20 miles.

By that time, our hospital had closed and PeaceHealth said it would not only endeavor to reopen the hospital under Paul’s discover of “Critical Access” designation, but also build a new hospital for Cottage Grove if the community would help to achieve the necessary elements for the hospital to be financially viable, long-term.

These elements would require federal legislation, passage of a bill in the Oregon State Legislature, and the re-opening of our hospital no later than December 31, 1999. And – oh yes – we had to raise more than \$2 million dollars for the \$16 million it would cost for a new “Critical Access” hospital.

So, onto the team strode the Lane-Douglas Healthcare Foundation, led first by President Attorney Gary Ackley and later by Dr. Jim Gant, succeeding Gary as President, who along with the LDHF board of directors who agreed to raise the \$2 million.

Sharing a firm grip of the action were Jim and Carol Reeves, who co-chairs the fundraising campaign.

Joining them, Donna Shepherd who, at age 80, seemed to have more energy and determination than all of us combined. First, Donna wrote letters to residents inviting them to include their names in newspaper ads to publicly tell PeaceHealth that Cottage Grove wanted them to build a new hospital. Hundreds of people responded and paid \$5 per person to cover the cost of the ads.

Next, Donna phoned 200 people, visited some in person, and collected pledges from 180 people, the largest gift being \$60,000. In addition to several very generous pledges to our fund drive, her dedication to establishing a new hospital even includes a “paver” she purchased for the Healing Garden in memory of her late cats, Timmy and Tiger.

Other members of the fundraising team included Robert Ball, Barbara Gant, Judy Cunningham, Wilbur Heath, Doug Lund and Jody Rolnick. In less than 90-days, Donna and the committee raised \$1 million dollars – more than half the goal. This fast pace really got the attention of PeaceHealth leaders, showing them how serious the community was in wanting a new hospital.

With the fundraising effort underway, U.S. Representatives Peter DeFazio and Ron Wyden, and Senator Gordon Smith took up the cause. Their leadership and influence persuaded Congress and the President to lower the “Critical Access” distance requirement to 20 miles. Not only did their victory give Cottage Grove this crucial designation, but it also established a new national model for rural health care.

Our next challenge was to request that the State of Oregon designate South Lane Medical Group as a “Provider-Based Rural Health Clinic” so it could receive the highest Medicaid reimbursement allowed by law. Senator Tony Corcoran and Representative Al Kind presented our case to the state assembly, and won the designation.

With the federal and state designations in hand, we needed to save the hospital’s license by resuming services before the end of 1999. PeaceHealth, through the efforts of Trish Tully and the Cottage Grove medical staff, re-opened the hospital, offering limited but vital services, with only 15 days to spare.

Our license was preserved.

And finally, having recognized that our team had accomplished all the requirements set forth, both the PeaceHealth Oregon Region and the PeaceHealth System boards voted to proceed with the construction of America's first new critical access hospital.

And there we were, standing at the finish line, having traveling 240,000 miles to the moon and re-entering the earth's atmosphere at a speed of 25,000 MPH, toppling a 35-mile concrete wall with electrified fences and guard posts. It felt incredible!

We thanked many individuals who helped in the conquest. In particular, we thanked Alan Yordy, Trish Tully and the other PeaceHealth leaders for their unwavering support; We thanked our elected officials for their perseverance on our behalf; we thanked our doctors, nurses and other medical staff for continuing to serve our needs during this uncertain time; and we thank the many citizens of Cottage Grove and the surrounding area who joined our "all-comers" team in the belief that our moon shot could be achieved.

Soon, it was time for Tim Hermann to open the new PeaceHealth Cottage Grove (critical access) Medical Center and Clinic. And now, following several years of career advancement at RiverBend, Tim is back, caring on the tradition of compassionate care, now, in its fifteen-year, our critical access medical center continues to serve this and surrounding community and will do so for decades to come.

Why was this goal so important to our community?

Ask Marie Ammon. Shortly after the new medical center had opened, Marie was getting ready to drive to work when a wasp stung her. She had never reacted to bee or wasp stings before, so she got in her car and headed for work. But on the way, she noticed a light rash on her arm. Marie recognized she needed medical attention, so she turned and headed to the new clinic. She walked in, explained what was happening and the medical staff immediately grabbed a wheelchair. She collapsed unconscious before she reached the emergency department. Fortunately, Marie survived because hospital services were again available locally.

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On the afternoon of Thursday, November 19, 1863, four and a half months after the Union armies defeated those of the Confederacy, **Abraham Lincoln** delivered a speech at Soldiers' National Cemetery in Gettysburg, Pennsylvania, in the middle of which he said:

***"The world will little note, nor long remember what we say here, but it can never forget what they did here"***

We can say tonight, with some sense of assured confidence, that the world will little note, nor long remember what was said here tonight, but can almost be assured that 1,871 rural hospitals across the 50 states of these United States can never forget what we did here: Cottage Grove, Oregon, on December 19, 1999, when President Clinton signed into law the legislation containing our issue, those 1,871 additional rural hospitals also lived to see another day.

Thanks to many of you and other generous individuals, earlier in this century we accomplished the seemingly impossible to restore and improve health care for the people of Cottage Grove, our surrounding area and thousands of rural communities across America.

To borrow from the late Ted Sorenson, famed presidential speech writer, I leave you with these amended words:

*The energy, the faith, the devotion, which we brought to our endeavor has indeed brightened our country and all who serve it, and the glow from that fire is truly lighting the world.*

Thank you and good night.

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