Remarks on Rosalynn Carter

Dr. Fricchione Remote 2026 · Full Transcript

Good afternoon. My name is Greg Fricchione. I know many of you. I'm very sorry I can't be with you today. I have a prior engagement up in the Upper Peninsula in Michigan. But I'm really very pleased that I'm being given this opportunity to say a few words about Mrs. Carter, and share some of my personal reflections about the privilege I had to get to know her and to work with her.

She was a tireless fighter against stigma, which was very strong back in the 70s and 80s and 90s, and she made progress. I must say, as a psychiatrist, I had my doubts whether we would make much progress fighting stigma, but that didn't derail her. And then she was also a visionary in terms of really spotting the problem of family and lay caregiving in our country.

One thing we did — the head of the Rosalynn Carter Institute for Caregiving in those days, in the early 2000s, was Dr. Ronda Talley. She was the editor of a series of books, and I took part in one volume on mental health caregiving. That was a wonderful volume of text devoted to caregiving that came out of the Rosalynn Carter Institute.

And then I also feel really proud that during my tenure as director of the mental health program, we expanded the mental health program into the global space. I remember going to Dr. Bill Foege, who I had the privilege of being supervised by during my stay at The Carter Center, and Dr. Foege really was the most impressive and important global health physician of the 20th century.

Later, Mrs. Carter and I decided it was time to put on the first international meeting on mental health promotion and mental illness prevention, and I asked Dr. Foege to be a keynote speaker, and he gladly accepted, and he gave such a wonderful, inspiring speech. In that talk, I remember him using the phrase “you need unwarranted optimism,” and I'll always remember that.

So we started a journalism fellowship expansion into the international sector, and that's been a great success. I've been so impressed with the young journalists who've been selected for the Rosalynn Carter Mental Health Journalism program.

So when I returned to Harvard, later in 2002, I asked my chair, Dr. Jerry Rosenbaum, if I could start a global division. So now we have The Chester Pierce Division of Global Psychiatry at Massachusetts General Hospital. And I'll always thank Mrs. Carter for inspiring me to do that.

I remember she invited my family and I down to Plains, and what a wonderful day we shared with President and Mrs. Carter. They showed us all around Plains. We had a lunch with them, and she was just very, very happy. It wasn't like a chore — you know, sometimes people who have so many exciting things to do spend time with you in a pro forma sort of way. My wife and I and my children never had that feeling when we spent that time with President and Mrs. Carter.

I'll end it there. I hope you have a wonderful day together thinking about Mrs. Carter and remembering her fondly.

Transcript proofread and approved by the client. Prepared for greg.editsuite.com.