

## Efforts of the National Organization on Disability

### Chronology of N.O.D.'s Involvement with the FDR Memorial Wheelchair Statue

**MARCH 1995** Michael R. Deland, Chairman of the National Organization on Disability, meets with members of the FDR Memorial Commission and requests that they include a depiction of FDR in a wheelchair in the memorial. The Commission refuses.

**APRIL 1995** The Board of the Franklin and Eleanor Roosevelt Institute pass a resolution that a depiction of FDR's disability should be added to FDR Memorial (then under construction).

**MAY 1995** N.O.D./Harris Survey results show that 73% of Americans support the depiction of FDR's disability at the FDR Memorial.

**MARCH 1996** N.O.D. writes to the FDR Memorial Commission restating its 1995 request to change the design of the Memorial to include a portrayal of FDR's disability.

**MAY 1996** The national press starts to take interest in the debate; opinion articles run in the New York Times and Washington Post.

**JUNE 1996** Sixth grade students in Palisades Park, NJ, advocate for a depiction of FDR's disability at the Memorial. They organize a letter-writing campaign urging U.S. politicians to support the cause, and raise a total of \$378.50 to fund the FDR in a Wheelchair Campaign, newly established by N.O.D.

**FEBRUARY 1997** The FDR Memorial Commission announces that the Memorial will be dedicated on May 2<sup>nd</sup>. N.O.D. leads demonstration (with approximately 150 in attendance) at the FDR Memorial site in Washington, DC. Other demonstrations are held around the country as well.

**FEBRUARY-APRIL 1997** The debate over whether to depict FDR's disability at the Memorial is covered widely in the national media. The disability community plans large-scale protests for the day of the dedication, while N.O.D. continues to negotiate with all concerned parties.

**APRIL 1997** At N.O.D.'s urging, Senator Daniel Inouye introduces a resolution mandating the depiction of FDR's disability at the FDR Memorial. The Senate unanimously approves the resolution on May 1<sup>st</sup>, one day before the dedication ceremony.

**MAY 2, 1997** FDR Memorial dedication ceremony is held. The disability community, satisfied with the passage of Senator Inouye's resolution, refrains from protest at the ceremony.

**JUNE 1997** The House of Representatives approves Senator Inouye's resolution..

**JULY 1997** Senate Joint Resolution 29 is signed by President Clinton. The bill requires that funding for the addition to the Memorial be raised in the private sector.

**JULY 2, 1998** Vice President Gore joins N.O.D. in a commitment ceremony at the FDR Memorial, launching N.O.D.'s Rendezvous with Destiny Campaign. The Campaign aims to raise funds to commission the creation and placement of the FDR Wheelchair Statue.

**JULY 2000** N.O.D.'s Rendezvous with Destiny Campaign exceeds its goal of raising \$1.65 million for the FDR Wheelchair Statue.

**JANUARY 2001** Sculptor Robert Graham's bronze statue of FDR in his wheelchair is installed at the Memorial. President Clinton dedicates the statue on January 10<sup>th</sup>.

- All seminar  
- getting other dis. orgs  
- Chris Reeve discusses issue  
of Clinton & Clinton make  
start calling  
for something  
- NOD lobbies Hill  
for legislation  
- 2 demonstrations  
at Memorial  
- public testimony  
to Committee



**NATIONAL ORGANIZATION ON  
DISABILITY**  
www.nod.org

Dictated beginning March 2001

1-22-01

**CONFIDENTIAL**  
**Six-Year Saga of FDR Wheelchair Statue**

**List of people involved:**

1. Babbitt, Bruce - Secretary of Interior
2. Blumenthal, Sally - Assistant to Mr. Parsons
3. Buckley, Davis - Architectural Consultant to N.O.D.
4. Bush, George - President, Honorary Chairman of N.O.D.
5. Cleland, Max - R. Georgia Senator
6. Clinton, William - President of the United States
7. Deland, Michael R. - Chairman, N.O.D.
8. Dickson, Jim - Consultant then later N.O.D. Vice President and Director of CPP
9. Dolan, Mary - N.O.D. Vice President and Chief of Staff
10. Echeveste, Maria - White House Deputy Chief of Staff
11. Gore, Albert - Vice President of the United States
12. Graham, Robert - Sculptor
13. Gund, Gordon - NJ Businessman, Blind and \$100,000 donor
14. Halprin, Lawrence - FDR Memorial Architect
15. Hatsfield, Mark - R. Oregon Senator, Co-Chairman, FDR Memorial Commission
16. Innouye, Daniel - D. Hawaii Senator, Co-Chairman of FDR Memorial Commission
17. Kovler, Peter - Washington DC Philanthropist and \$1 million donor
18. Parsons, John - Supervisor, National Park Service
19. Podesta, John - White House Chief of Staff
20. Regula, Ralph - Ohio Congressman, Chairman of U.S. House of Representatives Appropriation Committee
21. Reich, Alan A. - President, N.O.D.
22. Roosevelt, Anne - (Chicago) FDR Granddaughter and incoming President of the Franklin and Eleanor Roosevelt Institute and Co-Chairperson of N.O.D. Rendezvous with Destiny committee
23. Roosevelt, Christopher - (New York) FDR Grandson and volunteer attorney
24. Roosevelt, David - (Cedar Rapids, Iowa) Member of FDR Memorial Commission
25. Roosevelt, Ford - (Los Angeles) FDR Grandson
26. Roosevelt, James - (Washington DC) FDR Grandson
27. Saner, Robert - Attorney for N.O.D.
28. Stanton, Robert - Director, National Park Service
29. Thornburgh, Dick - Attorney for N.O.D.
30. White, William - White House Office of Public Liaison for Disability
31. Young, Jonathan - White House Office of Public Liaison for Disability, succeeding Mr. White
32. Kemp, Evan Jr. - Former Chairman of the U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission





33. Douglass, Rick – Former Executive Director of President's Committee on Employment of People with disabilities
34. Young, Don – Florida Congressman, Chairman, U.S. House of Representatives Interior Sub-Committee
35. Stevens, Ken – Alaska Senator, Chairman, U.S. Senate Appropriations Committee
36. Gregg, Judd – New Hampshire Senator, Member of U.S. Senate, Interior Committee
37. Jones, Lloyd – Chief of Staff, House Interior Sub-Committee

#### Free Flowing thoughts on FDR:

In early 1995 at the N.O.D. Board of Directors meeting at the Metropolitan Club in Washington (date marked – pull out minutes). After this meeting, new N.O.D. Chairman, Mike Deland stated that there is no depiction of FDR's wheelchair or disability planned for the FDR Memorial which would open in 1997. The Board adopted a resolution (find minutes).

On BLANK Mike Deland attended a meeting of the FDR Memorial Commission, co-chaired by then Senator Mark Hatfield (Republican) and Daniel Innouye (Democrat of Hawaii). Although Mike was not on the agenda Senator Hatfield asked him to comment and Mike spoke out forcefully saying that it was a mistake to deny FDR's disability in the Memorial. The minutes of that Commission meeting reflect that the Commissioner had no intention of changing its plans. The Commission was falling back on the fact that the Neil Estern of FDR seated and in his cape would place the president on a chair with tiny "two inch" casters on the rear wheels. These casters can be observed today if one purposely looks for them around the back of this particular statue.

Since President Roosevelt was preparing his speech for the founding of the United Nations in late April of 1945 in San Francisco, I decided it would be good to commemorate the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the U.N. (with the actual founding date of October 24, 1945) with a speech about FDR – as leading the United Nations founder – with a speech at the Commonwealth Club in San Francisco. In this speech, I pointed out that FDR's disability was to be hidden at the Memorial, and the disability community took exception to it. (Look at black book with speech). While this speech was devoted primarily to the impact of FDR's disability in his public life generally, and especially internationally, it also brought focus to the problem of the missing depiction at the memorial.

On April 12, 1995, the United Nations celebrated the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of FDR's death in Warm Springs, Georgia. President Clinton attended the event organized by the Franklin and Eleanor Roosevelt Institute. Mike Deland, Hugh Gallagher and I attended. The Board of Trustees of the Roosevelt Institute, lead by Arthur Schlessinger and Bill vanden Heuvel adopted a resolution calling for a depiction of FDR's disability at the Memorial. (See attached resolution.) The Franklin and Eleanor Roosevelt Institute was a loyal ally throughout the entire campaign. (I refer to the campaign as the six-year battle ending with the addition of the FDR Wheelchair Statue, although it also related only to the *Rendezvous with Destiny Campaign*.) The Roosevelt Institute and the Warm Springs administration are to be commended for ensuring that wheelchair users were to be invited to this significant FDR event. In addition to Mr. Deland and



Gallagher, they included Georgia Secretary of State and Former U.S. Secretary of Veteran Affairs Mr. Max Cleland and Mr. Blank Evans, attorney and wheelchair user from New York, member of the Institute's Executive Committee.

October 1995, thanks to the good lobbying effort of Peter Kovler, was the proclaimed by the U.S. Congress as Franklin D. Roosevelt's History month. The Congressional Resolution called upon governments, organizations and individuals at all levels to commemorate in whatever way they considered appropriate and useful to their purposes, FDR's legacy to the nation. With the instigation of Peter Kovler and the creativity of Mary Dolan: N.O.D. organized a sponsored event at American University which was a seminar entitled "Monuments, Memories and Memorials"? Chaired by Dr. BLANK, president of American University. Excellent presentations by professor Scott Sandage and Davis Buckley on the general concept and philosophy of memorials and their symbolism and audiences. These were important contributions to public rationale for proceeding with the N.O.D. Campaign. The seminar, attended by about 75 individuals, evoked two very important commentaries.

It was particularly appropriate that this seminar in Roosevelt History month be held at American University because, as we learned from Dr. Arthur Fleming who had been on the faculty at AU in the 1930s, in 1936 FDR came to American University in his wheelchair for the installation of the Dean of the School of Arts and Sciences. When we Dr. Fleming first told Mary Dolan and me about the President's venturing out into public in this way in his wheelchair, we checked the AU archives and discovered that indeed was true.

The seminar that evening was fairly low key and academic until the two individuals spoke up. First was Rick Douglas, Executive Director of the President's Committee on Employment of People with disabilities. A wheelchair user, Rick expressed his view that it was shameful that the Memorial now nearing completion would seek to hide FDR's disability. Rick stated that we must take action and not allow this to happen. His comments evoked considerable applause, and the discussion from that point became quite lively. The other spirited remarks were made by Joan Challinor. She stated asked, "are we just going to sit here and talk, or are we going to take action?" Everyone applauded, obviously eager to have something done to correct the situation.

The next morning a \$5,000 check arrived in the office, totally unsolicited. Joan enabled N.O.D. to launch a campaign that would lead to depicting FDR's disability at the Memorial. I worked several years earlier with Jim Dickson, a disability advocate and leading authority of voting and disability. I knew him to be outspoken and a fighter. I decided we would ask him if he would do some consulting work and take a short-term assignment for N.O.D. to mobilize the disability community. I hadn't realized it, but Jim could ?? having organized some 300 demonstrations on various causes, and Mike Deland and I felt he would be needed. With the \$5,000, we started Jim's consultancy, gave him an office, with his dog Buckley, Jim went to work at N.O.D. in October 1995.

1. May 1995 N.O.D. Harris Survey
2. May 1995 N.O.D. makes initial request to Commission; Commission says no
3. May 1996 N.O.D. write FDR Commission



4. May 1996 National Press articles begin
5. June 1996 Palisades Park
6. February 1997 Commission announces May 2<sup>nd</sup> Memorial Dedication date and N.O.D. holds a demonstration at the site.
7. April 1997 Innouye introduces resolution and Senate approves unanimously
8. May 2, 1997 FDR Memorial Dedication Ceremony held
9. June 1997 House adopts joint resolution number 29
10. July 1997 Resolution 29 signed by Clinton
11. July 2, 1998 Gore joins N.O.D. at commitment ceremony at FDR Memorial
12. July 2000 Rendezvous Campaign exceeds goal of \$1.65 million
13. January 10, 2001 Dedication

Jim continued as an N.O.D. full time consultant for a year and a half. He enlisted some 53 disability organizations in a coalition. He organized the demonstration at the FDR Memorial in early 1996 (maybe 1997). Disability leaders, on a cold winter morning, came out, about 100 in all shouting that we want FDR to be portrayed the way he was, and that the truth will prevail, that stigma should no longer rule etc. Speakers included Kurt Bower, Mike Deland, Jim Dickson, I. King Jordan, Justin Dart and Evan Kemp. Evan came out of the hospital. In his remarks he offered to chain himself and Alan Reich to the White House fence in our wheelchairs until the government relented. Jim Dickson organized another conference outside Hyde Park New York and in San Francisco where the founding for some of the sculptors were being fabricated.

We mobilized the media. Mike Deland and I met with the editorial staff with the New York Times in New York. Mike had a number of contacts in the media. The major writers wrote Op Eds, including George Will, Charles Krauthammer, Mary McLory and others. Mike and I enlisted the Roosevelt Family members as 17 or 18 grandchildren co-signed a supportive letter that was published in the NYT. We thought that it was important to have the Roosevelt Family on our side because opponents constantly sited what FDR himself had said and what the family said, at least as they thought. This letter was a very powerful expression.

Later on, FDR Memorial Commission Co-Chairman Senator Daniel Innouye published an Op Ed in which he categorically stated there would be no wheelchair statue. We wrote letters to N.O.D. Community Partners and other groups and disability leaders throughout the country urging them to contact their members of Congress.

The Campaign was picking up momentum. We requested meetings with the co-chairmen Senator Innouye and Senator Hattfeild. These were denied. We dropped in on the Commission staff in the Senate. This is not welcomed or appreciated at all, but it added fuel to the flame because they were very arrogant and kept falling back on the wishes of the Commission and supposedly, the wishes of FDR himself.

It is important to realize that FDR was quoted as having said to Felix Frankfurter, his friend and Supreme Court Justice that he wanted no memorial to himself larger than a desk. Such a small memorial was erected not far from the Justice Department, I think on Constitution



Avenue many years ago. So, according to the Wheelchair Statue nay Sayers, Roosevelt did not want a large memorial, but they nevertheless went ahead and planned one anyway. So much for the wishes of FDR. Family members thought that if FDR were alive now and he believed that they thought that if FDR were alive now and he believed that it would help advance social justice then he of course would want to be shown in his wheelchair – especially there were additional depictions of him not showing the wheelchair.

The Neil Estern statue is a kind of a sop to people with disabilities. It sort of shows FDR's brace protruding out from under his cape. And, in this 13 foot statue there are two inch casters can be seen if a visitor stretches and looks around the back of the chair.

\*\*More importantly, scholars and others have raised the important question who are statues for anyway? The person being remembered? The people who were alive at the time and were his friends and family at the time? The public at the time of constructing the memorial or, present and future generations of the public who will engage with the memorial and arise understanding of the time and the person being memorialized and inspired by it? Obvioulsy, the later, in my letter to Charles Kruathammer in 2001 in the Washington Post, I expressed this thought (although my letter was shortened by the editors of the Post.)

We formed a loose committee – Mike Deland, Jim Dickson, Mary Dolan, LeePage of the PVA, Kurt Bauer of Disability Sports USA, Davis Buckley (during this period he was on a part time consultancy), and two or three others who attended meetings when needed. I would estimate we had at least 200 meetings on this project in my office, to say nothing of others held in various places.

We didn't have any luck with the Commission which was busy preparing for the completion and the dedication scheduled to take place in July 1997 (1996?). This was a very busy time for them finishing up what everyone agreed would be beautiful memorial – absent only a depiction of FDR's disability. We wrote letters to all members of Congress. We met with the Interior Committee sub-Committee on National Parks because the FDR Memorial was to become one of more than 300 parks in the NPS system. The staff, especially the Chief Lloyd Jones was very helpful, although we would write him letters that were quite frank and he would send them along as is to the people we were being critical of. In any case, Jones and his staff advised us to seek legislation.

About this time, Christopher Reeve, newly injured and nationally acclaimed, met with President Clinton and mentioned the idea of showing FDR's disability at the memorial. At the annual meeting in May of that year in Detroit of the President's Committee of Employment of Adults with Disabilities, President Clinton sent a message in which he mentioned his meeting with Reeve and his concern for showing FDR's disability. This message of President Clinton was well received.

Meanwhile, since we could not get any traction in the Congress because no one wanted to come up against Senator Innouye even Senator Hatfield, our strategy was to have the Roosevelt Family members put pressure on the President and the White House. David Roosevelt, of course, was a hold out. He had not signed the letter. He was a member of the Commission and



admittedly opposed. Curtis Roosevelt, self-appointed patriarch of the family who lived out in the country also was opposed. The others, especially Chris Roosevelt and Anne Roosevelt grandchildren of FDR were our strong allies. They led the strategy of putting pressure on the White House, and finally, with our pressure added, Clinton called Senator Innouye and asked Innouye to introduce a bill into Congress calling for the addition of the Wheelchair Statue. Innouye drafted the legislation which then was passed about 99-1 (check this) in the Senate. Before the Dedication ceremony itself. This was a great victory for the disability community, although the bill would not become law until the house also approved and the President signed the final bill.

*having Thanksgiving  
- White House  
mtgs*

On May 4, 1997?, President Clinton dedicated the FDR Memorial at a very fine ceremony. It was a beautiful day. Many hundreds of people attended, and there was full media attention. Speakers included Hatfield and Innouye and David Roosevelt. Master of ceremonies was                      from 60 Minutes. Mike Deland and his wife Jane attended. Meanwhile, we demonstrated peacefully out on the streets at the entrance. I carried a sign, "thank you Mr. President." Everyone knew that the statue legislation had passed the Senate and hundreds of disability community people were guardedly optimistic and celebrated the event outside in a peaceful way. *Ted Kennedy Jr*

*Mike Wallace*

Part of the reason that the Roosevelt Family wanted to put pressure on the White House and the government to add the Wheelchair Statue was that they were afraid that the dedication event would be disrupted by disability demonstrators and this would mar the dignity of the occasion. After all, the planning for the memorial had been underway since 1955.

We kept up the pressure on the House. Congressman Young of Florida, Steny Hoyer of Maryland and Congressman                      of New York, a member of the Commission actually, were supportive in the House. The bill finally passed in the House by (?). President Clinton signed the bill on July ?. The legislation stated that the Secretary of Interior was instructed to add a statue of FDR in his wheelchair. The funding for the statue was to be provided by the private sector, and not by the government. In fact, we had the opportunity to comment on the legislation, as did the Interior Department itself. We made minor adjustments. *Pinchey*

We were ecstatic. There would be an FDR Wheelchair Statue. The work would now begin.

The day after the Dedication of the Memorial, I took John Parsons to lunch at the Cosmos Club so that we could "bury the hatchet" and get on with planning for the Memorial. John tried out his ideas on me. He suggested there be an Advisory Committee and that I be on it. I responded that it was a good idea and suggested that the letters of appointment should come from Secretary of Interior Babbot to add importance. I said that as President of the National Organization on Disability I would be an outside advocate, but I did not feel that it would be appropriate to serve on the Committee, even though I had many ideas. I suggested that N.O.D. Chairman Mike Deland, as an N.O.D. volunteer who also cared passionately about the statue should be a member and that Hugh Gallagher, wheelchair user and FDR historian should be on the Committee.



John Parsons proceeded to form the Committee. It was to function under the consultation of the Memorial architect Larry Halprin. The Committee met five or six times, including in Halprin's office in San Francisco and at Warm Springs, Georgia. The Committee, supposedly, made the decisions, but actually Halprin, with the instigation of Parsons actually made the decision that were rubber stamped or fine tuned by the Committee members. This is not to find fault with the work that came out of the Committee, but rather with the process. There were no minutes of the meeting, although we requested them. I would request certain items to be placed on the agendas of these meetings; they were not. For example, I felt very strongly that it would be important to show that FDR served throughout his presidency using a wheelchair and not just have the wheelchair located at the entrance. Years from now, people might assume that FDR used a wheelchair early in his life and then went on to a life liberated from his wheelchair. This easily might be assumed by future generations when viewers would become common place. I felt strongly about this and wrote letters that urged that it be put on the agenda of the Committee, but this was not done. I still feel this is a problem and am thinking of taking an opinion poll to determine whether or not my concerns have merit.

Although we probably could have had the legislation stipulate that the government pay for the statue, Mike Deland and I felt that if we raise the money that we would be in a good position to ensure progress and also more of a void of a kind of quality outcome that was important to people with disabilities.

During the month after the Dedication, we formed the Rendezvous with Destiny Campaign Committee to raise the funds for the statue - \$1.65 million. It was an outstanding letterhead Committee (see exhibit \_\_\_ for membership) management of the Committee and the Campaign was handled by N.O.D. We wanted to have the funds donated by people from all walks of life, young and old, disabled and non-disabled, etc. What actually happened was different. We were most fortunate to have as lead donor Peter Kovler whose family had donated \$500,000 to the main basis for the Memorial. Peter is a great advocate of FDR. I first met Peter when good friend Jim Billington, Librarian of Congress, told me about Peter and his great admiration for FDR when Jim and I were at Fort Benning, Georgia together being inducted into the U.S. Infantry Hall of Fame in 1994. (As noted previously, Peter has sponsored FDR history month which he got Congress to declare, provided major funding for the Memorial, was a tremendous inspiration throughout this campaign, and was an ongoing advisor.)