Opening Remarks

Dr. Frank Press

It is a great pleasure to welcome each of you to our fifth Staff Awards Day. The establishment of this event is one of the most important and rewarding initiatives we have undertaken in the 1980s. It has given us the opportunity to recognize the splendid dedication and achievements of a few of our colleagues who have been nominated by their peers for their singular efforts to meet the goals of this institution.

And, yet, this event might well be called Staff Appreciation Day. While we respect and acknowledge the work you do throughout the year, we want this day also to be one of salute to the nearly eleven hundred people who do the work of the NRC. It is recognized nationally—even globally—for the excellence and effectiveness of its work. That reputation is a direct tribute to you. It is after all the root, and essential, strength of an advisory institution such as ours.
The past year has seen significant growth in the size of both our programs and our staff. This growth generates considerable pressure for everyone, and I, on behalf of Bob White and Sam Thier, want to thank you for responding so well to those pressures. You make possible the success of our institution as the most important advisory mechanism for science and technology policy in the United States, and perhaps in the world. Its purposes have evolved for the past 125 years and are advancing every day, thanks to your work. The Government calls on us increasingly for advice on national issues affecting scientific and engineering personnel, medicine, transportation, and research.

What we achieve here is a part of America's science and technology development, which in turn contributes in concrete ways to public welfare and power. Senior government officials rely on us, and on the work you do, for support. That support will perhaps be more important than ever during the next year when a new federal administration will assume the nation's leadership.
What you do may not always be conspicuous and it is
unfortunately not possible to publicly recognize as many as we
would like. But, your work is a part of the whole of this
national endeavor. Carol Corillon, Ray Kearney, and the people
on the SSC Study are today your representatives and shining
examples of the best we have to offer.

I want to begin the presentation of awards by telling you
about Carol Corillon's achievements.
Presentation of 1988 NRC Professional Staff Award to Carol L. Corillon
by: Dr. Frank Press

When you meet Carol Corillon, you instantly know her as a person of unusual grace, charm and intellect. What you learn as you find out about Carol's work is that she is also a person of towering determination, dedication, and imagination.

Carol's work as Director of the Committee on Human Rights of the National Academy of Sciences has saved lives. In one case, her work and that of the Committee contributed substantially to the last minute decision of the President of Somalia to commute death sentences and in a few cases release scientists and engineers who were imprisoned for speaking out against government policies in Somalia. This may be the most spectacular of her successes, but it is only one of many which have resulted in a stream of letters to Vic Rabinowitch and me which attest to Carol's brilliant partnership with her committee members.

At the outset, Carol, the Committee, and I knew that the Somalia mission had little chance of success, because the Somalian government would not cooperate in having its actions questioned, and would strongly resist a visit by the Committee. No one could have complained had the committee been unable to travel to the country. That view, however, underestimated the tenacity and commitment of Carol Corillon; thanks to her, our
system was permitted to work and achieve its highest expectations. The Committee did visit; and its report, written by Carol, was widely circulated, with enormous political impact. The death sentences were commuted. Moreover, the Committee continues to work actively in an attempt to see that the prisoners are treated well and that they may eventually be freed. There are many other examples of excellence in her service to our Institution:

- Key persons in both the national and international human rights community have said that Carol knows her subject inside and out, according to Committee Chairman Eliot Stellar.

- She organized a successful mission to Chile and wrote a superb report.

- She organized a major symposium in 1987 and succeeded in getting major world figures from the Soviet Union, South Africa, and Chile, as well as key NAS members, to speak. The symposium was a great success; everyone considered it to be one of the most moving and meaningful events they had ever participated in.
Carol's efforts have been ecumenical:

- She helped the IOM organize and develop its own Committee on Health and Human Rights.
- She has helped NAE members who write letters on behalf of oppressed colleagues, and she writes a newsletter for them.
- She has a limited budget to support all of this effort and she uses it with masterly efficiency.

When the professional staff awards were being discussed by the Executive Directors, one of them remarked that "Carol Corillon may have the hardest job in the institution." I think that's right. Carol deals with the basest instincts of man, of man's inhumanity to his fellows. It is work that is frustrating, emotionally wrenching, and often invisible in the effort to exert private pressures on governments; yet, Carol has brought to these difficulties the highest dedication and competence. We are all inspired by Carol's great skill and devotion and her ability to withstand the exhausting stress of
dealing continuously with human tragedy. We are privileged to have Carol on our staff. She has brought enormous credit to the Office of International Affairs, this institution, and our nation itself. It is an honor to bestow on Carol Corillon the 1988 NRC Professional Staff Award.