

“Nutrition and Health Promotion”
Presented to a Luncheon Meeting of the Wheat Industry Council
Washington, D.C.
September 8, 1982

This is the first speech I gave on nutrition as Surgeon General. The invitation came from the Wheat Council because they had initiated a nutrition educational program. The speech was intended to provide a basic pillar of nutrition as one of the important supports of public health. Of course the wheat industry was seeking an economic gain, and therefore, this speech is tilted toward the fact that wheat-based food can be a one-stop source of carbohydrate, fiber, protein, vitamin b, and important trace minerals. Wheat foods are also abundant, inexpensive, and not fattening. This is an example of Reagan’s policy to look to the private sector to make its unique contributions to progress in American life. The Wheat Council was created by an act of Congress. (Public law 95-113).

The lecture starts off with some general nutritional concerns about increased consumption of fat and simple sugars and a drop in the presence of wheat flour in the per capita food supply. These have an impact upon the health status of American citizens.

This speech came at a time when the Departments of Agriculture and Health and Human Services were beginning to work together, hitherto an unusual phenomenon, and probably could be said to be the beginning in the Surgeon General’s involvement in nutrition which lead to the first report ever by a Surgeon General on nutrition several years later.

References were made to the publication of “Healthy People” every decade by the government as well as our efforts with “Healthy Mothers, Healthy Babies”.

Of greatest interest from the vantage point of the early years of the 21st century is the fact that we had very little information at the time this speech was given about the extent of obesity among children. Now we know that America is obese across the board. We did know that about a third of all obese adults were obese as children.

Even alcohol and drunk driving got into the speech because the Department of Agriculture includes alcohol in “food group 5” along with fats and oils. Cholesterol was mentioned here as a risk factor in heart disease even though the message was given in ’82. Links were also made between nutrition and cancer as well as the economics of nutrition.

Aging of America & Diet
Alcohol & motor vehicle deaths
Alcohol & Smoking
American increase of consumption of fat
American increase of consumption of simple
sugars
Cancer & diet

Cancer of the Upper GI & respiratory tracts
Cholesterol & heart disease
Cigarette smoking & heart disease
Contributions of the private sector to
 American life
Cost of wheat-based food
Death rate
Death rates in cancer
Death rates in heart disease and stroke
Drop in the percentage of wheat flour in the
 per capita food supply
Drunk driving & high school students
Heart disease
Heart disease & diet
Hypertension
Infant mortality
Link to breast & colonic cancers
Links of obesity between childhood and
 adult life
Longevity
Obesity
Salt cured, smoked, & pickled foods
Saturated & unsaturated fats
Sodium consumption
Stomach & esophageal cancers
Wheat-based food has a one-stop source of
 multiple nutrients
Wheat Council chartered by an act of
 Congress

“Dietary guidelines for Americans” (1980)

“Healthy Mothers, Healthy Babies”

“Healthy People”

Maternal nutrition

“National Nutritional Monitoring System”

Partnership of Departments of Agriculture
 and Health and Human Services

President Ronald Reagan

“Research Initiative in Nutrition”

Secretary Richard Schweiter

“Task force on private initiatives”