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GRIDIRON REMARKS OF VICE PRESIDENT FORD

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Before I begin, could I ask a favor? Would somebody please keep an eye on my seat? No. I'm serious.

(Laughter)

I told the Republicans I had a safe seat in Grand Rapids -- and look what happened!

(Laughter)
~~Applause~~

It really came as a surprise to me. In a city that's famous for making fine furniture, I never thought we'd be caught with our drawers down.

(Laughter)

First, I want to congratulate you members of the Gridiron Club on this fantastic display of optimism. Trying to make comedians out of Scoop Jackson and me ---- makes as much sense as getting a hair transplant from Mel Laird.

(Laughter and Applause)
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I want to congratulate the Arrangements Committee on an excellent job. The decorations are fabulous -- and I love that wall of roses. ----- Wouldn't that make a great corsage for Bella Abzug?

(Laughter)

No, I'm only kidding. I have a great admiration for Bella Abzug. In fact, we both use the same slogan:

I AM MY OWN MAN!

(Prolonged Laughter)



I really enjoyed the streaking earlier in the program. You know something? Last week a reporter asked me if I were in college today -- would I be a streaker.

Well -- as much as I admire President Nixon --- *and I do --*
there are some things I just don't intend to make perfectly clear.

(Laughter)

Believe me, at my age, I'm a lot closer to creaking than streaking.



And frankly, I don't think the President approves of streakers. He told me the only Butts he wants to see around the White House is Earl.

(Laughter)

And who will ever forget that memorable evening at the White House when President Nixon sat down at the piano and played GOD BLESS AMERICA? I looked at the man sitting next to me and tears were actually streaming down his face. I said, "That's very touching. Are you a Republican?" He said, "No. I'm a musician."

Or his face I should say. I've met my wife better backwards - and I think that's the way in doing it. (Laughter)

(Prolonged Laughter)

For those of you who never heard the President play the piano, let me describe it this way: He's sort of the Harold Stassen of the Steinway.

(Laughter)



As you can see, this is a time for candid and honest assessments. After I was sworn in as the 40th Vice-President of the United States you remember I said, "I am a Ford, not a Lincoln." Now if somebody could only convince Scoop he's a Jackson, not a Jefferson.

*(Laughter
6 Applause)*

But I really did enjoy Senator Jackson's remarks tonight. And I think he deserves a lot of credit for hiring the handicapped — my old White House speechwriters.

*(Laughter
and Applause)*

(Laughter)



I'm sure you're already familiar with Senator Jackson's many achievements. Why just last week he won the Calvin Coolidge Award -- for Conspicuously Concealed Charisma.

~~And~~ (Prolonged Laughter & Applause)

And I have a sneaking suspicion that Scoop Jackson wants to run for President. You can tell by little things -- like his car. You know how some horns go BEEP BEEP? His horn plays HAIL TO THE CHIEF!

(Laughter)

What really hurts, ^{through} --- it's a Ford.

(Laughter)



But with all respect to my good friend Scoop ---
there's only one Democratic ticket that would really
worry me --- and that's a Kennedy-Wallace Ticket.
What a dream ticket -- Kennedy and Wallace ----
Joan and Cornelia. (laughter)

I hear the Democrats can hardly wait until 1976.
They've already set up a long-range timetable.
And in the spirit of political fraternity, I wish them
all the luck of the last outfit that had a timetable ---
the Penn Central. (laughter)



But when it comes to Presidential hopefuls,
 we Republicans are really loaded. For instance,
 once again -- there's Nelson Rockefeller ---
 always a man to be reckoned with. Other
 Republican candidates keep saying that good times
 are coming back. Rocky never knew they left.

(Laughter)

Nelson Rockefeller is the only man I know who
 can write a check and the bank bounces!

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Then there's Senator Percy who has been working
 so long and so hard for the N. A. A. C. P.

And you all know what the N. A. A. C. P. is.

That's the National Association for the
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(Laughter)



Ronald Reagan is certainly a possibility --- if
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Ronnie was in Washington last week and unfortunately,
there was a lot of silly speculation on whether he dyes
his hair. Which is ridiculous. Governor Reagan does
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prematurely orange.

(Prolonged Laughter)



And for Republicans who like their conservatism with a Southern accent -- we have that great Son of Texas: John Bowden Connally. In the past, Secretary Connally has helped three different Presidents. Now he might like to help himself. *W*

Some people think John's recent conversion from Democrat to Republican might be a handicap. What they don't understand is what a rejuvenating effect the Republican party has. Don't take my word for it -- ask Strom Thurmond.

(Laughter)



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Henry Kissinger's greatest contribution may not be negotiating impossible cease-fires, but simply showing us that statesmanship need not always be a stuffy and somber business.

Whether we are pundits or politicians -- or a little of both -- let's remember the saving grace of our Great Republic, from Ben Franklin to Abe Lincoln, to Jack Kennedy, to Ev Dirksen, has always been a gentle wit, and genuine good humor.



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So I offer the Ford Formula to those who compete and also to those who cover the 1974 campaign:

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I must admit, though, that sometimes you really can't be sure what the truth is.



For instance, the last time I spoke at a Gridiron Dinner was on March 9, 1968 -- six years ago. I shared this platform with my ^{very} dear friend, Hubert Humphrey, who was then the Vice President. And I said:

"Let me assure the distinguished Vice President of the United States that I have absolutely no designs on his job."

(Laughter)



And then I said:

" I'm not at all interested in the Vice-Presidency.

I love the House of Representatives, despite the

long irregular hours. Sometimes, though,

when it's late and I'm tired and hungry ---

on that long drive home to Alexandria ----

as I go past 1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, I do seem

to hear a little voice saying: " If you lived here,

you'd be home now. "

Thank you and good night.

*(Prolonged
Laughter and
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AT THE ANNUAL DINNER OF
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APRIL 6, 1974



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I really enjoyed the streaking earlier in the program. You know something? Last week a reporter asked me if I were in college today -- would I be a stalker. Well -- as much as I admire President Nixon -- and I do -- there are some things I just don't intend to make perfectly clear. (Laughter)

Believe me, at my age, I'm a lot closer to creaking than streaking.

And frankly, I don't think the President approves of streakers. He told me the only Butts he wants to see around the

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White House is Earl. (Laughter)

It's a great pleasure to be here at this Gridiron Dinner -- one of the last bastions of male chauvinism. I know you're the last bastions (Laughter) -- because that's what the ladies outside are calling you. (Laughter)

But as we gather here tonight with music in the air, joy in our hearts, and mothballs in our pockets -- (Laughter) we should all be thankful that we're living in such momentous times. Just look at last weekend. President Nixon was in Key Biscayne -- I was in Chicago -- And Henry Kissinger was in Heaven. (Laughter)

And who will ever forget that memorable evening at the White House when President Nixon sat down at the piano and played GOD BLESS AMERICA? I looked at the man sitting next to me and tears were actually streaming down his eyes. Or his face, I should say. I told my wife Betty I knew this speech backwards -- and I think that's the way I'm doing it. (Laughter) Tears were actually streaming down his face. I said, "That's very touching. Are you a Republican?" He said, "No. I'm a musician." (Prolonged Laughter)

For those of you who never heard the President play the piano, let me describe it this way: He's sort of the Harold Stassen of the Steinway. (Laughter)

As you can see, this is a time for candid and honest assessments. After I was sworn in as the 40th Vice-President of the United States you remember I said, "I am a Ford, not a Lincoln." Now if somebody could only convince Scoop he's a Jackson, not a Jefferson. (Laughter and Applause)

But I really did enjoy Senator Jackson's remarks tonight. And I think he deserves a lot of credit for hiring the handicapped (Laughter and Applause) -- my old White House speechwriters. (Laughter)

I'm sure you're already familiar with Senator Jackson's many achievements. Why just last week he won the Calvin Coolidge Award -- for Conspicuously Concealed Charisma. (Prolonged Laughter and Applause)

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I hear the Democrats can hardly wait until 1976. They've already set up a long-range timetable. And in the spirit of political fraternity, I wish them all the luck of the last outfit that had a timetable -- the Penn Central. (Laughter)

But when it comes to Presidential hopefuls, we Republicans are really loaded. For instance, once again -- there's Nelson Rockefeller -- always a man to be reckoned with. Other Republican candidates keep saying that good times are coming back. Rocky never knew they left. (Laughter)

Nelson Rockefeller is the only man I know who can write a check and the bank bounces! (Prolonged Laughter and Applause)

Then there's Senator Percy who has been working so long and so hard for the N.A.A.C.P. And you all know what the N.A.A.C.P. is. That's the National Association for the Advancement of Chuck Percy. (Laughter)

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