

**The original documents are located in Box D24, folder “Annual Dinner, The Gridiron Club, Washington, DC, March 9, 1968” of the Ford Congressional Papers: Press Secretary and Speech File at the Gerald R. Ford Presidential Library.**

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OFF-THE-RECORD REMARKS  
OF REP. GERALD R. FORD (R-MICH.)  
MINORITY LEADER OF THE U.S. HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES  
AT THE ANNUAL DINNER OF  
THE GRIDIRON CLUB OF WASHINGTON D.C.  
MARCH 9, 1968

Mr. Vice-President, Mr. President Finney,

Gentlemen of the Gridiron, and Deductible Guests. (Laughter)

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Let me tell you a little inside story. I've heard that President Johnson tells his visitors: "There's nothing wrong with Jerry Ford except he played football too long (Laughter) ----- without a helmet." (Laughter)

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He goes by a code name ----- The Lone Arranger. (Prolonged laughter)

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But what a full public career Vice-President Humphrey has had ----- just one long struggle against McCarthyism. (Prolonged laughter and applause)

He's been birched red by the Old Right.....and rapped brown by the New Left. (Prolonged laughter)

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Incidentally, I have a neighbor who's a real 100% Democrat ----- that's what you get with open housing. (Prolonged laughter)

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There's only one problem. ----- Did you ever try using the same teabag for nine years? (Prolonged laughter)

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(Laughter)

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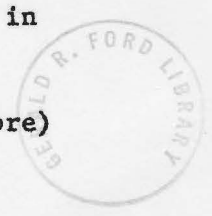
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Leon Parma  
1) Birthday Party  
2) Speech

Francis -  
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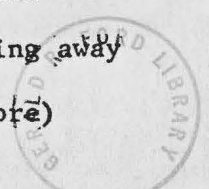
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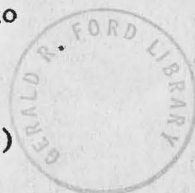
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President Roth, members and guests of the Gridiron, thank you on behalf of the President of the United States for your traditional salute.

Many of you have probably been telling your readers how I spent my first two days as Vice President -- presiding over the Senate, calling upon the President, and trying to pack up my belongings at the office for a two-way transfer to the Executive Office Building and the other side of the Capitol.

Actually all that is just a clever cover story my Press Secretary, Paul Miltich, was instructed to put out. What I have really been doing ever since the Joint Session adjourned Thursday night is taking phone calls from ladies of the press demanding that I boycott this male chauvinist affair.

There were times when I was almost persuaded by these lovely ladies that the political thing to do would be to cancel. They were very persuasive. But then I remembered that Bella Abzug and Elizabeth Holtzman



were only able to sway 35 votes and decided to take the courageous course and come.

This morning I went down to take my first look at the Vice President's office in the Executive Office Building. It is very handsome and spacious. But I was a little disappointed to find that they had removed all of the personal reminders of my predecessors: Spiro Agnew's practice tennis court; Hubert Humphrey's jumbo sized dictating machine; Lyndon Johnson's Neiman Marcus furniture; Richard Nixon's Anthology of Great Debates; and Harry Truman's desk plate reading "The buck stops over there."

Nearly six years ago, the last time I had the honor of addressing this distinguished Club, the Vice President of the United States spoke for the Democrats and I spoke for the Republicans. I made a lot of fun of the Vice Presidency on that occasion and I want to say here and now "Hubert, it was all in fun. I didn't mean a word of it." The distinguished Senator from Minnesota has been gracious and helpful as always in helping me both publicly and privately in assuming my new responsibilities and I am deeply grateful.



But I can't think of any better way to conclude this gathering than to repeat my closing words from that 1968 Gridiron dinner. They certainly show how little any of us know what tomorrow will bring. But they also express the feelings about our political system which Jerry Ford held then which the same Jerry Ford holds now. In that speech, I said:

"The things that unite us as Americans are far more enduring than the things that divide us -- and one of these is our national sense of humor. The Gridiron Club nourishes this great tradition. Let's all remember to singe but never to burn . . . that all of us would lots rather make love than war . . . that both Democrats and Republicans are striving together to create a more perfect Union, with liberty and justice for all.

"Our unwritten compact of respect for the convictions of others and faith in the decency of others, allows Americans the luxury of rugged political competition. Let's all work to banish war from our shrinking world and hate from our expanding hearts -- to make this whole planet as full of friendship and felicity as this room tonight.



"In this spirit, let me assure the distinguished Vice President of the United States, before all of you, that I have absolutely no designs on his job.

"How many others in this room can make that statement?

"I'm serious. 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.'"

# # #



OFF-THE-RECORD REMARKS  
OF REP. GERALD R. FORD (R-MICH.)  
MINORITY LEADER OF THE U.S. HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES  
AT THE ANNUAL DINNER OF  
THE GRIDIRON CLUB OF WASHINGTON D.C.  
MARCH 9, 1968

Mr. Vice-President, Mr. President Finney,  
Gentlemen of the Gridiron, and Deductible Guests. (Laughter)

What the President calls us in public ----- Wooden Soldiers ----- is nothing  
compared to what he calls us in private. (Laughter)

Let me tell you a little inside story. I've heard that President Johnson  
tells his visitors: "There's nothing wrong with Jerry Ford except he played  
football too long (Laughter) ----- without a helmet." (Laughter)

Now I don't mind a little joke. But like so many other things you hear  
nowadays, that just isn't true. (Laughter)

And I can prove it. On the Gridiron, I always wear my helmet. (Prolonged  
laughter)

This is really my helmet ----- it used to fit. (Prolonged laughter and  
applause)

Well, everything's getting a little tight tonight. (Laughter)

They're really tightening up security down at the White House. The President  
isn't leaving any lock unturned. I'm told the CIA, the FBI, and the Secret  
Service all are trying to identify a mystery man who really has his fingers in  
high places ----- the President's new hairdresser. (Prolonged laughter)

He goes by a code name ----- The Lone Arranger. (Prolonged laughter)

Why did I ever tell Nat Finney I wanted to be the next Republican Speaker?  
Matching me against Hubert Humphrey for laughs is like putting Twiggy up against  
Zsa Zsa Gabor. (Prolonged laughter)

Nat told me how it would go tonight. He said first he'd give a little  
talk ----- and next I'd give a little talk ----- and then the Vice-President  
would follow.

I said: "Who follows the Vice-President?"

He said: "Hardly anybody." (Prolonged laughter and applause)

It's good to see so many great political writers here tonight. More and  
more lately, you gentlemen have been the zipper on the Credibility Gap. (Laughter)

Now where else in Washington can you bask in the warm glow of good  
fellowship ----- and see Bill Fulbright toast President Johnson's health in  
Charlie DeGaulle's wine? (Prolonged laughter)

(more)



It's really tough speaking for the political party that produced one of the wittiest Presidents of all time ----- a great Republican who always lightened his burdens with laughter and humor and jokes ----- Calvin Coolidge. (Prolonged laughter)

History tells that Governor Coolidge got to the White House by sticking his nose into a big city strike. You can see who's been doing his homework lately. (Prolonged laughter)

You know issues are funny. We had the Missile Gap ----- the Anti-Missile Gap ----- Now ----- the Garbage Gap. (Laughter)

The only question: which smells worse, the strike or the settlement? (Laughter)

You know, getting rid of something you once needed, but don't want around anymore is really a headache ----- even for Presidents.

As a matter of fact, Presidents are not always considerate of their Vice-Presidents.

Remember when Nixon returned from South America ----- stoned? (Prolonged laughter)

Remember when Johnson had to fly 26,000 miles ----- for a camel? (Laughter)

Frankly, if I were Vice-President Humphrey, and just got home from a backbreaking tour of Africa, and the next day my President put a stop to all foreign travel (Laughter) ----- Well, I'd lead a pretty good riot myself. (Prolonged laughter)

But what a full public career Vice-President Humphrey has had ----- just one long struggle against McCarthyism. (Prolonged laughter and applause)

He's been birched red by the Old Right.....and rapped brown by the New Left. (Prolonged laughter)

But Hubert always comes up smiling. He's really the Pagliacci of politics. (Laughter)

Incidentally, I have a neighbor who's a real 100% Democrat ----- that's what you get with open housing. (Prolonged laughter)

He claims President Johnson is a teabag candidate ----- his strength comes out only when he's in real hot water. (Laughter)

There's only one problem. ----- Did you ever try using the same teabag for nine years? (Prolonged laughter)

I know LBJ isn't going to miss a trick. Look how he's going after the serviceman's vote. You know, one of Bob McNamara's economy moves was doing away

(more)

with paper towels in all Pentagon washrooms. Now they've installed those little hand drying machines at every military base. On every machine there's a big sign: Press this button and you will hear a message from your Commander-in-Chief. (Prolonged laughter and applause)

All kidding aside, I do hope President Johnson finds time to drop by later. Nat, has anybody checked to be sure the elevator is working? (Laughter)

I think the former Attorney General is here ----- at least I saw his stand-in. Bobby Kennedy had more foresight than most. He's one guy who got off the river boat so fast he got his money back. (Laughter)

Politically, Bobby's now at the awkward age.

He's too young to be President ----- and he's really too old for that haircut. (Prolonged laughter)

I sort of sympathize with the Senator from New York. I know there's one big dealer here in town who'd like to send this Ford back to Michigan. (Laughter)

But that would be dirty politics at its Nader. (Prolonged laughter)

Right now though, the President better keep his eyes on Gene McCarthy. Gene talks a lot about principal, but he's a typical Democrat alright. His interest rate keeps going higher and higher. (Laughter)

Now that George Wallace, there's a horse of a different color.

In your heart, you know he's white. (Prolonged laughter)

If George sneaks off with just a few little ol' electoral votes, we may have to pick the next President in the House of Representatives.

What a parliamentary foul-up! After the election of 1800, the House went on and on and on for 36 ballots ----- and they didn't even have H. R. Gross. (Laughter)

The Democrats, as usual, would be divided between LBJ and George Wallace.

But you know ----- we Republicans are always united. (Laughter)

We'd all rally 'round that great Republican champion: Ronald ----- Milhous ----- Percyfeller. (Prolonged laughter)

Our Republican drag race is still exciting, even with our Michigan Rambler scratched.

There's Nelson Rockefeller. He still won't volunteer ----- but last week he installed a hot line to his draft board. (Laughter)

Nelson is the best man to save the American dollar ----- it's a family habit. (Laughter) After all, Governor Rockefeller is the only taxpayer who can balance the Federal budget with his Mad Money. (Laughter)

(more)



Dick Nixon doesn't have to stay in politics for the money, either. Only last week the Schick Razor Company offered him Two Million Dollars just to do a shaving commercial (Laughter) ----- for Gillette. (Prolonged laughter) Dick's the only candidate who gets Five O'Clock Shadow on the "Today" Show. (Prolonged laughter)

Oh, ----- then there's Pistol Packin' Percy. Chuck's the one who went to Vietnam and nearly shot his own brainwasher. (Prolonged laughter and applause)

And Governor Reagan, he says he isn't running for President either. I believe him ----- even if his door chimes do play "Hail To The Chief." (Laughter) Let's not forget Harold Stassen ----- wouldn't it be great if we could? (Laughter) Harold isn't the youngest candidate anymore, but I guess you'd have to say he's the most WIGerous. (Prolonged laughter)

Of course, you can't blame anyone for trying.

Henry Clay always said he'd rather be right than President.

Now President Johnson has proved once and for all ----- it really is a choice. (Prolonged laughter)

You know, I nearly didn't get here on time tonight. When I heard it was to be a bi-partisan affair, I went straight to the President's Club.

Isn't that where you go to Buy Partisans? (Laughter)

Of course, partisanship has to stop somewhere. The things that unite us as Americans are far more enduring than the things that divide us ----- and one of these is our national sense of humor.

The Gridiron Club nourishes this great tradition. As the campaign gets hotter, let's all remember to singe but never to burn.....that not just the hippies, but all of us, would lots rather make love than war.....that both Democrats and Republicans are striving together to create a more perfect Union, with liberty and justice for all.

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(Laughter)

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(more)

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"If you lived here, you'd be home now." (Prolonged laughter and applause)

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