

Governor Jennifer M. Granholm
“Welcome Home Ceremony” for President Ford
Gerald R. Ford Museum – Grand Rapids
January 2, 2007

To Mrs. Ford, Michael, Jack, Steven and Susan, friends of the Ford family, President and Mrs. Carter, and honored guests: On behalf of the state of Michigan, welcome. We are proud and honored that you are here.

And to President Ford: Welcome home, Mr. President.

Welcome home to the city where you ate dinners with your family on Union Avenue, where you laughed with your high school football friends, and graduated with honors from Grand Rapids South High.

Mr. President, welcome home to the state and the city where your mother and your stepfather baked into your young life some good Midwestern values – hard work, sportsmanship, integrity, honesty.

Welcome home to the city you returned to after serving your country in the war. Welcome home to the city where you and Betty were married, at Grace Episcopal Church – Betty in a \$50 dress, and you in muddy shoes.

Welcome home to the district you represented in Congress so well for 25 years, while living on Crown View Drive. And welcome home to the people you reflected so well when you were in Washington. You probably saw as the motorcade drove in citizens of Grand Rapids on freeway overpasses, children holding signs saying “Welcome Home.” We are so proud.

And let me just observe, sir, that a lot has been said about your humility, simplicity, low-key approach to leading. But we won’t let all that understatedness fool us – you were incredible. We all know about being a high school and college football star, but... an Eagle Scout, a war hero, an honors graduate of the University of Michigan and Yale Law School. In fact, the most delightful secret about Gerry Ford is that you were a paradoxical gift of remarkable intellect and achievement, wrapped in plain brown paper.

Mr. President, you embodied the Midwestern spirit illustrated in the three rules you often said your parents taught you – tell the truth, work hard, and come to dinner on time. I cannot think of three better rules to live by, whether you are a boy growing up in Grand Rapids or the President of the United States.

I was listening to the commentators on the news this morning describe the actions yesterday by Susan and Jack and Michael and Steven as they personally shook the hands of mourners who came to pay their respects – the commentators described their graciousness and warmth and accessibility as an example of good Midwestern values. It made me proud. I’m sure that you were proud too, Mr. President.

We were proud to see the down-to-earth spirit you brought to the White House. We are proud that we will put you down in our Michigan earth, right here.

Welcome home, Mr. President, to a state proud of your time as not only the nation's president, but *our* president. Michigan's president.

Mr. President, you said at the rededication of this museum in 1997: "Like a runner nearing the end of his course, I hand off the baton to those who share my belief in America as a country that has never become, but is always in the act of becoming. Presidents come and go. But principles endure, to inspire and animate leaders yet unborn. ... That is the mission of every American patriot. For here the lamp of individual conscience burns bright. By that light, we can all find our way home."

Mr. President, we are proud that you have found your way home.