

The original documents are located in Box 128, folder “Jan. 7, 1974 - Press Release, Visit to Grand Rapids” of the Gerald R. Ford Vice Presidential Papers at the Gerald R. Ford Presidential Library.

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Jerry,
our Vice President,
comes home.



For Immediate Release

When he returns to Grand Rapids for the first time since his inauguration as Vice President, Jerry Ford will be greeted with a full scale hometown welcome. A day-long series of events is planned January 17 giving district residents ample opportunity to greet their favorite son personally. (The schedule is announced by the Jerry Ford Homecoming Committee, a special group established by the Kent County Republican Committee.)

Festivities actually get underway Wednesday night (January 16) at Kent County Airport where the vice presidential party is expected to arrive at 10 p.m. from Washington. A brief and informal airport reception will include music by the South Middle School Band (where Ford attended classes,) with a receiving line composed of teammates from his state championship South High football team, former teachers, Grand Rapids mayors and other close friends.

Jerry Ford's association with South will again be highlighted the following day. The Vice President will attend a

program there during which his portrait will be unveiled as the first in the middle school's newly established Hall of Fame. Ford was graduated from South High School in 1930. In addition to being an All-City center for two years and captain of the football team as a senior, Ford was also a member of South's National Honor Society, Inter-Hi Council, Sodalitas Latina and Glee Club.

At 10:30, after the visit to his high school alma mater, a brief motorcade will accompany Ford to a downtown news conference. Observed along the route will be the site of the first of several Ford family residences in Grand Rapids; St. Mary's Hospital whose recent growth benefitted from Federal funding arranged by then-Congressman Ford; and his former district headquarters on Cherry Street among others. Local motorists are urged by the celebration committee to turn on car headlights any time they drive during the day in salute to Ford's 25th Anniversary Homecoming.

Representatives from both local and national news media are expected to fill the Grand Rapids Press Club at 11 o'clock for a 45-minute conference with the new Vice President. Ford will be hosted at a prayer luncheon in the Civic Auditorium by Billy Zeoli, Gospel Films. A separate women's luncheon honoring Mrs. Betty Ford, also a Grand Rapids native, is planned by Kent County Republican ladies.

Each of the 5th District constituents who supported Jerry Ford throughout his 25 years in the Congress has an opportunity



to congratulate him personally during the afternoon. From two until five p.m., the Fords will meet the public in the lobby of the Kent County building in Vandenberg Center.

Numerous bands are being scheduled to entertain both public and honored guests in Calder Plaza throughout the afternoon.

The day's festivities will be climaxed by a gala dinner for 1500 set for 7 p.m. at Calvin College Fieldhouse. The committee has already issued invitations at \$12.50 per person to several thousand residents. While the occasion is expected to be a "sellout," anyone who was missed and wishes to attend may call 459-0141 with reservation inquiries.

Planners of the evening's program promise, "There will be no long speeches." Colorful groups tentatively invited to participate include the University of Michigan Friars, local Shrine bandsmen and Latvian dancers.

A few long-time friends will share glimpses into Jerry Ford's early years; humorous presentations will spotlight his frequent visits to area celebrations; and brief tributes will be paid by guest celebrities representing Ford's Congressional years. His 25th Anniversary Homecoming will conclude with Vice President Ford's response at the dinner.

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(Further details will be forthcoming.)

OFFICE OF THE VICE PRESIDENT
WASHINGTON, D. C.



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
Monday, Jan. 7, 1974

CONTACT:
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Vice President Gerald R. Ford will make a sentimental journey to his home town of Grand Rapids, Mich., the evening of Jan. 16 and spend the entire day Jan. 17 there enjoying a welcome-home celebration.

Theme of Jerry Ford Day on Jan. 17 will be "Jerry, Our Vice President, Comes Home."

Grand Rapids Area friends plan a personal welcome for the Vice President when he arrives at Kent County Airport at 10 p.m. Jan. 16.

According to the local committee planning the Jerry Ford Day, two columns of friends, former teachers and neighbors will form an aisle of welcome from the Vice President's plane to a waiting motorcade. The welcome lane will include all the men who served as Grand Rapids mayors during the 25 years Mr. Ford has represented Michigan's Fifth District in Congress. The welcome also will feature a card section of several hundred persons spelling out the Jerry Ford Day theme and a musical salute from an ensemble of all the Grand Rapids Area high school bands.

On Jan. 17 Mr. Ford will go at 9:30 a.m. to what used to be South High School when he attended there and now is South Middle

(more)



School. He will speak to a school assembly, with the audience to include not only all South Middle School students but representatives from all other Grand Rapids secondary schools and some of the Vice President's former teachers and South High School football teammates.

The rest of the day's program will include a news conference at 11 a.m., a luncheon in the Grand Rapids Civic Auditorium, a reception at the City-County Building, a dinner at the Calvin College Fieldhouse, and a private reception with several hundred Republican leaders and campaign contributors.

The dinner will be a \$12.50-a-plate event, with the proceeds used to meet the expenses incurred by the Jerry Ford Committee which is organizing the tribute to the Vice President. Speakers will include Michigan Gov. William Milliken and Congressman Elford A. Cederberg, dean of the Michigan Republican delegation in Congress. The Vice President will give a response to the tributes paid him by Milliken and Cederberg.

After the close of the day's events, the Vice President will board his plane at 11:30 p.m. for the flight back to Washington.

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