

The original documents are located in Box 6, folder “3/22/75 - Annual Gridiron Dinner” of the President’s Speeches and Statements: Reading Copies at the Gerald R. Ford Presidential Library.

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THE WHITE HOUSE

WASHINGTON

From: Robert T. Hartmann

To: Bob Roth, Historian
Gridiron Club

Date: April 2, 1975

Time

a.m.

~~XXXX~~

Pursuant to your request, attached is the President's original speech at the Gridiron Club dinner on March 22 which he has agreed to surrender in this one case.

THE PRESIDENT HAS SEEN *df*.

ANNUAL GRIDIRON DINNER

SATURDAY, MARCH 22, 1975

PRESIDENT WARREN, LADY AND GENTLEMEN OF THE

GRIDIRON, DISTINGUISHED GUESTS:

FIRST, I'D LIKE TO CLEAR UP ONE THING. WOULD

YOU ALL TAKE A LOOK AT THAT GREAT CARTOON ON THE BACK OF YOUR

MENU + THE ONE OF THE GUY PLAYING FOOTBALL WITHOUT A HELMET.

THAT IS SUPPOSED TO BE A DRAWING OF ME CENTERING

A FOOTBALL. THERE WAS A LITTLE CONFUSION ABOUT IT.

SOME PEOPLE THOUGHT IT WAS A PICTURE OF BILL COLBY OF THE CIA

-- PICKING UP A SUBMARINE.

THIS HAS REALLY BEEN A WONDERFUL EVENING. IN
PARTICULAR, I ENJOYED VICE PRESIDENT ROCKEFELLER'S SPEECH.

OBVIOUSLY, NELSON'S LIFE HERE IN WASHINGTON IS A BIG
CHANGE FROM WHAT IT WAS IN NEW YORK. IN NEW YORK HE COULD
GO OVER TO THE CHASE MANHATTAN BANK AND SEE HIS MONEY.

IN WASHINGTON IT'S A LITTLE DIFFERENT. IN
WASHINGTON HE GOES OVER TO INTERNAL REVENUE AND LETS HIS MONEY

SEE HIM!

~~I'M VERY SORRY SECRETARY KISSINGER COULDN'T BE HERE.~~

I ALWAYS ENJOY LISTENING TO HENRY. HE'S SO CALM, SO RELAXED,

SO SELF-POSSESSED. HENRY IS THE ONLY MAN I KNOW WHO CAN

GIVE A PRESS CONFERENCE AND HAVE HIS SHOES SHINED AT THE SAME

TIME.

SOME TWENTY YEARS AGO, WHEN I WAS A YOUNG
CONGRESSMAN, THE LATE BILL PYPER INVITED ME TO MY FIRST
GRIDIRION DINNER. A LOT HAS CHANGED SINCE THEN.

FOR INSTANCE, YOU'VE GONE CO-ED

WHICH IS GREAT. BUT, I'LL TELL YOU ONE THING:

HELEN THOMAS IS NO HOUSE-MOTHER!

BUT I DO HAVE ONE SUGGESTION:

NOW THAT YOU'VE ADMITTED LADIES TO GRIDIRON MEMBERSHIP,

IN THE INTEREST OF EQUAL RIGHTS + THEY OUGHT TO HAVE TO WEAR

THIS KIND OF COLLAR, TOO.

PERSONALLY, I HAVE ALWAYS FELT VERY COMFORTABLE IN
THE GLOW OF THE GRIDIRON. WHEN NAT FINNEY ASKED ME TO SPEAK
FOR THE REPUBLICANS ABOUT SEVEN YEARS AGO, I FOUND MYSELF PAIRED
AGAINST VICE PRESIDENT HUBERT HUMPHREY. LAST YEAR,
JERRY TER HORST INVITED ME TO COMPETE FOR ATTENTION WITH
SCOOP JACKSON.

TONIGHT, WHEN I THOUGHT I'D FINALLY HAVE THE SPOTLIGHT

ALL TO MYSELF, I FIND MYSELF SHARING IT WITH ELLA GRASSO,

HAPPY ROCKEFELLER AND MY OWN VERY FAVORITE LOBBYIST, BETTY.

BUT I AM GRATEFUL TO LOU WARREN FOR ONE THING.

I STILL GET THE LAST WORD AT LEAST UNTIL I GET HOME!

I DON'T WANT TO OVERLOOK HELEN THOMAS. I LEARNED
THAT LONG BEFORE I EVER BECAME PRESIDENT.

THROUGH THE YEARS, HELEN HAS PRACTICED A FINELY
BALANCED BLEND OF JOURNALISM AND ACUPUNCTURE. SHE HAS
PRAISED ME WHEN IT WAS EARNED -- AND NEEDED ME WHEN IT WAS
NECESSARY. AND I HAVE ALWAYS BEEN GRATEFUL FOR HER FAIRNESS.

NOW! -- I WANT YOU TO KNOW THAT I LISTENED WITH
GREAT INTEREST -- AND I MIGHT ADD, GREAT SYMPATHY TO MY
GOOD FRIEND BOB STRAUSS.

I THINK THE CHAIRMAN DID THE BEST ANYBODY COULD FOR A

PARTY THAT'S SUFFERING FROM THE DOMINO THEORY / BUT IN REVERSE.

THE MINUTE ONE CANDIDATE STANDS UP -- SIX MORE FOLLOW HIM.

BUT I AM SORRY BOB STRAUSS DIDN'T ANSWER THE ONE

BURNING POLITICAL QUESTION THAT'S REALLY ON EVERYBODY'S MIND

TONIGHT: "HAS MOE UDALL'S CAMPAIGN FOR PRESIDENT -- PEAKED TOO

SOON?"

I DO WANT TO CONGRATULATE SCOOP JACKSON AND ALL THOSE
OTHER DEMOCRATIC CANDIDATES RUNNING ALONG WITH HIM.

THE ONES WITH THE HIGH HOPES AND THE LOW PROFILES.

OBVIOUSLY, SENATOR JACKSON HAS MANY ADVANTAGES.

WITH A NAME LIKE SCOOP, AT LEAST HE HAS THE HOWARD JOHNSON VOTE.

AND ANOTHER DEMOCRATIC CANDIDATE, JIMMY CARTER, HAD
FANTASTICALLY GOOD NEWS AND BAD NEWS THIS WEEK. THE GOOD NEWS
IS, JIMMY CAME RUNNING INTO HIS OFFICE SHOUTING, "LOOK AT THIS
LATEST GALLUP POLL! IT HAS ME RIGHT ON TOP OF THE LIST OF
PRESIDENTIAL CANDIDATES!" THE BAD NEWS IS --- HE WAS HOLDING
IT UPSIDE DOWN.

I'M ONLY FOOLING. WHEN IT COMES TO THE WHITE HOUSE,

LET ME EXTEND A SINCERE WELCOME TO ALL THE DEMOCRATIC CANDIDATES
WHO WANT TO GET IN ON THE GROUND FLOOR.

AND TO ALL THE REPUBLICANS, TOO.

YOU HAVE MY PROMISE THAT I'LL DO EVERYTHING POSSIBLE
TO HELP THEM GET INTO THE WHITE HOUSE -- ON THE GROUND FLOOR.

AS LONG AS I STAY ON THE SECOND.

SINCE I MOVED INTO THAT HISTORIC HOUSE, I HAVE
LEARNED HOW MUCH OF A LIFESAVING MEDICINE A LITTLE LAUGHTER
IS FOR PRESIDENTS.

SO IF A FINE EVENING OF FUN AND FRIENDSHIP LIKE THIS
IS GOOD FOR PRESIDENTS, IT MUST ALSO BE GOOD FOR AMERICA.

THE GRIDIRON CLUB NURTURES THIS NATIONAL ASSET, AND

I AM GLAD WE CAN ALL POKE GENTLE JOKES AT OURSELVES AND AT ONE

ANOTHER THIS WAY -- SINGEING WITHOUT REALLY BURNING.

I HOPE IT WILL ALWAYS STAY THAT WAY.

AMERICANS ARE A DIVERSE PEOPLE LIVING TOGETHER IN MANY
DIFFERENT STYLES AND PLACES. WE ARE UNITED MORE BY THE WAY WE
LOOK AT THINGS THAN BY THE TRADITIONAL TIES OF BLOOD OR BELIEF OR
BATTLES LONG FORGOTTEN. AND WHEN WE ARE ABLE TO LOOK AT THE
BRIGHTER SIDE OF OUR TROUBLES, AND THE LIGHTER SIDE OF OUR
STRUGGLES, AND SEE THE SMILE THAT LIES JUST BELOW THE SURFACE OF
OUR NEIGHBOR'S FACE, WE AMERICANS ARE AT OUR VERY BEST.

THANK YOU AND GOOD NIGHT.

END OF TEXT