

The original documents are located in Box 31, “5/7/76 - Remarks at Groundbreaking Ceremonies for Archbishop Bergan Mercy Hospital, Omaha, Nebraska” of the President’s Speeches and Statements: Reading Copies at the Gerald R. Ford Presidential Library.

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THE PRESIDENT HAS SEEN....

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Archbishop Bergan Mercy Hospital

- Thank you, Sister Mary Kieran
- Archbishop Sheehan
- Senator Hruska
- Senator Curtis
- Secretary Butz
- Mayor Zorinsky (Omaha)
- Distinguished Guests
- Ladies and Gentlemen

~~YOU KNOW,~~ I CAN'T HELP BUT SAY THIS --

~~A LOT OF PEOPLE THESE DAYS ARE SAYING THAT NOTHING GOOD EVER
COMES OUT OF WASHINGTON,~~ D.C.

~~BUT~~ WHEN YOU HAVE A TORNADO OR A FLOOD OR AN
EARTHQUAKE, IT'S NICE TO KNOW THAT SOMEBODY IN ~~THE~~ *Washington*
FEDERAL GOVERNMENT CARES.

ON MY WAY HERE THIS AFTERNOON, I VISITED THE SITE
OF THE HOUSE WHERE I WAS BORN, AT 32nd AND WOOLWORTH.
AS IT IS FOR ANYONE WHO REVISITS THE SCENE OF HIS EARLY
CHILDHOOD, THE VISIT WAS A MOVING EXPERIENCE.

MIXED WITH THE NOSTALGIA WAS A NEW APPRECIATION FOR
HAVING BEEN BORN IN THIS WONDERFUL PART OF THE COUNTRY.

THANKS TO THE GENEROSITY OF THE PEOPLE OF OMAHA,
THE SITE WHERE THE HOUSE ONCE STOOD IS BEING TRANSFORMED
INTO A GARDEN TO MARK THE BIRTHPLACE OF THE FIRST NATIVE
OF NEBRASKA TO SERVE AS PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES•

THAT'S CERTAINLY A RECORD I NEVER EXPECTED TO ESTABLISH
WHEN I LEFT THIS CITY FOR MICHIGAN AT THE RIPE OLD AGE
OF A YEAR AND A HALF•

I AM DEEPLY HONORED BY THE THOUGHTFULNESS
OF THE PEOPLE OF OMAHA IN PRESERVING THIS SITE•

MY REAL PURPOSE IN BEING HERE, THOUGH, IS TO
HONOR THE COURAGE AND RESOURCEFULNESS OF A GREAT NUMBER
OF OTHER NEBRASKANS.

JUST ONE YEAR AND A DAY AGO, DISASTER STRUCK
OMAHA IN THE PATH OF A DEVASTATING TORNADO. ARCHBISHOP
BERGAN MERCY HOSPITAL WAS STRUCK WITH ITS FULL FORCE.
BUT MIRACULOUSLY NONE OF THE 900 PATIENTS AND STAFF
MEMBERS INSIDE THE HOSPITAL WAS SERIOUSLY INJURED.

THE SISTERS OF MERCY AND THE HOSPITAL STAFF

MEMBERS SHOWED GREAT COURAGE AND HEROISM IN EVACUATING

THE SELF-CARE UNIT BEFORE IT WAS WRECKED AND MOVING PATIENTS

INTO THE SAFETY OF THE MAIN BUILDING.

IT WAS A TRULY MAGNIFICENT JOB OF RESPONDING

TO THE RAVAGES OF THE WORST STORM EVER TO HIT OMAHA.

THROUGHOUT THE CITY PEOPLE BROUGHT ORDER TO THE CHAOTIC

SITUATION - PROVIDED FOR THE INJURED AND HOMELESS -

AND CLEANED UP THE DAMAGED SECTIONS OF THE CITY.

I FIRST HEARD ABOUT THE TORNADO DIRECTLY FROM
SENATOR HRUSKA AND CONGRESSMAN JOHN McCOLLISTER,
TWO MEMBERS OF YOUR FINE CONGRESSIONAL DELEGATION.

FEDERAL DISASTER RELIEF WAS ON THE WAY WITHIN 24 HOURS,
AND NOW THE REBUILDING OF THE DAMAGED AREAS IS SO COMPLETE,
IT IS DIFFICULT TO FIND ANY SIGN THAT A TORNADO EVER PASSED
THROUGH HERE.

YOU SHOULD BE PROUD OF YOUR SELF-SUFFICIENCY
AND YOUR COMMUNITY SPIRIT•

YOU ARE PREPARING NOW, NOT ONLY TO REBUILD
FROM THE RUINS OF A MAJOR DISASTER -- BUT TO EXPAND ON
THIS SITE• THIS GROUNDBREAKING IN ITSELF IS AN ACT OF
COURAGE AND OF FAITH -- TWO QUALITIES THAT HAVE NEVER BEEN
IN SHORT SUPPLY IN THE STATE OF NEBRASKA•

THE NEW EAST TOWER WHICH WILL RISE FROM THIS
SITE WILL BE MORE THAN AN INSTITUTION OF HEALTH CARE --
IT WILL BE AN INSPIRATION TO ALL THE CITIZENS OF OMAHA•

IT WILL SYMBOLIZE YOUR STRENGTH, YOUR COMPASSION,
YOUR SOPHISTICATION, AND YOUR RISING AMBITION•

IN MORE PRACTICAL TERMS, IT WILL SERVE YOUR
COMMUNITY WITH NURSING CARE OF THE HIGHEST QUALITY FOR
OLDER CITIZENS IN THE OMAHA AREA•

ALL OF US KNOW THAT IT TAKES MONEY --

AND LOTS OF IT -- TO BUILD A FACILITY LIKE THE EAST TOWER,

MONEY TO MAINTAIN IT, TO STAFF IT, AND TO PROVIDE THE

PROFESSIONAL CARE THAT IS NEEDED SO MUCH.

AS A RESULT, MEDICAL TREATMENT --

ESPECIALLY FOR THE ELDERLY -- CAN BE A VERY EXPENSIVE

PROPOSITION.

IF AN OLDER PERSON HAS TO STAY IN A HOSPITAL OR NURSING HOME
OR UNDER A DOCTOR'S CARE FOR A VERY LONG TIME, IT CAN PUT
AN INCREDIBLE STRAIN ON A LIFETIME'S SAVINGS AND ON THE
PEACE OF MIND OF THE PATIENT AND LOVED ONES ALIKE.

BEING IN POOR HEALTH FOR A LONG TIME IS BAD
ENOUGH WITHOUT HAVING TO WORRY ABOUT THE RUINOUS ECONOMIC
EFFECT OF A LONG-TERM ILLNESS. I HAVE A PLAN TO ENSURE
THAT OLDER AMERICANS WILL RECEIVE THE MEDICAL AND HOSPITAL
CARE THEY NEED / WITHOUT GOING BROKE IN THE PROCESS.

UNDER MY PLAN, MEDICARE PATIENTS IN HOSPITALS
OR NURSING HOMES WOULD NEVER HAVE TO PAY MORE THAN
500 DOLLARS A YEAR FOR MEDICAL CARE, OR TEN PERCENT OF THEIR
TOTAL HOSPITAL BILLS, WHICHEVER IS LESS.

FOR COVERED DOCTOR'S SERVICES, THE MAXIMUM WOULD BE
250 DOLLARS OR 20 PERCENT OF THE TOTAL, WHICHEVER
IS LESS. MEDICARE WOULD PAY THE REST, WHETHER IT COSTS
1,000 DOLLARS OR 10,000 DOLLARS OR 50,000 DOLLARS.

I WANT TO SEE AMERICA'S OLDER CITIZENS

LIVE THEIR LIVES IN DIGNITY AND SECURITY AND IN THE

BEST POSSIBLE HEALTH. SO DO THE SISTERS OF MERCY,

WHO HAVE GIVEN MORE THAN A CENTURY OF SERVICE TO THE SICK

AND DISABLED IN AMERICA.

THEY HAVE SHOWN COUNTLESS TIMES THAT THE QUALITY OF MERCY

BLESSES BOTH THOSE WHO RECEIVE IT AND THOSE WHO GIVE IT.

THE REBUILDING OF YOUR CITY AND THE EXPANSION OF
THE ARCHBISHOP BERGAN MERCY HOSPITAL EXEMPLIFIES ANOTHER
IMPORTANT TRAIT THAT I AM PROUD OF AS AN AMERICAN --
OUR CONTINUING FAITH IN OUR AMERICAN WAY OF LIFE•

THE FEARS OF INFLATION AND UNEMPLOYMENT --
SO STRONG ~~ONLY~~ A YEAR AGO -- PROVIDED ~~ONLY~~ ANOTHER CHALLENGE•
AS WE HAVE SEEN SO OFTEN IN THE HISTORY OF OUR NATION,
THE THREAT OF ADVERSITY MERELY UNCOVERED NEW RESERVOIRS
OF STRENGTH AND RESOURCEFULNESS•

YOU HAVE NOT ONLY REPAIRED THE DAMAGE
FOLLOWING A DISASTER -- YOU HAVE BUILT NEWER AND
BETTER FACILITIES FOR A NEWER AND BETTER COMMUNITY.

THE FEELING OF CONFIDENCE IN THE FUTURE THAT I SEE
BEING REKINDLED ALL ACROSS AMERICA IS NO BETTER DEMONSTRATED
THAN RIGHT HERE IN OMAHA -- ON THIS SITE WHERE THE RAVAGES
OF THE PAST HAVE SO CONFIDENTLY BEEN REPLACED WITH OUR
BEST HOPES FOR THE FUTURE.

END OF TEXT