

The original documents are located in Box 42, “11/2/76 - Remarks at Kent County Airport, Grand Rapids, MI, Upon Dedication of the Gerald R. Ford Mural” of the President’s Speeches and Statements: Reading Copies at the Gerald R. Ford Presidential Library.

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THE PRESIDENT HAS SEEN . . . ,

I AM OVERWHELMED BY GRATITUDE -- BY APPRECIATION --
AND BY A FEELING OF PERSONAL INDEBTEDNESS TO EVERYONE
INVOLVED IN CREATING THE GERALD R. FORD MURAL.

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THE TIME, EFFORT AND THOUGHTFULNESS CONTRIBUTED BY
A GREAT NUMBER OF PEOPLE HERE IN THE GRAND RAPIDS AREA --
IS SOMETHING I WILL NEVER FORGET.

MY OLD FRIEND FROM THE CONGRESS, GUY VANDER JAGT,
DEVELOPED THE IDEA FOR THE MURAL -- DAVE MEHNEY, MRS. BOBBIE
BUTLER, BURKE PORTER AND MANY OTHERS WORKED HARD TO ORGANIZE
THE PROJECT, AND, OF COURSE, PAUL COLLINS, A GREAT ARTIST
WHO HAS CONTRIBUTED SO MUCH TO OUR CITY AND ITS PEOPLE HAS
PAID ME THE HIGHEST HONOR BY PAINTING THE MURAL ITSELF.

I THANK ALL OF THEM FROM THE BOTTOM OF MY HEART.

I AM PARTICULARLY TOUCHED BY THE EFFORTS OF THE BETHEL
PENTECOSTAL CHURCH CHOIR WHICH SANG HERE TODAY AND HELD
A BENEFIT CONCERT TO RAISE MONEY FOR THE MURAL.

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I AM ALSO TOUCHED BY THE KINDNESS AND LOVE SHOWN BY
THE CHILDREN OF THE JEFFERSON ELEMENTARY SCHOOL WHO WORKED
HARD, SELLING POPSICLES, TO HELP CREATE THE WORK OF ART I
WILL SOON UNVEIL.

-7-

I OWE SO MUCH TO SO MANY OF YOU HERE THIS MORNING
AND MANY WHO ARE NOT HERE.

-II-

I DO THINK IT'S APPROPRIATE, HOWEVER, TO ASK PAUL
COLLINS IF HE WOULDN'T MIND ADDING ONE SMALL THING TO THE
MURAL, BEGINNING TOMORROW? SO THAT THE MURAL WILL BE
COMPLETELY ACCURATE, I WOULD LIKE A BANNER OR A PLAQUE
INCLUDED THAT STATES: "GERALD R. FORD, PRESIDENT OF THE
UNITED STATES, 1974 TO 1981." HOW ABOUT IT, PAUL?

END OF TEXT

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

NOVEMBER 2, 1976

OFFICE OF THE WHITE HOUSE PRESS SECRETARY
(Grand Rapids, Michigan)

THE WHITE HOUSE

REMARKS OF THE PRESIDENT
AT THE
KENT COUNTY AIRPORT

11:42 A.M. EST

Guy, Bobbie Butler, Dave Menhey, of course Paul Collins, Reverend Clergy, ladies and gentlemen -- and I understand Bob Griffin is somewhere in the midst here -- and Bob, of course:

After the comments made by Bobbie Butler, the comments made by Paul Collins and those by Guy VanderJagt, I am just overwhelmed, and if I had any good sense I would sit down. (Laughter) But I do feel an obligation to thank many, many people here, and I will try and condense it.

First, I want to thank the Bethel Pentecostal Church Choir for the concert they put on, and for the singing they have done here this morning. I thank you very, very much.

Then I understand that the students at the Jefferson Elementary School went out and sold popscicles to try and raise money to make this mural a reality. I want to thank all of them and express to them my deep appreciation for their special effort.

As I was sitting here and looking at what Paul Collins has done, obviously it brought back many, many, many memories, and I could tell a little story about each and every one of them. Those details aren't important. It is what Paul has so beautifully indicated there, that is what means so much to me.

Paul, I just can't adequately express my gratitude and appreciation to you for bringing my life to this wonderful airport and for so many people to see. But the main thing is -- and I think I express it for Betty -- it expresses our lives, not only our lives and that of Mike, Jack, Steve and Susan, but our personal relationship with so many of you here and so many thousands who aren't here who we grew up with, who we consider our friends, regardless of respective circumstances in life or regardless of our political ideology.

MORE

I could take hours to relate some wonderful experiences that I have had in my lifetime here in Grand Rapids, Kent County, Ottawa County, Ionia County, the State of Michigan.

But there are two people I would like to mention -- I guess the name will be "The Gerald R. Ford Mural", and in the years to come I expect to come by and come in and out of this airport and I will see that mural. But it will mean much to me because of the name Gerald R. Ford and Dorothy Ford, my mother and father.

I owe everything to them and to the training, the love, the leadership, and whatever has been done by me in any way whatsoever, it is because of Jerry Ford, Senior, and Dorothy Ford, and that is what that mural will always mean to me in the years ahead.

So, I thank you all and express to you as deeply as I can, to Dave, to Paul, to Bobbie, and to Guy, of course, who had really the inspiration to start it all, but mainly to all of you who mean so much to Betty and myself.

Thank you.

END (AT 11:49 A.M. EST)