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THE WHITE HOUSE

REMARKS OF THE PRESIDENT
AT THE
23RD CONGRESSIONAL DINNER
OF THE UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN CLUB

WASHINGTON HILTON HOTEL

8:40 P.M. EDT

Thank you very much, Marv, and may I express my deep appreciation for your more than generous introduction.

That is literally true that Betty and I spent the first night of our honeymoon at that famous L and L Hotel. I thought that I was giving her a great treat. I can only add this: I have paid for that mistake a thousand times. (Laughter)

My former colleagues in the Congress, Bob Griffin and Members of the House, President Fleming, my associates as alumni of the University of Michigan, particularly my colleagues in the Class of 1935:

It is a great privilege and a very high honor to have the opportunity of participating in the 23rd gathering of this kind in the national capital.

I might say to Chuck -- Chuck Wixom over here -- he speaks with some remorse about the fact that only one of his children has indicated that there was a skip of a generation.

I can assure you from my limited experience that four in our family give me an awful lot of trouble and often times -- if not almost unanimously -- have their own views and have no hesitancy to communicate them to their father, regardless of what office he may hold.

I can say without any reservation or qualification that it is a particular pleasure to come to these dinners-- to which I have come reasonably regularly--for the friendship and the fellowship and, quite frankly, the fun of seeing old friends and making new acquaintances.

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I am really looking forward to seeing the program tonight, and I do appreciate the honor of your calling it, "This is Your University, Mr. President." All I can say is they sure didn't know it back in 1935. (Laughter)

You know, as a matter of fact, I can still remember spending a good part of my sophomore and junior years washing dishes, in the Deke house -- of which I was a proud member -- and I mean washing dishes. As a matter of fact, I washed so many dishes I was the only athlete in Michigan history who ever had a football knee and dishpan hands at the same time. (Laughter)

As I mentioned a moment ago, I was lucky enough to play football first on Ferry Field, and then in the stadium, and I was lucky enough to start a few games in the football season of 1934, and that was quite a year.

The Wolverines on that memorable occasion played Ohio State, and we lost 34 to 0. To make it even worse, that was the year we lost seven out of eight of our scheduled games. But you know what really hurt me the most was when my teammates voted me their most valuable player. I didn't know whether to smile or sue. (Laughter)

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When I look back to 1931 and bring us up to date, so many, many fine memories come to mind.

In my freshman year, I had a job at the University hospital. Dr. Murokowsky, with the help of Harry Kipke, got me the job. I was a very disinterested waiter in the interns' dining room and a very energetic waiter in the nurses' cafeteria. (Laughter)

You know, the truth is, it couldn't have been better. I worked in the interns' dining room for their benefit and the nurses' dining room for my benefit. (Laughter)

Personally, I am intrigued by the differences between then and now, and by the similarities. For instance, back in Ann Arbor I lived on the fourth floor of a rooming house and my rent was \$4.00 per week. And I shared it with a good friend of mine from Grand Rapids.

Today in Washington, that building would be described as a townhouse. The room would be called a pad. The rent would be \$400 and you still wouldn't get enough hot water.

Of course, that doesn't apply to where I live now. I have only been there seven months and you can't believe all of the hot water I have gotten into. (Laughter)

Frankly, I just wish some of my critics could have been here tonight. I would have liked them to know what my major in Ann Arbor was -- economics. The truth is, it shows you how little times have changed.

In 1935, I got my first degree, and in 1975, from some sources I am getting my third degree -- and it is still in economics.

But now, as then, I look to the future with confidence. Those of us who went to the University of Michigan during the 1930s don't have to be reminded of just how hard those times were, but what years haven't been hard? And what times haven't been a challenge to those who lived in them? What is wrong with hard times and a challenge?

I think it has a way of making people a little stronger and a little better. Frankly, I have always been grateful despite whatever hardships I and others served under for my years at the University of Michigan. They were darn good years -- years that provided me with the necessary building blocks and the blueprints to fashion a life from -- years that gave me so many, many true friends to experience life with.

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And a rare night like this allows all of us to look back with affection and at times with amusement. But our sights should always be set on tomorrow and the many tomorrows that follow.

I know what my views are and my hopes and expectations are. You know, I intend to follow the sentiments expressed in one of our dearly loved college songs -- the one that says, "I want to go back to Michigan." And I do.

But with your kind permission, I would like to do it in 1981.

Thank you very much.

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(AT 8:50 P.M. EDT)