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THE WHITE HOUSE

REMARKS OF THE PRESIDENT  
AT THE DEDICATION CEREMONIES  
OF THE  
GERALD R. FORD HEALTH AND PHYSICAL  
EDUCATION BUILDING

10:10 P.M. EST

Phil, Congressman Guy Vander Jagt, Mr. Godfrey,  
Reverend Clergy, students, faculty and guests:

You don't know how much it means to Betty and to myself to come home and see this wonderful turnout. Of course, the welcome we received from the airport to the Pantlind Hotel will be indelibly impressed on our minds. I saw, as Betty did, literally thousands of people that we grew up with. She went to Central and I went to South, but we get along pretty well, (Laughter) and have for 28 years.

But mainly to see the great changes that have taken place in Grand Rapids since we were young -- this is a great and growing community. It has the same strong character that it has always had, but it has changed with the times. I can vividly recall when I got through South High in 1931. Those were tough times. A few of you can remember them.

I literally almost had an opportunity to come to Grand Rapids Junior College, and I knew what a great President the junior college had in Arthur Andrews. An old and dear friend of mine, a principal at South High, he somehow found in the bookstore student loan fund one hundred bucks so I could pay my tuition to go to the University of Michigan.

But, I always had a fond, fond memory of the junior college, and Betty just lived around the corner from here. But, this is one of the great junior colleges of this country. I can recall on the floor of the House of Representatives about ten years ago when there was a movement in the Congress of the United States to expand what they called then community colleges.

They talked about what they would do and how they had a great role to play in the educational system of this country. I said, "Heck, we got the best doggone junior college in the country. We proved it in Grand Rapids."

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So, I had a little connection with athletics. I played football at South back when the ball was round. (Laughter) Paul Goebel used to give me a hard time when he was officiating and tell me to kind of obey the rules a little bit. But, we used to like to win, and that is what this country is all about.

Competition -- it is good for America, it is good for schools, it is good for students, it is good for us, and that is what makes America great today.

Although Arthur Andrews was a super, super president, Frank McCarthy did a tremendous job. Now you have a fine president in President Calkins, and I congratulate all of you. I know the Board of Education kind of stretched the rules a bit, but I am deeply grateful that there will always be my imprimatur on this wonderful facility of health and recreation and physical education.

I happen to believe that your gymnasium, your natatorium, your handball courts, your other facilities here will contribute significantly to the kind of development physically as well as mentally, and I happen to believe that in the world we live today you have to be strong physically as well as mentally.

This facility represents the best, and it came from the people of Grand Rapids, the people who have been for so long so generous in making this a great community, and that is why Betty and I love the community and love you all.

But, I would be remiss if I didn't mention one other name. He was close to me, although he never coached me. But, there is one person I think whose name is likewise indelibly impressed upon the history of this great institution, and that is John Boss, one of the great, great members of the teaching profession. He may not be remembered by the younger, but by some of us he was a super guy.

So, either educationally or athletically, you are number one, we are proud of you and I am indebted to all of you for making it possible for my name to be identified with this great institution and this wonderful facility.

Thank you very much.

END (AT 10:18 P.M. EST)