

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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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 popsicles 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.

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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)