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SOUTH MIDDLE SCHOOL, IN CONNECTION WITH  
"JERRY FORD DAY," GRAND RAPIDS, MICH.  
9.30 A.M. THURSDAY, JAN. 17, 1974.

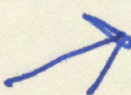
THANK YOU FOR THIS WARM AND  
FRIENDLY WELCOME.

WHEN I COME TO SOUTH MIDDLE  
SCHOOL, I KNOW I'M HOME -- AND YOU'VE MADE  
ME FEEL AT HOME.



When I was your age.  
When you are my age.

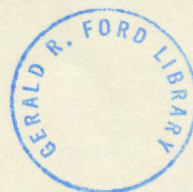
AS YOU CAN ALL IMAGINE, THIS IS A DAY OF PURE JOY FOR ME -- SEEING OLD FRIENDS, VISITING MY OLD HAUNTS. BUT NO PLACE I GO TODAY WILL BRING BACK MORE MEMORIES THAN MY VISIT TO THIS BUILDING WHERE I STARTED IN SEPTEMBER 1925 AS A SEVENTH GRADER AND WOUND UP IN JUNE 1931 WITH A DIPLOMA.



ONE THING I'LL NEVER FORGET IS HANDING IN SOME PAPERS LATE -- AND MY TEACHERS MAKING ME WISH THEY'D BEEN HANDED IN ON TIME!

I ALSO REMEMBER SOME GRADES ON MY  
REPORT CARD -- THAT MY PARENTS MADE ME  
WISH HAD BEEN HIGHER!

BUT MOST OF ALL I REMEMBER MY  
FRIENDS AND TEACHERS.



THESE ARE THE TWO GREAT PLEASURES  
OF SCHOOL: MAKING FRIENDS AND LEARNING  
TO APPRECIATE TEACHERS.

MY TEACHERS HERE WERE THE SAME KIND OF PEOPLE YOURS ARE, THE SAME THAT TEACHERS HAVE ALWAYS BEEN. THEY ARE AMONG THOSE SELFLESS PEOPLE IN THE WORLD WHO ALWAYS GIVE MORE THAN THEY GET. FOR THEY GIVE THEMSELVES, WHICH IS THE GREATEST GIFT ANYONE CAN GIVE, AND FOR WHICH NOTHING CAN EVER REPAY THEM.



NOW YOU MIGHT ASK, DON'T I REMEMBER ANYTHING ELSE? DON'T I REMEMBER LEARNING SOMETHING FROM MY STUDIES?

WELL, I HOPE SO. I STUDIED HISTORY AND SCIENCE AND SOMETHING WE CALLED CIVICS -- AND SOME READIN', WRITIN' AND 'RITHMETIC. ALL OF IT HELPED ME TO GO ON AND LEARN OTHER THINGS THAT WERE MORE COMPLICATED.



BUT THERE'S ONE THING THAT I SPECIFICALLY REMEMBER. LET ME TELL THE STORY.

IT DIDN'T COME OUT OF A BOOK; IT WAS  
SOMETHING A TEACHER TOLD OUR CLASS ONE DAY.  
I DON'T KNOW WHETHER IT WAS ORIGINAL WITH  
HER OR NOT, BUT IT MADE AN IMPRESSION ON  
ME THAT HAS LASTED TILL THIS DAY.



SHE TOLD OUR CLASS, "I'VE GOT A  
QUESTION FOR YOU: WHAT IS THIS?" AND SHE  
HELD UP A PENCIL.

NOW, WE DID THE SAME THING YOU'D  
HAVE DONE. WE GROANED AND THEN SAID,  
"A PENCIL, OF COURSE!"



SHE SAID, "I DIDN'T THINK YOU'D  
MISS THAT ONE. BUT IT IS ALSO SOMETHING  
ELSE: A PENCIL IS THOUGHT. IT'S MADE UP  
OF WOOD AND LEAD, AND RUBBER ON THE TIP HERE.  
BUT A LOT OF PEOPLE HAD TO THINK TO MAKE  
THESE THINGS AND PUT THEM TOGETHER. THEY  
HAD TO STUDY AND LEARN ABOUT EACH ONE OF  
THEM. THEY HAD TO GO TO SCHOOL, READ BOOKS,  
DO LESSONS, AND LEARN FROM OTHERS WHO KNEW  
ABOUT THEM."



"AND SO IT IS," SHE SAID, "WITH EVERYTHING PEOPLE HAVE MADE IN THE WORLD. THE MUSIC RECORDS AND THE MACHINES THAT PLAY THEM, AND AUTOMOBILES AND CLOTHES AND HOUSES AND BUILDINGS AND ALL OUR LAWS AND GOVERNMENT AND MEDICINE, AND JUST ABOUT EVERYTHING -- THEY'RE ALL THOUGHT AND STUDY AND LEARNING."



*Smith*

"AND HERE AT ~~MIDDLE SCHOOL~~," SHE WENT ON, "YOU ARE STUDYING SOME OF THE BASIC THINGS THAT YOU WILL BE NEEDING WHEN YOU GROW UP AND HELP TO BUILD THE WORLD THAT YOU WILL BE LIVING IN. THE MORE YOU LEARN, THE BETTER THAT WORLD WILL BE, AND THE BETTER YOUR OWN LIVES WILL BE."



NOW I DON'T BELIEVE THAT ANY OF US IN THE CLASS THAT DAY HAD EVER BEFORE REALIZED THE TRUTH OF WHAT OUR TEACHER WAS TELLING US. CERTAINLY I HADN'T. BUT FROM THEN ON, I BEGAN TO LOOK AT THE WORLD IN AN ENTIRELY DIFFERENT WAY.

EVERYWHERE I LOOKED, I SAW NOT  
JUST THINGS, BUT THOUGHT.



WHEN I LOOKED AT A BUILDING I  
DIDN'T SEE JUST THE BRICKS AND THE MORTAR,  
THE SHAPE AND COLOR OF THE BUILDING. I ALSO  
SAW PEOPLE -- THE PEOPLE WHO HAD BUILT IT.  
I EVEN SAW THEM AS BOYS AND GIRLS IN  
SCHOOL YEARS BEFORE STUDYING AND LEARNING  
HOW TO HAVE THE THOUGHT REQUIRED FOR THEM  
TO DO THEIR PART IN BUILDING THAT BUILDING.

I ALSO SAW THEM LEARNING TO THINK AND WORK TOGETHER AS A TEAM, TO HAVE TEAM PLANS. THEY WORKED ON CLASS PROJECTS TOGETHER, ON SCHOOL NEWSPAPERS, AND ON ATHLETIC TEAMS -- FOOTBALL, BASKETBALL, BASEBALL, AND OTHER SPORTS. THIS WOULD HELP THEM BECAUSE THEY WOULD HAVE TO WORK TOGETHER IN BUILDING THAT BUILDING.



THEN ONE DAY I BEGAN TO WONDER.

SUPPOSE THEY HADN'T GONE TO SCHOOL, OR  
HAD DROPPED OUT OF SCHOOL. WOULD THAT  
BUILDING HAVE EVER BEEN BUILT? AND I  
DECIDED IT WOULDN'T HAVE, BECAUSE THEY  
WOULDN'T HAVE HAD THE TRAINING. THEY  
COULDN'T HAVE HAD THE THOUGHT THAT THE  
BUILDING REPRESENTED.



WHEN I CARRIED THIS IDEA A LITTLE  
FURTHER, I REALIZED THAT NOTHING WOULD HAVE  
GOTTEN BUILD<sup>D</sup> IF EVERYONE QUIT SCHOOL. WE'D  
HAVE HAD NO CARS, NO HOUSES, NO RADIOS, NO  
GOVERNMENT, NOTHING.

BECAUSE THEY WERE ALL THOUGHT --  
TRAINED THOUGHT.



AND THEN I KNEW FOR SURE WHAT MY  
TEACHER MEANT WHEN SHE TOLD OUR CLASS:  
"YOU ARE STUDYING SOME OF THE BASIC THINGS  
THAT YOU WILL BE NEEDING WHEN YOU GROW  
UP AND HELP TO BUILD THE WORLD THAT YOU  
WILL BE LIVING IN. THE MORE YOU LEARN,  
THE BETTER THAT WORLD WILL BE, AND THE  
BETTER YOUR OWN LIVES WILL BE."

SO DO YOU KNOW WHAT I DID? THE  
NEXT PAPER THAT TEACHER ASKED ME TO HAND  
IN, I HANDED IT IN ON TIME!

THANK YOU! GOOD-BYE! AND GOD  
BLESS EVERY ONE OF YOU!

-- END --



REMARKS BY VICE PRESIDENT GERALD R. FORD  
AT SOUTH MIDDLE SCHOOL  
IN CONNECTION WITH "JERRY FORD DAY"  
GRAND RAPIDS, MICHIGAN  
9:30 a.m. THURSDAY, JANUARY 17, 1974



ADVANCE FOR RELEASE ON DELIVERY

Thank you for this warm and friendly welcome.

When I come to South Middle School, I know I'm home -- and you've made me feel at home.

As you can all imagine, this is a day of pure joy for me -- seeing old friends, visiting my old haunts. But no place I go today will bring back more memories than my visit to this building where I started in September 1925 as a seventh grader and wound up in June 1931 with a diploma.

One thing I'll never forget is handing in some papers late -- and my teachers making me wish they'd been handed in on time!

I also remember some grades on my report card -- that my parents made me wish had been higher!

But most of all I remember my friends and teachers.

These are the two great pleasures of school: making friends and learning to appreciate teachers.

My teachers here were the same kind of people yours are, the same that teachers have always been: They are among those selfless people in the world who always give more than they get. For they give themselves, which is the greatest gift anyone can give, and for which nothing can ever repay them.

Now you might ask, don't I remember anything else? Don't I remember learning something from my studies?

Well, I hope so. I studied history and science and something we called civics -- and some readin', writin' and 'rithmetic. All of it helped me to go on and learn other things that were more complicated.

But there's one thing that I specifically remember. Let me tell the story. It didn't come out of a book; it was something

(more)





a teacher told our class one day. I don't know whether it was original with her or not, but it made an impression on me that has lasted till this day.

She told our class, "I've got a question for you: What is this?" And she held up a pencil.

Now, we did the same thing you'd have done. We groaned and then said, "A pencil, of course!"

She said, "I didn't think you'd miss that one. But it is also something else: A pencil is thought. It's made up of wood and lead, and rubber on the tip here. But a lot of people had to think to make these things and put them together. They had to study and learn about each one of them. They had to go to school, read books, do lessons, and learn from others who knew about them."

"And so it is," she said, "with everything people have made in the world. The music records and the machines that play them, and automobiles and clothes and houses and buildings and all our laws and government and medicine, and just about everything -- they're all thought and study and learning."

"And here at Middle School," she went on, "you are studying some of the basic things that you will be needing when you grow up and help to build the world that you will be living in. The more you learn, the better that world will be, and the better your own lives will be."

Now I don't believe that any of us in the class that day had ever before realized the truth of what our teacher was telling us. Certainly I hadn't. But from then on, I began to look at the world in an entirely different way.

Everywhere I looked, I saw not just things, but thought.

When I looked at a building I didn't see just the bricks and the mortar, the shape and color of the building. I also saw people -- the people who had built it. I even saw them as boys and girls in school years before studying and learning how to have the thought required for them to do their part in building that building.

(more)

I also saw them learning to think and work together as a team, to have team plans: They worked on class projects together, on school newspapers, and on athletic teams -- football, basketball, baseball, and other sports. This would help them because they would have to work together in building that building.

Then one day I began to wonder: Suppose they hadn't gone to school, or had dropped out of school. Would that building have ever been built? And I decided it wouldn't have, because they wouldn't have had the training. They couldn't have had the thought that the building represented.

When I carried this idea a little further, I realized that nothing would have gotten built if everyone quit school. We'd have had no cars, no houses, no radios, no government, nothing.

Because they were all thought -- trained thought.

And then I knew for sure what my teacher meant when she told our class: "You are studying some of the basic things that you will be needing when you grow up and help to build the world that you will be living in. The more you learn, the better that world will be, and the better -our own lives will be."

So do you know what I did? The next paper that teacher asked me to hand in, I handed it in on time!

Thank you! Good-bye! And God bless every one of you!

# # #

