

REMARKS OF SENATOR BOB DOLE  
GRIDIRON DINNER  
THE CAPITOL HILTON  
MARCH 11, 1978

Mr. Chief Justice, Mr. Cromley, and other distinguished guests:

Hi, remember me? I'm Robert Dole for American Express Card.

Before we begin, I'd like to ask a question. I read in THE WASHINGTON POST this morning that there was going to be a big shake-up at the White House.....  
And now, President Carter isn't here ..... You don't think??? Naaaaaa.....

I am disappointed President Carter is not here to laugh at my speech ---- I laugh at all of his.

I also regret the Vice President cannot be with us, but tickets are very hard to get ---- and it was the President's turn to wear the tails.

It's too bad the President missed the Speech in the Dark ---- it was a real tribute to the Administration's handling of the coal strike.

And before we go any further, I'd like to say one thing about that sketch --- Obviously, there's still a difference of opinion over the Panama Canal. Ronald Reagan says we bought it, we paid for it, it's ours and we're not going to give it back. Then again, Tongsun Park feels that same way about Congress.

It's been suggested by some that I bring you up-to-date on what I've been doing since the election ---- others are still curious to know what I was doing during the election.

There has been a lot of speculation on why we lost, but I'll tell you this right now ---- I still favor the Pardon ---- Hamilton Jordan has suffered enough.

I'm sharing this podium with my good friend, Bob Strauss. Bob now spends most of his time on trade agreements. Yesterday the United Mine Workers asked him to trade theirs ..... It seems everytime Strauss goes into a coal mine, the country gets the shaft.

It's good to see Henry Kissinger, who's just had some good news and some bad news. The good news is, someone said, "Henry, you're all right in my book." The bad news is, it was H. R. Haldeman.

And it's always good to see Edward Bennett Williams -- the owner of the Washington Redskins. You know --- the Washington Redskins and the Republican Party have a lot in common. They both have been called over the hill ..... They both have a coach who's gone to California ..... And they both have to wait until 1980 to get a first round draft choice!

My good friend, Nelson Rockefeller could not be here this evening --- Happy told me just last week that Nelson is getting out of politics ---- isn't it a shame when the wife is the last to know?

Senator Dole  
GRIDIRON DINNER

-2-

Governor Reagan sends his regrets. He had to attend a very important conference on Social Security. His check was lost.

President Nixon has been in the news lately ---- I talked to him recently on his 65th birthday. He was hard at work on his memoirs ---- during that day alone he had erased three chapters.

But just thinking about all these important people and being here tonight, one just can't help reminiscing about what might have been. I remember the Convention in Kansas City and President Ford calling. He said, "Is this John - Howard?" I said, "Yes."

Then I went to the President's hotel and we talked about campaign strategy. I often thought later we should have had one.

But I was totally stunned by being selected. So were many of this audience.

After the Convention, I went to see Zelda, the fortune teller. I said, "Zelda, will I be Vice President?" And she said, "Yes, without a doubt, you will be Vice President." After I paid her, I prepared to leave and said, "Thank you, Zelda," she said, "You're welcome, Fritz."

I really am sorry the Vice President isn't here tonight. If there's one thing I can't stand, it's a sore winner.

I'll never forget the Dole-Mondale debate ---- and don't think I haven't tried.

I won't say how we did, but halfway through the debate, three empty chairs got up and walked out.

If you remember those debates, President Ford was supposed to take the high road and I was supposed to go for the jugular. And I did. My own!

I knew I was in trouble in that debate when Senator Mondale said, "I'm positive the Democratic ticket is America's best hope for the future." I said, "Fritz, only fools are positive." He said, "Are you sure?" I said, "I'm positive."

I don't want to seem immodest, but I always keep my cool in difficult situations. On Election night, even at the point where we were 80 electoral votes behind, I went to bed and slept like a baby. Every two hours, I woke up and cried.

It was a close race and President Ford carried 27 states. Even on the day of the Inaugural, I hadn't given up hope. But I could feel it slipping away that morning when they escorted me into the cold and Senator Mondale into the heated area.

A few moments later they escorted Billy Carter to his seat - and his military aide was carrying a six-pack -- ~~and~~ I knew it was down the drain.

But I still hadn't given up hope. I remember at precisely 20 minutes till twelve, I turned to Strom Thurmond -- who in addition to being the Father of the Century, is also the Ranking Republican on the Armed Services Committee -- and said, "Strom, there's still time for a military take-over."

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Senator Dole  
GRIDIRON DINNER

-3-

You all know what happened ---- they didn't fire the cannons until after the oath was taken and they were pointed in the wrong direction anyway so it wouldn't have made any difference. So I've come to accept the change in Administration.

But there are subtle little changes that occur when you lose an election. During the Inaugural Ceremony, I was sitting so far back, when the Marine Band played, "OH, SAY CAN YOU SEE?" ---- I yelled, "Just barely."

Since the election, I've been doing a lot of work for the handicapped ---- the Republican Party.

In my spare time, I'm also working on a book with Alf Landon ---- "Victory is Just Around the Corner."

Believe me, it isn't easy being a member of the minority party these days. A travel bureau got a phone call from a customer. He said he wanted to go to a place that was completely out of touch with the real world. They sent him to the Republican National Committee.

I won't comment on all that's happened since the election -- just let me say that watching this new Administration can only be described as a religious experience. You get up in the morning, look at the headlines, and say, "Good Lord!"

We all miss Bert Lance in Washington ---- As you know, he's doing a local news show now in Atlanta ---- and has his own sponsor: Arabian Express Credit Card. You go to Atlanta now and see mostly camels with Georgia tags.

Bert Lance and his wife, Labelle, were on the Tom Snyder show recently, and Labelle said, "I knew God would be good to us." Bert said, "That's Allah, dear."

Prime Minister Begin will be here again next week. I'm told that yesterday he sent President Carter a message stating, "When I said, 'let my people go,' I wasn't referring to Mark Siegel.

There's much more, but time is running out for some ...

The Gridiron may singe, but it never burns. Perhaps it is most accurate to say that it banks the fires of partisan debate to warm us and remind us that behind the titles and the responsibilities, the ambitions and the differences that distinguish us in this City, are simple men and women -- human beings, fallible and fragile. Some keep that fact more firmly fixed in their minds and their actions than others.

One who did and who is now apart from us was Hubert Humphrey. He practiced the politics of joy ... and taught us the joy of politics. He died January 14, 1978, but we don't have to believe that if we don't want to. His legacy enobles us, and his life instructs us, teaching us that nothing is so temporary as political animosities, nothing so cleansing as forgiveness, and nothing so vital to the proper governance of this great people as a capacity for laughter and a loving heart. That's really what it's all about, and I am most grateful to be a part of this wonderful evening.

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