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Remarks on The American Century, delivered for GVSU and the Ford Museum on April 9, 1999

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REMARKS FOR 4/9/99 MUSEUM EVENT

The American Century

Grand Valley State University and the Ford Museum together present the Millenium Lecture Series on the topic The American Century. Our partnership in bringing distinguished, qualified speakers to Grand Rapids illustrates how so many organizations operate in our community – they cooperate. Those of you who are acquainted with the Director of the Ford Museum, Richard Norton Smith, know that he makes interesting things happen. As William Faulkner wrote, “The past is never past.” Richard understands that and his programs and exhibits make history live for us. His idea to examine what has been called the American Century during its last year appealed to us. Alone, neither of us could produce the exciting programs that will be offered to you. Together we did, and we have the pleasure that comes with collaboration in fulfilling a responsibility that each of us has for illustrating, teaching and researching history.

There has never been a century like the 20th. That I suppose can be said of any century. Yet, for Americans, it has a special place. Someone could have guessed that it might be that way for the forthcoming century when Teddy Roosevelt sent the Admiral Dewey into Manila Bay when his boss wasn’t looking.