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A Tribute to Fred Meijer on His 90th Birthday From His Improvement Association Colleagues, delivered in December 2009

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A Tribute to Fred Meijer on His 90th Birthday
From His Improvement Association Colleagues
Written by Don Lubbers
December 2009

We like you very much and we are pleased to celebrate your 90th birthday with you. Ninety isn't particularly old in our group, but it is more years than most people live on this planet. Each Monday we have the opportunity to savor the experiences your long life has provided. As we share thoughts, ideas and events, our respect for you takes on a personal dimension. We have always observed what you accomplished in business and did for the community. By being together on Mondays, we are exposed to the spirit and intelligence that made it all happen.

When did it occur to you that you were wealthy? I suspect it was after the fact. I say that because you carry no hint of the arrogance that often accompanies wealth, nor do you claim a special place for yourself because of it. You treat all as equals. You listen to everyone who wants to express opinion. You enjoy contact with people from many places and vocations. You seem always ready to learn. You have said your father was your teacher. He did a great job educating you for business and for life.

Your parents were highly successful, and you and Lena have used the foundation they provided to build a business and a life far beyond what they could have imagined. You have special characteristics that made that happen. First, you used what they gave you to build what you have. Consequently, you had a head start. You didn't need to rebel. You didn't need to take all the credit. Second, your high intelligence is infused with creativity and reinforced by a strong will. You are a pretty folksy and friendly guy, and that helps gain acceptance for ideas and decisions like sugar coating does for a pill. Your analysis of situations, your readiness to make tough decisions, and the correctness of those decisions, prove the point. Third, you know yourself well enough to know other people with prescient insight. You were better at this than some of your competitors and it made a difference. Harvey and Earl were right for the time they administered the company, and you knew it. Some company owners can never surrender any authority for business success. You never fell victim to that. Your ego is well-modulated in that respect. Fourth, you always invited employees at Meijer's to be partners in an enterprise. You encouraged good work and good attitude. You were interested in them as individuals, in their

families, and their aspirations. Enough have responded positively to your attitude and ethic to make Meijer's a special place to work.

You created a major company in your image. With its success came the means to do whatever you and Lena wanted. Your heads have not been turned the wrong way by your accomplishments. You were modest in what you required for happiness and you have remained modest. What has changed as a result of your achievement is the community landscape with projects undertaken and completed because you and Lena brought them to fruition or participated in making them happen.

Though words come easily to you, they are not used in self-praise. We don't hear from you much about the good that you do. We see evidence of it all about us, and we who also love our community, are grateful for it. You and Lena, through what you have attained, can leave a significant legacy to our community and you are doing it. As we celebrate your 90 years of living let's celebrate, too, the success you have had, and how you are sharing it with all of us. As Duncan Littlefair used to say, "This is indeed a day which the Lord hath made. Let us rejoice in it and be glad, and let us count our many blessings."