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Remarks, delivered at the Ottawa County Lincoln Day Dinner on February 4, 2000

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Remarks at Ottawa County Lincoln Day Dinner

Friday, February 4, 2000

As I greet you this evening I am reminded of a comment made by Yogi Berra, former New York Yankee catcher and one line philosopher. On a similar occasion he said, “This is deja vu all over again.” At this time of year, about this time of day, from this dais in 1983, I was greeting about 1,000 people at the Ottawa County Lincoln Day Dinner. The visiting celebrity of the evening was George Bush, Vice President of the United States, a yet unannounced candidate, running for President. He came to honor then Congressman Guy VanderJagt from our district. The two of them had been elected to Congress in the same year. This seems like a replay, but there are differences. The Congressman now is our own hard-working Pete Hoekstra who produces for our district.

A U.S. Senator has been added, Spence Abraham, who does more for west Michigan than anyone in the august body that I can remember. There was no Secretary of State here, and now, we welcome Candace Miller.

This year’s George Bush has a W. as a middle initial and he is the successful Governor of Texas. He is accompanied by our excellent Governor, John Engler, who was a member of the legislature in those days. So everything is the same, yet it is different. What isn’t different is that we welcome again you, our neighbors in Ottawa County, to your State university, a strong university built by your taxes and gifts.
What is different is that there are over 1,200 of you, more than in 1983 and more than ever before. The turnout should be encouraging to the candidate George W. Bush. Your turnout comes close to making Ottawa County “Bush Country.”

Two days after Vice President Bush spoke to us in 1983, I received a “Dear Don” postcard in his handwriting thanking me for my remarks. I didn’t know we were such good friends. He got my vote. I wonder what his son, Governor Bush, is going to write on his postcard.