Remarks, delivered at the Improvement Association Dinner on August 11, 2010

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Improvement Association Dinner  
August 11, 2010

By now our guests and spouses know the importance we members of the Improvement Association attach to birthdays. Without them we are in danger of losing our significance. For the last few years we have learned how to celebrate 90th birthdays. You may remember George Cope and Fred Meijer passed that line. When Peter cook approached his 95th in May two years ago, the celebration began in January and didn’t end until October. So you can see that birthdays are big events for us.

This year we face a new challenge. Bill Martindill is our first member to become a centenarian. You will remember the sensational kickoff to his celebration in April which included Inetta who is a mere 99. You might call our party tonight the “summer solstice” of his birthday season. We are learning how to do 100th birthday parties and when Ralph Haunestein hits the mark in less than two years we will have it perfected.

Unfortunately our friend and fellow member Bill Schroeder will have no more birthdays. We remember him with affection and respect, and know that his life of more than 96 years was filled with accomplishments and was quite an accomplishment in itself. His chair has been filled by J.C. Hiuzenga, whose age I will not mention because it would be obscene. At least you know we are determined that the Association survives by inviting a young member to join who could be the age of our oldest member’s great-grandson.
We are pleased that our guests could join us. Most of you have a relationship to us through a parent, and Susan Lovell, who by confirmation of the Secret Committee (the committee that is the final authority for our Association), is our honorary member. One of our guests is celebrating his birthday today; the Honorable John Logie, former Mayor of Grand Rapids. Have you ever noticed if you have once been a Mayor, Senator, Ambassador or President, you never lose the title? One of our members, Bob Hooker, celebrated his 80th yesterday. So you see we are surfeited with birthdays.

To return to the focus of tonight’s event; Bill Martindill, the best I could do was compose some limericks between the time I awakened and the time I arose. So here goes:

Our centenarian friend named Bill  
Is a man with a very strong will  
All his marbles he’s kept  
He is socially adept  
And still speaks with unusual skill.

Our friend Bill has 100 years  
For that we give him three lusty cheers  
Inetta has reigned  
Tho Bill’s never been tamed  
What you get is what it appears.
Our friend Bill has lived long and lived swell
His experience provides great stories to tell
From Michigan to Ohio
He’ll give you his bio
With names, dates, and humor as well.

So march on, Bill, to 101
There is still a race to run
With a walker and will
You won’t take a spill
Tho in life’s race you’ve already won.

Now we pause to give thanks to the Creator of life, the Originator of all our birthdays, our Sustainer through the number given to us, our Savior from those inward and outward destructive forces we all confront, and the Provider of the fuel for our lives which we are allowed to take pleasure in as we are tonight. Amen.