

April 10, 1937

[Gridiron Club Dinner]

FDR Speech File

Sancho Panza said to Don Quixote a few minutes ago

REMARKS OF THE PRESIDENT
AT THE GRIDIRON CLUB DINNER
WASHINGTON, D. C.,
APRIL 10, 1937.

*My last word off
again!*

When I learned that ^{my old friend} Myron Taylor was to speak at the
Gridiron dinner tonight, I realized, in the first place,
that because he and I agree on so many factors and funda-
mentals in our Governmental, social and economic problems
he had not been invited in the usual sense, that he was
to speak for the opposition, and I for the Government. He
was invited, I assume, ^{since hearing him & know,} to speak as a representative,
successful ~~and~~ ^{and thoughtful} educated American. ^{And I am grateful to him for his} But in thinking about him ^{fair}
I said to myself: "What is the first thing that comes into ^{statement}
my head?" It is not Myron Taylor, the distinguished lawyer ^{of}
of New York; it is not Myron Taylor, the Chairman of the ^{Administration}
Board of the United States Steel Corporation; it is the ^{ideals}
Myron Taylor that I know best - the Myron Taylor who says
to me, whenever he sees me: "I am just waiting for the chance
to go back to Florence; I am just waiting for the chance

*to take
my
holiday*

to spend more time on my avocations and less time on my vocations." And that is the kind of thing that I wish we did more of in the United States.

At the time of our beginnings on this continent there was little opportunity for ^{culture, for} recreation or the arts. Breaking the wilderness, especially in the age of puritanism, was a stern task. Culture and play as we know them were rare indeed before the Revolution. The richer families sent occasional sons to make the Grand Tour in Europe. A few of the great landowners of Virginia ^{and Maryland & the Carolinas} hunted foxes.

But With the formation of the nation the understanding of culture progressed. George Washington experimented with ~~his lands~~, his crops and his gardens at Mount Vernon. Thomas Jefferson designed Monticello and the University of Virginia. Benjamin Franklin delved in philosophy and science. Chancellor Livingston financed Robert Fulton, the poor inventor. A little later Andrew Jackson, when not

^{unusually}
occupied by the Bank of the United States and the Supreme

Court, turned his hand to horseracing. Still later, ^{in the 70's & 80's}
especially in the adolescent cities of the Middlewest,

^{Robert} Browning Societies were organized, and medieval castles
filled with Victorian art dotted the ^{Great} lake fronts. Eugene
Fields' "Culture's Garland" is one of our greatest American
classic satires. But we should perhaps remember that the
~~laughable~~ ^{laughable}, amazing, crude culture of the America of sixty
or seventy years ago was the inevitable forerunner of the
avocations which have brought us in these later days ~~the~~

^{great}
^{Mr.} Mellon's National Gallery of Art, the museums, the libraries, ^{the universities}
and indeed the whole range of the culture of today.

But we still do not know how to play. Our foreign
cousins are far ahead of us.

I like to think, for example, of the British Colonel
who has spent most of his life in India. When he goes back ^{to England}
~~home~~ ["] to retire with pay at sixty or sixty-five - and this

is honestly not intended to apply, in any way, to any present age issue in the United States - he is not lost. He does water colors, or he raises a ^{special variety} ~~particular~~ ^{of} flowers, or he goes in for ornithology, or for some other avocation that not only gives him intense pleasure, but keeps him out of mischief!

In other nations great numbers of men start in their younger days to take an interest in outside things - outside of the government, outside of the army, ^{outside of the law,} outside of their careers, outside of their professions and their businesses.

But these avocations need not be limited to those in high places, or those with large private means. Some persons go in for collecting Italian art, some collect etchings, some ship models, some antiques, some even postage stamps. I like, among other diversions, to plant trees at Hyde Park or Warm Springs; I also like deep sea fishing. But if the principle of an avocation is good for some of us, it should be good for all of us, for our families and our children.

And especially we are coming to realize that avocations are not confined to collecting things, nor are they to be confined to those blessed with riches.

^{I have}
~~There was~~ a Southern cotton mill ~~that I know about~~ that had never in all its history of thirty or forty years given a single day of holiday with pay in the whole year ^{it was work} - six days a week, ^{a year} 52 weeks with only Sundays off. There was no such thing as recreation in that town. When NRA came into operation, the workers were given under the Code - Code No. 1, Saturday and Sunday off. During the first two week-ends, the people in that town did not know what to do with themselves, what to do with two consecutive days of holiday. They began to get restive, wanted to go out and smash something, ^{again} not a sit-down strike. Some of the wise leaders among the workers said to the owners of the cotton mill: "We do not know what to do ^{with} Saturday and Sunday off. We are not accustomed to two days' holiday. Could you tell us something about what is called 'athletics'?" The owner of the mill, having some sympathy for them, sent

for an athletic director, and turned over a vacant cotton field for their use. They built tennis courts, football fields, baseball diamonds and a swimming pool. And today there are athletic facilities for the entire community, not only for the adults but for the children too. And that ^{gentleman} is part of the story of avocations.

About a month later, a pastor in a local church got up and said to his congregation: "I want to ask you a question. How many out of the four hundred of you have ever seen the ocean, or seen a steamship? Hold up your hands!" And two people held up their hands. That place was less than 300 miles from the sea. The pastor said: "Would you all like to see the ocean? I have found out from the ticket agent that we can get a special train on Friday night, when the mill closes. We will go to an historic city on the coast where we can ~~go to~~ ^{stay on} the beach and watch the ships go by. We will sleep in the coaches Saturday night so that we will not have any hotel bills, and Sunday we will see the historic sights of that city and get back here in time

for work Monday morning. Who wants to go? The whole congregation held up their hands. ^{Just a sentence} That is part of the story of avocations. And the minimum wage ^{for those cotton mill operations} paid for the tickets. _{RR}

One need not be too serious about his avocations, however. For example, at small cost and no great expenditure of effort, one might be active in Republican politics. That ^{reminds of} ~~is~~ an avocation!

I understand that members of the Gridiron Club, when not rehearsing, find their avocation in writing occasional articles for the newspapers.

There is a member of the Supreme Court whose avocation is ^{chief justice - how good} making speeches at fraternity banquets. There are college chemists who like to appear as witnesses before Judiciary Committees. There was a recent Vice-President of the United States who ^{composed it} composed music for the violin, and there is a current Vice-President whose avocation - rare in politics - is to make no speeches.

Avocations For myself, I still hope to find time to read the Washington Evening Star, to which the chairman of this dinner

is a distinguished contributor. God knows reading The Star would have to be an avocation; it would almost be a life work - on a par with delving into the Mayan civilization, becoming a good chess player, or translating Plutarch's Lives. I have always wondered what one would find on Page 148 of The Star, but I never got further than the editorial page, where its reckless expressions of opinion incite and inflame the populace. I fear that with this background Dictator Gould Lincoln will find it hard to restrain his iron impulses in directing the affairs of the Gridiron Club. Members, guard well your liberties against Executive usurpation. Do not hitch your Gridiron horse and buggy to The Star.

I am glad to see that the Gridiron Club is becoming more and more modern in its treatment of public questions. At one of your recent dinners, there was a skit about Noah's Ark. Tonight we have progressed as far as the Pharoahs and even presented the Imperial Russian ballet. You have caught up to within twenty years of today.

The Gridiron Club, I think, needs more of the spirit of youth. You must catch your hobbies earlier. We have been shown very strikingly tonight that ~~one cannot~~ ^{it takes hard work to} start out at - well, forty-five, - and hope to be a ballerina as a side

issue to writing for The New York Times. Some of our hosts ~~may~~ have "lovely, lovely voices," but I would suggest that the ^{We know they could sing, we know they could talk - and we know they can dance,} next time they feel that impulse for the light fantastic, they

~~cover their lower extremities with dainty but ankle-length~~

pantalettes. Art for Art's sake is all very well, but

future Gridiron audiences are going to ^{suggest} ~~insist~~ that the members of the ballet visit the barber before any future performance.

And so I say to you of the Gridiron Club, razor or no razor, more power to you, ^{to your voices and your legs.}

I announce as a fundamental policy of this Administration that we seek more leisure, leisure for the Press, leisure for the Government - avocations for the Congress and for the Judiciary - more time for the President to fish. In the times of our leisure when work-a-day cares are banished, we can perhaps

smile a little more and find a greater refreshment for our
souls. With the wise philosopher let us seek that little
leisure ^{in which we may} ~~leisure~~ not only ~~grow~~ grow in the sun, but ^{also} grow
^{and mellow} more ripe in the shade time of ^{our lives.} ~~life~~.

Franklin H. Rowland
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(Original reading copy)

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