

**CAPITOL ROTUNDA REDEDICATION  
GOV. TOMMY G. THOMPSON  
OCTOBER 19, 1998**

**CHIEF JUSTICE ABRAHAMSON, SPEAKER JENSEN,  
GOVERNOR LUCEY, MEMBERS OF THE CABINET, AND  
DISTINGUISHED GUESTS.**

**TODAY, WE RE-DEDICATE THE ROTUNDA OF OUR STATE  
CAPITOL IN THE LAST GREAT STATEWIDE CEREMONY OF  
THIS SESQUICENTENNIAL YEAR.**

**THIS GREAT STRUCTURE ... WAS BUILT WITH THE  
BOUNDLESS OPTIMISM THAT INSPIRED WISCONSIN TO DO  
SO MANY GREAT THINGS IN OUR HISTORY.**

**NOW, AFTER MORE THAN 80 YEARS ... THE FIRST  
COMPLETE RESTORATION HAS RETURNED THE ROTUNDA  
TO ITS ORIGINAL SPLENDOR.**

**I WANT TO RECOGNIZE THE HARD-WORKING CRAFTSMEN AND WOMEN WHOSE SKILL AND DEDICATION WHO HAVE MADE THIS GREAT PLACE GLOW AGAIN. [LOOK TO YOUR LEFT] THANK YOU SO VERY MUCH. THEY DESERVE OUR APPLAUSE.**

**[PAUSE]**

**I WANT TO PERSONALLY THANK ARCHITECT DAVID KAHLER AND CONSTRUCTION CONTRACTOR DAVID CULLEN. ... AND MY THANKS TO MARK BUGHER AND THE DEPARTMENT OF ADMINISTRATION'S DIVISIONS OF BUILDINGS & POLICE SERVICES AND OF FACILITIES DEVELOPMENT.**

**RESTORATION OF THE ROTUNDA BEGAN 12 MONTHS AGO ... WHICH IS PRETTY GOOD, CONSIDERING IT TOOK FIVE YEARS TO BUILD IT IN THE FIRST PLACE.**

**THE CAPITOL RESTORATION PROJECT BEGAN 10 YEARS  
AGO AT THE INSTIGATION OF THE JOINT COMMITTEE ON  
LEGISLATIVE ORGANIZATION ... WITH WORK ON THE  
NORTH WING.**

**THROUGH ALL THE DIFFERENT CONTRACTORS ... ONE  
CRAFTSMAN HAS BEEN ON THE JOB SINCE DAY ONE IN  
1988, TEN YEARS AGO. HE GREW UP WITH THIS  
BUILDING. IN FACT, HIS FAMILY HELPED BUILD IT.**

**HIS GRANDFATHER, PETER McCANN, WAS A MASON ON  
THE ORIGINAL CONSTRUCTION PROJECT. TODAY, HIS  
GRANDSON IS A LIVING SYMBOL OF THE WISCONSIN  
WORK ETHIC. PLEASE STAND UP AND BE RECOGNIZED,  
MR. TOM LIEBL. (“LEE-BEL”)  
[PAUSE]**

**WE HAVE WITH US TODAY SOME LIVING LINKS WITH HISTORY. THIS IS THE THIRD CAPITOL ON THIS SITE. ONE OF THE ARCHITECTS OF ITS PREDECESSOR WAS A GERMAN IMMIGRANT NAMED ... FRIEDRICH ROESLING ("RACE-LING"). WITH US TODAY ARE HIS GRAND-DAUGHTER FROM JANESVILLE, LAURA FINLEY, AND HER DAUGHTER JANET FINLEY. ... LET'S GIVE THEM A HAND.**  
**[PAUSE]**

**AS A STATE WE HAVE SCRAPED OFF THE ACCUMULATED GRIME OF YEARS OF NEGLECT OF OUR HERITAGE TO PAINT, POLISH AND APPRECIATE ANEW ... AND MANY FOR THE FIRST TIME ... THE LASTING BEAUTY OF THIS STATEWIDE JEWEL. IT IS A PART OF OUR INHERITANCE. IT BELONGS TO ALL OF US.**

**THIS IS THE THIRD CAPITOL TO STAND ON THIS SPOT ...  
AT THE SUMMIT OF A HILL LOCATED BETWEEN TWO  
WISCONSIN LAKES ... THIS CAPITOL WAS BUILT FOR  
THE AGES. ... “A MONUMENT TO THE GREATNESS OF THE  
BADGER STATE,” AS A MILWAUKEE REPORTER WROTE  
SHORTLY AFTER ITS COMPLETION.**

**IT IS QUITE SIMPLY, THE MOST BEAUTIFUL CAPITOL IN  
AMERICA.**

**THIS GREAT STRUCTURE ROSE OUT OF THE ASHES OF A  
TERRIBLE FIRE, A BOLD SYMBOL OF OUR  
DETERMINATION TO PERSEVERE.**

**IT WAS SO LIKE WISCONSIN TO CONCEIVE BIG PLANS ...  
WITH “MAGIC TO STIR MEN’S BLOOD” WHEN THEY  
DESIGNED THIS CAPITOL. FAMED ARCHITECT GEORGE  
B. POST POURED EVERYTHING HE HAD INTO ITS DESIGN  
... THE LAST HE WOULD EVER DO.**

**IT WAS NOTED MADISON ARCHITECT LEW PORTER WHO INSISTED ON AN IMPOSING DOME. ... AS EXECUTIVE SECRETARY OF THE ORIGINAL CAPITOL BUILDING COMMISSION, HE SUPERVISED EVERY DETAIL OF ITS CONSTRUCTION, EVEN TRAVELING TO VERMONT TO OVERSEEING THE MARBLE CUTTING.**

**HIS GRANDDAUGHTER, MARTHA KILGOUR OF MADISON, IS HERE WITH US TODAY. WOULD YOU STAND UP AND BE RECOGNIZED, MRS. KILGOUR? [LOOK LEFT].**

**[PAUSE]**

**LEW PORTER AND HIS COMMISSION SUMMONED THE GREATEST ARTISANS IN THE LAND TO MADISON. AND HERE THEY DID THEIR BEST WORK. ... ENGINEER AND MASON, PAINTER AND SCULPTOR – ALL “AIMED HIGH ... IN HOPE AND IN WORK. THEIR “WATCHWORD WAS ORDER ... AND THEIR BEACON ... BEAUTY.”**

**THEY BUILT WISCONSIN'S CAPITOL OF THE FINEST STONE. IN THIS ROTUNDA ALONE WE SEE LABRADORITE FROM NORWAY, MARBLE FROM ITALY, GREECE, AND ALGERIA, AND GRANITE FROM OUR OWN MARQUETTE AND MARATHON COUNTIES. THE BUILDERS WERE CONFIDENT OF THE FUTURE.**

**THEY BUILT THIS CAPITOL IN THE SHAPE OF ST. ANDREW'S CROSS TO EXPRESS THEIR FAITH IN GOD. IT WAS A FAITH FULFILLED.**

**THEY GAVE IT FOUR WINGS TO DESCRIBE THE FOUR POINTS OF THE COMPASS. AND WISCONSIN GREW AND PROSPERED – NORTH AND SOUTH, EAST AND WEST.**

**THEY MADE THOSE WINGS OF EQUAL SIZE TO REPRESENT THE SENATE, THE ASSEMBLY, THE SUPREME COURT, AND THE EXECUTIVE BRANCH. AND WISCONSIN LED THE NATION AS THE CRUCIBLE OF GOOD GOVERNMENT.**

**THEY UNITED THOSE BRANCHES WITH THIS ROTUNDA.  
THIS CIRCULAR SPACE IS THE TURNTABLE OF  
WISCONSIN ... THE ROUNDHOUSE WHERE WISCONSIN  
SETS ITS COURSE. THE DIRECTION IS ALWAYS ...  
FORWARD.**

**[PAUSE]**

**THROUGH THESE PILASTERED (PIE-LASTER'D) PORTALS  
PASS LAWMAKERS, JUSTICES AND GOVERNORS ... AND  
THE ULTIMATE SOURCE OF GOVERNMENT – THE PEOPLE  
WHO IN WHOSE HANDS ULTIMATE POWER RESTS.**

**THIS IS INDEED, A TEMPLE OF DEMOCRACY. AND THIS  
DOME, ITS CATHEDRAL SPIRE, SOARS INTO WISCONSIN'S  
BLUE SKY ... POINTING UPWARD TOWARD INFINITY.**



**THIS DOME – THE ONLY GRANITE DOME IN AMERICA – IS  
TOPPED OFF BY A LANTERN THAT NEVER DIMS ... THERE  
STANDS A GOLD-LEAFED LADY. ... SHE HOLDS A GLOBE  
SURMOUNTED BY AN EAGLE, HER RIGHT HAND  
OUTSTRETCHED IN WELCOME TO THE PEOPLES OF THE  
WORLD WHO HAVE SO ENRICHED THIS IMMIGRANT  
STATE.**

**[PAUSE]**

**OUR RESPECT FOR THE PAST FIRES OUR COMMITMENT  
FOR THE FUTURE. ...**

**THIS RE-DEDICATION THEN ... IS A TIMELY REMINDER OF  
THE ENDURING POWER OF A FREE PEOPLE,  
DEMOCRATICALLY ASSEMBLED.**

**WE HAVE THREE BRANCHES OF GOVERNMENT.  
DEPICTED ON KENYON COX'S MOSAICS ... [POINTING  
LEFT] ... THERE IS THE LAWGIVER, MOSES. AND OVER  
THERE [POINTING RIGHT] THE CENTURION ARMED WITH  
SWORD CARRIES OUT HIS LAWS. ABOVE ME [SIGNALLING  
UPWARD LEFT], THE JUDGE WEIGHS RIGHT AND WRONG  
WITH THE SCALES OF BALANCE.**

**IT IS FITTING THAT THE ARTIST ADDED A FOURTH, [UPPER  
RIGHT]. SHE REPRESENTS LIBERTY ... SHE REPRESENTS  
THE PEOPLE, GUARDING THE BALLOT BOX. THE FIGURE  
IS DRAPED IN GREEN, WHICH WE ARE TOLD IS THE COLOR  
OF YOUTH AND HOPE.**

**HOW MANY COUNTLESS BUSLOADS OF WISCONSIN  
SCHOOL CHILDREN ... THROUGH THE GENERATIONS ...  
IN THEIR KNICKERS AND PENNY LOAFERS AND AIR  
JORDANS ... HAVE COME THROUGH THIS ROTUNDA?**

**THEIR HAPPY CHILDHOOD CHATTER GROWING QUIET WITH AWE. ... HOW MANY FUTURE LEGISLATORS HAVE LAID DOWN ON THEIR BACKS AND LOOKED STRAIGHT UP INTO THE INNER DOME AND DARED TO DREAM?**

**THEY ARE LOOKING 200 FEET STRAIGHT UP INTO SOMETHING THE ARCHITECTS CALL THE “OCULUS” ... A WORD THAT REFERS TO THE HUMAN EYE.**

**IT IS A DIZZYING PERSPECTIVE. ... AND WHAT DO THEY SEE? AT THE APEX. ... BLASHFIELD’S MURAL ENTHRONES WISCONSIN UPON CLOUDS AND WRAPS HER IN THE FOLDS OF THE AMERICAN FLAG. ... SHE HOLDS A SCEPTER OF WHEAT, AND IS SURROUNDED BY FIGURES HOLDING LEAD, COPPER, TOBACCO, FRUIT, AND A FRESHWATER PEARL.**

**IT IS, IN SHORT, A BOUNTEOUS WORLD OF INFINITE POSSIBILITIES.**

**THEY ARE LOOKING INTO THE FUTURE, THEIR FUTURE  
AND WISCONSIN'S ... FOR IT IS THEIR FUTURE TO MAKE.**

**THAT IS WHY WE HAVE POLISHED AND REPAINTED THIS  
PLACE OF DREAMS – AS A LAUNCHPAD FOR YOUNG  
IMAGINATIONS ... SO THAT THEIR AMBITIONS CAN SOAR  
AS HIGH AS HOPES CAN GO ... AND AS A REMINDER TO  
OUR GENERATION TO GUIDE THEM.**

**WINSTON CHURCHILL WAS CORRECT TO OBSERVE THAT  
... “WE SHAPE OUR BUILDINGS, THEREAFTER ... THEY  
SHAPE US.”**

**[PAUSE]**

**ALL THIS SESQUICENTENNIAL YEAR ... OUR GREAT STATE HAS TAKEN A VOYAGE OF RE-DISCOVERY – AND LIKED WHAT IT FOUND. .... IN VOYAGEUR’S CANOES AND IMMIGRANT PRAIRIE SCHOONERS, ON HARLEY MOTORCYCLES AND 5 KILOMETER RUNS, IN TELEVISED SESQUICENTENNIAL MINUTES AND FOLKLIFE FESTIVALS ... THE PEOPLE OF WISCONSIN HAVE DUG INTO THEIR TREASURE CHEST OF TRADITIONS, POLISHED THEM OFF AND SHOWN THEM TO THE WORLD.**

**WE HAVE DISCOVERED A NEWFOUND SENSE OF PRIDE IN THE PRACTICAL INVENTIONS, THE IMAGINATIVE ARTISTRY, AND THE FAR-SIGHTED LEGISLATION ... THAT SPRANG FROM WISCONSIN MINDS. AND WE HAVE RESOLVED TO CARRY THAT TRADITION INTO THE NEW MILLENNIUM.**

**[PAUSE]**

**WE ARE A STATE OF HARD-WORKING PEOPLE, DEVOTED  
TO OUR FAMILIES, LOYAL TO OUR COMMUNITIES. WE  
ARE WISCONSIN AND WE ARE PROUD.**

**TODAY WE HAVE RE-DEDICATED THE FOCAL POINT OF  
OUR STATE CAPITOL. ...THIS DOME IS THE CANDLE ON  
WISCONSIN'S 150TH BIRTHDAY CAKE. ONE THAT WILL  
SHINE BRIGHTLY FOR ANOTHER 150 YEARS AND MORE.**

**ITS LASTING GRANDEUR WILL LIGHT THE WAY FOR  
FUTURE GENERATIONS ... AS A GUIDELIGHT ALONG AN  
UNBROKEN PATH OF GREATNESS.**

**IN THIS ... AMERICA'S STATE.**

**THANK YOU.**