100th Birthday Celebration--Ray S. Walker  
April 1, 2012  
Remarks of President Tom Foley

Happy birthday, Ray. It is an honor to be with you and your entire family today.

Ray, I am amazed that you were able to get up out of that casket and blow out all 100 candles. Bob Hope, your fellow “centurion,” said on the occasion of his 100th that “you know you are old when the candles cost more than the cake.”

1912—the year that Ray came down from heaven (and we are still pretty sure that is the direction from which he came!!)—anyway, 1912 was a good year for the birth of great Americans. Gene Kelly and Art Linkletter, Ben Hogan and Sam Snead, great American writers like John Cheever and Barbara Tuchman, chroniclers of this American life like Studs Terkel and Woodie Guthrie, and stylists like Perry Como, Les Brown and his Band of Renown and even that Ph.D. of the kitchen Julia Child, who endeared herself to generations of Americans because like Ray she wasn’t afraid of a little butter!!! They were all born in the same year as you Ray, but take second place to you today.

You also join a list of great Americans who lived to be 100—the Broadway genius Irving Berlin, the great football coach Amos Alonzo Stagg, jazz innovator Eubie Blake and one of the funniest men in my lifetime, George Burns. I loved Burns’ line when, holding his ever present cigar, someone asked what his doctor said about his smoking. Mr. Burns retort was “My doctor is dead!”

I don’t have a “Top Ten Ways to Tell You are a Hundred” like Senator Scarnati brought with him, but I did make a list of some things that are “younger” than Ray. Today Ray, you are officially older than the Panama Canal (98), Einstein’s Theory of Relativity (96), band aids, lifesavers, the brassiere and the zipper, the foxtrot, and believe it or not, Ripley’s Believe it or Not!!

Ray, you’re even older than rubber (which wasn’t synthesized until 1922), and you are as exactly old as China!! Seriously, you are the exact same age as the Republic of China, Oreo Cookies and Benzels pretzels—the last two among the great concoctions in our lifetime!!!
Ray Walker has been associated with Mt Aloysius College for 28 years, all the way back to the Presidency of Dr. Edward Pierce, who first opened wide the doors of the College to dislocated coalminers and steelworkers and anyone else unfortunate enough to lose their jobs in a tough economy. It was that action by Dr. Pierce that first attracted the attention of Ray and Louise, and the Walker family have been loyal supporters ever since.

I think everyone here knows that Ray is a good talker, but he is that rare talker who walks the walk. And Mt Aloysius is great evidence of that. Ray created the Ray and Louise Walker Scholarship and the Clearfield County Scholarship at the College and next year the 22nd student will be able to go to Mt Aloysius thanks to Ray and his family. Ray comes every year and has dinner with the kids who win his scholarship—he enjoys it as much as they do. And now new Mount trustee and grandson Derek will join him on that evening.

I am always intrigued at the generosity of men like Ray—no connection to the College—didn’t go there, no children went there, heck, he told me on my last visit he’s not even Catholic, though he gets along with the nuns just fine!! Alan sent me the program to the 2002 PA Society Dinner when Ray was honored as the Distinguished Citizen of the Commonwealth. And it says right in the program that Ray was the first person from his town to ever go to College, the very first—that might be the single most impressive thing in Ray’s whole long resume. Well, at Mt Aloysius 70% of our students are the first generation in their families to go to college, so now I understand what brought Ray to Mt Aloysius.

Ray is also very observant—never misses a trick and never mistakes a fool, as the saying goes. Ray noticed that we didn’t have much in the way of recreation in the early days. No surprise as most of our students, then and now, work outside jobs and it’s all they can do to get to class let alone join a team. But Ray persisted, thought it was an important part of the College experience, and he and Louise made the gift that created the Ray and Louise Walker Athletic Complex at the school, and today we have 13 intercollegiate teams, the two time defending league softball champs, a league final four basketball team and 156 intercollegiate student athletes. And last fall, we had the highest percentage in the conference of kids who made the conference academic honor roll—and I know that the old valedictorian in Ray appreciates that last fact most of all.

We thought a long time about how to honor Ray on this day. Ray already has an honorary doctorate from Mt Aloysius. So we can’t do that again. And I think the Sisters of Mercy consider him to be a saint of some sort, which may be very hard for those of you who know him well to believe. So we can’t go there. But we are about to start our 14th intercollegiate sport, and Ray we’d like you to be its honorary and first captain. I hold here in my hands the official proclamation naming Ray S. Walker captain of the Mounties Ski Team, perfect for the man in the skiing picture blown up here on the wall behind me.

But you all know Ray. The first thing he is going to say to me when I get down there on the floor with him is “what good is that going to do me, I haven’t being skiing since I was 98!!” Well Ray, there is one benefit you can still enjoy from this new stature, and I present you now this autographed (and some of these autographs have hearts drawn next to them), this autographed and framed photo of our cheerleaders—actually about ten photos of our—now your—cheerleaders, as captain of the ski team!!!
Last thing, Ray. 1912, the year of your birth, was also a great year in music, with a lot of songs written that year that may well have been predictions about your now 100 years of living:

“After All That I’ve Been to You”—that is the story we are all telling today

“And the Grass Grew Green All Around”—the story of your fabulous garden

“Daddy Has a Sweetheart (and Mother is Her Name)” — the story of Louise

“He Played it on his Fid, Fid, Fiddle-dee-dee”—the story of your violin days

“When Irish Eyes are Smiling”—the story of the nuns at Mt Aloysius and their affection for Ray, and

“There’s One in a Million Like You”—and that’s you Ray.

Thanks for the honor of being with you in Clearfield on this great day.