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Nov. 25, 1986
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MEMORANDUM FOR MRS. REAGAN

From: Landon Parvin

Subject: Boys Town Remarks

Date: November 13, 1986

Attached are the Boys Town remarks. As I mentioned on the phone, they are written to address the kids' most basic insecurities and fears. Each paragraph has a purpose in terms of reaching the kids or in terms of sending a message that Father Peter and the staff are working to get across.

Few people have ever cared about these children whom Father Peter calls the kids nobody wants. Your presence in itself is meaningful. The fact that you're talking about certain things the kids feel inside and even sharing something from your own childhood will open them up to you and to what you have to say. And I think there's one sentence in here, which coming from you, will make some kids who usually have little to feel good about feel genuinely special.

Landon

(Parvin-11/13/86)

MRS. REAGAN: BOYS TOWN REMARKS
NOVEMBER 25, 1986

Thank you for this distinguished award. I'm very honored. But, as Father Peter knows, the reason I'm here today is not because of the award, but because of you.

I came all the way from Washington this morning so I could talk to you for five minutes. And I'll tell you the reason why. Because Father Peter told me that there have been times when you thought no one cared about you. I came today because I wanted you to know I care.

To be cared for is what all of us want. And when we don't get that, it hurts. I know that you sometimes hurt inside. I know you wonder why things keep going wrong in your life. I know you sometimes feel confused and lonely and unsure where you belong.

There was a time when I didn't quite know where I belonged, either. You see when I was young, my mother was an actress and so she had to travel. I missed her and she missed me. My father had left us, so I stayed with my aunt and uncle. They were very good people but they weren't my parents. And what I wished for more than anything else in the world was a normal family. I finally got my wish when my mother married a wonderful man, who became my wonderful father. And at last I knew where I belonged.

I know you ask yourself where you belong, too. It's not easy being here at Boys Town with new faces and new ways of doing things. But isn't the pain you felt when you first came here less than the pain where you were before? And pain is what I want to talk to you about for a minute.

Do you know what happens when you hurt inside? You usually start closing your heart to people. Because that's how you got hurt in the first place--you opened your heart.

Another thing that happens is that you don't trust people. Because somewhere along the way they probably didn't live up to your trust.

And there's another thing that happens when you've been hurt. You start to think you're not worth much. You think to yourself, "Well, how can I be worth anything, if someone would treat me in this terrible way?"

So I understand why you feel beaten down by it all. Some of you may have tried drugs in order to escape these feelings. But, please, believe me, drugs aren't the answer. They'll only make the pain worse in the long run. It's pretty hard to imagine that you can hurt worse than you did before you came here, but it's true. Whatever anyone has done to you, drugs will make it worse.

Boys Town is your fresh start. No matter why you're here. No matter what you've suffered. No matter what you've done. If you work at it, you can be free of your troubles. You can be anything you want to be. And you can be happy. But you have to open your heart just a little.

You have to trust just a little and begin to believe in yourself.

I believe in you. I'm proud of you already. Because when you came to Boys Town, you signed a paper that you wanted to be here. Whether you realized it or not, that was your way of saying that you believed life can get better. And it can. And all the family-teachers and all the staff and all the facilities of Boys Town are here to help give you a clean start. Boys Town is a wish that takes a little work. But you have to do the work, because it's your life.

I don't know whether we will ever see each other again, but if that is the case, I want you to remember something long after I leave here today. And it's this.

I believe in you. I believe in what you can do. I believe you are important and deserve the very best that life can offer.

And although someone is sitting beside you or in front of you right now, I'm saying this to each one of you alone-- I'm saying it just to you. And I hope you'll always remember it. . . .I know how good you are inside and I would be proud if you were my child.

REMARKS FOR BOYS TOWN AWARD LUNCHEON
NOVEMBER 25, 1986

-- THANK YOU FOR THIS DISTINGUISHED AWARD. I'M VERY HONORED. BUT, AS FATHER PETER KNOWS, THE REASON I'M HERE TODAY IS NOT BECAUSE OF THE AWARD, BUT BECAUSE OF YOU.

-- I CAME ALL THE WAY FROM WASHINGTON THIS MORNING SO I COULD TALK TO YOU FOR FIVE MINUTES. AND I'LL TELL YOU THE REASON WHY. BECAUSE FATHER PETER TOLD ME THAT THERE HAVE BEEN TIMES WHEN YOU THOUGHT NO ONE CARED ABOUT YOU. I CAME TODAY BECAUSE I WANTED YOU TO KNOW I CARE.

-- TO BE CARED FOR IS WHAT ALL OF US WANT. AND WHEN WE DON'T GET THAT, IT HURTS. I KNOW THAT YOU SOMETIMES HURT INSIDE. I KNOW YOU WONDER WHY THINGS KEEP GOING WRONG IN YOUR LIFE. I KNOW YOU SOMETIMES FEEL CONFUSED AND LONELY AND UNSURE WHERE YOU BELONG.

-- THERE WAS A TIME WHEN I DIDN'T QUITE KNOW WHERE I BELONGED, EITHER. YOU SEE WHEN I WAS YOUNG, MY MOTHER WAS AN ACTRESS AND SO SHE HAD TO TRAVEL. I MISSED HER AND SHE MISSED ME.

MY FATHER LEFT US, SO I STAYED WITH MY AUNT AND UNCLE. THEY WERE VERY GOOD PEOPLE BUT THEY WEREN'T MY PARENTS. AND WHAT I WISHED FOR MORE THAN ANYTHING ELSE IN THE WORLD WAS A NORMAL FAMILY. I FINALLY GOT MY WISH WHEN MY MOTHER MARRIED A WONDERFUL MAN, WHO BECAME MY WONDERFUL FATHER. AND AT LAST I KNEW WHERE I BELONGED.

-- I KNOW YOU ASK YOURSELF WHERE YOU BELONG, TOO. IT'S NOT EASY BEING HERE AT BOYS TOWN WITH NEW FACES AND NEW WAYS OF DOING THINGS. BUT ISN'T THE PAIN YOU FELT WHEN YOU FIRST CAME HERE LESS

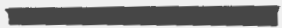
THAN THE PAIN WHERE YOU WERE BEFORE? AND PAIN IS WHAT I WANT TO TALK TO YOU ABOUT FOR A MINUTE.

-- DO YOU KNOW WHAT HAPPENS WHEN YOU HURT INSIDE? YOU USUALLY START CLOSING YOUR HEART TO PEOPLE. BECAUSE THAT'S HOW YOU GOT HURT IN THE FIRST PLACE -- YOU OPENED YOUR HEART.

-- ANOTHER THING THAT HAPPENS IS THAT YOU STOP TRUSTING PEOPLE. BECAUSE SOMEWHERE ALONG THE WAY THEY PROBABLY DIDN'T LIVE UP TO YOUR TRUST.

-- AND THERE'S ANOTHER THING THAT HAPPENS WHEN YOU'VE BEEN HURT. YOU START TO THINK YOU'RE NOT WORTH MUCH. YOU THINK TO YOURSELF, "WELL, HOW CAN I BE WORTH ANYTHING, IF SOMEONE WOULD TREAT ME IN THIS TERRIBLE WAY?"

-- SO I UNDERSTAND WHY YOU FEEL BEATEN DOWN BY IT ALL. SOME OF YOU MAY HAVE TRIED DRUGS IN ORDER TO ESCAPE THESE FEELINGS. BUT, PLEASE, BELIEVE ME, DRUGS AREN'T THE ANSWER. THEY'LL ONLY MAKE THE PAIN WORSE IN THE LONG RUN. IT'S PRETTY



HARD TO IMAGINE THAT YOU CAN HURT WORSE THAN YOU DID BEFORE YOU CAME HERE, BUT IT'S TRUE. WHATEVER ANYONE HAS DONE TO YOU, DRUGS WILL MAKE IT WORSE.

-- BOYS TOWN IS YOUR FRESH START. NO MATTER WHY YOU'RE HERE. NO MATTER WHAT YOU'VE SUFFERED. NO MATTER WHAT YOU'VE DONE. IF YOU WORK AT IT, YOU CAN BE FREE OF YOUR TROUBLES. YOU CAN BE ANYTHING YOU WANT TO BE. AND YOU CAN BE HAPPY. BUT YOU HAVE TO OPEN YOUR HEART JUST A LITTLE. YOU HAVE TO TRUST JUST A LITTLE AND BEGIN TO BELIEVE IN YOURSELF.

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-- I BELIEVE IN YOU. I'M PROUD OF YOU ALREADY. BECAUSE WHEN YOU CAME TO BOYS TOWN, YOU SIGNED A PAPER THAT YOU WANTED TO BE HERE. WHETHER YOU REALIZED IT OR NOT, THAT WAS YOUR WAY OF SAYING THAT YOU BELIEVED LIFE CAN GET BETTER. AND IT CAN. AND ALL THE FAMILY-TEACHERS AND ALL THE STAFF AND ALL THE FACILITIES OF BOYS TOWN ARE HERE TO HELP GIVE YOU A CLEAN START. BOYS TOWN IS A WISH THAT TAKES A LITTLE WORK. BUT YOU HAVE TO DO THE WORK, BECAUSE IT'S YOUR LIFE.

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-- I HOPE WE WILL SEE EACH OTHER AGAIN, BUT IF WE DON'T, I WANT YOU TO REMEMBER SOMETHING LONG AFTER I LEAVE HERE TODAY. AND IT'S THIS.

-- I BELIEVE IN YOU. I BELIEVE IN WHAT YOU CAN DO. I BELIEVE YOU ARE IMPORTANT AND DESERVE THE VERY BEST THAT LIFE CAN OFFER.

-- AND ALTHOUGH SOMEONE IS SITTING BESIDE YOU OR IN FRONT OF YOU RIGHT NOW, I'M SAYING THIS TO EACH ONE OF YOU ALONE -- I'M SAYING IT JUST TO YOU. AND I HOPE YOU'LL ALWAYS REMEMBER IT . . .

I KNOW HOW GOOD YOU ARE INSIDE AND I WOULD BE PROUD TO CALL YOU
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-- I AM CERTAIN THAT NOT A SINGLE DAY OF THE YEAR GOES BY
WITHOUT SOME OF YOU, OR EVEN ALL OF YOU, GIVING THANKS THAT THERE
WAS A FATHER FLANAGAN AND THAT THERE IS A BOYS TOWN. IT SEEMS
ESPECIALLY FITTING THAT AT THIS SPECIAL TIME OF THANKSGIVING, WE
ALL STOP AND GIVE THANKS FOR THE WONDERFUL WORK HE DID WHICH GAVE
SO MANY YOUNG PEOPLE A SECOND CHANCE AT LIFE.

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