

took an old idea—direct sales—and made it work on a scale never seen before. Fred Meijer, to make shopping more pleasant for parents with kids, installed mechanical ponies in his stores which cost one cent per ride and personally hands out "Purple Cow" cards for free ice cream cones.

Employee relations are also an important part of Grand Rapids' success. "We have 60,000 people working with us," Fred Meijer says. "We need them; so let's treat them like we need them." If any of us makes a mistake, he adds, "we don't need to be bawled out, we need to be helped to succeed." That way, the "job will be better, and everybody will be more productive."

Nor is there an adversarial relationship between business and government. "The best thing government can do is to get out of the way," says Grand Rapids City Manager Kurt Kimball. "To try to create an environment that enables the private sector to achieve its ends. Prosperity for business means prosperity for residents. Then we'll have the resources for quality of life." Says GR magazine editor Carol Valade, "There is a very low tolerance for government here—the attitude is, I will do it myself. And a tremendous respect for the arts of the entrepreneur. It spills over into government. The city removed 98 percent of its effluents from its sewers, without federal funds—the only city in Michigan to do so."

Successful small businesses and small businesses that have grown large but have stayed headquartered here, have helped build Grand Rapids' cultural institutions. Even the banks have remained local. Old Kent is still based in Grand Rapids, though it has spread outward; First Union sold out to Detroit-based NBD, but David Frey, whose grandfather founded the bank, has kept the Frey Foundation here, and 85 percent of its grants are in western Michigan. "Giving money intelligently is hard work," Frey says. "A lot of due diligence is required. But there's the prospect of great satisfaction."

Anyone walking through downtown Grand Rapids can see some of the reasons for that satisfaction. Twenty-five years ago, downtown Grand Rapids looked dumpy, with aging and often empty commercial buildings, and a grubby convention center. Then Grand Rapids' business leaders decided to make it something special. "Always the private sector has taken the lead," says Frey. "And people are willing to put corporate money into projects. Then they would get the city, county, or state governments to forge a coalition." Phase one, in the mid-1970s, included a new Old Kent building and Vandenberg Center, which replaced abandoned warehouses. Phase two included the Amway Plaza Hotel and the Gerald Ford Museum. Phase three includes the recently opened Van Andel Arena for Grand Rapids' minor league hockey and basketball, a new convention center, and a downtown campus for Grand Valley State College.

The secret is leadership and commitment. "We have people who give time and effort and support. They sit at the same table," says Pete Secchia, head of Universal Products, and also a leader of Michigan's Republican Party who served as Ambassador to Italy under Bush. "When we promise something," says Fred Meijer, sitting around a table with other Grand Rapids business leaders, "we don't do it lightly. Not one of us has ever renege on a promise." If there are problems, someone jumps in and solves them. "The Amway Plaza would be torn down or destitute if Amway hadn't picked it up," Meijer adds.

With no major university or medical school, Grand Rapids has missed out on the boom in biomedicine. But that's likely to change with the building of a Van Andel In-

stitute for nutrition research at Grand Rapids' Butterworth Hospital. Steve Van Andel, who has succeeded his father Jay as co-head of Amway, describes the process. "We watched our fathers build the firm. The second generation got even more involved with the community. The building decision was also made by the second generation of the Van Andel and DeVos families. My dad and family have been discussing it for years. We decided to do something. Dad was always interested in nutrition, so we decided to build an institute that would work on nutrition research and education." He is thinking big. Peter Cook, who owns several big car dealerships and is on the board, says that it has five Nobel Prize winners as advisers and will have 200 to 300 doctors and scientists in a \$30 million building.

Grand Rapids' philanthropists are buttressed not by the liberalism of so many national foundations but by traditional virtues. It's an early-to-bed-early-to-rise town, where people eat at home with their families. "Everyone is doing well but restaurants," says Secchia, "but the breakfast joints are filled at 6:30 in the morning." The churches are busy on Sundays, filled with people from all economic levels; the billionaire Van Anders and DeVoses pray at a modest Reform church not far from downtown. Or as Peter Cook puts it, "A lot of our people have done more than their share in giving. We grew up in a Christian home and tithed, and after that you gave more. We give 30 to 40 percent of our income. . . . That type of thing is very influential. This is a good place to work and live."

Entrepreneurial and religious impulses also inform Grand Rapids' programs to help the poor. Gene Pratt, now retired, tells of raising \$1 million in less than two hours to renovate his community center, and how a kids' gardening project produced City Kids Barbecue sauce, got it stocked in Meijer's and other local supermarkets, and got 5 percent of the market. Verne Barry, head of the Downtown Development Agency, came to Grand Rapids in 1985 after living homeless in New York. With ministries and social service agencies he founded Faith Inc., which won competitive contracts with 25 local manufacturers. Hiring people from close-in neighborhoods, his group got commitments for 10 percent of the jobs on projects like the Van Andell Arena. He claims that more than 50 percent of those with little work experience are now in permanent employment.

Grand Rapids has low crime, low unemployment, and scandal-free local government. But statistics tell only part of the story. For Grand Rapids' leaders have put the imprint of their own personalities on the civic institutions they've built. The Grand Rapids Museum hosted an exhibit of the artist Perugino in 1997-98; Secchia helped set it up using his Italian contacts and the fact that Perugia is a sister city. Fred Meijer took over a 20-acre parcel of industrial property and built the Frederik Meijer Gardens, one of the nation's largest conservatories. Amid the plants and the gardens outside he placed 70 bronze sculptures he has collected over the years. You can see him there some days, smiling and enjoying himself as he leads kids around, explaining the plants and sculptures, and handing out Purple Cow cards for free ice cream cones—the spirit of Grand Rapids in person.●

WHAT'LL YA' HAVE? A TRIBUTE TO THE VARSITY

● Mr. CLELAND. Mr. President, I would like to take this opportunity to salute Georgia's beloved Varsity Restaurant for 70 years of prospering busi-

ness and never-ending dedication to its customers and employees. People have come from all around the world simply for a sampling of the Varsity's great food and down home hospitality.

The Varsity was founded by Frank Gordy in 1928. As the world's largest drive-in, the Varsity's hot dogs, chili dogs, hamburgers, chili burgers, onion rings, french fries, and fried pies are the best in the world. The Varsity also sells more Coca-Cola than any other single outlet in the world. Whether you get your "dogs" at Atlanta's North Avenue Varsity, the Gwinnett Varsity off Jimmy Carter Blvd., the Varsity Jr. on Lindbergh Drive or the Varsity on Broad Street in Athens you are guaranteed to go back for more.

The menu is extensive and the Varsity's volume is legendary. Two miles of hot dogs, a ton of onions, 2500 pounds of potatoes, and 5,000 fried pies are served every day. Six 50 gallon pots of chili are made from scratch and, like all specialty items, are prepared from original recipes. Varsity orange is piped from the kitchen to faucets at the serving counter and the popular frosted version is also on tap.

Every time I come home to Atlanta from Washington, D.C., stopping by the Varsity is a must on my agenda. In fact, it is often my first stop after leaving the airport. All Georgians can attest that the Varsity's heavy weight, chili steak, frosted orange or fried pies are unlike any other food in the world. I cannot count the number of meals I have eaten at this Atlanta institution, but the memories of dining at the Varsity are endless.

Mr. President, I ask that you join me, our colleagues, and the entire Gordy family in recognizing 70 years of mouth-watering food and fond memories, and in wishing the entire Varsity family many more successes in the future.●

THE VERY BAD DEBT BOXSCORE

● Mr. HELMS. Mr. President, at the close of business yesterday, Monday, August 31, 1998, the federal debt stood at \$5,564,553,479,478.04 (Five trillion, five hundred sixty-four billion, five hundred fifty-three million, four hundred seventy-nine thousand, four hundred seventy-eight dollars and four cents).

Five years ago, August 31, 1993, the federal debt stood at \$4,403,247,000,000 (Four trillion, four hundred three billion, two hundred forty-seven million).

Ten years ago, August 31, 1988, the federal debt stood at \$2,575,800,000,000 (Two trillion, five hundred seventy-five billion, eight hundred million).

Fifteen years ago, August 31, 1983, the federal debt stood at \$1,348,374,000,000 (One trillion, three hundred forty-eight billion, three hundred seventy-four million).

Twenty-five years ago, August 31, 1973, the federal debt stood at \$461,845,000,000 (Four hundred sixty-one billion, eight hundred forty-five million) which reflects a debt increase of

more than \$5 trillion—\$5,102,708,479,478.04 (Five trillion, one hundred two billion, seven hundred eight million, four hundred seventy-nine thousand, four hundred seventy-eight dollars and four cents) during the past 25 years.●

12th ANNUAL ENTREPRENEURIAL WOMEN'S CONFERENCE

● Mr. DURBIN. Mr. President, I rise today to offer my congratulations to the Women's Business Development Center (WBDC) as it celebrates the 12th Annual Entrepreneurial Women's Conference. The event, which is to be held on September 9, 1998, at Chicago's Navy Pier, will celebrate the Women's Business Development Center's second decade of outstanding service to women in the business community.

The Women's Business Development Center is a Chicago-based nonprofit women's business assistance center devoted to providing services and programs that support and accelerate the growing role of women business owners in the economy. Since its founding in 1986 by Carol Dougal and Hedy Ratner, the Women's Business Development Center has facilitated more than \$20 million in women's business loans and has assisted women-owned businesses in gaining over \$90 million of government and private contracts. More than 30,000 women business owners have benefited from the following programs and services: counseling, workshops, entrepreneurial training, the Women's Business and Finance Programs, the Women's Business Enterprise Initiative, the Entrepreneurial Woman's Conference and the Women's Business and Buyers Mart.

The success of the Women's Business Development Center has inspired similar initiatives across the country. Women's business development programs modeled after the Center have been launched by economic development organizations in Indiana, Ohio, Florida, Massachusetts, and Pennsylvania. The tremendous inroads made by women in the business community over the past decade is due in no small part to the efforts of these organizations.

Mr. President, there are now more than 7.7 million women-owned businesses in the United States, and 250,000 of these businesses are located in my homestate of Illinois. Nationally, women's businesses generate \$2.3 trillion of sales and employ one out of every four U.S. company workers.

Given the importance of women-owned businesses to the economy, I look forward to hearing about the continued successes of the Women's Business Development Center in the years to come. Once again let me offer my congratulations to the Women's Business Development Center on their 12th anniversary.●

5TH ANNUAL CROATIAN FESTIVAL

● Mr. ABRAHAM. Mr. President, I rise today to recognize the 5th Annual Croatian Festival that took place August 29–30, 1998 at St. Lucy Croatian Catholic Church in Troy. The Croatian Festival is a very important event for the Croatian community of Michigan, in that it showcases the beautiful Croatian culture and heritage and unites the 20 various Croatian organizations in the state who have come together to organize the Festival. Over the past few years, the Festival has proven to be a very exciting time with exhibits focusing on different regions of Croatia, a variety of Croatian foods, games and traditional Croatian music.

In addition to serving as a celebration of the Croatian culture, the Festival serves the very important purpose of raising funds to assist and reduce the debt of St. Lucy Croatian Catholic church. I wish St. Lucy success as they strive for this goal. I also want to extend my best wishes to the entire Croatian community of Michigan.●

GEMOLOGICAL INSTITUTE OF AMERICA AND GEM LABORATORY

● Mrs. BOXER. Mr. President, I rise today to commend the exemplary work of the Gemological Institute of America (GIA) and the GIA Gem Laboratory.

GIA has been the nation's leader in gemology training and education since 1931, conducting valuable research and establishing standards upon which purchasers of gems in the United States and abroad have come to rely.

The Federal Trade Commission (FTC), in establishing regulations concerning gems that are the subject of trade in the United States, adopted standards developed by GIA.

GIA's Gem Laboratory—located in New York City and Carlsbad, California—operates to protect the public from misrepresentation of gems, to assist in the recovery of stolen property, and to provide information useful in the prosecution of criminals involved in gem fraud or theft.

The Gem Laboratory is also the main body applying the FTC's regulations on gems (26 CFR Part 23), such that consumers have a means of determining whether the products they purchase are, in fact, the real thing. It serves an essential role in identifying gems and in detecting synthetics as well as colored, doctored, or treated gems being marketed as natural and in deterring those who might attempt to profit by misrepresenting their goods to American consumers.

The Laboratory can achieve these purposes only because it is responsible for identifying and/or testing a large proportion of the significant gems purchased by consumers in the United States.

The Laboratory's extensive computerized gem database enables it to identify stolen gems that it had previously tested and inhibits the fencing of sto-

len gems, thereby providing an important deterrent to gem theft.

At the request of the United States Customs Service and pursuant to licensing by the Nuclear Regulatory Commission, the Gem Laboratory also tests for irradiated gems posing a health risk to the American public.

The Federal Bureau of Investigation and local law enforcement agencies rely on the Gem Laboratory for assistance in solving crimes involving gems. The Laboratory has been instrumental in solving many such crimes, providing crucial evidence and expert testimony essential to their successful prosecution.

Mr. President, I commend GIA and the GIA Gem Laboratory for their contribution to the protection of the consumer. Through its work, the Gem Laboratory significantly lessens the burdens of the federal government that would otherwise have to be borne by the FTC, the FBI, the Customs Service, and other government agencies.●

REPORT OF THE SPECIAL INVESTIGATION UNIT ON GULF WAR ILLNESSES

● Mr. ROCKEFELLER. Mr. President, today the Committee on Veterans' Affairs released the final report of its Special Investigation Unit (SIU) on Gulf War Illnesses. The report represents the culmination of the unit's year-long, 20-member staff investigation into issues surrounding the illnesses that have affected many veterans of the 1990–91 Persian Gulf War.

The Gulf War ended over seven years ago, but the aftermath of this military victory will remain with us for years to come. This brief war represented a critical turning point in our concept of modern warfare. For the first time since World War I, we faced the possibility of widespread use of chemical warfare agents. Previously, concerns about the use of "weapons of mass destruction" focused on the threat of nuclear warfare, increasingly possessed by the more developed nations of the world, but still limited in availability. But in the Gulf, we came face-to-face with the threat of the "poor man's atomic weapons"—chemical and biological weapons.

Chemical and biological weapons have been around for a long time. The United States and its allies abandoned the use of chemical weapons many years ago. In April 1997, the United States Senate ratified the Chemical Weapons Convention, joining many other nations in the international disarmament of chemical weapons. But for terrorists and rogue nations, chemical and biological weapons remain the weapons of choice, and they are likely to play a significant role in the battlefields of the future. According to Secretary of Defense William S. Cohen, just as we faced this threat in the Gulf War, we are likely to face it again.

In hearings before the Committee on Veterans' Affairs, military heroes such