

DED THOMAS W. DEMPSEY

MAY, 1988

COMMENCEMENT: "BE PROUD, SET HIGH STANDARDS...EXCEL"

I AM HONORED TO BE HERE TODAY TO SHARE IN THIS, THE CULMINATION OF A DREAM FOR GRADUATES AND PARENTS ALIKE. I HOPE THAT THIS IS ONLY ONE OF MANY MOUNTAINS THAT EACH OF YOU WILL CLIMB AS YOU LEAD PRODUCTIVE LIVES.

GRADUATION CEREMONIES HAVE PROBABLY CHANGED LESS THAN ANY OTHER CUSTOM OVER THE YEARS...AND IF ANY OF YOU HAVE HAD THE OPPORTUNITY TO ATTEND A GRADUATION CEREMONY, I'M CERTAIN THAT YOU ARE HOPING THAT ONE THING WILL BE DIFFERENT DURING THESE COMMENCEMENT EXERCISES...THAT BEING THE LENGTH OF THE COMMENCEMENT ADDRESS.

IN PREPARING THIS ADDRESS, I REMINDED MYSELF OF A COMMENCEMENT ADDRESS AT BROWN UNIVERSITY SEVERAL YEARS AGO BY THOMAS J. WATSON, JR. MR. WATSON TOLD THE GRADUATES, "IT'S NOT AT ALL HARD FOR ME TO REMEMBER THAT VIVID DAY OF MY OWN GRADUATION. STRANGELY ENOUGH, THE ONE THING ABOUT THAT DAY THAT I CANNOT REMEMBER IS WHAT THE COMMENCEMENT SPEAKER HAD TO SAY. MY THOUGHTS, LIKE YOURS, WERE TARGETED UPON MY FAMILY AND MY FRIENDS AND MY PLANS FOR THE SUMMER. BUT OF ONE THING I'M SURE: IF THE SPEAKER MADE A SHORT SPEECH, I KNOW I BLESSED HIM."

I WILL PAY PARTICULAR ATTENTION TO THOSE COMMENTS, AND I TRUST THAT YOU'LL FEEL DIFFERENTLY THAN MR. WATSON 10 OR 20 YEARS FROM NOW WHEN YOU LOOK BACK ON THIS SPECIAL OCCASION.

AS EACH OF YOU SIT HERE THIS EVENING, READY TO TACKLE THE CHALLENGES AHEAD, BE REMINDED THAT YOUR GRADUATION IS THE INTERMISSION BETWEEN SCHOOL AND REAL LIFE.

EACH OF YOU HAS LEARNED SKILLS WHICH SHOULD ENABLE YOU TO JOIN THE WORKFORCE AND ASSUME YOUR RESPONSIBILITIES AS A CITIZEN OF THIS WORLD.

BUT AS I LOOK AROUND, I SEE MORE THAN EXCITEMENT IN YOUR EYES. I SEE APPREHENSION...AND I NOTICE SOME TEARS. ALTHOUGH READY FOR THE DAYS AHEAD, MANY OF YOU ARE PROBABLY RELUCTANT TO LEAVE BEHIND THE DAYS OF FRIENDSHIP AND FELLOWSHIP OF YOUR SCHOOL YEARS.

IN THIS DAY AND AGE WHEN NUCLEAR WAR IS ON THE MINDS OF EVERYONE, WHEN CHILDREN AROUND THE WORLD ARE LEFT HOMELESS AND HUNGRY BY WAR AND THE TENSIONS BETWEEN THE WORLD'S SUPERPOWERS ARE PAINFULLY EVIDENT...I AM SURE THAT MANY OF YOU ARE WONDERING WHAT KIND OF FUTURE IS BEING LEFT TO YOU.

BUT LET ME REMIND YOU THAT THE CHILDREN OF AMERICA'S FIRST SETTLERS PROBABLY WONDERED WHAT KIND OF A FUTURE THEIR PARENTS WERE LEAVING THEM. THE CHILDREN OF SOLDIERS IN THE REVOLUTIONARY WAR WONDERED WHAT THE FUTURE WOULD BRING THEM.

THE CHILDREN--BOTH BLACK AND WHITE--OF THE CIVIL WAR PERIOD WONDERED WHAT KIND OF FUTURE THEY WOULD HAVE IN AMERICA. AND THOSE YOUNG ADULTS OF WORLD WAR I, OF THE GREAT DEPRESSION AND WORLD WAR II HAD SERIOUS RESERVATIONS AND FEARS ABOUT THE FUTURE AS WELL.

THUS, ITS APPARENT THAT THE MORE THINGS CHANGE, THE MORE THEY REMAIN THE SAME. AND ONE THING HAS REMAINED CONSTANT: DESPITE THEIR FEARS, AMERICA'S CHILDREN HAVE ALWAYS STOOD TALL IN FACING THE CHALLENGES BEFORE THEM.

TONIGHT, I WOULD ASK THE SAME OF YOU, THE GRADUATES OF 1988. BUT TO MEET THESE CHALLENGES, I BELIEVE YOU MUST FIRST BE AWARE OF THE INGREDIENTS NEEDED TO BETTER INSURE SUCCESS.

ONE OF THE BASIC INGREDIENTS IN MEETING LIFE'S CHALLENGES IS AN EDUCATION. BECAUSE YOU HAVE BEEN TRAINED TO GO INTO SOCIETY AND PERFORM NEEDED SKILLS, YOU HAVE ALREADY LAID THE FOUNDATION NECESSARY IN MEETING THE CHALLENGES OF TOMORROW.

SECONDLY, CITIZENSHIP IS A VITAL INGREDIENT. YOU MUST ASSUME YOUR RESPONSIBILITIES AS A CITIZEN OF THIS GREAT NATION.

PRESIDENT THEODORE ROOSEVELT SAID, "THE FIRST REQUISITE OF A GOOD CITIZEN IN THIS REPUBLIC OF OURS IS THAT HE SHALL BE ABLE AND WILLING TO PULL HIS WEIGHT." AND THE LATE SUPREME COURT CHIEF JUSTICE EARL WARREN SAID, "CITIZENSHIP IS MAN'S BASIC RIGHT, FOR IT IS NOTHING LESS THAN THE RIGHT TO HAVE RIGHTS."

ALTHOUGH I AM COMPELLED TO STRESS THE IMPORTANCE OF CITIZENSHIP, I WILL NOT LECTURE ON THE SUBJECT. IT IS UP TO EACH INDIVIDUAL TO SHOW AN INTEREST IN GOVERNMENT AND TO TAKE PART IN THE PROCESS OF THIS REPUBLIC.

FINALLY, I BELIEVE THAT IN ORDER FOR EACH ONE OF US TO FACE THE CHALLENGES AHEAD, WE MUST HAVE THE COURAGE TO DREAM. ALL THROUGH HISTORY WE CAN SEE THAT BETTER TOMORROWS ARE THE FRUITS OF YESTERDAY'S DREAMS. DREAMS ARE WHAT TOMORROWS ARE MADE OF.

AND THIS IS THE ULTIMATE CHALLENGE I PRESENT TO YOU ON THIS SPECIAL OCCASION: DON'T BE AFRAID TO DREAM. THIS NATION'S FOREFATHERS DREAMED OF A LIFE IN THE NEW WORLD, AND THEIR CHILDREN DREAMED OF A NATION BEHOLDEN TO NO OTHER NATION.

THOSE WHO WERE NOT AFRAID TO DREAM OF A WORLD FREE FROM POLIO AND OTHER DISEASE SUCCEEDED IN MAKING OUR WORLD BETTER.

YOUR DREAMS DON'T NECESSARILY HAVE TO BE OF GREAT MAGNITUDE. RATHER, YOU MIGHT DREAM OF A DAY WHEN YOU ARE YOUR OWN BOSS, HAVE A SUCCESSFUL BUSINESS OR A STRONG FAMILY LIFE. THESE DREAMS ARE JUST AS IMPORTANT.

THE KEY, REGARDLESS OF THE SCOPE OF YOUR DREAM, IS TO HAVE ONE.

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ALTHOUGH EACH OF YOU HAS LAID A FIRM FOUNDATION ON WHICH TO LEAVE HERE TONIGHT AND LIVE A FRUITFUL LIFE, THOSE OF YOU WITHOUT A DREAM, I'M SORRY TO SAY, COULD BECOME STAGNANT AS THE WORLD PASSES BY.

BECAUSE THOSE WITHOUT VISION ARE WITHOUT HOPE, IT'S NECESSARY TO REALIZE THE IMPORTANCE OF A VISION FOR THE FUTURE--YOUR FUTURE. DON'T BE AFRAID TO DREAM..AND DON'T BE AFRAID TO PURSUE YOUR DREAMS.

HENRY THOREAU SAID.. "IF ONE ADVANCES CONFIDENTLY IN THE DIRECTION OF HIS DREAMS, AND ENDEAVORS TO LIVE THE LIFE WHICH HE HAS IMAGINED, HE WILL MEET WITH A SUCCESS UNEXPECTED IN COMMON HOURS."

SO AS YOU GO FORTH TONIGHT, SEARCHING TO TAKE YOUR PLACE IN THIS SOCIETY, ARM YOURSELF WITH A VISION FOR TOMORROW. AND FOREVER REMAIN STEADFAST IN YOUR PURSUIT OF THOSE GOALS.

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ALSO, AS YOU LEAVE HERE TONIGHT, CONSIDER YOUR ROLE IN THE FUTURE OF THIS NATION AND WORLD. IT MATTERS NOT WHAT YOUR JOB IS. WHATEVER THE TASK, GET IT DONE AND DO IT RIGHT. THERE IS AS MUCH DIGNITY AND IMPORTANCE IN HARVESTING THE FIELDS AS THERE IS IN PERFORMING A HEART TRANSPLANT.

BE PROUD OF WHAT YOU DO IN LIFE. DEMAND THE SAME HIGH STANDARDS OF OTHERS AS HAVE BEEN DEMANDED OF YOU. AND REMEMBER, DON'T BE AFRAID TO DREAM.

THIS IS WHAT LIFE IS ALL ABOUT..AND I WISH YOU ALL THE SUCCESS IN REALIZING YOUR VISIONS FOR THE FUTURE.

THANK YOU.