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South High School Commencement Address  
by  
Representative Gerald R. Ford, Jr.

June 7th, 1956

AGELESS KEYS

Mr. Chairman, the 245 distinguished and honored  
Seniors in the class of 1956, parents, friends and guests.

It is a high honor and rare privilege for me to be  
a part of this auspicious occasion which is a major step up  
the ladder of life for the class of "56." I am indebted to  
the class of 1956 for inviting me to have a part in these  
ceremonies which are similar to those held in the then new  
South High auditorium 25 years ago, June 19th.

A quarter of a century ago your speaker of this  
evening was one of 232 seniors in the graduating class of 1931.  
For me and my classmates, that occasion was the culmination of  
many happy and stimulating experiences which resulted in very  
real friendships that have endured throughout the years. It  
was the cut-off date for many, both as spectators and partici-  
pants, who had cheered and fought for Trojan victories and the  
glory of the red and blue. It was the completion of our  
academic training under the guidance and leadership of a  
wonderful faculty, teachers who patiently prodded us along the  
all important path of scholarship. Happy as we were to receive



South High School Commencement Address  
by  
Representative Gerald R. Ford, Jr.  
June 15th, 1955

Pardon me, if you will, if I am a bit misty-eyed.

I have the fondest memories of South High. In the 6 years that I attended South, from the 7<sup>th</sup> through the 12<sup>th</sup> grades, I experienced most of the good + bad things of those ages.

a) I spent my share of time in the office of Principal Arthur Kowser and received my punishment from the faculty, all for good reason.

b) Although honored as Captain of the football team, I spent many unhappy hours on the bench as a second stringer, <sup>or also many</sup> in other sports.

c) Although a seemingly good student in certain subjects I had my problems with others.

d) Finances weren't easy + as a result I worked <sup>shaping desks & washing dishes</sup> called Bill Thompson's the 5<sup>th</sup> + 6<sup>th</sup> hours at the old restaurant on Hall St. across from School for \$2.00 per week + a meat loaf lunch. That was a really fine experience.

e) My first political venture came my senior year in the election for Class President. I took a sound whipping. It was deserved + for my benefit.

In other words I am truly indebted for the opportunities in the 6 years and I shall forever be grateful.

our diplomas, there was an undertone of sadness, for all had learned to revere and respect our alma mater.

That night in June, 25 years ago, our class, our parents and friends listened to a fine address by a prominent professor from the University of Michigan. His theme was, "The master keys necessary to success in life." He vividly pointed out that there were a number of essential keys to open the doors of accomplishment in our careers ahead. He urged, to reach the top, some master keys which would unlatch all doors to success and happiness. The speaker emphasized that each individual, to a substantial degree, must be the locksmith who fashions these keys. The winning formula must include character, technical or scholastic training, work, and spiritual integrity.

Those words of wisdom made an indelible impression on our class. With considerable pride I can say that I know of no one among the 232 who has failed or faltered along the path of life. Each has unlocked his or her door, some as skilled tradesmen, others <sup>as</sup> teachers, more than a few in business or professions, and last but not least, many as proud



and happy parents with the tremendous responsibility of  
guiding future generations in their early and formative years.

In other words the class took to heart the speaker's suggestions,  
made their individual keys and opened the door on their path  
to accomplishment.

Let me reemphasize these guide lines which were  
prescribed, character, technical or scholastic training, work,  
and spiritual integrity. It is well that those of that  
generation were given these attributes as essential for the  
master keys, for in the past quarter of a century all were  
mandatory to meet the stresses and strains of life. In this  
span of time, our country and the world has had a multitude  
of trials and tribulations which put heavy burdens on us all.

Almost immediately following our graduation the nation,  
yes, practically all nations, were literally engulfed by  
desperate and disastrous economic conditions which simultaneously  
hit rich and poor alike. Jobs were scarce, or non-existent.  
Economic degeneration prevailed. Opportunity seemed beyond  
the reach of those caught in the vicious downward spiral of  
economic chaos.



Within a decade of our graduation, and during the year when most of the class of 1956 were born, ominous war clouds gathered in what seemed like <sup>far</sup> far off places. While most of you in the class of "56" were toddling infants, a world-wide armed conflict developed and it continued for four long, sad years. Families were separated, loved ones lost. These were terribly difficult days.

The world had hardly concluded one horrible war to rid the earth of Hitler-like dictators when a new danger was upon us. Again our Nation, this time in far off Korea, was called upon to defend our way of life against the scourge of premeditated and predatory aggression. Many relatives and neighbors were called to arms, some for the second time.

This new burden coming so soon after World War II, understandably discouraged and bewildered many.

Not all of the problems of the past 25 years were as easily identifiable as depression and war, yet the threat to our Nation, our precious way of life, was just as real. During this period we have seen a relatively new ideology emerge and achieve a threatening strength. Communism in the early years following 1931 insidiously preyed upon the victims of economic



despair and a limited few misguided intellectuals. Until recently, by force and deception, the dictators in the Kremlin have gobbled up the weak and unprotected, imposing on nations and many innocent people a cruel and ruthless totalitarian state where freedom, opportunity, and security are non-existent. It is self-evident that this diabolical philosophy of government has added immeasurably to our burdens.

You may wonder why depression, war and communism have been mentioned ~~here~~. I believe it is significant that while transient events have burst upon the scene and then faded off in the past quarter century, the ageless keys enumerated here in 1931 remain steadfast and true, now/as then.

Now/as then, it is this thing called "character," those strong and good qualities of real being that have remained constant. The personal character of our citizens has maintained the integrity of our family unit, which is the foundation of our society. The combined character of our citizens on the local level makes the community decent and dynamic. The character of our Nation, a composite of those who live in Michigan or Florida, Maine or California, has earned America the respect of mankind's free peoples and



guided our destiny. These qualities of character which  
make us look up, not down; which produce in us big thoughts,  
not small ones; which make us go ahead, not backwards - -  
this "character" is permanent, this we cherish. I have  
always liked St. Paul's <sup>which are as follows</sup> summation: <sup>words of</sup> "Finally, brethren, what-  
soever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, what-  
soever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatso-  
ever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report,  
if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think  
on these things."

Let us turn to another essential key. Technical and  
scholastic training has been a bulwark of strength for all,  
and for our country as a whole. Twenty-five years ago the  
Model T was still quite a car. We had the crystal set with  
earphones, or a radio set with a multiplicity of dials. <sup>more than we have on a TV set today</sup> Much  
of the production in our factories was laboriously done by hand.  
Our scientists were striving to find the <sup>intricate</sup> formulas to eradicate  
prevalant diseases. In this era the ability of our skilled  
craftsman in the factory, the scientist in the laboratory,  
the teacher in the school and the businessman in his technical  
field have carried us, one and all, to new peaks of accomplishment  
and stability.



May I say a special word about "learnin", as some put it. Life has proven to me that I knew very little - that the man who thinks he "knows it all" has ceased to learn. Actually the world today is no haven for one who has quit learning. In contrast the horizons are unlimited for those who constantly study in the process of living.

It is almost trite to emphasize the importance of work as a master key. Yet, the self-evident oftentimes requires constant reiteration. Let me assure you history records that hard work has been an essential ingredient in the formula for success. The men and women in our Armed Forces worked at the arduous and dangerous jobs to achieve victory over the enemy on the battlefields thousands of miles from our precious land. They were effectively supported by home front workers in our factories and on our farms. Work has been synonymous with America <sup>in</sup> and its progress from the wilderness the Pilgrims knew, to the industrial giant of today. Work under our enlightened self-government has brought great and good material benefits to our people. Work, mental and physical, has permitted Americans to spend less hours on the job, enjoy more and longer vacations. According to available figures the productivity of the



American workingman has more than doubled in the last 25 years. Our standard of living in this same period has increased <sup>over</sup> 100 percent.

<sup>May I paraphrase</sup>  
~~Since the day~~ of Captain John Smith's edict, "He who does not work shall not <sup>proper.</sup> eat," America has expected its people to perform their tasks. Out of it come the noblest satisfactions of life; through it one fulfills the reason for his existence; by it we serve God and our fellowman.

The final, and perhaps most important master key, is spiritual integrity. It is the element in the combination that steadfastly kept all but a few of our citizens, even in the depths of economic ruin, from accepting the false and fraudulent ideologies of a Godless communism. Our form of government is predicated, not only on complete and total religious freedom, but on a deep and abiding faith in the Almighty. In fact our fundamental form of government stems from the spiritual concept of the fatherhood of God. This firm religious conviction which predominates in America, as well exemplified by President Eisenhower, is in vivid contrast to the atheistic philosophy of the Kremlin. Our nationwide devotion to the highest ethical and religious



principles carried our soldiers, sailors and airmen through gunfire and privation. Likewise, it is an essential key to happiness and success in time of peace and prosperity.

One of our <sup>great</sup> American presidents, who for many years was an educator and leader of youth, has described these keys in a slightly different manner. A federal judge who studied under him recalls that Woodrow Wilson taught three things:

*First* - That American democracy could not function without a constant renewal of its leadership from the rank and file, the men and women who today are boys and girls trying to get some sort of an education.

*Second* - Schools and colleges do not exist for the purpose of sharpening our Wits for our own use, but rather to quicken our social understanding, instruct our consciences, and develop in us what he called a 'taste of unselfishness and self-sacrifice.'

*Third* - Ideals and moral principles are 'of the very spirit of all action,' and we are put in this world not to twiddle our thumbs but to act.

These Ageless Keys have withstood heavy buffeting <sup>heavy</sup> and pressures of the past. Can they run the gauntlet of the future?



What are your tests, our Nation's tests in the days ahead. There is ample evidence that America and the world are moving forward rapidly scientifically. New chemicals, life-saving antibiotics, modern metals, more efficient tools and equipment, swift jet aircraft, are here now, and accelerated development is assured in the future.

We can expect more and better highways, new and improved transportation by rail, truck and airplane. Distance as measured by time will be drastically shortened so that no one on the face of the globe will be more than 24 hours away from Grand Rapids.

Our military scientists and production geniuses speak confidently of guided missiles that have an astounding range of 6000 miles, a fantastic speed of 16,000 miles per hour, <sup>20 times the speed of sound</sup> and an unbelievable altitude capability of 300,000 feet.

Such a weapon would carry nuclear and thermonuclear warheads <sup>The United States now has</sup> with relative pin-point accuracy. ~~We now have~~ an atomic powered submarine that has travelled over 20,000 miles without refueling. The power plant of this submarine has the capacity of providing all of the electrical energy needed for a



community the size of Holland, Michigan.

Our Nation's economy has been growing on a firm foundation at a rapid rate in recent years with expanding opportunities for the youth of today. Labor, business and government have ironed out inequities, evened out peaks and valleys in our steady climb to this increased economic well-being for all.

In the world at large we face challenging, but not insurmountable, problems created by the Soviet dictators who have enslaved their people and conquered by military might or infiltration the satellites behind the Iron and Bamboo curtains. New faces, softer words, sly and deceitful propaganda techniques are the Kremlin strategy today, all of which poses fresh tests to us, our allies and those who are struggling to win or maintain their independence.

The tests of the future are in your hands, - our hands. We must learn to use wisely our material benefits that abound so plentifully in the home, the factory and in our everyday living. We must strive constantly to better our accomplishments in economic security, opportunity, and well being. We must zealously guard and protect that form





The first thing that I noticed when I stepped  
 out of the plane was the beautiful view of  
 the city below. The buildings were tall and  
 modern, and the streets were wide and  
 clean. I had heard that this was a great  
 place to visit, and I was not disappointed.  
 The weather was perfect, and the people were  
 friendly. I had a great time, and I  
 would love to come back again.

June 26  
 This afternoon  
 The Times  
 This

COMMUNICATIONS SECTION OF THE ARMY, WASHINGTON, D.C.

of government which has given America, her sons and daughters  
over the years, so much. We cannot afford the luxury of  
complacency and self-satisfaction in this modern world.

We must work constantly for lasting world peace with honor.

These lofty objectives are within our grasp. We  
must not succumb to the voices who cry out that our beliefs  
and ideals are weakened and enfeebled. That is not the  
tradition and heritage of America. These pinnacles can be  
scaled individually and collectively by the vigorous  
assumption of our responsibilities. The master keys, ageless  
in the path of progress, are your ammunition for success and  
happiness, your government's ammunition for peace and prosperity.

*May 2 close with this*

"So nigh is grandeur to our dust,  
So near is God to man,  
When duty whispers low, thou must,  
The youth replies, I can."



1936

Commencement Address  
South High

204

Mr. Chairman, the 245 distinguished and honored

Seniors in the class of 1956, parents, friends and  
guests.

It is a high honor and rare privilege for me to  
be a part of this auspicious occasion which is a major  
step up the ladder of life for the class of "56." I  
am indebted to the class of 1956 for inviting me to <sup>have</sup> be  
a part of these ceremonies which are similar to those <sup>in</sup> held

in the then new South High auditorium 25 years ago, June 19th.

~~Quarter of a century~~ <sup>Thirty-one years</sup> ago your speaker was one of

232 seniors in the graduating class of 1931. For me and  
my classmates, that occasion was the culmination of many  
happy and stimulating experiences which resulted in real

friendships that have endured throughout the years. It

was the cut-off date for many, both as spectators and

participants, who had cheered and fought for Trojan

victories and the glory <sup>of</sup> for the red and blue. It was the

completion of our academic training under the guidance and

leadership of a wonderful faculty, teachers who patiently

prodded us along the all important path of scholarship.

*It seems appropriate to add that this athletic field was first used in the fall of 1930 when South's football team had an undefeated season.*



Happy as we were to receive our diplomas, there was an undertone of sadness for all had learned to revere and respect our alma mater.

That night in June, 25 years ago, our class, our parents and friends listened to a fine address by a prominent professor from the University of Michigan. His theme, <sup>was the</sup> "X master keys <sup>the</sup> necessary to success in life." He vividly pointed out that <sup>There were a number of essential keys</sup> ~~a key with a single notch~~ was ~~inadequate~~ to open the doors of accomplishment in our careers ahead. He urged, to reach the top, <sup>some</sup> ~~a~~ master keys <sup>unlatch</sup> ~~with many notches~~ which would open all doors to success and happiness. The speaker emphasized that each individual, to a substantial degree, must be the locksmith who fashions <sup>these keys</sup> ~~this key~~. The winning formula must include character, technical or scholastic training, work, and spiritual integrity

Those words of wisdom made an indelible impression on our class. With considerable pride I can say that I know of no one among the 232 who has failed or faltered along the path of life. Each has unlocked his or her door, some as skilled tradesmen, others teachers, more than a few in business or professions, and last but not least, many as <sup>proud and</sup>



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guiding future generations <sup>in their early and formative years.</sup> In other words the class  
took to heart <sup>speakers'</sup> the suggestions, made their individual keys  
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In this span of time, our country and the world has had  
a multitude of trials and tribulations which put heavy  
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Almost immediately following our graduation the nation,  
yes, practically all nations, were <sup>literally</sup> engulfed by desperate and  
disastrous economic conditions <sup>simultaneously</sup> which hit rich and poor  
alike. Jobs were scarce, or non-existent. Economic  
degeneration prevailed. Opportunity seemed beyond the  
reach of those caught in the <sup>vicious</sup> downward spiral of economic  
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Within a decade of our graduation, and during the  
year when most of the class of 1956 were born, <sup>ominous</sup> war clouds  
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<sup>in the class of '56</sup> of you were <sup>toddling</sup> infants, a world-wide <sup>armed</sup> conflict developed and



it continued for four long, sad years. Families were separated, loved ones lost. <sup>These</sup> They were terribly difficult <sup>days.</sup> ~~years.~~

The world had hardly concluded one war to rid the earth of Hitler-like dictators when a new <sup>horrible</sup> ~~threat~~ <sup>danger</sup> was

upon us. Again our Nation, this time in far off Korea, was called upon to defend our way of life. <sup>against the scourge of premeditated + predatory aggression.</sup> Many relatives

and neighbors were called to arms, some for the second time. This new burden coming so soon after World War II <sup>understandably</sup> discouraged and <sup>bewildered</sup> embittered many.

Not all of the problems of the past 25 years were as easily identifiable as ~~the~~ depression and war, yet the threat to our Nation, our precious way of life, was just as real. During this period we have seen <sup>a</sup> relatively new ideology emerge and achieve a threatening strength.

Communism in the early years following 1931 insidiously preyed upon the victims of economic despair and a limited <sup>Until</sup> few misguided intellectuals. ~~United~~ recently, by force

and deception, the dictators in the Kremlin have gobbled up the weak and unprotected, imposing on nations and <sup>innocent</sup> many, people a cruel and ruthless totalitarian state where

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is self evident that this diabolical philosophy of government

has added immeasurably to our burdens.

*you may wonder why depression, war and communism have*

~~Some here this evening may have wondered why I~~

~~been mentioned.~~ *I believe it is significant that while transient events*

~~have mentioned depression, war and communism. My response~~

*have burst upon the scene and then faded off in the past quarter century, the axles*

~~is - despite these heavy burdens and onslaughts the~~

*keys enunciated here in 1931 remain steadfast and true, now as then.*

~~master key has been our solution, individually and~~

~~collectively.~~

*Now as then, it is this thing called "character," those strong & good qualities of real being that have remained constant.*

The personal character of our citizens has maintained

the integrity of our family unit, which is the foundation

of our society. The combined character of our citizens on

the local level makes the community decent and dynamic.

The character of our Nation, a composite of those who live

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*These qualities of character which make us look up, not down; which produce in us big thoughts, not small ones; which make us go ahead, not backwards - this "character" is permanent, this we cherish. I have always liked St. Paul's summation: "Finally,"*

our destiny.

Let us turn to another essential ~~notch~~ in this master

key. Technical and scholastic training has been a bulwark of

strength for all and for our country as a whole. Twenty-five

years ago the Model T was still quite a car. We had the

crystal set with earphones, or a radio set with a multiplicity

of dials. Much of the production in our factories was

laboriously done by hand. Our scientists were striving to

find the formulas to eradicate prevalent diseases. In this

*the* period the ability of our skilled craftsman in the factory,



Philippians 4:8

Mary Lyon (82) "There is nothing in the universe that I  
fear, but that I shall not know my duty or fail to  
do it."

"Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are  
honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are  
pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things  
are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if  
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the scientist in the laboratory, the teacher in the school and the businessman in his technical field have carried us, one and all, to new peaks of accomplishment and stability.

It is almost trite to emphasize the importance of work as a ~~notch in the~~ master key. Yet, the self-evident oftentimes requires constant reiteration. Let me assure you history records, <sup>that hard</sup> work has been an essential ingredient

in the formula for success. The men and women in our Armed Forces worked at the <sup>arduous</sup> difficult and dangerous jobs to achieve victory over the enemy on the battlefields, <sup>Thousands of miles from their precious land.</sup> They were effectively supported by home front workers in our factories and on our farms. Work has been synonymous with America and its progress from the wilderness the Pilgrims

knew, to the industrial giant of today. Work under our <sup>+ good</sup> enlightened self-government has brought great material benefits to our people. Work, mental and physical, has permitted Americans to spend less hours on the job, enjoy more and longer vacations. According to available figures the productivity of the American workingman has <sup>more than doubled</sup> risen ~~100~~ per

~~cent~~ in the last 25 years. Our standard of living in this <sup>period</sup> same era has increased <sup>a hundred</sup> 700 percent.

Since the day of Captain John Smith's edict, "He who does not work shall not eat," America has expected its people to perform their tasks. Out of it come the noblest satisfactions of life - though it one fulfills the mission for his existence; by it we serve God & our fellowmen.

*add insert #1*

*Add*



#1

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are unlimited for those <sup>who constantly</sup> study in the process  
of living!



The final, and perhaps most important ~~factor~~ in this master key, is spiritual integrity. It is the element in the combination that steadfastly <sup>kept</sup> held all but a few of our citizens, even in the depths of economic ruin, from accepting the false and fraudulent ideologies of a Godless

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faith in the Almighty, <sup>in fact our fundamental form of government stems from the</sup> ~~citizens~~ <sup>spiritual</sup> ~~concept of~~ <sup>the path</sup> ~~of God.~~ This firm religious conviction which <sup>well</sup> predominates in America, as exemplified by President Eisen-

hower, is in vivid contrast to the aesthetic philosophy of <sup>ethical & religious</sup> the Kremlin. Our nationwide devotion to the highest principles

*Insert (attached)  
Nelson*

carried our soldiers, sailors and airmen through gunfire <sup>Shawie, it is an essential key to happiness + success in time</sup> and privation. <sup>of Peace & prosperity.</sup>

These Ageless Keys have withstood <sup>heavy buffeting and pressures</sup> the stresses and strains of the past. Can they run the gauntlet of the future?

What are your tests, our Nation's tests in the days ahead. There is ample evidence that America and the world are moving forward rapidly scientifically. New chemicals, <sup>life saving anti-</sup> ~~fluores~~ <sup>swift jet aircraft</sup> modern metals, more efficient tools and equipment, are here <sup>accelerated</sup> now, and <sup>assured</sup> ~~more rapid~~ development is ~~promised~~ in the future.

We can expect more and better highways, new and improved transportation by rail, truck and airplane. Distance as



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1. That American Democracy - - - -

P. # 4383 in "Record" for June 4.



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strategy today, all of which poses fresh tests to us, our

allies and those who are struggling to win or maintain their

independence.



The tests of the future are in your hands, our hands.

We must learn to use wisely our material benefits that abound so plentifully in the home, the factory and in our everyday living. We must strive constantly to better our accomplishments in economic security, opportunity, and well being. We must zealously guard and protect that form of government

which has given America, her sons and daughters over the years, so much. We must work constantly for ~~our~~ lasting world peace with honor.

*We must not be complacent*

*We cannot afford the luxury of complacency in this modern world.*

*We must not succumb to the voices who cry out that our beliefs & ideals are weakened & feeble.*

These lofty objectives are within our grasp. These pinnacles can be <sup>scaled</sup> reached individually and collectively. The

master key, <sup>are</sup> ageless in the path of progress, <sup>is</sup> your ammunition for success and happiness, your government's

ammunition for <sup>peace & prosperity</sup> ~~prosperity and peace~~.

*That is not the tradition & heritage of America.*

*"So high is grandeur to our dust,  
So near is God to man,  
When duty whispers low, thou must,  
The youth replies, I can."*



South High School Commencement Address  
by  
Representative Gerald R. Ford, Jr.

June 7th, 1956

AGELESS KEYS

Mr. Chairman, the 245 distinguished and honored  
Seniors in the class of 1956, parents, friends and guests.

It is a high honor and rare privilege for me to be  
a part of this auspicious occasion which is a major step up  
the ladder of life for the class of "56." I am indebted to  
the class of 1956 for inviting me to have a part in these  
ceremonies which are similar to those held in the then new  
South High auditorium 25 years ago, June 19th.

A quarter of a century ago your speaker of this  
evening was one of 232 seniors in the graduating class of 1931.  
For me and my classmates, that occasion was the culmination of  
many happy and stimulating experiences which resulted in very  
real friendships that have endured throughout the years. It  
was the cut-off date for many, both as spectators and partici-  
pants, who had cheered and fought for Trojan victories and the  
glory of the red and blue. It was the completion of our  
academic training under the guidance and leadership of a  
wonderful faculty, teachers who patiently prodded us along the  
all important path of scholarship. Happy as we were to receive



our diplomas, there was an undertone of sadness, for all had learned to revere and respect our alma mater.

That night in June, 25 years ago, our class, our parents and friends listened to a fine address by a prominent professor from the University of Michigan. His theme was, "The master keys necessary to success in life." He vividly pointed out that there were a number of essential keys to open the doors of accomplishment in our careers ahead. He urged, to reach the top, some master keys which would unlatch all doors to success and happiness. The speaker emphasized that each individual, to a substantial degree, must be the locksmith who fashions these keys. The winning formula must include character, technical or scholastic training, work, and spiritual integrity.

Those words of wisdom made an indelible impression on our class. With considerable pride I can say that I know of no one among the 232 who has failed or faltered along the path of life. Each has unlocked his or her door, some as skilled tradesmen, others teachers, more than a few in business or professions, and last but not least, many as proud



and happy parents with the tremendous responsibility of guiding future generations in their early and formative years. In other words the class took to heart the speaker's suggestions, made their individual keys and opened the door on their path to accomplishment.

Let me reemphasize these guide lines which were prescribed, character, technical or scholastic training, work, and spiritual integrity. It is well that those of that generation were given these attributes as essential for the master keys, for in the past quarter of a century all were mandatory to meet the stresses and strains of life. In this span of time, our country and the world has had a multitude of trials and tribulations which put heavy burdens on us all.

Almost immediately following our graduation the nation, yes, practically all nations, were literally engulfed by desperate and disastrous economic conditions which simultaneously hit rich and poor alike. Jobs were scarce, or non-existent. Economic degeneration prevailed. Opportunity seemed beyond the reach of those caught in the vicious downward spiral of economic chaos.



Within a decade of our graduation, and during the year when most of the class of 1956 were born, ominous war clouds gathered in what seemed like far off places. While most of you in the class of "56" were toddling infants, a world-wide armed conflict developed and it continued for four long, sad years. Families were separated, loved ones lost. These were terribly difficult days.

The world had hardly concluded one horrible war to rid the earth of Hitler-like dictators when a new danger was upon us. Again our Nation, this time in far<sup>y</sup> off Korea, was called upon to defend our way of life against the scourge of premeditated and predatory aggression. Many relatives and neighbors were called to arms, some for the second time. This new burden coming so soon after World War II, understandably discouraged and bewildered many.

Not all of the problems of the past 25 years were as easily identifiable as depression and war, yet the threat to our Nation, our precious way of life, was just as real. During this period we have seen a relatively new ideology emerge and achieve a threatening strength. Communism in the early years following 1931 insidiously preyed upon the victims of economic



despair and a limited few misguided intellectuals. Until recently, by force and deception, the dictators in the Kremlin have gobbled up the weak and unprotected, imposing on nations and many innocent people a cruel and ruthless totalitarian state where freedom, opportunity, and security are non-existent. It is self-evident that this diabolical philosophy of government has added immeasurably to our burdens.

You may wonder why depression, war and communism have been mentioned here. I believe it is significant that while transient events have burst upon the scene and then faded off in the past quarter century, the ageless keys enumerated here in 1931 remain steadfast and true, now as then.

Now as then, it is this thing called "character," those strong and good qualities of real being that have remained constant. The personal character of our citizens has maintained the integrity of our family unit, which is the foundation of our society. The combined character of our citizens on the local level makes the community decent and dynamic. The character of our Nation, a composite of those who live in Michigan or Florida, Maine or California, has earned America the respect of mankind's free peoples and



guided our destiny. These qualities of character which make us look up, not down; which produce in us big thoughts, not small ones; which make us go ahead, not backwards - - this "character" is permanent, this we cherish. I have always like St. Paul's summation: 'Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report, if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things.'

Let us turn to another essential key. Technical and scholastic training has been a bulwark of strength for all, and for our country as a whole. Twenty-five years ago the Model T was still quite a car. We had the crystal set with earphones, or a radio set with a multiplicity of dials. Much of the production in our factories was laboriously done by hand. Our scientists were striving to find the formulas to eradicate prevalent diseases. In this era the ability of our skilled craftsman in the factory, the scientist in the laboratory, the teacher in the school and the businessman in his technical field have carried us, one and all, to new peaks of accomplishment and stability.



May I say a special word about "learnin", as some put it. Life has proven to me that I knew very little - that the man who thinks he "knows it all" has ceased to learn. Actually the world today is no haven for one who has quit learning. In contrast the horizons are unlimited for those who constantly study in the process of living.

It is almost trite to emphasize the importance of work as a master key. Yet, the self-evident oftentimes requires constant reiteration. Let me assure you history records that hard work has been an essential ingredient in the formula for success. The men and women in our Armed Forces worked at the arduous and dangerous jobs to achieve victory over the enemy on the battlefields thousands of miles from our precious land. They were effectively supported by home front workers in our factories and on our farms.

Work has been synonymous with America and its progress from the wilderness the Pilgrims knew, to the industrial giant of today. Work under our enlightened self-government has brought great and good material benefits to our people.

Work, mental and physical, has permitted Americans to spend less hours on the job, enjoy more and longer vacations.

According to available figures the productivity of the



American workman has more than doubled in the last 25 years. Our standard of living in this same period has increased 100 percent.

Since the day of Captain John Smith's edict, "He who does not work shall not eat," America has expected its people to perform their tasks. Out of it come the noblest satisfactions of life; through it one fulfills the reason for his existence; by it we serve God and our fellowman.

The final, and perhaps most important master key, is spiritual integrity. It is the element in the combination that steadfastly kept all but a few of our citizens, even in the depths of economic ruin, from accepting the false and fraudulent ideologies of a Godless communism. Our form of government is predicated, not only on complete and total religious freedom, but on a deep and abiding faith in the Almighty. In fact our fundamental form of government stems from the spiritual concept of the fatherhood of God. This firm religious conviction which predominates in America, as well exemplified by President Eisenhower, is in vivid contrast to the atheistic philosophy of the Kremlin. Our nationwide devotion to the highest ethical and religious



principles carried our soldiers, sailors and airmen through gunfire and privation. Likewise, it is an essential key to happiness and success in time of peace and prosperity.

One of our American presidents, who for many years was an educator and leader of youth, has described these keys in a slightly different manner. A federal judge who studied under him recalls that Woodrow Wilson taught three things:

1 - That American democracy could not function without a constant renewal of its leadership from the rank and file, the men and women who today are boys and girls trying to get some sort of an education.

2 - Schools and colleges do not exist for the purpose of sharpening our wits for our own use, but rather to quicken our social understanding, instruct our consciences, and develop in us what he called a 'taste of unselfishness and self-sacrifice.'

3 - Ideals and moral principles are 'of the very spirit of all action,' and we are put in this world not to twiddle our thumbs but to act.

These Ageless Keys have withstood heavy buffeting and pressures of the past. Can they run the gauntlet of the future?



What are your tests, our Nation's tests in the days ahead. There is ample evidence that America and the world are moving forward rapidly scientifically. New chemicals, life-saving antibiotics, modern metals, more efficient tools and equipment, swift jet aircraft, are here now, and accelerated development is assured in the future.

We can expect more and better highways, new and improved transportation by rail, truck and airplane. Distance as measured by time will be drastically shortened so that no one on the face of the globe will be more than 24 hours away from Grand Rapids.

Our military scientists and production geniuses speak confidently of guided missiles that have an astounding range of 6000 miles, a fantastic speed of 16,000 miles per hour, and an unbelievable altitude capability of 300,000 feet. Such a weapon would carry nuclear and thermonuclear warheads with relative pin-point accuracy. We now have an atomic powered submarine that has travelled over 20,000 miles without refueling. The power plant of this submarine has the capacity of providing all of the electrical energy needed for a



community the size of Holland, Michigan.

Our Nation's economy has been growing on a firm foundation at a rapid rate in recent years with expanding opportunities for the youth of today. Labor, business and government have ironed out inequities, evened out peaks and valleys in our steady climb to this increased economic well-being for all.

In the world at large we face challenging, but not insurmountable, problems created by the Soviet dictators who have enslaved their people and conquered by military might or infiltration the satellites behind the Iron and Bamboo curtains. New faces, softer words, sly and deceitful propaganda techniques are the Kremlin strategy today, all of which poses fresh tests to us, our allies and those who are struggling to win or maintain their independence.

The tests of the future are in your hands, - our hands. We must learn to use wisely our material benefits that abound so plentifully in the home, the factory and in our everyday living. We must strive constantly to better our accomplishments in economic security, opportunity, and well being. We must zealously guard and protect that form



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of government which has given America, her sons and daughters over the years, so much. We cannot afford the luxury of complacency and self-satisfaction in this modern world.

We must work constantly for lasting world peace with honor.

These lofty objectives are within our grasp. We must not succumb to the voices who cry out that our beliefs and ideals are weakened and enfeebled. That is not the tradition and heritage of America. These pinnacles can be scaled individually and collectively by the vigorous assumption of our responsibilities. The master keys, ageless in the path of progress, are your ammunition for success and happiness, your government's ammunition for peace and prosperity.

"So nigh is grandeur to our dust,

So near is God to man,

When duty whispers low, thou must,

The youth replies, I can."

