

The original documents are located in Box 3, folder: “Westminster Choir College Commencement, Princeton, N.J., May 31, 1974” of the Frances K. Pullen Papers at the Gerald R. Ford Presidential Library.

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Memo to the Record:

A draft of this speech and the press release version can be found in box 133 of the Gerald R. Ford vice presidential papers.

Bill McNitt
12/3/84

WESTMINISTER CHOIR COLLEGE COMMENCEMENT

PRINCETON CHAPEL, PRINCETON, NEW JERSEY

FRIDAY, MAY 31, 1974, 10:30 A.M.

DOCTOR ROBINSON, MEMBERS OF THE BOARD OF TRUSTEES AND
FACULTY, GRADUATING SENIORS, FAMILIES AND GUESTS.

I WANT TO THANK YOU FOR THE OPPORTUNITY TO VISIT YOUR
SCHOOL AND TALK TO YOU TODAY. THE VISIT HAS BEEN VERY ENRICHING.
YOU HAVE A BEAUTIFUL CAMPUS, ~~WITH A BEAUTIFUL CHAPEL~~ ^{with a lovely chapel}, AND IT IS HARD TO
IMAGINE A MORE ATTRACTIVE TOWN THAN PRINCETON IN THE EARLY SUMMER.
LASTLY, I WILL ALWAYS TREASURE THE INSPIRING MUSIC WE HAVE HEARD TODAY
ALTHOUGH I HAD HEARD YOUR CHOIR SING BEFORE, I NEVER FULLY APPRECIATED
ITS FULL POWER. THAT CAN ONLY COME IN A SETTING SUCH AS THIS.

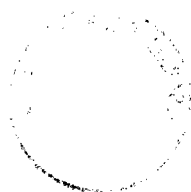
I SHOULD START WITH A SMALL CONFESSION. I AM USED TO

COMMENCEMENTS. ^{We} I DO HAVE FOUR CHILDREN, AND MY YOUNGEST SON GRADUATE ^{OUR}
FROM HIGH SCHOOL EARLIER THIS MONTH. BUT MY HUSBAND USUALLY MAKES THE
COMMENCEMENT ADDRESSES. SO WHEN DR. ROBINSON'S INVITATION ARRIVED I
THOUGHT IT MUST BE FOR MY HUSBAND, AND YOU CAN IMAGINE MY SURPRISE
WHEN I REALIZED IT WAS FOR ME. OF COURSE I DECIDED TO ACCEPT RIGHT AWAY

NOW, I DON'T HAVE ANY SPEECHWRITERS SO I THOUGHT I MIGHT BORROW
FROM ONE OF MY HUSBAND'S SPEECHES. THEN I READ THE TALK HE GAVE
EARLY THIS MONTH AT THE UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN, HIS ALMA MATER.

I KNEW IT WASN'T RIGHT FOR ME WHEN I CAME TO THE SENTENCE, "AND YOU
MAY HAVE HEARD I PLAYED A LITTLE FOOTBALL--AND I DID WEAR A HELMET."

YES, HE DID WEAR A HELMET. I KNOW THAT BECAUSE WE STILL HAVE IT IN
THE BASEMENT. ^{Then} BUT I ALSO KNEW I WOULD HAVE TO DO MY OWN SPEECH. ^{Przypom}



A COMMENCEMENT IS A BEGINNING. YOU ARE ABOUT TO LEAVE THIS PLEASANT TOWN WHERE MOST OF YOU HAVE SPENT THE LAST FOUR YEARS, AND YOU MUST BE ASKING YOURSELVES, "WHAT WILL IT BE LIKE; WHAT SORT OF TIMES ARE THESE TODAY?"

CHARLES DICKENS ANSWERED THIS OVER A HUNDRED YEARS AGO, IN A TALE OF TWO CITIES, WHEN HE WROTE: "IT WAS THE BEST OF TIMES; IT WAS THE WORST OF TIMES." TODAY WE MIGHT SAY, "THERE IS GOOD NEWS AND BAD NEWS." CERTAINLY THERE ARE PROBLEMS. SOME OF THEM ARE LARGE AND SOME OF THEM ARE TOTALLY NEW, BUT NONE ARE INSOLUBLE.

WE HAVE PROBLEMS TODAY, BUT NOT LIKE THOSE MY GENERATION →
FACED, GROWING UP IN THE DEPRESSION OF THE THIRTIES. NOR ARE THEY LI
THOSE FACED BY 15 SENIOR CLASSES SINCE 1941, WHO GRADUATED WITH THE
UNITED STATES AT WAR. THE RIOTS AND PROTESTS OF JUST A FEW YEARS AGO
HAVE SUBSIDED; THE RISE IN CRIME RATES HAS SLOWED. WE ARE OUT OF THE
WAR IN VIET NAM AND AT PEACE. DETENTE IS EASING COLD WAR TENSIONS, AND
WE HAVE REESTABLISHED DIPLOMATIC RELATIONS WITH COMMUNIST CHINA.

IF I HAD THE TIME I WOULD LOVE TO TELL YOU ABOUT THE TRIP MY HUSBAND
AND I MADE TO CHINA IN 1972. FINALLY THERE ARE SIGNS THAT THERE MAY
BE A SETTLEMENT IN THE MIDDLE EAST. SO IN SPITE OF OUR PROBLEMS,
THE FUTURE IS PROMISING. IT IS A TIME OF OPPORTUNITY FOR YOUNG PEOP
AND ESPECIALLY FOR THOSE SKILLED IN THE ARTS AS YOU ARE.

THERE ARE SOME BEAUTIFUL WORDS CARVED ON THE FACE OF THE
KENNEDY CENTER, IN WASHINGTON, TAKEN FROM A STATEMENT BY THE LATE
PRESIDENT KENNEDY:

"THERE IS A CONNECTION, HARD TO EXPLAIN LOGICALLY BUT EASY
TO FEEL, BETWEEN ACHIEVEMENT IN PUBLIC LIFE AND PROGRESS IN THE ARTS.

Phidias
"THE AGE OF PERICLES WAS ALSO THE AGE OF PHIDIAS.

"THE AGE OF LORENZO DE MEDICI WAS ALSO THE AGE OF
LEONARDO DA VINCI.

"THE AGE OF ELIZABETH ALSO THE AGE OF SHAKESPEARE."



EVERYWHERE I GO TODAY I SEE THESE WORDS COMING TRUE.

LAST MONTH WE WENT WITH NANCY HANKS, OF THE NATIONAL ENDOWMENT FOR THE ARTS, TO A SMALL PLACE CALLED DALTON, TO INAUGURATE THE ART TRAIN'S FIRST TOUR OF THE SOUTH. THE ART TRAIN WAS ORIGINALLY SET UP IN MICHIGAN, BY THE MICHIGAN STATE COUNCIL ON THE ARTS, AND TOURS THAT STATE EVERY SUMMER. BUT IT ALSO TOURS THE REST OF THE COUNTRY.

LAST SUMMER IT VISITED THE ROCKY MOUNTAIN AREA. THE RESPONSE TO
IT IS ENTHUSIASTIC EVERYWHERE IT GOES, AS IT BRINGS ART TO COUNTLESS
SMALL TOWNS WITHOUT MUSEUMS OF THEIR OWN, TOWNS WHERE THE PEOPLE
SELDOM HAVE A CHANCE TO SEE THE BEST IN ART. THE SIX COACHES ALSO
HOUSE SCULPTORS, SILVERSMITHS, MACRAME WORKERS AND POTTERS WHO SHOW
THEIR SKILLS ^{In Fact} LAST YEAR TO 72 MILLION PEOPLE.

THERE ARE ALSO BANDS AND DANCE COMPANIES TO ENTERTAIN THE
CROWDS EACH TIME THE TRAIN STOPS. AND THE INTEREST SHOWN IN THE
ART TRAIN BY MIDDLE AMERICA IS MATCHED BY THE DEMAND FOR MUSEUMS,
voice choirs ~~and~~
LIVE THEATRE, BALLET AND SYMPHONY ORCHESTRAS THAT IS DEVELOPING
THROUGHOUT THE COUNTRY.

THE INTEREST IN THE ARTS IS A PART OF THE ENTHUSIASM FOR
LEISURE ACTIVITIES AND ISN'T JUST LIMITED TO SPECTATORS. MORE AND
MORE YOUNG PEOPLE WANT TO DEVELOP THEIR TALENTS. THE ANNOUNCEMENT
THIS MONTH THAT WESTERN HIGH SCHOOL IN WASHINGTON, D. C. WILL BECOME
THE CAPITAL'S FIRST PUBLIC HIGH SCHOOL FOR THE ARTS IS ENCOURAGING.

~~WESTERN WILL START NEXT YEAR WITH THE 9TH GRADE, BUT AFTER THE UPPER~~

~~CLASSES GRADUATE, THE ENTIRE SCHOOL POPULATION WILL BE ARTS STUDENTS~~

~~IN GRADES 9 THROUGH 12.~~ THERE WILL BE FOUR TEACHING DIVISIONS:

DANCE; THEATRE; VISUAL ARTS; AND MUSIC, BOTH VOCAL AND INSTRUMENTAL.

I'M TOLD THAT THE ONLY OTHER HIGH SCHOOLS FOR THE ARTS ARE IN

NEW YORK CITY, NEWARK, AND WINSTON SALEM, NORTH CAROLINA; BUT WE CAN

HOPE FOR MANY MORE.

WE RECENTLY ATTENDED THE OPENING OF THE NEW HARKNESS

THEATRE FOR THE BALLET IN NEW YORK, AND I WAS REMINDED OF THE MANY NE

THEATRES WE HAVE IN WASHINGTON. FOR A START THERE ARE THE THREE LARGI

THEATRES OF THE KENNEDY CENTER. THERE IS WOLF TRAP, FOR OUTDOOR

PERFORMANCES IN THE SUMMER, AND CATHOLIC UNIVERSITY'S NEW HARTKE THEA

THE FORD THEATRE HAS REOPENED, CAREFULLY RESTORED TO ITS APPEARANCE
OF A CENTURY AGO. EVEN THE ELIZABETHAN THEATRE OF THE FOLGER SHAKESP
LIBRARY HAS BEEN REMODELLED TO MEET PRESENT FIRE REGULATIONS AND
NOW HAS A REGULAR SEASON, SOMETHING IT NEVER HAD BEFORE, AND QUITE
IMPOSSIBLE BEFORE 1970. I'M CERTAIN NEARLY EVERY LARGE CITY IN THE
COUNTRY HAS HAD A SIMILAR EXPERIENCE.

MUCH OF THE GROWTH CAN BE CREDITED TO THE NATIONAL
ENDOWMENT FOR THE ARTS. WHEN THIS ADMINISTRATION TOOK OFFICE,
IN 1969, THE NATIONAL ENDOWMENT HAD A BUDGET OF LESS THAN EIGHT
MILLION DOLLARS. THANKS TO NANCY HANK'S LEADERSHIP, THIS AMOUNT
HAS STEADILY INCREASED. THIS YEAR IT IS OVER SIXTY MILLION
DOLLARS AND WILL SUPPORT MORE THAN 2,500 DIFFERENT PROJECTS.

THE BUDGET REQUEST FOR NEXT YEAR IS EIGHTY-TWO MILLION DOLLARS, OR MORE THAN TEN TIMES AS MUCH AS WAS SPENT ONLY FIVE YEARS AGO. I

SHOULD ADD THAT THE NATIONAL ENDOWMENT FOR THE HUMANITIES IS FUNDED

AT ESSENTIALLY THE SAME LEVEL, SINCE THEIR INTERESTS OFTEN APPEAR

TO OVERLAP. I BELIEVE THIS SUPPORT WILL CONTINUE TO GROW.

HOWEVER, THIS IS JUST THE TIP OF THE ICEBERG. THE ENDOWMEN
EXPECTS MATCHING FUNDS, AND A DOLLAR OF GOVERNMENT MONEY OFTEN
GENERATES FIVE OR SIX DOLLARS IN PRIVATE MATCHING FUNDS. PUBLIC
SPIRITED BENEFACTORS CONTINUE TO MAKE GENEROUS CONTRIBUTIONS,
SUCH AS THE HARKNESS THEATRE, OR WOLF TRAP, WHICH I JUST MENTIONED.

THERE IS CONTINUED SUPPORT FROM THE LARGE FOUNDATIONS, AND BUSINESS FIRMS HAVE RECENTLY MADE GIFTS. AN EXAMPLE IS MOBIL'S, OF ONE MILLION DOLLARS, TO UNDERWRITE W-N-E-T'S "MASTERPIECE THEATRE". ALL IN ALL THE NATION'S TOTAL ART REQUIREMENT IS EXPECTED TO EXCEED ONE BILLION DOLLARS NEXT YEAR. THE ART REVOLUTION IS WITH US, AND THIS IS A GOOD TIME FOR YOUR TALENTS, WHETHER YOU ARE A TEACHER, DIRECTOR OR PERFORMER.



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HOWEVER, I HOPE YOU WON'T LIMIT YOUR TALENTS TO GAINFUL
EMPLOYMENT, BECAUSE IT IS IMPORTANT TO BE INVOLVED. THE REAL
CONTRIBUTION YOU CAN ALL MAKE IS COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT. IT CAN
TAKE MANY FORMS. IF YOU LIKE SPORTS, YOU CAN WORK WITH YOUNGSTERS
IN LITTLE LEAGUE BASEBALL, ~~OR THE BADE ROTH LEAGUE~~, OR THE POLICE
ATHLETIC LEAGUE. SOME COMMUNITIES HAVE "BIG BROTHERS", WHERE AN
ADULT SPENDS A DAY A WEEK WITH A FATHERLESS CHILD. THERE ARE SUNDAY
SCHOOLS, SUMMER BIBLE SCHOOLS, AND CHURCH SPONSORED SUMMER CAMPS, OFT
WITH VOLUNTEER COUNSELLORS. THERE IS THE RED CROSS AND THE GOOD WILL

THERE ARE COUNTLESS FUNDRAISING ORGANIZATIONS REQUIRING WORKERS.

THERE ARE LIBRARIES, MUSEUMS AND HOSPITALS WHICH USE VOLUNTEERS.

THERE IS THE P-T-A, AND FOR THOSE WITH MORE TIME THERE IS THE LOCAL SCHOOL BOARD, WHERE A TEACHER IS SINGULARLY EFFECTIVE. FOR THE

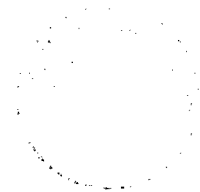
MORE AMBITIOUS THERE ARE VISTA PROGRAMS. THE LIST OF POSSIBILITIES IS ENDLESS, BUT PLEASE DO SOMETHING.

AT DIFFERENT TIMES I'VE BEEN A CUB SCOUT DEN MOTHER AND
TAUGHT SUNDAY SCHOOL. NOW THAT MY CHILDREN ARE NEARLY GROWN, AND
I HAVE THE TIME, I'M FORTUNATE IN BEING INVITED TO SERVE ON A GREAT
NUMBER OF COMMITTEES. THERE I SEE THE GOOD WORK THAT IS BEING DONE
AND AM THANKFUL TO BE ABLE TO DO MY SMALL SHARE.



BUT THE ACTIVITY I RECALL WITH THE GREATEST PLEASURE WAS
OF A DIFFERENT SORT. AFTER ^{Attending} ~~GRADUATING FROM~~ COLLEGE I SPENT SEVERAL
YEARS IN NEW YORK WITH THE MARTHA GRAHAM DANCE COMPANY. THEN I WENT
BACK HOME TO GRAND RAPIDS, WHERE THERE WAS NO PROFESSIONAL DANCING.
HOWEVER, I WAS ABLE TO ORGANIZE SOME DANCING CLASSES FOR UNDERPRIVILEGED
CHILDREN FROM THE GHETTO, AND WAS THRILLED WITH THE RESULTS. THOSE
CHILDREN WERE SO APPRECIATIVE OF THE NEW DIMENSION IN THEIR LIVES THAT
I FELT GUILTY WHEN WE MOVED TO WASHINGTON AND I HAD TO LEAVE THEM.

SO THIS IS THE SORT OF ACTIVITY I ESPECIALLY RECOMMEND TO YOU -- USING YOUR TALENTS TO REACH THE UNDERPRIVILEGED. THERE WILL BE MANY WAYS OPEN TO YOU IN YOUR PROFESSIONAL LIVES: SATURDAY MORNING PROGRAMS IN YOUR SCHOOLS, OR ACTIVITIES OF CHURCH AUXILIARIES OR NEIGHBORHOOD HOUSES ARE BUT TWO EXAMPLES. DON'T BE AFRAID TO EXPERIMENT OR BRING GROUPS INTO YOUR CHURCH, BECAUSE A CHURCH IS NOT INTENDED TO BE USED ONLY ON SUNDAYS.



RATHER, IT SHOULD BE USED IN A VARIETY OF WAYS. RELIGIOUS PLAYS, STAGED IN CHURCHES IN THE MIDDLE AGES, WERE THE ORIGIN OF THE SECULAR THEATRE. TODAY WE AGAIN FIND MANY DIFFERENT ACTIVITIES IN OUR CHURCHES. FOR EXAMPLE, A GROUP OF MEXICAN DANCERS AND MUSICIANS, STUDENTS FROM GUADALAJARA, MEXICO, RECENTLY PRESENTED A PROGRAM OF OF EXOTIC NATIVE DANCES IN THE NATIONAL CATHEDRAL IN WASHINGTON. SURELY YOU, TOO, CAN THINK OF WAYS OF USING YOUR TRAINING WHICH WILL HELP BRING PEOPLE BACK INTO THE CHURCHES WHERE THEY BELONG.

THIS HUMANITARIAN APPROACH TO MUSIC -- THE GIFT OF MUSIC

TO THE UNDERPRIVILEGED, PERHAPS BRINGING THEM INTO CLOSER CONTACT

WITH THE CHURCH AND A RICHER LIFE -- IS A SPLENDID USE OF YOUR TALENTS

IT WILL MAKE YOUR COLLEGE, WHICH HELPED DEVELOP YOUR TALENTS, PROUD

AND MAY

OF YOU. GOD BLESS YOU ALL.

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