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COMMENCEMENT ADDRESS, UNION HIGH SCHOOL,
GRAND RAPIDS, MICH., CIVIC AUDITORIUM,
8 P.M. THURSDAY, JUNE 5, 1969.

Ralph Cowdin Jr
1660 4th St. N.W.
Grand Rapids Mich
49504

Sent him
copy

AFTER THAT GLOWING INTRODUCTION, I
CAN HARDLY WAIT TO HEAR WHAT I AM GOING TO
SAY.

AS YOU KNOW, I AM ONE OF THE FOUR
POLITICAL PARTY LEADERS IN THE CONGRESS OF
THE UNITED STATES. THE TROUBLE WITH BEING
A LEADER NOWADAYS IS IT'S HARD TO TELL
WHETHER YOU'RE BEING FOLLOWED OR CHASED.

I FEEL HONORED TO BE YOUR
COMMENCEMENT SPEAKER. I LOOK OUT AT YOU
YOUNG PEOPLE TONIGHT AND I AM PLEASED. I
AM PLEASED TO BE SHARING THIS MOMENT WITH
YOU. IT IS A BIG MOMENT IN YOUR LIVES. AND
YET, AS THE VERY DESCRIPTION OF THIS
CEREMONY TELLS US -- THESE ARE COMMENCEMENT
EXERCISES -- THIS IS JUST A BEGINNING FOR



EACH OF YOU.

SOME OF YOU WILL GO ON TO COLLEGE; /
SOME WILL TAKE SPECIAL TRAINING FOR OCCUPATIONS
REQUIRING CERTAIN ADDITIONAL OCCUPATIONAL
SKILLS; / AND SOME WILL GO DIRECTLY INTO JOBS.
SOME OF YOU WILL GET MARRIED SOON AND PERHAPS
BEGIN RAISING FAMILIES. SOME OF YOU YOUNG
MEN WILL GO INTO MILITARY SERVICE, / AND IF YOU
GO IN WITH THE RIGHT ATTITUDE YOU CAN GAIN
INNER STRENGTH AND SKILLS THAT WILL SERVE YOU
FOR A LIFETIME.

OLDER PEOPLE OFTEN ASK ME, WHAT ARE
OUR YOUNG PEOPLE COMING TO? YOU KNOW, YOU
MAY THINK IT'S FUNNY, BUT THE TIME WILL COME /
SLOWLY BUT SURELY / WHEN YOU WILL BE ASKING THE
SAME QUESTION.

YOUR PARENTS AND I WERE YOUNG PEOPLE
ONCE. // I USED TO PLAY FOOTBALL AND BASKETBALL
AND COMPETE IN TRACK FOR OLD SOUTH HIGH
SCHOOL AGAINST OLD UNION HIGH.

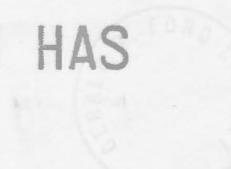


I'M TOLD TODAY'S YOUNG PEOPLE ARE A SPECIAL BREED AND IT'S IMPOSSIBLE FOR ADULTS OVER 30 TO UNDERSTAND THEM. BUT ^{my wife} I HAVE FOUR CHILDREN, INCLUDING ONE BOY IN HIGH SCHOOL AND ANOTHER IN COLLEGE SO I HAVE SOME IDEA OF WHAT YOU ALL ARE GOING THROUGH. AND I HAVE SOME APPRECIATION OF WHAT YOUR PARENTS MAY HAVE GONE THROUGH.

I MENTIONED A LITTLE EARLIER THAT IN A SENSE / LIFE IS JUST BEGINNING FOR HIGH SCHOOL GRADUATES. HOW WONDERFUL FOR YOU! YOU HAVE YOUR WHOLE LIFE AHEAD OF YOU.

MARK TWAIN ONCE PUFFED ON HIS CIGAR AND REMARKED: "WHAT A SHAME YOUTH IS WASTED ON THE YOUNG." I BEG YOU TONIGHT, DON'T WASTE IT.

YOUTH IS A TIME OF DREAMS. THIS IS ONE OF THE WONDERFUL QUALITIES OF YOUTH. WHEN A MAN STOPS DREAMING, HIS YOUTH HAS PASSED FROM HIM.

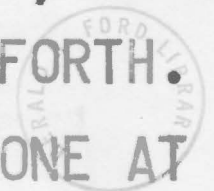


DON'T BE AFRAID TO DREAM, BUT DON'T BECOME LOST IN YOUR DREAMS.

HENRY THOREAU ONCE WROTE THAT "THE YOUTH GETS TOGETHER HIS MATERIALS TO BUILD A BRIDGE TO THE MOON, OR PERCHANCE, A PALACE OR A TEMPLE ON THE EARTH, AND AT LENGTH, THE MIDDLE-AGED MAN CONCLUDES TO BUILD A WOODSHED WITH THEM."

THIS IS THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN YOUTH AND AGE. TO THE YOUNG, NOTHING SEEMS IMPOSSIBLE.

I VIVIDLY REMEMBER THE NAVY'S FABULOUS SEABEES WHO PERFORMED MIRACLES OF CONSTRUCTION WORK IN THE SOUTH PACIFIC JUNGLES DURING WORLD WAR II. THEY OFTEN LANDED AHEAD OF THE COMBAT TROOPS. AS SOON AS THEY HAD A SPARE MINUTE, THEY WOULD ERECT LIGHT-HEARTED SIGNS AROUND THEIR CAMPS, LIKE "WELCOME TO THE U.S. MARINES" AND SO FORTH. BUT THE SIGN I REMEMBER BEST WAS THE ONE AT

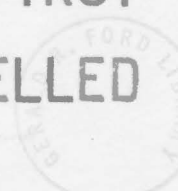


BOUGAINVILLE. IT SAID: "THE DIFFICULT
WE DO IMMEDIATELY. THE IMPOSSIBLE TAKES A
LITTLE LONGER."

SO WE OF MY GENERATION WILL DO THE
DIFFICULT. WE LEAVE IT TO YOU YOUNG PEOPLE
TO DO THE IMPOSSIBLE.

PERHAPS YOU THINK I AM JOKING. I AM
MOST SERIOUS. WHO WOULD HAVE THOUGHT
15 YEARS AGO THAT MAN WOULD NOT ONLY CATAPULT
HIMSELF OUT OF THE ATMOSPHERE INTO THE
TRACKLESS VOID OF OUTER SPACE BUT WOULD SET
FOOT ON THE MOON -- THAT PLANET WHICH TO THIS
TIME HAS MERELY INSPIRED LOVERS AND POETS?

↓ IT IS LESS THAN 12 YEARS SINCE THE
RUSSIANS STARTLED AND AMAZED THE WORLD BY
SENDING THE FIRST MAN-MADE SATELLITE INTO
ORBIT AROUND THE EARTH, AND IT HAS BEEN ONLY
A LITTLE MORE THAN 11 YEARS SINCE THE FIRST
UNITED STATES EARTH SATELLITE WAS PROPELLED
INTO ORBIT.



YET ON THE EVENING OF MAY 22, 1969, AMERICAN ASTRONAUTS IN AN INCREDIBLE AMERICAN-MADE MACHINE GIVEN THE CODE NAME, "SNOOPY," SWOOPED TO WITHIN 10 MILES OF THE MOON'S SURFACE WHILE AN AWE-STRUCK EARTH MARVELED AT THEIR ACCOMPLISHMENT.

AND NEXT MONTH TWO EARTH MEN -- AMERICANS, I NOTE PROUDLY -- ARE SCHEDULED TO ACTUALLY WALK ON THE LUNAR SURFACE AND BRING BACK SAMPLES OF WHAT THEY FIND.

TO BE THE FIRST ON THE MOON -- FOR PEACE! THAT WILL BE AN ACCOMPLISHMENT WHICH WILL BE WRITTEN LARGE IN THE ANNALS OF MAN'S BRIEF HISTORY. IT WILL BE A GLORIOUS CHAPTER IN THE SAGA OF AMERICAN GREATNESS.

IN A SENSE IT IS REMARKABLE THAT IT SHOULD BE AMERICANS WHO WILL BE THE FIRST MEN ON THE MOON. I SAY THIS BECAUSE THERE ARE MANY YOUNG PEOPLE IN OUR COUNTRY TODAY WHO THINK IT'S SHARP TO TRY TO GET THROUGH

SCHOOL WITHOUT CRACKING A BOOK, AND SOME WHO FEEL THAT WHATEVER THEY CAN GET AWAY WITH IS "ALL RIGHT."

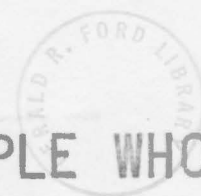
HOW DID AMERICA REACH THIS PINNACLE IN SPACE? HOW HAVE WE ADVANCED TO WITHIN ONE STEP OF LANDING ON THE MOON? HOW DID WE ACHIEVE THIS SCIENTIFIC TRIUMPH, THIS MARVEL OF MAN'S DOING, THIS GREATEST PIECE OF BUSINESS?

WE DIDN'T DO IT BY "GOOFING OFF" IN SCHOOL OR ON THE JOB.

NO LESS THAN 200 AMERICAN COLLEGES AND UNIVERSITIES HAVE MADE CONTRIBUTIONS TO THE UNITED STATES SPACE PROGRAM THROUGH THEIR RESEARCH ACTIVITIES.

THOUSANDS OF MEN AND WOMEN WITH PH. D.'S ARE INVOLVED IN THE APOLLO PROJECT. AND 400,000 SKILLED TECHNICIANS ARE EMPLOYED IN VARIOUS PHASES OF APOLLO.

YET THERE ARE SOME YOUNG PEOPLE WHO



SNEER AT LEARNING AND SCOFF AT THEIR SERIOUS-MINDED FRIENDS AND THEIR AMBITIONS.

PERHAPS SOME OF YOU SEE NO POINT IN SPACE EXPLORATION. THE FACTS ARE THAT THE RESEARCH MADE NECESSARY TO CONQUER THE TREMENDOUS PROBLEMS OF SPACE TRAVEL HAS PRODUCED TECHNOLOGICAL AND INDUSTRIAL ADVANCES WHICH, AS A SPIN-OFF, WILL OPEN UP A WHOLE NEW ERA OF PROGRESS FOR MANKIND.

WE HAVE ADDED VASTLY TO OUR KNOWLEDGE OF THE UNIVERSE IN WHICH WE LIVE.

LIKE COLUMBUS, WE ARE SOARING ACROSS TRACKLESS SPACES INTO THE VAST UNKNOWN. WITHOUT EXPLORERS LIKE COLUMBUS, THERE WOULD HAVE BEEN NO NEW WORLD SETTLEMENTS THAT GREW INTO A MIGHTY NEW NATION. WITHOUT OUR ASTRONAUTS, WE WOULD NOT NOW BE DISCOVERING NEW WORLDS IN SPACE AND OPENING LIMITLESS NEW OPPORTUNITIES FOR THE QUESTING SPIRIT OF MAN. THIS IS MAN'S BLESSED GIFT FROM GOD -- THAT

HE IS ENDOWED WITH VISION AND THE DESIRE TO REACH OUT BEYOND HIMSELF FOR A PLACE IN THE STARS. OUR OWN ROGER CHAFFEE HAD THAT VISION.

NOT MANY OF US CAN BE SPACE EXPLORERS. EACH MUST FOLLOW THAT COURSE WHICH SEEMS BEST SUITED TO HIS TALENTS AND ABILITIES. AND EACH MUST REACH UPWARD AND SEEK SOMETHING ABOVE AND BEYOND HIMSELF -- OR FOREVER REMAIN BOUND WITHIN THE PRISON OF A NARROW AND UNSEEING SELF.

DREAM YOUR DREAMS. SHARE YOUR LIFE WITH OTHERS. DON'T LIVE LOCKED WITHIN YOURSELF OR YOU WILL BE MISERABLE.

PERHAPS YOU ARE DAZZLED AND BEWILDERED BY THE WORLD AROUND YOU. IT IS A FANTASTIC WORLD -- FAR DIFFERENT FROM WHEN I WAS A BOY AND WENT TO SOUTH HIGH SCHOOL AND WORKED DURING THE LUNCH HOUR AND SEVERAL NIGHTS A WEEK IN THE STUDENT HANGOUT ACROSS THE

STREET.

YOU LIVE IN THE SHADOW OF INTER-CONTINENTAL BALLISTIC MISSILES, AND THE FRACTIONAL ORBITING BOMB DEVELOPED BY THE RUSSIANS, AND THE VIETNAM WAR AND THE DRAFT.

THESE ARE REALITIES WITH WHICH WE HAVE TO COPE ^{and} FOR THE FIRST TIME IN FOUR YEARS THERE IS SOME REAL HOPE FOR PEACE IN VIETNAM. AND I AM DETERMINED THAT IN THE CONGRESS WE WILL REFORM THE DRAFT TO MAKE IT MORE EQUITABLE AND THEN DO AWAY WITH IT AS SOON AS POSSIBLE, SUBSTITUTING IN ITS PLACE A VOLUNTEER ARMY WITH A CAREER ROLE FOR YOUNG AMERICANS WHO PROTECT OUR NATION FROM DICTATORS LIKE THOSE NOW DESTROYING ALL FREEDOM IN CZECHOSLOVAKIA.

THERE IS MUCH THAT IS UGLY IN THE WORLD AND THERE IS MUCH THAT IS BEAUTIFUL IN IT. WE MUST LIVE IN THE WORLD AND WE MUST DEAL WITH IT AS IT IS. WE MUST LEARN TO COPE,

AND WE ALWAYS HAVE THE GOD-GIVEN RIGHT TO ENGAGE IN "THE PURSUIT OF HAPPINESS."

WHERE CAN WE BETTER ENGAGE IN THE PURSUIT OF HAPPINESS AND FIND THE GOOD LIFE THAN IN AMERICA?

I KNOW THAT DESPITE SOME FOOLING AROUND, YOU ALL DID QUITE A BIT OF SERIOUS THINKING IN HIGH SCHOOL.

YOU SHOULD ASK YOURSELVES THE DEEP QUESTIONS. YOU SHOULD ASK YOURSELVES... WHAT IS THE GOOD LIFE?

YOU WILL FIND -- OR PERHAPS YOU HAVE ALREADY -- THAT IT IS NOT IN BREAKING THE RULES OF LIFE AND IT IS NOT IN HURTING OTHERS.

YOU KNOW THE RULES. WE NEED THEM. THEY RANGE ALL THE WAY FROM THE TEN COMMANDMENTS TO THE SIMPLE BUT MOST-DIFFICULT TO-FOLLOW-RULE...DO UNTO OTHERS AS YOU WOULD HAVE OTHERS DO UNTO YOU.

THERE ARE RULES THAT GOVERN EVERYTHING WE DO. MAN HAS MADE THEM -- AND FOR A PURPOSE. MAN IS HIGHER THAN THE ANIMALS. HE HAS THE POWER TO REASON. IT IS WITH THAT POWER TO REASON THAT HE FORMULATES THE RULES BY WHICH HE LIVES. WITHOUT THE RULES -- OR IF TOO MANY MEN BREAK THEM -- WE BECOME AS ANIMALS. WE DESCEND INTO A PIT OF TERROR AND LIVE BY ONLY ONE RULE -- THE RULE OF THE JUNGLE.

NOBODY CAN DECIDE WHAT LAWS HE LIKES AND WILL OBEY AND WHICH LAWS HE DOESN'T LIKE AND WON'T OBEY -- ANY MORE THAN ANY PLAYER IN A FOOTBALL GAME CAN MAKE UP HIS OWN RULES.

OF COURSE, SOME RULES SEEM TO US BURDENSOME, OR SILLY, OR UNJUST. AND SOME OF THEM ARE.

BUT WE HAVE A SYSTEM IN THIS COUNTRY THROUGH WHICH ORDERLY CHANGE IS ALWAYS POSSIBLE.

THERE ARE SOME COUNTRIES WHERE FREEDOM

IS SO RESTRICTED THAT MASS DEMONSTRATIONS AND STUDENT REVOLT ARE THE ONLY WAY TO BRING ABOUT REFORM. BUT THIS IS NOT TRUE IN THE UNITED STATES -- AND ANYONE WHO TELLS YOU IT IS IS EITHER IGNORANT OR IS DELIBERATELY MISLEADING YOU.

I BEGGED YOU EARLIER NOT TO WASTE YOUR YOUTH. IT IS SO EASY FOR YOUNG PEOPLE TO WASTE THEIR LIVES, TO LITERALLY THROW THEM AWAY.

THERE IS MUCH TO TEMPT YOU IN THAT DIRECTION TODAY -- THE LURE OF COMPLETE IRRESPONSIBILITY, OF DROPPING OUT OF LIFE WITH A FLOWER IN YOUR HAIR AND DRUGS IN YOUR BRAIN.

WHEN YOUTH IS WASTED, IT IS BECAUSE SOME YOUNG PEOPLE ARE FEARFUL OR FOOLISH OR BOTH.

FEAR PARALYZES. // YOU NEVER KNOW WHAT YOU CAN ACCOMPLISH UNTIL YOU TRY. HENRY


THOREAU SAID: "NOTHING IS SO MUCH TO BE FEARED AS FEAR." AND MANY YEARS LATER PRESIDENT FRANKLIN D. ROOSEVELT MADE FAMOUS THE PHRASE, "WE HAVE NOTHING TO FEAR BUT FEAR ITSELF."

FOOLISHNESS. THE BEST ANTIDOTE FOR IT IS SELF-RESTRAINT, SELF-DISCIPLINE.

FOOLS LAUGH AT PEOPLE WHO SHOW GOOD SENSE. OLIVER GOLDSMITH WROTE OF "THE LOUD LAUGH THAT SPOKE THE VACANT MIND."

THE TRUE BEGINNING OF WISDOM IS THE DESIRE FOR DISCIPLINE; AND THE BEST FORM OF DISCIPLINE IS DISCIPLINE OF SELF AND NOT DISCIPLINE FROM FEAR OF OTHERS.

BY SELF-DISCIPLINE I MEAN DOING WHAT IS RIGHT SIMPLY BECAUSE YOU KNOW IT TO BE RIGHT; OR, CONVERSELY, REFRAINING FROM WRONGDOING SIMPLY BECAUSE YOU KNOW IT TO BE WRONG. A PERSON WHO DESIRES TO DO EVIL CAN ALWAYS FIND THE OPPORTUNITY. IT IS RESTRAINT WHICH IS DIFFICULT AND ADMIRABLE AND REWARDING.



THE GOOD LIFE IS BUILT ON LOVE AND DISCIPLINE AND HARD WORK. CHIEF AMONG THESE IS LOVE. NOT THE MINDLESS HIPPIE KIND OF LOVE -- IRRESPONSIBLE, FLOATING, UNATTACHED TO ANY SET OF VALUES. THE GOOD LIFE FLOWS FROM LOVE OF GOD AND LOVE OF FAMILY...OF PARENTS FOR CHILDREN, CHILDREN FOR PARENTS, AND PARENTS FOR EACH OTHER. THE GOOD LIFE FLOWS FROM LOVE FOR YOUR FELLOWMAN AND LOVE FOR YOUR COUNTRY.

THE LATE PRESIDENT DWIGHT D. EISENHOWER SAID JUST BEFORE HE DIED: "I HAVE ALWAYS LOVED MY WIFE. I HAVE ALWAYS LOVED MY FAMILY. I HAVE ALWAYS LOVED MY COUNTRY."

IKE KNEW WHAT THE GOOD LIFE WAS BECAUSE HE LIVED IT. SO, TOO, CAN YOU.

IKE LOVED YOUNG PEOPLE. HE BELIEVED IN THEM. SO, TOO, DO I.

EVERY YEAR SEVERAL GROUPS OF HIGH SCHOOL SENIORS VISIT WASHINGTON, D.C., FROM

KENT AND IONIA COUNTIES. I LOOK FORWARD TO WELCOMING THEM ON THE STEPS OF THE UNITED STATES CAPITOL.

SURE, THEY FOOL AROUND A BIT. THEY ARE FULL OF HIGH SPIRITS, AND THAT IS AS IT SHOULD BE. BUT THEY ARE FINE YOUNG MEN AND WOMEN. I TALK WITH THEM AND LOOK AT THEM AS I AM LOOKING AT YOU TONIGHT AND I FEEL A NEW CONFIDENCE THAT AMERICA WILL SURVIVE IN THIS AGE OF SWIFT AND ALMOST UNCONTROLLABLE CHANGE, THIS AGE OF SUPER WEAPONS AND NUCLEAR TERROR AND, YES, TURMOIL AT HOME.

HAVE FAITH IN YOURSELVES AND YOU WILL PREVAIL. HAVE FAITH IN EACH OTHER. AND HAVE FAITH IN YOUR COUNTRY, WHICH BY ANY STANDARDS IS STILL THE FINEST IN ALL THE WORLD.

KEEP THE FAITH, AND YOU AND I WILL GO ON TOGETHER TO PROVE TO THE WORLD THAT



IN AMERICA MAN CAN BE AND IS JUST "A LITTLE
LOWER THAN THE ANGELS."

-- END --



Distribution: 20 Copies Mr. Ford

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AN ADDRESS BY REP. GERALD R. FORD
REPUBLICAN LEADER, U.S. HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
AT COMMENCEMENT EXERCISES OF UNION HIGH SCHOOL, GRAND RAPIDS, MICHIGAN
AT 8 P.M., THURSDAY, JUNE 5, 1969
CIVIC AUDITORIUM, GRAND RAPIDS

FOR RELEASE ON DELIVERY

After that glowing introduction, I can hardly wait to hear what I am going to say.

As you know, I am one of the four political party leaders in the Congress of the United States. The trouble with being a leader nowadays is it's hard to tell whether you're being followed or chased.

I feel honored to be your commencement speaker. I look out at you young people tonight and I am pleased. I am pleased to be sharing this moment with you. It is a big moment in your lives. And yet, as the very description of this ceremony tells us -- these are commencement exercises -- this is just a beginning for each of you.

Some of you will go on to college; some will take special training for occupations requiring certain additional occupational skills; and some will go directly into jobs. Some of you will get married soon and perhaps begin raising families. Some of you young men will go into military service, and if you go in with the right attitude you can gain inner strength and skills that will serve you for a lifetime.

Older people often ask me, what are our young people coming to? You know, you may think it's funny, but the time will come slowly but surely when you will be asking the same question.

Your parents and I were young people once. I used to play football and basketball and compete in track for old South High School against old Union High.

I'm told today's young people are a special breed and it's impossible for adults over 30 to understand them. But I have four children, including one boy in high school and another in college so I have some idea of what you all are going through. And I have some appreciation of what your parents may have gone through.

I mentioned a little earlier that in a sense life is just beginning for high school graduates. How wonderful for you! You have your whole life ahead of you.

Mark Twain once puffed on his cigar and remarked: "What a shame youth is wasted on the young." I beg you tonight, don't waste it.

(more)



Youth is a time of dreams. This is one of the wonderful qualities of youth. When a man stops dreaming, his youth has passed from him.

Don't be afraid to dream, but don't become lost in your dreams.

Henry Thoreau once wrote that "the youth gets together his materials to build a bridge to the moon, or perchance, a palace or a temple on the earth, and at length, the middle-aged man concludes to build a woodshed with them."

This is the difference between youth and age. To the young, nothing seems impossible.

I vividly remember the Navy's fabulous Seabees who performed miracles of construction work in the South Pacific jungles during World War II. They often landed ahead of the combat troops. As soon as they had a spare minute, they would erect light-hearted signs around their camps, like "Welcome to the U.S. Marines" and so forth. But the sign I remember best was the one at Bougainville. It said: "The difficult we do immediately. The impossible takes a little longer."

So we of my generation will do the difficult. We leave it to you young people to do the impossible.

Perhaps you think I am joking. I am most serious. Who would have thought 15 years ago that man would not only catapult himself out of the atmosphere into the trackless void of outer space but would set foot on the moon -- that planet which to this time has merely inspired lovers and poets?

It is less than 12 years since the Russians startled and amazed the world by sending the first man-made satellite into orbit around the earth, and it has been only a little more than 11 years since the first United States earth satellite was propelled into orbit.

Yet on the evening of May 22, 1969, American astronauts in an incredible American-made machine given the code name, "Snoopy," swooped to within 10 miles of the moon's surface while an awe-struck earth marveled at their accomplishment.

And next month two earth men -- Americans, I note proudly -- are scheduled to actually walk on the lunar surface and bring back samples of what they find.

To be the first on the moon -- for peace! That will be an accomplishment which will be written large in the annals of man's brief history. It will be a glorious chapter in the saga of American greatness.

In a sense it is remarkable that it should be Americans who will be the first men on the moon. I say this because there are many young people in our country today who think it's sharp to try to get through school without cracking a book, and some who feel that whatever they can get away with is "all right."

(more)

How did America reach this pinnacle in space? How have we advanced to within one step of landing on the moon? How did we achieve this scientific triumph, this marvel of man's doing, this greatest piece of business?

We didn't do it by "goofing off" in school or on the job.

No less than 200 American colleges and universities have made contributions to the United States space program through their research activities.

Thousands of men and women with Ph. D.'s are involved in the Apollo Project. And 400,000 skilled technicians are employed in various phases of Apollo.

Yet there are some young people who sneer at learning and scoff at their serious-minded friends and their ambitions.

Perhaps some of you see no point in space exploration. The facts are that the research made necessary to conquer the tremendous problems of space travel has produced technological and industrial advances which, as a spin-off, will open up a whole new era of progress for mankind.

We have added vastly to our knowledge of the universe in which we live.

Like Columbus, we are soaring across trackless spaces into the vast unknown. Without explorers like Columbus, there would have been no New World settlements that grew into a mighty new nation. Without our astronauts, we would not now be discovering new worlds in space and opening limitless new opportunities for the questing spirit of man. This is man's blessed gift from God -- that he is endowed with vision and the desire to reach out beyond himself for a place in the stars. Our own Roger Chaffee had that vision.

Not many of us can be space explorers. Each must follow that course which seems best suited to his talents and abilities. And each must reach upward and seek something above and beyond himself -- or forever remain bound within the prison of a narrow and unseeing self.

Dream your dreams. Share your life with others. Don't live locked within yourself or you will be miserable.

Perhaps you are dazzled and bewildered by the world around you. It is a fantastic world -- far different from when I was a boy and went to South High School and worked during the lunch hour and several nights a week in the student hangout across the street.

You live in the shadow of intercontinental ballistic missiles, and the Fractional Orbiting Bomb developed by the Russians, and the Vietnam War and the draft.

(more)

These are realities with which we have to cope. For the first time in four years there is some real hope for peace in Vietnam. And I am determined that in the Congress we will reform the draft to make it more equitable and then do away with it as soon as possible, substituting in its place a volunteer army with a career role for young Americans who protect our nation from dictators like those now destroying all freedom in Czechoslovakia.

There is much that is ugly in the world and there is much that is beautiful in it. We must live in the world and we must deal with it as it is. We must learn to cope, and we always have the God-given right to engage in "the pursuit of happiness."

Where can we better engage in the pursuit of happiness and find the good life than in America?

I know that despite some fooling around, you all did quite a bit of serious thinking in high school.

You should ask yourselves the deep questions. You should ask yourselves... what is the good life.

You will find -- or perhaps you have already -- that it is not in breaking the rules of life and it is not in hurting others.

You know the rules. We need them. They range all the way from the Ten Commandments to the simple but most difficult to follow rule...do unto others as you would have others do unto you.

There are rules that govern everything we do. Man has made them -- and for a purpose. Man is higher than the animals. He has the power to reason. It is with that power to reason that he formulates the rules by which he lives. Without the rules -- or if too many men break them -- we become as animals. We descend into a pit of terror and live by only one rule -- the rule of the jungle.

Nobody can decide what laws he likes and will obey and which laws he doesn't like and won't obey -- any more than any player in a football game can make up his own rules.

Of course, some rules seem to us burdensome, or silly, or unjust. And some of them are.

But we have a system in this country through which orderly change is always possible.

There are some countries where freedom is so restricted that mass demonstrations and student revolt are the only way to bring about reform. But

(more)

this is not true in the United States -- and anyone who tells you it is is either ignorant or is deliberately misleading you.

I begged you earlier not to waste your youth. It is so easy for young people to waste their lives, to literally throw them away.

There is much to tempt you in that direction today -- the lure of complete irresponsibility, of dropping out of life with a flower in your hair and drugs in your brain.

When youth is wasted, it is because some young people are fearful or foolish or both.

Fear paralyzes. You never know what you can accomplish until you try. Henry Thoreau said: "Nothing is so much to be feared as fear." And many years later President Franklin D. Roosevelt made famous the phrase, "We have nothing to fear but fear itself."

Foolishness. The best antidote for it is self-restraint, self-discipline.

Fools laugh at people who show good sense. Oliver Goldsmith wrote of "the loud laugh that spoke the vacant mind."

The true beginning of wisdom is the desire for discipline; and the best form of discipline is discipline of self and not discipline from fear of others.

By self-discipline I mean doing what is right simply because you know it to be right; or, conversely, refraining from wrongdoing simply because you know it to be wrong. A person who desires to do evil can always find the opportunity. It is restraint which is difficult and admirable and rewarding.

The good life is built on love and discipline and hard work. Chief among these is love. Not the mindless Hippie kind of love -- irresponsible, floating, unattached to any set of values. The good life flows from love of God and love of family...of parents for children, children for parents, and parents for each other. The good life flows from love for your fellowman and love for your country.

The late President Dwight D. Eisenhower said just before he died: "I have always loved my wife. I have always loved my family. I have always loved my country."

Ike knew what the good life was because he lived it. So, too, can you.

Ike loved young people. He believed in them. So, too, do I.

Every year several groups of high school seniors visit Washington, D.C., from Kent and Ionia Counties. I look forward to welcoming them on the steps of the United States Capitol.

(more)

Sure, they fool around a bit. They are full of high spirits, and that is as it should be. But they are fine young men and women. I talk with them and look at them as I am looking at you tonight and I feel a new confidence that America will survive in this age of swift and almost uncontrollable change, this age of super weapons and nuclear terror and, yes, turmoil at home.

Have faith in yourselves and you will prevail. Have faith in each other. And have faith in your country, which by any standards is still the finest in all the world.

Keep the faith, and you and I will go on together to prove to the world that in America man can be and is just "a little lower than the angels."

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I feel honored to be your commencement speaker. I look out at you young people tonight and I am pleased. I am pleased to be sharing this moment with you. It is a big moment in your lives. And yet, as the very description of this ceremony tells us -- these are commencement exercises -- this is just a beginning for each of you.

Some of you will go on to college; some will take special training for occupations requiring certain additional occupational skills; and some will go directly into jobs. Some of you will get married soon and perhaps begin raising families. Some of you young men will go into military service, and if you go in with the right attitude you can gain inner strength and skills that will serve you for a lifetime.

Older people often ask me, what are our young people coming to? You know, you may think it's funny, but the time will come slowly but surely when you will be asking the same question.

Your parents and I were young people once. I used to play football and basketball and compete in track for old South High School against old Union High.

I'm told today's young people are a special breed and it's impossible for adults over 30 to understand them. But I have four children, including one boy in high school and another in college so I have some idea of what you all are going through. And I have some appreciation of what your parents may have gone through.

I mentioned a little earlier that in a sense life is just beginning for high school graduates. How wonderful for you! You have your whole life ahead of you.

Mark Twain once puffed on his cigar and remarked: "What a shame youth is wasted on the young." I beg you tonight, don't waste it.

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Youth is a time of dreams. This is one of the wonderful qualities of youth. When a man stops dreaming, his youth has passed from him.

Don't be afraid to dream, but don't become lost in your dreams.

Henry Thoreau once wrote that "the youth gets together his materials to build a bridge to the moon, or perchance, a palace or a temple on the earth, and at length, the middle-aged man concludes to build a woodshed with them."

This is the difference between youth and age. To the young, nothing seems impossible.

I vividly remember the Navy's fabulous Seabees who performed miracles of construction work in the South Pacific jungles during World War II. They often landed ahead of the combat troops. As soon as they had a spare minute, they would erect light-hearted signs around their camps, like "Welcome to the U.S. Marines" and so forth. But the sign I remember best was the one at Bougainville. It said: "The difficult we do immediately. The impossible takes a little longer."

So we of my generation will do the difficult. We leave it to you young people to do the impossible.

Perhaps you think I am joking. I am most serious. Who would have thought 15 years ago that man would not only catapult himself out of the atmosphere into the trackless void of outer space but would set foot on the moon -- that planet which to this time has merely inspired lovers and poets?

It is less than 12 years since the Russians startled and amazed the world by sending the first man-made satellite into orbit around the earth, and it has been only a little more than 11 years since the first United States earth satellite was propelled into orbit.

Yet on the evening of May 22, 1969, American astronauts in an incredible American-made machine given the code name, "Snoopy," swooped to within 10 miles of the moon's surface while an awe-struck earth marveled at their accomplishment.

And next month two earth men -- Americans, I note proudly -- are scheduled to actually walk on the lunar surface and bring back samples of what they find.

To be the first on the moon -- for peace! That will be an accomplishment which will be written large in the annals of man's brief history. It will be a glorious chapter in the saga of American greatness.

In a sense it is remarkable that it should be Americans who will be the first men on the moon. I say this because there are many young people in our country today who think it's sharp to try to get through school without cracking a book, and some who feel that whatever they can get away with is "all right."

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How did America reach this pinnacle in space? How have we advanced to within one step of landing on the moon? How did we achieve this scientific triumph, this marvel of man's doing, this greatest piece of business?

We didn't do it by "goofing off" in school or on the job.

No less than 200 American colleges and universities have made contributions to the United States space program through their research activities.

Thousands of men and women with Ph. D.'s are involved in the Apollo Project. And 400,000 skilled technicians are employed in various phases of Apollo.

Yet there are some young people who sneer at learning and scoff at their serious-minded friends and their ambitions.

Perhaps some of you see no point in space exploration. The facts are that the research made necessary to conquer the tremendous problems of space travel has produced technological and industrial advances which, as a spin-off, will open up a whole new era of progress for mankind.

We have added vastly to our knowledge of the universe in which we live.

Like Columbus, we are soaring across trackless spaces into the vast unknown. Without explorers like Columbus, there would have been no New World settlements that grew into a mighty new nation. Without our astronauts, we would not now be discovering new worlds in space and opening limitless new opportunities for the questing spirit of man. This is man's blessed gift from God -- that he is endowed with vision and the desire to reach out beyond himself for a place in the stars. Our own Roger Chaffee had that vision.

Not many of us can be space explorers. Each must follow that course which seems best suited to his talents and abilities. And each must reach upward and seek something above and beyond himself -- or forever remain bound within the prison of a narrow and unseeing self.

Dream your dreams. Share your life with others. Don't live locked within yourself or you will be miserable.

Perhaps you are dazzled and bewildered by the world around you. It is a fantastic world -- far different from when I was a boy and went to South High School and worked during the lunch hour and several nights a week in the student hangout across the street.

You live in the shadow of intercontinental ballistic missiles, and the Fractional Orbiting Bomb developed by the Russians, and the Vietnam War and the draft.

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These are realities with which we have to cope. For the first time in four years there is some real hope for peace in Vietnam. And I am determined that in the Congress we will reform the draft to make it more equitable and then do away with it as soon as possible, substituting in its place a volunteer army with a career role for young Americans who protect our nation from dictators like those now destroying all freedom in Czechoslovakia.

There is much that is ugly in the world and there is much that is beautiful in it. We must live in the world and we must deal with it as it is. We must learn to cope, and we always have the God-given right to engage in "the pursuit of happiness."

Where can we better engage in the pursuit of happiness and find the good life than in America?

I know that despite some fooling around, you all did quite a bit of serious thinking in high school.

You should ask yourselves the deep questions. You should ask yourselves... what is the good life.

You will find -- or perhaps you have already -- that it is not in breaking the rules of life and it is not in hurting others.

You know the rules. We need them. They range all the way from the Ten Commandments to the simple but most difficult to follow rule...do unto others as you would have others do unto you.

There are rules that govern everything we do. Man has made them -- and for a purpose. Man is higher than the animals. He has the power to reason. It is with that power to reason that he formulates the rules by which he lives. Without the rules -- or if too many men break them -- we become as animals. We descend into a pit of terror and live by only one rule -- the rule of the jungle.

Nobody can decide what laws he likes and will obey and which laws he doesn't like and won't obey -- any more than any player in a football game can make up his own rules.

Of course, some rules seem to us burdensome, or silly, or unjust. And some of them are.

But we have a system in this country through which orderly change is always possible.

There are some countries where freedom is so restricted that mass demonstrations and student revolt are the only way to bring about reform. But

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this is not true in the United States -- and anyone who tells you it is is either ignorant or is deliberately misleading you.

I begged you earlier not to waste your youth. It is so easy for young people to waste their lives, to literally throw them away.

There is much to tempt you in that direction today -- the lure of complete irresponsibility, of dropping out of life with a flower in your hair and drugs in your brain.

When youth is wasted, it is because some young people are fearful or foolish or both.

Fear paralyzes. You never know what you can accomplish until you try. Henry Thoreau said: "Nothing is so much to be feared as fear." And many years later President Franklin D. Roosevelt made famous the phrase, "We have nothing to fear but fear itself."

Foolishness. The best antidote for it is self-restraint, self-discipline.

Fools laugh at people who show good sense. Oliver Goldsmith wrote of "the loud laugh that spoke the vacant mind."

The true beginning of wisdom is the desire for discipline; and the best form of discipline is discipline of self and not discipline from fear of others.

By self-discipline I mean doing what is right simply because you know it to be right; or, conversely, refraining from wrongdoing simply because you know it to be wrong. A person who desires to do evil can always find the opportunity. It is restraint which is difficult and admirable and rewarding.

The good life is built on love and discipline and hard work. Chief among these is love. Not the mindless Hippie kind of love -- irresponsible, floating, unattached to any set of values. The good life flows from love of God and love of family...of parents for children, children for parents, and parents for each other. The good life flows from love for your fellowman and love for your country.

The late President Dwight D. Eisenhower said just before he died: "I have always loved my wife. I have always loved my family. I have always loved my country."

Ike knew what the good life was because he lived it. So, too, can you.

Ike loved young people. He believed in them. So, too, do I.

Every year several groups of high school seniors visit Washington, D.C., from Kent and Ionia Counties. I look forward to welcoming them on the steps of the United States Capitol.

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Sure, they fool around a bit. They are full of high spirits, and that is as it should be. But they are fine young men and women. I talk with them and look at them as I am looking at you tonight and I feel a new confidence that America will survive in this age of swift and almost uncontrollable change, this age of super weapons and nuclear terror and, yes, turmoil at home.

Have faith in yourselves and you will prevail. Have faith in each other. And have faith in your country, which by any standards is still the finest in all the world.

Keep the faith, and you and I will go on together to prove to the world that in America man can be and is just "a little lower than the angels."

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