

Speech by
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ON THE DEDICATION OF THE CHARLES PARRISH MEMORIAL NURSING
CENTER

Thank you for giving me the privilege of being here today.
I am always glad to have the opportunity of being home among
my friends.

As the lyrics we know so well:

"Mid pleasures and palaces though we
may roam,

Be it ever so humble, there's no place
like home."

I am particularly proud to be a part of this happy occasion
because this beautiful nursing center we are here to dedicate
today is the result of not only the dream of the Honorable
C. Gilmer Parrish and Mrs. Parrish, but the result of a community
endeavor, which it should continue to be as our people here in
this home are a part of our community.

Mr. and Mrs. Parrish in 1966, when they lost their
beloved son, Charles, instead of turning their grief inward began
to exert their energy toward a living memorial. They wanted to

express their feelings for others and make a contribution to the county that they and their son loved.

With perserverance and determination, and probably too many meetings and too many telephone calls to remember, in December of 1968 plans were drawn.

July 5, 1971 was a day perhaps even more memorable than this day. for this was the day service began - the first patient was admitted. Since that day we have 56 new members in our community. Perhaps all of them are not new to the area, but they are new to this particular segment of our community. And, they are a part of our community, and should always be, where possible, a part of any community endeavor.

We have all awakened lately to the fact that while medical science has advanced toward lengthening the span of life, we have not met the socialological problems that such a lengthening presents. We have hailed each advancement, and yet given very little thought to the needs of the elderly.

Today, in many instances, and in most cases where employment is with a large concern, 65 is the mandatory age for retirement. Too often, we as driving human beings, who are geared to this headlong rush, decision-making, or attitude of

"they can't get along without me," wake up one morning and find that this is the morning when "they can get along without me." This is the day, and it must be faced! This can be a crushing blow mentally which many times leads to physical disability.

In recent years, our nation seems to have been pre-occupied with the demands of our young people - simply because of their loudness and exuberance, and I would be the first to admit that they should be listened to, but the physical and social needs of our senior citizens must be met also.

But, I believe, as a nation, we are awakening to the fact that we have been remiss.

I was privileged in May to speak to the Governor's Conference on Aging. The Governor's Conference on Aging is the result of the first National Conference on Aging that was held 21 years ago - August 1950. This conference was called to try to solve some of the social needs brought on by increased life expectancy.

Progress has been made. Today, there are 55 states and territories with agencies on aging with their own budgets

and staff.

This State meeting I spoke to was the result of community hearings on problems of the aging; then regional hearings and now the White House Conference in November will hold hearings on the cumulative facts that first started with hearings last year on the local level.

And, I would like to bring to your attention that these meetings that first started on the local level, were not meetings attended just by the elderly. The attendance has been broadly representative. Some have been teachers, nursing home administrators, teachers, social workers, doctors, young people, volunteers and leading businessmen of the community.

An excellent example of combined effort was the passage of the Mass Transit Bill through Congress last October. There was an amendment attached which reads:

"It is hereby declared to be the national policy that elderly and handicapped persons have the same right as other persons to utilize mass transportation facilities and services; that special efforts shall be made in the planning

and design of mass transportation facilities so that the availability to elderly and handicapped persons of mass transportation which they can effectively utilize will be assured; and that all federal programs offering assistance in the field of mass transportation should contain provisions implementing this policy."

So, you see our voices might not be quite as loud as a large delegation of youth, but our voices can be forceful and can carry enthusiasm!

Frederick Williamson expressed the conviction that, "The longer I live, the more certain I am that enthusiasm is the most important of all traits or qualifications."

But, perhaps you think I have been speaking only of our active senior citizens - those who are still at home though retired - and not our friends in nursing homes. Our friends here might not be active physically, but there are many that are very active mentally, and it is up to us to see that they remain so.

Older people in nursing homes are tagged often with a diagnosis of senility, when in many instances, such a diagnosis is not only clinically inaccurate, but tragically misleading and inadequate. Many patients are diagnosed as senile because essentially they are lonely people and have no one with whom to talk. Such a patient may find himself in a new and confusing environment and withdraw and retreat.

But, we are fortunate here because one of the goals set by the staff and founders of this nursing home is "to stimulate interest and activities for those able to participate." They are as much concerned with the mental health of their patients as with their physical health.

But, no matter how dedicated a staff is, they must, and properly so, rely on the community of which they are a part. How much easier their job if you actively participate in getting our friends here reinvolved in the community.

While this is not the case with the Charles Parrish Nursing Center, too many nursing homes exist in an atmosphere of isolation and social ostracism. But, I do not believe that this isolation atmosphere is inspired or desired by those who run nursing homes, but by those in a community that foster the attitude of a nursing home being a dead end.

This could not be further from the truth. The rather wistful philosophy of the late Douglas MacArthur that "old soldiers fade away," does not apply to our senior citizens today. While I am a great admirer of General MacArthur, I do not necessarily agree with this philosophy, nor do I really believe he did as he was in his seventies when he made this statement.

There are many services that can be established in a community to help our older citizens.

A Loan Closet of sick room supplies and equipment for those in our community who are not in nursing homes.

A Transportation System to assist those that need to get to the doctor's office, the hospital or the clinic. Or in the case of our nursing center here where medical help is available, transportation to reawaken those able to get out to see the growth of the community - to see what is going on outside the nursing home - to revitalize interest.

A Regular Visting Service, and not necessarily by contemporaries/^{alone} but by the young people in our community. I am sure a lot of our friends here in the home would like to

really quiz some of our young people. For instance, why do you have your hair so long - what are you trying to express? Tell us your political views? Who is your gubernatorial choice. And by the way, let me know what they say.

Establish an information program where our senior citizens can learn about services available to them, and services to the community that they themselves can render.

Our culture, as I said earlier, has been so involved with youth in recent years, we have not considered the significance of the contribution that the aging can make.

People can compensate for the physical slowing-down that age brings by shifting from speed to accuracy of response in the kind of occupations or hobbies he pursues. The speed with which youth usually pursues a hobby or occupation does not, many times, lend itself to accuracy. So, if achievement is defined apart from performance in which youth excels - speed - aging may be considered to contribute positively to those fields where life experience, maturity of judgment and accumulation of knowledge are

relied upon, such as in musical creativity, medicine, philosophy, and politics. Long after physical capacities have receded from their peak, psychological and social skills may still be ripe.

As the Roman sage Cicero so aptly put it:

"People who declare that there are no activities for old age are speaking beside the point. It is like saying that a pilot has nothing to do with sailing a ship because he leaves others to climb the masts and run along the gangways and work the pumps, while he himself sits quietly in the stern holding the rudder.

"He may not be doing what the younger men are doing, but his contribution is more significant and valuable than theirs.

"Great deeds are not done by strength or speed or physique; they are the products of thought and character, and judgment. And far from diminishing, such qualities actually increase with age."

The goals for this nursing center were written by Mrs. Ethel McCleen, and I think they should be the goals not

only of the nursing center, but some of them can be the goals for this community. They are on the back of the program if you would like to follow them with me.

1. To provide a secure home-like institution for the care of the elderly.
2. To try to preserve what was good from his previous way of life.
3. To establish a comfortable routine and habit pattern for daily living.
4. To provide an atmosphere of calm, contentment and tranquility.
5. To allow as much freedom of choice or action for each patient which conditions warrant.
6. To stimulate interest in activities for those able to participate and to provide gentle loving care for the helpless.
7. To buffer them against fear and anxiety.
8. To respect his privacy and personal belongings.
9. To encourage sociability and congeniality between patients, and try to place them with others who share common interests.
10. To encourage laughter, joking, conversation, and friendliness between patients and their attendants.
11. To keep their clothing and personal appearance presentable.
12. To understand their needs, to listen to each patient and to accept him at his level.

13. To provide kindness and affection as well as medical care.

14. To discourage favoritism and discrimination of different types of patients. by employees.

15. Above all, to help each patient to maintain dignity, self-respect, personal pride and as much independence as possible.

16. To allow each individual to maintain and practice his own religious faith.