

Speech by

ROBERT MORGAN  
Attorney General of North Carolina

Pilot, N. C.  
April 8, 1972

Dr. Stephen Durwood Stallings, Jr. Day

Let me begin my remarks by telling you how glad I am that you invited me to be with you today and to participate in this program honoring Dr. Durwood Stallings. I say this sincerely, for I have had the privilege of knowing him and the opportunity of observing the same qualities of concern, compassion and dedicated service which you have and I gladly join in your tribute to him.

But though you come today to honor your neighbor and servant, Durwood Stallings, in a very real sense, you also honor yourselves and honor your community. It certainly speaks well for citizens of this community that you recognize greatness among you and that you are willing to make this effort to say "We are proud of what Durwood Stallings has done; we are proud of the example he has set for us, for our children and for members of his profession."

There is little need for me to come to Pilot and recite the many achievements of Dr. Stallings or explain what he has done

for this community and so many of you individually. You know that far better than I. To illustrate, let me tell you about a visit I had at my office in Raleigh one day this week.

[relate conversation with Cheryl Lanier]

After talking with this young lady, it struck me that the kind of appreciation she had for the work being done by Dr. Stallings and the personal admiration she so clearly evidenced could be fostered today only in the many small towns scattered about our State and nation where people still have an opportunity to really know their neighbors and understand the value of genuine friendship.

\* \* \* \* \*

Not long ago our young people had an expression they used to describe someone who lacked some of the social graces they thought necessary to move smoothly in the inner circles of large university campuses and city life. They described such a person as "small town" and meant the term to be derogatory. They missed their mark, in my opinion, for if the persons they were describing really possessed the "small town" qualities of people like the man you honor today, they could have paid no higher compliment.

I am reminded that President Eisenhower recognized the virtue and the integrity of the citizens of rural areas when he said:

"I think for any American who had the great and priceless privilege of being raised in a small town, there remains always with him (fond) memories of those days. And the older he grows, the more he senses what he owed to the simple honesty, the neighborliness, the integrity that he saw around him, in those days, and took for granted, and that he learns to appreciate only as he grows older and dwells more in other places of the earth."

The simple honesty and friendship - the spirit of brotherhood and cooperation and community spirit that the President saw in small communities and which is so much in evidence here today are the very foundations of our country. And the freedom we all cherish so much was won and is still preserved by the brave deeds and achievements of men like Dr. Stallings from places like my home town of Lillington and like Pilot - deeds and achievements which never received national attention but nevertheless are stamped as "profiles of courage" in the minds of people like you in small towns and communities throughout these United States.

Great or small, these deeds performed beneath the folds of Old Glory, woven together, have produced a national fabric too strong to be ripped apart by the sudden violence of an

assassination, too rugged to be made threadbare by the lawless acts of mobs, too proud to be lowered even one inch by assaults on our international prestige, too colorful to be stained by mud tossed from abroad and too durable to be weakened by the trampling it receives from detractors and summer patriots.

It has been said by great philosophers and great statesmen that our system of free government depends in the first instance upon the virtue of its citizens. George Washington once declared that it could not survive without it. I agree and say to you that when we thank God for the liberties we have and the way of life we enjoy, we should also thank God for men like Durwood Stallings.

\* \* \* \* \*

You know, in every community there are persons who shun civic endeavors and public service on the pretext that they haven't the time or that they just aren't "joiners". In some few instances their reluctance may be justified and understandable. But in most cases it is not.

In most cases these people simply haven't taken the time to consider their responsibility to their communities, to their fellow citizens, and to themselves. It just hasn't occurred to them that there is more - much more - to being a good citizen than obeying laws, voting, and paying taxes. They could take

a lesson from Dr. Stallings. And the sad part is that they haven't discovered what Dr. Stallings has so obviously discovered - what they are missing in the way of personal satisfaction that can only be derived from making a real and lasting contribution to one's own community.

\* \* \* \* \*

I wish that I could stand here today and tell you how a man achieves greatness, how a man earns the respect of his followmen and makes his mark on the people he meets and the community in which he lives. If I could, I would, for it might inspire greatness in someone within the sound of my voice and certainly it would give you a clue to what makes a man like Dr. Stallings click.

I'm afraid I can't. But I do know one thing, no man has ever been honored like you honor Dr. Stallings today for what he has received - only for what he has given. I do know one thing; no man has ever been admired as Dr. Stallings is for using others to his own advantage, for ignoring need, and for avoiding responsibility.

I can't tell you how a man achieves greatness but I can direct your attention to an account of how one man, the Great King Solomon, achieved greatness long ago. Perhaps we can gain some insight from one of the best sources I know, the Bible.

The third Chapter of First Kings related that the Lord appeared to Solomon in a dream and asked him what he desired most. Needless to say, this was no easy question but after Solomon had considered it, he replied, "Give ... Thy servant an understanding heart ...." The scripture goes on to observe that "... the speech pleased the Lord, that Solomon had asked this thing", and the Lord in turn granted to Solomon a "wise and understanding heart" with the assurance that his wisdom would never be exceeded by that of any man.

We might well speculate that Dr. Stallings has modeled his life after that of Solomon for he has in every way exhibited the qualities of a wise and understanding heart. There are many testimonies which could be made to prove this point. And, in my opinion, it is for this, above all things, that we honor him this afternoon.

\* \* \* \* \*

I will conclude my comments with this observation. There are some people who say with a certain amount of pride that their philosophy of life is "live and let live". I used to think this was a pretty good attitude and perhaps it is all right. But I believe Dr. Stallings has a better philosophy. I believe he has improved considerably on that philosophy and that he would not say "live and let live"; he would say "live and help live".

This is the way Durwood Stallings looks at the needs and hopes of his neighbors and his community. This is the way Durwood Stallings practices his profession. This is what has made the people of the Pilot community and this area love and respect him also.

And this philosophy he practices is what makes it such a privilege for me to help pay tribute to a distinguished humanitarian who has chosen to make his life's work serving the people who gather here today to honor him.

\* \* \* \* \*