

Memorial Service
for Marshall University
Football team
Wright Auditorium
Greenville, N. C.
November 15, 1970

ON BEHALF OF GOVERNOR SCOTT,
THE PEOPLE OF NORTH CAROLINA, AND
ALL OF US HERE AT EAST CAROLINA UNIVERSITY,
I WANT TO EXPRESS OUR SORROW AND
GRIEF TO THE BEREAVED OF THE VICTIMS
OF YESTERDAY'S TRAGIC AIRPLANE CRASH.

YESTERDAY AFTERNOON, WE IN
GREENVILLE, WERE HAPPY, BECAUSE WE HAD
SEEN AN EXCITING FOOTBALL GAME ON A
BALMY AUTUMN AFTERNOON.

TODAY, THE SUN SHINES AGAIN,
BUT IRONICALLY OUR HEARTS DO NOT
RESPOND WITH GAITY, FOR THE JOY
OF YESTERDAY IS GONE.

TODAY, INSTEAD, OUR FINITE
AND LIMITED MINDS PROBE INTO THE
INFINITE TRYING TO UNDERSTAND THE
UNLIMITED AND THE "WHY".

THE TRAGEDY THAT SILENCED
THE "THUNDERING HERD" HAS LEFT US
MUTE, SICK AT HEART, DEPRESSED, AND
IS BEYOND OUR COMPREHENSION.

THE LOSS OF A WHOLE SEGMENT OF FRIENDS, THE REALITY OF VITAL AND VISIBLY ACTIVE HUMAN BEINGS NO LONGER PHYSICALLY LIVING, THE ENORMOUS GRIEF WHICH ENGULFS FAMILIES AND FRIENDS AND THE MEMBERS OF THE STUDENT BODY, LEAVE US NUMB AND INARTICULATE, AT THE VERY TIME WE FEEL THE NEED TO EXPRESS REACTION TO THE PAIN WE FEEL.

DURING THIS FIRST CRUSH OF SADNESS WE PERHAPS NEED NOT TRY TO UNDERSTAND THE DIMENSIONS OF SUCH A TRAGEDY.

INDEED, OUTSIDE THE VERSE
THAT SAYS "THE LORD GIVETH AND THE
LORD TAKETH AWAY," THERE IS LITTLE
WAY FOR US TO UNDERSTAND THIS KIND
OF LOSS.

EXPERIENCE TEACHES US THAT IT
SEEKS OUT PEOPLE IN EVERY WALK OF LIFE,
JUST AS IT HAS NOW REACHED INTO THE
STREETS AND COVES OF WEST VIRGINIA
AND THE COASTAL PLAINS OF EASTERN NORTH
CAROLINA.

WE ALL WANT TO EXPOSE IN SOME
ARTICULATE MANNER THE GRIEF AND SENSE
OF LOSS AND HURT WE FEEL.

AND YET, NO WORDS ARE TRULY
ADEQUATE TO DESCRIBE WHAT WE FEEL OR
TO PROVIDE AN AVENUE OF RELEASE FOR
THE EMOTIONS TOILING WITHIN US.

YET, IN AN ATTEMPT TO RECOVER
SOME RAY OF YESTERDAY'S SUNLIGHT,
LET US FOCUS OUR ATTENTION POSITIVELY
UPON THE IDEALS AND GOALS OF THOSE
WHO HAVE LOST THEIR LIVES IN SUCH
A TRAGIC MANNER.

THEY WERE YOUNG, ALIVE, VIGOROUS,
AND EXCITED ABOUT LIFE.

THEIR SPIRIT WAS TYPICAL
OF THE BEST IN AMERICA.

THEY WERE BEAUTIFULLY
DISCIPLINED AND WORKED HARD AND
FAITHFULLY FOR THEIR GOALS.

THEY BELIEVED IN HONESTY,
INTEGRITY, AND FAIR PLAY.

THEY STOOD FOR FRIENDSHIP AND
COOPERATION AND KNEW HOW TO DEPEND UPON
AND TO ASSIST THEIR NEIGHBORS, THEIR
TEAM MATES.

THEY WERE NOT AFRAID TO PLAY THE
GAME OF FOOTBALL ACCORDING TO THE RULES.

THEY WORKED FOR VICTORY AND
KNEW HOW TO ACCEPT IT WITHOUT HAUGHTINESS.

THEY ALSO KNEW HOW TO ACCEPT
HONEST DEFEAT AND NOT GIVE UP, KNOWING
THAT TRUE VICTORY IN ALL OF LIFE HAS TO
DO WITH POSITIVE AND UPLIFTING ATTITUDES.

PERHAPS THEY HAVE TAUGHT US IN
SOME MEASURE THAT WHAT COUNTS MOST IS
NOT HOW LONG WE LIVE BUT HOW WELL.

THESE WHO WERE WILLING TO
SACRIFICE THEMSELVES IN TEAM EFFORT,
HAVE NOW MADE THE EXTREME SACRIFICE
IN THE GAME OF LIFE.

THOSE OF US WHO REMAIN MUST
LOOK BEYOND OUR SENSE OF DEFEAT, AND
STRIVE TO LIVE BY THE STANDARDS OF
THOSE WHO WERE ABLE TO SHOW A VIGOROUS
RESPONSE TO LIFE.

FOLLOWING THEIR EXAMPLE, WE
NOW MUST SHOW HOW TO ACCEPT LOSS AND
NOT GIVE UP.

WE CAN NOW EXEMPLIFY
THEIR DISCIPLINED LIFE EMBUED WITH
A SENSE OF FAIR PLAY, WE DEPEND UPON,
AND UPHOLD ONE ANOTHER.

WE WHO HAVE YET AN OPPORTUNITY
TO MAKE A VIGOROUS AND EXCITING RESPONSE
TO LIFE CAN NOW BE EVEN MORE DETERMINED
TO "PLAY THE GAME ACCORDING TO THE
RULES" OUT OF DEEP RESPECT FOR THOSE
WHO NO LONGER HAVE A CHANCE TO DO SO.

LET ME MAKE A PERSONAL
REFERENCE.

IN SEEKING SOLACE DURING
THE FIRST HOURS FOLLOWING THE NEWS
THAT CAME CONCERNING THE PLANE
CRASH, I FOUND THE WORDS OF A HYMN
I KNEW AS A CHILD, RUNNING THROUGH
MY MIND, AND SUPERCEDING ALL THE
PHILOSOPHY AND ETHICS I HAVE READ
AND STUDIED.

IT HELPED ME KEEP APPROPRIATE
PERSPECTIVE, AT LEAST TO SOME DEGREE,
AS I WAS REMINDED THIS IS GOD'S WORLD,
AND THAT HE WHO IS CONCERNED EVEN
WITH THE SPARROW, IS SURELY WITH US YET.

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AS M. D. BABCOCK WROTE:

"THIS IS MY FATHER'S WORLD
O LET ME NE'ER FORGET
THAT THOUGH THE WRONG SEEM OFT
SO STRONG.

GOD IS THE RULER YET.

THIS IS MY FATHER'S WORLD
THE BATTLE IS NOT DONE
JESUS WHO DIED SHALL BE SATISFIED
AND EARTH AND HEAVEN BE ONE.

MAY I CLOSE WITH THIS ONE
THOUGHT, THAT ALTHOUGH IT HAS NOT
BEEN REVEALED TO US THERE MUST INDEED
BE A PURPOSE OR REASON FOR THIS TRAGEDY.

I WANT TO AGAIN, AS I DID LAST
NIGHT BEFORE OUR FOOTBALL TEAM, EXPRESS
OUR SORROW TO THE FAMILIES OF THE
PERSONS ON THE PLANE AND TO THEIR
ASSOCIATES BACK AT MARSHALL UNIVERSITY.

GOD BLESS US ALL.