

Speech by ROBERT MORGAN
Attorney General
Dedication of New Duplex at
Camp Dogwood
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It certainly is a pleasure being with you on this important day for Camp Dogwood. As I looked around the camp this afternoon, I found it hard to believe that such an outstanding recreational facility could have developed since just 1967, and everyone who has been associated with the growth of the camp certainly has much to be proud of. I saw from the Camp Dogwood brochure that the growth is far from over, since future plans include another duplex, another dormitory, and an addition to the lodge. Quite frankly, if it keeps up I'm afraid pretty soon there could be somebody else trying to steal Dr. Jenkins from East Carolina.

I think Camp Dogwood came about because of what I believe is the common faith that no man need be bound by the circumstances of his birth or any other handicap -- physical or mental -- but rather, he should be encouraged, and helped whenever possible, to raise the level of his life to its highest possible limits. You here today share this faith I know.

Some of you are in some way handicapped yourselves. Others of you have simply seen a great need and responded to it,

but you all have a special interest in helping the blind to enjoy the pleasures of recreation.

Over the years, many people have given of themselves -- their love -- their willingness to serve -- to aid the blind, as well as the deaf, the crippled, and the mentally ill. Many of these people have been visually handicapped themselves. For example, the interest and concern of the gallant and gifted physician, Samuel Gridley Howe, produced the first school for the blind, the Perkins Institution.

And we can never think of the Perkins Institution without the connecting thought of the amazing Annie Sullivan Macy. As a child, Miss Sullivan was blinded by disease. After her schooling at Perkins Institution, she had surgery which partially restored her sight and enabled her to assume her now famous role of teacher to Helen Keller. It is impossible to imagine the feat of first reaching that inaccessible mind with the notion that there was such a thing as a word. Certainly this gift by an extraordinary teacher was a remarkable example of giving of one's self to help others.

Helen Keller had this quality herself. When Annie Sullivan grew older, she became blind again. She had forgotten all the ways of blindness, and after all those years she had to take lessons in Braille. This time, Helen Keller was her teacher.

I am sure many of you are also familiar with the story of Henry Viscardi, Jr. It is a story of courage, dedication, and perseverance. Henry was born in 1912 with two short stumps where legs should have been. He spent the first seven years of his life in hospitals while doctors performed operation after operation.

Finally he was allowed to go home, his stumps encased in heavy padded boots. With cries of "ape man" ringing in his ears, young Viscardi went through elementary school and high school in eight years. At Fordham University, he paid his own way by refereeing basketball games, waiting on tables, and covering school sports for The New York Times. After three years, he left to take a job as a law clerk and to attend St. John's Law School at night. Soon he became a tax expert for the government, working hard, rising rapidly.

At age 26, research in artificial limbs advanced to the point that Henry could be fitted with them, and for the first time, he stood. He looked in the mirror and saw not a three feet, 8 inches high man but a man of five feet, 8 inches tall who no longer wore boxing glove boots.

In 1952, Henry Viscardi founded Abilities, Inc. giving up a position with Burlington Mills where he had the reputation of "the fast-rising young executive." The company has grown, and with it the opportunities for disabled men and women throughout the world, for only the handicapped are employed by this company.

Helen Keller and Henry Viscardi were born with their handicaps, but what of those who have had to adapt in adult life to conditions that must seem overwhelming. Their perseverance and courage is truly amazing, for it would be all too easy to develop a defeatist attitude of "why did this happen to me" and wallow in self-pity.

Take, for example, the story of Roger Arnett. Roger came from a very poor family and it required great sacrifice for him to go to college in 1929. At Michigan State, he became a record-breaking champion as a track runner. And then in 1931, on the way to a meet, Roger's car overturned in a snowstorm. When he regained consciousness, he learned that the lower part of his body would be paralyzed forever.

So began Roger Arnett's real handicap race, the one he must run for the rest of his days. But what did he

do in the face of this adversity? He overcame the frustrations and defeats, turned to the ministry and enlisted in a crusade to bring hope and assistance to the physically disabled. He married a very special young woman, who herself had been handicapped by polio at the age of six, and they found room in their lives to adopt three children.

Somehow, the way these people have all reacted to their handicaps substantiates the theory that God works in mysterious ways, often turning a meaningless tragedy into a very meaningful experience or a blessing -- a shared experience and a blessing that can mean much to others.

And reacting in this way is not easy. It takes courage, the kind of courage, I think, President Kennedy was talking about when he said:

"There are a lot of acts of courage which are done in the flash of a moment, but the most commendable and admirable acts of courage are those which go on day, in day out, month in, month out, year in, year out."

Thus, courage -- and determination -- and faith -- are the tools of the handicapped. With such an arsenal, no

challenge could be too great, but even so, because of people like you who are here today, the blind have not had to face their challenge alone.

Just as the blind do so readily give of themselves, you, too, have given much to this great cause; and so, too, do you share in this heritage of self-sacrifice. What a great contribution, for example, has been made by Mrs. Sternberger and Mrs. Brooks in this beautiful duplex, the dedication of which is our reason for coming here today. It would be impossible to assess the joy it will bring over the years to those who will stay here.

You Lions, too, are well-known for your work on behalf of the blind, and certainly Camp Dogwood is your crowning achievement. I know some of you may at times feel that your own contributions seem insignificant, but without the concerted effort of a great many, a project like Camp Dogwood would never become a reality.

I certainly could not here today even begin to mention all those who I know have worked so hard to help the handicapped here in North Carolina, let alone all the pioneers who throughout history have cared, loved, and given of themselves. But I think

Helen Keller paid them just tribute when she so eloquently said of those who helped her:

"In a thousand ways, they have turned my limitations into beautiful privileges, and enable me to walk serene and happy in the shadow cast by my deprivation."

And I think of no other place which could be more conducive to the kind of transformation Helen Keller was talking about than here at Camp Dogwood. It is here because many people -- with and without handicaps -- have volunteered themselves toward helping the blind to lead fuller lives. As I thought about my talk here today, I think more than anything I wondered what it is that causes motivation for a project such as this. I think I found the answer in that word "volunteer." Literally, it means "one who enters into, or offers himself for, any service of his own free will."

"Offering one's self" -- I expect this phrase can provide many an individual story of human worth, of personal dignity, and concern for human rights.

This "offering of one's self" has created a new world for the handicapped, and while we tend to hide from

such thoughts, the world of the handicapped has not always been pleasant. I certainly would not imply that we are spending too much effort in the field of occupational rehabilitation, but recreation for the blind has been neglected for too long. Like everyone else, the handicapped will be finding more time for recreation in the future, and certainly they should have available the facilities for it. Camp Dogwood is such a facility.

I think that it is important, too, that at Camp Dogwood the emphasis is on ability, not disability. Its philosophy is based on what people can do rather than what they cannot do, and I think that too often we forget the great achievements that persons with visual handicaps have made.

Again, I think, of Helen Keller. Not only did she graduate from Radcliffe at the age of 24, but she did so cum laude.

And I'm sure many of you know Judge Fred Hedrick, right here in North Carolina, who has distinguished himself as a Judge of our Court of Appeals. Judge Hedrick has been blind since early in his childhood, and he views his handicap in this way, and I quote:

"Blindness is a handicap, perhaps, if you're looking for perfection. But nobody is perfect. Everyone has some kind of personal handicap.

I think of other handicaps and I really can't complain. I have, after all, been able to do most things...have been fortunate to live pretty much as I wanted. The only thing I cannot do is see."

Where could anyone find more ways to use their abilities than here at Camp Dogwood? Here, everyone is able to read, swim, go boating and fishing, and even ride horses, while at the same time an excellent staff and architectural layout keep disability at a minimum. The people who come here and use the camp's facilities will most certainly enjoy themselves, and in keeping with the slogan in the camp brochure, "Don't Let Blindness Mean Loneliness," this should certainly be so. Just as importantly, everyone who comes will go away more productive and self-sufficient persons and better able to keep their limitations in the proper perspective.