

SPEECH BY ROBERT MORGAN
IRONS BUILDING DEDICATION
GREENVILLE, NORTH CAROLINA
SEPTEMBER 18, 1974

IT IS A PLEASURE FOR ME TO BE HERE TODAY TO PARTICIPATE IN WHAT IS SURELY A MOST SPECIAL OCCASION FOR EAST CAROLINA UNIVERSITY AND THE PEOPLE OF THIS AREA OF OUR STATE.

ONE OF THE GREAT TRAGEDIES OF OUR EXISTENCE IS THAT TOO OFTEN WE FAIL TO TAKE TIME TO NOTE THE ACCOMPLISHMENTS OF PERSONS LIVING AND WORKING AMONG US. INSTEAD, WE EXPECT THOSE WHO COME AFTER US TO SORT THROUGH THE EVENTS OF THE PAST AND GIVE CREDIT WHERE CREDIT IS DUE.

BUT HISTORY BOOKS, WHEN ALL IS SAID AND DONE, HAVE SPACE FOR ONLY THE MOST EXTRAORDINARY ACCOMPLISHMENTS AND INDIVIDUALS, THOSE WHOM FATE AND CIRCUMSTANCES FOR SOME REASON HAPPENED TO PUSH TO THE FOREFRONT AND INTO THE BRIGHT LIGHT OF PUBLIC RECOGNITION. CONSEQUENTLY, WE REVERE THE FEW BUT EVENTUALLY LOSE SIGHT OF THE ACCOMPLISHMENTS OF THE MANY.

I THINK IT IMPORTANT TO REMEMBER ON AN OCCASION SUCH AS THIS ONE, THAT EACH DAY AS WE GO ABOUT OUR APPOINTED DUTIES, THERE ARE MANY AMONG US WHOSE CONCERNS FOR THEIR FELLOW CITIZENS ARE JUST AS KEEN AS THE HELEN KELLERS, THE JANE ADAMSES, AND THE MADAME CURIES.

THERE ARE THOSE AMONG US WHOSE DEDICATION TO MAKING A BETTER LIFE FOR OUR PEOPLE IS JUST AS INTENSE AND WHOSE CONTRIBUTIONS REQUIRE AN EQUAL MEASURE OF IMAGINATION, COURAGE AND DEVOTION.

THEREFORE, I DO CONSIDER TODAY TO BE A "MOST SPECIAL OCCASION" AS WE GATHER TO CREATE A MEMORIAL TO A BEAUTIFUL LIFE, WHICH WE STILL ARE PRIVILEGED TO SHARE, AND TO SAY "THANK YOU," TO DR. MALENE IRONS FOR HER OUTSTANDING WORK WITH THE EXCEPTIONAL CHILDREN OF OUR STATE, ESPECIALLY EASTERN NORTH CAROLINA.

YOU KNOW, WE LIVE IN AN ERA WHEN WE AT LAST HAVE COME TO KNOW THE MEANING OF THE WORD "CONSERVATION," AND TO UNDERSTAND THAT THE RESOURCES OF EVEN A BOUNTIFUL NATION SUCH AS OURS ARE NOT UNLIMITED. UNFORTUNATELY, IT HAS TAKEN US A LONG TIME TO COME TO THIS REALIZATION.

IN THIS REGARD, DR. MALENE IRONS WAS AHEAD OF HER TIME.

EVERYONE, I THINK, WOULD AGREE THAT THE GREATEST RESOURCE OF ANY STATE OR NATION IS ITS PEOPLE, BUT FEW COMPREHEND THE IMPLICATIONS OF THIS STATEMENT.

ASK DR. MALENE IRONS AND SHE WILL TELL YOU.

SHE WILL TELL YOU THAT WE CANNOT AFFORD TO WASTE ONE OUNCE OF HUMAN TALENT AND THAT WE CANNOT PERMIT ONE BIT OF HUMAN POTENTIAL TO GO UNEXPLORED OR UNDEVELOPED.

DR. IRONS, IN TURN, HAS TRANSLATED THIS UNDERSTANDING AND THIS CONVICTION INTO WHAT HAS BECOME HER LIFE'S WORK: HELPING CHILDREN EXPAND THEIR CAPABILITIES AND THEIR LIVES TO THE GREATEST EXTENT POSSIBLE. AND IT IS FOR THIS SERVICE THAT WE GATHER TO HONOR HER TODAY AND OFFICIALLY DESIGNATE THIS STRUCTURE, WHICH HOUSES THE CLINIC WHICH HAS BECOME THE INSTRUMENT FOR HER GREAT WORK, THE MALENE G. IRONS BUILDING.

I THINK IT VERY MUCH IN ORDER THAT WE TAKE A FEW MOMENTS TO REVIEW THE LIFE AND ACCOMPLISHMENTS OF THIS OUTSTANDING WOMAN, THIS SKILLED PROFESSIONAL, THIS COMPASSIONATE HUMANITARIAN.

I TAKE PRIDE IN NOTING THAT DR. IRON'S ROOTS ARE DEEP IN THE SOIL OF EASTERN NORTH CAROLINA WHICH IS SO DEAR TO ALL OF US. SHE WAS BORN IN SUNBURY UP IN GATES COUNTY, AND WAS EDUCATED IN THE PUBLIC SCHOOL OF OUR STATE.

WE ARE EQUALLY PROUD THAT SHE CHOSE EAST CAROLINA FOR HER UNDERGRADUATE EDUCATION AND THAT UPON COMPLETING HER MEDICAL TRAINING AT THE MEDICAL COLLEGE OF VIRGINIA SHE DECIDED TO RETURN TO GREENVILLE TO ENGAGE IN THE PRIVATE PRACTICE OF PEDIATRICS.

HER PROFESSIONAL INTERESTS HAVE BEEN FAR-RANGING, AND SHE CONTINUES HER ASSOCIATION WITH LOCAL, COUNTY, STATE, AND NATIONAL MEDICAL ASSOCIATIONS. SHE IS A MEMBER OF THE NORTH CAROLINA AND AMERICAN PUBLIC HEALTH ASSOCIATIONS AND A MAINSTAY OF LOCAL PROGRAMS DEALING WITH THE PROBLEMS OF CHILDREN AND THE HANDICAPPED.

THE PRACTICE OF MEDICINE IS A DEMANDING UNDERTAKING, BUT FOR MALENE IRONS IT IS A "CALLING," A LABOR OF LOVE, A VEHICLE OF SERVICE. AND SHE HAS WON THE HEARTS AND THE DEVOTION OF THE PEOPLE OF THIS AREA.

IT IS NO WONDER, THEN, THAT SHE WAS FASCINATED BY THE IDEA OF CREATING A DEVELOPMENTAL EVALUATION CLINIC ON THE EAST CAROLINA UNIVERSITY CAMPUS AND WAS WILLING TO ACCEPT THE DIRECTORSHIP OF IT WHEN IT WAS OFFERED IN 1964. UNDER HER GUIDANCE AND WITH THE BASIC PHILOSOPHY THAT EVERY CHILD WITH A HANDICAP CAN BE HELPED AND, INDEED MUST BE HELPED TO FULLY UTILIZE HIS ABILITIES, THE CLINIC'S SPHERE OF SERVICE NOW EXTENDS INTO 27 EASTERN NORTH CAROLINA COUNTIES.

AS A HIGHLY COMPETENT, RESPECTED PROFESSIONAL, SHE TOOK CHARGE AND LEAD THE WAY FOR OTHERS LONG BEFORE IT BECAME FASHIONABLE FOR WOMEN TO DO SO. IN THIS REGARD, I THINK HER LIFE AND HER ACCOMPLISHMENTS SHOULD BE AN OBJECT LESSON TO US.

JUST AS SHE REJECTED OLD NOTIONS ABOUT THE LIMITATIONS OF EXCEPTIONAL CHILDREN, THROUGH THE PRACTICE OF HER PROFESSION SHE CAUSED OTHERS TO CAST ASIDE PRECONCEIVED IDEAS ABOUT THE ROLE OF WOMEN IN THE PROFESSIONS.

AGAIN I NOTE THAT OUR GREATEST RESOURCE IS OUR PEOPLE, AND WE MUST MAKE SURE IN OUR DAY AND WE DO NOT ALLOW THE TALENTS OF WOMEN TO GO WASTED, OR THEIR AMBITIONS TO BE FRUSTRATED, BY SOCIETY'S OLD PREJUDICES AND OUT-DATED STEREOTYPES.

MANY YEARS AGO, THOMAS WOLFE, WHOM WE AS NORTH CAROLINIANS ARE PROUD TO CLAIM AS A NATIVE SON SPOKE OF THE "PROMISE OF AMERICA" BY SAYING: "TO EVERY MAN HIS CHANCE, TO EVERY MAN, REGARDLESS OF HIS BIRTH, HIS SHINING GOLDEN OPPORTUNITY -- TO EVERY MAN THE RIGHT TO LIVE, TO WORK, TO BE HIMSELF, AND TO BECOME WHATEVER THING HIS MANHOOD AND HIS VISION CAN COMBINE TO MAKE HIM -- THIS, SEEKER, IS THE PROMISE OF AMERICA".

YOU WILL NOTE THAT WOLFE SPOKE IN TERMS OF "EVERY MAN."

THE LIFE AND ACCOMPLISHMENTS OF DR. MALENE IRONS SHOULD BE EVIDENCE ENOUGH THAT THE NEEDS OF OUR TIMES AND THE DESIRES OF THE WOMEN IN OUR NATION DICTATE THAT WOLFE'S "PROMISE OF AMERICA" BE AVAILABLE TO EVERY AMERICAN, MAN OR WOMAN, AND THAT SEX SHOULD BE NO BARRIER TO PERSONAL AND PROFESSIONAL FULFILLMENT.

EAST CAROLINA UNIVERSITY, TODAY, HONORS ITSELF BY HONORING DR. MALENE IRONS AND NAMING THIS BUILDING FOR HER.

DR. IRONS, SURELY THOSE OF US PRIVILEGED TO BE HERE TODAY WILL DRAW NEW STRENGTH FROM YOUR EXAMPLE. WE CONGRATULATE YOU AND WISH FOR YOU MANY YEARS OF HAPPINESS AND CONTINUED SERVICE TO THE PEOPLE AND THE CHILDREN OF EASTERN NORTH CAROLINA.