

SPEECH BY ROBERT MORGAN  
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FIRST ANNUAL COLLARD FESTIVAL  
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I WANT TO THANK YOU FOR INVITING ME TO BE WITH YOU TODAY AND TO PARTICIPATE IN THIS FIRST ANNUAL COLLARD FESTIVAL. I ALWAYS WELCOME A CHANCE TO BE IN EASTERN NORTH CAROLINA AND ESPECIALLY IN PITT COUNTY.

MANY OF YOU KNOW THAT JUST A COUPLE OF WEEKS AGO I SPENT SEVERAL DAYS TRAVELLING THROUGHOUT THIS AREA TRYING TO KEEP IN TOUCH WITH THE PEOPLE. WE DIDN'T TRY TO CREATE A STIR; WE JUST VISITED AROUND AND MADE OURSELVES AVAILABLE TO ANYBODY WHO WANTED TO COME BY AND TALK.

I WAS PLEASED WITH THE TRIP AND THE REPORT THAT ONE OF THE LARGER STATE NEWSPAPERS MADE OF IT. THEY TITLED IT "HEY ROBERT, HOW'RE YOU DOING," AND WERE SURPRISED THAT I SEEMED TO FEEL PERFECTLY AT HOME WALKING DOWN THE STREET AND BEING GREETED BY "HEY ROBERT" IN PLACES LIKE FARMVILLE, AND KINSTON AND WILLIAMSTON.

WELL, THEY SHOULDN'T HAVE BEEN BECAUSE EASTERN NORTH CAROLINA IS HOME TO ME AND NOTHING SOUNDS BETTER TO MY EARS AFTER BEING IN WASHINGTON AND NEW YORK AND CALIFORNIA AND

RUSSIA AND GERMANY THAN BEING RIGHT HERE IN AYDEN AND HEARING SOME OLD FRIENDS SAY, "HEY ROBERT, HOW'RE YOU DOING?"

THE TRUTH IS I'M DOING ALRIGHT AS LONG AS I CAN GET BACK DOWN HERE WHENEVER I WANT TO!

THERE IS NO DOUBT IN MY MIND THAT THE COLLARD FESTIVAL OVER THE YEARS IS GOING TO BE THE SOURCE OF A LOT OF FUN AND GOOD FELLOWSHIP.

YOU KNOW, THE GREAT WRITER KIPLING ON ONE OCCASION TURNED HIS EYES TOWARD HEAVEN AND MADE THIS SHORT PRAYER: LORD, "TEACH US DELIGHT IN SIMPLE THINGS."

WE MIGHT WELL HAVE OPENED THIS FIRST FESTIVAL WITH THOSE WORDS TODAY AS WE GATHER TO HONOR AND PROMOTE THE COLLARD.

IF YOU WANT TO GET PHILOSOPHICAL ABOUT IT, THE COLLARD MAY VERY WELL STAND FOR A WAY OF LIFE THAT OUGHT TO BE PRESERVED HERE IN THE EASTERN PART OF THE STATE.

EVERYONE KNOWS THAT THIS AREA IS UNDERGOING SOME PROFOUND CHANGES THESE DAYS. AND UP TILL NOW I BELIEVE THESE CHANGES HAVE MEANT GOOD THINGS FOR THE PEOPLE WHO

LIVE HERE. BUT WE'VE GOT TO KEEP OUR PERSPECTIVE, AND SEE TO IT THAT THE WAYS WHICH ARE OLD AND GOOD ARE NOT LOST FOREVER.

I KNOW FROM PERSONAL EXPERIENCE THAT THERE IS SOMETHING ABOUT GROWING UP AND GOING TO SCHOOL DOWN EAST THAT WILL SUSTAIN A PERSON FOR THE REST OF HIS LIFE.

PART OF IT IS GROWING UP AMONG PEOPLE WHO HAVE A TASTE FOR HUMBLE THINGS AND SIMPLE PLEASURES.

PART OF IT IS GROWING UP WHERE NATURE IS STILL WILD ENOUGH TO DEMAND THAT HUMAN BEINGS PAY ATTENTION TO HER WAYS. AS EVERY FARMER IN THE EAST KNOWS, THE MAN WHO TRIES TO GO AGAINST NATURE IS LIABLE TO LEARN SOME HARD LESSONS IN HIS TIME.

IN A VERY REAL WAY, THIS PART OF THE COUNTRY, AND THE PEOPLE WHO LIVE HERE, GO WITH YOU ALL YOUR DAYS, AS LONG AS YOU REMAIN A PERSON WHO VALUES THINGS WHICH COUNT, AND SUSPECTS THINGS WHICH ARE ARTIFICIAL AND PHONEY.

I LIKE THIS STORY -- A TRUE ONE -- ABOUT A LITTLE GIRL FROM NORTH CAROLINA WHOSE PARENTS SCRAMBLED HARD TO MAKE ENDS MEET. THEY NEVER HAD MUCH MORE THAN THE BARE NECESSITIES, MUCH LESS A VACATION.

BUT FINALLY THEY GOT SOME MONEY TOGETHER AND DECIDED FOR ONCE IN THEIR LIVES NOT TO JUST PAY BILLS WITH IT. THEY TOOK A TRIP TO THE BIG CITY OF NEW ORLEANS, AND -- HANG THE EXPENSE -- THEY WERE GOING FIRST CLASS.

THEY CHECKED INTO THE FINEST HOTEL IN THE CITY -- THE ROOSEVELT -- AND TRIED THEIR BEST NOT TO ACT LIKE THE COMMON FOLKS THEY REALLY WERE.

IN THE FANCY HOTEL DINING ROOM THAT NIGHT, WITH LINEN ON THE TABLE, AND GLEAMING SILVERWARE, AND SPARKLING CRYSTAL, THEY WANTED TO HAVE A DINNER TO MATCH.

HER MOTHER LEANED OVER TO THE LITTLE GIRL AND WHISPERED, "NOW DEAR, GO AHEAD AND ORDER ANYTHING YOU WANT TO. DON'T WORRY ABOUT WHAT IT COSTS."

THE LITTLE GIRL WAS REAL PLEASED AT THAT. AND WHEN THE WAITER ASKED WHAT SHE'D HAVE, SHE SAT UP STRAIGHT AND PROUDLY AND SAID, "THANK YOU, I'LL HAVE COLLARDS."

IF YOU ASK ME, THAT LITTLE GIRL HAD BEEN BROUGHT UP RIGHT. I KNOW THERE HAVE BEEN PLENTY OF TIMES WHEN I'VE BEEN SEATED IN SOME FANCY FRENCH RESTAURANT --- USUALLY AS SOMEBODY ELSE'S GUEST, I MIGHT ADD --- AND NOTHING WOULD HAVE PLEASED ME MORE THAN TO PASS OVER THE

THE CREPES AND THE FILETS AND SAID TO THE WAITER, "THANK YOU, I'LL HAVE COLLARDS PLEASE . THE WAY MOMMA FIXED THEM."

PROVIDED, OF COURSE, THEY COULD ROUND ME UP SOME PEPPER VINEGAR TO GO ON THEM.

A NUTRITIONIST -- ONE WHO GREW UP HERE IN NORTH CAROLINA -- TELLS ME SOMETHING VERY INTERESTING. FOLKS IN OUR PART OF THE STATE USED TO SURVIVE ON SIMPLE FARE, AND THE THINGS THEY DID EAT SHOWED THEY KNEW WHAT THEY WERE DOING.

A DIET OF COLLARDS AND DRIED BEANS, WITH A LITTLE MEAT, PROVIDES THE NECESSARY VITAMINS AND MINERALS AND COMPLETE PROTEIN REQUIREMENTS. IF PEOPLE HAD CORNBREAD AND BUTTERMILK, THEY WERE SITTING PRETTY.

IT'S JUST AS I SAID. PEOPLE WHO HAVE TO PAY ATTENTION TO WHAT NATURE PROVIDES FOR THE HUMBLEST MAN LEARN WHAT'S GOOD FOR THEM AND WHAT'S WORTHLESS.

THAT'S WHY IT WAS SUCH A GOOD IDEA TO STOP CALLING THE WAY WE USED TO DO THINGS "FOLK-LORE" AND TO START CALLING IT "FOLK WISDOM." IT WAS WISDOM, FOR EXAMPLE, FOR TENANTS TO PLOW UP THEIR COLLARDS WHEN THEY MOVED

AT THE BEGINNING OF THE YEAR TO THE NEXT FARM. THEIR VERY SURVIVAL WAS LIABLE TO DEPEND ON IT.

BUT WHAT ABOUT THE SURVIVAL OF SOME OF THAT BASIC FOLK WISDOM WHICH CAME FROM HAVING TO STUDY NATURE?

RIGHT NOW, EASTERN NORTH CAROLINA IS UNDERGOING INDUSTRIAL GROWTH AND AN AGRICULTURAL REVOLUTION.

THE LITTLE TOWNS OF THE EAST ARE BECOMING LITTLE CITIES. THEY ARE LIABLE TO BE THE SITE OF A SLEEK INDUSTRIAL PLANT OF REGIONAL IMPORTANCE, AND PEOPLE EVENTUALLY MAY DRIVE FROM MILES AROUND TO WORK THERE.

THE RICH PHOSPHATE ORE BEING MINED IN BEAUFORT COUNTY IS OF MAJOR SIGNIFICANCE TO THE AGRICULTURE OF THE ENTIRE NATION.

AND A FEW YEARS AGO WHAT HUNTER DEEP IN THE PINEY WOODS STALKING DEER OR BEAR COULD GUESS THE FOREST WOULD GIVE WAY TO HUGE MIDWESTERN-STYLE FARMS OF AS MUCH AS THREE HUNDRED AND EIGHTY THOUSAND ACRES.

YOU CAN HARDLY THINK OF THAT MUCH LAND AT ONE TIME, MUCH LESS IMAGINE TRYING TO FARM IT.

THE EAST IS MAKING GREAT PROGRESS IN THOSE THINGS WHICH SUSTAIN OUR PEOPLE ECONOMICALLY. THAT'S GOOD.

BUT IT IS EQUALLY IMPORTANT TO MAKE SURE WE DO NOT GIVE UP THOSE THINGS WHICH SUSTAIN US IN SO MANY OTHER WAYS. WE MUST WORRY ABOUT THE QUALITY OF LIFE AND THE PRESERVATION OF BASIC VALUES.

LATELY, PEOPLE IN THIS NATION HAVE COME TO REALIZE SOME BASIC TRUTHS, WHICH, IN MY OPINION, THEY COULD HAVE LEARNED LONG AGO FROM PEOPLE HERE IN EASTERN NORTH CAROLINA.

ONE IS THAT THE AMOUNT OF LAND AVAILABLE TO WORK WITH IS NOT ENDLESS. ANOTHER IS THAT THERE IS A RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE SORT OF PLACE YOU LIVE IN AND THE SORT OF PEOPLE YOU ARE. IT IS SO VERY TRUE THAT MAN AMIDST DISMAL SURROUNDINGS BECOMES A DISMAL CREATURE.

WHAT THESE TWO THINGS MEAN FOR EASTERN NORTH CAROLINA IS THIS: WE CANNOT AND SHOULD NOT CONVERT THE WHOLE OF THE COASTAL PLAINS INTO SOMETHING THAT LOOKS LIKE KANSAS. WE HAVE TO MAKE SURE THE FAMILY FARM SURVIVES AND I TELL YOU IT ISN'T GOING TO BE EASY. THERE ARE THOSE HIGH IN THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT WHO WOULD BE DELIGHTED TO SEE THE FAMILY FARM PERISH.

WE HAVE MADE GREAT PROGRESS IN THIS PART OF THE STATE AND I AM PROUD OF IT.

THE ARGUMENT FOR A MEDICAL SCHOOL IN THE EAST WAS A GOOD ARGUMENT AND THANK GOODNESS WE PREVAILED. THE ARGUMENT FOR BLUE CHIP INDUSTRIES AND NEW PAYROLLS IS GOOD. THE ARGUMENT FOR EFFICIENT AGRIBUSINESS IS GOOD.

BUT LET'S CLING TO THE KIND OF LIFESTYLE WE HAVE LOVED DOWN HERE SO LONG. LET'S NOT GET SO TIRED DRIVING MANY MILES TO WORK THAT WE CAN'T TAKE ADVANTAGE OF WHAT NATURE GIVES US HERE. LET'S NOT GET SO OVERPOPULATED THAT THE PEOPLE IN OUR TOWNS STOP BEING NEIGHBORLY.

WE OUGHT NOT TO FOLLOW CALIFORNIA'S LEAD AND LET MORE THAN TWO-THIRDS OF OUR WETLANDS BE DESTROYED, ALONG WITH ALL THE WILD CREATURES WHO CALL IT HOME. LET'S PRESERVE AND STRENGTHEN OUR COASTAL INDUSTRIES. FOR GOODNESS SAKE DON'T LET OUR EASTERN LANDSCAPE BECOME THE INDUSTRIAL NIGHTMARE WE SEE NOW IN THE NORTH.

MOTHER NATURE HAS SOME MESSAGES FOR US IN THIS WILD AND FERTILE COUNTRYSIDE OF OURS. "GO FORWARD," SHE SAYS, "BUT BE CAREFUL, OR YOU'LL LOSE WHAT YOU CAN'T EVER GET BACK."

LET'S LISTEN TO HER. WE DON'T WANT TO RAISE A SINGLE GENERATION OF YOUNG PEOPLE DOWN HERE WHO DON'T KNOW THAT THERE IS SANITY IN SIMPLE THINGS.

THEY WILL BE BROUGHT UP WELL IF THEY KNOW THE  
VALUE OF THINGS WHICH ARE AS UNPRETENTIOUS AND ELEMENTAL  
AS THE COLLARD GREEN. AND AS NOURISHING TO BOTH BODY  
AND SPIRIT.

THANK YOU VERY MUCH.