

ADDRESS BY ROBERT MORGAN
UNITED STATES SENATOR
SANDERSON HIGH SCHOOL BACCALAUREATE
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This afternoon as we all know, we have gathered here in honor of these young men and women who reached such a very important milestone in their lives.

By your presence here and by this ceremony today we are saying to these young people just how very proud we are that through their hard work and through years of perserverence they have distinguished themselves by completing the rather rigorous and prescribed course of studying in preparation for their lives that lie here.

And to you young graduates, I would say that your accomplishments have not been easy of course but with encouragement from your family and your friends and with the assistance of

your teachers and with an abiding faith and a merciful and Almighty God, you are now able to pause briefly and momentarily and look back at your accomplishments so that you may then look forward to a future that is much clearer and to a future that has a much brighter vision and so for all of your friends who are gathered this afternoon and to all of the people of this city and this state and this great nation of ours of which we are so proud, I congratulate you for your accomplishment.

Now I speak of this occasion to you as being a milestone in your lives, and surely it is. You have now reached the point when you must necessarily become more dependent upon your own judgement and upon your own actions than in the past. In the future, you will be called upon to decide for yourselves the various courses

and directions that you will take.

Some of you, if not most of you in this graduating class, will continue roles for study at one of our universities or colleges in North Carolina and perhaps some even outside of our state. Others, a most durable study for technical and trade careers and some of you will go directly into your lifes work. But to all, there are some observations that I think we can make this afternoon. Observations that I have gathered over a lifetime of works and study that I think may have some relevance and some importance to you. And so, at the risk of being somewhat conventional, at the risk of being somewhat like most baccalaureate and commencement speakers, I want to pass on to you some thrift deplore of my thoughts with the hope that some

of them will be remembered by you and may be of some help to you as you confront lives from time to time in the future and as you confront so many of the various typical and very profecion problems that we all have to face.

First of all, we should always remember that by the mercy and divine province of all-knowing God, that we here in this state live in a land that is free. A freedom that we here have taken for granted and we in this country can take our freedom for granted because we live in a Democracy. Only in a Democracy such as ours can a person take his freedom for granted. But without constant and frequent recurrence to the fundamental principles that have kept us free and made this land great, it may not be always so.

I want to say to you that we live in a very real world today. We cannot and we must not divide ourselves from the realities of the world that we live in. Today, this very afternoon, as we sit here in this Civic Center, thousands yeas tens of thousands and even hundreds of thousands of Bermese who are of the Muslem faith are being slothered and maimed and killed and driven from their homeland in Berma by their Budhists neighbors and today they lie languishing in the poorest of all lands on the face of the earth, Bangladesh. A country that is so poor that it cannot even care for or feed its own.

All of this because of difference in political beliefs.

Today, here in this auditorium, we no doubt have Christians and Jews, Muslems and Budhists, Atheist and Deist sitting side by side in peace and in harmony. Each affording to the other the

rights of his own conscience and the right to believe in his own beliefs. There are very few places in this world today where this is true and once you remember it from time to time that this is true and once you dedicate your lives and yourselves as you go forth in the future, that it may always be so in this country. In the past few days, and no doubt at the present time in other parts of the world, we in Washington learn very vividly on very clear and succinct reports that men and women, boys and girls, both black and whites, Chinese and Vietnamese have been massacred or been driven from their native land solely because of the colors of their skin or on the origins of their purpose. And others of course and of the land around the world are being denied the privileges of participating in the process of governing their own lives for similar reasons.

And though laced with frailties as no other society on the face of this earth offers such opportunities, such equality to its people as we do here in this great land of ours.

Some time ago, I was sitting in the presiding office, Office of the Chairman of the United States Senate and I heard one of the greatest orations concerning the greatness of America as we pay tribute to a number of members of the United States Senate who were retiring at the end of the last session. There as one of the Senators spoke, he pointed to Senator John Pastore of Rhode Island, a first generation American, born of Immigrant attire. There was Senator Roman Hruska of Nebraska, a first generation American born of Czechoslovakia immigrant parents. And there sitting on the floor of the Senate on that very day

was Senator Spark Matsunaga and Senator Daniel Inoye from the State of Hawaii both born of Japanese immigrant parents and then there was Senator Ed Brooks, a distinguished Senator from Massachusetts born of parents of African origin. And Hiram Fong, who just retired, a member of the Senate at one time, of Hawaii, born of Chinese parents.

Only in America do we find people of all origins, of all races, of all creeds able to live together in peace and harmony and respecting each others rights to enjoy the freedom that we each himself enjoys. There is something great about America and I hope as you go away from this your school that you won't forget.

When you leave this school this afternoon, you may if you choose to do so, board a jet plane and go to anywhere in this

country without bothering to ask the advice or consent of anyone including the local police of your intentions or of your destinations. The right to be mobile, to be free, to travel is one of the great human rights that we enjoy in this country that is not enjoyed by the majority of the people on the face of this earth. The right to be let alone unless we are infringing upon the rights of others is so fundamental to this country that the Supreme Court has spoken time and time again and has said that no country can ever be free unless we can be free to be let alone.

So won't you remember and treasure these basic freedoms, and remember that they can be threatened from within our own country as well as from without.

And I will ask you also as you pursue your courses better next year that you may, if you choose, you may be able to pursue

it in anyone of 57 community colleges or technical institutes maintained and supported by the people of this State in order to afford its people a better opportunity to a better education and to have to improve the quality of one. Or you may, if you like, enter into one of the 16 state supported universities that we have here in North Carolina and there are literally dozens of privately supported colleges and universities. Yes, I could go on to enumerate to you for a longer period of time the blessings of this great state and country but you know that all I'm asking is that you remember and that you seek to preserve them and that you seek to protect them so that you can hand down to your children and your grandchildren to come these precious privileges and freedom which have been ours to enjoy.

If we are to do that, we must be mindful of it and we must be mindful of them to be mindful of them requires a positive action. I think when we remember these so many blessings, the manifold blessings of this country, too numerous to mention, that the penny gripes and frustrations of our people that we so often hear and quite often we hear on the Bart Ritner talk show in the evenings that these criticisms and these forms fell into was insignificant.

Last Thursday night, my wife and I were driving from Greensboro to Raleigh and we turned on the Barts WPTF show and I said to my wife, I said, "You know we are driving down a beautiful highway and beautiful state where we have wonderful and bountiful opportunities but I bet you a nickel that from here to Lillington we will not hear anything complimentary about this great state

that we live in." Well I was wrong. One caller called in to complain about the grass on our highways but in doing so he did compliment how well South Carolina had maintained their highways.

But I think it is something in the frame of mind and in that I am not really saying it is wrong but what I am really saying to you is that if we want to make this country really great and that if we want to continue to be great that we ourselves must really think good about our country and then we must talk about the good that we think about.

Now that I have said these things and got them off of my chest let me talk with you for just a few moments about two or three other observations that I have made in my lifetime which I hope may be of some help to you.

First, I want to talk about your own economic well being. We

owe it to ourselves to be self-reliant and there is nothing in the world wrong about us being concerned about our future. You know every since essay on self-reliance has commended to all of us. Yes, I suspect most of us here today at some time or another here in our school and career has been required to read Emerson's essay on self-reliance.

So, I say to you that you must begin now to prepare to provide yourselves and your families the necessary materiel possessions of life such as food and clothing, medical care and materiel comforts which we in this country deem necessities but to an extent in which people in most countries never dreamed of.

These things are important for the substance of life and for the enjoyment of some of the finer things of life but from

years of experience of a larger and a small town observing my friends and my neighbors as they came into court and went out of court with their troubles and problems as a member of the state government and Attorney General, I observed others coming in and out of our system and as I have been a member of the United States Senate where I have had occasions to observe people of world renoun.

I have learned that when we make the acquisition of wealth and material things of life the center concern of our lives that we have little room left in our hearts for more important things. It accuses, I think, in the summonal amount with concern about this when he counseled us this way. You recall the sermon on the mount when he builf himself six chapters of Matthew one of those passengers he said:

Lay not for yourselves treasures upon earth
Where moth and rust doth corrupt,
And where thieves break through and steal;

But lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven,
Where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt,
And where thieves do not break through nor steal,
For where your treasure is, there will your heart
be also.

What does that last line really mean to us? "Where your treasure is, there will be your heart also." It means to me that what we really concentrate on is liable to take over our lives.

It is just as a man named M. J. Barrie said a few years ago when speaking to a society that he saw and becoming more and more concerned about the material things in life. The finer automobiles, the finer homes and the greater things that money can buy. He said to them that "One's religion is whatever he is most interested

in and speaking to this particular society he said, "Your religion is your success."

Some people, I'm afraid get into the unconscious habit of making a religion out of financial success and in so doing we undermine the very happiness that we are looking for. Eventually one finds himself estranged from his family, his community and his own better nature. At that point, he will find that he has somehow missed the point -- that his life really has no meaning because he has been so immense on the accumulation of worldly goods and that the taste of success of which he might have gained after all is literally took. With this of human experience in our society is pretty persuasive. Materialism alone can not bring you happiness.

As Emerson put it, "Nothing can bring you peace but yourself."

And I would say to you today that if you have peace of mine,
the responsibility is affirmatively your own.

Another thing which I believe contributes to personal
happiness is involvement with people, involvement with others
in the community. Soon you are going to enter into your dull
life that all of the institutions built for those that came
before you will now be delivered into your hands. You will
have the stewardship for your local government. You will have
the responsibility for your local churches. The school system
that you have been so much a part of will be in your hands in the
very near future.

You will have stewardship to these things all of your adult
life and you will have the choice of leaving them better than you
found them or worse than you found them.

People were not made to live in isolation. No man can go into his own house, and shut the door, without stagnating personally and without leaving the needs of his town and his community unmet.

But a strange thing happens to people who get involved in civic clubs, who get involved in community activities and churches and volunteer groups of his own home town. They themselves, benefit. There is much to be done. And I suggest to you that you begin by discovering that right in your own community, there are people with real trouble who need your help. It may be the trouble of poverty or it may be the trouble of ill health or loneliness.

You will find people poised uncertainly between the choices of delinquency and healthy lives. You will find old people shut

up in nursing homes, cut off from their families and the main current of life, whose lives could just be brightened just a slight bit or great bit by a visit or a few words from one of you.

You will find that amongst you, handicapped and disabled people ready and willing to become productive, ready and willing to become self-supportive citizens if only someone like those of you here today can give them a little bit of help. That little bit of help that is quite often needed to get started. The great problematic world is waiting for your effort. Yet, when you give yourself to this world, you will be the real beneficiary. You will find real pride and satisfaction in being of use to those who need you.

There are no sleepless nights for the useful, active person, no matter how baffling the problem that you are attacking. By your own personal action, take on the troubles of the world, and you will find that there is great cause for optimism. You can have effect. You can do something, even in the face of problems which quite often seem too high for solution. And your life I guarantee you, will be energized by the attempt, in contrast with the drained life of one who thinks that all he needs to worry about is a job, and a house, and a new automobile and a new car and a trip to the beach.

And finally, let me say, that the final source of human happiness in my mind is spirituality. That's an old-fashioned term in these days of rampant materialism, but it is a word which needs to be brought into use. Each one of us have a spiritual

potential. We will develop it, consciously, actively, over all the years, or we'll let it die with us. The person who loses that potentiality for a spiritual enlightenment is only half alive in the midst of his own life. To ignore the spiritual side of ourselves is akin to suffering in my opinion, an amputation, cutting away a part of ourselves.

Spiritual development does not happen without effort and it doesn't happen without study. Look to your religious groups. No one can predict what will happen to you in your life. To be sure, you are going to suffer some misfortune. But you will find that your religious tradition that is available to you is the distilled experience of all human life. In time of misfortune, the wisdom of the ages can speak to you through religion but don't wait for misfortune to strike. If you are a Christian, you have

an affirmative responsibility to study the principles of your religions, to know them, and to carry them through all that you do. If you are members of other faiths, you have the same affirmative responsibility. We talk in this country of perserving our natural resources and of improving our environment but religious principles are nothing more than the natural resources of the just person. We have to improve the quality of our moral environment as well.

Abraham Lincoln in the midst of the Civil War said that war is too important to be left to the generals. And I would say that religion is also too important - too important to each of us personally to be left to the ministers. Yet, we want to leave our religion to the experts. We want to go to church now and then

to hear a sermon but that really can't help us personally. In my opinion, religion is like a cool well of water. A man can go and sit by that well every day of his life but unless he partakes of the refreshing water from the well he himself will never be refreshed. We have to know our religion, we have to know its history and its people and we have to practice it everyday of our life.

You know, no one ever became like an accomplished pianist by taking a one hour lesson each week. You become like an accomplished musician or pianist by practicing music everyday of your life and you become an accomplished Christian. You become spiritually alive by practicing your religion everyday of your life. Make religion a constant force of your lives. The truly happy person is the one who have discovered that spiritual force

is stronger than any material force in the world.

Remember the words of Job: "Where is the place of understanding?" Remember that it is in religion itself and therein lies the peace that passeth understanding.

In the great many years that you and the people of this state have given me to participate in government, I've known many many great believers and somehow or another, I have been able to observe that the greater the believers the more divine their faith.

Tuesday morning I'll be going to Gaston, Alabama to attend the service of one of my departed colleagues, Senator Jim Allen who every single Wednesday morning since I've been in the United States Senate, has been sitting in the small dining room in the Capital of this nation with a small group of United States

Senators engaged in prayer and study of the Bible. They are devout people because of the more learning the more they become, the more heavily they rely upon a spiritual guidance and so I will urge you to seek and to find the best as you go out into the life ahead of you and you work hard and then you too can be a success.

Thank you again for giving me this privilege for sharing a few thoughts with you and again congratulations to each and all of you.