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REMARKS PREPARED FOR DELIVERY BY SECRETARY OF TRANSPORTATION
ELIZABETH HANFORD DOLE
TO THE GRADUATING CLASS
RAVENS CROFT SCHOOL
RALEIGH, N.C.
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Senator Helms, Chairman Holding, President Smith, distinguished guests, and most of all, the graduating class and the families and friends whose presence here this afternoon represents an investment of love: let me say thank you for the warmth of your welcome and the opportunity to enjoy what is for me something of a homecoming.

Whoever first declared that nothing could be finer than a day in Carolina must have experienced Raleigh on a beautiful afternoon in June. It is a day you have long awaited, and yet I am sure you leave here with fond memories and — I trust — a touch of regret. You will look back on Ravenscroft as a time of great joy and great challenge; of new appreciation for old values, and a thirst for what lies ahead. If Ravenscroft has prepared you well for the future, it has endowed you with more than academic credentials and intellectual curiosity; it has instilled in you a taste for innovation and a zest for self-fulfillment. Most of all, it will have equipped you to embrace change in pursuit of the American dream.

Commencement days themselves, of course, are never easy. For parents, and well-wishers, it's a chance to say "well done" and offer whatever wisdom age and experience can claim. For the graduate, graduation involves some painful partings and some numbing speeches, usually revolving around the theme that the world is an oyster to be plucked open and robbed of the pearl within. But the real purpose of a ceremony such as this is to remind you that success from this point forward depends largely on what you do with the knowledge you have acquired and the challenges you will surely face.

Most of all, of course, this is a day of ambition — ambition rewarded, ambition held out. There are some, beyond the reach of my voice, who condemn the ambitious, who prefer to cling stubbornly to the status quo. They call to mind a black tie dinner sponsored by the Sons of the Confederacy in Charleston, to which a very proper Bostonian had been invited as a guest. As the dinner proceeded, the tributes to Robert E. Lee and the many virtues of the South wore the Bostonian's patience rather thin.

Finally, he could take it no longer. He rose to his feet, and in the most unmistakable Boston accent, he flung down a challenge.

"I was born a Yankee," he announced. "I have lived as a Yankee. I shall die as a Yankee."

The audience grew quiet, and then an old colonel stood up and posed a question of his own. "What's the matter with you, son," he asked. "Have you no ambition?"

It is a question I do not have to raise here this morning. Indeed as a North Carolinian myself, I needn't question the ambition or the innovation that characterizes today's South. Like commencement day itself, it is part admiration for what has been, part anticipation for what might be -- and preparation for a future that combines the best of both worlds.

I am also reminded of a story about a young woman who was a clerk in a grocery store. A man came in and asked to buy half a grapefruit. "Half a grapefruit," she said. "Yes," he responded. "I would like to purchase half a grapefruit." Never having been confronted with such a request, the clerk hurried to the backroom of the store and said to the manager, "there is this crazy nut out there -- this man who wants to buy half a grapefruit." As she said it, she noticed from the corner of her eye that the man had followed here into the backroom. And without a moment's hesitation, she turned and said, "And this gracious gentleman has agreed to buy the other half."

Indeed, life after graduation requires of us such flexibility, creativity, and adaptation to ever changing conditions.

Your time here at Ravenscroft is now short. But before you leave this campus, do not forget why you came -- or what you learned from one another as well as your classroom instructors. Here you have learned the primary truth of education -- that so long as books are kept open, then minds can never be closed.

History attends this ceremony today, as much as faculty or family members who have given their love, shared their knowledge and expressed their confidence in you. On this late spring day, I'm reminded that America herself is in the midst of a springlike renewal. Our 200-year-old experiment in popular government is rethinking itself, its options, its possibilities and its dreams. One recalls the words of a great jurist, Robert H. Jackson, who wrote in 1950, "It is not the function of our government to keep the citizen from falling into error, it is the function of the citizen to keep the government from falling into error."

Thomas Jefferson, in his first inaugural address, raised the deeper question of individual rights and moral responsibilities. "Sometimes it is said that man cannot be trusted with the government of himself," he told the infant republic. "Can he then be trusted with government of others? Let history answer the question."

We are still answering Jefferson's query. Even then, his generation recognized that a popular government could be subject to abuse -- financial, political, and military. Jefferson defined his own ideal government as one that would "restrain men from injuring one another and leave them otherwise free to regulate their own pursuits of industry and improvement."

For most of our history, we followed that model. We became a truly popular democracy, with a central government refereeing the conflicting forces within. Life was a contest in which all participants were to be encouraged. Government's chief role, we told ourselves, was to guarantee equality of opportunity to all. Education served to rectify the imbalances of birth and blood. It was freedom for which the first Americans fought and argued -- the freedom to rise in the world, each according to his own talents and labors.

Under the flag of free enterprise, government cheered on the risk-takers, while extending a helping hand to those living on the outskirts of hope. Then, half a century ago, as your history courses have taught you, the rules were changed forever by the Great Depression. Desperate people turned to Washington for food, for housing, for jobs and for hope. Washington responded, and government graduated from being a mere umpire to an active member of the team itself. A bureaucracy was born.

All changes, left unchallenged, take root. The standards appropriate to an emergency can shackle a succeeding generation. Government entrenched can supplant the governed. It can place the cart of social justice ahead of the economic horse, denying the role of a healthy private sector as the solid foundation of social commitment. But government, it has been conclusively demonstrated, cannot by itself provide the full range of social services to all who are in need. Equally important, government can rarely summon the enthusiasm or the imagination that aroused private citizens can bring to bear on a stubborn problem. Public intentions rarely equal private solutions.

We are committed today to rediscovering a national sense of community, restoring free enterprise and scaling the heights of private ingenuity. The President early in his Administration announced his own commitment to a program of private sector initiatives -- a partnership with free enterprise to find alternative ways of helping those in genuine need, not in lieu of federal efforts, but in addition to them. The first order of business was to restore our economy to good health. That is rapidly being accomplished, and far faster than even the most optimistic believed possible. Now we can again generate the millions of individual miracles that happen when men and women are given the chance to chart their own lives, harness their own ambitions, create their own futures and strengthen their own families.

So today we face a new challenge -- to make the most of the economic tools provided, to create new jobs while combating the old evils of poverty, neglect and urban desolation. We are again encouraging the risk-takers who brought our country to prosperity.

Challenges of a different sort abound. Can we make the marketplace reflect social as well as commercial values? Can we harness the wonders of science and technology to serve our people, rather than the other way around? Can space colonies, genetic engineering, laser beams and industrial robots co-exist in a world where human values still predominate? Can we give allegiance to the computer chip without sacrificing the soul of modern man and woman? Can the social forces now propelling millions of women into the workforce be used to pry open genuine opportunity -- employing women in executive and decision-making roles as well as the lower paying jobs in which they are so often concentrated?

I can identify with Sandra Day O'Connor, who, upon completing law school, was offered a job as a legal secretary and, of course, went on to break the type -- as the first woman appointed to the U.S. Supreme Court. I also remember vividly a day in September 1962 when I entered Harvard law school, one of 25 women in a class of 550 eager students. I'll never forget being accosted by a male classmate on my very first day at Harvard, who demanded to know what I was doing there.

"Don't you realize," he said in tones of moral outrage, "that there are men who'd give their right arm to be in this law school? Men who would use their legal education?" Obviously, he felt I was taking the place of a man. And come to think of it, some may have felt that way when I became Secretary of Transportation.

Yes, much has changed since then. Much of the change has been dictated, not by government edict, but by the marketplace. For instance, the double digit inflation of the 1970's forced many women into the labor market for the first time. Divorced women joined the economy at the same time, until, in 1982, we reached the point where 63 percent of women with children between the ages of 6 and 17 years were in America's labor force. During the last decade alone, the number of females receiving masters in business administration degrees has soared by nearly 800 percent. Women today make up more than one-third of law school enrollments.

And more of the same is in store. For as our economy evolves from its traditional reliance on smokestack industries, to a greater reliance on communications and managerial skills, women who were previously barred from steel mills and auto factories find themselves in ever greater demand. At long last the double standard is about to go the way of hoop skirts and horseless carriages! In the evolving nature of the work force, there is increasing acceptance that one's sex or race or creed has no legitimate part in an individual's opportunities. Legal equity is being matched by financial equity.

And speaking of change, it is the order of the day at my Department. One of my priorities is the modernization of our air traffic control and navigation system described as the biggest undertaking since the Apollo man-on-the-moon program. The new system will eventually double our capacity in the air through the year 2,000 and provide the safest possible air system.

And we are changing behavior, through a massive campaign against drunk driving, the mad killer of 26,000 people each year on our highways. For too many years we seemed to regard death on the highways as a tragic truism, as lax laws and lenient judges let irresponsible motorists literally get away with murder. That, too, thank God is changing. The private and public sectors are joined in a concerted campaign to reduce the threat posed by the drunk or drugged driver. Michael Jackson has lent his own unique talents to this cause. I was at the White House recently when President Reagan commended Michael for his support and, as one who uses neither alcohol nor drugs, for his example.

Along with our responsibilities for air, waterways, railroads, buses, trucks and barges, we may soon be overseeing space travel. The President has asked me to help develop what may become a multi-billion dollar business -- the use of expendable launch vehicles by private industry for commercial space purposes. It's an industry that may be ripe for your skills and talents when your next educational journey has been completed.

Yes, those who graduate today have been prepared for a new and different world. For some, leaving college campuses to pursue careers, the news is better than it has been in years. A recent story in the Washington Post reported that this year's college seniors can expect to enjoy a 30 percent increase in job offers over their counterparts in the class of '83. In the job market, earnings continue to outstrip inflation. Median family income rose 7½ percent in the first quarter of this year, compared to the 4½ percent inflation rate. The nation's leading economic indicators have all registered increases in 19 of the last 20 months.

For you, the prospects loom even brighter. Here at Ravenscroft, you have received the finest of liberal arts educations. You have been given a privileged glimpse into the best of our heritage. You have been challenged to live up to the examples provided. Now you will go on to more education, of the classroom variety in colleges and universities, and ultimately to that "real world" that awaits. Somewhere along the way you will achieve the equilibrium that balances your personal drive for worldly success with the stabilizing values of personal character, moral strength and inner faith. You will be asked to put your talents to work in practical ways -- without ever surrendering the love of learning for its own sake. You will discover what you may already know -- that success cannot be measured by any narrow standard of financial achievement or instant self-realization. You will be a success when you can say that life as you live it is meant to be enjoyed and not merely endured. You will be a success when you do not fear to take risks, and you do not accept anything less than excellence.

In a free society, there are many ways to pursue excellence. You can climb the corporate ladder -- or you can avoid the rat race in favor of contemplating the majesty of a mountain range and the divine hand that fashioned it. No one path is the right path. What counts is that you make the journey at all, that you develop your abilities, and broaden your outlook. In the words of one great educator of the nineteenth century, "Look up and not down; look out and not in; look forward and not back -- and lend a hand." If you can do that, then you will have combined a craving for success with a capacity for thoughtful citizenship. You will understand change for what it is, and you will have the emotional perspective to make sure it never runs away with all that we treasure as a God-fearing, neighbor-loving people.

Like stones tossed into the water, each of you will send out ripples. Some, no doubt, will make waves. As you do, remember who fashioned the stones and filled the lake in the first place.

The world may or may not be your oyster. It most certainly is your opportunity. In the words of Dag Hammarskjöld, "You have not done enough -- you have never done enough -- so long as it is possible that you have something of value to contribute." Every single one of you has something of value to contribute. In pursuing your own accomplishments, I ask you to remember to be generous. Make change work for you -- and make your own lives instruments of positive change. Beware of the quicksand of instant gratification. Revere the proven ideals of hard work, pride of family, love of freedom and faith in the Almighty. Let your values contribute to the spiritual as well as material enrichment of this land. As Scotland's famed Olympic runner, Eric Lyddle, said in Chariots of Fire: "So where does the power come from to see the race to its end? It comes from within."

Today, you take a major step forward. I look forward to the day when you and your generation help guide America's steps. God bless you all, on this first phase of that long journey -- now and always.

Thank you very much.

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