



U.S. Department of
Transportation

News:

Office of Public Affairs
Washington, D.C. 20590

Contact: Tom Blank
Tel: (202) 426-4570

REMARKS PREPARED FOR DELIVERY BY SECRETARY OF TRANSPORTATION
ELIZABETH HANFORD DOLE
THE FAMILY PLACE ANNUAL BREAKFAST
WASHINGTON, D.C.
JUNE 22, 1983

There is a story told about a famous novelist who once informed his publisher that he planned to write a book about child care. The publisher, being a doubting man, demanded to know what the novelist's qualifications might be. To which the novelist replied with quiet dignity: "I am a former child."

As a former child myself, it's a great personal pleasure for me to be here this morning to share in celebrating the second birthday of The Family Place. Your success is a tribute to the dedicated efforts of many people. It provides living testimony to the vitality and selflessness of many other former children -- most of all to Ann Barnet.

We all owe a great deal of appreciation to Dr. Barnet, who has made a career of caring for the less advantaged; and to every member of the Board of Trustees and the advisory boards who give so freely of their time and their talents. We cannot say enough about the work of Joe Citro, Sherril Ventura, Dolores Arroyo and the entire professional staff. All have one thing in common: they love people and they demonstrate that love through a day-by-day commitment that already has changed the lives of more than 300 families.

I have had the privilege of knowing Ann, your president and executive director, for a number of years. She has been an inspiration to me, as I'm sure she has to the thousands of people she has helped by caring for them professionally or sharing personally in dealing with their problems.

-more-

By her living example and through her friendship, Ann has demonstrated that one gains neither success nor satisfaction by putting yourself first. Schopenhauer told us that wealth and fame are like sea-water -- the more we drink, the thirstier we become. The Scriptures teach that to be fulfilled we must reach out to others. In so many ways, Ann illustrates the great principle that God is the center from which all other things flow: that if we do not embrace the second great Commandment -- if we do not love our neighbor as ourself -- then we will lead empty, parched lives. Ann's commitment has been a testimony to that principle in my life and, I'm sure, in the lives of many others as well.

She and I have shared something else. We both ventured into Harvard at a time when our chosen fields -- hers, medicine; mine, law -- were largely male domains. We learned something there about discrimination -- subtle, not harsh, but the feeling, nevertheless, of resigned acceptance. I don't know what the ratios were in the Harvard Medical School when Ann attended, but I vividly recall being one of 25 women in a class of 550 students -- and being verbally accosted my first day there by a male classmate who told me in no uncertain terms that I was denying a place to a man; someone, as he said, "who would put their legal education to good use."

Well, times have changed considerably since then, and as a result of what we have come to think of as a "quiet revolution" women have attained increased representation and greater acceptance in the professions.

I have kept in touch with The Family Place as it has grown, and I think those at its helm have been quietly working a revolution of your own and something of a miracle as well.

Here you demonstrate that people still care about people. That compassion is not a lost commodity in our society. That the so-called "Me Generation" has been thankfully consigned to the past. And that even in urban America, where anonymity and detachment are supposed to reign, there are those still motivated by concern for the needs of others.

I was back in my hometown of Salisbury, North Carolina recently for the dedication of a day care center, part of the Services for Older Adults of Rowan County. The center is in a house built originally by my father as a parsonage. It serves now as a place where senior citizens can enjoy day-time activities, have someone to talk to, and be cared for in a personal way by people they know.

At The Family Place, you are concerned with the other end of the age spectrum. But what you are doing in this city and what others are doing in a small town in North Carolina demonstrate the kinds of private sector initiative that President Reagan has been talking about as preferred alternatives to Federal programs that dispense funds but do not always meet real human needs. Here you know people as people -- not as statistics on a computer print-out or numbers in a vast Federal budget. The Family Place testifies to the effectiveness of people working together as a community to solve problems -- to care for their own -- without going to Uncle Sam.

Early in its history the United Nations issued a declaration which said, and I quote: "Mankind owes to the child the best that it has to give."

You personify that admonition. The Family Place gives the best because you give of yourselves. Those who assist in supplying the financial resources give of their substance. Together you make The Family Place a reflection of the heart and soul of this community -- a living expression of human and economic generosity.

As has been noted, some 300 families have filtered through The Family Place since its inception two short years ago. Many came as strangers to this city, or to this country. They find at 1848 Columbia Road what no other organization in this city is as well-equipped to give: they find "first friends" -- The Family Place participants who guide them through a difficult time, serving as big sister or foster mother, confidante and counselor. Only those who are alone, uncertain or frightened can appreciate how much it means to have someone to turn to -- someone to care.

St. Paul spoke of faith, hope and love -- and proclaimed the greatest of these to be love. While some translations render the Greek as "charity," I prefer "love." For there is, I believe, a distinction. Charity implies giving out of abundance. Love means giving from the heart. At The Family Place, everyone gives from the heart.

Harry Emerson Fosdick once offered this advice: "Always take a job that is too big for you."

Ann Barnet, Kent Cushenberry, Fred Kleisner, Oliver Carr, Renay Weissburger, Joe Citro -- so many who are here this morning and others who couldn't be here have made a habit of taking on jobs that perhaps loomed too large in the abstract. But you find time and again that when the commitment is there -- when the challenge is to the heart -- you grow with the job; you exceed your own expectations.

The Family Place is growing. It needs more participants; more people to serve as first friends and as lasting friends. If it is to continue to shine as a beacon of hope in the area it serves, it also needs more financial assistance.

In my job as Secretary of Transportation, I continually have to look at requests for funds for highway or transit or airport projects and evaluate them on the basis of their cost-effectiveness. Do they represent a good investment of public funds? If I were looking at The Family Place from the same perspective, I would have to rate it Triple AAA for cost-effectiveness. As Dr. Barnet has pointed out, the services provided by The Family Place prevent the disability and handicapping conditions caused by inadequate pre-natal care or improper infant support. The cost of hospital care for even one premature infant can exceed your entire annual budget. And that is a cost that the community ultimately must bear.

We talk a lot about the greatness of America. Ironically, it took a Frenchman, Alexis de Tocqueville, to assess America's true wealth.

"Not until I went into the churches of America and heard her pulpits aflame with righteousness did I understand the greatness and the genius of America," he said. "America is good. But if America ever ceases to be good, America will cease to be great."

From our faith in God has flowed much of our concern for people. The Family Place reflects the goodness of America, as vested in the volunteer spirit of its people. And therein resides, I believe, our great hope for the future.

This is a place dedicated to hope, to potential, to the spark of divinity that resides within each man, woman and child. America is that kind of country. One of our greatest creative artists was a woman who never held a job, never served in public office, and rarely left her home in the little town of Amherst, Massachusetts. And yet the power of her vision, and the eloquence of her words, have left an indelible mark upon the American conscience.

"I dwell in possibility," wrote Emily Dickinson.

We, too, dwell in possibility. We will continue to expand the boundaries of human potential as we share in the hopes as well as the needs of our neighbors and all who have yet to find for themselves either spiritual peace or material comfort. We will care -- and we will share. Because that is the true message of The Family Place.

It exists because people want to be involved -- personally, professionally and financially. It will continue to serve this community so long as those with compassion for others involve themselves and invest their resources.

I'm very proud of The Family Place. I'm sure you agree with me that it merits our praise, our participation and our prayers, as it goes about its self-imposed mission, an apostle of possibility.

Thank you very much.

-###-