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CHARLOTTE OBSERVER  
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I was asked tonight not to speak of policies or politics, but to visit with you on personal matters. My life as a North Carolinian and the influences of Carolina on my career. It's a bit awkward because it's so personal but I've been flooded by so many happy memories in putting my thoughts together and I thank you, Rolfe, for causing that to happen by inviting me to participate in your centennial celebration.

I can assure you: the Charlotte Observer is a newspaper to which I need no introduction for my family has been reading and devouring the Charlotte Observer with breakfast for the past 50 years. And as you've said, I have my own special association with the paper. For it was here that I came, in the summer of 1958, fresh out of Duke University, for my very first job interview. I didn't get the job.

But it was a learning experience, like almost everything else that has occurred in the years since. I went into that interview confident that my journalistic credentials would be self-evident. Not that I was about to be confused with Walter Lippmann, but hadn't I won the UDC essay cup, given every year at junior high graduation? Granted, winning the Salisbury police department's fire prevention essay contest was no guarantee of future Pulitzer Prizes. Well... bottom line, while yet another prize winning essay on a Civil War train "The Old General," may have foreshadowed my career in transportation -- it most surely did not secure me a foothold in the Charlotte Observer city room.

Come to think of it, this was the second time I'd been disappointed by the press. As student body president at Duke, I had on one memorable occasion been taken to task by Fred Shaheen, editor of the campus newspaper,

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The Chronicle, for insufficient command of parliamentary procedure. Well, no one ever studied Robert's Rules of Order more diligently than I did over the summer months after the pain of that editorial. And come the next fall, I felt as if I could have held my own in the legislature at Raleigh. Later still, when graduation weekend rolled around, my father picked up the Chronicle and opened it to discover a picture of yours truly, complete with the nicest editorial I've ever read and the flattering title "leader of the year." After the healthy tension all year between press and student government, it marked a particularly memorable highlight of my young life.

I learned a lot from those two experiences -- in one instance, I found out that I didn't know as much as I thought I knew in the procedural rules of public debate. In the second, I learned that a job interview was a two-way street. It wasn't enough to wear the right dress and nod your head at the right moments. You had to be a little assertive, to explain in your own words why you felt you were right for the job. Such incidents, important as they are, only scratch the surface of my North Carolina education. There are many kinds of education, of course, and experience conducts its own seminar. Mark Twain once wrote that as a boy of 14, his father was so ignorant he could hardly stand to have him around. By the time Mark reached 21, however, he was astonished at how much the Old Man had learned in just seven years.

That's one kind of education. There's another to be found in the classroom, or on the playing field, in the science lab and the church pew. One comes while bent over an exam book, another while kneeling before an altar. I've been fortunate enough to sample them all -- and to keep on sampling them, every day I'm on the job. This evening, in keeping with the nature of this special celebration, I want to talk less about my life as a Cabinet Officer than about the people and places which shaped the woman who just happens to be Secretary of Transportation.

Fortunately, I have been blessed with some of the greatest teachers possible. First, there is North Carolina herself -- a state whose motto is "To be rather than to seem" -- a state whose heritage inspires each of her citizens to embrace and embody those noble sentiments. You cannot grow up in such a place without drinking deeply of a proud past. Here the American Revolution began, and the American Civil War ended. My roots are deep in Mecklenberg tradition for two of my ancestors, Hezekiah Alexander and John McNitt Alexander were signers of the Mecklenberg Declaration of Independence. And later, my great uncle, Dr. H. Q. Alexander, was to serve as the first president of the Mecklenberg Medical Association. Here in North Carolina, man first took to the skies over Kill Devil Hill, and here, particularly here in Charlotte, a New South is being created daily out of the dreams and ingenuity of modern-day pioneers. Here, we stand on the cutting edge of high technology -- even as we keep one foot firmly planted on the treasured ground of yesterday. And I saw both North Carolinas while growing up in Salisbury.



Now, in Washington, D.C., its sometimes said that success is relative -- the closer the relative the greater the success! My world was defined by some very special relatives, including a beloved father, who combined a singular talent for business with a rare gift for the business of humanity. I often kidded my dad that he resembled Harry Truman. But, even if Dad didn't share Mr. Truman's philosophy he most certainly resembled the man from Missouri in his concern and compassion for everyday people. I'll never forget, after his death, visiting a number of rental apartments which he had built. As I talked with elderly women. Mostly widows, renting those apartments, I realized how much they appreciated his understanding of their economic situation, reflected in extremely moderate rental fees instead of rapid escalation based on supply and demand. That was Dad's way -- his quiet way of rendering service. How could one fail to be moved -- or motivated -- by such an example?

Dad's not here tonight -- not physically, anyway. But I never feel as if he's far away! And how lucky I am to have a mother who's also my best friend and adviser. A vital and life-enhancing influence just as she was back in the days when a little girl first observed her unselfishness and took heart from her unquestioning devotion. I've often described Salisbury as a sort of Rock of Gibraltar. More to the point, I can honestly say that I've built my life on the rock of parental love and support, equaled and reflected in a faith which they lived and personalized.

In memory's eye I can still see my mother so conscientious, eager to help, always volunteering, chaperoning our student government trip to Myrtle Beach, driving young Methodists to the camp at Lake Junaleska in the mountains of western North Carolina, and entertaining the Judicial Board from Duke at our cabin in a pine forest outside of town. Such acts of constant service to others were daily expressions of her faith, perhaps the greatest legacy that any parent can transmit to a child. In my own case, it's a faith imparted by a mother who was and is always there -- not just physically, but emotionally. Nor am I by any means unique in benefitting from her lifelong concern for the welfare of others.

Long before the cause of historic preservation became fashionable, she joined with other public-spirited women of Salisbury to rescue and restore the structural reminders of a precious past. She did so, not because she was wedded to the past -- but so that future generations could know for themselves the best of our heritage. Mother has never tackled anything in her life without intending to do the very best she could. This alone provided a powerful source of inspiration for those around her. Certainly, it strengthened me as I found myself pursuing a career in the political arena -- a career whose earliest roots can be traced to a third grade election for president of the Bird Club. Even then, I guess you could say I was interested in things that flew. (Of course, I still had a lot to learn about democratic procedures; after I organized, at the age of 12, the Junior High Book Club, I immediately declared myself president.)



Much of the learning took place at Duke, where I was taught that so long as books are kept open, then minds can never be closed. Along with the education garnered in the classroom, there was another kind of instruction, expressed in the generous support of other women, above all Dean Florence Brinkley, advisor to the student government and a staunch believer in the positive effects of travel. It was Dean Brinkley who urged me to sample some of the Old World, in a summer at England's venerable Oxford University.

Now in Durham, there sometimes seemed to be two distinct groups of female scholars: there were girls with dates, and there were girls with data! But even then, I sensed I might be on the cutting edge of a quiet revolution, a social and economic transformation which continues in our own time to reshape the American workplace and reorder the priorities of millions of women.

Once, not so long ago, it was necessary for any woman aspiring to responsible positions to demonstrate levels of competence well above those expected from the typical male applicant. In those days there reigned what I call "the tyranny of perfection," an attitude well summed up by the author and social critic Marya Mannes when she wrote:

"Nobody objects to a woman being a good writer or sculptor or geneticist if, at the same time she manages to be a good wife, a good mother, good-looking, good-tempered, well-dressed, well groomed, and unaggressive."

Unfortunately, imperfect humanity has a way of demanding perfection -- or, occasionally resorting to tunnel vision when viewing the problems and the potential of the American woman.

Fortunately, a great deal has changed since then. Women in the 1980s comprise a diverse group with varied interests. Some seek careers in business. Some run for political office. Some focus on the home and family. And some -- the true miracle workers -- seek to do all these things. In today's society, no one role is superior to another, although I personally can't imagine any career more challenging than that of homemaker and mother. What's important is that every woman has the right and the opportunity to choose the role she wishes for herself.

My own life, then, has been lived amidst the challenges of change. Fortunately, in meeting those challenges, I had the legacy of my town and my family to guide me. Through them, I learned that wealth -- true wealth -- consisted, not of what you have, but of what you contribute. I learned that no man or woman is impoverished who has eyes to see, ears to hear, and above all, a heart to understand. Success might be defined as the process of getting what you want. But happiness consists of wanting what you get.

It was the native North Carolinian Thomas Wolfe, whose poignant and pain-filled novels of family life in the town he called Altamont will forever be a jewel in this state's cultural crown, wrote something which



every Tarheel might well proclaim as a sort of personal credo. As Wolfe put it, "The unity that binds us all together, that makes this earth a family, and men brothers and the sons of God, is love."

That love can take many forms. There is the love of one human being for another, the love which cements our attachment to a place of memory, the love of work and the sense of mission which must of necessity replace purely individual ambition if that work is to be truly fulfilling. My first job in government involved education of the handicapped. Little did I know this was the start of a commitment which would be shared with my future husband... Twenty years later, as Secretary of Transportation, I find myself charged with responsibility for literally everything that moves in this country. I've even discovered my own footnote in history -- as the first woman ever to head a branch of the armed forces, the Coast Guard.

While I promised you a personal, and not a policy speech, there is no way to separate the personal experiences which shape one's outlook from the laws and regulations which inevitably reflect a lifetime of learning. And so, when we move to deregulate transport, it isn't just a classroom theory, but a positive difference in the lives of thousands of people who under the old system could not possibly afford to fly, but who in today's competitive skies can take advantage of "democracy on wings." When you hear of fresh initiatives to open up the trucking industry, remember that most of the goods which arrive in Charlotte come by truck --and that competition to carry those goods means a greater variety of choice for you, the consumer, and lower prices for everyone.

A moment ago, I spoke of the changing role of women. When I arrived at the Department of Transportation, I asked how many of our employees were women. I was told 19 percent. Then I asked, what was the percentage when the department was established in 1967? The answer: 18.5 percent. It didn't take long for us to design a program to change all of that. Now we are helping more women to enter our work force, and we're preparing more women than ever to assume managerial positions and to expand existing skills -- for example, to become air traffic controllers and move into higher paying jobs. In a department of over 100,000 people, that vision of change is indeed a challenge. It takes many women to move that female percentage up even one point, but in the three years since we began our program, the number of women employees in the department has increased to almost 23 percent. When you compare that to the half a percentage increase over the previous 16 years, it demonstrates how much a commitment can mean -- and I am totally committed to the task.

By the same token, it is out of personal experience -- the memory of a grandmother whose son was run down by a drunk driver even before I was born -- that I derive my personal commitment to ridding the American Road once and for all of this scourge. Safety in all its forms is my number one priority. When I speak of safety, I define it, not as laws passed but as lives protected -- as countless men, women and children who might yet have a



chance to make the contribution in life which my late uncle never got to make.

I think of teenagers, just starting out in life and more likely to realize their potential now that the drinking age has been raised to 21, and teenaged fatalities on our highways have declined by more than 25 percent. I think of still more drivers who could avert death or crippling injury by simply buckling up their seat belts -- an act more likely to occur now that we have stepped in with action which has spawned seat belt laws in some 26 states and the District of Columbia.

Recently, we required a third stop light to be mounted in the line of sight near the rear window on all new cars. The cost of this light is only a few dollars, but it is expected to prevent about 900,000 accidents and \$434 million in property damage every year once it's installed on all new cars. Some people have even taken to calling this the "Dole light" and I am personally delighted to be associated with such a great safety device. And in another important safety area -- we have just succeeded, after 12 years, in getting regulations addressing the significant problem of drinking and drugs on the railroads.

I think of desperately poor Haitians, fleeing an island whose economy is in a shambles, refugees consigned to fate and the stormy sea of the South Atlantic. Many would have drowned were it not for the heroic work of the Coast Guard. And indeed, the Coast Guard has stopped tons of marijuana and cocaine from entering our cities... And almost daily their search and rescue actions on the seas, and inland waterways, save precious lives.

In these and other areas, I have a mission to field. And I'm grateful for the opportunities the President has given me to employ some of the values which came to me from my extended family here in Charlotte, where my father located much of his business, and where my brother -- and his family continue to live and work -- a brother I've looked up to since childhood -- who's still on that pedestal -- who's been such a source of strength and help and such a positive influence on my life.

Mine has been a busy life, a continuing education and a never ending voyage of discovery. Just in recent years, I've had chances to see a world I could only dream about as a first year student at Duke. I've had the privilege to discuss privatization of transport with Margaret Thatcher in London as I strive to sell our government owned freight railroad, Conrail -- I've talked over maritime policies with Deng Xiaoping, the dynamic man who is single-handedly thrusting China into the 20th century -- and bowed my head in prayer with that spiritual beacon for our times, Pope John Paul II. But, I cherish as much as anything the story told to me by our President: As he recalled how he first learned to deal with enormous challenge and stress as a newly-elected governor of California. "Each morning began," he said, "with someone standing before my desk describing yet another disaster. The feeling of stress became unbearable. I had the urge to look over my shoulder for someone I could pass the problem to. One day it came to me



that I was looking in the wrong direction. I looked up instead of back. I'm still looking up. I couldn't face one day in this office if I didn't know I could ask God's help and it would be given."

Inspired by such values, I haven't the slightest doubt as to their origin. For my roots run deep in the Carolina Piedmont. I may work in Washington -- but home is the house on South Fulton Street which I moved into at the age of three, and a mother whose love is the one constant in an ever-changing world, and whose pursuit of excellence has enhanced the quality of life of all who have known her.

Tonight, as we celebrate the centennial of a Journal renowned for its own standards of excellence, I recall another North Carolinian, the descendant of Quaker grandparents and a man who never abandoned his own conscience, whatever the price of adhering to it. Edward R. Murrow is most famous for his contributions to the electronic media, but as a youth in Depression-era New York, he paid humorous tribute to the print medium, which he said provided a warmth and protection against the cold and rain which no radio or TV station could possibly match! Then and later, Murrow was unyielding in his refusal to compromise with the second-rate. In that, too, he was typical of the state that nurtured him.

A good newspaper, it's been said, is a nation talking to itself. Murrow himself could not have put it better.

For a hundred years, the Charlotte Observer has done a magnificent job, not only of talking; but of listening to the community and the nation. Throughout that time, it has reported the facts and informed the opinions of North Carolinians from Hatteras to the Great Smoky Mountains and so many people beyond our boundaries. It is a great newspaper because it is put together by good people -- men and women whose values are no less shaped than my own have been by the legacy of our North Carolina past and the vision of our future.

I am honored to join with the entire community in extending my congratulations to the people of Charlotte, and especially to those who are the Charlotte Observer. You have much to be proud of. And I would leave you with the words first immortalized by Edward R. Murrow himself.

"Good night -- and good luck."

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