

PHILLIPSBURG HIGH SCHOOL
COMMENCEMENT ADDRESS
PHILLIPSBURG, KANSAS
MAY 20, 1965
(Congressman Bob Dole)

THE TIME HAS ARRIVED WHEN THOUSANDS UPON THOUSANDS OF
HIGH SCHOOL SENIORS BEGIN LIFE IN THE WORK-A-DAY WORLD. MANY
WILL GO TO COLLEGE, ENROLL IN TRAINING PROGRAMS, OR ON TO
WORK, OR INTO FARMING, BUT IT WILL BE A NEW BEGINNING; THERE
WILL BE NEW OPPORTUNITIES AND NEW RESPONSIBILITIES.

UNTIL NOW YOU HAVE HAD THE OPPORTUNITY TO PREPARE FOR
THIS NEW BEGINNING. THERE ARE MANY HERE TONIGHT WHO ARE
PROUD OF YOUR ACCOMPLISHMENTS ~~THIS FAR~~ AND HAVE HIGH EX-
PECTATIONS OF THE USEFUL LIVES YOU ARE PREPARED TO CHOOSE AND
THE CHALLENGES YOU WILL PROVE READY TO MEET. THESE PROUD
PEOPLE -- YOUR PARENTS, YOUR TEACHERS, YOUR SUPERINTENDENT,
MR. MEEKER, AND THE MEMBERS OF YOUR COMMUNITY HAVE WISELY

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INVESTED OF THEIR CONCERN AND EFFORTS TO PREPARE YOU FOR THIS
NEW BEGINNING. ⁹ YOUR PARENTS ARE TO BE ESPECIALLY COMMENDED.

THEIR EFFORTS AND SACRIFICES FOR YOUR EDUCATION ARE UNSURPASSED.

YOUR PARENTS' PRIDE AND CONFIDENCE WILL ALWAYS BE AN INSPIRATION

TO YOU. THEY HAVE INVESTED WISELY IN A SCHOOL SYSTEM WHOSE

PRIMARY OBJECTIVE WAS TO PREPARE YOU TO BECOME A THINKING

AND SELF-RESPECTING INDIVIDUAL. ~~FOR~~ THE EMPHASIS IN THE

UNITED STATES ³⁴ IS ON ~~THE~~ INDIVIDUAL ~~←~~ INITIATIVE -- ON THE

INDIVIDUAL AS HE PROGRESSES WITHIN A FREE ENTERPRISE SYSTEM.

THEREFORE, EACH OF YOU HAS THE HOPE OF REWARD, THE FREEDOM TO

SUCCEED, BUT ALSO THE FREEDOM TO FAIL. THE OPPORTUNITY FOR

REWARD AND SUCCESS IS PRESERVED IN OUR FREE SOCIETY FOR YOU,

BUT IT'S STILL UP TO YOU TO CHOOSE TO USE YOUR TALENTS AND

ABILITIES FULLY TO ATTAIN THE GOALS YOU SEEK, TO DO THE

IMMEDIATE TASKS WELL BUT TO SEEK THOSE GREATER TASKS EXPERIENCE

WILL ENABLE YOU TO ACCOMPLISH.

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THERE ARE THOSE WHO WOULD TRADE THE AMERICAN OPPORTUNITY
OF "LIFE, LIBERTY, AND THE PURSUIT OF HAPPINESS" FOR SECURITY.

THERE IS NOTHING SECURE ABOUT "LIFE". WHAT IS SECURE ABOUT
"LIBERTY", MANKIND'S MOST TENUOUS AND FRAGILE POSSESSION?

WHAT IS SECURE ABOUT "HAPPINESS"? "LIFE, LIBERTY AND HAPPINESS"
(CAN NOT) BE SECURED FOR US BY LAWS AND TAXES AND BUREAUCRACY.

OUR SYSTEM OF DEMOCRATIC GOVERNMENT IS TO SECURE THE OPPORTUNITY
TO LIFE, LIBERTY, AND HAPPINESS IN A FREE SOCIETY. YOU HAVE HAD
THE OPPORTUNITY ^{TO} ~~FOR~~ PREPARATION FOR LIFE, LIBERTY AND HAPPINESS
IN YOUR HOME, COMMUNITY, AND SCHOOL. MANY SEIZE UPON THIS
OPPORTUNITY TO PREPARE THEMSELVES AND MANY SUCCEED BY A WISE
CHOICE OF CAREER AND INDIVIDUAL DETERMINATION. AMERICANS HAVE
PROVED THAT FREE PEOPLE ARE THE GREATEST PRODUCTIVE FORCE IN
THE WORLD. FROM THE UPWARD PRESSURE OF TENS OF THOUSANDS OF
ENTERPRISING INDIVIDUALS THE UNITED STATES GAINS ITS STRENGTH

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AND RETAINS THE MOST ENDURING FORM OF GOVERNMENT IN THE WORLD,
THE MOST EMULATED, AND THE ONLY SYSTEM THAT HAS EVER BEEN ABLE
TO BRING A SIGNIFICANT MEASURE OF OPPORTUNITY, FREEDOM, PROGRESS,
AND MATERIAL COMFORTS TO THOSE IT GOVERNS.

AS I THINK OF THE MOST SUCCESSFUL CITIZENS OF OUR LAND, I
FIND THERE ARE CERTAIN CHARACTERISTICS THAT ALL SEEM TO POSSESS
IN COMMON. TAKE A DOZEN OR A SCORE (OF) REALLY SUCCESSFUL LIVES
CHOSEN AT RANDOM AND MAKE THEM A SUBJECT OF EARNEST STUDY AND
COMPARISON. IN OUTWARD CIRCUMSTANCES AND CONDITIONS OF LIFE
YOU WILL FIND THEIR LIVES WIDELY AT VARIANCE. ONE PERSON HAS
BEEN A CHILD OF FORTUNE AND ANOTHER HAS HAD THE SEVEREST STRUGGLE
WITH POVERTY. ONE BEARS AN HONORED NAME WITH GENERATIONS OF
CULTURE AND ACHIEVEMENT BEHIND. ANOTHER IS OF OBSCURE ORIGIN,
WITH LITTLE HELP FROM FAMILY OR EARLY ENVIRONMENT. THEIR
ACCOMPLISHMENTS HAVE TAKEN VARIED ROADS. YET IN ALL WORTHY

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LIVES THERE ARE CERTAIN CLEARLY DEFINED COMMON CHARACTERISTICS.

I THINK ALL THE SUCCESSFUL PEOPLE I HAVE KNOWN OR KNOWN OF, HAVE HAD A DEFINITE PURPOSE IN LIFE. THEY HAVE CHOSEN THE OPPORTUNITY TO SUCCEED, WHICH IS SECURED THEM BY OUR FREE SOCIETY, AND THROUGH INDIVIDUAL EFFORT AND DETERMINATION, THEY HAVE PROGRESSED TOWARD A CHOSEN GOAL, REGARDLESS OF ENTICEMENTS BY THE WAY.

IT IS NOW UP TO YOU YOUNG PEOPLE TO SERIOUSLY CONSIDER YOUR DEFINITE PURPOSE AND GOAL IN LIFE. THE PREPARATION OF HIGH SCHOOL -- THE GUIDANCE OF PARENTS, TEACHERS, FRIENDS -- SUSTAINS YOU, A FREE SOCIETY PROFFERING EQUAL OPPORTUNITY AND FREEDOM OF INDIVIDUAL EXPRESSION AND ENTERPRISE AWAITS. IT IS NOW UP TO YOU TO ASSUME RESPONSIBILITY FOR A USEFUL AND PRODUCTIVE CAREER. *A* IT IS NATURAL THAT YOU ARE PRIVATELY WORRIED ABOUT LEAVING THIS SCHOOL AND THE FRIENDS YOU HAVE KNOWN. IN SPITE OF SELF-CONFIDENCE AND AMBITION, YOU ARE

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UNCERTAIN OF THE YEARS AHEAD. HOWEVER EACH ONE OF YOU,
REGARDLESS OF WHETHER HE OR SHE BEGINS TO WORK FULL-TIME, GOES
ON TO COLLEGE OR TRADE SCHOOL, BECOMES A HOMEMAKER OR A
SECRETARY, IS GIVEN THE OPPORTUNITY TO BEGIN WITH THE IMMEDIATE
TASKS AT HAND. YOU MUST APPLY YOURSELF TO ACCOMPLISH THESE TASKS
TO THE BEST OF YOUR ABILITY. AS EXPERIENCE AND SKILL PREPARE
YOU FOR GREATER RESPONSIBILITY AND GREATER TASKS, YOU WILL
DISCOVER NEW CHALLENGES YOU MUST MEET. MUCH OF WHAT YOU
ACCOMPLISH WILL DEPEND UPON A STRONG CHARACTER. IT WILL
DEPEND UPON YOUR DETERMINATION TO ACCOMPLISH YOUR TASKS
HONESTLY AND TO THE BEST OF YOUR ABILITY. IT IS OFTEN SAID
THAT STRONG CHARACTER IS A BY-PRODUCT OF HARD WORK WELL DONE.

IN YOUR DAY BY DAY WORK EXPERIENCE, YOU WILL PROBABLY
COME IN CONTACT WITH MANY MEMBERS OF THE COMMUNITY -- YOUR
EMPLOYERS, CUSTOMERS AND FELLOW WORKERS. BY DEMONSTRATING

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YOUR WILLINGNESS TO BE DEPENDABLE AND RESPONSIBLE ABOUT YOUR
DUTIES, YOU BEGIN TO ESTABLISH YOURSELF AS ^{an} INDIVIDUAL WORTHY OF
RESPECT. ~~IN~~ "DUTY AS SEEN BY LINCOLN", ~~HE~~ POINTS OUT THE
IMPORTANCE OF SELF-RESPECT:

"IF I WERE TO TRY TO READ, MUCH LESS ANSWER, ALL
THE ATTACKS MADE ON ME, THIS SHOP MIGHT AS WELL
BE CLOSED FOR ANY OTHER BUSINESS. I DO THE VERY
BEST I CAN; AND I MEAN TO KEEP DOING SO UNTIL THE
END. IF THE END BRINGS ME OUT ALL RIGHT, WHAT IS
SAID AGAINST ME WON'T AMOUNT TO ANYTHING. IF THE
END BRINGS ME OUT WRONG, TEN ANGELS SWEARING I WAS
RIGHT WOULD MAKE NO DIFFERENCE."

I HOPE THE GRADUATES OF 1965 WILL NOT FEEL FOR ONE
MOMENT THAT THEY ARE NOT CAPABLE OF ASSUMING DEFINITE RES_
PONSIBILITIES IN THIS TWENTIETH CENTURY. THE WORLD AWAITS YOU.

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GREAT MEN AND WOMEN OF ALL AGES HAVE BEEN AMONG THE YOUNG OF
THEIR COUNTRIES.

AT SIXTEEN BACON SKETCHED HIS PHILOSOPHY.

AT SEVENTEEN WALTER RALEIGH HAD GONE TO FIND NEW WORLDS.

AT FOURTEEN NAPOLEON WROTE HOME FROM MILITARY SCHOOL TO
HIS MOTHER, "WITH MY HOMER IN MY POCKET AND MY SWORD AT MY SIDE,
I WILL FIGHT MY WAY TO THE TOP."

AT TWENTY-ONE WILLIAM OF ORANGE, THE WASHINGTON OF ENGLAND,
COMMANDED THE ARMY OF CHARLES V.

AT 32 ALEXANDER WEPT FOR OTHER WORLDS TO CONQUER.

GEORGE WASHINGTON WAS ENTRUSTED WITH THE MEMORABLE MISSION
TO THE FRENCH AT AGE 21 AND FLASHED HIS SWORD AT FORT NECESSITY
AT 22.

AT 36 MOZART HAD SUNG HIS SWAN SONG - BUT LEFT A PRICELESS
HERITAGE OF MUSICAL COMPOSITIONS.

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THOMAS JEFFERSON WAS ELECTED TO THE VIRGINIA HOUSE OF BURGESSES AT THE AGE OF 25, BECAME A MEMBER OF THE CONTINENTAL CONGRESS AT THE AGE OF 32, AND AT AGE 33 WROTE THE DECLARATION OF INDEPENDENCE.

ALEXANDER HAMILTON, JEFFERSON'S GREAT RIVAL, WAS DISTINGUISHED AS A SPEAKER AND WRITER AT THE AGE OF SEVENTEEN, WAS A LIEUTENANT COLONEL IN THE CONTINENTAL ARMY AT TWENTY-ONE. HE TOOK HIS SEAT IN CONGRESS AT 25, AND WAS SECRETARY OF THE TREASURY AT THE AGE OF 32.

JAMES MADISON WAS A MEMBER OF THE FIRST CONSTITUTION CONVENTION OF VIRGINIA AT THE AGE OF 25.

PATRICK HENRY BECAME FAMOUS AT THE AGE OF 27 IN MAINTAINING THE CAUSE OF THE PEOPLE, AND AT 29 IN THE VIRGINIA HOUSE OF BURGESSES MADE A SPEECH IN DEFENSE OF THE RIGHTS OF THE COLONIES THAT CAUSED GEORGE III TO TREMBLE ON HIS THRONE.

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SO - YOUTH CAN BECOME THE MAINSPRING OF THE UNIVERSE.

MAY I ASK THIS GRADUATING CLASS - WHAT ARE YOU GOING TO
DO WITH THE PRICELESS TREASURE OF THE FUTURE WHICH IS YOURS
TODAY?

PLEASE REMEMBER THAT OTHER GENERATIONS HAVE FOUND GUIDANCE
AND COURAGE FROM GREAT MEN AND WOMEN OF THE PAST - THOSE WHO
FOUNDED THE CHRISTIAN RELIGION - THOSE WHO DEvised THE MEANS
OF ESTABLISHING THESE UNITED STATES.

BUT YOU WILL ALSO FIND GUIDANCE FROM THOSE WHOSE NAMES MAY
NOT BE WRITTEN IN BOLD CAPTION IN HISTORY - THOSE WHO HAVE DAY
BY DAY UPHELD THE MORAL CODE OF OUR SOCIETY. AMONG THIS GROUP
MOST ASSUREDLY SHOULD BE PLACED HIGH ON THE LIST, YOUR PARENTS,
YOUR TEACHERS, YOUR NEIGHBORS, IN THIS GOOD AND FRIENDLY
COMMUNITY, YOUR PASTORS, YOUR FRIENDS.

YOU WILL NEED THE HELP OF ALL THESE WONDERFUL PEOPLE. YOU

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WILL NEED THE WISDOM OF THE PAST, THE KNOWLEDGE OF THE PRESENT,
AND YOU WILL NEED FAITH IN THE FUTURE TO HELP YOU ASSUME YOUR
RESPONSIBILITIES. YOU WILL NEED TO BE CONSTANTLY ALERT TO MEET
CHANGING CONDITIONS. THIS AGE OF SWIFT CHANGE, TECHNOLOGICAL AND
SOCIAL, IS UNIQUELY THE YOUNG PERSON'S TIME, FOR YOU HAVE THE
ENERGY AND FLEXIBILITY NECESSARY TO MEET THE CHALLENGE OF CHANGE.
CERTAINLY, OUR SOCIETY IS NOT YET WHAT IT CAN AND SHOULD BE.
THERE ARE ALWAYS IMPROVEMENTS TO BE MADE AND FUNDAMENTAL
PRINCIPLES TO BE SUSTAINED. SOME CHANGES ARE TO BE EMBRACED
ENTHUSIASTICALLY. WORK AS HARD AS YOU WANT TO EFFECT NECESSARY
IMPROVEMENTS IN OUR SOCIETY, BUT WORK WITHIN OUR FREE, DEMOCRATIC
SYSTEM TO STRENGTHEN IT BY IMPROVEMENT. REMEMBER WORKING OUTSIDE
OUR DEMOCRATIC SYSTEM TO FORCE CHANGE UPON IT WILL NOT IMPROVE IT,
BUT WILL WEAKEN IT.

IN ORDER TO MEET THE FUTURE IT WILL BE VERY HELPFUL, INDEED,

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IF YOU GRADUATES WILL TAKE THE TIME TO WEIGH THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE OLD AND THE NEW. SUCH ANALYSIS BRINGS TO NATIONAL AND WORLD AFFAIRS A MUCH NEEDED PERSPECTIVE.

EACH YEAR I'M INCREASINGLY IMPRESSED WITH THE THOUSANDS OF HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS WHO COME TO WASHINGTON, D. C. TO VIEW THE NATION'S CAPITOL FIRST-HAND. THEY COME TO SEE THE MONUMENTS, THE BUILDINGS THAT HOUSE RELICS OF THE PAST, TO SEE CONGRESS AT WORK, AND TO LEARN AS MUCH AS POSSIBLE ABOUT HOW OUR GOVERNMENT OPERATES.

NO DOUBT THESE STUDENTS HAVE A GOOD KNOWLEDGE OF OUR FEDERAL GOVERNMENT, BUT COMING TO WASHINGTON MAKES THEM REALIZE MORE THAN EVER, THAT ALL THOSE THINGS IN THEIR HISTORY AND GOVERNMENT BOOKS -- WHICH SEEMED REMOTE -- REALLY HAPPENED. THE TOUCH OF REALITY AWAKENS THEM ANEW TO THE IMPORTANCE OF OUR HERITAGE.

I FIRMLY BELIEVE THAT HIGH SCHOOL GRADUATES WILL ASSUME THE RESPONSIBILITIES OF CITIZENSHIP IN LATER YEARS MORE SERIOUSLY, MORE CONSTRUCTIVELY, AND MORE ENTHUSIASTICALLY IF THEY WILL COME

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TO REALIZE THAT EACH STEP IN OUR HISTORY REPRESENTS "DEMOCRACY
IN ACTION". THE "GRASS ROOTS" OF A NATION MUST BE PROPERLY
CULTIVATED.

IT IS NOW UP TO YOU TO ASSUME ^{these} RESPONSIBILITY TO REPAY THE
WISE INVESTMENT YOUR PARENTS, TEACHERS, AND MEMBERS OF THIS
COMMUNITY MADE IN YOU -- IN YOUR PREPARATION AND EDUCATION.

NOW IT'S UP TO YOU TO PARTICIPATE IN LOCAL, STATE, AND NATIONAL
POLITICS BY BEING INFORMED ON CURRENT POLITICAL ISSUES, TO KNOW
AND SPEAK YOUR CONVICTIONS, AND WHEN POSSIBLE TO RUN FOR PUBLIC
OFFICE.

IT WILL SOON BE UP TO YOU TO ASSUME IMPORTANT CIVIC
RESPONSIBILITIES -- AS MEMBERS OF SERVICE ORGANIZATIONS, SCOUT
LEADERS, AND CHURCH LEADERS. INDIVIDUAL CITIZENS WHO TAKE THE
RESPONSIBILITY OF LEADERSHIP AT THE LOCAL LEVELS ARE THE REAL
STRENGTH OF OUR DEMOCRACY.

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ONE OF THE BRAODEST CHALLENGES FACING THE YOUNG PEOPLE OF
TODAY IS THE ACHIEVEMENT OF WORLD COOPERATION AND LASTING PEACE.

THAT IS A VAST FIELD AND ONE IN WHICH GREAT PROGRESS CAN BE
MADE.

OUR NATION NOW FACES ITS GREATEST TEST. OUR FORM OF
GOVERNMENT MUST CONTINUALLY PROVE ITSELF. WE MUST STRIVE AT EVERY
LEVEL OF GOVERNMENT - LOCAL, STATE AND NATIONAL -- DEMONSTRATE
OUR ABILITY TO MEET NEW PROBLEMS. NOW IT'S UP TO YOU GRADUATES
TO CONTINUE TO GROW IN APPRECIATION OF THE FREEDOM OF OPPORTUNITY
OUR DEMOCRATIC SOCIETY PROVIDES. SPEAK WITH PRIDE ABOUT WHAT
FREEDOM ACTUALLY MEANS TO THE AMERICAN -- FREEDOM TO CHOOSE A WAY
OF LIFE, A CAREER, AND TO PURSUE IT VIGOROUSLY AND INDIVIDUALLY.

I HAVE A GREAT RESPECT FOR YOUR STATUS TODAY. I HAVE GREAT
HOPES FOR YOUR ACHIEVEMENTS TOMORROW. OUR FREE SOCIETY OFFERS ~~YOU~~
THE OPPORTUNITY TO BECOME ALL YOU WERE "CREATED CAPABLE OF BEING",

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BUT IT'S YOUR RESPONSIBILITY, IT'S STILL UP TO YOU, TO SEIZE THE
OPPORTUNITY, TO CHOOSE GOALS USEFUL TO OUR FREE SOCIETY AND TO
PURSUE THEM WITH ALL YOUR ABILITY AND ENERGY.

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