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VASSAR COLLEGE
COMMENCEMENT
POUGHKEEPSIE, NY
MAY 28, 1990

C. EVERETT KOOP

GREETINGS, ETC.

**IT IS A SPECIAL PRIVILEGE FOR ME TO BE AT VASSAR, TO SHARE
WITH THE GRADUATING SENIORS THEIR COMMENCEMENT
HONORS.**

**I HOPE THIS WILL BE A MEMORABLE DAY, ALTHOUGH I DONT
EXPECT IT TO HAVE AS FAR-REACHING CONSEQUENCES FOR ME
AS MY FIRST VISIT TO VASSAR, 54 YEARS AGO THIS MONTH, ON A
SUNNY DAY IN MAY, IN THE YEAR 1936.**

**I WAS DRIVING FROM MY HOME IN BROOKLYN BACK TO COLLEGE
AT DARTMOUTH, AND I DECIDED TO STOP BY HERE AT VASSAR TO
SEE BETTY FLANAGAN, CLASS OF '39, A LOVELY YOUNG WOMEN I
HAD MET THREE MONTHS BEFORE, WHEN SHE HAD COME TO
DARTMOUTH AS THE WINTER CARNIVAL DATE OF ONE OF MY
FRIENDS.**

BETTY AND I HAD BEEN ATTRACTED TO EACH OTHER IMMEDIATELY ON THAT WINTERY WEEKEND, AND IN THE WEEKS THAT FOLLOWED WINTER CARNIVAL THE ATTRACTION GREW. I WAS SHY --BACK THEN-- AND I SENT HER AN ANONYMOUS VALENTINE. AND I INTERCEPTED HER LETTERS TO MY FRIEND, AS A JOKE DOUSING THEM WITH MY SHAVING LOTION. WHEN HE SMELLED THE "PERFUMED" LETTERS AND EXCLAIMED "SMELLS JUST LIKE HER!", HE WAS UNWITTINGLY TESTIFYING TO THE DISTANCE IN THEIR RELATIONSHIP.

SO I FELT FREE TO "JUST HAPPEN TO STOP BY AT VASSAR" ON THAT MAY DAY.

BETTY USED THE TRADITIONAL VASSAR PLOY OF WALKING ME AROUND THE LAKE SEVERAL TIMES, BUT BY THE SECOND TIME AROUND I HAD COAXED HER TO DRIVE NORTH WITH ME FOR GREEN KEY, DARTMOUTH'S SPRING HOUSEPARTY. BY THE END OF THE WEEKEND I CALLED MY PARENTS TO TELL THEM I WAS ENGAGED TO THAT VASSAR GIRL.

EVER SINCE THEN BETTY HAS SAID MANY TIMES THAT I WORK WITH DISPATCH.

I DIDN'T GET MUCH STUDYING DONE THAT WEEKEND, AND IN A FEW DAYS I FACED AN ART HISTORY EXAM, SO BEFORE BETTY WENT BACK TO VASSAR I TALKED HER OUT OF HER ART 105 SYLLABUS, BECAUSE IT SEEMED MUCH BETTER THAN DARTMOUTH'S.

**OVER THE NEXT FEW YEARS I GOT TO KNOW THE VASSAR
CAMPUS VERY WELL, AS I VISITED BETTY EVERY CHANCE I HAD,
THE FIRST YEAR TRAVELING SOUTH FROM MY SENIOR YEAR AT
DARTMOUTH, THE SECOND DRIVING UP THE HUDSON FROM MY
FIRST YEAR AT CORNELL MEDICAL COLLEGE.**

**I EVEN FOUND A SIDE DOOR TO JOSSLYN HALL THAT ALLOWED
ME TO VISIT BETTY --IN THE DAYTIME ONLY IN THOSE DAYS--
WITHOUT HAVING TO GO THROUGH THE FORMIDABLE WOMEN IN
WHITE WHO GUARDED THE MAIN DOOR.**

JUST BEFORE THE START OF MY SECOND YEAR IN MEDICAL SCHOOL, BETTY AND I WERE MARRIED BY HER RELIGION PROFESSOR, RIGHT HERE, IN THE ALUMNI HOUSE, STEPPING OUT OF A QUIET FAMILY WEDDING INTO THE WIND AND RAINSTORM WE LATER FOUND OUT WAS THE BEGINNING OF THE INFAMOUS HURRICANE OF 1938.

THAT WAS A REVOLUTIONARY THING TO DO IN THOSE DAYS. IT WAS ALMOST VERBOTEN FOR MEDICAL STUDENTS TO BE MARRIED.

SO BETTY AND I WERE PIONEERS, AS WE WERE MARRIED IN MED SCHOOL.

I SAY "WE" BECAUSE BETTY HAS ALWAYS BEEN PART OF MY CAREER.

EVEN THOUGH SHE HAD HER OWN JOB THEN, SHE ATE LUNCH EVERY DAY WITH ME AND MY FELLOW MEDICAL STUDENTS.

AND SHE PICKED UP ENOUGH MEDICINE FROM OUR

CONVERSATIONS SO THAT SHE BECAME A PRETTY GOOD

DOCTOR, EVEN WITHOUT SMALL TECHNICALITIES LIKE A MEDICAL DEGREE OR A LICENSE.

**WE BROKE THE RULES AND MARRIED EARLY, BUT THEN WE
ENGAGED IN WHAT THE SURGEON GENERAL REFERRED TO AS A
"MONOGAMOUS, MUTUALLY FAITHFUL RELATIONSHIP."**

**THE FACTOR OF "MUTUALITY" HAS BEEN VERY IMPORTANT IN
OUR MARRIAGE. THERE HAS BEEN MUTUAL SHARING OF LIFE
AND CAREER EXPERIENCES AND MUTUAL RESPECT FOR WHAT
EACH OTHER DOES ... AND IS.**

**I HAVE ALWAYS SEEN BETTY'S ROLE AS AN EQUAL PARTNER IN
MY CAREER FIRST WHEN I WAS A PEDIATRIC SURGEON, AND
THEN AS YOUR SURGEON GENERAL, SHARING IN ALL MY
VICTORIES AND -- ALAS! -- ALL MY DEFEATS AS WELL**

**DOWN THROUGH THE CENTURIES, WOMEN HAVE SERVED THE
HUMAN RACE VERY WELL ... KEPT IT GOING AND KEPT IT DECENT.
BUT THE HUMAN RACE HAS GENERALLY NOT RETURNED THE
FAVOR.**

BUT I BELIEVE THINGS HAVE IMPROVED, ESPECIALLY OVER THE PAST TWO DECADES. MEN -- AND WOMEN THEMSELVES -- ARE GIVING WOMEN THEIR RIGHTFUL PLACE AS EQUAL PARTNERS IN THE WRITING OF HUMAN HISTORY.

IM SO PLEASED THAT VASSAR GAVE MEN THE PRIVILEGE OF ITS EDUCATIONAL EXPERIENCE. VASSAR'S EMPHASIS ON INTELLECTUAL GROWTH AND FREEDOM TO CHOSE ANY CAREER SHOULD ELIMINATE ANY PERCEIVED STIGMA OF A MAN'S OR WOMAN'S CHOICE OF A CAREER AT ONE TIME THOUGHT TO BE THE PROVINCE OF ONLY ONE SEX.

WITH A VASSAR EDUCATION BEHIND HER, BETTY HAD THE WORLD BEFORE HER. BUT SHE CHOSE, IN THE WORDS SHE USES, "TO MAKE MY HUSBAND'S CAREER MY CAREER."

BUT IT WAS MORE THAN THAT. IT WASN'T THAT SHE MADE MY CAREER HER CAREER..... SHE MADE OUR CAREER, WELL, OUR CAREER.

WE WERE BOTH DISTURBED AND A LITTLE AMUSED BY THE RECENT RUCKUS AT WELLESLEY, WHEN A VOCAL MINORITY OF STUDENTS OBJECTED TO BARBARA BUSH BEING CHOSEN AS THE COMMENCEMENT SPEAKER, BECAUSE SHE WAS --AS I SAW IT REPORTED IN THE NEWS-- "ONLY A WIFE AND MOTHER". THE WORD "ONLY" SHOULD NEVER BE USED TO MODIFY THOSE NOUNS.

BETTY AND I BRISTLE WHEN THE LONG OVER-DUE FREEDOM FOR WOMEN TO CHOOSE THE CAREERS THAT THEY WANT.... WHEN THAT FREEDOM DOES NOT INCLUDE THE CHOICE MADE BY BARBARA BUSH AND BETTY.

**SUCH WOMEN LIVE THEIR LIVES SO THAT THE PUBLIC HAS AN
EXPECTATION FROM THEM. WHEN THAT EXPECTATION IS
FULFILLED, IN ADDITION TO BEING A WIFE AND MOTHER, IT IS
ICING ON THE CAKE.**

BETTYS VASSAR EDUCATION HAS SERVED US WELL MANY TIMES.

**AS A FIRST-TIME VOTER IN NEW YORK, BETTY WAS REQUIRED IN
THOSE DAYS TO TAKE THE LITERACY TEST. BY FLASHING HER
VASSAR RING IN FRONT OF THE OFFICIAL, WE TRIED TO
PERSUADE HIM THAT SHE COULD DO WITHOUT THE TEST. AT**

**FIRST HE HEMMED AND HAWED, BUT EVENTUALLY ALLOWED AS
TO HOW A VASSAR STUDENT PROBABLY COULD READ AND
WRITE.**

**SO I GUESS YOU CAN TAKE PRIDE IN THE WIDESPREAD NOTION
THAT VASSAR STUDENTS ARE, AT LEAST, LITERATE.**

**THIS PLACE HAS MEANT A LOT TO US, AND WE'VE RETURNED TO
VASSAR FROM TIME TO TIME OVER THE YEARS, MOST RECENTLY
JUST LAST YEAR AS BETTY JOINED THE CLASS OF '39 FOR ITS
50TH REUNION.**

ENOUGH VASSAR RECOLLECTIONS...

**MY TIME IS LIMITED -- BY MY CHOICE, I MIGHT ADD -- BECAUSE
A LONG, RAMBLING SPEECH OUGHT NOT TO STAND BETWEEN
YOU AND YOUR DEGREE.**

**THEREFORE, IN THE FEW MINUTES I HAVE WITH YOU, I WANT TO
TALK ABOUT SOME THINGS THAT MIGHT INTEREST YOU AND AT
LEAST ONE THING YOU MIGHT NEED TO KNOW, AS YOU PROCEED
INTO THE WORLD OF WORK ... OR GRADUATE STUDY ... AND/OR
FAMILY ... AND/AND/OR/OR GRADUATE STUDY, WORK, AND
FAMILY.**

A GENERATION AGO, I WOULDN'T HAVE HAD TO INCLUDE SO MANY "ANDS" AND "ORS" IN A COMMENCEMENT ADDRESS, BUT NOW SO MANY OPTIONS LIE BEFORE EACH OF YOU, REGARDLESS OF GENDER, RACE,AND EVEN YOUR GPA.

YES, YOU HAVE GREAT OPPORTUNITIES. A GLANCE AT THE HEADLINES ABOUT WORLD AND NATIONAL EVENTS DURING THE LAST 12 MONTHS MAKE IT CLEAR THAT YOU ARE GRADUATING INTO A WORLD THAT HOLDS GREATER PROMISE, WIDER OPPORTUNITIES, AND MORE EXCITEMENT THAN ANY YEAR I CAN RECALL.

YOU HAVE THE OPPORTUNITY TO MAKE A DIFFERENCE.

DO IT.

**I'M MOST PLEASED WHEN PEOPLE WHO TALK TO ME ABOUT MY
SURGEON GENERAL YEARS TELL ME THAT I MADE A DIFFERENCE.**

IF I DID, THERE ARE TWO REASONS WHY.

**FIRST, I DECIDED THAT NO MATTER WHAT THE COST,
POLITICALLY OR ECONOMICALLY, I WOULD ACT SIMPLY
ACCORDING TO WHAT I THOUGHT WAS RIGHT.**

**YOU MAY REMEMBER, I'M SURE, THAT MY NOMINATION WAS NOT
WITHOUT SOME CONTROVERSY, WHICH IS PUTTING IT AS
DELICATELY AS I CAN. IN PRIVATE LIFE I HAD BEEN AN
OUTSPOKEN PERSON WITH VERY STRONG OPINIONS ON
IMPORTANT ISSUES. AND THESE OPINIONS -- AND MY AGE, 65 AT
THAT TIME WERE USED AS ARGUMENTS AGAINST MY BEING THE
COUNTRY'S SURGEON GENERAL.**

**THE CONGRESS AND MANY PEOPLE ACROSS THE COUNTRY
DEBATED THESE MATTERS FOR ABOUT 8 MONTHS. BUT I DID,
TOO.**

**I ASKED MYSELF IF I SHOULD -- OR COULD -- VOW TO BE A
CHANGED PERSON IN ORDER TO GAIN THE SENATE'S APPROVAL.**

**SHOULD I, FOR EXAMPLE, DEPOSIT MY RELIGIOUS BELIEFS IN A
BLIND TRUST?**

**SHOULD I DONATE MY MORAL VALUES TO SOME WORTHY
CHARITY?**

**BEFORE MOVING TO WASHINGTON, SHOULD I PACK AWAY MY
ETHICS IN AN ATTIC TRUNK?**

AND I SAID, "NO ... NONE OF THE ABOVE."

**I TRULY BELIEVED THEN -- AND I BELIEVE NOW -- THAT THE
BEST APPROACH YOU CAN MAKE TO PUBLIC SERVICE IS TO
PROMISE TO GIVE IT EVERYTHING YOU HAVE ... OF WHATEVER IT
IS YOU DO HAVE ... TO DRAW TO THE FULLEST EXTENT FROM
YOUR OWN STOREHOUSE OF KNOWLEDGE AND PERSONAL LIFE
EXPERIENCE ...ALWAYS TO ACT IN ACCORD WITH YOUR
PERSONAL ETHICS.**

**IT WASN'T ALWAYS EASY. AS YOU MAY RECALL, I FOUND MYSELF
IN CONFRONTATIONS WITH PEOPLE INSIDE THE ADMINISTRATION
AS WELL AS OUTSIDE, AS I DEALT WITH THE ISSUES THAT CAME
ACROSS MY DESK . . . ISSUES LIKE SMOKING, BABY DOE, AIDS,
AND MY LETTER TO THE PRESIDENT EXPLAINING WHY I COULD
NOT WRITE A STATISTICALLY VALID SCIENTIFIC REPORT ON THE
HEALTH EFFECTS OF ABORTION ON WOMEN.**

**I LEARNED EARLY ON THAT IF YOU HAVE YOUR SPEECHES
CLEARER THEY LOSE THEIR PUNCH AND PURPOSE. --
SO I DECIDED TO CLEAR MY SPEECHES WITH MY WIFE, WHOSE
VASSAR-EDUCATED JUDGEMENT WAS BETTER THAN ANYONE'S IN
THE CLEARANCE PROCESS.**

SO, WHEN I WROTE THE SPEECH CALLING FOR A SMOKE-FREE SOCIETY IN THE YEAR 2000, I DID SO IN SWITZERLAND, AND HAD IT TYPED IN WASHINGTON IN A PRIVATE OFFICE. WHY? BECAUSE I HAD BEGUN TO WONDER IF ALL GOVERNMENT COPY MACHINES HAD 3 CHUTES . . . ONE FOR THE OPERATOR, ONE TO THE WHITE HOUSE - AND ONE TO THE WASHINGTON POST.

THERE WAS PLENTY OF PRESSURE, ON ME, PRESSURE TO MAKE ME EASE UP ON THE TOBACCO INTERESTS, AFTER ALL SOME OF THEM MAY HAVE BEEN BIG CAMPAIGN CONTRIBUTORS.... I WAS MADE AWARE OF THE OPPOSITION OF COMMERCE AND AGRICULTURE, AS WELL.

THE STRUGGLE GOES ON. JUST LAST WEEK ON FACE THE NATION AND AT AN INTERNATIONAL SMOKING CONFERENCE THE SECRETARY OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES SAID WHAT HE DOES NOT BELIEVE – THAT THE EXPORT OF TOBACCO BY AMERICAN COMPANIES WAS A TRADE ISSUE – NOT A HEALTH ISSUE. WHAT A SORRY STATE OF AFFAIRS! UNDER THE THREAT OF TRADE SANCTIONS, – WE ARE EXPORTING DISEASE, DISABILITY AND DEATH – AND I THINK IT IS IMMORAL.

I ALSO BELIEVE THAT IT IS THE HEIGHT OF HYPOCRISY FOR THE UNITED STATES TO ASK COLOMBIANS TO STOP THE EXPORT OF COCAINE TO OUR SHORES WHEN WE CONTINUE TO EXPORT AN EQUALLY ADDICTIVE DRUG, NICOTINE, TO MANY MANY COUNTRIES THAT WILL NEVER BE ABLE TO PAY THE ENSUING HEALTH BILL.

THERE WAS PRESSURE TO GIVE UP ON THE HANDICAPPED BABY DOES IN AMERICAN NEO-NATAL UNITS. AFTER ALL, MANY OF THEM MIGHT DIE SOON ANYWAY.....

PRESSURE TO IGNORE THE INITIAL AIDS VICTIMS, AFTER ALL, DIDN'T THEY BRING IT ON THEMSELVES?

**BUT AS A HEALTH OFFICER WITH ETHICAL STANDARDS
COMMITTED TO THAT MOST BASIC RIGHT, THE RIGHT TO LIFE, I
KNEW WHAT I HAD TO DO, WHAT I HAD TO SAY TO BE TRUE TO
MY CALLING AND MY ETHICS.
SO I DID IT.**

I KNEW THE AMERICAN PEOPLE WERE CLAMORING FOR THE TRUTH ABOUT AIDS. I ALSO KNEW – THE WAY THINGS WERE GOING – THEY WERE NEVER GOING TO GET IT. WHEN PRESIDENT REAGAN DIRECTED ME TO WRITE A REPORT ON AIDS, ONCE AGAIN I DECIDED I'D CLEAR IT WITH NO ONE OFFICIALLY ONLY WITH BETTY AND A FEW TRUSTED COLLEAGUES. I HAD TO REPORT TO THE CABINET BUT I DID NOT WANT THEM TO CHANGE A WORD, OR LEAK A WORD.

I COVERED THE LEAK BY NUMBERING EACH COPY & COLLECTING THEM ALL AT THE DOOR. BUT, HOW TO AVOID CHANCES? I DECIDED TO MAKE ANY CHANCES LOOK SO EXPENSIVE TO DO, – THAT NO ONE WOULD DARE.

**WHILE MILLIONS OF COPIES WERE BEING CHURNED OUT ON
CHEAP PAPER STOCK – THE COPIES I GAVE THE CABINET WERE
ON GLOSSY PAPER, ROYAL BLUE COVER, WITH THE SEAL OF THE
P.H.S. IN SILVER. NO ONE CHANGED A WORD. I RELEASED IT TO
THE PRESS THE NEXT MORNING.**

**SOMETIMES IT AMAZES ME WHEN PEOPLE CONGRATULATE ME
ON MY YEARS IN WASHINGTON, WHEN ALL I DID WAS SIMPLY TO
DO THE JOB OF THE SURGEON GENERAL OF THE UNITED STATES.**

WHAT ELSE SHOULD THEY EXPECT?

**EVERY COMMENCEMENT SPEAKER IS PERMITTED AN
ADOMINATION OR TWO! I AM CONCERNED ABOUT WHAT I SEE AS
A GREAT WILLINGNESS TO PASS THE BUCK OF PERSONAL
ACCOUNTABILITY. IT HAS BECOME PAINFULLY RARE FOR
SOMEONE --AND NOT ONLY THOSE IN PUBLIC LIFE--TO ADMIT
ACCOUNTABILITY, TO SAY, "THAT WAS MY FAULT." OR, "I
SHOULD HAVE DONE IT DIFFERENTLY." OR GOING OUT ON A
LIMB, EXERCISING MORAL SUASION, SAYING, "THIS IS THE RIGHT
THING TO DO."**

**I AM EVEN MORE CONCERNED ABOUT A GROWING TENDENCY TO
ABROGATE THE RESPONSIBILITIES EACH OF US HAS TO OTHER
PEOPLE, ESPECIALLY TO MEMBERS OF OTHER GENERATIONS.**

**I AM DELIGHTED TO SEE SO MANY GRANDPARENTS HERE
TODAY.....ALONG WITH PARENTS AND CHILDREN..... BECAUSE
MOST OF US SPEND OUR LIVES IN 3-GENERATIONAL WORLDS.**

**AS WE GO THROUGH LIFE, WE CHANGE PLACES IN THAT 3-
GENERATIONAL WORLD. RIGHT NOW I CAN SEE MYSELF AS
CLEARLY AS IF IT WERE YESTERDAY, RUNNING AROUND THIS
CAMPUS AS A COLLEGE KID. AND YES, IT MAY BE HARD FOR YOU
TO ENVISION NOW, BUT BEFORE YOU KNOW IT, YOU'LL BE THE
ONES WITH THE GREY HAIR.
BUT, WE MUST ALWAYS REMEMBER THAT WE NEED THE OTHER
TWO GENERATIONS....AND ARE NEEDED BY THEM.**

**TOO OFTEN, PEOPLE FAIL TO DISCHARGE THOSE
RESPONSIBILITIES. PARENTS LEAVE TO THE SCHOOLS THE
ENTIRE TASK OF EDUCATING THEIR CHILDREN, WHEN NOT LONG
AGO PARENTS CLAIMED THE EDUCATION OF THEIR CHILDREN TO
BE THEIR PRIVILEGE AND OBLIGATION, EVEN IF SHARED WITH
THE SCHOOLS.**

**RELIGIOUS TEACHING AND ETHICAL VALUES, IF THEY ARE
INSTILLED AT ALL, ARE NOW LEFT TO CHURCH OR SYNAGOGUE. .
. OR MTV.**

ELDERLY PARENTS AND GRANDPARENTS ARE SHUNTED OFF TO NURSING HOMES OR "SENIOR CENTERS", TOLD TO FIND THERE THE SENSE OF BELONGING THAT USED TO COME WITH FAMILY.

CHILDREN LIVE IN THEIR OWN CULTURE, REMOTE FROM ADULTS, DOMINATED ONE YEAR BY TRANSFORMER TOYS, THE NEXT BY CABBAGE PATCH DOLLS, THE NEXT BY TEENAGE MUTANT NINJA TURTLES.

THEY LEAD LIVES DETACHED FROM PARENTAL CONCERN OR INTEREST, TURNING TO PEERS FOR THE GUIDANCE OR EVEN PLAYFUL COMPANIONSHIP THAT PARENTS AND GRANDPARENTS USED TO PROVIDE.

I HAD NOT PLANNED TO TALK IN THIS VEIN, BUT MY EXPERIENCES THIS WEEK, DEMAND IT. I AM IN THE MIDST OF SHOOTING A ONE HOUR PRIME TIME TV SHOW FOR NBC ON TEENAGE HEALTH. I SPENT THE LAST 4 DAYS WITH HOMELESS ADOLESCENTS, STREET KIDS – I AM APPALLED AND DISMAYED –

OF COURSE, I AM AWARE THAT EACH GENERATION MAKES ITS SHARE OF MISTAKES. THERE ARE NO PERFECT CHILDREN BECAUSE THERE ARE NO PERFECT PARENTS, OR PERFECT GRANDPARENTS...AS CLOSE TO PERFECT AS THOSE HERE TODAY MIGHT COME!

AND NOW BACK TO MAKING A DIFFERENCE.

LIFE AFFORDS NO GREATER RESPONSIBILITY, NO GREATER PRIVILEGE THAN THE RAISING OF THE NEXT GENERATION.

INDEED, I AM HEART SICK AT THE WAY A PREVIOUS GENERATION HAS FAILED THEM.

THE YOUNGSTERS I HAVE BEEN WITH ARE NOT PRODUCTS OF THE GHETTO, THEY ALL COME FROM HOMES LIKE YOURS.

I AM CONVINCED THAT ONE OF THE MOST RESPONSIBLE USES OF YOUR TIME, TIMELY FULFILLMENT OF YOUR RESPONSIBILITY MAY BE AS THE FATHER OR THE MOTHER --REMEMBER CHILD-REARING IS NOT JUST WOMEN'S WORK-- TO BE WITH THE YOUNG CHILD, EACH DAY OF THOSE CRITICAL FIRST YEARS.

IN THE LAST DECADE I HAVE SEEN TOO MANY PEOPLE DETERMINED TO BE RIGHT THERE FOR THE INITIAL PHASES OF A NEW PROJECT AT THE OFFICE, BUT ABSENT FOR THE INITIAL PHASES OF A NEW CHILD AT HOME.

**MAYBE THAT SECOND INCOME FOR THE MORTGAGE PAYMENT ON
THE BIGGER HOUSE IS NOT THAT IMPORTANT, BECAUSE A GOOD
HOUSE IS NOT AS IMPORTANT AS A GOOD HOME.**

**COLLEGE USUALLY DOES LITTLE IN A DIRECT WAY TO PREPARE
YOUNG PEOPLE FOR THE MOST IMPORTANT TASK OF PARENTING,
- ALTHOUGH YOUR VASSAR EDUCATION SHOULD HELP BUTTRESS
THOSE BASIC VALUES THAT WILL PROMPT YOUR RIGHT CHOICES.**

**BUT MY REMARKS ABOUT THE NEXT GENERATION OF CHILDREN
ARE NOT DIRECTED TO THEIR PARENTS OR PARENTS-TO-BE
ALONE. YOU ALL HAVE A RESPONSIBILITY TO THE YOUNGER
GENERATION. EACH ADULT, PARENT OR NOT, CAN MAKE A
DIFFERENCE.**

AND, UNFORTUNATELY, OUR CHILDREN NEED YOU NOW MORE THAN EVER. OUR CHILDREN ARE ALWAYS OUR MOST VULNERABLE CITIZENS, BUT IT IS A SAD COMMENTARY ON OUR TIMES THAT TODAY THE MOST LIKELY VICTIMS OF POVERTY, ABUSE, MALNUTRITION AND CRIME IN AMERICA ARE AMERICA'S CHILDREN.

I WOULD HOPE IT WOULD BE ALTRUISM AND GENUINE CONCERN THAT WOULD PROMPT YOUR CARE FOR THE NEXT GENERATION. THOSE ARE THE BEST OF MOTIVES.

BUT, IF THEY DONT PERSUADE YOU, SELF-INTEREST SHOULD.

THE NEXT GENERATION MAY BE TINY NOW, EVEN UNBORN.

BUT EVENTUALLY YOU'LL NEED THEM TO CARE FOR YOU.

AND WHETHER OR NOT THEY ARE YOUR BIOLOGICAL CHILDREN,

THEY'LL BE THE ONES VOTING TO ALLOCATE OUR INCREASINGLY

SCARCE RESOURCES FOR THE SOCIAL SERVICES YOU'LL NEED

WHEN YOU ARE MY AGE.

YOU MAY SEE THAT THE CHILDREN PLACED INTO DAY CARE FOR THE SAKE OF CONVENIENCE AND NOT OF NECESSITY IN THE NINETIES WILL, FOR THE SAME REASON, BE THE ONES TO EASE THEIR PARENTS INTO NURSING HOMES LATER ON.

REACH OUT TO THESE CHILDREN, TO AMERICA'S CHILDREN, TO YOUR CHILDREN, TO OTHER CHILDREN.

BE PART OF THEIR WORLD, MAKE THEM PART OF YOURS.

THERE IS NO BETTER INVESTMENT OF YOUR TIME.

TAKE YOUR TIME AND GIVE IT TO THEM.

**I KNOW THAT SOCIAL ISSUES HAVE ALWAYS BEEN OF CONCERN
TO VASSAR STUDENTS.**

YOU CAN "SEIZE THE DAY"

YOU CAN MAKE A DIFFERENCE.

**YOU CAN MAKE IT BETTER, FOR CHILDREN AND THAT MEANS
FOR ALL OF US.**

AND NOW A SINCERE WISH FOR EACH ONE OF YOU:

THAT YOU HAVE GOOD HEALTH ... A LONG LIFE ...

AND A TRUE LOVE TO MAKE THEM BOTH WORTHWHILE.

THANK YOU.

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