

CAROL H. RASCO
Assistant to the President for Domestic Policy

EVENT: Commencement Address
University of Central Arkansas
Spring Commencement

DATE: Saturday, May 14, 1994

TIME: 10:30 a.m.
(Assemble in Purple Circle Room by 10:15am)

EVENT LOCATION: Farris Center
University of Central Ark. Campus
201 Donaghey Avenue
Conway, Arkansas
*NOTE: Parking reserved for you in front of
Farris Center

PRESENTATION: 15-20 minute speech - No Q & A

SEATING ARRANGEMENT: You will be seated on stage with faculty and
staff

INTRODUCTION BY: Dr. Winfred L. Thompson

AUDIENCE: Approximately 650 graduates

ISSUES OF INTEREST: Traditional commencement speech

FORMAT: See attached program

PRESS: Local newspaper reports are expected

DRESS: Cap and gown provided (personal hood)

CONTACT: Carol Daves
(501)450-5073

OTHER INFORMATION: Win Thompson will host a luncheon in your
honor immediately following commencement
(platform guests, board members, vice
presidents, and deans will attend.)

Commencement Address by Carol H. Rasco

**University of Central Arkansas
Conway, Arkansas
May 14, 1994**

Thank you, President Thompson and thank you distinguished trustees, faculty, students, parents, friends, and citizens who are gathered here.

Most of all I thank you, the graduates of the class of 1994 for indulging me, for allowing me to be a part of this celebration at one of my own alma maters.

Commencements are a time to stop and think about the past, to celebrate this present moment and to look forward

into the future. There is no way that any commencement speaker at any campus this spring could stand before you and tell you what will happen. Not tomorrow, not next year, not for the rest of any of your lives. But part of the reason commencement speeches have a certain similarity and familiarity to them is because when one does stand in front of a group like this, impressed by YOUR accomplishments and achievements, remembering one's OWN past, it is an opportunity to talk about some of the ideals and values that have withstood the test of time and which can be guiding principals in lives well lead.

There are many people in this audience today who are responsible for your being here. They believe in you and your journey. Many are people who believed that as parents and family members they had responsibilities to you and worked every day, often through hard times, just as you yourself did to fulfill the dream, the journey. A college degree is a collective achievement, because for every person dressed in black in front of me I know there are people in the stands who are very, very proud -- whether parents, spouses, friends, children, instructors, professors -- and each one, whether in a cap and gown or not, deserves some of the credit for the diploma you will receive today.

When I graduated from college with my Bachelor's degree in 1969 and then my graduate degree here in 1972, I had dreams for my life and I also hoped to be able as I fulfilled those dreams to do some good along the way. That reminds me of a quote by one of my favorite figures in history...Benjamin Franklin. He said: "We may make these times better if we bestir ourselves." The nobelist question in the world is "What good may I do in it?" That is the question for this commencement. That will be, I hope, the question you ask yourselves as you journey through your life...that journey will not always be an easy one, it will not always have clear directions attached to it.

When I do look back at that very warm and humid Arkansas night in August of 1972 when I was on a football field here receiving my graduate degree, I see the idealism, I see the excitement I felt and I see some of the naivete that marked me and marked many who are at the beginning of their adulthood. I know that at 24, I did not fully appreciate the political and social restraints that one faces in the world. I know that I assumed that we could overcome a lot of these obstacles that are still with us, despite the progress we have made. But I am glad that I felt idealistic at 24 because I think it is important to feel that way and I have tried to maintain that feeling as I have grown older. I want to be idealistic, I want to care

**about the world. I want to be connected to other people.
And I hope that you will as well.**

**As I thought in recent weeks about my remarks to you I
reflected on what gives the most meaning to my life and
came to a very CLEAR conclusion....**

1. Family and personal relationships

2. Work

3. Service

And 4, unpinning all of this, Faith.

I believe each of us makes our mark on the time in which we live by continually trying to construct the unique balance in our lives among these three things...and how you strike that balance will change as you go through life, and how you see your obligations will change.

First, your personal relationships. When all is said and done, it is the people in your life...your family, the friendships you form and the commitments you maintain that give shape to your life. Your friends and your neighbors, the people at work, or at church, all those who touch your daily lives. It is said that with each encounter we make, no matter how short, how long, we give

something of ourselves and we receive from that encounter.

Second, your work. For some of you, that may overlap with your contribution to the community. For some of you, the future might not include work outside the home, but most of you will at some point in your life work for pay. You may choose several careers within a lifetime...I sure have. But above all, what work really does is expressed best by President Clinton in a recent address:

~~"I do not believe we can repair the basic fabric of society until people who are willing to work have work. Work organizes life. It~~

gives structure and discipline to life. It gives meaning and self-esteem to people who are parents. It gives a role model to children.

Further...we cannot, I submit to you, repair the American community and restore the American family until we provide the structure, the value, the discipline and the reward that work gives."

Third, your service. Perhaps the most eloquent statement of the place of service in our lives was one I read by Havel, the playwright and first freely elected President of Czechoslovakia....in a letter he wrote to his wife Olga while he was imprisoned he said: "Everything meaningful in life is distinguished by a certain transcendence of individual human existence ~~— beyond the limits of mere 'self-care' —~~ toward other people, toward society, toward the world. Only by looking outward, by caring for things that, in terms of pure survival, you needn't bother with at all...and by throwing yourself over and over again into the tumult of the world, with the intention of making your voice count — only thus will you really become a person."

I first recognized what I cared most passionately about, while I was in graduate school here when I worked as a volunteer with children at the Child Study Center in Little Rock. Then after the birth of my son who was diagnosed early with a disability, ^{the passion deepened}...my experiences gave voice to deep feelings about what children deserved from their families and government. I discovered I wanted my voice to count for children.

Some of you may have already had such a life-shaping experience; for many, it lies ahead. Recognize it and nurture it when it occurs. ~~Because my concern is making children count, I hope you will indulge me as I tell you~~

Why. To me, the American Dream is an intergenerational compact. Or as someone once said, one generation is supposed to leave the key under the mat for the next generation. We repay our parents for their love in the love we give our children -- whether the children born to us or the children of our community -- and we repay society for the opportunities we are given by expanding the opportunities granted others..that is the way it is supposed to work. You and I know too well it is NOT working that way. Too many of our children are being impoverished financially, socially and spiritually. The shrinking of their futures ultimately diminishes us all. Whether you have children or end up having children of your own or not, I

hope each of you will recognize the need for a sensible national family policy that continues to reverse the neglect of our children.

There are many ways of helping children. You can do it through your own personal lives by being dedicated, loving parents. You can do it in medicine or music, social work or education, business or government service, by making policy [&]/or making cookies.

It is a false choice to tell women or men that we must choose between caring for ourselves and our own families or caring for the larger family of humanity....as President

Clinton has said for years....." Family values alone won't feed a hungry child. And material security alone cannot provide a moral compass...We need both."

Forty-five years ago, the biggest threat to our country came from the other side of the Iron Curtain; from the nuclear weapons that could wipe out the entire planet. That threat has ended.

Today, our greatest national threat comes not from some external Evil Empire, but from our own internal indifference that tolerates unparented children, embattled

schools, pervasive poverty, racism, and violence.

Not for one more year can our country think of children as some footnote on our national agenda. How we treat our children should be front and center of that national agenda...or ultimately it won't matter what else is on that agenda.

My plea is that you not only nurture the values that will determine the choices you make in your personal lives, but also insist on policies with those values to nurture our nation's children.

"But, now really, Carol," many of you may be saying to yourselves, "I've got to pay off my student loans. I can't even find a good job yet, let alone someone to love. How am I going to worry about the world? Our generation has fewer dreams, fewer illusions than yours."

And I hear you.....as graduates today, you face tough choices.

You might easily conclude the safest course of action is just to take your diploma and crawl under your bed..

But let me propose an alternative.

Hold onto the dreams you have.

Take up the challenge of forging an identity that transcends yourself.

Care about something you don't HAVE to care about at all.

Throw yourself into the world and make your voice count.

Whether you make your voice count for children or for another cause, enjoy your life's journey. There is no dress rehearsal for life and you may have to ad lib your way

through more scenes than you wish. The only way to prepare is to do what you have done...get the best possible education and then continue to learn from literature and history, from your personal relationships, from service.

I want you to remember this day and remember how much MORE you have in common with each other than with the people who will try to divide you through the years ahead. And I want you to continually stand together person to person wherever you reside, stand as a community, the community of the extended family.

Congratulations to each of you.

Look forward,

seize the moment,

and welcome the challenges ahead!

Thank you and Godspeed.

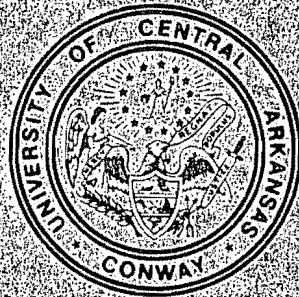
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**THE UNIVERSITY OF
CENTRAL ARKANSAS**



SPRING COMMENCEMENT

**Ten-thirty O'Clock in the Morning
May the Fourteenth
Nineteen Hundred and Ninety Four
FARRIS HEALTH AND PHYSICAL EDUCATION CENTER**