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1959 Commencement Address and Dedication of Buildings

Jessamyn West

Richard M. Nixon

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Addresses delivered on the occasion of the 56th Commencement and Dedication of Buildings at Whittier College, June 13, 1959
The afternoon of June 13th was an historical moment in the life of Whittier College. Her most illustrious son and daughter had come home to honor their Alma Mater. It was fitting that Jessamyn West, who gave the address, should begin with a short story of the Quaker heritage which she shares with her cousin, Richard Milhous Nixon, who was to follow with the Commencement Charge. She told the tale, as her custom is, with humor, directness, and her woman's touch of grace; then she spoke to the condition of us all as users and abusers of words.

In this time of troubles when we as parents and educators look with eyes of sober reappraisal for the verities upon which free men may continue to stand, perhaps we should heed her inspired direction to the most fundamental of all the general studies. Whittier College is proud, indeed, to give the permanence of public print to this still untarnished tenet of the Friendly Persuasion. And it is our hope that the “disciplined craft” of Jessamyn West may “enlarge the scope” of your humanity.

But it is one thing to be an artist of integrity portraying one's fellows with candor and compassion in the seclusion of his study and quite another to meet them in the rough and tumble of the hustings and the press conference. To say what one must say if he is to get votes and influence legislation and at the same time be what one must be if he is to remain just and honest is the very acid test of human probity. What more gratifying moment could a teacher have than the opportunity to assure the nation that in Richard Nixon the promise of the former student has burgeoned richly in the present friend? The Vice President is more than a living tribute to his Alma Mater. He symbolizes the function of the small college in the great world.

Albert Upton
Director of General Studies
Whittier College

Note: Jessamyn West would have you know that she had delivered the second part in somewhat expanded form at Swarthmore College and that the Nixon story was told exclusively at Whittier.
COMMENCEMENT ADDRESS
by
Jessamyn West

Members of the Graduating Class . . . Fathers, Mothers, and Friends of the Graduating Class—and I take it that this includes the faculty—President Smith—Vice President Nixon.

I have saluted the graduating class first and the Vice President last because I believe he would want me to do so. The Vice President greatly honors us all by his presence here today. But Richard Nixon, Whittier College '34, is, in the long line of Whittier graduates, a has-been on this stage today. He had his hour of glory here twenty-five years ago. Today belongs to today's graduates. And while the occasion is made happy and auspicious by Richard's presence, we celebrate this afternoon the successful completion of four years of hard work by the class of fifty-nine.

This is perhaps an opportune moment—before I begin to speak of more serious things—though I shall speak of nothing which lies closer to my heart—this is perhaps an opportune moment for me to say that I was misquoted the last time Richard and I were on this campus together.

Some people at that time thought they heard me say then that I was a former baby-sitter for the Vice President. Since then the Vice President has let it be known that he finds it helpful to wear spectacles when reading. The minute I read that item in my newspaper I knew I had been misquoted. It is one thing to have been a baby-sitter for a rising young politician. It is quite another to have served in this capacity for a spectacle-wearing elder statesman.

For if it is reading glasses today, you know quite well it will be bifocals, tired blood and grandchildren tomorrow.

And if you think about it, you will recall, I believe, that what I actually said earlier was that once, I as a wee, wee toddler myself, sat in a room in which Richard lay in his bassinet. And I submit that this does not constitute the technical act of baby-sitting.

Though I am separated from Richard by more years than I would like you to think, I share with him a background and experiences of which I would not speak at all at this time, except that they are also the background and
experiences of most of you. And they constitute, this back­
ground and these experiences, the fabric which holds us as 
Americans, as Californians, and as persons interested in 
Whittier College in so understanding a group.

This background, the part of it I share with Richard 
and with you, begins as does so much of American history 
with religious persecution in another country. By chance, 
in this case, Germany. From Germany there went to Eng­
land a family seeking the right to worship as it pleased. The 
men of that family presently found themselves fighting with 
Cromwell's Roundheads against the Royalists. And when 
Cromwell won, these English-ex-Germans were dispatched 
with other Cromwell followers to Ireland. There these ex-
German-English fighters became what has been called a 
contradiction in terms—Irish-Quakers, and as such were 
not much more welcome in Ireland than they had been in 
Germany.

These Irish-Quakers accompanied William Penn to 
Pennsylvania and settled in Philadelphia. Which city they 
left in 1812 because, they wrote to friends, the smoke of 
factories and the noise of passing vehicles had become in­
tolerable. (That move, landing, as it has, their descendents 
in the environs of Los Angeles, can scarcely in retrospect 
appear to have been wise—for the reasons stated.)

They went to Ohio. In Ohio in 1870 the farms were so 
close together that the countryside rang in the morning with 
the crowing of cocks, a situation unbearable for any free­
dom lover: and one music-loving, peppermint-sucking Quak­
er, feeling fenced in, struck out for open country. He found 
it in the fertile prairie land of Illinois and Iowa—and turned 
it down because it was so much less beautiful than the un-
fertile picturesque hills of Southern California.

For any westward moving family, California was ob­
viously the next goal and Whittier, since the members of 
this family were Quakers, the next stop. But Whittier it­
self was pretty tame by 1909 and really adventurous souls 
struck out for that last frontier—Yorba Linda. I once asked 
my father, with this frontier idea in mind, if Yorba Linda 
constituted what is called virgin territory. He gave my 
question his usual thoughtful consideration and said, "No, 
it was not virgin, but it was mighty raw."

It was also in my opinion very beautiful. The sun came 
up there as I think the sun always should, from behind a 
mountain called Old Saddle Back.
The evening breezes sprang up there as I think evening breezes always should, fresh and sweet off the blue Pacific.

Children in spring picked there, as children always should, double handfuls of yellow violets and mariposa lilies. In fall they ran after rolling tumbleweeds blown by the big Santa Anas. In winter they brought armloads of holly down from the hills.

In that neighborhood Richard’s mother was a classic frontier mother trying to preserve amidst the rawness of the surroundings the niceties of a more settled life.

Richard’s father was a classic frontier father—a firebrand—not forgetting of course that this was a calm Quaker frontier where a little fire goes a long way. But he was, in any case, the first person to fire me, in his Sunday School class, with the idea that Sunday’s pieties were hollow unless put to work in civic life on week days.

Richard’s mother and my mother were both very proud of their fathers and I somehow got the impression—I don’t know whether Richard did or not—that it was rather a pity that there had to be for biological reasons an admission of non-Milhous blood into our life stream.

It was, for instance, kept from me until rather late in life that I had a grandfather—on the other side of the family, it is unnecessary to say—who had rigged up a seat in his wagon and rode to work sitting down. No Milhous, my mother used to say, would have been caught in so unenergetic a posture.

And Richard may not know to this day (Richard Nixon, this is your life) that he had a grandfather—also of course on the dubious or non-Milhous side of the family—who is reputed to have been—and, such is my early upbringing, I hesitate even now to say this word aloud—a trader of horses—a successful trader of horses. When I ask myself why elderly Quaker ladies lowered their voices when revealing these facts, the answer lies, I believe, in the fact of the success.

Success in horse trading implied a certain shrewd, worldly hardheadedness in the sizing up of man and beast which did not accord with their concept of gentle, trustful Quaker living.

And much as I honor my mother and Richard’s, I am grateful for these grandfathers. A grandfather who liked
to sit down is a fine ancestor for a writer who must necessarily spend most of his days in this position.

And a grandfather with a certain degree of hardheaded psychological insight into men and horses is not a bad ancestor—in these times—for a man holding Richard’s position.

I have permitted myself these preliminary and personal remarks for two reasons. First, because they have to do with our guest of honor here today. And second, and more importantly, because it seemed to me that they have to do with all of us. We are a polyglot country, the melting pot of nations. And California, and especially Los Angeles County, is the melting pot of the Republic. But there exists—and persists—I hope, in the midst of this disparity a core of like-mindedness growing out of the shared past of our people which makes us not only one people—but a unique people.

The adventurousness, the westward movement, the willingness to sacrifice material gains for ideals, the conviction that there are no cloistered virtues, the hardheadedness, the humor—this is great heritage. It lies in the past of all of us. I hope it lies in our future.

I want to speak to you now of one of the means by which this heritage can be kept intact.

I want to speak to you this afternoon of our responsibilities and our opportunities as users of words. Of our responsibilities to the words—and to each other. Of our opportunity through the responsible use of words to convey not only our own vision of the unique world in which each of us lives alone—but to convey to others the only real treasure each of us possesses—a self.

This is in fact an invitation in Martin Buber’s words, “to make the effort to impart oneself to others as one is.” This is not a question, as Buber warns, of saying everything that occurs to one (And I shall try to remember this as I speak), but a question of allowing persons with whom one communicates to partake of one’s being. It is a question of the authenticity of what is between men, and without which there can be no authentic human existence.

I have been drawn to this subject by four considerations. First, by the nature of the time in which we live; second, by the character of the Quaker experience in the use of words and silence; third, by my own inclinations as
a user of words for the purposes of storytelling—and fourth, I have been drawn to this subject because of the achievements of our guest of honor, a man who has been demonstrating, since his undergraduate triumphs as a debater here at Whittier College, both a unique willingness and a unique ability to speak his own mind in his own words.

Before this—or any other speech—is made and listened to, I think this question should be answered: What is the justification of the inconvenience of assemblage for the purpose of making and listening to a speech.

For you are all readers. You can all read rather more quickly, easily and comprehendingly than you can listen. And as a writer I feel that I can write rather more easily, quickly, and comprehensibly than I can speak.

What then are we doing here face to face? Speaker and listeners? What is the justification for this one-sided conversation? For you who in the time since you left your homes to come here this afternoon might have read ten times the words I’ll be able to speak. (For reasons of vanity I keep the comparison quantitative, only.)

What is the justification for me, who in the time since I left home could have written a story?

Are we sheep? Are we participating in a form outworn? Meaningful once, but meaningless now?

Its justification in this age? Its justification in the light of Quaker experience? Its justification for the writer? As readers you will have to find your own justifications for choosing to become listeners.

In 1650 George Fox took his stand on a small hill in Yorkshire. On the slopes of that hill some 3000 people had assembled to hear him speak. Many had travelled all night. There were no seats except for those who were not too saddle-sore to remain in their saddles. There was no public address system, no popcorn, no teleprompter.

George Fox stood in front of these three thousand people for three hours without saying a word—and they all waited for him. Afterwards he said, “I famished them for words.”

The person who would attempt to predict what George Fox could or could not do in this or any other age would be on very precarious ground. For “dear George”, as William Penn said, “was a new and heavenly-minded man.”
But I feel that even “dear George” would find it more difficult nowadays to famish us for words. The famishment we are all more likely to feel today when the very air hums with a criss-crossing network of sound is a famishment for silence.

The air hums with words—but too many of the words we hear are impersonal, mechanized, canned.

Too many of our leaders speak to us not in their own words and out of the core of their own experience and being. Instead they read to us, assisted by their teleprompters, the words written for them by a corps of experts, hired to write words for leaders to read from their teleprompters.

Our funny men are funny by rote. Their wit is a matter of memory. Their humor is a matter of money, and the funniest man is the man able to hire the largest corps of gagwriters and to command the most complete file of jokes.

In our intense hunger for the personal and the natural, we have made a bestseller of “Kids Say the Darndest Things”—things which in happier times would have been no more than fireside prattle—and reported as such to papa returning home to supper—or written as such to grandmothers back East, who value such trivia.

“Something human,” said the girl in the fairy story, “is dearer to me than any pearl.”

In the aridity and dehumanization of our communicating today, we live like that little girl, caught in the inhumanity of a fairy tale—offered pearls—great big lustrous production-number pearls—when what we long for is something a good deal less large—and a good deal less fishy.

So though dear George new and heavenly-minded might have a more difficult time today in famishing us for words, we are famished to starvation’s point for what, when he did speak, he always gave his listeners in full measure—and that was George Fox, the living man. The living man—the man who not only stands behind his words, but who lives in them. Where is he today? And I am speaking now not primarily of public life, but of private life. Where is the man with his own idiom, his own inflection, his own voice? The man who does not speak in the tired, flat idiom of journalism, television, radio?

John Woolman on his western travels once spoke to an audience of Indians. One of these Indians, a man by the
name of Paupenhang, said to Woolman afterwards: “When you speak, I love to hear where words come from.”

What did Paupenhang mean by this? He meant, I believe, that he felt that peace, that refreshment, that contentment that we all feel in the presence of someone who makes the effort to impart himself to us as he is.

“One loves to feel where words come from.” When we do not feel this, we are denied authentic human existence—which occurs only when persons who are communicating permit each other to partake of their being.

One would rather hear a villain speak out of his villainy than hear a saint dissemble. A villain speaking out of his villainy has a willingness to impart himself to others as he is. With that man, that villain, we have a place of meeting. He has declared himself true, he has declared himself to be wicked. But that is a very human characteristic—and there are few of us who will not be able to meet him on his own ground.

But we do not love false words. That is, words which falsify the speaker, words which hide him, distort him, misrepresent him. Such words leave us struggling with shadows. We are not met.

Human life, says Ortega y Gasset, in its ultimate truth, is radical solitude. And he defines love as an attempt to exchange two solitudes, to mingle two secret inwardnesses.

If this is so, the most unloving act in the world is the refusal to exchange inwardness.

The Quaker ideal of communicating is not wholly described by Buber’s “a willingness to impart oneself to others as one is.” That is only half of it. One must have also a willingness to speak to the listener as he is—without, of course, ever ceasing in any way to impart oneself.

This speaking to another's condition requires, at the very least, two vanishing abilities—the ability to be spontaneous, and what is an expression of spontaneity—the ability to be silent.

The “Life of Isaac Hooper” is a book too little known. In it Mrs. Hooper says to a niece, “It is a very nice thing, my dear, to be silent when thee has nothing to say.”

It is still a nice thing, though little practiced nowadays—but it is an absolutely necessary thing if we are to attain
any knowledge of the condition of the human being to whom we speak.

Ideally, one's words and one's life should be so much of a piece that one could no more open his mouth than he could his veins without giving of his essence. Though the comparison is not apt. We are human beings, not by virtue of the blood in our veins, but by virtue of the words in our mouths. By blood kinship we are united to the animals. By word kinship we are united to each other.

George Fox, when set upon by his enemies, was wont to say, “Strike me. Here is my hair, here is my cheek, here is my back.” He presented himself wholly to his attackers. He did the same when he spoke. He presented himself wholly to his listeners. I have tried to imagine George Fox reading a teleprompter. My imagination fails. It is difficult to think of him preparing a speech. He prepared for his speeches by living his life. He was an undivided man. He was whole.

He was a concerned man—and one of his concerns was to reach and to speak to the condition of his listeners.

I come now to my third point. In an era famished for silence and the personal, in a tradition which emphasizes the spontaneous—what is a writer doing on a public platform? A person whose stock-in-trade is invisibility, whose craft is considered, not spontaneous, whose concerns, if he has any, are extremely general and can best be served in 419 pages of fictional narrative—what is he doing, fully visible, unsilent, non-spontaneous, on a public platform?

The question is rhetorical—the answer is not.

In my opinion the writer, as such, is in an awkward position on a public platform. This position, platform, belong to the man with a cause. They belong to the man whose physical presence enhances and advances his cause.

They belong, this position and this platform, to the teacher: to the man with graph and pointer.

They belong to the politician: the man who says, Vote for my candidate.

They belong to the soldier, who says, Fight in my war.

They belong to the preacher, who says, Worship my God.

They belong even to the medicine man, who says, Buy my snake oil.
Now if there is any logic in what I have been saying, I must at this point either announce my cause or sit down.

I have a cause—the responsible use of words. This is a cause in which I believe—which I am incapable of practising in any very satisfactory way, and which I recommend to you with all the irony which is to be found in the analogous position of a man unfit for front line service urging martial eagerness and punitive fury upon younger men who are.

The simplicity of this cause shouldn’t blind you to its difficulty.

To make the effort to impart oneself to others as one is—to make others love to feel where words come from, requires first of all, self-knowledge: not necessarily a conscious self-knowledge, but a knowledge which is the result of a deep centering-down into the core of one’s being.

And it requires, secondly, a discriminating knowledge of and love for that instrument, the language, without which the self, in the multiplicity of its facets and the uniqueness of its essential nature, cannot be shared.

When we speak sham words we make life shoddy. When we use awkward words we make life graceless. When we use evil words we can, if we use them with power and persuasiveness, make life hell.

We do not love to feel where false words come from because their home is death and they are infected with decay. Hide black deeds under fair words, call murder liquidation, and concepts of right and wrong won by men through centuries of attempting to discriminate are lost.

Call the embrace of men and women sex and the humanization of an act attained through centuries of like efforts to discriminate is lost. As users of words our first responsibility is to mean the word we say. This is the responsibility of character.

Our second responsibility is to say the word we mean: this is the responsibility of craft.

These are our responsibilities as speakers and writers.

We have responsibilities also as readers and listeners.

1. We must, as readers and listeners, require the speaker and writer to mean his words. We must refuse to be conned, curried and cossetted.
2. We must learn to recognize and value exactitude in the use of words. Without exactitude that which is unique cannot be imparted. And when the unique is not imparted we do not face each other as individuals—but only as massman, herd-man, anonymous man.

When we betray the word, underrate the word, falsify the word, destroy the word, we betray, underrate, falsify and destroy ourselves. Refuse to live in the used word, to identify ourselves with it, to stand behind it, and rot strikes at the core of our being; the responsibility to the word is a responsibility to life—as a human being.

Emerson said, “Let every word cover a thing.” By this he was urging not only a concrete, and hence a poetic language, but an exact language.

When language becomes debased, you have a debased people. When words no longer mean what they appear to say, we are in worse case than the animals who have not so far as I have heard attempted to disguise the fact that one growl means, “I’m hungry,” and two means, “You taste good.”

A Yorkshire man reported recently in the New Statesman that he was able to converse with hedgehogs. He was not, however, he admitted, yet able to understand the hedgehogs, as to what they were able to make of the Yorkshire-man.

With the disappearance of any exactitude in language, accompanied as this is by the disappearance of any possibility of reliance on what anyone says (the speaker may not know what he is saying himself) men tend to put their reliance on that language whose nature is unchanging and whose meaning is clear to all—force.

When Zest means soap, when Charm is a brassiere, when Old Quaker is not an octogenarian member of the Religious Society of Friends, God send us another Emerson. And send him soon. Otherwise we shall not understand a word he says. Emerson prayed that his days be loaded and fragrant. What this means to a modern reader I know not. Probably that Emerson desired to be filled with Old Quaker and scented with My Sin.

But now—as then—we cannot separate our living from our words. Willy-nilly we live them ... and we die in them. If we are fair-speaking villains, we may escape the law, but we escape also authentic human existence. And that is to live behind bars indeed.
The joy of life is to cure the wound of division, to become whole and to impart that undivided self to others. This is not easy. It amounts to being an artist, not on canvas or on paper, but hour by hour, all day long, day in and day out.

This means that one must work over one’s head, with no formula for success, without any assurances of security of any kind, with no hope for retirement.

It is a struggle in which you will still be involved, probably unsuccessfully, on your deathbed.

These are perilous times. Perilous in every way. I have asked myself and you may be asking yourselves how I can seriously recommend in such times a cause, with all the difficulty—and the significance, too, you may feel—of balancing a pin on its head.

Is it folly, stupid folly, in such times, to say anything so simple and personal as: respect words? Try to use them so that you impart yourself to others as you are?

Will this solve the Berlin crisis? Put an end to the threatened inflation? Give us “clean”, I quote, bombs?

Bombs and crises and inflation are all man made. There was inflation in the mind, and a bomb in the heart and a crisis in the soul before they externalized themselves in the world.

I must attempt to practise what I preach. If I impart myself to you, it must be as one who sees the world as made up of persons. It is a limitation of my profession or it is a personal limitation and one chooses one’s profession because of it.

A crisis, a bomb, an inflation: these are only men acting: acting out of what they believe themselves to be—and against what they believe other men to be.

Albert Camus said recently that he had discovered in himself, though he was living through what appeared to be an everlasting winter, an invincible summer.

I believe that Camus differs from other men, not in his possession of this summer light and warmth, of these summer blossoms and fruits, but only in the self-knowledge which makes him aware of it—and in the self-discipline of a craft which makes it possible for him to write of it in a way which touches us all.
I believe that what Camus calls an invincible summer, Emerson might call the over-soul—and George Fox the inner light.

I believe in Camus' invincible summer, in Emerson's over-soul, in George Fox's inner light. But even if I did not, I believe that whatever our inner seasons, we must share them.

We are human, insofar as we can claim this title, as the result of this sharing. We have had the scope of our humanity enlarged by those who were willing to make the effort and to take the risk to meet us undisguised—however unpopular their ideas, however revolutionary their insights, however unpalatable their truths.

Out of the meeting of such men, out of the sharing of such insights, something beyond the individual capabilities of each emerged.

The inner light in each of us may be small. But these small lights, combined and turned outward, can create a season of warmth, a fructifying climate of love and truth—a world where, finally, the invincible summer of the heart becomes an outward, observable, and planetary fact.
Members of the graduating class, members of the faculty, members of the Board of Trustees and friends of Whittier College — I have made thousands of speeches since the day I sat in this place twenty-five years ago. But I am going to have to admit that I have never had a more difficult assignment than to find appropriate words to say at an occasion like this one. After all, what can I say to the class of 1959 that could add to what you have learned from the dedicated members of the Whittier faculty; and just now from the eloquence of the one my father always contended was the most brilliant member of our family, Jessamyn West? And particularly after what she has had to say about words, I know that mine will be inadequate and had she not spoken so disparagingly of ghost writers I was tempted to ask her to become mine for this occasion and in the future. Under the circumstances I trust that you will forgive me for speaking to you briefly from my personal experience.

Since I have held my present office I have traveled through sixty-two countries of the world. In the course of those visits I have had the privilege to meet graduates of most of the great colleges and universities in the world and I can assure you, members of the class of '59, and friends of this institution, that there never has been a time when I was not proud that I had attended and had received a degree from Whittier College. To every college graduate his own school has a very special meaning. For me these are the most outstanding characteristics of the Whittier tradition: On the Whittier campus what really counts is not a man's family, how much money he might have, the color of his skin, his racial or his national background, but only his character. And from the day a man or woman enters Whittier College he learns to respect the God-given dignities of his fellow student and his fellow man. And another characteristic of Whittier as I see it is best summarized by the Quaker connotation of the word "friend." A Whittier man or woman cannot spend four years on this campus without coming away with a concern for peace, for human life, for the less fortunate peoples of this and other lands and for every cause which can contribute to a freer, richer fuller
life for all the people of the world. In essence Whittier graduates share a common faith in human decency.

You know of course, that as you leave this friendly campus you will be stepping into a world where men fear one another, hate one another, war with one another. And it is in the present world that the quality of your faith is to be tested. Here then is my Charge to you the class of 1959. Wherever you go and whatever you do, let your example help to make men see a little clearer the glory of justice, the beauty of friendliness. May you ever have as your goal not simply the idea of making a good living for yourselves (for which your Whittier education has admirably prepared you) but the higher objective of making this nation and the world a better place for all of us to live in. Wherever you see prejudice and hatred, strike it down; wherever you encounter ignorance and provincialism, speak up for intelligent community and world responsibility. And above all remember that when you receive your degree your education has just begun. Resist the temptation — and it will be a great one — to settle down, to become smug and complacent, to become oblivious to the problems, the misery, disease and sadness of others around you. And never forget that our Republic cannot long endure without self disciplined and self-educating leaders. I urge you to participate in the activities of the political party of your choice and I speak from knowledge and experience when I say that both of our major parties need whatever new blood and new leadership the college graduate of 1959 can provide. If America is to meet the evolving challenge of world responsibility you and others like you must go on learning for the rest of your lives to the purpose that you may not only enjoy the fruit but unselfishly fulfill the promise of your Whittier and American heritage.
CITATION FOR HONORARY DEGREE
DOCTOR OF LAWS FOR MR. JOHN STAUFFER
by
President Smith

It must be apparent to us all that the future of representative government is deeply involved with the integrity of West Berlin and the resolution of free nations to guarantee it. It may not be so superficially apparent that the independence of the human spirit is similarly bound to the private enterprise to foster it. Only insofar as our captains of industry are willing in their wisdom and generosity to share of their counsel and invest of their wealth will institutions like Whittier continue to flourish on the earth. Mr. John Stauffer, your clear vision of the proper place of education in American life, both liberal and technical, and your clear understanding of the necessity that they be kept in complementary balance, is being recognized by us today.

But I cannot fail to take this historic moment as the president of an independent college with the ideals and problems of the president of an independent college to say that beyond this and deeper than this is my personal gratitude for your constant, vigorous, and imaginative participation in the affairs of Whittier College as a member of her Board of Trustees and may I add that in thus honoring you Whittier College herself is honored.

Mr. John Stauffer, Doctor of Laws.
Mr. Cohu—This podium rather intrigues me; it goes up and down and there is a clock in here that has a timer such as you have on an oven. If the speaker talks too long a bell rings and a trap door opens up.

Ladies and gentlemen: This, as you all know, is a most important day for Whittier. Founders Hall, the first building to be constructed on the Whittier campus, was begun in 1893. When we look over this campus now and see what has been done over the last comparatively few years the development has been something of which we all can be mighty proud. It is particularly important because this is a privately endowed college. I personally believe that the strength of our country and a good bit of our educational excellence comes from colleges of this sort which are privately endowed and are not state controlled institutions. Now I am not going to talk very long because we have many other speakers that do a lot better job than I can. The invocation for this occasion will be given by Dr. Harold Walker, Minister of the First Friends Church of Whittier. Dr. Walker is a Whittier graduate and received his Doctorate degree at the University of Edinburgh.

Dr. Walker—Shall we stand - let us pray. Eternal God our Heavenly Father, we thank thee for this community founded by men and women of vision and noble purpose who recognized the need of education with a spiritual dimension and gave themselves for the establishment of this institution. We rejoice in the contribution made by benefactors, trustees, administrators, faculty and students through the years which have brought us to this great hour. Now, O Lord, we beseech thee to bless the work of our hands and all that is said and done here today and to lead us in the fulfillment of these captivating dreams of growth and development in a Christian college with a vital future. Help us to understand that faith without works is dead and that works without faith can never live. We pray in the name of Him who loves us all. Amen.

Mr. Cohu—I think our next speaker needs no introduction here at Whittier. He is the Mayor of your City, Mr. Don Vaupel, and we have set the clock on him and he won’t talk too long—
Mr. Vaupel—Thank you Mr. Cohu. I can assure you that the trap door will not work today for me. Honorable Richard M. Nixon, honored guests, ladies and gentlemen:

Whittier College is one of the great cultural forces in the city of Whittier. We are proud to have this distinguished institution in our midst; indeed more than that, as an integral part of life of this community in a day when the nation's welfare demands more alert and ever better educated minds and when it calls for more sensitive hearts. That is why it is reassuring and stimulating to see what we see on the Whittier campus today. To see a total of three million dollars worth of buildings become a reality on this campus in a five or six year period is indeed an unparalleled achievement in the history of this College.

Our congratulations go to President Paul S. Smith and the members of his great Board of Trustees who together are bringing a new administrative stimulus and effectiveness to a college so historically worthy. On account of this spectacular growth in your campus physical facilities and because this is being matched by the growth of an educational inner strength within the body of the institution, we pledge to all of you the fullest moral and material support of the greater Whittier area and along with this, we give you our prayers for an ever larger measure of success. Thank you.

Mr. Cohu—Our next speaker is Dr. Paul S. Smith the President of Whittier College. I think that we should be very grateful that we have a man of Dr. Smith's integrity, capacity and energy as head of this college. What he has done for Whittier over the last few years since I have been on the Board of Trustees seems to me to be one of the most outstanding jobs I have ever known a college president to do. My good friend Dr. Smith.

Dr. Smith—Thank you Mr. Cohu. Mr. Vice President, honored guests all of you on the campus at Whittier this afternoon:

The American college today stands in the forefront of national defense no less than do armies and navies and air forces. Indeed the modern phrase, "cold war," is but another way of saying that in our contemporary era, national welfare and national survival are continuously at stake in the area of ideas. So colleges count, they count as they have never counted before in a world-wide struggle between constitutionalism and communism. This is a time in history
when nations which seek to destroy balances of power seek
to do so in the sense of holding captive the minds of men
rather than their bodies. We used to think that our heri-
tage of freedom was a simple bequeathment but we are now
coming to see that instead it is an eternal search and that
each generation must reclaim it.

That is why colleges hold a new importance today, and
I would say especially colleges of the kind of Whittier, this
kind in origin, in organization, and in commitment, just as
Mr. Cohu has so forcefully pointed out in his introductory
comments. All of this is why colleges count as they have
never really counted before. This is so because we need to
graduate not only young folks with knowledge of the old,
yet ever new letters, arts, and sciences, but also young folks
with a better developed sense of equity, a greater capacity
for compassion and a better understanding of the nature of
liberty. To fail in any one of these objectives is to court
failure in all of them. That is why colleges today are so sig-
ificantly related to the welfare of the community and of
the nation.

On behalf of all of us who make up the Whittier Col-
lege family, we accept your compliments, Mr. Mayor, and
we thank you for them.

Mr. Cohu—Our next speaker probably doesn’t need an in-
troduction, he is a graduate of Whittier College, he is a real
American in the true sense of the word and he is the Vice
President of the United States, The Honorable Richard M.
Nixon.

Mr. Nixon—Mr. Cohu, Dr. Smith, Mr. Mayor, all of the dis-
tinguished guests of the platform and in the audience:

I must say that participating in these ceremonies brings
back to those of us who attended this college many years
ago memories which I think are worth sharing with you
for a moment. When I think that today we are dedicating
three new buildings and breaking ground for three more,
I recall what was here in 1930, the year 29 years ago, that
the class of ’34 entered Whittier College.

For example we are dedicating a new student union
building, a student lounge and a bookstore. In 1930 the
bookstore was housed in an oversized closet under the
bleachers at Hadley Field and as far as the student lounge
was concerned all that I can recall was the students used to
lounge on the steps of Founders Hall; so we can see the
progress that has been made in this respect. And then of
course I think of the fact that in the course of twenty-five years the endowment of Whittier College has grown five times; the worth of its physical plant is approximately five times greater than it was twenty-five years ago; there are three times as many students; approximately three times as many faculty members now as there were then and to show that other things have followed apace — I understand that the tuition is about three times as high as it was twenty-five years ago. But I can assure you that the education we received in 1930 to 1934 was in its width as fine an education as members of the class of 1959 receive and as symbolized when their diplomas are awarded a few hours from now.

It is in that vein that I would like to speak very briefly in dedicating these buildings. We are seated on the patio of one of the finest buildings of its kind in all the country. I had intended to describe each of these buildings but the description is written on the program so you can read it more quickly than I can talk about it. But as I think of the John Stauffer Lecture Laboratory with its fine lecture hall and seminar rooms I am reminded of what I think is one of the best statements with regard to education and the need for improvement of education that I have read in recent years. President Pusey of Harvard said just a few years ago “classrooms in which there are teachers with no exceptional gifts are places to keep young people, not to educate them.” The classrooms we had when I was a student here were not particularly attractive; they were crowded, they were most inadequate, but the teachers we had were magnificent; they were dedicated; they worked for far less than they could get in similar activities and professions other than teaching and they left an indelible mark on all those who came through those classrooms in that period. And so today as we break ground for the buildings let us also remember that the teachers in those buildings are what make the complete college. So we are grateful that the Whittier campus classrooms are not just places to keep young people, but places to educate them.

A second thought occurs to me on an occasion like this. It has already been touched upon by Mr. Cohu and, incidentally, thinking of his remarks with regard to this podium, may I say that back in 1934 we didn’t even have a podium, let alone one that goes up and down and sideways as this one does. But he referred to the place of the small independent church-related college like Whittier. I want to tell you how I feel about this kind of college — feel about it not
as a graduate of Whittier, not as one who is a member of its Board of Trustees, but as one who has responsibilities on the national level and has had an opportunity to see some of the factors that make our great economic and social system work as it does. This nation today could use and actually needs a hundred colleges more than it presently has of this kind. I know that there are many that would suggest that the trend is away from the independent college and particularly the smaller ones.

There are a variety of reasons why this would be the case. Lack of funds for endowment purposes and for the purposes of building the kind of structures we dedicate today. But there are others who would suggest that because of the fact that public funds are now available to build universities and colleges for students who wish to attend them that there is no longer any need for private schools, colleges and universities like Whittier. Now there is no need for any of us to argue about the relative merits of the great state universities as contrasted with those of the smaller independent colleges and universities. Both are necessary and both have their problems. But I can certainly echo what Mr. Cohu has already touched upon in stating that when the day comes when we do not have in this country the independent church-related private institutions, we will no longer have the kind of individual free enterprise system which we now have and which we cherish in the United States today. Because as far as education is concerned the trend is always too much toward uniformity and conformity. And once the entire responsibility for education, particularly at the college level, is left to government, whether local, state or federal, inevitably the trend will be toward uniformity and conformity. And only by leavening our educational system with colleges and universities like Whittier do we keep the great public institutions on their toes and only in that way do we assure constantly that our intellectual life will be infused with independent new ideas, the life-blood of progress in a free society.

And so for that reason may I express special appreciation to those who have made these buildings possible. Mr. Stauffer, a captain of industry of the 20th century variety, is a man who recognizes that he has a responsibility not only to make profits for his company but a contribution to the society in which his company must exist. John Stauffer is a man who recognizes that the private enterprise which he believes in is stimulated and enhanced by the kind of institution of which Whittier, we think, is a fine example.
We think also, when we see the name Walter Dexter, of the man who was president of this college twenty-five years ago; of a man who dreamed big dreams that nobody thought were possible. But even the dreams he dreamed have been exceeded by what we will participate in today. And we could add men like Dean Herschel Coffin and others who, with Walter Dexter, built in the days when it was difficult and dreamed of a day like this one. In the realization of the hope and aspirations they had for this institution which they loved so much I feel that there is little more that can be said on an occasion like this that could not more eloquently be said by the ground breaking ceremonies and by the opportunity that you will have to see these buildings and to realize how much they will contribute to the life of this community, and the nation as well. The events on this campus, today, promise that the future will be even better, fuller, richer because of what we participate in today. Thanks.

Mr. Cohu—Thank you Mr. Nixon. I am sure that all of us sympathized with every word that you said. You have made us feel a bit deeper and better not only about the future of our college but about the future of our country. Our next event on the program is our ground breaking ceremony and Mr. Thomas W. Bewley, Chairman of the Board of Trustees of Whittier College and City Attorney, formerly one of the senior partners of Dick Nixon's law firm when he was here at Whittier, will be our next speaker on the ground breaking ceremony, Tom Bewley.

Mr. Bewley—Mr. Cohu, Dick, and all the other friends of Whittier College:

May I tell you, Dick, that we really appreciate your taking the time out of your busy schedule to be present at Whittier College to speak at these dedication exercises on the campus of your Alma Mater.

It is not an easy task to provide a good faculty and pay them the salary we would like to pay to keep them here. But we are trying to do that and we are happy today to say that we have completed three of our buildings — the first part of our program and we have dedicated the new residence hall for women known as the Susan and Clifford Johnson residence for women, the Walter Dexter Student Center and the John Stauffer Lecture Laboratory, and I should like to thank you Mr. Stauffer and you Mrs. Stauffer for making it possible for the Board of Trustees to erect this great building where now we sit. But this is not all of the picture. The Board of Trustees have the plans of three
other buildings that we are going to start today. We have already ordered the blue prints and the specifications and by fall they will be completed and bids will be let and the buildings will be under construction by the time the students get back in the fall. That helps to complete the program, of the physical aspect of the campus, so I am glad at this time, President Paul Smith, to turn over to you the keys for these new buildings and I hope that you and the faculty and students will enjoy them as much as the Board of Trustees has enjoyed providing them for you. Then I should like to say that the three new buildings will be started with the spade that has been used to start almost all the other buildings on the campus and as the Chairman of Building and Grounds Committee, Will B. Wickersham, I now present the spade — Mr. Wickersham, you can dig the first earth and start the new building. Thank you so much for coming.

*Mr. Cohu*—Ladies and gentlemen that concludes our program for the morning. We now adjourn for lunch.