

from the office of

Senator Edward M. Kennedy *of Massachusetts*

REMARKS OF SENATOR EDWARD M. KENNEDY

DEDICATION CEREMONIES

JOHN F. KENNEDY SCHOOL OF GOVERNMENT

HARVARD UNIVERSITY

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FOR RELEASE UPON DELIVERY

Once, not long ago, Jack and all the others in our family had a different dedication in mind for this beautiful university site.

But Harvard is a house of many mansions. It works its will in mysterious and wonderful ways. And so the new home to which President Kennedy and our family come today is a happy place, full of remembrance of the past, full of promise for the future.

When Jack was an undergraduate living in Winthrop House and competing in sports against other Houses with Yankee names like Eliot, Lowell, and Kirkland, he never dreamed that one day there would be a building named Kennedy on this campus.

To those who have made this morning possible, I express the deepest gratitude and appreciation on behalf of all the members of our family -- to President Bok, who has presided so skillfully over this reconciliation and new beginning; to President Pusey, who launched this proud endeavor with my brother Bob; to Dean Allison and Ira Jackson and Jonathan Moore, who have worked so hard to bring us to this auspicious day; and above all, to the family of the President, especially Jacqueline and Caroline and John, who have kept the dream alive and who deserve a full share of the honor that this magnificent memorial will be to President Kennedy.

Other Presidents have touched the nation deeply and have had monuments erected in tribute to their memory and their place in history. But few, if any, have had the sort of living memorial that this School of Government will be for President Kennedy.

He would have loved the red brick of this building and its reminder of the college he knew as an undergraduate. He would have loved the Memorial Park leading to the river and the sycamores that march beside the water. From his window in Winthrop House, on a glorious New England Indian summer day, he could see the Charles on which he sailed for Harvard and the bridge leading to his playing fields beyond.

He would have been proud to see his world of government rising here, directly across the water from his father's world of business.

There would have been other memories -- coming back to see Professor Holcombe and reminisce about the introductory course in government; joking with "Mrs. D" in the Winthrop dining hall; ordering still another roast beef special at Elsie's.

Most of all, perhaps, he would have loved the Forum, so brilliantly created here as a link between Harvard and ancient Greece and Rome -- a crossroads by day and a meeting place by night, an arena for debate where democracy can come alive in the town and university community, a forum where citizens can meet with Presidents and Kings, or poets debate with Secretaries of Defense.

You can almost hear the echoes from the future now. How my brother would have laughed at the thought of debating Richard Nixon in the Forum here before the League of Women Voters. How he would have relished a seminar in which students and professors disputed his handling of the Cuban Missile Crisis. How he would have loved the chance of an evening here to chastise Russell Long or Jack Kemp or William Buckley for taking his name in vain to justify their doubtful schemes for massive tax reductions.

More than ever, we need the School of Government to help strengthen our resources for the future. There are precious few profiles in courage in public life today. Proposition 13 and the unpredictable explosions of single interest issues have sent elected officials and administrators scurrying to the foxholes.

The harsh winds of an economy in trouble have been blowing for too long. Government seems to have lost the knack of keeping the economy on an even keel. More and more of those who wield power in private life have decided the time has come to pull the drawbridge up, regardless of the plight of fellow citizens left outside the walls to endure or fight the storm alone.

Increasingly, those who try to represent the public interest are out-maneuvered, out-computered and out-expenditured by the superior resources of narrow interest groups. No longer is a stone and slingshot an adequate defense for David when he faces Goliath in the halls of Congress or at the White House door.

The School of Government has set its face against these ominous developments for our society and for the principle of representative government.

President Kennedy understood the overwhelming need for greater talent and ability in public service, and that is why this living memorial is so appropriate. More than any other public figure in our recent history, he believed in the power of individual citizens to make a difference, to improve their lives and the lives of those around them. He understood the awesome power of intelligence married to commitment, the irresistible force of an idea in the mind of a man or woman educated to serve the public.

He also understood that compassion and dedication are not enough, that rigorous training must also be provided, that professional skills must be harnessed in public service of a sort comparable to those required for law or medicine or business. An unskilled Senator or Congressman or Cabinet Secretary is as great a danger to the body politic as an unskilled surgeon is to a patient on the operating table. My brother would have liked the idea of suing public servants for professional malpractice or breach of public trust, as a way of shoring up those who otherwise might bend too easily to the prevailing special interest winds.

For President Kennedy, as for those of us who carry on his work, the opportunity for public service is the privilege of a lifetime. He lived by the words of John Buchan, who wrote in *Pilgrim's Way*, the President's favorite book:

"Public life is regarded as the crown of a career, and to young persons, it is the worthiest ambition. Politics is still the greatest and the most honorable adventure."

More than most, he knew that it is not just Presidents, Prime Ministers and Professors who change the world, but ordinary men and women working to make a difference, not only in their own communities but in the farthest reaches of the globe.

Returning as a veteran from war, he was torn between the professions of politics and journalism. He recognized the power of these two great professions in their separate but complementary ways. He knew that each could bring change to a world where words are swords for ideas on the march. He loved the Crimson, but his mother was the Mayor's Daughter.

And so, as Congressman, he touched the lives of thousands in the Cambridge district he served and loved. As Senator, he touched the lives of millions in this Commonwealth. As President, he touched the lives of billions in America and around the world.

He understood that you do not have to make a headline to make things change. In our country today and in nations throughout the world, Americans are doing many worthwhile things because of his example. They are people whose pictures you may never see, whose deeds you may never read about, who will never win a Nobel Prize.

Physicians inspired by the opportunity for public service are bringing health care to people and places that never had a doctor. Teachers are bringing knowledge and opportunity to children who never had a school. Lawyers are bringing the Constitution to people who never knew the Bill of Rights. Business men and women are bringing new enterprises to the city ghetto and rural farm, and helping to end the ancient curse of poverty and neglect. In many parts of our country and the world, Americans are making a real and very important difference for their fellow human beings.

The spell of hope he cast has not diminished with passing time. It has reached to the opposite ends of the earth, and has lighted the darkest corners of the human spirit.

A sea captain from Belfast in Northern Ireland described it this way in a letter he wrote to his niece in East Boston:

"His eager boyish figure, his swift smile and determined eyes will live in our memories for long, long to come as one who raised a banner for the human rights of man."

His greatest gift was the ability to reach the hearts of others, to plant a seed of hope in barren lives, to nurture new ideas in fertile minds, to inspire the young to devote a portion of their lives to the well-being of their own communities and lift up others less fortunate than themselves. Many responded to that call and many more are still responding now.

In a sense, the young Americans of the 1960's were like the farmers of New Hampshire two hundred years ago, who saw the beacon fires lighted as signals on the hilltops. They laid aside their plows and rushed to Massachusetts to join the infant cause of freedom in time for Bunker Hill.

The tinder was there, waiting for the spark. It was there again in the early 1960's. Millions took his spark and fanned it into life. In every city, town and village in the nation, Americans were touched and drawn to the cause of public service in our own nation and throughout the world. Who would have believed, a decade later, that America would elect a new President whose mother had been a Peace Corps volunteer in India?

We hark back now to those brief years with a nostalgia that is sometimes painful, because the contrasts are so sharp with the uncertain sound the trumpet often brings our ears today.

They used to say of John Havlicek in the Garden that, with his grace and skill and remarkable anticipation, he made the hardest plays look easy, when lesser figures made even the easy plays look hard.

We sometimes try to excuse our errors in public life today, on the ground that the challenges we now face are more difficult than those of other years. But I doubt that any court or jury would accept that plea. Nuclear arms control, energy and inflation are questions we have faced in each succeeding generation since World War II. It should not be more difficult to achieve a responsible program of national health insurance in the 1970's than it was to enact Social Security in the 1930's. It should not be more difficult to deregulate industries today than it was to regulate them a generation or more ago. What is required to prevail against challenges like these is the age-old quality summed up by the single word called "leadership."

There have always been those in public or private life who said, with all the authority their ignorance could muster, that things should stay the same. They told us that England was too powerful for any colony to win its freedom. They told us that the West was too wild to tame, that slavery was too strong an institution to overcome, that the moon was too far for an astronaut to reach.

But there were always others in public life who recognized the opportunity, who were willing to make a stand, to risk defeat for the cause of a greater victory, to try another time when early efforts failed.

And there are citizens waiting now for leaders to see their plight, to label evils as unacceptable, to act against the injustice and ignorance, the poverty and disease that are the servants of oppression and blighted lives.

Despite the clouds of recent years, there have been a few extraordinary rays of sunlight piercing through the government, examples of the remarkable way in which one able individual, acting alone at first, can rally allies to his side and achieve a worthwhile change.

-- A Professor of Law from Harvard prevailed as defender of the Constitution against the most powerful assault a President could mount.

-- A black Congressman from the District of Columbia persuaded his House and Senate colleagues that the 700,000 people of Washington deserved the same right to representation in Congress that all other Americans enjoy.

-- The Dean of an outstanding School of Government in New York, a graduate of Harvard's own school in the 1950's, responded to the public call and earned one of the major achievements of the current Congress and Administration, the long-overdue reform of the civil service system.

-- And another Harvard Professor, in the schools of both Law and Government, was responsible almost single-handedly for the finest gift by Congress to our free enterprise system in many years, the deregulation of the airline industry -- a step that may even make it cheaper for Harvard to fly to Washington.

The genius of America has been its ability to summon leaders like these and others to the helm in times of need. President Kennedy could have no greater legacy than this -- a School of Government in his name, pre-eminent in the nation, a bridge between the academy and the world of politics, an institution of learning and practical experience, whose goal is to train young men and women for future leadership in public service.

There is a story that Ghandi was once asked in India what made him saddest in life. He is said to have replied, "The hardness of heart of the well-educated."

That will not happen here. The purposes of the School of Government are based on the ideals in which President Kennedy believed so deeply. The school itself will be a bridge that extends in many directions:

-- It will reach out to Harvard's undergraduates, and inspire in them the challenge of public life.

-- It will involve Harvard's other great professional schools more deeply in the concerns of government.

-- It will promote new relations and understanding between the private and public sectors in society, and help to dispel the mutual misunderstanding, suspicion and hostility which mar that relationship today.

-- And most important, it will link the worlds of thought and action between which President Kennedy moved so gracefully. A new generation of professionals will be trained for public service. Research facilities like the Center for Science and International Affairs will be new reservoirs of knowledge on complex modern issues like nuclear arms control. And the Institute of Politics will be a magnet between the university and elective office.

In its eleven years of life, the Institute has gone well beyond its original purpose of linking the world of ideas and practical political action. It has become one of the most active, vital and exciting parts of Harvard, and its presence is felt around the country. Of all the programs of the Institute, its student program would have been especially close to President Kennedy's heart. May it have as lasting an impact on those who take part in it as it has had on those who have watched it grow.

In all its exciting programs and new surroundings, we have confidence that the School of Government will prosper. But to live up to both its name and mission, it need not try to rival the other schools of the university in size. The Kennedy School is part of a great university whose historic motto and purpose is the objective search for truth -- "Veritas" -- truth not beholden to any political viewpoint, economic interest, or segment of society. Its independence is the most precious asset of the school. The quest for excellence in government or any other human endeavor will tolerate no compromise of this principle.

For all the Kennedys here, it is an honor to be part of this beginning. We were proud of him. And the four Kennedys no longer with us -- our father, and Joe and Kathleen and Bob -- would have shared our pride on this very happy day.

On that other beginning, in 1961, my brother said, in words applicable as well today:

"All this will not be finished in the first one hundred days. Nor will it be finished in the first one thousand days, nor in the life of this Administration, nor even perhaps in our lifetime on this planet."

Now at last Jack has come back to Harvard. The work goes on. The dream still lives. The flame may flicker, but it shall never die.

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