

Commencement Recognition Reception (June 11, 1991)

Welcome to all of you

who helped make our Spring 1991 Commencement
such a beautiful occasion
such a resounding success.

It was a day for the history booksand the picture books..... wasn't it?

The White house Advance Team said they had never worked

with any institution that was better at organizing events.

All of us on the platform were so proud of the University that day.

I hope all of you felt the same way.

You deserved to feel proud not just of the University

but also of yourselves
because you are the ones who made it happen.

President and Mrs. Bush were astonished

at the sheer scale and scope of the ceremony
as well as at how smoothly everything proceeded.

Most of all, I know our students were thrilled.

And, above all else, it was really their day.

The great majority were obviously very excited and honored

at seeing the President and Mrs. Bush

and being a part of all the national attention and media hoopla.

I think they were also thrilled by the amazing sights and sounds
of a full scale UM ceremony.

At the last moment they had the chance to join with all of the graduating class of 1991
in one last big bash in Michigan Stadium.

After all how many graduates can boast a ceremony that draws
70 thousand people give or take a few.

I think just about all of them showed their appreciation for the beautiful ceremony

.....and all your planning and hard work....

by behaving like adults--dissenters and majority alike-- .

Later the President wrote to thank us saying that our students were so polite
he thought for a moment he might have come to the wrong place.

I don't know of any other institution that could have pulled it off

with as much warmth, grace, dignity and style
as you producedand on very short notice, at that.

Everything looked so beautiful, well planned, orderly, fresh and clean....

it was hard to discern all the long hard work, the numbers of staff involved,
the planning, the meetings, the cooperation, the teamwork,
the missed meals, and working nights and weekends,
the headaches, crises, and outbreaks of hives,
that went into making this Commencement
one of the most memorable in our history.

As someone who saw the Stadium just a week beforehand,

I am willing to testify that there are some real miracle workers among you.

We were just one minute over the time allotted in the script

a miracle of organization and timing in itself.

So many people contributed to making this Commencement

work and work beautifully.

Vice President Womack took the lead

and from purchasing to plant, from finance to carpentry
signmaking and painting, transportation and security,
everyone in the Womack shop
deserves our thanks for a job exceptionally well done.

Then Anita Miller and her staff in University Events...

Pam, Joyce, Susan, Jacque...

everyone came early and stayed late for weeks,
pushing to the limits of exhaustion,

they pulled off the logistics with the same high style they bring to all our events.

Walt Harrison and his people in External Relations

were also in the thick of it.

I hate to leave anyone out

but so many people were involved I just can't name them all.

In fact, this event brought the University together as a team

more than any event I can remember.

From bottom to top, everyone pitched in, cooperated, and did their best.

Before I forget, I especially want to thank

whoever arranged to have the sun come out

just as the ceremony got underway.

We are no strangers to Divine intervention in Michigan Stadium

but the timing of the sun ranks right up there with a finals seconds goal to win over Ohio State.

I hope we can learn from the experience just how good we are

...as the song says

you are the "Champions and the Best".

I think this experience proves that

when we are committed to the goal and determined

there is nothing we can't accomplish when we work hard and work together.

Let's bring this lesson to everything we do.

But for now, just bask for a moment in the knowledge of a job very well done.

Thank you one and all for showing us off to America

as the best there is.

We've always known it.

Now everyone else does , too.