

Well, graduates, you made it.

And the achievement is so remarkable that the President of the United States had to come to see for himself!

Are you excited about graduating from Michigan?

Are you a little sentimental about leaving us?

Are you worried that the faculty may have made a mistake in recommending your degrees?

Not to worry. Let me assure you that they have not!

For yours has been an exceptional class--strong in talent, in energy, creativity, and dedication.

You leave our University community better than you found it.

From athletics to the Marching Band, from politics to creative arts and performance, from the Residence Halls to the Greek system and, yes, even to the Michigan Daily, you graduating students have made a big difference here.

You leave behind lasting accomplishments.

You are also a class strong in your commitment to serving others, something President and Mrs. Bush have called forth from our nation.

Mr. President, probably no class in our history has labored harder or longer in community action programs.

Service is a hallmark of a Michigan education.

Because we are a public institution, I think our students are conscious always of our obligations to use learning to serve great public purposes.

Graduates, the world will need your commitment, talents, and leadership.

Rarely in history has society faced more profound transformations in its activities, its people, or its obligations in the world.

Educated people and the ideas they produce have become the wealth of nations as we prepare to enter an age of knowledge.

You are a significant part of that wealth and we trust you will use your knowledge wisely and unstintingly for the good of others.

Of one thing I can be certain.

You are equal to the challenges ahead.

You have the essential ingredient:

You have that unique Michigan spirit, a will to achieve excellence, to set high ethical standards, to take risks and make sacrifices, to go all out.

To borrow a phrase from our fight song, The Victors, you are, indeed, the "leaders and the best."

We will miss you. But we will be watching your future achievements with pride--and, of course, sending you a few requests for donations from time to time.

Mr. President, Mrs. Bush, we have heaped praise on our graduates.

But I think you would agree that the real heroes of this day are the parents--the families--of our those before us.

You, the families, are the ones who have cared and worked and provided; you have loved and hoped, helped and sacrificed to bring these students to this moment.

The selflessness that parenthood requires might seem a bit out-of-fashion of late.

But all the while, families like yours just kept going, struggling and striving to give your children, and through them, our society, a better future.

Feel proud. This is really your day.

You have earned the gratitude and respect of everyone in this stadium.

Would all of the family members of today's graduates please rise and let us show our appreciation.

Thank you.

Of course, the most important learning in a university does not always take place in the classroom. The conferring of honorary degrees here at Michigan, gives us a wonderful opportunity to teach by example-- to hold before our graduates the example of women and men whose lives and accomplishments exemplify the highest aspirations and values of our University.

We seek out people who have made our world a better place, people of talent who have applied their talents wisely and generously

to improve the quality of human life.

This year, I think you graduates are very fortunate
in the models we set before them.

You will carry away with you
the example of five individuals who,
each in her or his own way,
has helped to shape our times.

Let us then turn to the conferring of honorary degrees.

Concluding Remarks

Let me now direct a few words directly to the graduates. Your college years have as much impact as anything that will follow in your lives.

They put you on course to your career. Many of the friends you have made will remain close throughout your lives. Indeed, many of you have met your lifetime companions in college.

Think of your college experiences as an anchor, a tie to the knowledge and values that you can depend on for guidance and inspiration as your life unfolds.

And, look at it this way, as an alum you will always have something to do on Saturday afternoons in the fall--and on New Year's Day!!!

Most of you will be leaving Ann Arbor now.

But I suspect you will find yourself returning.

You know, for me one of the most moving moments in the cycle of campus life comes in early September when the Ann Arbor merchants put up banners along State Street and South U welcoming back students at the beginning of the fall term with the simple phrase, "Welcome Home."

In a very real sense, this University has become forever your home... you will forever be a member of the Michigan family.

Today you join that long line of maize and blue that stretches back over eight generations and is now over 400,000 strong--one out of every 700 Americans.

And if there is a single common theme that seems to characterize the lives of Michigan graduates, it is the theme conveyed by that phrase in our fight song, "The Victors"...

"Hail, hail to Michigan, the leaders and best "

You inherit a tradition of leadership...and excellence
...but tempered with an unusual commitment
to both intellectual and humane values.

As a Michigan graduate, as a leader, you will face a future of great
challenge and responsibility...but it will also be a future of great
opportunity and excitement.

There is an old saying that...
"The best way to predict the future is to invent it!"

That is the real challenge before you!

To go out into that exciting world of challenge and opportunity...and
to invent the future!

We wish you health, happiness, and the satisfaction of a rewarding
and a meaningful life.

Congratulations

...God Speed

...and Go Blue