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COMMENCEMENT REMARKS
By
MIKE MANSFIELD
U.S. AMBASSADOR TO JAPAN

TO THE
UNIVERSITY OF MARYLAND, ASIAN DIVISION
30TH GRADUATING CLASS
TOKYO, JAPAN
MARCH 9, 1986

Chancellor Massey, Dr. Matsushita (in absentia), Members of the Faculty, Parents, Relatives, and Friends, Members of the Class of '85:

This is a most unusual group of graduates. One, I understand has studied for his degree on four continents; another is 61 years old! Young man, you've got a long road ahead of you.

I am delighted to share this important day with you. I am honored to accept the Doctorate of Laws that the University of Maryland has so graciously bestowed on me. With pride I look out from this podium and congratulate you as you begin a new phase of life. For commencements are beginnings; and whether these be the best of times or the worst of times, I assure you that these are the only times -- and we had best make good use of them.

The figures tell me that you number around 200; that your average age is 31 years; that it has taken about seven years to complete your degrees; that some of you have pursued your academic yearnings at dozens of University of Maryland campuses on three different continents.

I believe that you are an amazing group. Many of you are older, more mature, and shouldering many more responsibilities than the majority of your fellow graduates in College Park. Many of you are working full-time jobs -- in the Armed Forces - or in other occupations here in Japan. Many of you are married, with children. In short, there have been numerous other important people and situations competing for your time and efforts.

But you persevered. You somehow managed to balance and meet all these different demands, and you have earned your battle ribbons with honor on the campaign for academic achievement.

The wonderful thing about education, about learning -- and I speak as a former professor myself -- is that it

never stops. The American education system has shown its flexibility time and time again: in community colleges, in rural extension programs, in credit transfers, in overseas campuses.

But perhaps the best thing about the American education system is that there is no age cut-off, no deadline for those who wish to pursue their academic goals. I, too, was 30 years old when I received my baccalaureate. I was a bit "older" for the same reasons you are. I had traveled ; I had been in the military. As a marine, I had visited Japan, China, and the Philippines. The sights, the sounds, the richness of the varied experiences were powerful in shaping my outlook on the Pacific Basin and the world -- in making me a better student and, hopefully, a stronger bridge between my home country and its international neighbors.

I have frequently said that the U.S.-Japan relationship is the most important bilateral relationship in the world -- bar none! But this relationship, like any other, must be build on a strong foundation and held together by human bridges. Let me urge you to take full advantage of the international education - and not just in

the classroom - that you have received. Let me urge you to cast your eyes afar over the marvelous potential of the Pacific Basin -- where 58 percent of the world's population lives, the meeting place for all of North and Central America, four South American nations, all of East Asia, Australia, New Zealand, and the islands in between. It is in this Basin where it all is, what it's all about and where our future lies. And, the development of that Basin will depend the strength, reliability and durability of the Japanese-American relationship; ^{to repeat} the most important bilateral relationship in the world -- bar none! Let me urge you to continue your personal growth, so that in doing so you inspire growth in others. Let me urge you to work for a world of peace and prosperity ^{and understanding} among all peoples

Well, I hadn't intended for my remarks to turn into a lecture, since I guess you've had enough of those, but let me touch upon one last, but certainly not least, point. I want to congratulate the wives, husbands, and children of the 30th graduating class. Because if the graduates haven't already said it themselves, allow me to say "thank you." I know from first hand experience how important your encouragement and support has been to each graduate. For if it hadn't been for my wife Maureen, I wouldn't be a graduate today.

Robert Frost - one of America's outstanding poets - wrote, "I have promises to keep and miles to go before I sleep." Keep the promises your degree gives you and walk the endless miles before you sleep. It will be well worth your while.

So, let me put this speech text away, and wish you the best. You represent the present and the future of America and the world, and your job is just beginning - a new Commencement - part of life's cycle - has begun.

Thank you.

* * * *

From: The Ambassador

To:

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~~Distinguished Guests,~~ and Friends; *Members of the class of '85*

(in absentia)
Parents, relatives
Members of the faculty
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