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Office of Public Affairs

Telephone: 301/415-8200

Washington, DC 20555-001

E-mail: opa@nrc.gov

Web Site: <http://www.nrc.gov/OPA>

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Comments

by

The Honorable Greta Joy Dicus

at the

Texas Woman's University Honors Convocation

Denton, Texas

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The Adventure

Thank you Chancellor Stuart for your wonderful introduction. It does go without saying, but I will say it anyway - I am deeply honored and touched to stand here today before so many extraordinary people who are likewise honored on this special day at Texas Woman's University; to be included with you and my fellow Distinguished Alumni and to be asked to say a few words at today's Convocation.

Speaking of my fellow Distinguished Alumni honorees let me take the opportunity to introduce them:

1. Margaret Varner Bloss Class of 1950 an International Ambassador of Women's Sports
2. Elizabeth Ann Nalley, Ph.D. Class of 1975 a Chemistry Professor and on the Board of American Chemical Society
3. Emily-Mae Stafford Class of 1956, a trailblazer in Journalism

Today we honor students, staff and faculty for their achievements over time. For the students, undergraduate and graduate, it is an acknowledgment of what you have accomplished in your time here. Congratulations to each of you. To the staff and faculty who are honored on this day, I think my fellow Distinguished Alumni would join me in saying Thank You for a job well done -- congratulations to you also. It is fitting that those awards named in honor of someone, the Leman, Humphries, Lyon and Cornan were named for Women who accomplished something special.

This is also a very special time for me, in addition to be honored as a Distinguished Alumnae it is also my Class Reunion year! Yea Ladies of 1961. This weekend we the class of '61 celebrate 40

years since TWU launched us into the world. I can't believe so much time has passed since we thought we were the world's answer to everything!

It is also a special time for TWU. One hundred years ago we came into existence as a school of higher learning for women. As we all know, we started as the Industrial College for Women. We graduated to the Texas State College for Women and to what we are today, Texas Woman's University. That wonderful designation. We were no longer a college; we are a University. It is with some amount of pride that I note that the Class of 61 was the first class to enter as Freshmen in 1957 with our new official name, Texas Woman's University. The name, by the way does cause some confusion among some people. From time-to-time, I have to explain the difference between Texas Women's University and Texas Woman's University. Texas Women's University is a University for Texas Women. Texas Woman's University is a University in Texas for Women. That is an important distinction, especially for those of us who are not from Texas!

I arrived on campus in September of 1957. I was 17 years old and I was scared to death. I was moving from home and Arkansas to a University and TEXAS! What a change. But that is when I started this incredible adventure. Let me tell you that since that September day it truly has been an extraordinary adventure. I believe that my fellow Distinguished Alumni have some similar stories.

I should like now to quote from an unknown author, about a comment on life - this adventure we all share. I paraphrase slightly. "We cannot tell what may happen to us in the strange medley of life. But we can decide what happens in us - how we can take life and what we are able to do with it - and that is really what counts in the end. How to take the raw stuff of life and make it a thing of worth and achievement. That is a test of living. Life is an adventure and supported by the positive influences upon it, we can become victors over it rather than victims of it."

Today, all who are honored, Distinguished Alumni and faculty, staff and students have become the victors of life.

How did that happen? How do green freshmen come to achievement as graduating seniors, graduate students, staff and faculty? For those of us who have graduated from TWU, I believe and I think my fellow Distinguished Alumni would agree, that the raw stuff of life we brought to this campus was refined by our experiences here. So, when we graduated and launched our careers, we did so coming from the firm foundation we received at TWU. My career began here and I attribute my success to the foundation I was given in my undergraduate education.

You, the faculty and administration who are here today makes it possible. And, you represent the faculty and administrations of yesterday and tomorrow. It is for you to take that raw stuff of life, in the students who come here, and transform it into something of value - to themselves, to society, to this country or their own country and perhaps to the world. You have an awesome responsibility.

Let me relate one of my many positive experiences during my student days. I was a Senior and only a few months from graduation. I was taking an advanced biology course; it was an advanced genetics course taught by Dr. Robert Fuerst now of course retired - and who will join us on Saturday at the luncheon. Only Seniors and I believe one graduate student took the course. As mentioned, it was toward the end of the semester and test time came around. Dr. Fuerst told us this exam would be "open book." We could bring all our notes, our textbook and any other books to the test and use them. What a treat - this was a walk in the park! I now know, of course, to beware of the Open Book Test.

When the test started, we were handed a packet, the first page of which contained general information and data. We were informed that we had been selected as the first scientists to go to the moon - remember, this is 1961 - and we were in fact in route to the moon. We had successfully landed and had done some preliminary exploration and had found a very basic form of life. Preliminary evaluation of this life form provided some basic data - which was given to us.

Then Dr. Fuerst said, based upon your preliminary findings and your knowledge of science answer the following questions. I remember using the wealth of books and notes I brought that day only once - maybe twice. That was only to look up the spelling of something - to this day I'm afraid I am a bad speller!

Since no one had been to the moon at that time (and those who have been since then did not find "life") - there was no right or wrong answer to any question. Dr. Fuerst evaluated our answers based upon the reasoning we used to arrive at our answer. Each question asked us why we chose that answer. What we had to rely upon to pass this test was the 4 years of instruction, focus, dedication and discipline we had received in biological science, chemistry, physics, English, history, physical education, fine arts, and languages just to name a few. His point was, that we were being launched into the world with a diploma that said we were graduates of TWU with abilities in science. He was testing us to see if that was true. If it is not already in your plans, I would challenge you to have the courage to evaluate graduating seniors in their field of choice on their ability to use what TWU has taught them as Dr. Fuerst evaluated us.

You, the faculty and administration are the beginning of the Adventure. In your classrooms today are tomorrow's Distinguished Alumni, Staff and Faculty Awardees, Student Awardees, leaders for the future and perhaps TWU's first Nobel Prize Laureate. As I said you have an awesome responsibility.

Let me quote from Harry Emerson Fosdick. "No horse gets anywhere until he is harnessed. No steam or gas ever drives anything until it is confined. No Niagara is ever turned into light and power until it is tunneled. No life ever grows great until it is focused, dedicated, disciplined."

Let me make clear that when I quoted the words "harnessed, confined and tunneled" I did not mean constrained. To constrain is to limit. That is not what education is; education is to expand and to do so in a manner that is focused, dedicated and disciplined. These are, in my view, the avenues necessary to take acquired knowledge and turn it into something of value.

It has been said that education has to do with how we think about things - it is changing mind-sets. Education is learning. Education leaves you with something to ponder. These are among the things that set education apart from training. Training teaches you skills - how to do things - and that is no small accomplishment for we all must know how to do things. But I also believe we must think about things, be open to changing our mind-sets, learn and enjoy the wonderful exercise of pondering.

This fall another group of Freshmen will come to TWU. A lot of raw material to focus, dedicate and discipline. They will be accompanied by graduate students wanting to expand to their next level of achievement. What a wonderful opportunity to this University - what an awesome responsibility for you - faculty, staff, administration. I know that is the third time I have said "awesome responsibility" - but that is on purpose. Of course, you can do it or you would not be here at Texas Woman's University.

Enjoy the challenge and for those whose education is entrusted to you - begin their adventure.

Thank you; thank you Dr. Stuart.