

SENATOR GRAHAM'S ADDRESS

AT THE

1987 UNIVERSITY OF FLORIDA COMMENCEMENT

Saturday, May 2, 1987

Gainesville



Good Morning...

I know this is a really important day for you. It's a really important day for me, too. My daughter Cissy is graduating with a masters degree in elementary education and with honors and I'm proud to be here as her father...

I'm also proud to be here as a Floridian -- and as a Florida Gator.

When I was preparing this speech and thinking about what I'd like to say to you today, I considered which might be topics of sufficient urgency and gravity to engage your undivided attention. Nuclear proliferation in developing nations, international trade competitiveness, U.S. relations with Latin America -- these, I know, are the issues which keep every senior and graduate student awake at night.

Cissy and her friends set me straight. What the Class of '87 is overwhelming obsessed with can be summed up in one word: "Jobs."

This was bad news to me. Through no fault of my own I have had 204 jobs in the last eight years. So although I am probably the number 1 expert in Florida at getting jobs, I don't have much credible advice for you about holding onto them for more than a day.

I can talk to you, though, about being flexible and about looking to the future.

This is a great time to be a Gator in Florida. You walk out from this University into the sunlight of a vibrant economy, communities which are healthy and expanding, opportunities which are many and diverse, a state which is the fifth-largest in the nation and which, by the end of this year will surpass Pennsylvania and become 4th-largest.

You take with you one of the finest educations you could have received in any institution of higher learning in this country. The University of Florida, as a member of the prestigious American Association of Universities, is recognized worldwide as an example of intellectual and cultural excellence, as a place which attracts world class professors and bright, ambitious students.

In 1959, when I graduated from this University, Florida's opportunities were more limited. The economy was based on agriculture and tourism. Bad weather or bad times in the rest of the country could be disastrous for either one. Some of my classmates migrated elsewhere to try to build careers and Florida lost some valuable talent.

Today you have a choice about whether or not to stay and pursue a career in Florida. The reasons to stay here and to take

a job in your field, with real development and a real future, are compelling reasons.

I made a campaign promise in 1978 when I first ran for Governor which you kept for me. I said the University of Florida would be South East Conference champions. In 1984 the Gators won that title. So, of course, I think the logical next step is the national title.

As a state we don't compete just with other Southern states anymore. In per capita income, in employment and growth in industry, in teacher pay, in environmental preservation, in international economic ties, Florida is a national contender.

These are truly the best of times. But I'd like you to remember something as you apply your academic success to successful careers. As bright as tomorrow is for you - it is only a beginning. Your lives will evolve and change as rapidly as Florida does. More opportunities will open up for you. Life will become fuller and richer.

I encourage you to think beyond your first job -- because reality today is that you may have as many as three or four different careers in your working lifetimes. It is important to be flexible about how you apply your skills and education. It is important to know that what the University of Florida has given you is the ability to keep your options open. It is important to remember that life does not begin and end from 9 to 5 -- that many of the things which sustain you will be separate from your jobs and their responsibilities.

Your generation, Cissy, is already a lot better at seeking that balance than mine was. Young men and women look for things like flex time and educational benefits today when they look for jobs -- because they want to make time for children and for self-expression and growth.

The canvas on which your life is painted is a broad expanse with space for work, family, friends, sports and the arts, travel, spiritual growth and public service. You are fortunate. Life has already blessed you with a great deal. You should exult and take pride in exploring all of it.

Don't be narrow people. Find the things you love to do which don't earn you a living and make time for them. Keep your running sweats and your Reeboks in the front of your closet. Go to the exhibitions at the Museum of Art in Fort Lauderdale or in Sarasota. Go to concerts, whether they're The Grateful Dead or the Cleveland Orchestra. Read Professor Harry Cruz' new book. Read Melville and Cervantes. Travel to other countries and get to know what people care about in other, different societies.

Get involved with your community. Be active in your churches and synagogues. Put some of your energy into public service. America is not an isolated country anymore and you can't be isolated either. Your education is a gift to be shared.

You will be busy making a good living, working for your families. At the same time you can be building a better world,

demonstrating by example how dynamic life in a democratic society can be.

This isn't pie-in-the-sky stuff. This is what's real about the quality of education your parents struggled to give you, about the advantages that have enriched your lives, about the responsibilities you have as human beings in an imperfect world.

Lately it seems as if the unethical behavior of individuals has dominated the news and turned our famous American idealism into cynicism. Even our television advertising has shifted from upbeat flagwaving to the kind of ads in which a man swears that lightning will strike his sweet old mother dead if he is lying about the great features you can get on a foreign car. Of course, at the end of his outrageous sales pitch, sweet old mom disappears in a flash and a puff of smoke, along with any illusion that he might have been telling you the truth.

It's a national disease -- the quick fix, the loss of trust, go for the short term, don't take the time to build -- just grab and run. But I think our traditional ideals are out there, right behind the jaded commercials and the headlines of corruption.

I think all of you here today are living proof that hope exists...that we can aim as high as we can dream. Your graduation is your chance to begin to shape the society you live in -- and the society you will eventually pass along to your children.

In Lake Wales, 71 perfectly-cast tin and copper bells ring out a joyous and silvery music every afternoon at 3 -- just as they have since President Coolidge dedicated them in 1929 -- because a Dutch immigrant named Edward Bach remembered something his grandmother told him.

Bach built the Singing Tower and Gardens because his grandmother said to leave a beautiful and lasting thing in this world to show where he'd been. He built a monument of incomparable beauty and peace to last for generations. Edward Bach lived, not just for the moment, but for the future.

We are proud of you this morning because you have reached a threshold -- and the bright and shining future we imagined for you is all before you. When you make your choices, step outside the immediate and put yourself in a lifetime perspective. Build something beautiful of your lives to show future generations where you've been.

Today, as you go forth from the temporary home you found at the University of Florida into the world which is your true home, we think you are telling us we haven't failed you. You've set goals here and worked hard to achieve them. You've learned to respect yourselves as others have learned to respect you. You are ready for this challenge and for this world.

I wish for every one of you here today the same thing I wish for my daughter, Cissy. Be successful. Be happy. Give generously of your time and talent to the world. Know that you have an outstanding education and an outstanding future. Know that there is no one quite like you, with your gifts and your possibilities.

Know that you deserve lives rich and full of meaning. Know that you have made friends here at the University of Florida which you will keep forever. Know that you are loved.

God bless you and good luck.



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Commencement UF/draft 1

DATE:For: May 2, 1987

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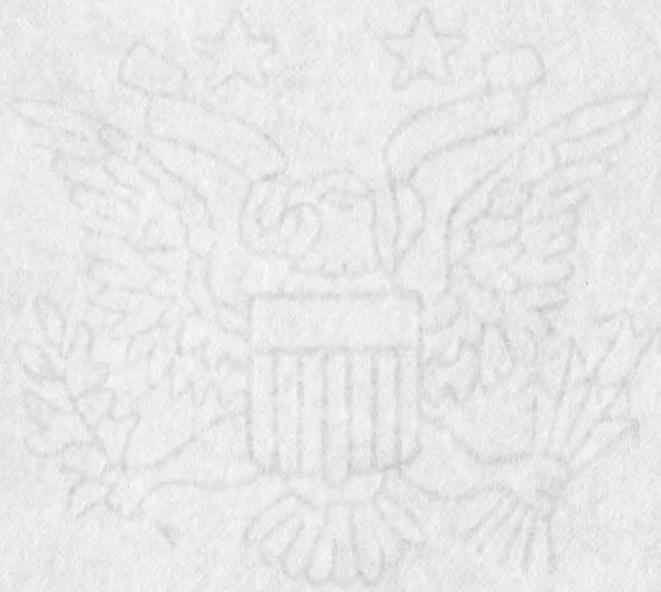
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