

COMMENCEMENT ADDRESS
MESA COMMUNITY COLLEGE
MESA, ARIZONA
BY DAVID K. UDALL
May 10, 1991

I WAS CHAIRMAN OF THE COMMISSION ON EXCELLENCE, A GROUP OF APPROXIMATELY 100 COMMUNITY LEADERS WHO WERE ATTEMPTING TO FOSTER MESA COMMUNITY COLLEGE.

INTRODUCTION:

A. I FEEL A TOUCH OF NOSTALGIA HERE TONIGHT. YOU SEE, I AM A PRODUCT OF THE JUNIOR COLLEGE SYSTEM MYSELF. AS I REFLECTED BACK, IT WAS 35 YEARS AGO ABOUT NOW THAT I GRADUATED FROM EASTERN ARIZONA JUNIOR COLLEGE.

B. JOKES.

AT GRADUATIONS SUCH AS THESE, MUCH IS MADE OF ALTRUISM, SERVICE AND LOFTY GOALS. IT IS TRUE, THERE IS MORE TO LIFE THAN MONEY. THERE ARE ALSO STOCKS, BONDS, REAL ESTATE....!

I KNEW IT WAS GOING TO BE A BAD DAY WHEN MY 15 YEAR OLD SON CAME HOME FROM JUNIOR HIGH THE OTHER DAY AND SAID, "DAD, TOMORROW IS NERD DAY AT SCHOOL, CAN I BORROW YOUR CLOTHES?"

CONGRATULATIONS: THIS IS A TIME OF CONGRATULATIONS TO ALL OF YOU WHO ARE GRADUATING HERE TONIGHT. IT IS ALSO A TIME OF EXCITEMENT FOR YOUR PARENTS AND OTHERS WHO HAVE SUPPORTED YOU. I GRADUATED FROM THE UNIVERSITY OF ARIZONA COLLEGE OF LAW IN 1963. MY WORKING WIFE, LOUISE, WAS THRILLED. MY PARENTS WHO HAD BEEN SUBSIDIZING US WERE DELIGHTED. AT THE SWEARING IN FOR THE NEW LAWYERS, A PICTURE WAS POSED WITH SEVERAL JUDGES AND LAWYERS AND THEIR SONS WHO HAD JUST PASSED THE BAR. MY FATHER AT THE TIME WAS ON THE ARIZONA SUPREME COURT. I STOOD BEHIND HIM AND SUGGESTED, "WHY DON'T I PUT MY HAND ON YOUR SHOULDER, DAD, SO THEY WILL KNOW THAT I BELONG TO YOU?" HE QUIPPED, "WOULDN'T IT BE MORE ACCURATE IF YOU PUT YOUR HAND IN MY POCKET?"

MCC, MESA'S GREATEST NATURAL RESOURCE: IN THESE TOUGH ECONOMIC TIMES, ALL COMMUNITIES ARE LOOKING FOR WAYS TO ENHANCE THEIR ECONOMIC BASE. WE SET UP COMMISSIONS AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT ORGANIZATIONS TO GO OUT, FIND NEW BUSINESSES, AND BRING NEW JOBS TO TOWN.

WHEN MO UDALL RAN FOR CONGRESS TEN YEARS OR SO AGO, HIS SLOGAN WAS, "MO UDALL, ARIZONA'S GREATEST NATURAL RESOURCE." WE COULD PARAPHRASE THAT HERE TONIGHT. MESA COMMUNITY COLLEGE, MESA'S GREATEST NATURAL RESOURCE.

APPROXIMATELY ONE HUNDRED COMMUNITY LEADERS HAVE JOINED TOGETHER IN THE COMMISSION ON EXCELLENCE TO FOSTER MESA COMMUNITY COLLEGE, AND HELP WITH COORDINATING AND PLANNING FOR THE NEW EAST MESA COLLEGE. WE ARE ALSO WORKING IN THE AREA OF INTERNATIONAL

EDUCATION, BUSINESS AND INDUSTRY AND THE DEVELOPMENT OF COMMUNITY RESOURCES. I AM PLEASED TO SERVE AS CHAIRMAN OF THAT GROUP. IF YOU WISH TO BE INVOLVED IN THIS EFFORT, JUST ASK. WE NEED ALL THE HELP WE CAN GET.

ADVICE: GRADUATIONS ARE ALWAYS A TIME FOR REFLECTION AND ADVICE. WE ALL WANT SUCCESS AND HAPPINESS. THE SUCCESSFUL AND HAPPY PEOPLE I KNOW SHARE A VARIETY OF QUALITIES. TONIGHT I WANT TO MENTION THREE. FIRST, THEY KNOW WHERE THEY ARE GOING, THEY HAVE GOALS. SECOND, THEY FOCUS ON THEIR GOALS RATHER THAN FOCUS ON THEIR PROBLEMS. THIRD, THEY BELIEVE IN THEMSELVES AND IN THE SYSTEM. LET ME SHARE THREE QUICK STORIES TO ILLUSTRATE.

SUCCESSFUL PEOPLE SET GOALS: SOME TIME AGO, I WAS FLYING HOME FROM LOS ANGELES. I SAT DOWN NEXT TO A YOUNG MEXICAN-AMERICAN. HE WAS VERY OUTGOING AND INTRODUCED HIMSELF TO ME AS ARMANDO GARZA, A SEVENTH GRADER AT PENDERGAST JUNIOR HIGH NEAR AVONDALE. I ASKED HIM WHAT HE WAS GOING TO BE WHEN HE GREW UP. HIS RESPONSE WAS "AN ENGINEER." I ASKED HIM, "ARE YOU GOOD IN MATH?" HE RESPONDED, "I'M A VERY GOOD MATHEMATICIAN. I AM IN A SPECIAL MATH PROGRAM." I OBSERVED TO HIM, "YOU HAVE A REAL ADVANTAGE OVER MOST YOUNG PEOPLE AGE 13 BECAUSE YOU KNOW WHAT YOU WANT TO BE. YOU'RE MUCH MORE APT TO GET THERE SINCE YOU KNOW WHAT YOU'RE AFTER. HE HAD A GOAL. HE KNEW WHERE HE WAS GOING.

SUCCESSFUL PEOPLE FOCUS ON THEIR GOALS: ONE OF THE INTERESTING THINGS I DO IS INTERVIEW PROSPECTIVE LAWYERS FOR EMPLOYMENT. A YEAR AGO, I INTERVIEWED THREE PEOPLE ON ONE DAY. ALL WERE WELL QUALIFIED AND PLEASANT. LYNN STILL STANDS OUT IN MY MIND. SHE WAS A 32-YEAR OLD DIVORCED MOTHER AND WAS JUST FINISHING HER SECOND LAW SCHOOL YEAR AT THE UNIVERSITY OF ARIZONA. SHE HAD A VIBRANT AND OUTGOING PERSONALITY AND I FELT UPLIFTED AS I VISITED WITH HER. I ASKED HER WHY SHE DECIDED TO GO TO LAW SCHOOL. SHE STATED THAT SHE HAD A GOOD JOB IN THE CORPORATE WORLD AND WAS MOVING UP BUT HAD CONCLUDED AFTER HER DIVORCE THAT IN ORDER FOR HER AND HER YOUNG SON TO ACCOMPLISH THEIR GOALS IN LIFE, THEY NEEDED TO MAKE MORE MONEY THAN HER CORPORATE OPPORTUNITY AFFORDED. SHE DECIDED THAT THE WAY TO DO THAT WAS TO GO TO EITHER MBA SCHOOL OR LAW SCHOOL. FOR A COUPLE OF YEARS STRUGGLED WITH THE DECISION AND COULDN'T BRING HERSELF TO LEAVE HER JOB. ONE MORNING THE VISION CAME TO HER, AS SHE DESCRIBED IT, AND SHE SAID TO HER YOUNG SON, "WE NEED TO START FOCUSING ON OUR GOALS RATHER THAN FOCUSING ON OUR PROBLEMS. OUR GOAL IS TO GO TO LAW SCHOOL AND GET A GOOD EDUCATION AND GET OUT AND MAKE SOME MONEY." ONCE SHE MADE THAT COMMITMENT TO FOCUS ON HER GOALS RATHER THAN WORRY ABOUT THE OBSTACLES, SHE WAS ABLE TO ACCOMPLISH HER TASK.

WILLIAM DANFORTH SAID, "HISTORY RECORDS THE SUCCESSES OF MEN AND WOMEN WITH OBJECTIVES AND A SENSE OF DIRECTION. OBLIVION IS THE POSITION OF SMALL MEN AND WOMEN OVERWHELMED BY OBSTACLES."

SUCCESSFUL PEOPLE BELIEVE: ONE OF MY FAVORITE MOVIES WAS "THE EMPIRE STRIKES BACK." YOUNG LUKE SKYWALKER HAD GONE TO SEE YODA, THE RAT LOOKING JEDI MASTER, TO LEARN HOW TO USE "THE FORCE." YOU'LL RECALL LUKE'S FUTILE ATTEMPTS TO RAISE THE SPACESHIP OUT OF THE POND. YODA THEN CLOSED HIS EYES, STUCK OUT HIS ARMS AND THE SPACESHIP CAME UP OUT OF THE LAKE AND ONTO THE DRY LAND.

LUKE'S COMMENT, "I DON'T BELIEVE IT?" YODA'S RESPONSE, "THAT'S WHY YOU FAIL." SO OFTEN IN LIFE, WE DON'T BELIEVE IN OURSELVES AND THAT'S WHY WE FAIL. DON'T LIMIT YOUR OPPORTUNITIES BY FEAR OF FAILURE AND NOT TRYING.

GEORGE PATTON, THE GREAT TANK GENERAL IN NORTH AFRICA, ITALY AND EUROPE DURING WORLD WAR II, STATED, "TO OVER ESTIMATE THE ENEMY IS JUST AS SERIOUS AS TO UNDERESTIMATE HIM." DON'T OVERESTIMATE THE DIFFICULTY OF SCHOOL OR OTHER AVENUES YOU DREAM TO PURSUE.

THIS IS PARTICULARLY TRUE OF YOU YOUNG LADIES IN THE AUDIENCE. IT'S A WOMAN'S WORLD OUT THERE. DON'T SELL YOURSELVES SHORT. JUST AS AN AFTERTHOUGHT, TOO MANY OF OUR YOUNG WOMAN GET EXCITED OVER NOTHING--AND THEN MARRY HIM!

I HAVE TRAVELED A LOT IN THE WORLD. AMERICA IS THE GREATEST COUNTRY I KNOW. OPPORTUNITIES HERE ABOUND. IT IS NOT PERFECT, BUT IT REALLY BEATS WHATEVER ELSE IS IN SECOND PLACE. BELIEVE IN AMERICA. BELIEVE IN ITS INSTITUTIONS. BELIEVE IN YOURSELF. YOU CAN BECOME WHATEVER YOU WISH. THE MIND CAN ACHIEVE WHAT THE MIND CAN BELIEVE.

MAY YOU KNOW WHO YOU ARE, SET GOALS. FOCUS ON THE POSITIVE. DON'T STEW ABOUT THE NEGATIVE. AND LASTLY, BELIEVE. MY CONGRATULATIONS TO YOU. I SALUTE YOU. MAY GOD BLESS.