

To The Graduating Class of
Mountain View School, May 14th, 1936.

C. Guy Curtis

You have kindly invited me here to address you upon this one of the proudest days of your life, and I as proudly accept that invitation.

There is much that one may with propriety speak to the youth of the land upon in these disturbed times. I say disturbed times because it is stated by those in a position to know that at this time throughout our nation there are more than five millions of our youth, youth between sixteen and twenty five, out of any kind of employment. This is a tragedy, indeed. After youth has worked hard to bring itself to a position where they may be efficient in whatever character of work they undertake, to be in a position of not being able to occupy themselves is disturbing, and the fear that attends such a condition is that youth will become embittered and out of that bitterness turn to things that bring a destruction of our present standards of civilization.

We see these things transpiring in other lands. We ask why and are answered by the thought that it is because the youth of those countries have become embittered and turn to any thing that some persuasive personality, imbued with eloquence of speech, may conjure up. The minds of the youth have gotten to a stage here in the parlance of the times " they can't take it."

May I point out, with utmost truth, that there is less occasion for such condition of mind in our nation, even in the face of such adverse conditions as we have experienced for the last few years, than in those other places of the world. Our lands are still fertile and abundant, our industry is the greatest in

the world, our government affords each and every one, without restriction, an equal opportunity to make headway for himself; it provides freedom of thought and of action that encourages those of a resourceful and energetic ~~term~~ ^{and} of mind of body to prosper and go forward. The fields of honest effort are as open to the youth of the land today as any time of the past. Let it not be supposed that with patient application the youth of this nation cannot find fruitful fields in which to work and make progress. There is no just reason why the youth of the land should feel discouraged, even with the unemployment numbering as many as just related.

The greatest danger of the times is that there are certain thoughts loose among us which implant an idea into the minds of the people that the government or something else owes our people a living. That thought is disquieting, it is calculated to grow, and as it grows it will develop into a resort to means that are today destroying the very fountains of civilization and self respect in other nations. You see the progress of that thought taking hold in Germany, in Russia, in Italy and other lands. As a result of that thought taking so deep a root there the people have lost the very last vestige of personal freedom and liberty. Never allow yourselves to come to the point where you believe that the world owes you ^a living. It does not owe you anything that your honest effort and resourcefulness of minds cannot provide for you. I will tell you something right now, that out of almost a half century of experience I have learned; work is the agency that will smooth your pathway through life. With work, honest work, everything worth while may be accomplished. Without it there is no hope for youth or age.

Of course, many opportunities that belonged to yesterday are gone. But they were peculiar to yesterday, were exploited, accepted and worked out yesterday. They were just ^{as} unapparent ^{to} the unthinking and nonworking youths of yesterday as the opportunities of today are unapparent to that same type of today. Each of you must depend upon yourself. Each of you ~~are~~ ^{is} a captain of your own destiny. That is right and that is just, if it were otherwise men and women would slowly grow weak and useless and our people fall a victim of some other and more progress, ^{ive} vigorous people. If you are thinking of going into the world expecting anything but your own resourcefulness to carve out your career or provide an occupation or a job, then you are destined to a sore and fateful disappointment.

You must develop your selfreliance, you must rely upon your own energy, you must progress by your own resourcefulness. You have no more right to expect some other person or some other agency to provide you with sustenance, property, power or position than you would expect or demand if you and your future family were the only one on this earth. Under those circumstances you would, of necessity be forced to rely upon yourself. The same principle is true at this very time. It has never varied in the course of human progress toward civilization. It is as impelling and forceful today, and it will be tomorrow, as it was in those days when our forebears were naked savages hunting their food in the dangerous places of the earth. Above all things in your life, keep this thought in mind.

Civilization is but a restraint upon our natural desires to take away from him, who has provided for himself, for our own use, and to kill and destroy, if that be necessary. Living as we do in a world populated with two billions of people, it is necessary that we adhere to the rules of civilization and cooperate in a generous and

and thoughtful manner. Asking no more of them than we are willing to give. Seeking no advantage for ourselves that if turned around and applied to us and our condition would be bad for us. In this way society may thrive and live in peace. It is for this purpose that governments are instituted to regulate the conduct of society, one toward another, for there will be found among all peoples those who will impose upon others. It is these that government seeks to protect against.

Your government is the most important factor in your lives. It is necessary that you fully understand it and that you intelligently cooperate in its work. Not to the end that you will profit thereby, because that is selfish, but to the end that the great bulk of humanity will profit. And by such a profit you and each of you will be the gainer. The very fact that many of you have, through the agency of your school system, been enabled to get this opportunity of graduating from an excellent school, is an excellent example of that unity and cooperation in society. Government gave you this opportunity. Your government is the greatest government on the face of the earth because it affords to the government itself a restricted and limited power sufficient for its needs and yet reserves to the individual of that government liberty and freedom. Those two words have become, to your minds, but catch words, no doubt; but they have a definite application to your every day life and your future life and that of the children to come after you. You cannot regard them with unconcern they are your very life, if you fully understand their meaning. Therefore it is necessary that you understand government, and I want to forcefully impress this idea upon the minds of every one of you.

Government can make a veritable slave of you, it is being done in Russia at this time. Your government is your affair, it is your government, you are not its slave. Keep this in mind and make it a point throughout your lives to keep government in that position. In Russia or Germany you would not be allowed to attend the church you desired to attend, or to worship God as your mind and heart might dictate; there you are told just how to do it. You are expected not to have any mind of your own, the government will do the thinking for you. Do you want that kind of administration? Do you want that kind of dictation? Now it is your business, but if the power of the government gets away from you, then it is a matter of force on the part of the government and you do as it says. Our forefathers made their choice and fought a great war for freedom, are you going to relinquish and surrender that freedom that they thought so much of that they died for to get it? You will not if you understand what liberty means to you, but the trouble is that the realization of the virtue of freedom and liberty comes to the people too late, after they have foolishly surrendered them to government, then it is too late, force has become enthroned and you must abide its edicts.

Do you want your homes searched by every little officer that comes along to see what you might have therein and to take whatever they may wish for their own? Then you should zealously protect that part of your liberty. That protection is written into the constitution of the land by your forefathers, take it out and every agency of the government will be entering your homes and throwing you out while it is searched on some flimsy pretext. That protection is a part of your liberty. Do you want the government to tell you how to think, or do you desire to have

free speech and expression of thought? Well, your government gives that liberty and freedom to you. You can retain it or by your indifference surrender it. Therefore it is necessary that you understand your part in government and fight to retain the liberty you enjoy. Do you want to be thrown into prison just because some government hiring suspicions you are not in harmony with the whims of that government? Of course you dont, but just the same that is what other governments do to men and keep them there for a lifetime, with an iron mask on their faces, without any other crime having been committed than that they looked like the reigning monarch of the country. Do you want that? If you do then by your indifference surrender the right afforded you by the constitution to have a writ of habaes corpus. That writ takes you before some tribunal where enquiry is made as to the charge against you, if it is a legal charge then warrants must issue and you are then, under the same constitution, entitled to a speedy trial to see if the charges are true, and under the same constitution afforded the right to be faced by the witnesses against you and cross examine them, if there has been no legal charge filed against you, then that tribunal orders your release. Do you think this is just and right? Then if you do be zealous to protect that right. Indifference and unconcern will surrender it as effectively as an affirmative vote. Now these are but a few of the rights in which the present constitutional government protects you, there are many others, one that may be of especial interest is, that government cannot take your property away from you without compensating you for it. Do you want government to take your property that you have worked and slaved for for many years without paying you for it? Is that just? Certainly not, but that is just what other governments do that are

unlike your own. Don't believe for a moment that a despotic government could allow you these rights, if it did it could not endure for a month. It is necessary under despotic governments to kill men when they oppose the government. That is right and just from such a government's standpoint, because if such a government permitted opposition, it could not last. Now if you want that kind of government, you can have it by surrendering your freedom and liberty. Those two words that just a moment ago you probably thought were mere catch words. Do you consider them such now? Have they not become vivid and living words.

Let me remind you of something else as you go down through life; those rights and liberties will not be openly attacked, if you are deprived of them it will be in a roundabout and secret process. Designing men will filch them like a thief in the night. They do not work in the open, they work by underground methods. So it is your duty to ever be watchful. When some measure is proposed that looks like it is a good idea on its face, examine it closely and see what it will do to the future. See if you can figure out some way in which the objects of that measure may become oppressive. If you can then fight it with all the strength in your body, because it is directed at your liberty and your freedom.

Had I ~~may~~ way the history of your country and your government would be so firmly fixed in each of your minds that when the State of Massachusetts were mentioned your mind would immediately fly to old Samuel Adams and other patriots and to the battle field of Bunker Hill and the Commons where men fought for the freedom which you enjoy. When Virginia was mentioned you would think of Cornwallis and his surrender that gave to you the freedom you enjoy; you would think of Thos. Jefferson and the Declaration of

Independence; of the fight for Religious Freedom and the Bill of Rights to your constitution. That when Pennsylvania were mentioned your mind would go to the ragged soldiers with naked feet, leaving blood stains upon the snows at Valley Forge, so that you might enjoy liberty and freedom. When Illinois were mentioned your mind would recall Lincoln's Gattysberg speech where he announced that ours and yours is a government " of the people, for the people and by the people". I would have your minds so instilled with the history of your government and your country that it would fully understand what "liberty and freedom" means when applied to the individual citizen of every land. And I would have you so well versed in the political affair of the world that when Russia were mentioned you would think of men and women who could own no property, who were taught athéism and make fun of God, who have to have a ticket from the government before they are allowed to eat, and where men are "liquidated", which means starved to death, because they do not conform to the slightest whim of their government or because they made some mistake in a government factory. These things I would have you understand above all other things so that you will appreciate your government and your liberty. So that you will know what liberty and freedom means. I would have you remember when Russia is mentioned that parents are not allowed to rear their own children but where the government takes them away when mere babies so that the parents can be more free to labor in the factories of the government, and furthermore so that the children may be taught to despise God. When you fully understood all these things then you would be reborn into the principles of your government. Such things as you find in Russia came about because the young people of that land had become so disgusted with the old ways they fled to worse ones, hoping and believing they would improve their

conditions. Such beliefs on the part of the youth of this land will bring them to misery and slavery. Belief that the government owes you something, will bring you communism such as is being practiced in Russia. A belief that you must depend upon some other agency, rather than your own work and effort, will bring you, too, into this living hell.

Stand upon your own feet, rely upon your own ability, seek advantage of no man for your own benefit, but ever be watchful of your own interests. These precepts will help you to a more abundant life. Your life is your own, you make it what it is. If you be selfish, it will be selfish. If you be ignorant, it will be ignorant. If you be lazy and indolent, relying upon the work and thrift of others, it will be the same. If you be thriftless and unconcerned with the future, the future will demand you as its victim. You cannot escape, it follows as the night the day that you must depend upon yourselves.

Remember that happiness does not come from great wealth; that means much toil and the surrender of much of your social and family life to get, and it means far more anxiety and concern to keep. You do not need power or high places to be happy, that is but passing and affords you no sincere satisfaction and contentment. But you do need honesty and truthfulness, you do need sobriety and thrift; you do need to labor and strive; and you do need to have a comfortable home and raise a fine family and teach them good principles: to tell the truth, honor their elders, be obedient, pay their debts, be loyal to their country and Honor their God. And when a man or a woman has acquired a small home, paid for it by honest labor, owes no man any debts, or pays the debts he is forced to make, and raises a fine family he has achieved the greatest success in this life.

And may I remind you that in these days of much unemployment, that it is simply pointing the way to more tillers of the soil. There every man is more independent than all other men of some other vocation in life. There each man is directly dependent upon his own ability to work and the strength of his mind. There he may live through the rankest kind of a depression and by simple effort scarcely realize that depression is going on. There he is a free man where if he ^{is} working in some factory or slaving in some store or giving his efforts to other employment, he is but a hired slave, after all. Avoid that. It is my admonition to go to or remain upon the farm. Get that farm paid for, build you a comfortable home and raise you a grand family. Then you will have peace and contentment, the two things in this life most desired.

Life is just as hard as you make ^{it}, see that you adopt those measures and principles that will make it easy. It is difficult to get out of debt, but very easy ~~and~~ to get into it. Live within your means. Face every man with truth and sincerity. You will have no apologies to make then, no excuses to give. Respect and try to make better your government and society generally, uphold the laws, they are for your benefit and be a party to seeing that others conform to them, that is a duty you owe yourself and your government. Tell the truth, pay your debts, Honor your God and your country and raise your children along the same lines, and your life will be a happy one and a successful one. Protect the liberties that you enjoy as a heritage for your children and your neighbors children, Live as nearly as is humanly possible by the Golden Rule and you will need no marble shaft at the end of life. That life will have been so successful that no acclaim will be needed.

I wish you all the success in this life, and if you follow the above advise, you will have them., ^{it}