



"Alumnus" Ambassador Stevenson receiving a diploma from Very Rev. Father Rector Rigney. Looking on are Vice-Rector Father Hoepfener and Dean of Graduate School Father Rahmann.

# NARROW

Address of  
 Ambassador William E. Stevenson  
 at the Commencement Exercises,  
 University of San Carlos,  
 Cebu, April 18, 1964

THERE are a number of reasons why I am happy to be here with you today. In the first place, it is always pleasant to come to Cebu — the "Queen City of the South." I find your friendliness and warm hospitality most acceptable and memorable. As you know, the United States considers Cebu so important — as the "hub" of activities in the Visayas and Mindanao — that our only Consulate and U.S.I.S. offices outside of Manila are those that are here.

I am also glad to have this special opportunity to visit this venerable and distinguished University, about which I have heard so much. I am well aware of the tremendous contribution it has made to this country — and to others as well — because of the large number of well qualified and distinguished graduates it has produced. I know that each of you who are receiving a diploma today will always be proud that you attended this University and benefitted from its inspired teaching, its high academic standards and its concern for human values and moral character.

I am especially pleased to be back in an academic atmosphere because, for 14 years, I was President of an institution of higher education in the United States — Oberlin College in Ohio. So, I feel at home among you, especially on Commencement Day, symbolizing as it does, the recognition of work well done, the attainment of worthy objectives and the fulfillment of dreams and aspirations.

As you young men and women graduate from this distinguished University, I wonder what assumptions you are making about your own futures and about the environments in which you expect to be spending your lives. Do you face the years ahead with some

uncertainty or are you optimistic and reasonably confident that things will work out well for you in business, a profession, in politics or in the home? Are you hopeful or fatalistic? Or haven't you given your future much thought?

Certainly I'm not going to stand here this afternoon and tell you that life will be easy and that you won't encounter difficulties and troubles, or that the day has yet arrived when there will be no more disputes among nations or any more wars. That would be unrealistic and misleading and you would not believe me. On the other hand, I am going to suggest that despite the many problems besetting people and nations in many areas of the world, an adequate basis exists for you to look ahead with hope, with zest, with cheerfulness and with courage. Furthermore, I submit that should you do otherwise you will be shirking your opportunities and your special responsibilities as well educated citizens of this great Republic.

Human beings have a tendency to over-dramatize themselves in a distinctly personal way. Our outlook is apt to be very subjective. We like to think that we are living in more dangerous or more challenging times than ever before in history. This may be true, in many ways, but it is especially true that we look out at the world from our individual vantage points. It is hard to relate our own lifetime to past periods of history which may actually have been comparatively more difficult or discouraging. Throughout the ages there has been incessant struggle and danger. The fact of danger is not unique to any one period in the history of mankind. We have no right to com-

# ING THE GAP

plain that we, and we alone, have been malignantly singled out for hardship, trial and testing.

That men are prone to feel fearful or even pessimistic about their own particular times is illustrated by this comment:

"It is a gloomy moment in history. Not for many years has there been so much apprehension. Never has the future seemed so incalculable. In France the political cauldron seethes. Russia hangs like a cloud on the horizon. All the resources of the British Empire are sorely tired. Of our own troubles in the U.S. no man can see the end."

That quotation is not a recent one. Actually it comes from *Harpers Weekly* of October 10, 1857.

Or take this doleful observation:

"Our earth is degenerate in these latter days. Bribery and corruption are common. Children no longer obey their parents. Every man wants to write a book. The end of the world is evidently approaching."

Those words were inscribed on an Assyrian stone slab dated about 2800 B. C.!

So we are reminded that mankind has always had crises to cope with, hurdles to surmount, challenges to meet. As a matter of fact, life would be rather dull and uninteresting were it otherwise. The important thing is that year by year, decade by decade, century by century man is moving in the direction of a finer and a better scheme of things. Progress during a particular lifetime may be so slow as to be imperceptible but history, in its broad sweeps, supports the view that progress is gradually being made. Our goal, I suppose, is Utopia — a goal which lies a very long way ahead. But *the gap between a world of high ideals dedicated to security, peace and freedom for all and the rule of the jungle has steadily been narrowed through, the many centuries man has been upon this earth. It is your job and mine to do all we can to narrow that gap even more — as much as we can. Our individual contribution, taken by itself, may seem infinitesimal, but all of our contributions, taken together and in a forward direction, can mean significant progress toward a better and a more Christlike world.*



Ambassador Stevenson

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I hardly need to emphasize to you young men and women that those of us who have had the benefit of higher education have special obligation and responsibility to use our training, our intellects, our abilities and our character to live and act and work as members of the "Great Community" which Josiah Royce, a distinguished American educator and philosopher, once defined as "that international company of men and women who seek to leave behind them a better world than that into which they were born."

Obviously the first thing an educated person should do is to choose his life work wisely. However, that doesn't mean you cannot change a particular occupation if the first one doesn't work out for the best. In fact it is much more intelligent and in your own interest to leave one business or profession, or a particular location, in favor of another and more suitable one, than it is to spend one's life thwarted or frustrated. A human being, particularly an educated one, makes his greatest contribution to himself, his family and to society when he is contented and finds his work and life rewarding to the greatest possible extent. I had a classmate in college who had literary gifts and who was absolutely determined to be an independent author and never work for another per-

son. Twenty years after graduation he was managing editor of a leading magazine. He found he was making a greater contribution to society as an editor, rather than an author, even though he worked for a larger organization — things he had felt in his youth he could never do.

Whatever path each of you will follow may I urge you to do your utmost to maintain high standards of performance and ethics in your chosen line of activity and, as much as you can, to seek improvement. That's a very important part of narrowing the gap and moving civilization a little further up the incline. So much will depend upon your own attitude and motivation toward your life and work. For, as John Gaines once put it so wisely and encouragingly, "Anything which can be vividly imagined, ardently desired, sincerely believed in and conscientiously worked toward must inevitably be achieved."

Your great country and mine have many vital things in common. We are both nations founded in the Christian tradition. That means we believe in the significance and integrity of the individual. Hence we believe in *democracy and the rule of law*. We are both opposed to communism and its aggressive, anti-individualistic, atheistic aims and practices. We believe in universal education and equality of opportunity. Above all we are firmly committed to freedom and the democratic way of life, its noble ideals and its human objectives.

But, unlike the situation in dictatorship, in which the citizens must live under rules and directives arbitrarily prescribed from above, we, who are fortunate enough to live as free citizens in a democracy have to keep alert and undertake special responsibilities. You recall that John Philpot Curran warned us:

"It is the common fate of the indolent to see their rights become a prey to the active. The condition upon which God hath given liberty to man is eternal vigilance; which condition if he break, servitude is at once the consequence of his crime and the punishment of his guilt."

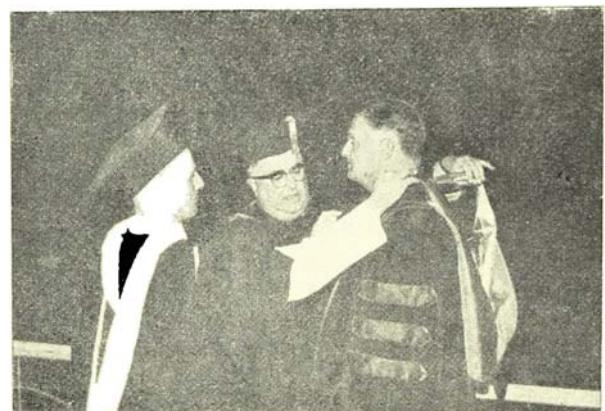
Our world has grown so small, and all nations are now so inter-dependent, that no intelligent person can perform his duty as a citizen in a democracy who is not well informed about the forces outside his own country which are moving human affairs in his times. In this connection I was pleased to note, in the general catalog of this University, that one of its specific objectives was "the promotion of international understanding."

Since I have been here in Southeast Asia I have been surprised to discover how little some people know about the history, the cultures and the ideals of neighboring Asian countries. Perhaps past colonial relationships are in part to blame. But obviously, as the Philippines takes increasing leadership in this area,

the time has come for every one of you here today to learn more about your Asian neighbors. Otherwise, how can you follow present day international affairs with meaning and effectiveness and thus conduct yourselves as responsible citizens? At a cultural conference at Kuala Lumpur a year ago I met the editor of a distinguished Asian newspaper who admitted he had never met a newsman from another Asian country until he encountered one on a trip to a conference in the United States. That incident highlights the importance, when possible, of travel as an excellent way to improve knowledge and understanding of other countries and of human affairs in general — something of great significance to any intelligent and conscientious citizen.

Mrs. Stevenson and I have been fortunate in having travelled quite extensively during our lives, including a trip around the world about ten years ago. All in all I believe I have visited personally about 50 countries, several quite extensively. As a result, it is my firm conviction that through travel one learns best, perhaps, that despite superficial differences people the world over are basically the same in the things that are really significant and meaningful about human affairs. Admittedly, some of you may not have the opportunity to travel as much as others, but a great deal of the same benefit can be gained from meeting and talking with visitors from other lands and places, not to mention reading about other societies and cultures.

True, people in different countries have different habits and social practices. They dress differently. Some drive their vehicles on the right side of the street, others on the left. Mothers carry their babies on their heads, or shoulders, on backs, or hips, or in their arms. Food varies conspicuously. But underneath these examples I have given of superficial differences it has been my consistent observation that people everywhere share such basic concerns as desire for peace, love of family, need for security, respect and affection.



Father Hoepfener and Father Rigney putting on the hood on "Alumnus" Ambassador Stevenson.

If we discover and keep in mind how much alike human beings are in their basic qualities and characteristics, it helps us to approach international problems and relationships with greater wisdom and a better chance to achieve harmony and understanding.

On the other hand it is unwise to disregard social amenities and approaches which may differ in various parts of the world. Here in the Orient, I have discovered that "face" is more important than it is in America. Here you emphasize pleasantness in your human relationships. In the United States we are so anxious to get to the point that you may think our directness is too blunt or from your point of view unpleasant. From our point of view directness and frankness are customary and taken for granted. Therefore, it is important in dealing with each other that the kind of differences I have just mentioned by way of illustration should be borne in mind.

One should study history, psychology and other social sciences, but in the end how effectively you succeed in life will depend, far more than you may as yet be aware, upon what you know about human relations through actual observation and experience. So often one finds that qualities like vanity, emotion, ambition or insecurity are more of a clue to a man's attitude and action than logic, for example.

During the two years it has been my privilege to serve in the Philippines I have been greatly impressed by its rich human and material resources. *Asia, and the whole world for that matter, needs the kind of example and leadership which the Philippines can offer even to a far greater extent than it has yet done.* But what this country can achieve for its own people and by way of helpful contributions in international affairs will entirely depend upon its own citizens, a body of which you young men and women will be an important segment. If you are active, intelligent, objective, tolerant citizens, not only will you be doing your duty and justifying the years of education and training given you but you will be serving your beloved country well. You will be doing your part to help narrow the gap I mentioned earlier. Through your humble efforts, and those of millions like you everywhere, civilization will be advanced nearer the long sought goal of universal peace and brotherhood.

But it is not enough, especially in a democracy, to be aware of these things and yet to shirk your responsibilities as citizens, endowed, as you are, with the fine education each of you has had. Deeds and action, rather than good intentions, are absolutely essential. Edmund Burke warned us, you recall, "All that is necessary for the forces of evil to win in the world is for enough good men to do nothing."

I stand here today as a man many years older than you are. I know full well from my own earlier days and from experiences in later years that youth is



The USC Fulbright scholars with Ambassador and Mrs. Stevenson at the Rector's office shortly before the ceremonies began. Sitting L to R: Mrs. Stevenson, Father Rector, Ambassador Stevenson, and Mrs. Maria Gutierrez. Standing L to R: Miss Luz Yee, Miss Jane Kintanar, Mrs. Nenita Sy, Miss Amparo Buenaventura, Mrs. Virginia P. Vamenta, Dra. Concepcion F. Rodil, and Atty. Expedito Bugarin.

skeptical about advice from its elders. Generally speaking you young people will prefer to try things out for yourselves — and sometimes to learn the hard way. That is human nature.

Nevertheless it is worth bearing in mind that time after time men and women have found, as they reached their later years, that it is unselfishness and concern for other human beings — the Christian way of life — that brings the deepest and most rewarding satisfactions. A few years before his death, Woodrow Wilson expressed this truth in these words:

"No thoughtful man ever came to the end of his life and had time and a little space of calm from which to look back upon it who did not know and acknowledge that it was what he had done unselfishly and for others, and nothing else, that satisfied him in the retrospect and made him feel that he had played the man."

Florence Nightingale, the English nurse who was such a heroic humanitarian in the Crimean War, had the same thought in mind when she said "I really never began to live until I stopped asking myself the question 'What do I want from life?' and began asking instead 'What does life want from me?' "

Young men women of the graduating class, I congratulate each one of you upon your accomplishments and achievements symbolized by your presence here today. I wish you every success in life. May God bless you as you take your places as the active, conscientious, successful citizens of this great country, that I know each of you will prove to be.