

OBERLIN COLLEGE - HONOR'S DAY
MAY 1986

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^{you}
~~It is an honor you do~~ me in your invitation to speak at this ~~Honor's Day~~ celebration. I suspect that you might have preferred Bill Cosby in this role ^{and so would I} but instead you have someone who specialized in controlling a disease, became an international authority in that disease and suddenly found himself without a disease to control. To destroy the very field which has been the foundation of the science which you know, has been likened to academic suicide. For someone such as this, there is no recourse but to become a dean!

As one progresses inevitably and inexorably toward the status of "senior statesman", some would say "old goat", one tends to reflect on ^{some what} ~~the~~ ^{were at the time, memorable experiences in} ~~highs and the lows of one's lifetime--on those events which at the time had~~ ^{but, in retrospect had their own special} ~~both a significance and an~~ elements of absurdity, which bear remembering.

One such event which I'm confident does not--appropriately--appear in the annals of the history of this great institution, was the ^{inaugural} ~~founding~~ broadcast of WOBC. My roommate and I ^{with devoted band of scrappers and amateur radio buffs} spent 1949 and 1950 assembling surplus Army equipment ^{with the grand dream of establishing} ~~to establish~~ a radio station. Inevitably, there were many more problems than we had anticipated and the inaugural broadcast was regularly postponed until ^{at last} ~~finally~~, in the Spring we were ^{to go on the air for the first time} ~~at last~~ prepared. What was ^{I am sure,} that first broadcast you ask--in breathless anticipation, A concert at Finney--a distinguished speaker--the president of the college--no! It was, believe it or not, an Oberlin-Wooster baseball game, played at Wooster. Never mind that Oberlin's baseball games at home were seldom attended by other than intimate friends. We could and did broadcast that game from Wooster. I doubt that anyone listened but there was a personal sense of

No less were the contributions of so many to the strategy, tactics and ultimately the success of smallpox eradication. It had a cast of thousands--or more literally hundreds of thousands. A young Brazilian who with ~~only a handful of~~ ^{those} others transformed the ~~Brazilian~~ ^{strategy of a handful} program and, subsequently, in Ethiopia, saw more of the country walking and on the back of a mule than any Ethiopian ever had; a Deputy Minister of the Soviet Union who was determined that the program must succeed and ^{publicly} supported an American in doing so; a Ghanaian senior medical officer who ^{guided his own program to} ~~understood the~~ ^{an early success} strategy and traveled ^{widely thereafter,} wherever asked, to communicate his beliefs; a dedicated Indonesian who consistently worked 7 day weeks and after success in his own country, ^{INSERT} ~~went~~ ^{people} to Ethiopia where he did the same, ultimately paying with his life. ^{They} ~~with~~ ^{so many others,} ultimately achieved what ~~few~~ ^{had} believed possible - the total eradication of a human disease.

~~However,~~ ^{as that I like} ~~Thus~~ it is ^{that} individuals, rarely groups, are recognized for achievements which, in truth, are the product of many. ^{In part, it reflects the recognition that} ~~one~~ ^{one} can not fairly and equitably assign the many contributions which so many make to any achievement. You yourselves owe much to parents, teachers and friends, as I'm sure you will acknowledge. For recognition conferred upon me, I know only too well that the achievement is a product of ~~many~~ for which I only symbolize the accomplishment. For the many others, who have contributed so much, satisfaction ^{is} ~~is~~ ^{inevitably much less;} a personal, an internalized experience--many taking ^{and satisfaction} ~~pride in the achievement~~ ^{and} ~~pride~~ ^{accomplished}, for which only one or a few are recognized. They remain anonymous--for them to accept and appreciate this achievement, requires maturity and perspective. It pertains to most.

~~However,~~ ^{do} For the few who ^{do} receive public recognition of achievement, ^{however,} ~~a~~ ^a special obligation is imposed. You stand not alone but as a

satisfaction which I never got from Organic Chemistry. We rejoiced in a beginning, in a creation, utterly convinced that others would see a dream to maturity--and I gather they did. But, in fact, it was in perspective, not a great or innovative accomplishment--just innocent amateurs attempting to create on our own territory what others had done before in other areas--but it was ^{as} immensely ^{and personally satisfying} ~~satisfying~~ as any ~~of my~~ during my Oberlin years ^{although} ~~But~~ for some reason, it was not identified at graduation as a distinctive accomplishment.

You are today being ^{publicly} recognized for your accomplishments. It is a pleasurable experience and, for each ^{public} recognition I have received, I ~~similarly~~ have taken a measure of satisfaction, a type of satisfaction, which I hope you will share as well. But, in this so-called real world which you will soon enter, public recognition, one finds, to be more and less than reality dictates. Perspective is not always easily sustained.

For reasons peculiar to history, to the press and to the tide of public affairs, individuals, not groups, are customarily singled out and come to symbolize a milestone in history. Thus, for example, the name of Jonas Salk is known to most of you. But how many of you know the names of David Bodian, Isabel Morgan and Kenneth Maxcy, ^{They} ~~who~~ discovered that poliomyelitis was caused by not one but three different strains of virus, that one could kill the virus with formalin and could protect chimpanzees by innoculating the killed virus. Or the names of John Ender^s, Thomas Weller and Fred Robbins, ^{They} ~~who~~ discovered that viruses could be grown in tissue culture and so made the production of ^{these and other} a virus vaccine possible. ^{For this,} ~~For this,~~ ^{they received the Nobel Prize} Jonas Salk tested the vaccine in humans, ^{and} ~~yet~~ ^{from the publicity and popular recognition} ~~Salk is the person recognized~~ ~~so widely today.~~

One might assume that Salk ~~had~~ was the creator for his is the only name widely recognized today.

representative, sometimes a spokesman, of what can be achieved, what is symbolically the best. You have the obligation to the many others who have contributed to your recognition to create, to discover, to build further. You receive recognition not to celebrate an accomplishment but to challenge you to do more.

For reasons unknown and still mysterious to me--an odd chemistry of creative minds, miserable weather, eclectic architecture sited on the boring landscape of a vast lake plain, a liberal tradition and a belief that the accepted was to be challenged and the challenge was to be accepted--all of this and more ~~has~~ ^{They did} made a unique college, and the college ~~has~~ fostered the growth of a spirit of doubt, and from the doubt, creativity. To you who have persevered ^{here} and today are to be honored, I salute you ~~and~~ challenge you.

My 4 years at Oberlin College were priceless ones in my development - although the price was then far less than it is now. ~~I~~ ^{I did} wonder more in retrospect than ~~at~~ ^{the} time what was so unusual ~~or~~ why here.