

# “The Mountaineer”

Salutatorian Address to the Shady Spring  
High School Class of 2010

Friday, May 28, 2010

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US AUTHOR AND PHYSICIAN OLIVER WENDELL HOLMES SAID, "THE MIND, ONCE EXPANDED TO THE DIMENSIONS OF LARGER IDEAS, NEVER RETURNS TO ITS ORIGINAL SIZE."

TO MY FAMILY AND FRIENDS, TEACHERS, ADMINISTRATORS, AND DIGNITARIES, THANK YOU FOR JOINING THE CLASS OF 2010 IN THE CELEBRATION OF AN EXPANDED PURPOSE. HIGH SCHOOL BEGAN FOUR YEARS AGO, BUT WITHOUT THOSE SITTING UNDER THIS ROOF, WE WOULD NOT BE HERE TODAY. FRIENDS, LET GIVE A ROUND OF APPLAUSE TO THOSE WHO HAVE HELPED US TO COME THIS FAR.

MOMENTS AGO, AMNA SPOKE OF HOW WE SHOULD BE PROUD OF THE SCHOOL THAT WE ARE FROM, BUT WE SHOULD ALSO BE PROUD OF OUR STATE—THE GREAT STATE OF WEST VIRGINIA. NELSON SPENCER SAID THAT WHEN WE ENTER COLLEGE, THE WORKPLACE, OR OUR INDUSTRY, WE SHOULD NEVER LET SOMEONE TELL US THAT WE ARE LESS INTELLIGENT OR LESS CAPABLE BECAUSE WE ARE FROM WEST VIRGINIA. I SHARE HIS BELIEF THAT WE SHOULD BE PROUD TO BE A PART OF THE HARDEST WORKING, BRAVEST, AND MOST BEAUTIFUL STATE IN THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA. I CAN SAY FOR MYSELF THAT I AM PROUD TO BE A MOUNTAINEER!

SITTING HERE TODAY, WE HAVE ACCOMPLISHED A GREAT FEAT; HOWEVER, WE SHOULD NEVER BE COMPLACENT WITH WHAT WE HAVE ACCOMPLISHED. IF IT HAD BEEN FOR COMPLACENCY, MARY LOU RETTON WOULD HAVE NEVER BEEN A WORLD CLASS GYMNAST; HOWARD "TICK" LILLY, A GRADUATE OF SHADY SPRING HIGH SCHOOL WOULD HAVE NEVER BECOME THE THIRD PERSON TO BREAK THE SOUND BARRIER AS A FIRST-RATE TEST PILOT; FOLLOWING WEST VIRGINIA'S OWN CHUCK YEAGER WHO WAS THE FIRST.

WE HOLD A RESPONSIBILITY TO THE ALUMNI THAT HAVE COME BEFORE US. SOME OF THEM FEEL THAT THEIR GENERATION FAILED AND IT IS OUR RESPONSIBILITY TO MAKE THINGS BETTER. WHETHER THAT IS FIGHTING FOR OUR MINERS, FOR EDUCATION, OR FOR EQUALITY, WE AS WEST VIRGINIANS AND ALUMNI OF SHADY SPRING HIGH SCHOOL MUST STAND UP FOR WHAT WE BELIEVE IS RIGHT.

TODAY IS AN EXAMPLE OF A DAY THAT WE SHOULD HOLD IN TRIUMPH. TO HAVE THE RIGHT TO SIT HERE TODAY, WE HAVE EACH TAKEN A STEP THAT MANY OF THOSE WHO BEGAN THIS JOURNEY NEVER COMPLETED. WE

KEPT OUR MINDS ON A HIGHER PURPOSE, AND PERSEVERED THROUGH CHALLENGES THAT FACED US.

THERE ARE MANY PEOPLE THAT I CAN GIVE GRATITUDE FOR MY PLACE HERE TONIGHT: MY TEACHERS, MY COACHES, ADVISORS, AND MY FRIENDS; HOWEVER, THERE ARE TWO VERY SPECIAL PEOPLE IN THIS ROOM THAT I HAVE THE MOST APPRECIATION: MY PARENTS. WHEN YOU COMBINE MY FATHER, THE MAN WHO TAUGHT ME HOW TO DEBATE; AND MY MOTHER, THE LADY OF TEN THOUSAND WORDS, YOU GET ME.

BUT MORE THAN THAT, THEY TAUGHT ME HOW TO BE A BETTER PERSON—HOW TO SERVE OTHERS, LOVE GOD, AND LOVE ONE ANOTHER, AS FAMILY. MOM AND DAD, I LOVE YOU.

TO THE CLASS OF TWENTY-TEN, I THANK YOU. WE HAVE HAD A SPECIAL OPPORTUNITY TO GROW UP TOGETHER. YOU ARE A WONDERFUL GROUP OF PEOPLE AND I THANK YOU FOR BEING MY FRIENDS.

AS SHADY SPRING TIGERS AND WEST VIRGINIA MOUNTAINEERS, I ENCOURAGE YOU TO ALWAYS REMEMBER WHERE YOU COME FROM. IN TIMES OF DOUBT REFLECT BACK ON YOUR EXPERIENCES HERE AT SHADY SPRING HIGH SCHOOL AND REMEMBER THOSE WHO HELPED YOU BECOME WHO YOU ARE TODAY. YOU ARE EACH UNIQUE AND SPECIAL IN YOUR DIVERSE TALENTS AND ASPIRATIONS, SO USE THESE GIFTS AND DREAMS TO GO OUT AND SHOW WHAT THE SHADY SPRING HIGH SCHOOL CLASS OF TWENTY-TEN HAS TO OFFER THE UNITED STATES AND THE WORLD.

MAY GOD BLESS YOUR LIVES AND GOD BLESS  
THE GREAT STATE OF WEST VIRGINIA.

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