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OF UNIVERSITY WOMEN LEADERSHIP CONFERENCE
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Dr. Rose, friends:

Coming home is always a nostalgic experience and Alabama is second home to me. But my nostalgia is mixed with pride today as we gather at this great university. Back in the summer of 1931, I was enrolled here for six short weeks. Over the years, this campus has lived in my mind as the perfect setting for a college. It seemed to come right out of a novel, with all the romance and beauty that implies. I remember the patrician President's Mansion and the quadrangle with its great old trees, offering welcomed shade and that comfortable feeling of deep roots. There was a marvelous swimming hole off the campus that must by now be lost to the forces of progress. But the center of life was the Union Building. We all gathered there at the Post Office. This, I am sure, is changeless.

Today on this campus we see the signs of wise planning -- the careful preservation of the old and the orderly development of the new. The University of Alabama is fortunate to have a man with the stature and vision of Dr. Frank Rose to guide it through these changing and demanding times.

You have gathered here because you know that Alabama, like the rest of our country, is in transition. Your conference theme recognizes that the decade of the sixties offers both responsibility and opportunity for citizens.

In your workshops and through your speakers, you are going to examine many avenues of possible service. But I sense from the speech topics that you are also searching for the answer to a deeper question: What is the real role today of women in our type of culture, in our period in world history, in this particular part of our country? This is a never-ending search. I wish you a fruitful journey.

How can I be useful to you in this important quest? The answer lies, I believe, not in cataloguing for you the problems we face or the programs and policies that need your backing. Instead, I would like to set before you an attitude of mind that I believe holds the key to all that we attempt to do.

First, let us do what all Southerners love doing -- let us find out who we are -- identify ourselves.

You have an enviable heritage of outstanding Alabama women doers behind you. There was Julia Tutwiler in the late 1800's, who established schools for women all over Alabama and brought co-education to this University. The officials solemnly assured her that grave consequences would follow if girls were admitted to the University. Finally, in 1896, ten women were admitted. "Aunt Julia" remembered not to smile too widely when the girls walked away with four of the six honors awarded at graduation. The first woman's dormitory was named in her honor. Her prison reforms brought about the establishment of Julia Tutwiler Prison for women. My own cousin, Edwina Mitchell, has for many years been its director.

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Who doesn't thrill over the miracle of Helen Keller of Tuscumbia whose indomitable spirit has given hope and encouragement to handicapped people throughout the world.

In your State Capital you have a great Archives, thanks to the determined efforts of Marie Bankhead Owen.

Harper Lee, a brilliant novelist who attended the University in the 40's, has brought alive the warmth and humanity of a southern family in a small southern town.

And, may I add, Libby Anderson Cater, who was the only girl to be elected President of the University of Alabama student body and whose husband, Douglass Cater, is a special assistant to my husband. In raising a family and being an alert, active citizen, she is a good example of a point I want to make today.

One of the most wasted of our natural resources today is the idleness of the educated woman. Some of us never survive the battle fatigue of launching a family. Others become accustomed to being homebodies and find the old rut too comfortable, or too deep, to climb out. Or we may simply lose our self-confidence about the worth of our talents.

I am speaking particularly to you students, who have before you the wonderful prospect of raising families but also desire to keep current with the world -- and to those of you who are facing a new freedom for the first time in your married lives now that the children have flown the coop. I am also speaking to those of you who are active career women already but who seek new dimensions of activity outside your professional duties.

I have made a discovery in my life that I am sure many of you have made for yourselves. It is a life-renewing discovery. There is some magical energy -- a secret chemical more powerful than adrenalin -- which pushes me on when I am doing something I love.

Some day I believe that medical researchers are going to isolate "habitual fatigue" only to find out that it is the presence of nothing. What else can explain the fact that the men and women who love their work are able to work twice as hard and twice as long and yet remain refreshed?

We have all had periods of nothingness in our lives when we felt too tired to begin to do something. But if there is one message that I would like to give you today, it is this: be aware of your hidden strengths. You have the capacity to change the face of your community, to elevate the level of life around you. Through the centuries, women have been the prodders. Good works go forward in proportion to the number of vital and creative and determined women supporting them.

When women get behind a project, things happen.

Things happen when we organize a yard-of-the-month program to make our hometown more beautiful.

Things happen when -- up in the mountains of Appalachia -- women take the bookmobiles back into the forks of the creek -- carrying the miracle of good reading to people who never before knew the joys of a library.

Things happen when women support a good citizenship campaign or a Head Start kindergarten for disadvantaged children or a fund drive for one of the many worthy UN projects.

Education is a debt to be repaid with the gift of self. But we do not have to look on this as a painful obligation. Rather each of us should choose a challenge that will make our own life richer and happier. Then, work so that at the end of the day we feel excited instead of tired -- excited over what we accomplished today and what awaits us tomorrow.

There are so many worthwhile things waiting to be done. When your children make their declarations of independence, be ready to make your own.

Life around the White House these days is very much like what you're doing here. It is one continuing seminar. A short while ago, I was supposed to meet with a group to discuss the women's job corps. We looked around for a place where 100 women leaders from all over the United States could talk about the hopes and pitfalls of this great venture.

In the East Room, a ceremony was being held to honor outstanding students from 40 states. The Rose Garden couldn't be used because a group of ministers were gathering to discuss community relations. The State Dining Room was being prepared for a luncheon and briefing of businessmen by the President and Cabinet members.

I didn't dare try for the second floor because Luci and Lynda were in the throes of exams and had issued dramatic pleas to keep everything quiet.

So we found our meeting place down in a far corner of the South Lawn amid a wonderful grove of trees. Fortunately, it was a sunny day! in 160 years, I doubt that this particular part of the White House grounds had been put to such talkative use. But we gathered there, with coffee and doughnuts, full of ideas about how to get untrained young women into jobs.

Here, as in the White House, our pulses beat with a new tempo. It is a different paced world than the one I entered as a girl when I first fell in love with Alabama. From the age of six until I married, I spent every summer here visiting my relatives. Montgomery, Billingsley, Mobile, Prattville, Wetumpka -- the places where I stayed come back to me in a mezzotint of memories.

I remember -- who could ever forget? -- the laughing hayrides and watermelon suppers, learning to swim in Mulberry Creek, the lazy curl of a cousin's fishing line flickering in the sun, church on Sunday and then the long Sunday dinner with kinfolks -- endless kinfolk -- discussing the endless family gossip around the table.

Today, I am still under the spell of that special grace, but I also sense the spirit of a state on the move -- decidedly on the move. I feel this most of all when I talk with the two Alabamians I know best -- two men who stand tall in the nation's capital. I mean Senators Lister Hill and John Sparkman.

I think of the top priority programs for the good of Alabama and the whole nation that these men have helped to move: What could be more important than education and health? When we read that the federal investment in education and training will reach \$10 billion this year, we can thank the man from Alabama who is Chairman of the Senate Labor and Public Welfare Committee -- and also chairs the Appropriations Subcommittee on Education -- Lister Hill. No group knows better than this one the contributions which Senator Hill and the Congressman from this district, Armistead Selden, have made to higher education.

When we drive through a small Alabama town or nearby eight thousand other towns and cities in America -- and come upon a modern, well-equipped hospital or nursing home offering health to the people, we can bless the author of the Hill-Burton Act.

Housing also ranks at the top when we consider our scale of values for the good life. I wonder how many farmers who own their own homes realize what they owe to that son of a tenant farmer, John Sparkman.

Nearly fifteen million American families today are better housed because of legislation patiently crafted by the man who is known as "Mr. Housing" in Washington.

For him, housing doesn't stop at the home place. It reaches to almost every college campus in the country. Right here in Alabama, 27 institutions of higher learning have benefitted from the college housing program sponsored by John Sparkman.

Both these men have a quality essential to the public servant and the active citizen. They don't say die when the going gets rough. To quote the late Governor Bibb Graves, they "keep on keeping on." Most things that are really worth accomplishing require this kind of persistence.

People sometimes ask me how I define the central purpose of all this activity in our land. I would like to refer to one more man. He happens to be my husband. He has wrapped it up in three words -- "The Great Society."

In describing The Great Society, the President said at Ann Arbor: "The challenge of the next half century is whether we have the wisdom to use our wealth to enrich and elevate our national life, and to advance the quality of our American civilization."

Our conquest of nature has produced more abundance, and more promise of abundance, than the world has ever known. Our scientists and engineers have propelled us further into the age of comfort than we dreamed possible.

Yet we are uncomfortable, and to me the Great Society means facing up to the reasons why we are ill at ease amid so much achievement.

To my mind, there are three main problems.

We need to bring our human resources -- our products of the mind and of the spirit -- up to matching our products of the laboratory.

We head for the moon. We go further down into the oceans than man ever ventured before. We seem to be able to do anything except get along together.

One day we might hope that the conference table in Birmingham or Geneva will be as successful as the assembly line in Huntsville and the launching pad at Cape Kennedy.

The second problem is closely connected with the first. We need to learn how to make use -- rich use -- of the leisure time which our technological advances are bringing us. We must avoid the repetitive, deadening, and slothful throwing away of time given us by our machines. If not, our leisure may become our Achilles' heel.

There is nothing very complex about this. It is a matter of attitude, of calling on the abundant resources in our country and inside ourselves. Quite aside from the time you give to your community, you must also reserve some time for self-renewal.

It is a time for remembering the joys of the simple things -- taking your child fishing in the woodland stream, walking through an art gallery with a friend and delighting to learn that you both respond to the same painting, experiencing the beauty of Vermont in October, the majesty of the Rockies snow-capped, the lilt of an Alabama Spring.

Thirdly, we must see to it that the potentialities of all these things are spread to ever-widening circles of the 190,000,000 Americans.

The history of the United States is the history of the constant expansion of opportunity for the people of our land. This is indeed the major theme of The Great Society.

The essence of the Great Society is that it cannot be a spectator society. It is a society of participation -- full-hearted participation by individuals acting as individuals and local communities acting as local communities.

People will shape the Great Society in a thousand different towns and cities and in a thousand different ways.

The Great Society is a Head Start Center I visited in Newark, New Jersey. It is -- especially -- the youthful volunteer I met who gives six hours each day taking children out of dull-eyed slums and sending them home bright-eyed with new horizons.

The Great Society is the group of energetic and far-sighted clubwomen of East Moline, Illinois, who raised money to replace trees destroyed by street-widening. One day there will be a majestic arch of shade for their grandchildren to enjoy.

It is the civic leaders of Atlanta who, as a living memorial to the Atlantans killed in a tragic plane crash, are seeing to it that the people of their city will be able to fill leisure hours with a great new center for all the arts.

The Great Society is all those who, by personal example and effort, are trying to ease the pain and suffering of human beings. I do not mean merely physical suffering, but the sharpest pain -- that of the spirit.

The greatest need of each human spirit is to walk with head high in the tonic air of self-respect.

To treat everyone as your fellow citizen is not always an easy thing to do. Some prefer non-involvement, even with our neighbors. Custom or prejudice deter us from reaching out and offering the hand of partnership in the American experience.

Yet the spirit of the second half of the Twentieth Century demands this partnership. We must think in a Twentieth Century way about human relationships.

We are doing that. The progress that has been achieved seldom makes page one, but it is there and it is solid.

The promise of equality first made in our Constitution is ours to keep.

And so, the Great Society is a society which finds in its technological brilliance a challenge to its human backwardness. It uses its material affluence as a base for achieving its non-material dreams.

You women leaders of Alabama are in the vanguard of this movement. Your energies, your talents, and your dedication are helping this state not simply to progress but to grow with grace. When I look at you, I know that Alabama can lead the roll call, not just in alphabetical order, but in all the achievements that make a society great.

It has been a moving experience for me to be with you today. Let me extend to you my own and the President's best wishes in your endeavors.

A year from now, may each of you be able to look around you and find that life in your community is a little more kindly, a little richer, a little more expressive of the whole human spirit because you -- as an individual -- cared -- and because you -- as an individual -- tried.

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