Address Given by Admiral Stark at
Wilkes College Commencement, 1956 June 4

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ADDRESS GIVEN BY ADMIRAL STARK AT WILKES COLLEGE

COMMENCEMENT 4 June 1956

SUBJECT

WYOMING VALLEY

PAST - PRESENT - FUTURE

(Preliminary extemporaneous remarks by Admiral Stark
as a prelude to main address not recorded)

The first permanent settlers in Wyoming Valley came down from Connecticut between 1762 and 1769.

It's only a few hours travel today, but in those times, it took days of travel, and very rough going. This area of our East was then the western frontier of the thirteen English colonies.

The pioneers in this beautiful and fertile valley cleared the land, built their cabins, and made friends, or enemies, of the local Indian tribes.

As on every one of our successive frontiers, men were isolated from their neighbors and depended upon their courage, initiative and industry, not only for their livelihood, but also for their very lives.

A Bishop of the early church is reported to have said that society needs three kinds of men: those who work, those who fight, and those who pray. More often than not, the early settler combined all three in the individual.

The settlers could look to no one else for services, for food, or for defense. They were of necessity and independent, rugged people. Farming, hunting, and trading were their chief occupations.

The Indians burned the black rock which later was the basis of our Valley's economy, but coal was not a source of wealth until men learned to burn it easily, and transport it economically.

In 1820, a handful of men mined 365 tons of anthracite in the State of Pennsylvania.

In 1870, - 35,600 men mined over 14,000,000 tons.

In 1917 - 156,000 men mined 100,000,000 tons.

These years of undisturbed growth ended about 1924, with the development of competing fuels: - oil, gas, and coke.

In 1955, production in the State had dropped from 100,000,000 tons to 25,742,000 tons; and employment from around 156,000 men, to 32,000 men.

The above figures are State wide and are taken from the Annual Report,

1954, of the Anthracite Division, Department of Mines, and from a special report of the Anthracite Institute for 1955.

With unemployment resulting from decreased coal mining, this community was faced with two alternatives:-

(a) It could take it lying down, and accept a steady and continued decline of its entire economy, letting its men seek employment elsewhere (and many were forced to do so), or

(b) It could unite in constructive action to obtain new industries, and expand old ones, and thereby take up the slack in employment, and insure the Valley's future growth.

Happily, that same spirit, which saw our early settlers overcome all odds, prevailed in our men and women of today: and, fortunately for all of us, a few men of vision and courage stayed to fight this threat to the welfare of the community.

Here was a new challenge.

Your leaders accepted that challenge.

The fight is still on. The transition period (as you well know) is difficult, the obstacles many, but progress has been and is being made towards a broad-base economy, as evidenced by the following:

In 1940, there were 413 manufacturing plants in Luzerne County, employing 25,221 persons. In 1955, there were 617 plants employing 42,733 persons.

In the mines of Luzerne County, on the other hand, and during this same period, employment dropped from 39,774 men to 16,800.

For fifteen years every gain in industry was more than counterbalanced by a loss of employment in the mines, and it was not until this year (1956) that the gains of any single year promise to exceed the losses.

Needless to say, such prolonged losses made tough going for those who bore the brunt of this effort for community rehabilitation, but fortunately

they had faith that the job could be done, and they stuck to it.

So it is that in 1955 there were 204 more industrial plants employing 17,500 more men and women than in 1940.

These figures show that our community leaders are succeeding in their attempt to create a new economic base upon which to build for the future.

Quietly and without fanfare, this community is being changed from a mining to an industrial center, even though mining still remains the greatest single source of income.

This experience plainly shows what the men and women of this area can do if everybody puts his shoulder to the wheel: as has been done so well by the Chamber of Commerce and the Industrial Fund.

Like a ship - we all go up or down together.

It's what in the Navy we call an "all hands" job.

The job requires that we should: -

a. Encourage research that will develop new uses for our greatest natural resource - - coal.

b. Develop a plan of cooperation for existing industries to assure their continued success and growth.

c. Create conditions that will attract new industries.

d. Cultivate a high morale and community spirit through the support of our schools and colleges, our churches and social agencies, and our cultural groups.

It requires vision, courage, faith, intelligent planning, leadership, and community determination to get on with the job and see it through. These qualities stem from trained and disciplined minds - - and that is where education comes in.

Doctor Marts, who means so much to Wilkes College, recently stated before the Georgia Education Association in Atlanta: - and I quote

"We, in our generation in America, are living on brains, educated brains. The next and the following generations will enjoy even greater prosperity and

abundance because of the education our colleges and universities are giving.

"Last year over $5,000,000,000 was spent in the U. S. on research: 2/3 by industry and the balance by colleges and universities, governmental agencies and non-profit institutions.

"This is the seed-corn of America's future economy. Out of this research will come most of the products which will be manufactured by industry and used by the public within the next twenty years.

"One great corporation, for example, has stated that 40% of its present business is in producing things that did not exist 15 years ago. They were dreamed up by trained minds and imaginations.

"Who is doing all this research? Who are these men and women whose brains are creating tomorrow's industry? They are the college boys and girls of yesterday.

"Yet, in spite of all our strides, we are still like children paddling along the shore of a great ocean of knowledge. More and more must be trained by our colleges, and some day we will inherit the well-being which God intended for his children on this earth." Unquote.

Your college was established to serve you at a time when the future seemed most black. In 1933 the country was at the bottom of the world-wide depression, and the people of Wyoming Valley despaired that their economy, so long based on coal, could be revived.

It was in that year of 1933 that a small group of people decided that the young people of this Valley should have new opportunities for education and self-development.

They made only a small and inauspicious beginning, but then these beginnings increased their conviction that a trained and self-reliant people could create their own future. And as this conviction grew, more students accepted the opportunities that were offered, and more and more support was given to the College.

The realization that the nurture and development of human capabilities was the only sure path to community and national well-being prompted generous giving and inspired a growing confidence.

Your College has been created by the gifts and hopes of the generation that precedes you, and your own education at Wilkes has been made possible by their faith that the future is secure if the intelligence and character of oncoming generations are fully developed.

At this moment, you are the latest Wilkes class to accept the responsibilities and challenges that must be met if our civilization is to survive.

Tomorrow, you will replace those who have created your College and, in your turn, you will sustain and pass on a richer heritage to future students.

Wilkes is better for your having become a part of it, and I am sure that you are better for having given to and received from your College.

I was delighted to learn just this morning, that you have already established a Class Memorial Fund, that will be used throughout the years to help your College, and to enrich the education of those who follow you. - - - - - I congratulate you all on this splendid action.

The story of our College and our Valley is also the story of civilizations. History shows that civilizations have lost their vitality and have withered away when men lost their faith and their sense of purpose. And studies of New England communities, made during the past decade, show that it is men and ideas that determine the vitality of a community.

In studying New England communities that had lost their basic industries a member of the staff of the Harvard School of Business Administration found that some of these towns were recovering from their losses whereas others were withering away.

Wondering why some should recover, and others fail, he began to search for causes.

He soon found that the towns that were recovering had no economic advantages over those that were declining, and further inquiry revealed that the difference lay in the quality of community leadership.

Where the community possessed leaders of courage and conviction, plans for economic recovery and united action were formulated.

Where this leadership was lacking, action and planning were also lacking, and the economic dissolution of the community continued without check.

Though you may not know it, you have seen men undertake that which seemed impossible, because they believed in the worth of their efforts and had faith that the right acts would gain the right results.

It should be significant to each of you as you graduate from Wilkes that you have participated in the making of a College that has grown,---in the face of adversity,---because men and women believed in the worth of the individual and have been sustained, during moments of doubt, by faith in the ideals that have motivated them.

These are American principles.

If you can carry with you a full measure of this same conviction, and this same faith, you will find yourselves capable of sustaining and expanding the ideals and institutions of a free people, and ultimately, we hope of a free world, and a peaceful one.

We have learned by bitter experience that the strength of our voice in inter-national affairs is largely in proportion to our armed might---yet, it is also a struggle for men's hearts and minds.

No methods for peace will ever succeed permanently unless they deal with the inner man -- and for this we must never cease trying.

At this point it might be a good place for me to stop. I recall when I was naval aide to the Secretary of the Navy, the Honorable Claude Swanson, he asked me one day what I thought of a talk he had made.

I replied: "It was good, but altogether too long."

He made no comment, but when he got on his feet next day after a luncheon in his honor in San Diego, he made one of the shortest and wittiest talks I ever heard him make.

He started off by mentioning his question to his naval aide and the reply he received, and then, among other amusing remarks, about the long windedness of an ex-senator; he told the story of his inaugural address when elected to his first term as Governor of Virginia.

He said he was going to try to outdo all the famous orators of Virginia from Patrick Henry on down -- and after finishing and feeling rather proud of his efforts, and like every good husband, he went over to his wife and said:

"My dear, what did you think of my speech?" and her reply was:

"I thought you missed several very good opportunities."

Rather surprised, he asked:

"Opportunities for what?"

She answered: "Opportunities to stop."

But at the risk of talking a little too long, there are a few things I'd like to mention to you young men and women.

I want to read to you an extract from an article by Ralph Bunche, United Nations Undersecretary and a Nobel Peace Prize winner. The article is entitled "The Best Advice I Ever Had." Here it is, and I quote:

My invalid mother and I were sitting in front of our little adobe house in Albuquerque, watching a glorious New Mexico sunset one spring evening in 1916. She knew, I think, that she had not long to live. I was a boy of 12. She searched for words to help me in the difficult times ahead.

"Ralph, she said taking my hand in hers, "God sends trials and tribulations to test us. But he arms us against them with hope and faith and dreams. Nothing is ever lost until they are abandoned, and then everything is lost. My boy, don't ever let anything take away your hope and faith and

dreams." Unquote.

The founders of Wilkes, and your fine Board of Trustees, headed by Gilbert McClintock who is devoted to your interests, had his hope and faith and dreams. And I shall not forget the joy of your splendid President, Doctor Farley, and the warmth with which he sopke to me when he learned of some of the wonderful gifts recently made to your College.

He said - quote

"It's like seeing some of the things I have dreamed, coming true." Unquote.

His thoughts were of the faculty, of greater opportunities for you young men and women, and of greater service to this community.

Henry Ward Beecher wrote: Quote

"No man can tell whether he is rich or poor by turning to his ledger. It is the heart that makes a man rich. He is rich according to what he is, not according to what he has." Unquote.

The greatest of all treasures is that inner reward that comes only from difficult tasks well done; and

The greatest monument any of you can ever have - is the good will you leave in men's hearts and minds.

Don't be misled or overswayed by the sensational, and the slander, which so often get the big headlines in the press.

Mostly unsung are the deeds of the vast majority of our people who perform their daily tasks honestly, effeciently, and cheerfully. It is they who keep the wheels going round.

I have never forgotten the words uttered from the pulpit over half a century ago by our beloved rector of St. Stephens Church, Doctor Henry L. Jones, when he said: Quote

"There's many a hero who never left a work bench, and many a heroine

who never left a kitchen." Unquote

Give a helping hand when you can, join your civic activities, and take your part in running your government - local - state - and national, from the precinct level up.

Lend yourselves to: -

"The assertion of truth -

The unveiling of illusion -

The dissipation of hate - and

The enlargement and instruction of men's hearts and minds." (The late Lord Keynes)

Life's cruise is a grand challenge -

Opportunities and need were never greater than today for men and women of character and with feet planted firmly on the ground.

We live in a machine age, but if all the power plants go out, and all the gadgets cease to function, we will still be men and women, and it is character upon which we stand or fall.

"Build castles in the air if you will, but put solid foundations under them."

Carry on with a smile. 'Twill pay big dividends: as will also hard work and common sense and for which there are no substitutes.

A few years ago the Kentucky Derby was won by a horse who was a very long shot. He had not even been mentioned as a possible winner. After the race when the crowd gathered around, the jockey was asked, if he were not greatly surprised, and how it happened.

His reply was: No, he wasn't too much surprised, his horse wasn't flashy or a sprinter, but he was a good horse, and he just kept on running when the others got tired - There's a lesson in that for all of us.

I thank you for letting me share this happy occasion with you.

Good Sailing! Good Luck! and God Bless You, and ever keep in mind that: Life begins each morning and -

"Today well lived makes every yesterday a dream of happiness, and every tomorrow a vision of hope."