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President
David D. Henry
New Year Convocation, September 19, 1965

President Henry:
As you have inferred . . . this convocation has a unique place in the University Calendar. It is a time when we welcome students, old and new to a new year, by which we mean to a new opportunity, experience, new insight through new learning. Then it is a time when we identify the central and high purpose of the world of learning, intellectual inquiry - and identify the academic tradition in that process. And, third, it is the time when we associate ourselves individually with the achievements of the U of I, its people, their work and distinction.

The convocation speaker today reflects and represents these three program purposes. Known for his insight into national and world affairs, admired for his ability to analyze and clarify complex issues and problems, he speaks not only to officials in government and by his discussion influences policy and decision in high place. He speaks to people, in human terms and always with a forward look and a spirit of optimism. Hence, he commands the attention of young people everywhere. Concerned with social criticism, as well as reporting, he is at home in the academic community. A foe of stereotyped thinking or of the emotional response which sometimes, in public debate, is substituted for rationalization, his identity with the U of I as an honored alumnus, gives us pride in our own association with the University.

In 1961, he was presented with the Alumni Achievement Award and in 1962, the honorary degree, Dr. of Laws. And, at the time of the Alumni Award, the citation cited was "notable contributions to the nation's daily understanding of its government and the men who make up the nations government," and further said, "Mr. Reston is a perceptive and thoughtful interpreter of the national scene."

Sometime later, Life Magazine presented our guest speaker as one of the most important political writers in the world and Time referred to him as a crack reporter, a thoughtful columnist and an able administrative chief of the biggest newspaper bureau in Washington.

James B. Reston was born in Scotland. As a boy, he came with his family to Ohio. After graduation from the U of I in 1932, he worked in London, first for the AP then for the New York Times, in 1939. He came to Washington, D. C. in 1941, for the Times and became its chief correspondent in 1953. Recently, he was appointed associate editor for the Times. The Reston column reaches an estimated 15 million readers. This overwhelming fact might justify our classifying him as an educational institution, if we did not know him as a person. Our awe at this reach, of one man's mind, and talent, is increased by the prizes and awards which have marked the quality of what he has had to say. Twice, the Pulitzer Prize for reporting, 3 times the Overseas Press Club Award for interpretation of international news. He has been honored by France, with its Legion of Honor, by Chili with the Order of Merit, by Norway with the Order of St. Olaf, by Belgium with its Order of Leopold. To many, however, including friends and former teachers on this campus, the renowned James B. Reston, is Scotty, remembered as a delightful companion, and a loyal and interested alumnus of this institution. As we followed his recent visit to Vietnam and worried for his personal

safety, and had some cause for worry, we now rejoice that he is among us today. Let me now present to you Mr. James B. Reston.

X - President Henry referred to the column I prepare, and when I got out here this weekend, I wrote a column about the two privileged classes that avoid the draft. The first, I said was the people who were particularly intelligent and perhaps a little better off than the rest of their contemporaries. This was the privileged sanctuary of the wealthy and of the intelligent. And Second was the privileged class of the Stupid, who could not pass the Army's test. When I got up this morning, I picked up the local paper, and I will read you something which will prove to you that journalism is not an exact science.
It came out in the paper as followed, "Some groups obviously have it easier than others. The colleges and universities are a privileged sanctuary of the stupid or illiterate." Now, Mr. chairman, when I got up here I expected to be booed, and I'm a little puzzled, but I can only assume 1) either you are exceedingly courteous, you don't read the papers and you don't differ with that statement.

Y - I should say to you, giving you this ancient history,

NEW YEAR CONVOCATION
University of Illinois
Sept. 19, 1965

"THE REST OF THE SIXTIES"
James B. Reston
Associate Editor
New York Times

Dr. Lanier, President Henry, Members of the Class of 1969, Ladies and Gentlemen:

This is quite a place for a quiet heart-to-heart talk. As Bob Hope said when he saw it: Some Barn! However, part of the discipline in university life is to listen patiently to middle-aged bores, and you might as well start right now.

I was here as a Freshman in the latter part of the Middle Ages. This was away back in the days when women wore skirts. The President of the University then was a Mr. David Kinley. He was a Scot with a strong conviction that all men and some women shared the burden of original sin---especially college undergraduate. He assumed that the students of that day were willful, and potentially wicked children---particularly when gathered together as males and females---so he believed we had to be policed like prospective criminals. This task he assigned to the Dean of Men, Mr. Thomas Arkle Clark, who looked like Mr. Chips and acted like J. Edger Hoover. Dean Clark was assisted by the Dean of Women, Miss Leonard, who warned the girls that wearing red might arouse the passions of the men.

I should say in passing that I myself married a recklessly beautiful Illinois girl whom I first saw on Wright Street wearing a scarlet coat. I will spare you the happy story of my life, but in any event, we got a new President at the end of my sophomore year, who ran the place on the totally different presumption, which was that all undergraduates were mature ladies and gentlemen, who needed very little supervision or discipline. I have often wondered since then who was right, but the contrast between Presidents Kinley and Chase was so striking that it illustrates really the only point I want to make to you about University life.

This is that the approach to a new experience or problem is fundamental. What assumptions you bring here with you at the beginning may be more important than what you take away at the end, for your approach to the beginning often determines the end. What I want to talk about, therefore, as frankly as I can, is how to approach university life at a time of great upheaval and convulsion in the world.

When Gilbert Keith Chesterton, one of the great Victorians, wrote his autobiography at the end of a long and useful life, he set himself the task of defining in a single sentence the most important lesson he had learned. And he concluded that the critical thing was whether one took things for granted in life or took them with gratitude. This, I think, is a good place to begin, and it has a special reference to the Class of 1969.

This country is at war. My generation may have staggered into it, but yours is fighting it. I have just come from the battle of Chu Lai up near the 17th parallel in South Vietnam. Americans who by the accident of birth, happen to be a little older than you are, fought and won that critical opening test of strength with the Vietcong. Other Americans of your own age, most of them probably a little poorer than your parents, are now registering not for classes but for uniforms. I don't want to make too mush of the point, for all wars are unequal, but the fact that you are here and they are there is not the sort of thing that should be taken for granted, but should be regarded, perhaps, with a little gratitude.

I leave aside the people of Vietnam, who have a life expectancy of 38 years, and have been at war for over 20 years. The theory of our public policy on the draft is that you will do more for the development and security of your country by studying here than fighting there. I think it is a good, if often an unfair policy, but it does place upon you an obligation to do your best and at some time to repay the nation for the opportunities provided for you here.

A respect for fact is another useful companion at the beginning of you journey. You are not obliged to be grateful for the present tumult of the world, but you have to live in it. You may have any opinion you like about Lyndon Johnson, but he's the only President we have. He is a fact---and some fact (Let me tell you.). You may not like the war in Vietnam, but it is also a fact. You may not like the size of this University---it is certainly not a small monastery---but you have to deal with the world as it is and not with the world of your desires and dreams.

It may be a significant fact that you entered this university in the week when one-fifth of the human race on the sub-Indian continent started bombing one another and China which contains one fourth of the human family, gave India a 72 hour ultimatum to abandon her military bases in the disputed areas of the Himalayas. We all have our thoughts about this madness. China is undoubtedly a nuisance, but even though we do not recognize China, it will not accommodate us by going away.

I have to tell you bluntly that the outlook for the rest of the Sixties in not entirely gay. My generation has had to deal with its share of moral monsters and staggering and blundering governments, but there is an important difference. Our problems were primarily in Europe and in Russia, which to some extent has come under the influence of a civilization we know something about. But your generation will be dealing with Asia, which comes from a much different culture and has a majestic disregard and even contempt for many of the fundamental things we proclaim in our Declaration of Independence to be "self-evident."

Our assumptions are not self-evident to the turbulent peoples who live between the Yellow Sea off the Coast of Korea and the Black Sea close to Russia. In fact, our assumptions are being challenged even by many of our allies, let alone our enemies.

General Ky, who is Prime Minister of South Vietnam---or anyway he was when this meeting started---said to me the other day in Saigon: "Don't talk to us about individual responsibility. Talk to us about rice and schools. We don't believe in individual responsibility the way you do. We believe the individual is precious only when he is part of the family, only when he sublimates himself to his parents and grandparents, and loses himself in the larger concerns of the people of his own blood." I'd hate to put that one to a vote of the Freshman class.

It is, then, going to be difficult to deal with this kind of world. I do not think the big war is going to start or that the little wars are going to end in this decade or maybe even in this century. But different habits of thought are facts too, and we are going to have to learn to think as steadfastly about them as those boys I saw in Vietnam think when they bring down a jet at 135 miles an hour on to 200 feet of the deck of an aircraft carrier in the South China Sea. In short, we are going to have to learn to live with disagreeable facts. After all, we couldn't even beat Oregon State.

You may ask what all this has to do with you. What can you do about the distracting tumult of the world when you haven't yet adjusted to the distracting tumult of the campus? There are, I believe, a great many simple things you can do. You can park your prejudices at the door, or maybe even better, examine them and see where they came from, and whether they make any sense in the face of the kind of world we have in front of us today.

You can put aside fifteen minutes a day to read a newspaper and get some idea of what's going on. I will not presume to tell you what newspaper to read. You can listen: that would be a remarkable innovation, and ask questions. I have learned in over 30 years of reporting that by far the most effective device for gathering information is what I call the "dumb-boy technique," which is nothing more than refusing to pretend you know what you obviously don't know and saying honestly: "Sorry I don't get it. I want to understand but I don't." You will, I think, be amazed at the possibilities of candid stupidity.

It is easy, of course, not to think consciously at all about these things, but simply relax and be carried along the broadwalk by the stream of others who seem to know where they are going but may not. This is natural ar first, but it would be a pity to let it go on for too long. A University is not few classes and teachers and a place to eat and sleep, with some pretty trees and pleasant walks in between. All the wisdom of the past has been gathered here on this fertile prairie. It can supply all the answers to all your questions except why a football bounces into the arms of the wrong man. But you have to know what is going on. A University is a vast catalogue of interesting events on the side: lectures, concerts, political, religious and dramatic societies to suit every interest and taste.

You cannot digest this whole smorgasbord. You will find that every teacher thinks you have nothing else to do except produce for him. But even so, you can look at the intellectual menu every morning in the Calendar of Events in the Daily Illini, and taste the fare from time to time.

Also, you can take a walk. This is a big place, but you can beat the bounds in an afternoon, and there's no telling what or who you may run into by suppertime. You may see somebody with a certain expression or a certain wistful smile that takes your fancy, and you may be pleasantly surprised to find out how easy it is to discover who she is and where she lives. I did, and it was the most important discovery of my life.

It is in these simple ways, by these practical small initiatives that you come upon windows and doors in to the wider world of the mind. Much more than my generation, most of you are going to live in the great clattering world of cities, where the enduring things of the human spirit---love and friendship and the association of lively minds---are not going to be so easy to come by without an effort.

For a time here in this place, a comparatively brief intermission between leaving your fathers home and starting you own, you will be free to discover who you are, and where you are, and what way you are going and who's going with you. But it is a much more ambiguous world than the one we had when we were here, much more complicated than following or defying the old man's orders at home. And it is, I think, better to paddle around and explore than just to drift.

The United States is now the most powerful nation-state, the latest, and if we falter, perhaps the last inheritor of Western civilization. We have avoided a big war for over 20 years, but we are still very new at the business, and we have to look to the men and women trained in these university repositories of our civilization, to understand what is at stake and how we can approach our problems. For a long time, we denied that the disorder of the world was any of our business; for another period we thought that maybe it was our business but that we couldn't do anything about it; then in a spasm of presumption, we seemed to think that nobody else could do anything and that we could do everything. But now, I think, we are passing through a phase of intellectual revision, in which we see more clearly that we are neither helpless nor omnipotent, but that we need friends and allies, and above all clarity in ourselves about what we can do and what we cannot do.

In this situation, a bawling patriotism, relieved only by a whining moralistic criticism of other nations, is really not very helpful. We need watchful minds and steady nerves to get through this period, and nothing, we may be sure, will come out as we would like or even fit into those tidy intellectual patterns we adore. Nationalism is wrecking our policy of inter-dependence in Europe, but Nationalism is the strongest force against Communism in Asia, and also in Africa and in both places may very well by our greatest hope on these two continents.

Above all, we must not be afraid of our enemies or make them so afraid of us that they will pull down the world. We thought there could never be an aggressor so wicked as Germany under the Kaiser, so we fought the first world war to the point of total surrender and in the process helped build up those two other more formidable enemies: Fascism and Communism. Fear and presumption are the great dangers to a steady course. The fear that Hobbs had in mind concerned men who were not absolutely brutish, and did not even want to be brutish, but were made brutish by fear and suspicion of one another and thus lurched into war.

Your generation did not invent anxiety. The world has always been unsafe and undoubtedly

will be when your children are sitting where you now are. As Herbert Butterfield has pointed out, no nation can ever achieve the perfect security it desires without so tipping the power balance that it becomes or at least seems to become a menace to other nations.

The problem of this age is not so much insecurity as it is ambiguity. We are living in a time when change is the order of the day, when nobody but a fraud or a fool would pretend he had any perfect solutions, and when, above all we need great integrity and flexibility of mind, not only to understand but to endure all this complexity.

This, at least, is my approach, my way of looking at this great university and the world. We shall have to develop a League of Minds, free and enquiring and respectful of fact, before we shall ever develop an effective League of Nations. And if we cannot look to the universities for this quality of mind, I don't know where we can turn.