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Transcript to President McCluer Inauguration Speech

Franc McCluer

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Mr. President, Members of the Board of Directors and the Faculty of Lindenwood College, Distinguished Guests, Alumnae and Students of the College, Ladies and Gentlemen:

I accept the honor of the presidency of Lindenwood College with a pride which I am sure you will pardon and a joy which I am equally sure will abide. Acquaintance with the great resources of this institution, its history of a hundred and twenty-one years, its splendid equipment, its staff of administrative officers and teachers, and its student body, cannot but bring pride to an administrative officer. The warmth of the welcome Mrs. McCluer and I have received from the faculty and those with whom I shall be associated in this work, from the community which is host to this institution, from alumnae throughout the nation, and from these students, cannot fail to give us much happiness, and I accept this office with a lively sense of responsibility and pledge you a devoted effort so to discharge that responsibility that we may, working together, realize the splendid opportunity before Lindenwood College.

One hundred and twenty-one years ago today this institution was born in a log cabin. Missouri had been but recently admitted to the Union and much of its land was an unconquered wooded wilderness. When Major and Mrs. George C. Sibley endowed the college with land and modest funds they dared to think of it as an institution of national scope. For the magnitude and courage of this vision friends of this college must ever be grateful. For more than a century there has been emphasized here the value of the liberal education of women. If we shall be true to our history we shall conserve here that liberal education which has been described as an "outstanding home of our cultural and moral values".

Perhaps our thinking about liberal education has been quickened by our experience in the war through which we have just passed. We have made fresh discovery of the indispensable practical value of education devoted to intellectual life for its own sake. We had realized in a vague sort of way that the conveniences of our modern civilization were the outgrowth of theoretical thinking - that Michael Faraday's research in theoretical physics made possible our radio. Then we found that our safety and our freedom required that thousands know something of pure mathematics and theoretical physics. For the practical task of defending civilization we had need of liberal education.

and for a number of years carried on its work

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And we shall look to liberal education for the further task of giving our civilization the strength to endure and the quality worthy of permanence. Here again the training of youth in the mastery of ideas provides the understanding and the appreciation of values vital to our democratic way of life. People, not dictators, must make the decisions of the future. Appreciation of great values and of eternal principles must be developed in some measure in countless minds if our decisions are to be wise and just. The immeasurable influence of women in all areas of human life and the vital importance of the roles which are theirs in the world community challenge us to provide them with a liberal education of the highest order. In this brave new day we dare not be content with the old idea of a finishing school education for women designed to give them sweet manners and good carriage as if they lived outside our world and had come on a visit to decorate it. The curriculum in a college for women will emphasize some studies of peculiar interest to its particular students, but the presence of women in the market place and in the professions, and their responsibilities as citizens, ^{to} of our nation and ^{to} of our world as well as to our homes, lead to the recognition of the fact that ~~the~~ basic liberal arts education is for women, as for men, of incalculable value.

It is with no diminution of regard for technical work that I emphasize the peculiar value of what we have called the liberal arts. Good tires and high speed do not lessen the need for good driving. To overcome the confusion, inhumanity, and destruction of our day we must rely on clear thinking, humane feeling, and exercised good will. Here is the responsibility of a liberal college, a responsibility that must be accepted one might say with "delight of battle", for varied attacks on this liberal tradition persist. For instance, it is said it requires too much time and the four years should be shortened, but it is obvious that in the new day there will be more time for thought and education just as surely as there will be more need for it. And, foolish as it may seem to many of us, there are those who hold that young women who have not settled upon a career other than marriage need make no effort to seek a liberal education, as if a trained mind could be of no help to a woman in making a home, or as if personalities with disciplined minds, able to think logically and courageously and sensitive to the meaning of our culture, will not be better citizens. Surely the task of liberal education described by Ordway Tead as "education in the ways of cooperative living, cultural awareness, scientific grasp, and moral enthusiasm"

will be embraced at this institution with a zeal that shall assure us of an atmosphere teeming with intellectual curiosity, electrified by high purpose, where teacher and taught enjoy glad fellowship and where young women may be come

Lords of an empire wide as Shakespeare's soul,
Sublime as Milton's immemorial theme,
Rich as Chaucer's speech,
Fair as Spencer's dream.

Faith in this kind of education is not an easy exercise of respect for tradition. A vital part of the tradition of liberal education is that it should not be static and unchanging but vital and living and free! Its adherents will not insist that all students of the liberal arts shall take four years of Greek.

Nor is support of this kind of education vague and sentimental talk about a better world. Liberal education requires intelligent effort of a high order. It is designed to develop disciplined minds and generous personalities. It is true, as many have said, that our social tensions and world problems are frequently the result of ungenerous attitudes and parochial emotions. It is also true that they are aggravated by the activities of people who lack knowledge of social need and who have limited understanding of the facts and forces that enter into the marring or making of human life. If genuine good will is to be properly implemented it will be directed by minds that know.¹ Some knowledge of the languages and literatures of the human race, some understanding of psychology and philosophy and religion, of the natural and the social sciences, of mathematics and history, bring an appreciation of the nature and destiny of man not to be acquired in any other way.

Page 3 Liberal education addresses itself to the whole personality. It is mindful of the fact that many of the major functions of life are shared by all. One does not escape the responsibility of being an intelligent voter by becoming a skilled engineer. Helplessness and lack of imagination and insight before a problem of human relations in a local community cannot be excused in the days ahead because one is the trained pilot of an airplane.

In this adventure in liberal education in Lindenwood College we shall draw strength from a sense of participation with many other institutions devoted to these ideals. We share with them responsibility for making the contribution of liberal education vital throughout the entire nation; but we had best be on guard against an over-specialization

that will not allow us as well a partnership with vocational education and an emphasis on those disciplines which will prepare women for their special obligations in the community. I am not thinking alone of the well-recognized value of liberal education as preparation for vocational training, such as preparation for a medical school, nor of the necessity for greater effort to motivate students by leading them to understand more clearly the relationship of the liberal arts to effective living. I am thinking of doing in several areas what we now do in the field of professional education. As we have prepared women to receive certificates from the State Department of Education qualifying them to teach in the State of Missouri, so we may prepare them for social service work or for work as directors of religious education in our churches, or for careers in the field of fine arts. All the students of a liberal arts college should take certain courses as the core of the liberal curriculum during the four years of study; within certain limits, attention to individual aptitudes, to the peculiar responsibilities of women, and to community needs, should lead us to prepare some for definite vocations, thus extending rather than impairing the influence of the liberal tradition.

The second great force in the tradition of Lindenwood College is in its purpose to provide an education that is Christian. It is the child of the Presbyterian Church and as a church college it seeks, with hundreds of other institutions, to prevent the secularization of knowledge. It was a wise editorial writer who declared, "If the secularization of knowledge continues it will ultimately wreck civilization." ~~The widely read Harvard Report on General Education in a Free Society points out that Roman Catholic and some Protestant colleges hold to the conviction that Christianity gives meaning and ultimate unity to all parts of the curriculum, but concludes that "religion is not now for most colleges a practicable source of intellectual unity." The answer to this pessimism is found in the forward march of those institutions which are free to declare, "the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom."~~

It is not argued that all education should be in the hands of the church, but it is clear that the church related institutions may have a leavening influence on all higher education. The administrative officers and teachers in our church colleges heartily join in the church's confession of faith in Christ as the ^{hope} ~~light~~ of the world. This type of institution is in a peculiar sense a safeguard of democracy. A free state and a free church are alike dependent on a conception of God and of man found explicit in the

Christian religion. The Christian college presents to the nation and to the youth within its walls a proper faith in the dignity of the individual man and in his right to freedom. The individual's right to be free may be asserted in constitutions, but the secular mind that finds these constitutions the final authority for this right is in gross error. One's right to freedom is not established by his ability to win it by violence. This is the authority on which tyranny relies. A man's right to freedom is inalienable from the person, a right given him by his Creator. It derives not from the strength of his race or his nation but from his nature as a creature of God. Our day calls for a fresh understanding of the fact that political freedom is the fruit of Christianity and that the authority for it is not in the might of man but in the mind of God.

Page 4 . In this connection, too, it will be well to state that the church college helps to maintain freedom in all of higher education in America. Our dual system of education is strengthened by the fact that publicly supported institutions may tend to prevent church colleges from becoming sectarian, doctrinal schools. On the other hand, the very existence of the church related college, free to stand for Christian faith as the basis for the cultivation of the human conscience and free from any considerations of political expediency, helps to keep the state supported institutions free from political interference.

I should add, however, that church relationship, required Bible study and chapel services, while of vital help in making an education Christian, do not of themselves guarantee an education of Christian character. A college is Christian as it seeks to build a Christian community. In its search for truth it must be free and unhampered by doctrinal restraints or social groups representing any particular economic or political viewpoint. A Christian community should be characterized by respect for the integrity of the human mind, for the dignity of the individual human being, by faith in the trustworthiness of Christian character, and by abiding faith in the future and in the destiny of the human race. The community will be pervaded by a spirit of friendliness and kindness in all human relationships. Its staff members will have confidence in persons and ability to recognize the potential possibilities of students. No teacher will regard any student as just another listener but will think of her as the bearer of an immortal soul, a child of God whose growth and development are entrusted for a little while to this community. It is not surprising that in institutions that seek to be Christian

The paramount factor in Christian education

large responsibilities are given to students.

But the college is not to be a cloistered community unaware of the world about it. Indeed, both students and faculty have a large participation in the life of that world. It seeks, however, in humility and sincerity, to develop in its community what may be inadequately described as a Christian atmosphere.

The second characteristic of a Christian education is found in the recognition of ^{The} oneness of truth. It is a knowledge of truth, not acquaintance with various truths, that brings freedom. The Scriptural statement concerning the freeing power of truth should be quoted in its entirety: "Abide in My Word and ye shall know the truth and the truth shall make you free". Segments of truth do not always free but may even enslave. Any search for truth that neglects God is likely to lead to error. Christian education seeks to bring students to the freedom that comes from knowledge of the whole truth. If it is true that God is the Creator and Ruler of the universe no study of the universe is complete without acknowledgment of His sovereignty. If it is true that Christ frees man and leads him to an abundant life no effort to develop character without awareness of His friendship may be fully successful. If it is true that the Sermon on the Mount gives man the eternal principles through which social tensions may be resolved, no effort to resolve them apart from these principles will bring peace.

I pledge you my loyalty, Mr. President, to these two great traditions of Lindenwood College. This is one of the few four-year colleges for women in this part of the country. It has an unique opportunity. Surely its future will be worthy of its history! The personal resourcefulness of the cultured woman, the vocational competence that is the product of a broad basic training, the keen conscience of a good citizen and the faith that "the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom" are the goals of ~~this~~ ^{its} educational program.

The spirit and tradition of this old and stately college shall be maintained and enlivened and intensified. With deep gratitude to all who have served the institution through the years, and with high hope and great joy I dedicate myself to this task and to Lindenwood ^{College.}