

001960

Mrs. Women
May 21, 1970

There is a man, this man is a wonderful friend of ours, Wayne Boysen, who doesn't let troops stand in the way of a good introduction. Once again I am grateful and I am very pleased to have the opportunity of meeting his wife Signe and I can say, and I hope you won't tell Mrs. Humphrey this, after having talked to Signe tonight and having conversed about how much Wayne travels and how much I travel, it's good that Mrs. Humphrey didn't come here tonight because she would only have her present frame of mind thoroughly fortified as to the fact that I am away from home far too much; but, she did send along tonight, to guard over me, a Federal District Judge, my good friend, United States District Court Judge Miles Lord is joining us tonight. Miles, stand up. I don't suppose that I dare get out of line too much or I'll be held in contempt. I've been held that way before by some people but not by a judge.

I want to express my congratulations and thanks to the Insurance Women of Greater Minneapolis for this invitation and I am going to be very candid with you. When it came in, we do get a number of invitations, but I thought that this would just be a really enjoyable occasion and it turned out to be just that. Plus the fact, I think it's a time in our national life when we're beginning to recognize that our women are not only fine women as mothers and sweethearts and as friends but they also can have excellent and outstanding careers in public life, public service, and business life. This is something that this nation needs to recognize more than it does. Fortunately tonight some recognition is being made by the bosses that are here, the husbands that are here, and all of us that are here. It's been said that behind every successful man stands a surprised mother-in-law. I believe that there's a slight amount of truth in that but I said to Miss Stibal and Mrs. Boysen, I said to both of them, that I think that a man in public life, more than anyone else, needs a good wife. They disagreed, they said that any man needs a good wife. I'm very fortunate in having a very lovely wife and a good partner for me in whatever work that I do and I think that many of you know her and I know that she would want me to bring you her greetings tonight. Now she'd be here except we're going to have a big party at our home on Sunday from Macalester College. We have graduation on Saturday and we're out there at Lake Waverly and some young lady came up there and said look, I'm from Dassel, that's a cultural center of the universe and it's near, it's about 15 or 13 miles or so and we're getting things sort of ready out there for this Sunday afternoon, a reception. I went out there last evening and when I said that to Signe she said, "Oh my goodness, how lucky Mrs. Humphrey is." You know that one night out that I got out home and that I got out there this morning and started cleaning up things around the yard. I want to say to any of you fellows if you have extra time on your hands, the lake shore needs a little trimming and I'd be glad to welcome you and a work crew whenever you feel you'd like to come out.

I want to visit with you just very briefly and seriously about your work, the work that I am in as a teacher, and the work that you're in in the field of providing security and protection for thousands and thousands of people. One of the young ladies came up here tonight and said, "I'm very glad to see you tonight and I want to shake your hand, after all we carry your insurance." I'm always glad to see somebody that represents the company at which I have

001961

my insurance. I have two or three companies at which I carry insurance. I want you to know that. I'm all for it. I'm not one of those that says you don't need it because we need it, not only need it but need much more of it. I am in the insurance business too. I'm in the business of education and I don't know any greater insurance for people throughout their lives than a good education. A good education is not just formal education that comes out of our elementary and even pre-school elementary, secondary and higher education, but it is the education of life's experience. In talking to my young friends who are students at the University of Macalester where I am privileged to teach these past few months, I remind them that we're living in a period of not only population explosion but of information explosion. In fact, I am sure that one of the reasons for some of the restlessness amongst all of us, which by the way is worldwide and not in just the United States, is this instantaneous flow of information -- the television, the radio, the press, the capacity and the ability that we have today to communicate, so that whatever happens anyplace becomes our news and our business. Whatever happens with us becomes somebody else's news and business. As a matter of fact, I doubt that the human psychic makeup is conditioned to this hog tied, this hog wash information that pours in on us like a tidal wave and a flood. I suppose some years from now, because mankind has a way of making these psychological and physical adjustments, we will be able to filter out a good deal of that which is really unimportant; be able to, in a sense, separate the wheat from the chaff. In the meantime, here we are and it is the duty of all of us, it seems to me, to try to do our level best; first, not to panic over the information that may seem terrifying each day; secondly, not to be too quick to respond lest we respond in an emotional, uncautionate manner that overcomes the rules of reason and then to remember that information does not necessarily make you wise. I happen to believe that a wise man, or those of you that are privileged to be gifted by wisdom, that that wisdom is the distillation of information of experience, of tradition, of understanding and knowledge which may come to some of us in the form of that greatest gift that man can have of being wise and having what we call wisdom. At least most of us can come to a point where we have some insurance against the emotions and passions of the day where we can have understanding. Since I'm talking to insurance people, let me assure you that your judgement is no better than your information and your understanding is no better than the combination of your information and your experience. So as we see turbulence and violence on the part of a few, none of which we should enjoy, like, or condone, let us not accuse the many. Now I say that in light of my experience as a teacher. I have been heckled, I have been harassed, I have gone through the pains of embarrassment as a public speaker in public light as a public official. I have 25 to 50 in an auditorium of 10,000 and yet I shall not condemn the 9,950 because 50 people were willing to be anarchists or revolutionaries or religious radicals, or people who like to create chaos. What I am saying to you is don't brand the whole generation by the antics of a few. What I am saying to you is that this generation has different experiences in mind. This generation will have to make new decisions that our generation did not, or at least my generation didn't. My plea to them is, and if they were here they would hear me say it as I've said it in the classroom, that it is always good to know of your heritage and your past. Not necessarily to relive it but to learn from it. My only criticism of the contemporary is that sometimes there is a lack of regard and a lack of appreciation for the experiences of those

001962

who have gone before. I have to, as a teacher, remind my students and remind myself as well that what has happened before, while not necessarily telling us it will happen again, gives us at least some guidelines, some way to pass judgement. We are all children, so to speak, of the space age. Actually no matter what our age is we're children of the space age because it's only 10 or 12 years of age. For four years, ladies and gentlemen, I was Chairman of the Space Council of your government. I had something to do with the decisions that related to the flights of Gemini and Apollo. I know the astronauts better than I know almost anyone in this audience, save maybe one or two. I don't think I know them better than I know my friend, Judge Lord, over there. But at least I -- for example Jim Lovell, or Frank Borman or Aldrin or well take my friend Pete Conrad -- these are personal friends of mine and out of their life and out of their experiences I have learned a great deal. I have learned, for example, that out of that program that whatever this country wills to do it can do. I was in the Soviet Union this last summer when Neil Armstrong put his foot on the moon and I want to remind this audience that we were fully 5 to 7 years behind the space program of the Soviet Union. Sputnik was 1957. We didn't even put anything in sub-orbital flight, and it was then for less than 15 minutes, until 1960. Yet, we caught up and we passed them. We did it because we made a commitment. We did it because we marshaled resources. We did it because we had a plan of action. We did it because we said we were going to do it. We did it not only on schedule but we did it ahead of schedule. Now many people have said, "Well you know I wonder about that space program, it's a waste of money at the time particularly when there is so many needs, when there are so many people that need help, so many things that need to be done." I would like to submit to you that maybe it's the best investment, in a sense, that we've ever made. I know how hard it is for us to gain or get the resources that we need to do public things as well as private things. I've had to face those responsibilities of trimming a federal budget, of asking members of Congress for money, of having to face the wrath of the taxpayer and sometimes just a mere misunderstanding of the taxpayer but let me tell you what that one thing meant. I sat with the Chairman of the Council of Ministers of the Soviet Union on Monday after the Sunday night that Neil Armstrong put his foot on the moon. The Soviet Union thought they could beat us to it. They even tried during that time, if you will recall, to orbit around the moon an unmanned space satellite which they had hoped would land on the moon, pick up some of the moon rock and dust, make its kind of calculations out of a mechanization and the automation of that space capsule and return. It failed. An American went there with an American flag with American made equipment, set his foot on the moon, not for the United States of America but he said for all of mankind and returned to earth, safe. This meant something not just as a scientific experiment but I am convinced that it told the Soviet Union in unmistakable words that whatever the United States of America really is to do, whatever we wish to do and will to do and work to do, we can do and they respect that kind of performance. This is just another way of saying this is a great step for peace because ultimately the peace of this world depends upon how the Soviet Union and the United States get along because we are the only two countries, at this particular moment of history, others are yet to come I'm sure, such as China, but we're the only

two countries as of 1970 and in the next two to five years, that have the capacity of total annihilation of mankind and I know of what I speak. Therefore, when that happened, when Neil Armstrong put his foot down on the moon, it said to the Soviet Union, "Be careful, watch your step, remember that these Americans were behind and they made up their mind, they went ahead, they achieved it, they were able to do it without regimentation. They were able to do it in freedom." A wonderful thing as so many other things which time doesn't permit tonight but I just wanted to give you this one indication. That too, by the way, is insurance. It's an expensive policy but is worth every bit of it. I want to remind you that everything that we do for this country in terms of health and education of our people, in terms of the development of our physical and human resources, in terms of the protection of our security, in terms of the advancement of science and technology -- everything that we do, no matter how much it costs, no matter what the premium payment -- it's worth it. Because, what are you protecting. You're protecting everything. You're protecting the greatest country on the face of the earth and you're protecting what Woodrow Wilson said was the hope of mankind and I think it is. I am an unabashed, old fashioned, flag waving patriot and I'm not a bit ashamed to say it even as a college professor. I think this is what this country needs.

I'll sum it up and say this. I read somewhere, I don't know where it was, I just keep reading a lot of things and some things stick in my mind. Somewhere I read that a success is a person who wished to succeed and worked and I'm sure that that's what the insurance woman of the year represents here as well as others. A failure is somebody who wished to succeed and wished, just wished. Now that narrows it down pretty much. There is no substitute for justifying one's self. I was a lucky young man. I had a wonderful mother and father. My mother still lives. My father, deceased some -- well almost 20 years ago. My father told me as a young man once he said, "Son, I'm going to tell you something. You're not half as smart as you think you are." and that was right. So he said, "I want to give you some good advice, you work twice as hard as you had planned on because that's the only way that you can be sure that you're going to succeed." I still think that there's a lot of good common sense in that for most of us. Most of us either under estimate ourselves or over estimate ourselves. When you're in politics you tend to be just a little bit on the over estimating side. There's no doubt about that. Long ago I've learned that the best politics is no politics in the sense of pettiness but in the sense of hard work, just staying with it. That's the best politics. I also learned, by the way, because I have been in business and am yet; in fact, I worked for one of the large corporations of this country, Encyclopedia Britannica. I just came back from Japan here about a month ago where we are getting ready to publish the new Japanese Britannica, a fabulous new encyclopedia in Japanese. I've been working with 200 of their top scholars to put this reference service together after consummating a financial deal. Now some of my republican friends wouldn't believe that but it is a fact and I'm happy to tell you that this is a company that does over a quarter million dollars a year business so it is not exactly what you would call a small hot dog stand. I am privileged, may I say, to understand something about what it means to face up to the hard work of making something successful. I want to congratulate you on your success. I want to congratulate the insurance industry. I want to thank the insurance industry for educating the American people of the necessity

001964

of self protection. Not somebody else, but working together through means of investment, through plan and savings, through setting aside a little something for security. I saw the insurance industry of this country in 1967 put a billion dollars into helping rebuild ghettos in our great urban centers. I sat in the Cabinet Room with the head of the Life Insurance Institute when that happened. I saw this same organization pledge another billion dollars. I know what can be done in the partnership between government and private enterprise and may I just leave you with this note -- don't feel that there is a built in antagonism between government and private enterprise. That is as old as the doctrines of Carl Marx. We need today as we've never needed it before, not only trust from each other in this country, not only pulling ourselves together, but we need the concept of partnership to get every job done that needs to be done in America. There isn't a single thing that needs to be done in this country that individually we can do alone. Individually, we can help but together we can do what even some people think is the impossible.

Thank you for inviting me. I've had fun and I'm going to take Judge Lord very shortly over to the University. I've told somebody up there that he needs some cultural development. Don't you hold me in contempt here. I'm going to go to the opera. My friend Robert Merrill is singing tonight. Robert and Marion are two of the best friends that Muriel and Hubert Humphrey have and he called me up and I said, "Well I'd come, Bob, but I can't get tickets, you know." He said, "Oh, I'll get you a ticket." I just phoned Judge Lord, my good friend, Miles, and I said, "You haven't had any cultural development since you heard the Crosby Ironton High School Choir sing. We're going to go right on over his head in a little while. Thank you very much.



Minnesota Historical Society

Copyright in this digital version belongs to the Minnesota Historical Society and its content may not be copied without the copyright holder's express written permission. Users may print, download, link to, or email content, however, for individual use.

To request permission for commercial or educational use, please contact the Minnesota Historical Society.



www.mnhs.org