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Remarks at Commencement, delivered on June 10, 1978

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Today is one for joy and gratitude, feelings that come naturally with personal accomplishment, and our pride in the success of those we love. For most of you, to reach this day of graduation has required sacrifice -- from the graduate and from his or her family. It is proper, therefore, that we come together on this day to mark this graduation, to give expression to our feelings of joy and gratitude, and to give thanks also, perhaps, for the removal of at least one financial burden. We extend our welcome to all of you, for you belong here. In one way or another, you are all a part of the Grand Valley Community.

I commend the graduates and I ask that they continue to keep ties with their alma mater. Colleges need to connect with those outside their immediate day-to-day environment. They need the perspective and the help of those who have gone before, just as every individual needs to connect with members of his family and community. To our alumni we look for this connection. If we can hold together, be a part of one another, future generations of students will benefit from your loyalty to Grand Valley or one of its colleges.

I commend the faculty for fulfilling the sacred responsibility of leading minds to learning. There can be few more satisfying ways to use one's life than in the pursuit of knowledge and understanding. To share what one has learned is part of that pursuit.

I commend the staff who are necessary to students and faculty. They are the enablers, those who assist in all manner of ways so that the students and faculty may be about the major purpose of the institution.

I commend the parents and friends who are gathered here for their support of their graduates. It has required money in many instances, patience, sometimes prodding, always love and concern.

I commend to all of you the candidates for honorary degrees. Each year Grand Valley recognizes people who are special in their accomplishments. Invariably they are people of great human spirit. More than any other characteristic, I think that has been the common denominator of Grand Valley's honorary alumni over the years. They have been significant in fields of scholarship, arts, business, politics, social movements; but most of all, they are great individuals, unafraid to be human and unafraid to stand for those ideas and views that are required, by conscience and understanding, for humanity's sake.