10-17-1996

Remarks, delivered at the Funeral for Dr. Mark Vasu on October 17, 1996

Arend D. Lubbers
Grand Valley State University

Follow this and additional works at: https://scholarworks.gvsu.edu/presidential_speeches

Part of the Archival Science Commons, Education Commons, and the History Commons

Recommended Citation

This Speech is brought to you for free and open access by the University Archives at ScholarWorks@GVSU. It has been accepted for inclusion in Presidential Speeches by an authorized administrator of ScholarWorks@GVSU. For more information, please contact scholarworks@gvsu.edu.
We were on the 13th tee. The day was balmy. It was Sunday. You took a practice swing and then you addressed the ball. On the way down we heard a snap and a crack. Both of us heard it. It came from your body; you couldn’t finish the round. Life changed.

Before that, there was golf many times in season. Golf with doctors, policemen, politicians, businessmen, clergymen. Golf in tournaments and outings. Together we reached the apex of our golfing careers. We won the 2nd flight in the member-member. What a day! We never forgot it!

There were trips. In the Jacuzzi under the stars, in the desert, with our wives - laughter and relaxation and golf. We played in the desert and couldn’t escape the man on the mower. We couldn’t stop laughing. Riding along the coast, through the mountains, more laughter. Good wines, good food. We played Spyglass and then Pebble Beach. We walked where Bing Crosby walked, played where he played. You liked that. We did pretty well too for four duffers from Michigan.

There were nights at Edison’s cottage close by Croton Dam. Men’s night together. Planning, talking, challenging, joking, drinking good whiskey. Serious talk about what was important to each of us. Sharing intimacies of the spirit and emotions. Then shouting again. It was the high water mark of friendship.

You were always the doctor. Like all doctors, you were intelligent; like most you were successful in practice. But normal practice couldn’t contain you. You were too big for that. You needed more excitement, more accomplishment. You were impatient with what you didn’t like. You didn’t like people dying because of inadequate emergency procedures. You had your cause.
I remember an ambulance careening through the streets of Grand Rapids, sirens blaring, a factory gate. Workers huddled around a colleague in shock and pain, his hand smashed by a press. I remember racing to the inner city in a police cruiser to quell a domestic fight, giving treatment for a bloodied head and a stab wound. Here was the excitement, here was the accomplishment. Here was your permanent legacy.

You liked celebrity. You were the type who would drive past movie stars’ houses just to have done it. I chuckled at that part of you. In a way, you had the last laugh. You often made the “big names” you sought out contribute to your legacy. The senators, the representatives, the rich and famous, Jerry Ford, all contributed something to emergency medicine and education. You could put a hammer lock on people until they gave to your cause. When you released them, they had given, appreciated being asked, and believed.

You were bigger than life. You had more energy when you were healthy. You were more single minded. You enveloped and you encompassed. You reached heights and the satisfaction you took in your high achievement was intense and justified. But like all people who are bigger than life, it becomes more intensely difficult to cope when your body snaps and cracks and can never be put back together as it once was.

You had projects. You had changed emergency procedures and education permanently. But the lights went on in your eyes when you talked with me about another subject in the last years. Your family. You may not have been around often enough when Edie raised the children, but you became a father, father-in-law, and grandfather nearly full time in your thoughts and deeds. You became the grandfather with photographs. I liked that. Your physical infirmities gave you time, and it may be more important than you ever realized.
You were aptly named. Your personality was so large, your essence so strong, your will so directed. You left an indelible mark on the situations you created and the people with whom you lived. You have left your mark on people whom you do not know and who do not know you. On the person who is living now because he received emergency treatment in time. On the person taught emergency procedures by an instructor taught by you.

I like to think of you alive in another dimension, free of the physical disabilities, free of depressing thoughts, charged up and ready to go, united with spirits who have gone before, and in love, joined with those left behind. My guess is there may be some emergencies in heaven. If there are, we know your assignment for now.

Your life was quite a ride. We all hopped on; more or less time. Your mother was there for the whole trip, your brother a little less. Edie, of course, wasn’t there as long, but when she got on she was always in the front seat and shared the driving. Your children, grandchildren, and Edie’s family all were packed in. So were your colleagues and friends who got on and off from time to time. You didn’t always make it easy, but did anyone say rides were always easy? You did take us up some high mountains and into some beautiful country-side. It was a ride none of us will ever forget. Memories of you will not blur. They will remain always vivid.