

4-28-2001

## Commencement Address, delivered on April 28, 2001

Arend D. Lubbers  
*Grand Valley State University*

Follow this and additional works at: [https://scholarworks.gvsu.edu/presidential\\_speeches](https://scholarworks.gvsu.edu/presidential_speeches)



Part of the [Archival Science Commons](#), [Education Commons](#), and the [History Commons](#)

---

### ScholarWorks Citation

Lubbers, Arend D., "Commencement Address, delivered on April 28, 2001" (2001). *Presidential Speeches*. 193.

[https://scholarworks.gvsu.edu/presidential\\_speeches/193](https://scholarworks.gvsu.edu/presidential_speeches/193)

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](mailto:scholarworks@gvsu.edu).

# Commencement

## April 28, 2001

Note: Thank and dismiss the Symphonic Wind Ensemble and University Arts Chorale and Steel Band.

Few American celebrations command the attention and attendance of Commencement. It may be an experience more common to our population than the 4<sup>th</sup> of July fireworks or Monday night football on TV. Most certainly it is family day, and to all families of our graduates we say, greetings. May this day bring relief to you as it has to your graduate.

The 19<sup>th</sup> Century British Prime Minister Benjamin Disraeli said, “The secret of success is constancy to purpose.” You, as graduates, have once again proven him correct. For it requires constancy to purpose for you to be here today. Your families, your friends, the faculty and all at the University congratulate you for sticking to the course.

On your behalf and mine I thank the faculty for the high quality of teaching that enhances the degree you will receive today. Together and individually they are lifting a relatively new university to a position that can claim distinction.

There are two guests with us who deserve to be introduced to you: President and Mrs. Gerald Ford. Mrs. Ford will be presented for and awarded an honorary degree. We take special notice of her fine personal qualities and contributions to national causes at this time because the Ford Museum is presenting an exhibition of memorabilia gathered by and about the first ladies of our nation. J. M. Barrie wrote, “Every man who is high up loves to think that he has done it all himself; and the wife smiles, and lets it go at that.” Well, today President Ford gets to sit back and smile while Mrs. Ford is in the spotlight.

President Ford received an honorary degree when he was the Congressman from our 5<sup>th</sup> District. It was conferred on the Allendale campus during the Vietnam War when it took courage for a Congressman to set foot on a college campus. I always admired Jerry Ford for making an effort to stay in communication with students during that turbulent period. He was on campuses throughout the country. Both the Fords are from Grand Rapids, and it is appropriate for us to honor the First Lady from Grand Rapids when she and her compatriots are featured at the city's Ford Museum.

One might think this is a theme Commencement. David McCullough, our speaker, also a holder of a Grand Valley honorary degree, won a Pulitzer Prize for his biography entitled, Truman, and in a week or two his biography of President John Adams will hit the stores, and probably tip the scales and make Amazon profitable. He is a publisher's dream, none of his books have ever been out of print.

I think "constancy to purpose" may describe David McCullough's approach to his work. He is the most successful of a profession filled with very successful scholars and writers. He has pursued his bliss as Joseph Campbell, the late writer-theologian would describe it, and that he has done with intensity. He finds a subject that intrigues him and hunts it down with a single-minded purpose. He has lectured at the White House as part of the Presidential lecture series, and today I hope he appreciates he has another opportunity to have a President in his audience. He is also one of few private citizens asked to speak before a joint session of Congress. He paints, he cooks, and you have probably seen him on Grand Valley's Public Television station or the PBS station where you live as host of "The American Experience," and narrator of numerous documentaries including "The Civil War."

The ancient Plutarch writes, “So very difficult a matter is it to trace and find out the truth of anything by history.” We who read David McCullough believe he has done it. I present to you an extraordinary historian and person, David McCullough.