Remarks on Helen Thomas, delivered at Convocation on March 30, 2000

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It is always an important day on a University campus when a distinguished leader in a profession visits that campus and shares her insights and experiences with students, faculty, staff and guests. Today is an important day for us because Helen Thomas, the foremost White House Bureau Chief and a legend in the field of communications is our guest. We are gathered in Convocation to honor her career and to hear about it from her.

Carlyle quoted in his Heroes and Hero-Worship the great English Parliamentary leader and political philosopher Edmund Burke. Carlyle wrote “Burke said there were Three Estates in Parliament; but in the Reporters Gallery yonder, there sat a Fourth Estate more important far than them all. It is not a figure of speech, or a witty saying; it is a literal fact – very momentous to us in these times.” Well the times haven’t changed and our honoree is living evidence. She has, with integrity, built a career as distinguished or more distinguished than those whose actions, policies and views she reports.

I believe Helen Thomas was drawn to us by her niece Suzanne Geha, who like her aunt, has become a respected name in the communications field. In west Michigan our day is incomplete if we have not learned what is happening in our midst from Suzanne or Channel 8. She will share with us, I am sure, some choice reminisces about her aunt who I’m sure is an influential person in her life. Thank you Suzanne for joining us this morning.