

Feelings of Gratitude

BRENT W. ROMNEY

What an honor it has been to watch each of you in your procession here. In your faces one can see the excitement and anticipation of this commencement exercise. This moment represents the culmination of many activities over the last few years. From agonizing over the choice of majors to class enrollments, from all-night study sessions to tentative visits to the Testing Center, and from research projects to term papers, your efforts are now rewarded.

While traveling this road you have experienced almost everything that a quality college education has to offer. But along the way you have experienced so much more: the big games on Saturday, the performances at the concert halls, the part-time jobs, the sweaty palms before that first date, the hike up to the Y, campus parking tickets, movies at the Varsity Theatre, lunch at the Cougareat, and perhaps a visit to Squaw Peak.

Many of your faces reflect a sense of relief that it is over. It is also clear that during the past several weeks—and even months—you have contemplated the job, environmental, church, and community responsibilities that await you.

There are many emotions swirling in your hearts and your souls, and it was not so long ago for me that I do not recall the significance of this moment. I don't remember much of what was said at my commencement—and, frankly, that thought has made preparing these remarks a little easier—but I do distinctly remember some feelings that I had. One was the euphoria of not having to open another textbook. Another was my anxiousness about beginning my new career. But the most vivid feeling was an overwhelming sense of gratitude for Brigham Young University.

I had started here as a small-town boy from West Texas, and now I was graduating from an acclaimed accounting program with a job at a national accounting firm. In the midst of these feelings of gratitude, I recognized that my BYU experience was indeed unique—from amazing professors who showed endless patience to the spiritual anchorings provided by religion classes and devotionals to the sounds of the carillon bell tower. I even waxed nostalgic over

Brent W. Romney was president of the BYU Alumni Association when this commencement address was given on 24 April 2003.

the endless stairs on the south side of campus that I had climbed each morning.

As you say good-bye to the campus, you will feel a lingering love as well—often referred to as the Spirit of the Y. I am confident that, although difficult to imagine now, some of the highlights of your lives after today will be those occasions when you reconnect with that spirit. So I would like to suggest you consider a few things:

First, come back to campus often—for athletic games, performing arts concerts, Aspen Grove Family Camp, Campus Education Week, Women’s Conference, and Homecoming festivities. You will find that every visit renews your love for the university and strengthens your resolve to “go forth to serve.”

Second, stay connected with what is happening with the university. Read and enjoy the *BYU Magazine* that will be sent to your homes and log on frequently to the university’s Web site.

Third—and if anything might be remembered from my remarks I hope this is it—give back to the university that has truly given you so much. Give of your time by becoming actively involved in alumni groups. We are now approaching 150 alumni chapters world-

wide, serving more than 350,000 alumni. You will find great benefit and satisfaction in furthering the cause and mission of the university through your participation. And I will be bold enough to say, “Give of your means.” One of the significant joys of alumni giving is to know that our contributions have, in some small way, made it possible for us to share in your experience of walking across that stage and receiving that diploma.

You see, we who preceded you also drank from wells we had not dug, and you will now have the blessing of joining with us as we replenish the wells for others. I suspect that as new graduates you may not yet be in a position to give generously, but give something, and make an annual habit of doing so. I will never be able to fully repay the debt I owe for the blessings BYU brought to my life, but I will forever keep trying.

In conclusion, as president of the BYU Alumni Association, I hereby confer on each of you lifetime membership in the Brigham Young University Alumni Association. May you consider the honor and responsibility of this title and use it well is my prayer, in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.