

## THE CONSTANCY OF CHANGE:

# Text of Paul Chandler's Bentley Commencement Address

When the Bentley High School Class of 1964 marched to their seats in the football grounds on a crisp Spring evening to hear their commencement address, few knew what an inspiring message Paul Chandler would give them. The words had deep meaning, not only to the young men and women in their graduation caps and gowns, but to their parents and teachers as well. Today, at the request of some of the adults and young people who were privileged to be on hand for that occasion, The Observer reprints the message. It has validity for all citizens in Michigan. We believe it is worth reading and re-reading.

It has been twenty-eight years since last I had the privilege of attending a high school commencement, and it is thrilling and exciting to be here tonight. Twenty-eight years — more than a full generation. It was my own commencement, and looking backward it seems possible that so much change could have occurred in the world. There was no television then, no nylon, no penicillin, no frozen dinners, no divided atom, no earth satellite. Albert Einstein was still in the earliest stages of thinking through the theories that time stands still if the object moves with enough speed and that huge bombs would be one result if the great energy in matter were to be released.

Our class had maybe 100 seniors graduating, and occasionally I think of them. One died recently of lung cancer, reminding that cancer's ravages are one thing that man has not yet changed. Another from that class is a prosperous electronic engineer; some were casualties during the War; a couple are in mental institutions; almost all of them have raised families, and in recent years have been attending high school commencements for their own children.

Commencement is an important moment—make no mistake—in the lives of all who reach it. It is a turning point; it is a time when many basic things begin to change in the lives of those involved. It is not the main point tonight to dwell on these, but I would suggest that perhaps the most shocking change which graduates now (and always) have had to face is the swift disappearance of pity for themselves and the loss of so-called "understanding" which is found by CHILDREN in their homes and in their schools.

Whereas heretofore it has always been possible for you to explain lack of success or oversight to someone—a parent or a teacher, or perhaps

even a psychiatrist—who would lend a sympathetic ear to the rules change. In general, you will be judged when you leave high school and home not by how sweet you are underneath, or what particular "emotional disturbance" might explain your failure, but rather you will be judged pure and simple on the basis of what you DO, what you accomplish, what is your product. It's a rough and competitive world once the commencement exercises are over, and the choice is either to understand it—work hard, become mentally firm—or to retreat into some kind of mysticism or beatnikism and let others take care of you as they might an invalid or a child.

A proper question on Commencement Day is: "What has been the point of going to school for these past 13 years?" There are some societies in the world where such schooling is not possible, for one reason or another, and yet young people there grow up and become adults somehow. Even in our own country, there are those who say knowledge is a dangerous and distressing thing and that we'd all be better off if we knew less and got about the business of milking the cows.

But the answer as to why you have spent 13 years in school is that your parents believed learning and knowledge would help you in your grappling with life in your later years — that with knowledge you can live a better life than you can WITHOUT IT. There is also in the minds of your elders a further justification for the search for knowledge and that is the somewhat spiritual belief which people hold that man was put on earth to wonder, to explore, and to learn; and that if he fails to do this, he is something of a failure in the eyes of God.

Every high school graduate, however, SHOULD BE WARNED that few human beings, if any, ever have been able to agree exactly on the purpose of life; and, hence, it is not any cinch trying to explain the value of schooling in a way that will be acceptable to every young man and young lady. There are those in the United States, and I think that I am one of them, who believe that our entire nation is misdirected and confused about its purpose and that across the whole land we are a bunch of crazy, mixed-up human beings pursuing mechanical rabbits that lead us aimlessly around in a circle.

For example, I think that both high school graduates and their parents today will concede that one of their foremost ambitions has been to "get rich"; to accumulate wealth in one form or another. In fact, I would say that this is the ambition of three out of every four men in an ordinary suburban community and that this single goal will dominate almost their entire lifetime. They started on it immediately after their high school commencement; they are still working at it today; and when they die they hope to be working at it directly or looking back on it in retrospect. Yet for all the accumulation of material things which has taken place in America—the richest country in the world, we like to boast—they never have been as much personal misery as exists today, and, if anything, the torment is the greatest in those who have dedicated themselves the most to "getting rich." "Getting rich" as an ambition actually is a form of selfishness, and one of the eternal rules is that selfishness inevitably creates enemies. It creates them because selfishness results in one man's gain at the expense of another man's loss. When one has enemies, they ultimately band together and create distress for their opponent. Anyhow, it's fair to say that many people do not believe that simply to aspire toward "getting rich" is a sufficient motivation for a high school graduate.

I believe that another widely held ambition by high school seniors is simply that "situation married." This is normal, of course, because men and women have been mating and raising families since the beginning of time. But, in terms of explaining why one has gone to school for 13 years, by itself "getting married" is not ENOUGH. Americans today are getting married in all-time record numbers. They also are being disillusioned with marriage at a rate that has staggered and perplexed every psychiatrist and sociologist in the country. The divorce rate today is something like nine times higher than it was 30 years ago.

Some of the more PHILOSOPHICAL high school graduates, when asked what they are going to do with their education and what their purpose in life is, will say: "My goal is to bring 'SECURITY' into my life and into the world." When questioned, they will become considerably vague about what "security" means to them, and, all too often, it will seem to boil down to a pension when they retire and a paid up mortgage on their home.

Of all the so-called goals which are in vogue today, I believe this one of "seeking security" is the most false and has deceived more Americans than any other single idea. The truth is that there is NO security in this world we live in; there is no security in getting married; and there is no security in claiming to be seeking security as a way of life. The reason there is no security is that change is constant. The real truth is in a phrase used by many writers and philosophers — the phrase, "this too will pass away." For any nation or for a woman or a man to attempt to live entirely within the memories of its past or to try to preserve the realities of the present without recognizing, anticipating, and yielding to change, is to absolutely guarantee a bitter and miserable life.

Madness, suicide, murder, divorce, revolution, war—all the violence that originates within the minds of men—come about because someone refuses to abandon the comfortable thoughts of his past and does not know how to live instead amidst the realities of change. The standard example in the psychiatric clinic is the adult who cannot endure the frustration of being unable in his later years to recapture the warm and secure images which he seems to remember as a child in his family's arms and, yes, as a teen-ager going through high school.

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A CITY MOURNS—The flag in front of Livonia's City Hall stands at half-staff in mourning for Paul M. Chandler, State Representative, State Senator-elect, and respected newspaper publisher of this community.

## Honor Chandler at Concert

The Livonia High Schools Symphony Orchestra, dedicated a portion of its program Saturday evening in honor of Paul M. Chandler.

Conductor William Savola designated "Requiem in Our Time" by the contemporary Finnish composer Eino Ruutu as a tribute to Paul M. Chandler.

Composed in four parts, the selection is titled Hymnus, credo et Dubito (Belief and Doubt), Dies Irae (Day of Catastrophe), and Lacrymosa (Mourning).

*We pledge that The Observer Newspapers will continue to stand for the principles and ideals for which Paul Chandler so valiantly fought. We ask all our readers' help in accomplishing this goal.*

**The Staff of  
The Observer Newspapers**