

DONALD BOSWELL COMMENCEMENT ADDRESS

(bold text indicates portions of the speech that were unscripted)

I'd like to thank Chancellor Bob Bennett for that very warm introduction.

I'd also like to thank President Simpson and Dean Mary Gresham and the faculty and staff of the Graduate School of Education for the honor of being this year's commencement speaker.

Since you know my background is in public broadcasting, this is a great moment for me because I can use the microphone and I don't have to worry about giving the pledge phone number. But if you would like to donate to WNED, just see me after the ceremony.

Let me share briefly how it came to be that I have spent my life loving and working for public broadcasting and at the same time dedicate this commencement address to my mother and father.

My dad brought home a new television set:

- 1) Monet
- 2) Scottish writer James Boswell
- 3) Sing opera like Paul Robeson
- 4) TV repair man

Graduates! You are about to embark on a long journey with a suitcase full of knowledge and a ticket for the future. Before we start that journey, I'd like to ask each of you to close your eyes right now and take 30 seconds of silence to think about the people in your lives who have loved you and valued you.

Keep your eyes closed

Whoever you've been thinking about, whether they're here today, far away or even in heaven, imagine how pleased they'd be to know how much you feel they have inspired you in your life.

Open your eyes

It always helps to have people we love beside us whenever we have to take on difficult challenges and difficult things in life. I really believe that people in the education field and public television are taking on difficult challenges together and we are one unique family.

So today, I'm going to share family stories, insights and a community vision that I hope bonds you closer with public broadcasting.

My grandmother once told me this story about a king who had three daughters and had to choose one to be the ruler once he passed away. He wanted the wisest one to rule, so he asked them to come to his chamber and explained the test.

He explained that each would receive a sum of gold and that each would be asked to fill a room with something and the winner would be the daughter who could fill the room. Two of the daughters left the room with their gold and the third daughter stayed and asked all sorts of questions about the room (its width, height, and other pertinent information).

The first daughter used all of her gold and bought pebbles and was able to fill the room 1/2 full.

The second daughter used all of her gold and bought sand and was able to fill the room 3/4 full.

The third daughter used a very small portion of her gold and bought a few candles and a match and the room was filled with light!

As educators we are that bright light that fills the classrooms as well as homes with meaningful lessons and enrichment. Goodness knows we never have enough money to do all that we want, but the little that we have can make a major impact.

Like the king's daughter we have to constantly ask questions and be creative and build inspiration in our kids.

A few insights to keep in mind from this story:

Wait, do you want to inspire your professors!

A. Teachers like public broadcasters must set a class, school, and home vision and make it come alive.

Class of 2005 Can you make a difference?

(class responds) We will make a difference!

B. When children walk through a school door or watch public television they must leave feeling they can accomplish anything.

Class of 2005 Are you the light?

(class responds) We will be the light!

C. Our leaders in the school system and in broadcasting must have positive energy and optimism to engage staff, teachers, and parents.

Class of 2005 Can you make a difference?

(class responds) We will make a difference!

D. We must envision the role of the school system and Public Broadcasting in the life of the community at large.

Class of 2005 Are you the light?

(class responds) We will be the light!

Another family story that my father told me was about a young prince who was kidnapped by a warlock. The warlock took away his voice and placed him in a cell somewhere in the kingdom. They never found the prince but each day the prince would rub the jewels of his crown on the bars and although one

would believe that the sound would be horrible, it was the most beautiful and interesting sound in the kingdom. Each day the townspeople would reach out and grasp the sounds and it would fill their souls with love, hope, and inspiration.

My father explained that children have silent voices and children are reaching out everyday for love, hope, and inspiration and television like the classroom must be able to listen with our ears and our hearts to give them something valuable to bring to their lives, their family, and their world.

I think we all realize that there is something unique about being a child and those children really need us as being educators in order to function well. One of the deepest longings a child can have is to feel needed and essential.

I have a gift for each of you after you receive your degrees. It's a candle and it relates to the words of George Bernard Shaw:

"I am of the opinion that my life belongs to the community and as long as I live, it is my privilege to do for it whatever I can. Life is no brief candle to me. It is a splendid torch which I have got hold of for a moment, and I want to make it burn as brightly as possible before handing it on to future generations."

Remember graduates, the light is within you! May that splendid torch burn brightly!

God bless you class of 2005.

Thank you.