

Address to the first class of Muir College

circa 1967 Fall

SUMMARY KEYWORDS

Muir, college, students, glaciers, mountains, dominion, men, John Muir, years, university, books, day, distinguished, Whitney, expect, creation, Yosemite Valley, minds, honesty, give

SPEAKERS

Louis H. Evans, John L. Stewart, John S. Galbraith

John L. Stewart 00:01

Muir college is called ordered. We will rise and sing one verse of the Star-Spangled Banner. [singing]

John L. Stewart 01:43

The invocation will be offered by the Reverend Lewis Hadley Evans.

Louis H. Evans 01:56

Shall we bow our hearts in prayer? Almighty God of creation we praise you this day for the goodness of earth and sky, for things seen and unseen, for dynamics of motion and change, for minds to observe and discover, and for our own flesh and blood. Indeed, we look at thy creation and we see that it is good. And humbly, we thank you for sharing your dominion over all this with us. And may we go about the task you have given to us with joy and anticipation, the task of getting dominion over all your works. This is a thrilling and an awesome day. But in order that it does not become a demonic and devastating day, teach us oh god to respond to the guidelines of generosity and upholding one another. Protect us from using our dominion over things to get dominion over people. That Dominion belongs alone to you. And as we come to dedicate this college, we come with a satisfying concept in which this university is built. We pray for all who will be part of it. We thank you for the professors and the faculty, instructors and fellows for the discipline they have brought to their calling for the excellence of their knowledge. And now may they not only help students in the acquisition of knowledge, but in their development as individuals using their information wisely. Oh lord bless these professors in the midst of their heavy demands, give them the strength, sufficient strength for their bodies for their research, for their teaching, and for their families.

Louis H. Evans 04:07

And bless the students. May their excitement and learning be matched by humility. May their liberty be equaled by a sense of responsibility to each other, less they walk in a dismal loneliness and nihilism. And as so many of them have truly perceived the importance of relationships in a world of material entities. May they build new structures that deeply benefit mankind and help it to come of age, facing realities squarely and with hope. And bless also the administrators. May their creative strategy not be drowned by the gush of administrivia nor their sensitivity to persons crushed by the sheer weight of

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concrete and steel. And above all, oh God, give us university and community, a sense of honesty. That willingness to see reality face to face. May we not wait for it, but maybe pursue it relentlessly. In granted, we shall be in communication with our families, with our fellow countrymen, with ourselves and with our enemies. Help us to learn from our opponents, rather than flee from them in fear and mistrust. Help us to believe strongly enough in our own ideologies, that we do not fear the contact, and yet make us open minded enough to see the point he might well have. May this honesty lead us to you, oh God. Many are confused about who you are or if you are. And as we open ourselves to any other person, may we open ourselves to you, being willing to discover in all honesty, what you are and what you are not. And thus, be liberated by the truth that sets men free. All this we ask of you, great God of creation, God of Abraham, Lord of the nations, and Father of Jesus Christ, who came to set men free, amen.

John L. Stewart 06:49

During the nearly three years of preparation that have brought us to this moment, John Galbraith has been chancellor of the University of California, San Diego. Under his Aegis, we have developed this college as part of a unique plan for the San Diego campus of the University. We have invited him to speak about this plan and the role of the colleges within it. Chancellor Galbraith.

John S. Galbraith 07:26

Provost Stewart, distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen, I would like to address my few remarks this afternoon primarily to the Muir College students who are here in attendance. Just three years ago, what is now Revelle college admitted its first freshman class, there were 181 of them, and they were filled with an enthusiasm at being in at the beginning of a university. Today, these freshmen are seniors. Most of them are not quite so gung-ho about creating instant traditions as they were three years ago, but the class of 1968 has left its mark on the character of Revelle College. You who are the first students of Muir have a similar opportunity. The tone of Muir College over the years, we'll certainly be affected by your influence. Until this year, UCSD at a college system with one college that's something like having an athletic league with only one team. I expect Muir to develop a distinctive identity from Revelle. It already has developed a distinctive identity from Revelle including such escapades as stealing the anchor from the Revelle College fountain to emphasize their distinctive identity. And I expect that difference to be expressed in a variety of other ways, in athletic competition, in styles, in the character of student life generally, and an attitude of we're a better college than you are which is already manifesting itself.

John S. Galbraith 09:10

Now, that's all to the good. But for all that a college system meant; it might not be worth the effort which has gone into the creation of this system. The main justification for a college system is that it makes possible a relationship between students and faculty on a personal basis. That purpose is not primarily social, but intellectual. Education is an active process or it is nothing. And too often that does nothing. Too often students passively receive information and transmit this information back in examinations, after which they forget whatever it was, they had learned during the course of that quarter or during the course of that year. This process has been described as like a big pitcher pouring into little pitchers, which eventually pour their content back into the big pitcher so that all it is left is a lot of dirty little pitchers. That is not education. In our colleges we expect to stimulate you students to think for

yourselves. Thinking is sometimes a painful process. But the brain like other parts of the body requires exercise. We also expect that you will enjoy yourselves in both intellectual and in social activity. I noticed that the ratio of boys and girls on this side of the road is more even than the college across the highway and that should provide an additional spice to the competition. Thank you.

John L. Stewart 11:09

I have a low opinion of books. They are but piles of stones set up to show coming travelers where other minds have been, or at best smoke signals to call attention. No amount of word making will ever make a single soul to know these mountains, as well to seek to warm the naked and frostbitten by lectures on caloric and pictures of flame. One day's exposure to mountains is better than cartloads of books. It may seem strange that we have chosen to name our college after the man who wrote those words. Stranger still, that we have invited one of America's most distinguished word makers to deliver the principal address at this our first convocation. Low opinion of books indeed, John Muir must have been giving way to some momentary impatience. After all, he himself patiently filled 60 volumes of journals, from which he and his editors later quarried, no less than 15 Good sized books. Moreover, when we honor John Muir, we have in mind his own achievement at word making. Indeed, we wouldn't know of his achievements as geologists and naturalist, if he had not been an unusually able writer. And without his word making, he'd never would have been an effective conservationist at all. It was his skill with a pen, rather than his ability to go for days without food or shelter that saved his beloved mountain regions for us. Despite what he says, we do know those mountains from his books, know them in ways that we could not by standing among them, are struggling up them. Their presence is so mighty, the struggle to climb them so distracting, that we must withdraw from the mountains into meditation, as Muir did in order to know them.

John L. Stewart 13:19

For this, we must have books, and so it is for all the things of this world. If though we recognize the oversimplification, Muir was enunciating a principle that is fundamental to this college. For some kinds of learning, there is no substitute for being there yourself and looking with your own eyes. Open eyes. Edwin Teale, tells it thus. Muir was the first to point out the role glaciers played in forming Yosemite Valley. Unknown and in his early 30s when he advanced this theory, he was opposed by the distinguished and dogmatic California State Geologist, Dr. Josiah Dwight Whitney, formerly of Harvard. Whitney maintained the glaciers had nothing to do with Yosemite, that the floor of the Valley had dropped down in some ancient cataclysm. Muir scoffed; the bottom never fell out of anything God made. Whitney rejoined that the glacial hypothesis was merely the idea of a shepherder. So began three summers of exhausting lone handed field work in which Muir traced to their sources all the streams of the Ptolemy divide, often returning to the valley only long enough to replenish his bread sack. He followed nameless watercourses through wild canyons in which no white man had ever set foot. Fragment by fragment, glaciers scratch by glaciers scratch, he amassed his evidence. By 1873, he was ready to publish his findings in his series of Sierra studies. Today, no scientist doubts the part glaciers played in the formation of the Yosemite Valley.

John L. Stewart 15:16

Our philosophy of education will be realized in a curriculum, which will enable our students from freshmen to doctoral candidate to participate in the search for knowledge. We shall be a community of Enquirer's and of meditators on the fruits of inquiry, that is, of men and women, who are both explorers, and writers and readers of books. For the past fortnight, we have been welcoming into the community, those new members without whom this would not be a college at all. I mean, of course, our first undergraduate students. We've wanted to communicate to them our respect for those men and women who like John Muir have in their own way, been both enquirers and interpreters.