

Address Given Before the Graduating Class
Minidoka Relocation Center, Hunt, Idaho
June 1, 1945

WHERE DO WE GO FROM HERE?

That great and beloved American humorist, Irving Cobb,
in his autobiography "Exit Laughing" relates an experience, ^{while} ~~in~~
a convoy ~~was~~ crossing the English Channel during the last war.
Just before sailing, orders had been given that should one ship
be torpedoed it should fall out of line and its passengers would
have to take their chances in life boats or life jackets, but in
no case was another ship to stop and aid in rescue. Mr. Cobb
tells of the ship, immediately in front of the one on which he was
a passenger, being hit, and all its lights went on immediately.
Through glasses he could see the troops of this transport ship
taking their places on the top deck. As his ship drew closer he
saw first one deck and then another settling below the surface,
until just as his ship pulled along side the torpedoed vessel,
only the top deck remained above the water. Lined up on this
deck were the troops which he could then see plainly, and across
the churning waters came the sound of thousands of singing
voices. All on board were under perfect control, not a sign of

panic, nothing but lusty singing. ~~Now~~ ^{If} they had been Russian boys they probably would have been singing the Internationale; or if French soldiers, the Marseilles; and if English, God Save the King. But, they were none of these, they were American doughboys. And what were they singing? The Star Spangled Banner? America? My Old Kentucky Home? No, they were singing a popular song hit of the day, "Where Do We Go From Here, Boys, Where Do We Go From Here?"

Americans have the happy faculty of being able to look disaster and adversity squarely in the face and come up laughing it off. Something in the experiences of those who felled the forests, opened the pits in the ground, and broke the sod are a part of our heritage, their lives are a part of us - we have learned "to take it." Where Do We Go From Here? I am not thinking of a physical location and I am not going to talk relocation here this evening, but I would like for you young men and women of this graduating class to think with me for a few minutes about your future.

That we might understand one another from the start, let

no say I agree that your lot at this time and at this hour is a tough one; tougher than most graduating seniors in the thousands of high schools throughout the land. Injustices have been done, hardships encountered, a radically different type of life has had to be lived, and seemingly almost impossible barriers erected.

But is the situation hopeless? It is not! Not for one moment will any of you, nor I, admit that! Many feel the world is in a mess.

My generation and the one preceding ~~that~~ must take the blame for

it, ~~if it is~~. But you are sane young people who have the opportunity

to help clean up the mess. You have completed a course of study

and are ready to roll up your sleeves, double up your fists and

say "what's next?" Browning wrote in one of his lovely poems:

"God's in His heaven, all's right with the world." Some cynic

paraphrased this when he said: "Is God in His heaven? For

nothing's right in the world." Young men, young women -- in which

group do you wish to throw your lot, with those who have courage,

a faith in God and themselves, or the cynics, and lie down and

be a quitter? You and I know that in the game ahead you will all

be in there pitching. There are several reasons why I am con-

vinced you will.

In Mr. Stafford's message, he spoke of pride of ancestry. I shall not recount any of those early hardships of your parents in making a home in this new land. Each of you have been told some of the less bizarre of the incidents. You can and should therefore take pride in the courage and accomplishments of your parents. You have a heritage, a reputation to preserve. The scholastic record of Nesei in this country is something of which to be proud and a challenge to emulate. Yes, I know which group you are in, you will not be cynical.

You have youth, physical stamina, and above all that "will to do" which is characteristic of young people everywhere. Will it be easy sailing? Not for a moment! A smooth road ahead? Not for an inch! Any fun in life? Well -- maybe-- that depends on you!

What are some of the obstacles ahead? First, there is that horrible and devastating disease "campitis". Ever had it? Ever see anyone else with it? A physical examination will rarely show it up, but the minute you speak you show if you are afflicted.

"Campitis" is an attitude of mind, manifesting itself in the wasting of time, purposeless living, bravado behavior, disrespect of the rights and feelings of others. What do you do with your spare time? what are the subjects of your conversations? Is it a continual "gripe"? Do you engage in the pastime of self pity? Have you developed a scapegoat complex? You and I know there is an epidemic on, and you are exposed, continuously! Have you caught it? I agreed in the beginning there have been injustices, but really now, will crying on each others' shoulders cure anything? I do not wish to appear unsympathetic, for I assure you I am not; but in a spirit of friendliness I wish to talk "straight from the shoulder."

Are you growing up, out of adolescence; is your life ruled by fear, fear of not making good, fear that someone will misunderstand, fear of your ability, fearful your parents cannot get along, fearful you cannot go to college, fear of not getting the right job, fearful you can't ever get married and have a home? Fear, fear, fear -- it is a complication resulting from "campitis". Courage, that is freedom from fear, is a sign you are growing up.

this courage
if you have it means you are leaving behind childish things
and are ready to take your place as men and women in a grown up
society.

"Caspitis" can be observed in another way. In Seattle,
Portland, Tacoma, from wherever you came, how did you dress when
you went to a party? - on Sunday? Did you try to be tough,
the community roughneck? And you girls, were you regarded as a
flirt, frivolous, an unsubstantial personality? You were not!
Did you take pride in your personal appearance; how were your
table manners; did you pay any attention to the social niceties;
did you take an interest in the arts, the activities of the
community; did you boast about the home town? Sure you did; you
should have, and you must in the future!

Shortly before leaving Philadelphia, I was in the WRA
district office late one afternoon. In the reception room, I
overheard a conversation between a young man and the receptionist,
which told me he had arrived in the city only that day. Suspecting
he might be stopping at the hostel, I asked him if he were, and

he answered uneasily in the affirmative. Having my car downtown and returning by way of the hostel, I invited him along. The walk to the car was about a mile. We had gone 5 or 6 blocks through the crowded downtown section when he turned to me and said, "No one pays any attention to you here, do they?" I replied that I really hadn't noticed; I was always too busy getting from one place to another to think about it, the idea just hadn't occurred to me. "But why do you ask?" I queried. He then went on to tell me ^{that} he had arrived from a relocation center only that morning, had spent the day walking around, and no one gave him a second glance. He said he had expected to be stared at. If passersby had stared I would not have been surprised. He was still suffering from "campitis". He thought he was different. He did not walk with that nonchalant air he could have, and by his very actions he drew attention to himself. He possessed an unwholesome mental attitude toward himself, Will you avoid "campitis" or get over it if you have it? Edwin Markham has expressed it in these words:

"He drew a circle that shut me out,

Heretic, rebel, a thing to flout,

But love and I had the wit to win,

He drew a circle that took him in!"

Those of us who have spent any time in large metropolitan cities the past two years have seen a lingering of the malady "campitis", relocatees who go down the street either hugging the buildings or the curbs as they walk ^{along} ~~down the street~~. You attempt "to get their eye" and they shift their glance, seem embarrassed, or if you speak to them the response is less than half hearted. The public generally wants to take you for what you are, as an individual. Friendliness is a two way thing. You will be expected to go at least half way. Without question, persons of Japanese ancestry have more sincere, close friends in America today than they ever had. I have seen it manifested in numerous ways. I have traveled across this continent 4 times, and into nearly every state in the union since I left this project almost two years ago. I have talked to hundreds of people, I know they want to be friendly, they want to help, but as you go out of here

you may live outside a circle, or by your own efforts you too
can draw a circle to take them in !

The Bridge Builder

An old man, going a lone highway,
Came, at the evening, cold and gray,
To a chasm, vast and deep, and wide,
Through which was flowing a sullen tide.
The old man crossed in the twilight dim;
The sullen stream had no fears for him;
But he turned, when safe on the other side,
And built a bridge to span the tide.
"Old man," said a fellow pilgrim, near,
"You are wasting your strength with building here;
Your journey will end with the ending day;
You never again must pass this way;
You have crossed the chasm, deep and wide --
Why build you the bridge at the eventide?"
The builder lifted his old gray head;
"Good friend, in the path I have come," he said,

"There followeth after me today

A youth, whose feet must pass this way.

This chasm, that has been as naught to me,

To that fair-haired youth may a pitfall be.

He, too, must cross in the twilight dim;

Good friend, I am building the bridge for him?

Yes, my young friends, you are not alone. The adult world is building bridges daily over which you may pass safely. Your parents, thousands of unknown friends whom you are yet to meet, are waiting to give you a hand, to guide you across the "chasm, vast, and deep, and wide."

One of the most disheartening attitudes of evacuees which I have witnessed is the one involving other minorities. What is your attitude toward negroes, toward Jews, toward Buddhists, Christians, Chinese or Filipinos? If you think your lot not so good, I commend to you most highly Richard Wright's autobiography "Black Boy". Other minorities too, have problems, discrimination to combat and most important, sensibilities which can be offended. Countee Cullen, the great Negro poet ~~wrote~~ *has expressed it in these words*

"Once I was in Baltimore,

I was six and no whit bigger

Of all the things that I remember

A man, he called me -- nigger."

In what terms do you think and speak of members of other groups?

I have been saddened greatly to hear some evacuees say they would not rent their property to a Negro or a Jew. How can we experience brotherhood unless we practice brotherhood.

The crest and crowning of all good,

Life's final star is Brotherhood;

For it will bring again to earth

Her long-lost Poesy and Mirth;

Will send new light on every face

A kingly power upon the race.

And, till it comes, we men are slaves,

And travel downward to the dust of graves.

Come, clear the way, then, clear the way:

Blind creeds and kings have had their day.

Break the dead branches from the path;

Our hope is in the aftermath --

Our hope is in heroic men,

Star-led to build the world again.

To this event the ages ran:

•
Make way for Brotherhood -- make way for Man !

Where Do We Go From Here Boys, Where Do We Go From Here?

Well, where do we go from here? Some may say science has progressed so rapidly and far there is nothing more to discover or develop. Some will say all the land is taken up, we can't live here, we can't live there. In the field of political science, would you say we have devised the best methods of political organization? Are the most capable, most honest men selected to run our governmental affairs? What of our codes by which people are tried or litigation settled? Archaic, cumbersome, there they rest, waiting for some young men and women to come along and revise them.

In international dealings how well do we get along? Is

there nothing to be contributed? Is there nothing challenging in modernizing the machinery for handling peaceably world problems?

And how about the health of the world? Do people not die hourly because someone has not as yet discovered the cure or prevention of scores of diseases.

Would you say farmers, generally, apply scientific methods to agriculture, soil conservation, insect control? Is there not unbounded opportunity to grow better and more food for mankind by cheaper and more improved methods?

And you young women who expect to establish a home and raise a family, what steps may you take to make that home successful, a place in which happiness may abide? Is there not a challenge in preparing for that day by good, honest, honorable toil and study? Or, if you prefer a career, immediately, are the doors of opportunity closed? Not one bit -- unless you are suffering from "campitis".

Where do We Go From Here? Have you your course charted? Where do you expect to be and what do you expect to be doing one year,

two years, five years, ten years from now? Will you pardon me for reciting a personal experience. In my second year in college I reached the point where it seemed useless to go on. Discouraged, overworked, and a not too favorable report card caused me to consider dropping out of college. I rationalized that until I decided exactly what I wanted to be or the field of endeavor I wished to enter, I should quit school. Expressing this defeatism to my basketball coach, a most understanding man and one in whom I had confidence, he said, "Well, some students do not discover exactly what they are going to do until their senior year, and some few not until after that, but all the time you are studying and applying yourself, you are developing the ambition for bigger things, you are preparing yourself for the future. If you drop out now, you are admitting to yourself that you are a quitter. You must live with yourself, therefore you must have respect for yourself. Stick it out." I did, and I shall be eternally grateful to that coach. So, if the way is not altogether clear, if the exact field of endeavor has not been decided upon, do not sit

by idly, procrastinating, get busy now, tomorrow; make plans for work or study which will contribute to your endeavor for the day when you make your permanent life work plans. and you need not be too hasty in selecting your life work. Get some experience, but be sure it is purposeful. A drifting object on the sea is a hazard to navigation; a drifting aimless life is not only useless for the perpetrator but may be a hazard to those about ^{him} it. High wages which some are receiving today will not last forever. If you are waiting for that big "break" with a big wage attached you are in for a bitter disappointment. We create our own "breaks". If you work, frugality and thriftiness are a preparation for any field.

Where Do We Go From Here? It is up to you. Unlike those troops standing on the top deck with the ship settling rapidly beneath them into the chilly, choppy waters of the English Channel, you have choices, you can chart your course. Can you, like them, face the hardships, the unknowns, even survival itself with a song in your heart, a smile on your lips, unafraid, and without

whimpering? You may, you can, you will. Is it possible for
you to leave this school experience, and say with W. E. Henley
in his "Invictus"

Out of the night that covers me,
Black as the Pit from pole to pole,
I thank whatever gods may be
For my unconquerable soul.

In the fell clutch of circumstances
I have not winced nor cried aloud,
Under the bludgeonings of chance
My head is bloody, but unbowed.

Beyond this place of wrath and tears
Looms but the Horror of the Shade,
And yet the menace of the years
Finds, and shall find, me unafraid.

It matters not how strait the gate,

How charged with punishments the scroll,

I am the master of my fate;

I am the captain of my soul.