

REMARKS OF GEORGE E. JONAS
ALEXANDER HAMILTON AWARD DINNER
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President McGill and President Truman and associations of deans (minus one) and friends:

Naturally, I've been quite moved by this evening. I understand that there are three people who are pardoned for not telling the truth: one's own mother, tombstone engravers and all toastmasters.

I hope it's permissible if I reminisce a little bit about my youth which I think was about the normal adventurous one of young people—sports, studies—but there were three things for some strange reason that always troubled me:

I wondered why was I born;

I wondered whether life had meaning;

And I couldn't quite understand why some people (this is when I was quite young) had more advantages than others.

And I think all those things gradually took shape in forming the values in that I wanted to follow as I grew up, apart from my economic duties in industry.

I gradually became so strong that I felt that I was fortunate in having them which gave life far more meaning. I felt that we talk a lot about the wealth of a country being its land, its mines, its forests, its industry but it seems to me one of the greatest assets any country has is its potential leadership and I was particularly interested in young people who were disadvantaged in many ways. Perhaps it could have been racial; perhaps it could have been cultural; perhaps it could have been financial; or other reasons, but there are millions of young people in every country who might become leaders—not necessarily political leaders, but leaders in the sense of becoming doctors, scientists, engineers, poets, painters, musicians. I could go on and on enumerating them.

I think one of the commissioners of education for the gifted about three years ago, made the magnificent discovery in Washington, that there are two million young people who are disadvantaged but who are quite brilliant, and the old concept of "Why help the bright boy—he's going to get ahead anyhow." Well, he came to the conclusion in his talk to Congress, that only about 4% of those young people fulfill their potentiality and that's a tremendous waste. Very often, they need encouragement and guidance.

I know that in some areas they have honor classes for the bright. That's not in every place of the country. But, that only handles the academic side of the boy's or girl's needs, and it does seem to me that one must be interested in the boy—in my case, it's the boys—during their waking hours and that, very often, the very bright, sensitive boys, have as many problems as the sub-normal boys but they are far

more conscious of them and I've quizzed many alumni about this. They tell me, that is the case.

I did come across the story about President James Garfield, who more than 100 years ago, addressed the alumni at Williams College and he told them that his idea of the perfect educator was Mark Hopkins at one end of the log and the student at the other end. And that he would forego all of these magnificent buildings and libraries and apparatus just to give the boys a chance of that type.

Well, I know it's not logical in today's world, but how wonderful it would be if every student at Columbia could spend a quiet hour in the country with President McGill and talk about life and the problems of existing and human values because I find that nowadays young people are even more confused than when I was young because the world is moving at least twenty or thirty times as fast as was the case when I was young.

I find that the advice that boys get from schools is often very limited because the number of guidance teachers—the number of students, rather, for guidance teachers, is fantastically limited. Perhaps in some cases there are 400, 500, even 600 students for one guidance teacher.

But, supposing it would have been possible for students at Columbia to sit at one end of the log with a Larry Chamberlain, a Carl Hovde, a Peter Pouncey, a Harry Coleman. What a vast amount of information and stimulus they could get about things that you'd not find in the College library or in academic subjects. I think, in my own case, if I could spend an hour at one end of the log with a David Truman, I would still feel it would be a wonderful experience because David, for me, is one of the wonderful persons I've known in my life.

Now that, there're two—almost twins—motives which more or less activated my work. One, I told you about was this search for boys 14, 15, 16 years old who perhaps not had all the advantages that they should have had. The other, which I hope you will not feel is too emotional, is I feel that everyone is searching for happiness in life and that happiness may come either from service to God or service to fellow man or, best of all, both. How does one project things like that to boys of that age?

Well, I found there's an old Chinese saying which is quite wonderful and it goes like this. "What you do speaks so loudly that I cannot hear what you say." So that it was necessary for those of us who were up there working with these boys, to try and actually live out the things that we believed in.

If I was merely interested in a boy because he's smart, I think that could have fascist or super-race connotation, but it seems to me if you could give this boy the things that you cannot buy with money—time, love, and interest for life—perhaps if you say to him, "If these things were of value, you owe me nothing, but someday you give it to somebody else." And those things very often take a long time to mature.

I won't burden you with much story, history of the international side of what we're doing but we have even worked with countries behind the Iron Curtain and we have some very interesting connections which I hope someday will lead boys from China to the Camp. I've already been told that that may take place when formal relationships are established. When that will be is very hard to say because I think in this country, we think in terms of presidential elections and the Chinese think in terms of 25 to 1500 years.

I had felt that it would be inappropriate for me to tell any stories or jokes at such an evening as this, but I've been tempted a little bit by something which David Truman said about teaching and I'd like to tell you one story because I think so much can be done with sitting on a log with a boy and talking.

There's one youngster, some years ago, that I was informed was pretty conceited, so I got him aside and I said, "X, I don't know if you know it, but you are a very bright boy."

He said, yes, he knew that. I said, "Do you know you're the smartest boy up here this summer?" Yes, he knew that.

I said, "Do you know you're the smartest boy we've ever had at the Camp?" And that really pleased him. And I told him, "We've just gotten some new potatoes in that had to be peeled but they were very special potatoes and I didn't want the average person to handle that. Would he mind doing this thing for me, you see?" Well, I had the cook set aside some very small potatoes and he very obediently did a marvelous job with them, which was quite credible.

And the second day, I got hold of him and said, "X, I don't know if you know it, but you're a very smart boy—the smartest boy we have up here—and the smartest boy we've ever had, and we have some very special string beans here."

The third day, he interrupted me very rudely and said, "I don't know why you want me to do these things, I'm not any smarter than anybody else."

To tell you that I was deeply moved by this award which was given to me—but, I must also tell you, in closing, that I experienced two very strong feelings. One was surprise and the other was fear. The surprise came that a great university could hear the voice of one man standing on a small hill and protesting against man's inhumanity to man. The fear came from another reason. I found that I resembled, I think it was an old Roman politician, who was unable to do two things at the same time. In my case the two things were the inability to stand still and go forward. The standing still to my mind seems like vanity, and I hope and pray that there are still many promises for me to keep and miles and miles to go before I sleep. And miles and miles to go before I sleep.

Thank you.