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### Thanks and Appreciation of the Degree, June 11, 1977

Vern Riffe

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SPEECH  
OHIO UNIVERSITY  
HONORARY DEGREE  
JUNE 11, 1977

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LADIES AND GENTLEMEN -- FELLOW GRADUATES -- THIS HONORARY DOCTOR OF LAWS DEGREE IS A VERY SPECIAL AWARD FOR ME.

IT IS SPECIAL BECAUSE ABOUT THIRTY-FIVE YEARS AGO I WAS A STUDENT HERE AT OHIO UNIVERSITY. UNFORTUNATELY, I WAS UNABLE TO COMPLETE MY EDUCATION HERE BECAUSE THE UNITED STATES ARMY AIR CORPS, FAMILY OBLIGATIONS, AND EMPLOYMENT ALL COMBINED TO INTERRUPT MY EDUCATION.

TODAY -- I AM VERY PROUD THAT I RECEIVED A DEGREE FROM OHIO UNIVERSITY.

HOWEVER -- ALTHOUGH MY FORMAL EDUCATION WAS INTERRUPTED -- I QUICKLY DISCOVERED THAT I COULD STILL BE A STUDENT. I COULD STILL LEARN.

BELIEVE ME -- I HAVE LEARNED A LOT -- FROM MY FAMILY, FROM THE AIR CORPS, FROM MY BUSINESS, AND FROM POLITICS, AND I CONTINUE TO LEARN.

THE FACT THAT YOU RECEIVED YOUR DEGREE THIS AFTERNOON DOES NOT MEAN THAT YOU STOP FROM BEING STUDENTS. GRADUATION SHOULD NOT SYMBOLIZE THE END OF YOUR EDUCATION. RATHER -- GRADUATION SHOULD SYMBOLIZE THE ACQUISITION OF INTELLECTUAL TOOLS TO LEARN MORE ABOUT LIFE.

WE CAN CONTINUE BEING STUDENTS WITHOUT THE FORMAL STRUCTURE OF LECTURE HALLS AND PROFESSORS. WE MUST, HOWEVER, BE WILLING TO OBSERVE AND LEARN FROM THE EXPERIENCES WE ENCOUNTER. WE MUST BE WILLING TO EXCHANGE FACTS, IDEAS, AND OPINIONS AMONG OURSELVES. SUCH COMMUNICATION CAN BE ACCOMPLISHED THROUGH READING, WRITING, TALKING AND LISTENING.

THERE IS MUCH TO BE LEARNED BEYOND THE BOUNDARIES OF THIS  
UNIVERSITY -- BUT IF WE CLOSE OUR MINDS WE COULD MISS A LOT OF  
VALUABLE LEARNING.

I RECOMMEND -- I URGE YOU TO KEEP AN OPEN MIND, BE WILLING  
TO CONTINUE TO LEARN FROM YOUR FAMILY, YOUR FRIENDS, YOUR JOB  
AND FROM OTHER EXPERIENCES.

BE WILLING TO CONTINUE TO BE A STUDENT.

THANK YOU, AND CONGRATULATIONS ON YOUR GRADUATION.