

Administrator of the Year Speech 1984

By W. Lynn Dredge

It is hard to know where to start in a moment like this. I must, to all of those who are the distinguished faculty and administration of the university and to all of you, express my deepest appreciation for this recognition. I have been one who has always believed in recognizing and appreciating other people and love always to see that done. I found this a somewhat difficult matter, as I considered all of the people who would be worthy to be so honored. I am deeply grateful to those of you who have been a part of this recognition, one which I shall never forget, for I do so love this University and all that it stands for and all that it has done for so many. I am so grateful to be recognized and honored by this great program, which prepares people generally to serve the public as public administrators and servant. I am grateful to Dr. Knighton, and to all of you who are here for this recognition, and for these gifts. I shall really truly treasure them and I appreciate them very much.

As I thought about this wonderful university and the experience I had here a number of years ago myself, I remember some of the great frustrations that I had with some of the faculty. Some of them are still here. I don't know how they survived this long to be honest with you.

I heard a story that I thought I would tell that sums up our collective feelings because, you see, I still associate myself with you rather than them. I heard the other day the definition of the statement "it's a crying shame." Some of you may not know what that is, but the definition I heard is, you see a busload of MPA faculty members going over a cliff, and realize, as you do, that there are two remaining empty seats.

Seriously, I have forgotten some of the abuses I have taken, and I do not mean all of that over the years and truly appreciate this faculty. I had the privilege tonight of seeing Dr. Snow again after not seeing him for some time. He came here to the university from California. I think that I was in one of his first classes and had a wonderfully enjoyable time under his tutorship and others of you I have known over the years and so greatly appreciate it.

Six weeks ago or so, I received a call from Dr. Knighton. That was not so unusual, because I talk to him and some of the staff members from time to time about the internship programs and other matters affecting the school. We talked about a number of miscellaneous items and then he said, "Oh, by the way, I like to mention, just in closing, that you have been selected to receive the Administrator of the Year Award." I was so shocked, literally, and I don't shock easily after several years in the business I am in, that I nearly sank out of my chair. Then he just continued right on and began to tell me the people that had received the award over the last years. At about that time, my secretary came into the office and quietly whispered to me, after looking at me for a moment, "Are you ill? You are as red as a beet." I truly felt faint at that moment. I recovered a little as Dr. Knighton indicated that last year the governor of Utah had received this award and that a member of the First Presidency was in attendance, a couple of other General Authorities and other people of distinction. I could see rather quickly that he had led himself off a little bit

into a corner, because I think that he thought it is not likely that those folks are going to come for a city manager from California. I listened for a moment as he did and it was interesting for him to explain why the Church wanted to maintain good relationships with the State of Utah, the governor, and those things. After allowing him to back out of that corner a little, I explained that I would understand if they did not come tonight. It was surely a shock to me and one which as I contemplated that I spent more time giving thought to the meaning of that and wondering of my worthiness to receive that recognition. Again, I express my deepest appreciation.

As I consider receiving an award and recognition, may I say that I must conclude with a certainty that those recognitions that we may receive come mostly because of the efforts of other people. We, who may be selected to be awarded, recognized for something or other, must truly, if we think about it, realize that our lives are indeed and greatly blessed by other people. Any accomplishments or successes that we may have find their genesis in others. I think as I say that of my parents and their great teaching in the home. I remember my father telling me, for example, that I had not completed any education when I graduated from high school. There was no doubt that I would go onto college because of his teaching. He was a bishop and a stake president, an outstanding man, a man who I could pattern my life after and have tried to pattern my life after. How grateful I am to him and my good mother for all that they put into me. The essence, perhaps, of that I am. I am grateful for my wife who is such a great supporter. I want to tell you that in public life, you will find that you are called to be away from home in inordinate amounts of time. You have regularly scheduled meetings during the week, always, and specifically scheduled meetings through the week and weekend obligations. And then, for the last fourteen or fifteen years, she sat alone in the congregation at church as I filled my church assignments. She has allowed me to go forth without complaint, without complaining about the things I have been called away from the home to do. Our home has been blessed because of her. My life has been blessed because of her. I could not possibly be standing here accepting this award tonight without her. I tell you, you spouses, that your assistance in sustaining support is essential to success in most any endeavor that your spouse may be pursuing and certainly in a public service endeavor.

I am thankful for my children. I suspect that most adults that have children realize the demands of family and the responsibility of family and how a negative family environment could influence your ability to function. I am grateful to my children that are here who have supported me so well and those who are at home to support my wife and I in the things that we do. To church leaders, who have given so much to me, who have set such good examples, to this university, to Stewart Grow, who was mentioned earlier. May I just be personal for a moment and tell you the brief experience with he who has been known as such a friend to students.

I recall one day on campus walking down the hall and him coming out and catching me by the arm as I was ready to go down to an assembly activity. He said to me, "Lynn, we had a test the other day and you didn't do particular well on it. I know you and know that you know that subject matter better than you have indicated by the test results." He put his arm around me and asked me what the problem was. I was a little discouraged at the time with the responsibilities of a family. My son that is here with us tonight was with us then. I was working a job starting at

four o'clock in the morning and going until eight and working an evening job in order to support my family, and trying to study. I have never been a particularly good test taker anyway. And so, he gave me the opportunity as he walked down to the Fieldhouse to discuss that with him and express some of my feelings and listened and encouraged me. As we came back, we got to the office and he said, "Come in the office." I stopped in the office with him for a moment and he proceeded to give me an oral examination of the subject matter that I had done poorly on in the test. And after he finished that, he said, "You see, I know that you knew the subject material. I am going to raise your grade and disregard the test."

I don't suppose that I can tell you what that meant to me as a student, and how I have loved this man for his goodness to me. As I say that, I know that there are innumerable students who have graduated from BYU who could tell similar experiences of a man's love for man, caring and concern for fellowmen. What a hallmark that is and how we exemplified it. How I wish he were here tonight so that I could thank him personally and publically as I have privately many times.

So as I say to you I appreciate receiving this award, I must give credit to other people who have made that possible and there are innumerable others. Just by way of some comment to you, most of you who are nearing the completion of your formal college training have great apprehension as you prepare to go out into the job market about whether or not you will be able to be placed and be successful in moving into the work environment. Let me assure you that you will be successful. You will find your place, rather quickly and without great difficulty, and you will prepare and begin a process of further education and development and will begin to make your contribution to mankind.

To those who are uneducated whom you will encounter, you will be held in esteem and there will be some that speak about you and will respect you for the effort that you have made. To those who have been similarly educated, you will join a fraternity. You will be a respected brother or sister and be accepted into the circles and the society you are moving into. You have the key that will open the door to those opportunities. You need not be doubtful about that. You will be successful as you pursue your efforts if you will apply principles and practices that you learned here. Let me read you some guidance that will be the other factor that will help you be successful. It is entitled "The Hustler."

"And in those days, behold, there came through the gates of the city as a salesman from far off. And it came to pass that as the day went by, he sold a plenty. And in that city were they that were the takers of orders and they did spend their days adding to the alibi sheets. Mighty was their astonishment. They said to one another, "What the heck. How doth he getteth away with it?" And it came to pass that many were gathered in the back office and a soothsayer came amongst them. And he was one wise guy. And they spoke and questioned him saying, "How is it that the stranger accomplishes the impossible?" Whereupon the soothsayer made answer, "He of whom you speak is one hustler. He ariseth early in the morning and goeth forth full of pep. He complaineth not, neither doth he know despair. He is arrayed in purple and fine linen while you goeth forth in unpressed pants. While ye gather here and say one to another, verily this is a terrible day to work, he is already abroad. And when the eleventh hour cometh, he needeth no alibis. He knoweth his lines and they who would state him off, they give him orders. Men say

unto him, Nay when he cometh in, yet, when he goeth forth he has their names on the orders. He taketh with him two angels, inspiration and perspiration, and worketh to beat all. Verily, I say unto you, go and do likewise.”

You have the key if you will go forth now to these people who will accept you and worketh to beat all. You will have great success. All of you. I suspect that that is a great key. Now there are some others. Let me move to them quickly. Just a couple of points that I want to make mention to you.

You have used texts that have been provided by your faculty and they have taught you many technical skills and abilities. I am sure that you have learned them well. Let me refer to another text with which you are familiar as I give some parting suggestion here tonight.

One is, “let your lights so shine that other will see your good works and wish to emulate you”. That is a great management principle. Dr. Knighton mentioned here just a little ago the experience that I had with the young man who came on the council. I wish I could describe to you how contrary and objectionable an individual that he was. I tried to be his friend, live with him, and work with him in a professional and careful way. One day after we had been in the same working environment for three or four years, he came to me and said, “Your life seems to have purpose and meaning beyond your work and employment. You seem to find peace and happiness outside of work. Work doesn’t seem to be the most important thing to you in the world. I would like to find out what it is that you have that seems to fulfill your life outside of work.” And so he gave us then the opportunity to teach him the gospel. As Dr. Knighton mentioned, he has joined the church and is now the Executive Secretary in the ward. He was the mayor for four years and we went on to have a wonderful relationship. I suppose when I assess my life, it is not the airports, the sewage treatment plants, and the streets, libraries, and parks that I have had a hand in building that are important to me, but the affect that I might have had on someone’s life.

Let me read a little note that I might have received one day that perhaps summarizes my feelings and some of that experience. I was called on to speak at the funeral of a mayor. The mayor who had hired me that had passed away. Afterwards, his wife wrote me this little card. “Mere words cannot express what you have meant to Willard during the years he worked with you. When your high moral values he held in the highest esteem. He truly did look upon you as a son. Thank you for the beautiful words on Thursday.”

You know, knowing that that man considered that I had high moral values is more important to me than all of the other things that I have mentioned together. I have also found it good to associate myself with those who might be considered at times to be the adversary to us in the church and often are. As you may know, I work with ministerial associated in the community. One day I received this note after have spoken to a congregation in the First Baptist Church in our community.

“Dear Friend:

Now that I am feeling fairly good. (He had some surgery at about this time.) I am recuperating from surgery, I have time to write and reflect upon the rich blessings that have been mine in recent weeks. August the 27 was a very special day and you helped to make it so. Thank you again for coming and making a special day for me. But more than that, thank you and bless you for being you—one of God's ambassadors and friends."

You know, that means a great deal to me. Knowing that the Baptist minister in town considered me to be one of God's ambassadors and not an effective, efficient administrator. I would much rather be known as one of God's ambassadors than a great and effective manager. Just one more. This is a note that was sent to me by the mayor of who had been one of my non-friends to begin with.

"Just a note to thank you for all you have done for me and my family. Your support and friendship has been a real comfort to me in my times of need. I am truly being blessed by that association we had and want you to know that the strength and guidance you have given me over to the years has helped me become the person my family is proud of. I just wanted to say thank you."

I would much rather be known for having helped an individual than for being an effective, efficient administrator.

Let your light shine so that men will see the good works and bless their own lives as a consequence of that. I consider that to be a great and important responsibility you should assume and take upon yourselves as you go forth from this great university.

Listen to some other management counsel:

"Do unto others. Or have you heard, it is the nature and disposition of almost all men that when they get a little authority as they may suppose, they begin to exercise unrighteous dominion." As an administrator, I have tried to keep that in mind throughout my working career. That we ought not to go forth and exercise unrighteous dominion in any of our positions in which we work. And then again, reproof when needed and moved upon by the Holy Ghost. And then showing afterwards, love least those whom you have reproofed would consider you to be their enemy.

This use of genuine love or our attempt to express this genuine love the Savior taught for all people in all places is a great opportunity as administrators. Proving that we are the boss or in charge and capable of administering by force of office is proof of nothing as far as I am concerned. We have great opportunity to lead and to teach and to help people by persuasion, education and training and assistance. I have a person in my organization that comes from a totally different background than I do. He is an obstreperous fellow in my opinion and I worked closely with him as a department head for eight years. I constantly have to tell myself that there is a place for everyone in this world and everyone must have an opportunity to work for life with their families. And as I tell myself that, I then realize that indeed there is a place for him. Though I consider him to be obstreperous and over the years we have developed a good relationship.

I would say to you without seeming I had hopes to preach to you that the understanding of the blessings of the gospel become a greatest management tools and blessings available to a public

administrator or any administrator for that matter that there are. You are going to graduate from this university with substantially all the technical skills that you will need to be successful in your work life. If you will apply those blessings and those principles that we find contained in the scriptures to the management skills that you have learned out of the book and the technical manuals that you have here at school, you will truly be good and successful administrators.

Edwin Burke once said, "The only thing necessary for the triumphant leader was for a good man to do nothing." How the world cries out really truly for good men. Men and women who can be truly trusted, who demonstrates the ability to be trusted. The world cries out for those kinds. You here have that combination of teaching and training that I am sure will help you find the greatest success that there is. While life will not be without its challenges, and there will be many difficulties that you and I yet will face in our lives, we will survive and we will find the greatest peace if we love our fellowmen and treat them in our administrations as we would treat ourselves.

I again express my deepest appreciation to all of you and my assurance that you will find great success in the efforts that you take following your graduation. I thank you for this opportunity to be here and the privilege of knowing and meeting some of you and having this acquaintanceship with you. I pray God's blessings to accompany you in all the things that you do that you will find peace in your lives and happiness in your pursuits, success in the things that you righteously endeavor to do. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.