

Remarks made by

CHARLES GRAY – CLASS OF 1960 -- 50TH REUNION, MAY 8, 2010

THE KIDS FROM SMALLTOWN, USA

IT'S GREAT TO BE HERE WITH ALL OF YOU AND TO RELIVE OLD MEMORIES. WHEN ANN SMITH CALLED AND ASK IF I WOULD MAKE A FEW COMMENTS TONIGHT, I BEGAN REFLECTING ON OUR TIME AT CHAPEL HILL. I REALIZED THAT ALL OF US HAVE OUR OWN DIFFERENT AND SPECIAL MEMORIES OF CAROLINA, SO I TRIED TO THINK OF SOMETHING THAT WE ALL HAD IN COMMON. I BELIEVE THAT, 52 OR 54 YEARS AGO, THE THING THAT MOST OF US HAD IN COMMON IS THAT WE WERE JUST KIDS FROM SMALLTOWN, USA. EVEN OUR BIG CITIES - CHARLOTTE, RALEIGH, GREENSBORO, AND WINSTON-SALEM - WERE SMALL BACK THEN. OUR WORLD CONSISTED OF A LIMITED AREA - THE DOWNTOWN SODA SHOP, THE DRIVE-IN THEATER, FRIDAY NIGHT FOOTBALL, AND A SUMMER TRIP TO THE MOUNTAINS OR THE BEACH. IF WE WERE LUCKY, WE HAD VISITED WASHINGTON D.C. ON A SCHOOL TRIP OR MAYBE NEW YORK CITY. OUR LIFETIME EXPERIENCES WERE ALSO LIMITED. WE HAD PROBABLY BEEN RAISED IN VERY CONSERVATIVE HOUSEHOLDS AND IN A SEGREGATED SOCIETY. WE GREW UP IN THE 50'S, WHEN WE HAD A FATHER FIGURE, DWIGHT EISENHOUR, AS PRESIDENT – A TIME OF PEACE, PROSPERITY AND RATHER GENTILE POLITICS. OUR ROMANCE WAS LIMITED TO OUR HIGH SCHOOL SWEETHEARTS. WE WERE VERY ROUGH, UNFINISHED GEMS. AT CAROLINA THOSE ROUGH GEMS STARTED A LONG, POLISHING PROCESS - YOU REMEMBER MANY OF THEM, BUT TO MENTION A FEW: -- THOSE THE DREADED 8:00AM SATURDAY CLASSES TAUGHT US ENDURANCE, THE FOOTBALL GAMES IN KENAN STADIUM AND BASKETBALL GAMES IN WOOLEN GYM , ESPECIALLY THE EXCITING NATIONAL CHAMPIONSHIP IN 1957 – THE EXPOSURE TO THE ARTS AND THE STUDY OF RELIGION WHERE WE FOUND OUT FROM DR. BOYD THAT JONAH WAS NOT SWALLOWED BY THE WHALE – EVEN LEARNING SOME ARCHEOLOGY WHILE STRUGGLING THOUGH DR. HARLAN'S CLASSES,--DISCOVERING THAT A PURPLE LIQUID(PJ) CAUSED A HORRIBLE HEADACHE THE NEXT DAY – THROUGH STUDENT GOVERNMENT,

REALIZING THE PHENOMENON OF LIBERAL AND CONSERVATIVE POLITICS EXISTED BACK THEN, -- THE LAUNCHING OF SPUTNIK AND KRUSHCHEV BANGING HIS SHOE MADE US REALIZE THAT HAPPENED ABROAD GREATLY AFFECTED OUR LIVES; - THE LUNCH COUNTER STRIKES MADE US FACE THE ISSUE OF RACE AND THAT A PERSON SHOULD NOT BE JUDGED BY THE COLOR OF THEIR SKIN!

WHEN WE WALKED ACROSS THE STAGE ON THAT RAINY GRADUATION DAY IN MAY, 1960, WE WERE IN OUR 20S, STILL ROUGH BUT MUCH SMOOTHER GEMS. WE HAD NO IDEA WHAT LIFE HELD FOR US, BUT WE WENT OUR WAYS - I ENDED UP IN LAW SCHOOL IN NEW YORK CITY AND SPENT 2 CONSECUTIVE SUMMER IN EUROPE. WHAT A POLISHING -- TRAVEL, MUSEUMS, ART, OPERA, BIG CITY, HIPPIES. MOST OF YOU HAD SIMILAR EXPERIENCES. WE ALL STARTED WORK, GOT MARRIED, HAD CHILDREN, SOME WENT TO WAR -- WE SAW THE TRAGIC DEATHS OF JOHN AND BOBBY KENNEDY AND MARTIN LUTHER KING,- THE LANDING ON THE MOON -- THE DRUG SCENE -- WE WERE MUCH SMOOTHER. IT WAS 1970 AND WE WERE IN OUR 30S.

THEN LONG GAS LINES, WATERGATE, NIXON'S RESIGNATION, THE DEFEAT IN VIET NAM, THE STRUGGLE WITH RAISING A FAMILY, THE 16% INTEREST RATE, AND THE IRAN HOSTAGE CRISIS -- WE WERE A LITTLE SMOOTHER . IT WAS 1980 AND WE WERE IN OUR 40S.

THE RECESSION OF THE 80S -- BUT PEACE AND THE FEEL GOOD TIME OF RONALD REAGAN, THE FALL OF THE SOVIET UNION -- OUR CHILDREN GOING TO COLLEGE (TRYING TO GET THEM IN CAROLINA), THE MID-LIFE CRISIS --MORE POLISHING . IT WAS 1990 AND WE ARE IN OUR 50S.

THE GULF WAR AND PROSPERITY AND TO PUT IT MILDLY, THE INTERESTING YEARS OF BILL CLINTON. WE STARTED SEEING CHANGES -- GRAY HAIR OR NO

HAIR, LITTLE OVERWEIGHT, MAYBE A FAILED MARRIAGE – THE DEATH OF A PARENT OR FRIEND - STRUGGLING TO SAVE SO WE COULD RETIRE, --GROWN CHILDREN, WEDDINGS AND GRANDCHILDREN -- SOME HEAVY POLISHING.IT WAS THE MILLENIUM, THE YEAR 2000 AND WE WERE IN OUR 60S.

NOW WE ARE READY TO SLOW DOWN AND RETIRE – BUT NO – THAT FATEFUL DAY OF SEPT 11, 2001, THE 2 WARS, TAKING OFF OUR SHOES AT AIRPORTS, MAYBE A SERIOUS ILLNESS AND EVEN DEATH OF VERY CLOSE ONES – THE FINANCIAL MELTDOWN , THE ELECTION OF THE NATION’S FIRST AFRO-AMERICAN PRESIDENT AND SUDDENLY IT IS 2010 AND WE ARE IN OUR 70S AND ARE HERE TONIGHT IN CHAPEL HILL.

THOSE ROUGH AND UNPOLISHED GEMS THAT ARRIVED IN CHAPEL HILL OVER 50 YEARS AGO HAVE BEEN POLISHED AND POLISHED BY THE EXPERIENCES OF LIFE, - THE JOYS AND LAUGHTER, THE HARDSHIPS, THE HEARTBREAKS AND TEARS. WE HAVE ACTUALLY BEEN WORN DOWN SOMEWHAT - BUT WE ARE SO BLESSED -- UNLIKE OVER 300 OF OUR CLASSMATES, WE HAVE MADE IT TO THAT GLORIOUS EVENT --OUR 50TH REUNION AT CAROLINA.

JUST LIKE THAT FIRST DAY HERE LONG AGO, WE DON’T KNOW WHAT LIES AHEAD FOR US – HOPEFULLY IT IS A LONG AND HAPPY ENDING TO THIS JOURNEY.

ALL I KNOW IS THAT 2 THINGS HAVE REMAINED CONSTANT DURING THIS LONG POLISHING PROCESS OF LIFE:

DEEP DOWN, EVEN THOUGH WE ARE MUCH WISER AND MUCH SMOTHER, WE ARE STILL THOSE KIDS FROM SMALL TOWN USA AND

ALL ALONG THE WAY, IN EVERY FACET OF OUR LIVES, WE HAVE LOVED THE UNIVERSITY OF NORTH CAROLINA WHERE IT ALL BEGAN.

THANK YOU AND GOD BLESS YOU.

CHARLES GRAY –CLASS OF 1960 50TH REUNION, MAY 8, 2010