

Look around you. There are people in this room that will be worthy companions through your lifetime, whose lives and cultures will enrich you beyond measure. Seek them out, let down your defenses, be open to new relationships you may uncover in the classrooms, on the playing fields, in the laboratories, in the hallways of your residence hall, even during the forest parties. Seek out some of our campus characters — they got that way because of a strength of personality that has been worn and polished by experience and time and by their love of teaching.

This college is deliberately unlike the real world. The difference is signified by symbols like these hot and stuffy robes we are wearing and these funny looking hats which we try to keep on our heads. But the difference really resides in the once-in-a-lifetime opportunity you have here to take intellectual risks. To escape the normal human laziness which we are all afflicted. To take courses that may seem at first frivolous or unconnected with any career aspiration, simply because you have "never taken something like that," but are willing to try it out once in your life.

You know by now your own accustomed patterns of learning. You know what it takes to prepare for an exam. You know how much you have to study in order to be ready for a class. I am suggesting that there is a fortune to be found if you push yourselves beyond these comfortable habits.

Be curious about the way other people learn. Attend a performance and lecture by a talented young pianist, blind since birth, because you want to understand how she has managed to command a wide keyboard and memorize hours of the most intricate of Beethoven's, Mozart's and Chopin's music, all without recourse to what is for most of us the single most important sense of all, the single most important measure of orientation — that of sight. Then push yourself to stretch the current limits of your own senses.

Through discipline and taking chances, forge new synapses in your brain. It really can be done.

Ask a Japanese friend how about his views of what is happening in the world, express your concern to him about the latest earthquake to hit his nation, reach out to him when the newspaper carries news of a student from his county who has been shot in one of our cities.

Ask friends from Yugoslavia and the Republic of Georgia what have been the values they have found most important to hang onto as their political and economic structures have disintegrated and many of their friends and family have been killed in civil war. What have they and their families found to sustain themselves through it all?

Ask a friend from The Gambia in West Africa about the fascinating politics of his country which has a comparatively long tradition of political stability in spite of a complex ethnic, linguistic and political diversity that would make Rush Limbaugh seem like Jesse Jackson's brother.

Exchange views with a friend about what each of you finds most beautiful or ugliest in this world, and rejoice in the common ground you may find. Learn how to say "good morning" — that most universal of greetings — in the languages of your friends from abroad. Think to yourself how lonely it would be to go a whole year without being greeted familiarly in your native tongue.

Ask your professor or the secretary in your departmental office about what she or he most enjoys doing outside class — you will find this campus chock full of unexpected talents and passionate hobbyists. There is someone at this college who knows and cares a lot about almost any subject in which you might have an interest. Seek that person out.

Above all, push yourself into ac-

tivities you've never tried before. Go to concerts, lectures, plays, athletic events, because they are full of a different kind of learning from what you meet day to day in the classroom. Make a commitment to yourself to do something absolutely new at least once a week, even if your first reaction may be to gag, as you and I did when we were 2 1/2 years old and our parents made us eat something we had already made up our minds we wouldn't like.

Get in the habit of pushing yourself beyond your fears and the limits of your comfort zone. So condition your mind and spirit, that at some time in the future, you too will rise to meet some human crisis armed with the moral courage and clarity of that young woman on the streets of Tbilisi. You can prepare yourself for this moment, even as a musician or an athlete prepares. Just as a practiced pianist's fingers seem to float unconsciously through a Schubert impromptu or as Michael Jordan appears to float effortlessly toward the basket, you may someday find yourself rising to a human crisis so spontaneously and so naturally that it will take your breathe away, and make you feel truly human, as if for the first time.

Students and colleagues, we are gathered here in a privileged place of learning, of aspiration and of human community; this place where some of us will remain but a few years and others, for a lifetime; a human place, resonant with a rich range of values, cultural and ethnic backgrounds, interests and beliefs; a place that has the resources to enlarge our minds and our spirits so that we go forth from here capable of changing the world for the better through our attentiveness to God, our love of others, and our stewardship of this beautiful, blue-green planet that is our home.

I am honored to welcome you to this privileged place, the world of Brevard College, in this month of September in the year nineteen hundred ninety three.