June 6, 1970

Dear Judge:

The millenium is at hand: the Headmaster of the Hathaway Brown School for Girls has asked me to give the Commencement Address. I said, "Young man, do you know what you're doing?" And accepted before he could change his mind.

It turns out that your granddaughter and my niece, Emily, class of 1970, put my name in the hopper of possible commencement speakers. The class voted and I won.

The last time I appeared in that lovely outdoor theater you were present to see me graduate, thirty years ago. Since it's that kind of a milestone, and all my immediate family will attend, as well as three former instructors, I have sweat blood over it. Several of my classmates and other acquaintances who have daughters in the class will permit their offspring to hear me. A few will not, incredible as that still seems to me.

I am guided in this speech by your ancient Chinese admonition: "When you have an advantage, don't take all of it."

HATHAWAY BROWN SCHOOL

COMMENCEMENT ADDRESS, JUNE 12, 1970, BY MRS. CYRUS EATON

My dear Young Ladies:

It is apparent, I hope, that I am a woman and therefore, like you (according to an eminent male psychologist), one of an oppressed minority, subject to psychological pressures which lead to mental and emotional disturbances, even violence. So much for that psychologist; he may have a problem himself. And so much for the militants of the Women's Lib, who have done for true feminism what the Boston Strangler did for door-to-door salesmen. We must be kind to these people (they all need mothering), but not take them seriously. It is difficult for me to see how burning certain items of apparel provides any uplift, if I may put it that way. On the contrary.

But we must take seriously what Dr. Erik Erikson says about the uniqueness of women. Erikson is a leading international figure in psychoanalysis and the field of human development. I recommend his book, Insight and Responsibility, especially a chapter on Human Strength and the Cycle of Generations. That's what commencements celebrate. He says women are being granted equal political rights and the recognition of a "certain sameness" in mental and moral equipment (only a man would put it that way, but we won't quibble), but they have not begun to earn the equal right to be effectively unique and to use their hard won rights in the service of what they uniquely represent in human evolution. (I heard a few distant trumpets sounding when I read that.)

What is it that women represent? Hope. Hope, my dear young ladies. Hope relies for its beginnings in any infant on trustworthy maternal

persons. In this era of fantastic mobility, upheaval and divisiveness, we are pre-occupied, he says, with roots, beginnings and first elements, with the mother-child relationship. We must make contact with this ontogenic source of hope (I looked that up; it means pertaining to the life development of an individual), with woman's most basic role in man's universe and with the roots of an ethics which must surpass man's proud inventions. (More trumpets.) The future of mankind, says he, cannot depend on men alone and may depend on the fate of the "mother variable" uncontrolled by technological man. (More trumpets. Blaring.)

"An ethics which must surpass man's proud inventions" - like the hydrogen bomb, for instance, or the multiple war head, or the ballistic missile. It's as simple as ABM. "It dawns on us," says this great masculine expert, "that womanhood may be forced to bear the larger share in saving humanity from man's climactic and catastrophic aspirations." (Trumpets. Possibly taps.)

That's the challenge, my dear young mother-variables: not to be equal to men (what's so great about that?) but to provide, subtly, an ethics for them, since they will continue to run things - rather poorly - but perhaps they haven't had the caliber of help they deserve. The challenge is to give heart to the life of the mind.

As the Indian said: How?

I want you to know about some friends of mine - not all career women, not all well educated, not all mothers (that's not a prerequisite) - just women who acted like real women.

The first, a negro widow without education or money, raised (and it's no accident that we say parents "raise" or "bring up" meaning "lift") two little sons, alone. They had none of the so-called advantages. What they had was a mother who knew what she was doing, and why. The only help she had was the occasional presence of her own mother. One of these boys is our mayor and one is a congressman from Cleveland.

How do you assess her contribution to this city, county, state, nation? What decisions are made in Cleveland, in international mayors' meetings, in the House of Representatives, in the Congress, because of the two voices she "raised"? Where did those sons' faith in this country originate? How important is that faith today when "Burn, baby, Burn" is the cry of some negroes here? "Learn, baby, Learn," is what the Stokeses say; that's what their mother taught them. There's Louise Stokes, the real thing. She mothered her sons.

It's possible to mother a city. The second lady is in another country. She's about my mother's age and looks astonishingly like her. (My mother, incidentally, is completing roughly forty years of HB commencements, May Days, and Carnivals, with her youngest granddaughter's graduation today - which only proves that woman's work is never done, if she's the real thing, of course.) The lady abroad told me in French that her city was occupied by Germans in the last war, and she'd experienced the first war Germans, too. Her husband said that when he departed with his government-in-exile for London, he left a lady of leisure, who never got up before ten, and returned to find he was married to the head of the underground.

They had a daughter, my age, who was killed in an air raid. Many of the daughter's friends had babies, so when Madame wanted hand-grenades delivered around town, she had the young matrons gather at her house to show off their babies, have tea, eminently respectable, line the bottom of the carriages with grenades, put mattresses and babies on top, and stroll to their delivery points. She was a source of hope for Warsaw. She is Madame Winiewicz, the wife of the current Foreign Minister of Poland.

I heard at the Canfield Lecture that a group of young women, some of you, went to Washington on behalf of the environment of Cleveland. I'd say they were uncontrolled by technological man, who made the mess in the first place, and won't clear it up, as any woman knows, until he's made to. That's mothering a city, too.

You can mother a country and the world. My third friend is my age, married with grown children, an illustrator of children's books in her spare time. She hasn't had much of that since she invited four friends to her Washington house to see what women could do to stop the testing of nuclear bombs. This was in '60.

Fall-out from bomb tests produced Strontium 90 drifting around the globe on the winds. When it landed where, for instance, cows graze, the milk the cows gave produced leukemia and bone cancer in the babies who drank it, not to mention genetic damage in those who survived.

These women contacted their Christmas card lists and to everyone's surprise, 150,000 women turned out in 50 cities. That was the beginning of

the Women Strike for Peace, now international. The woman is Dagmar Wilson. The test ban treaty was signed, not solely because of us, but certainly it would not have been signed without us.

Whose baby died of leukemia wasn't our point. (There's no difference between a capitalistic diaper and a communistic one.) Our point was no baby should be so threatened and no one had the right, in the name of any idea of government, to risk the genetic heritage of the race as a whole. Which is to say, there is an ethics surpassing man's proud inventions, including forms of government, and it is centered on the sanctity of life. The answer to "better dead than Red" (which is always said by people who have never been either and are too dense to see that that isn't the choice, anyway) is: "where there's life, there's hope." I'm sure a woman said that.

I must mention Coretta King. I first met her when she joined fifty American women to go to Geneva to badger the Disarmament Conference men, who were not disarming in any sense. She and Dagmar and I were interviewed at the airport. She was asked why she would leave her particular crusade - it was integrating lunch counters in Alabama then - to join us. She said, "I don't see any reason for us all to be able to sit together if we're going to be blown up just after we sit down." I've loved her ever since. In those days a lot of people who had no such personal hurdle as hers were unwilling or unable to give that kind of heart to the life of their minds.

Thirty years ago I sat down there listening to Miss Raymond, who always stressed intellectual integrity. "Beauty is truth and truth, beauty"

was her favorite. It was Miss Coburn's second commencement. Her favorite then was "Happiness lies not in doing what you like but in liking what you have to do."

That there is now recognition of a "certain sameness" in women's mental and moral equipment, is due to the efforts of such dedicated educators of women as they. I want to add a quote - not that I am in their distinguished company, mind you - but to emphasize uniqueness.

I'm quoting Tennyson, of all people. I imagine he's considered square, Round Table and all. However, he's been made into a musical called Camelot, and Guinevere wasn't exactly Queen Victoria. And have you seen a picture of him? Complete hippy - sideburns, beard, hair over the collar, marvelous face. I should quote a woman but I have a sentimental reason for this and she is here. It is my daughter; we have quoted this to each other for some years. It is from Ulysses:

"All experience is an arch wherethrough gleams that untravelled world whose margins fade forever and forever as I move." This is the real "trip," if I may put it that way.

I exhort you, in true commencement address style, to follow the gleam. You may be the only one who sees it, especially if you're surrounded by men. After looking at you today, I know you already are.

I must make clear how I feel about men; actually I'm very partial to them. Some of my best friends are men. I'm glad I don't have their responsibilities; I admire them. I hope Mr. Harris knows that I feel permanently indebted for the great compliment of his invitation to speak to you.

But today I'm concentrating on what women can do independently, uniquely, to help us all.

So - follow the gleam, make the margins fade, move - or, roughly translated, do your own unique thing. Be swingers - not in the sense of seducto ad absurdum, but of swinging a generation, a country, a world - why not? to the ethics surpassing man's proud inventions. You were born with the roots of that ethics; you can deny them or make the most of them. I don't need to tell you what needs your unique attention. William James once wrote to Jane Addams: "You inhabit reality." So do you.

I thank you in advance for all you will do. I thank you for all you will try to do.

Good luck.

And I thank you, honored faculty and fellow relatives and friends of the Class of '70, for the privilege of addressing our hostages to fortune.