

FEBRUARY 17, 1969JOHN A. REIDOpening Remarks

1. Today is my birthday, so when this date was assigned me, I thought it appropriate to compare some experiences in my earlier years with those generally available to present day youths, both for our amusement and also to see what influence these experiences may have had on character forming.

Character building

It appears that character building developed more naturally in our youth through the assumption of responsibilities for household or farm chores, or a paper route, or sweeping out a store, or shoveling snow, or teaching a Sunday School class. Developing character seems more elusive today.

Few of us had to contend with today's degree of sexy books, theater, T.V. or movies, which fill our youths with ideas and desires far beyond their years and beyond decency.

In School to learn

We seldom had such dissatisfaction with our schools and colleges that we'd try to tell the authorities how to run their schools. We were there to be taught and to learn, not expecting to govern until we had acquired an education on which to base judgments. If we didn't like a college, or thought its curriculum was not for us, we'd change colleges if our record was such that some other would accept us. Today, even some of the teachers join in harrassing their employers in uncondonable and unconscionable ways.

Many of the experiences I will tell about are no longer attainable. They are gone, but not forgotten. I feel they had a lot to do with the development of our characters. These experiences will be compared to some available today.

Canals

2(a) You are all familiar with the Miami to Lake Erie Canal, and many others, built by hand in the 1800's.

Camping out at the aqueduct

2(b) In my early childhood, my family spent several summer vacations camping out in tents in the dried up bed of the long unused Boston to Lowell Canal, next to where it crossed over the Shawsheen River, via an aqueduct, in Billerica, Massachusetts.

Here, was what to me seemed like the Eighth Wonder of the World, a canal crossing over a river at about 100 feet above the river's surface.

Stone pillars had been built, without benefit of steam derricks. How they were able to build the trough for the canal, so it would hold up and not leak, a distance of about 100 yards across the river's gorge, was, and still is, beyond my comprehension. The trough had fallen into the gorge long before my time.

Climbing the pier

2(c) Boys and young men used to try to climb to the top of that aqueduct's center pier. Some made it, but once up they had perhaps even a harder time getting down. One Sunday a lad got up there and got so frightened he couldn't start down. After much counseling from the ground by his buddies, he was urged to try to come down a tall tree which had a branch within his reach. When he swung out away from the stone pier, to go hand over hand towards the trunk of that tree, you could feel and almost hear the heart beats of the few who witnessed this daring effort. He made it down to everyone's cheers and relief. It was like seeing a person rescued from drowning.

Today's Youths Climb too

Today, some young men do go in for mountain climbing and take risks comparable to the above. They learn to share risks and responsibility with their fellow climbers, and this is great training for them.

Our Camp site

3(a) The bed of the Boston to Lowell Canal, where we camped, was a soft mat of long grass in a shaded area. Trees on the south side shut off any cursory view of the camp site from the road, which paralleled the canal at this point. A trolley line from Wilmington to Billerica also ran along our side of the road. The trolleys were the small four-wheeler type, with open cars for the summers.

Trolley Cars

3(b) Do you remember the sound of such trolley cars as they literally bounced and jounced their way along tracks, swinging from side to side? Remember the hum of the wire and occasionally the clatter when the trolley lost contact with the wire? Remember too, the sounds of its bells - the ding-ding and the clang-clang?

Trolley Conductor

3(c) Have you swung out along the running board of an open trolley car, making believe you were the conductor, collecting and ringing up fares, as you went along, by pulling the cord to the register which was fastened where everyone could see that each fare was turned in? Did you swear to yourself that if you could only some day get to be a trolley car conductor, or a motorman, you would have achieved the ultimate of success?

Canoeing

3(d) This river, where I learned to swim, runs north and empties into the Merrimack River. We had a canoe and used it for fishing or just paddling for hours up or down stream. It was more fun to go up first, so the return trip was largely a

matter of floating back. We hardly ever went north beyond a railroad bridge, as below that there were a lot of rocks in the river and it was hard going at low water. There was some good fishing down there, though.

Swimming Hole

3(e) A few hundred yards upstream was a deep hole with a good shore. Here is where we did most of our swimming. My three older brothers were not satisfied with my progress in learning to swim, so one day they pushed me overboard and told me to swim ashore. I don't know how I did it, but I made it and had no trouble swimming after that. I don't necessarily recommend this method in all cases, but it worked for me, and I don't think it caused me to have any deep-seated psychiatric problems, which some mothers today would expect from such a "traumatic experience."

School Discipline

4(a) I have always believed in proper punishment for unruly children by their teachers and parents. We had a 7th grade school teacher though, who went a little beyond the call of duty perhaps, but she did quickly gain control of her new classes each year. This woman, (Miss Forbes), was monstrous and would take no sass from anyone. She would yank an unruly boy out of his seat and hang him up by the back of his collar on a coat hook in the hall. Stories handed down from class to class had it that one day she even leaned over three desks to grab a particularly obstreperous youth, pulled him out of his seat and quickly hung him on the hook in the hall. No one dared hang their coats or hats on that first hook outside this classroom's door. It was reserved for that teacher's use.

No complaints from Parents

4(b) Funny thing, too, in those days, parents didn't go running to the school principal to complain; on the contrary, usually, when word filtered back home that a child had been unruly in school, he or she got a second whipping from father with a

hard bare hand or a wooden-backed clothes brush, or a switch, on a bare bottom. You recall, we did have report cards too, with grades clearly marked from A to F, and the deportment was a seaprate and distinct marking which seemed most important, as this was something that all parents clearly understood.

No Dissenters then

4(c) We didn't have many dissenters in my youth. Those who were out of step found themselves frowned on for wasting the teachers and other students time and found themselves ignored socially. They could not expect to be a part of the "in" crowd then.

Picnics

5(a) During the era before World War I, we had great times each summer going to church and Business Men's Association, annual picnics, at either Salem Willows or Nahant. The local churches would ban together for these trips using about 10 trolley cars. (8 wheelers would be used for this kind of a long trip of about 8 to 10 miles each way).

Pood baskets

Each family would carry huge baskets of food and all would join in broups for lunch, after one or more ballgames, usually between the married and single men.

Ballgames

During the ballgames, the children would be playing games and on rides of all kinds and picking up shells on the shore. Some went swimming and all, of course, were frequently after candy and ice cream, but especially Salt Water Taffy.

Salt Water Taffy

If you've never had salt water taffy at Salem Willows, you haven't lived. But don't try it now if you have false teeth.

Boat Rides

We also could take boat rides in large launches, holding 25 to 40 people each, out to Bakers Island, to the South to Marblehead, with its beautiful harbor full of sail boats and motor yachts. Either trip was to us then, a great experience and the excitement of someone almost falling overboard, or almost sighting a whale, would be recounted to all who would listen, on the return trolley trip in the evening, by which time most of the young children would be asleep in parents' laps.

Ecumenical Movement

These church picnics knew no church limitations and were no doubt the forerunner of the ecumenical movement. As a matter of fact, sometimes one even noticed a Protestant boy squiring a Catholic girl, or vice versa, much to the worry of some of the mothers. I'm sure some of them worried all the way home for fear some lasting acquaintanceship might have been started with a boy or girl of the "wrong" faith.

Lovers will be Lovers

Couples vied for the rear seats on these open trolleys, so they could better watch the moon on the return trip. We did hold hands in those days and sometimes sneaked a quick kiss if the young lady was willing.

Trip to Squantum - Wright Brothers Flight

5(b) By train and trolley my father took my brothers and me to see one of the Wright brothers fly his biplane from the Squantum neck on the south edge of Boston Harbor out to Boston Light and back. It was about a 12 mile round trip and it was billed as the longest flight up to that time. That was in 1908, I think. I was pretty young then, to be sure, (six), but I remember we stood on the shore at Old Harbor, South Boston, at what used to be called, Tinian Beach, called that because it was so cluttered with tin cans from picnicians.

Skating

6(a) I lived close to the Saugus River, in Wakefield, Massachusetts, and in the winter time, the Saugus River was dammed to backwater over a big meadow and cranberry bogs, to help preserve a supply of water for reservoirs below, for the Lynn water supply. This gave us a vast expanse of ice. There was no better skating area anywhere.

Big Meadow Location

6(b) So you will know exactly where this big meadow is, it's on the northeast side of Route 128 just before you reach the Colonial Golf & Country Club, west of South Lynnfield, where you turn north if you are headed for Maine.

The Saugus River

6(c) The River itself had its dangerous aspects though, and we young ones were early taught that it was something to be wary of and to stay off of until the bigger boys or men had tested it out for safety and had warned where the air holes were located.

After a real cold spell, it would usually be safe to run the whole river. I'll never forget some of the moonlit nights, when a bunch of us would skate in single file, often at great speed, on smooth black ice, twisting and turning as the river wound its way through the flooded meadow land. The river was clearly outlined in the moonlight by the bushes which grew along its banks.

Ice Cracks

On these nights, as we'd swing along the river, we'd often hear the long slow rumble of an ice crack somewhere on the big meadow, as the ice was freezing. In the daytime, you could see some of these long cracks happening as well as hear them. It's eerie at night, even though you know what's happening.

Gerry's Cider Mill

There was one direction we frequently took when off on a stag jaunt up river. Gerry's Cider Mill was on the north shore near Lynnfield Center. (This mill was on a farm earlier owned by the Pillings, forebears on my mother's side, who had moved there in 1830.) The mill was originally a woolen mill. The pond, out of which the stream runs which provided the water power for the mill, still carries the name of my mother's forebears.

Hard Cider

In the winter, apples were still being crushed into cider for fresh cider, but there were always some jugs of older cider on hand. Many was the time some of the older boys drank some of that "hard cider" and made out as though they were drunk on the way back. We didn't have L.S.D. or marijuana in those days, but I'm sure our mothers worried a little bit about that "Hard cider". But the dads usually said only that "boys will be boys."

The drugs, pot and liquor available today are certainly more dangerous.

Pete's Pond - Teedlies or Bendies

6(d) We skated wherever ice first appeared and this was usually at Pete's Pond, off Lowell Street. This is where we used to run "tweedlies" or "bendies" as some would call it, before the ice was strong enough for hockey.

We'd run back and forth across sections of ice, until it became almost rubbery. Eventually, at least one foot would go through and, of course, one couldn't go home with just one foot wet, so one usually kept the game up until both feet were wet and sometimes more. This was always good for a scolding at home and generally a forced bath, even if it wasn't Saturday night.

Skate Coasting

6(e) Another sport we enjoyed at Pete's Pond was coasting down a steep short hill while wearing skates. This was a good way to break an ankle.

This skate coasting could only be done after an ice storm, or by icing the hill with buckets of water, or by a snow followed by a rain which froze, giving us a hard enough crust that would support our skates.

Skating to School

Sometimes, when a crust was just right, we'd skate to school on the snow. The crust periods didn't come often, or last long, but when they did, we sure got some fun out of it - both by skating and also by coasting with sleds on the hills.

Ice Hockey

7(a) Ice hockey was one of my major sports. There was great rivalry in all sports between the High Schools in our area.

One year when I was playing defense for our team, we were playing our neighboring school at Melrose, on their ice at El Pond. It was the next to their last game and they had beaten most everyone and were in the running for the State Championship, but they had to get by us to win it. (We couldn't win it anyway, as we'd already had a couple of losses).

1 to 0 - Wild Game

We scored a goal on them early in the game and we kept pressure on them and beat off their threats near our goal. They made many shots, but they were all handled one way or another. As the final period wore on, they could see that State Championship slipping away from them. They got wild in their desperate attempts to get a goal before time ran out. In the last minute, one of their forwards on being checked by Pick Avery, my side kick on defense, raised his stick in anger and slashed Pick across the mouth, taking Pick's front teeth out. While there was a free-for-all for a few minutes, we skated off the ice the winner still, 1 to 0.

Johnny Mansur, who later became Captain

of one of Dartmouth's great teams, was one of the younger players at Melrose at that time.

Parades

8(a) My town was, and still is, great for parades and band concerts. On Memorial Days, the High School Cadets and the local Militia Company, along with all sorts of Veterans organizations and auxiliaries, parade. Of course, in my youth, we still had some of those wonderful old men of the Grand Army of the Republic, still able to march, and in what high regard they were held. Soldiers of later wars paraded too, but I don't think they ever quite got the applause which was given to those old gentlemen, some marching with the help of canes. Those who couldn't march were in cars. Many of them had beards, too.

4th of July Parades

In recent yeais, the leading political figures of the area have found it advantageous to put in an appearance at our July 4th parades. Even the late John P. Kennedy, was among those present on more than one occasion.

It is said that as many as 250,000 persons watch these parades now, and this is in a town of 25,000 people. Many of those would stay on in town for the grand fireworks displays later in the evening.

B.A.A. Marathon

8(b) The only larger crowds regularly thereabouts are those which gather on April 19th to watch the annual running of the Boston Athletic Association's Marathon. These races have been run annually (except for 1918) since 1897.

The race route covers the 26+ miles from Hopkinton to the B.A.A. building a the corner of New-berry and Berkley Streets in the Back Bay.

Crowds

Estimates of crowds watching this race have ranged up to 1,500,000 (atleast before television) despite the fact that the leaders may pass a given spot in fairly short order. But people stay to watch their favorites, who sometimes may be well back in the pack of runners.

C.H. DeMar

A long time favorite runner in this annual race was Clarence H. DeMar of Melrose, Massachusetts. (Some of his relatives live hereabouts for whom De Mar Road on Indian Hill is named). Clarence won the race seven times between 1911 and 1930. He also finished well up front a number of other times.

He was for some years a school teacher in Keene, New Hampshire, and used to get some of his exercise by running home to Melrose for weekend visits.

We and our children these days drive our cars to the local drug store for a package of cigarettes. Clarence didn't smoke, so he never walked a mile for a Camel. Also, he ran rather than jogged, as we are advised to do today for our exercise.

Paper Chase - Hangouts

8(c) Did you ever play Paper Chase or run Heir and Hounds? As a lad, we frequently ran for an hour or more, off and on, through woods and over hill and dale, trying to outdistance and fool our pursuers, or to over take the leaders, whichever side we were on.

This may be why we as youngsters were ready to stay at home and go to bed after dinner, but only after any remaining chores were finished. We didn't do much "galivanting around" to a Mt. Adams or a Calhoun Street area. We just didn't have such places. We did have a bowling alley and a billiard parlor, but any other hangout would have been at a corner store. Even the billiard parlor was a bit offbeat, because all the boys there smoked.

Freezing Face & Ears

8(d) One time, after a High School Cadets Officers Dance at our Town Hall, in the middle of winter, after taking my date home on the last trolley to her end of town and walking her home from the car line, I walked back across town to my home, a total distance of about 3 miles, with the temperature at 14 below zero.

I froze my ears and my left cheek. I still had only my Officer's cap on my head, as I'd been too proud to carry a stocking cap. What kind of an officer would I have looked like, carrying my Officer's cap in one hand, my sabre in the other, with a stocking hat on my head?

Somehow I always seemed to date the girls who lived farthest from home. It was pretty stupid, wasn't it? At least that's what we tell our young ones, but it still goes on - Indian Hill to Glendale, to Hyde Park to Terrace Park, etc. Will the young never learn?

Early Auto Trips

9(a) When you took a long automobile trip in my youth, you carried your own tent and a sterno or gasoline stove. You got most of your own meals.

My first trip by auto to Nova Scotia was made with my parents in 1916, in a Ford touring car. The 687 miles from Wakefield to Tatamagouche, Nova Scotia took 5 days.

One had to wait to break camp until the dew was off the tent, or you'd roll a wet tent. Shortly, people along the way began accepting overnight tourists, then cabins began to appear. They used to advertise that they had Simmons beds. No one dreamed then that we'd ever have the fancy motels of today. I must admit, traveling today can be pretty plush. Of course, some people are now owning or renting various types of trailer equipment. This looks worth trying.

Early Days in My Town

9(b) I was brought up in a cloistered environment as perhaps most of us were. My town was a dry town - anyone seen tipsy getting off a train from Boston, or a trolley car, or coming home from a distant road house, was considered a "rounder."

This is a far cry from present day attitudes.

9(c) We went to Church regularly and to Sunday School and also to Thursday night prayer meetings.

Billy Sunday

Those were the days of Billy Sunday. I went by train and trolley to hear him, with a group from my Church. He spoke in a huge tent tabernacle built on the old Boston Braves Field between Columbus and Huntington Avenues in the Back Bay.

Rodeheaver

I was perhaps more impressed with Rodeheaver's trombone and singing, than with Billy's preaching, but he did get hundreds headed down his "sawdust trail" to "come to Jesus." Billy Graham uses much the same general approach today.

Selecting a Career Today

10(a) Many of today's students seem to worry too much about selecting their vocations.

Too many of them are going after masters degrees and doctorates, without knowing why or where they're headed. Some seem to stay in college, because they seem afraid to strike out on their own for fear they may not make the success achieved by their parents.

It might be better, if all high school graduates eligible for military duty had to get their military out of the way before they go on to college. They would be more mature then and could really get their teeth into something without worrying continually about the draft. They'd perhaps get more out of college too after army

experiences. Also, many would find they're really fitted for a vocational, rather than a liberal arts major.

Parents a Problem

Unfortunately, as matters work presently, many parents feel their son must be the best in his class and should, of course, go on to the best college. Many of the youngsters just aren't cut out for college. This may account for many physical and mental breakdowns. Some of them seem quite confused.

Wasting Money

If the young men had to borrow or work for their educations, they'd think twice about wasting their own money. Using up Dad's or Mom's savings doesn't seem to bother them much. Hand-outs, either by parents or foundations, if too large, do not teach responsibility.

Fortune Magazine Study

11(a) Where are the youth of today headed? I recommend the reading of the Study in Depth of this subject in the January, 1969 issue of Fortune Magazine. Some answers may be found there, but the result of a questionnaire answered by students contained therein leaves me greatly confused and upset that so many are so against the establishment and their parents' beliefs.

Dr. Spock & Kinsey

I'm afraid that the permissiveness of Dr. Spock's book days and of parents is coming home to roost. Reports such as the Kinsey report have influenced children far beyond its intent, I am sure.

Are the actions of many of our students, made possible by our handing over full funds for tuition, board and room, travel and books and clothes, in line with what we expected? Maybe we give them too much.

College Campuses

Is the present permissiveness in some colleges progress? Is it right for any minorities to disrupt campuses so that students who wish to learn cannot function in an atmosphere conducive to learning? I think not.

Is it right for some of a faculty to so conduct themselves that they deny others the privilege of teaching for which they all were hired? I think not.

Why do we stand for characters entering our halls of learning to teach insurrection and draft dodging?

Where are Americans?

Where are the Americans of yesteryear? Are they only the ones who are fighting for us in Vietnam?

Breaking Laws

11(b) We and our youngsters go on breaking laws, some more, some less. This is one of the reasons for our lack of communication with our sons and daughters. They think we are hypocritical. They don't think they are doing anything worse than we do when they smoke pot, while we are drinking high-balls or breaking traffic laws, or cheating a little on our tax returns.

Can we Change for the Better?

11(c) Perhaps if we all practice self control we will have less trouble and we'll earn the respect of our children and we'll see a rejuvenation of spirit and character. They want to look up to us. They want to have goals to seek, but they are not charmed with the rat-race many of us are in.

Some are Doing a Good Job

12(a) Alot of youngsters are doing a good job. Perhaps percentage-wise there are no more dilettantes

today than there were when we were boys.

Lest we leave this paper on a too pessimistic note, let's not forget that many of our young people are trying and are doing perhaps even more to prove themselves than many of us ever did.

Trying to Prove Themselves

12(b) Many seem to be trying to prove to themselves that they are just as rugged as their forefathers by taking jobs in the Peace Corps, or by traveling to far corners of the world, on foot or hitchhiking, or on a bicycle, or a motor bike. They go to places such as Yugoslavia, Turkey, or Morocco, or the Far East, and live under conditions which we wouldn't tolerate. They're trying to tell us something and I think it's that we have made life too easy for them.

They ship on freighters or sail boats, as deck hands, as many did in our college days, when to get to Europe you shoveled your way across on a cattle boat.

They seek out the unusual, such as living temporarily with Monks at a monastery on Mt. Athos in Greece, or teaching in the back country in Appalachia, sleeping on the bare floors of one-room schoolhouses with rats running over their feet.

Working Hard

12(c) Many are working in the ghettos of our cities and those of other countries, assisting medical teams in the mountains of Central America, working in our hospitals as orderlies after a full day at school, and teaching all day and going to night school too. This must tell us that they are not all bad. Some of these who are working this hard are also wearing their hair long and sporting mustaches and/or beards, and even odd clothes and beads.

Yet some of these dissenters and long-hairs may be hurting their parents more than they realize. They may even cost their fathers a job or

a promotion. After all, it's pretty embarrassing to "we squares" to have to introduce such youngsters as being our own or our neighbors. Some of these kids are very selfish to say the least. They take, take, take and expect more. They act like children and should expect to be treated like children. Some of them certainly aren't ready to assume the responsibility of voting. What some of them need is a good sound spanking.

Skiing

12(d) However, a lot of youngsters have taken up skiing - not just to get a week at some plush resort, though goodness knows that's not too hard to take - but rather to show themselves that they do have gumption and guts.

12(e) Many of these experiences do build character and responsibility. It takes a lot of courage to do many of these things, especially when they do some of it without Dad's financial help.

Own Pads

12(f) Looking for independence, some of them have their own pads, and not just to have a hangout. Listen to some of them argue about life and politics and our problems with minority groups, and you'll find that many of them have fine reasoning powers.

Responsibility Soon to be Theirs

13. While the pendulum has swung a long way to the left in recent years, perhaps it's on the way back. It better had soon, as today's youth will be leaders of tomorrow. They won't be able to pass the buck much longer. It is going to be their day soon, and they better well realize it and prepare themselves for leadership.

Guard our Republic

14. Every republic must be alert at all times to guard its battlements. My hope is that our young (and especially the ministers, teachers and

students), who have been so anxious to break down the establishment, will realize that they must watch out what they support and don't support, lest they tear down the very structures which have made this country the greatest in the world.

John A. Reid
