

8/4/83

TOAST TO HONORARY GRADUATES, 1983

AT ANY UNIVERSITY, THE ANNUAL GRADUATION MAY BE CALLED A "STORY-TIME" IN MORE THAN ONE SENSE OF THE WORD.

FROM THE UNIVERSITY'S OWN POINT OF VIEW, EVERY GRADUATION ADDS ANOTHER COMPLETED CHAPTER TO THE LIFE-STORY OF THE INSTITUTION, AS A NEW GENERATION OF GRADUATES EMERGES FROM ITS PORTALS TO SERVE IN MANY FIELDS OF ENTERPRISE. AND EVERY CHAPTER IN OUR STORY IS FURTHER EMBELLISHED AND ADORNED BY THE NAMES OF DISTINGUISHED MEN ON WHOM DOCTORATES HAVE BEEN CONFERRED IN TRIBUTE TO THEIR MERITS WE ALSO LIKE TO BELIEVE THAT THE BESTOWAL OF THE UNIVERSITY'S HIGHEST RECOGNITION MAY RANK AS AN IMPORTANT CHAPTER IN THE PERSONAL LIFE-STORY OF EACH OF OUR HONORARY GRADUATES.

BUT APART FROM THE NORMAL STORY-TIME CHARACTER OF GRADUATION, WE HAVE SPECIAL REASONS, THIS YEAR, FOR ASSOCIATING "STORIES" WITH THE WORTHY MEN THAT WE HAVE BROUGHT INTO OUR ACADEMIC FAMILY TO-DAY.

2

DR ATHOL FUGARD, FOR A START, HAS MADE A CAREER OF WRITING STORIES AND BRINGING THEM TO LIFE ON THE STAGE AND, SO DOING, HAS ALREADY SEEN HIS OWN LIFE-STORY BECOME A LEGEND. (I SAY "ALREADY" BECAUSE HE IS THE SECOND-YOUNGEST MAN EVER TO RECEIVE AN HONORARY DOCTORATE FROM RHODES). HAVING REFERRED TO HIS PLAYS AS "STORIES", LET ME HASTEN TO POINT TO THE GREAT DEPTH TO WHICH THEY ARE ROOTED IN REAL-LIFE EVENTS AND EXPERIENCES OF OUR DAY, WHICH MAKES DR FUGARD A TRUTHFUL CHRONICLER, NOT ONLY OF SPECIFIC FEATURES OF LIFE, BUT ALSO OF THE ALL-EMBRACING STORY OF OUR TIME.

DR BASIL HERSOV, FROM THE BEGINNING OF HIS LIFE UNTIL NOW, HAS LIVED OUT A STORY OF INSTANT SUCCESS AND CONSTANT SUCCESS - A STORY WITH A FAIRY-TALE QUALITY THAT REMINDS US OF ONE OF THE EARLIEST PIONEERS IN THE GOLD-PRODUCING INDUSTRY - A MAN CALLED MIDAS. BUT, IN THE SCOPE AND VERSATILITY OF HIS TALENTS AND ACHIEVEMENTS, DR HERSOV OVERSHADOWS HIS PREDECESSOR COMPLETELY, FOR UNLIKE MIDAS, OUR FAIRY-TALE HERO IS FAMOUS NOT ONLY FOR GOLD, BUT FOR STERLING QUALITIES. HE IS ALSO BLESSED WITH A SUPERIOR SENSE OF TIME AND PLACE, FOR WHILE MIDAS EXISTS ONLY IN THE FICTION OF THE PAST, DR HERSOV IS HAPPILY WITH US IN THE REALITY OF THE PRESENT AND THE FUTURE .

DR JOEL MERVIS HAS DEVOTED A NOTABLE CAREER TO EXERCISING THE PREROGATIVE OF THE PRESS TO TELL THE STORY OF DAILY EVENTS AS QUICKLY AND FULLY AS POSSIBLE - A FUNCTION THROUGH WHICH LIFE ITSELF BECOMES LITERATE AND ARTICULATE. IT ALSO AMOUNTS TO THE KEEPING OF A DIARY FOR POSTERITY, A COLLECTION OF STORIES FEATURING THE PEOPLE AND EVENTS IN THE PASSING SCENE, BUT ULTIMATELY RANKING AS RECORDED HISTORY. IN ITS COMBINED ROLES OF NARRATOR, COMMENTATOR AND HISTORIAN, THE PRESS HAS NEVER BEEN BETTER SERVED THAN BY DR MERVIS.

IT GIVES US GREAT SATISFACTION, AT THIS MOMENT, TO KNOW THAT
HENCEFORTH THE STORY OF RHODES UNIVERSITY WILL NOT BE COMPLETE WITHOUT
DUE REFERENCE TO THE EMINENT MEN THAT WE HAVE SOUGHT TO HONOUR AT THIS
GRADUATION, AND THAT THEIR OWN LIFE-STORIES NOW INCLUDE THE STORY OF
THEIR ENTRY INTO THE FAMILY OF RHODES. MAY OUR COMBINED STORY RECORD,
WITHOUT FAIL, THAT WE LIVED HAPPILY EVER AFTER, AND I ASK YOU TO RAISE
YOUR GLASSES TO THAT HOPE, AND TO THE TOAST OF OUR HONORARY GRADUATES.

D S HENDERSON

8 APRIL 1983