

**CLOSING COMMENTS**  
(Three Minutes)

**WE ARE SURROUNDED BY GREATNESS,** a greatness that extends beyond those Shawnee Mission students of the past who have paid the ultimate price for service to their country, whom we honor today, and those present to honor them, but a greatness that bridges the gap of nearly two generations to you, the current students, the future of our nation.

Each and every one of you is a unique individual and has within you, the potential for greatness. For some, it is yet to be discovered, but it is within you. For others, a level of greatness has already been demonstrated through leadership in the classroom, on the athletic field, or through involvement in community projects. Students who are beginning their high school careers may feel overwhelmed, self-conscious and somewhat unsure of themselves, with the thought of greatness being the furthest thing from their minds. Be assured, we all experienced similar feelings when we started high school. The time will come when you will look back on those feelings as an integral part in the building of your character and test of your resolve. Remember that as individuals, you are unique. So, be proud, walk tall, and don't hesitate to explore some of the many opportunities available to you at this learning institution.

For all of you, those who have already demonstrated a level of greatness, and those who are just beginning high school and have yet to discover their greatness, the best is yet to come. There is a school spirit which permeates the halls of this, the mother school of all Shawnee Mission schools, and the halls of those schools under

her wing. This spirit instills within its students, a thirst for knowledge, a desire for  
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achievement, and the ability to make sound judgments based on compassion and a sense of fairness. Add to that spirit the dedication of the teachers, coaches, counselors and principals of the Shawnee Mission school system. There will be a time, during your high school career, maybe several times, when a teacher, coach, counselor or principal, will, having recognized where, within you, that greatness lies, challenges and encourages you, in order to bring it out.

As with those Shawnee Mission students who have gone before you, the day will come when your very resolve and character is tested. Hopefully, the test will never be as horrible as that which Capt. Charles Plumb endured, or be in the way of having to make a battlefield decision that may result in the loss of lives, as with those we have honored here today. The test may come, as with some of our former students; a district judge who makes a landmark decision, the CEO of a company deciding how best to keep his company afloat without employees losing jobs, the Superintendent of a major railroad whose daily decisions affect the safety of operations and well being of several hundred employees and their families, or it may be making a critical decision that holds your own family together during a troubled time.

Whatever this test of your resolve and character is destined to be, perhaps you will be unaware of it at the time, but the greatness mentioned here today, will be revealed. Upon reflection, you will realize that the very core set of values that drives your decisions through life, your sense of fairness and compassion, were

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**taught right here in the halls of Shawnee Mission North, and the refrain of those words common to all schools represented here today, that begin our alma mater, will come to mind, “Shawnee Mission, Shawnee Mission, here’s a toast to thee”.**

**Submitted by: Austin L. Landreth**  
**SMN 1962**