

**Honorary Doctorate Degree  
Boise State University**

**Remarks by Bethine Church  
May 16, 2009**

President Bob and Kathy Kustra, faculty, students, family, and friends, although I may have difficulty standing, I am honored to receive this honorary doctorate from Boise State University.

In 1941 and 1942, the academic year that I attended Boise Junior College, I studied Spanish and learned the tango for a Spanish play. I only wish I could demonstrate my dancing skills today!

When I was at BJC, as it was commonly called, America faced great challenges—as great as those we face today. After a decade of economic depression, our country had been attacked at Pearl Harbor. Many students had already been called to serve in the military, including my then-boyfriend, Frank, and his best friend, Carl Burke, who is with us today. Later, Frank and Carl both lectured at Boise Junior College in business law when they were starting their law practices.

With Frank at war in the Far East, I went to the University of Michigan, my father's alma mater, where I received a degree in sociology. There I also studied sculpture, and my best piece now resides in the home of my older son, Forrest, in New York.

After graduation, I returned to Boise. Because of the shortage of professors, I was recruited by the much-admired Ada Hatch to work part-time in the English Department at Boise Junior College. I recall I had to bone up on my adjectives and adverbs before each class. I also volunteered part-time at the understaffed children's ward at St. Luke's.

Only when the war was finally over would I resume my life with Frank. I mention this because, despite the current economic and foreign policy challenges, I want to assure today's graduates that you face a bright future with endless possibilities. So make no small plans but think globally. Growing up on a ranch on the Salmon River and later in Boise, I could not have imagined that I would travel the world and meet leaders like John F. Kennedy, Fidel Castro, Deng Tsao-ping, Yitzhak Rabin, Indira Gandhi, and many more.

For example, while I made dinner, Marlon Brando played pool with Frank and our younger son, Chase, in our recreation room! I mention these because today you have so many opportunities that did not exist for a girl from Idaho in the 1940's. Now we see women achieve in every walk of life— three recent Secretaries of State have been women. So grab all the opportunities that come your way, and let them take you on a life-long journey of learning and adventure. And remember never fear to take a chance on life or love.

My father had a great belief in the need for citizens to give as much as possible to public service. President Obama recently told all Americans that we need your service at

this moment in history. I'm pleased to note that the Edward M. Kennedy Service America Act will more than triple the number of federally funded volunteers around the country, so this will open doors for many of you to have jobs that will contribute to public service. This includes some of the elderly who still want to live full and productive lives.

A few years ago, I managed to write my autobiography, something I never thought I would accomplish. The title, "*A Lifelong Affair: My Passion for People and Politics*," reflects my view of life. It has been a passionate affair that continues today. As my friends and family will attest, I never tire of reading about current events or discussing politics or the latest outrage of the day. I care passionately about what happens to my country, to my state, and to my community. I care about the achievements of Boise State University, whether it's Dr. Kustra's vision for a metropolitan research university, whether the legislature and contributions will adequately fund it, or whether the Broncos will win on the weekends!

I care because my son, Chase, is a graduate of Boise State with a degree in Communications in 1999, and my grandson, Andrew, will be a Boise State freshman next fall. Because I care, I have tried to give back through the Frank Church Institute that recently held its 25<sup>th</sup> annual conference, appropriately titled, "America's Challenges: Perils and Possibilities." Many of those perils and possibilities will be yours to face. You now have the academic tools to succeed. You stand on the shoulders of those who came before you. Yes, and even your college loans will be repaid!

I care about our environment, which is why I founded the Sawtooth Society to protect some of the most magnificent parts of Idaho. I grew up on a ranch my family homesteaded on the Salmon River. Frank and I were married there, and we camped under the stars as they were meant to be seen. One of Frank's quotes remains good advice today: "I never knew a man who felt self-important in the morning after spending the night in the open on an Idaho mountainside under a star-studded summer sky. Save some time in your lives for the outdoors where you can be witness to the wonder of God."

In the Senate, Frank sponsored many environmental bills, including the Wilderness Act and the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act. Later we rafted together down the Salmon in what is now the Frank Church River of No Return Wilderness. But more needs to be done, which is why I have worked for the protection of the Owyhee Canyon lands and the Boulder-White Clouds. My message to you is to keep America's wilderness pristine. Protect the earth.

That is why I brought my friend, Vice President Al Gore, to Boise State two years ago with his warning about the environment. And that is why I plan to bring a Congress to Campus program about the environment to Boise State this fall.

So take up a cause you believe in, and fight the good fight. You will not win all the battles, but when you reach my age in life, you will look back with no regrets and some satisfaction that you have tried to make a difference.

Congratulations to all of you on this special day, and thank you.