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**PRESIDENTIAL ADDRESS: ACHIEVEMENT AGAINST THE ODDS, ROSE GARDEN
Thursday, May 3, 1990 ((Time))**

((Acknowledgements: Robert Woodson, etc.))

((It's great to get outdoors again.\\ Perhaps you saw on the news last week that Millie was hanging around, just over the other side of the hedge here -- when something bit her on the nose. Now I'm not sure if it was a squirrel or a cat, but I just had to investigate.

((And, of course, you know that whenever I go anywhere, about a half dozen secret service agents follow right along.\\ So imagine this -- four or five ~~the seven~~ of us poking around the hedges, looking for the culprit, when\\ . . . you guessed it\\ . . . the sprinklers came on.\\ \\ So, Millie -- girl, from now on, you're on your own.))\\ \\

We are here today because of the leadership of the Allstate Foundation, and the vision of Robert Woodson and the National Center for Neighborhood Enterprise.

For years, Bob has opposed the idea that big problems can only be solved by big government solutions. He believes that no federal program can begin to match the strength of our people and our neighborhoods. He believes that to fight poverty, crime and despair, we must first empower the powerless.

Empower Americans to help themselves.

2 uniform
gravel keepers
1 non-unif.
1 S.S. Agent

Empower them to help their neighbors.

Empower them to become leaders, to make the coming century yet another American century.

This is, in truth, happening, as the age of the individual dawns around the world, from Moscow to Managua. So let us remember, in this heartland of individualism, our own American tradition of self-reliance. While government has a critical role to play, we've been too willing in recent years to look first to faceless bureaucracies in Washington for answers. We are learning that if there is to be a better future, it must arise in the hearts of the men and women who struggle daily against poverty, ignorance and prejudice.

We are here today to honor a select few who are creating such a future; seven chosen out of twenty thousand to receive the first Achievement Against the Odds Award. They are not winning Oscars; they are not recipients of the Pulitzer or Nobel Prizes. But what they have done -- what they have achieved -- is, in truth, every bit as great and beautiful as the work of any actor, artist or scientist. For we have with us today seven men and women who prevailed over handicap and heartache.

*** Take Charles A. Ballard. An orphan, he grew up to become a teen father, chemically dependent and a prison inmate. Now Charles has legally adopted and raised his son; earned a Master's degree; and founded the Teen Father Program, which helps thousands of teen fathers deal with their responsibilities.

(four)

Miss Release



*** Also with us is Bobby Drayton, who will tell you that he was twice victimized, first by epilepsy, then by self-pity. But by age 17, Bobby had enough of feeling sorry for himself. He decided to fight his condition through athletics, becoming one of the toughest competitors on the Howard University gymnastics team. Bobby Drayton also formed and headed youth programs for disadvantaged kids. Like a gymnast on the parallel bars, Bobby balances his success with service to others.

*** Freddie Garcia grew up amid poverty, illiteracy and discrimination. In fact, some of his teachers and students actually managed to convince Freddie that he was a failure. And, as so often happens, the prediction became self-fulfilling. Freddie eventually became addicted to drugs, a criminal.

But then he found his faith, earned a degree from the Latin American Bible Institute, and founded Victory Outreach of Texas - a Christian-oriented rehabilitation center which, under his leadership, has developed one of the most effective programs in the fight against drug addiction, alcoholism and other life-consuming problems. A man who has come back from the precipice can best warn others of the dangers of drugs. Freddie is such a man. He is living proof that success is also a self-fulfilling prophecy.

*** Cheryl Hayes is a mother who was dependent on welfare, and much worse, dependent on drugs. Now she's the head of a support group for youth with addicted family members. And she's

endorsement?

his parents

WRONG

also working hard with her family to invest 500 hours of "sweat equity" in the home she is building with Habitat for Humanity.

*** Or consider Kathleen Smallwood Johnson, whose father was murdered when she was fourteen, and mother was murdered when she was sixteen. So at an age that for most of us is the most carefree time of our lives, Kathleen became the head of her family.

But she raised her three brothers and sisters. She re-entered college and graduated. She's now a successful attorney, and a mother to her late sister's three children and two children of her own, and still has time to serve her community.

*** Brad Linnenkamp calls himself "physically challenged" because he challenges cerebral palsy with a tenacity most of us can only imagine. Brad volunteers and now works full-time as a adult counselor. He has no time to worry about his own problems because he's too busy caring for others who are in greater need than himself.

*** And finally, there is Vivienne S. Thompson. She is a wheelchair-bound single parent. But Vivienne didn't let that hold her back. She often confronts the barriers, some of concrete, others of culture, that fenced-in so many disabled Americans. As an anti-poverty leader in Boston, she also helped establish the first Head Start class for severely disabled handicapped low-income children.

Each of these seven Americans provides a definition of the word "empowerment." Whether they turned to a higher power for

2 yrs

X

X

inspiration, or drew deep from the strength of their souls, they represent the survival instinct in all of us, and something more: A yearning to help others -- to be a guiding star to someone who is lost, to be a point of light.

Zane Grey once wrote that: "To bear up under loss, . . . to smile when tears are close, to resist evil men and base instincts . . . to seek ever after the glory and the dream . . . that is what any man can do, and so be great."

In this way, each of you have achieved greatness -- the kind that brings out the greatness in others.

Congratulations. Thank you all, God bless you and may God bless America.

Zane Grey Museum
Zanesville, Ohio
(614) 872-3143

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→ office (301) 891-4068
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Wanderer of the Woodland
P 410-411

Noted Scholar of Grey,
teaches Grey in college
has read all 13 million words (books)
all 5,000 letters, numerous journals



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FIRST ANNUAL ACHIEVEMENT AGAINST THE ODDS AWARD RECIPIENTS

1. Charles Augustus Ballard

Charles Augustus Ballard is founder and executive director of The Teen Father Program in Cleveland, Ohio. Established in 1982, The Teen Program is a remarkable community-based agency that provides comprehensive outreach, counseling, parental education, employment training, and conflict resolution services to young fathers and their families.

Orphaned and separated from his three brothers at age 3, Mr. Ballard experienced early in his life the pain of abandonment. His pain would later manifest in poor school performance and a pattern of deviant behavior. He eventually dropped out of school, became a teen father, ran away from home and joined the Armed Forces at age 17. By age 24 he was chemical dependent, undesirably discharged from the Armed Forces, convicted of a crime and serving a three year prison sentence.

Mired in what seemingly was an endless cycle of adversity, Mr. Ballard began to assess his life while in prison; and with the guidance of a fellow inmate, he discovered self-respect, compassion, and love for others and God. He was released from prison several months ahead of schedule, as he was considered completely rehabilitated.

As a "free" man, Mr. Ballard was determined to make life better for himself and others. He legally adopted his son and raised him. He took the GED test and entered college in 1966. He graduated in 1970 and the same year entered graduate school at Case Western Reserve University in Cleveland, Ohio. After graduating with a Master's Degree in May 1972, he began working in the community to make a difference.

Since its inception, the Teen Father Program founded by Mr. Ballard has served over four thousand teen fathers, teaching them to take control of their own lives and to provide a future for their children. Mr. Ballard was born in 1936.

"Turning Problems Into Opportunities"

2) Bobby Drayton

Bobby Drayton is an epileptic whose rise above adversity was both physical and spiritual. In his early childhood, Mr. Drayton was pushed down a flight of stairs while on his tricycle and suffered a head injury that developed into the chronic seizure disorder, epilepsy. As an adolescent and into his early teens, Mr. Drayton became discouraged by the medical prognosis that his illness was permanent. He became immersed in self-pity and as his self-esteem worsened so too did his epilepsy.

At the age of 17 during the summer of 1973, Bobby Drayton decided that there must be a way to combat his condition. While a high school student in Washington, D.C., he pursued gymnastics training to build his physical stamina. He also became spiritually enriched by a newfound belief in God. During high school, Mr. Drayton worked as a volunteer in his community, teaching gymnastics to inner-city youths and slimnastics to adults and senior citizens. In 1974, he won fourth place in a city-wide high school vaulting competition and continued to place formidably in competitions as a member of Howard University's gymnastics team.

Mr. Drayton has trained and worked extensively as a Szechuan chef, while maintaining an active interest in the sport of gymnastics. He formed a youth program that provides disadvantaged and handicapped black youths with an opportunity to participate on Howard University's gymnastics team.

Today at age 33 Bobby Drayton is founder and president of Courtesy Kids Ministries Foundation, a nonprofit organization that provides mentors, educational services, and counseling to disadvantaged youth.

This fall, Mr. Drayton will attend George Washington University in the District of Columbia to earn a Bachelor's Degree in Business Administration. He is aspiring as well to build a hotel in the summer of 1991, to establish an educational training center for youth, and to forge a joint-venture program with the public and private sector that assists handicapped and disadvantaged youths.

3) **Freddie Garcia**

"There is a whole generation of young people who need to be reached before they become casualties of addiction. Prevention is better than rehabilitation." Those are the watch words of Freddie Garcia, a reformed drug addict, pusher and mugger who founded Victory Outreach of Texas-- a Christian-oriented rehabilitation center which, under his leadership, has freely provided one of the most effective programs in the fight against drug addiction, alcoholism and life-controlling problems. Victory Outreach has been in existence for more than 20 years and has managed without the assistance of Federal resources.

Mr. Garcia, age 44, was born to patriotic but illiterate parents who wished for the Mexican-American son every success. However, as a child, Freddie experienced discrimination from teachers and students who perceived him as intellectually inferior. As a result, his cherished belief that he could achieve academic excellence gradually deteriorated and he dropped out of school.

After failing in his mind as a student, he married and later divorced. His failure as husband was the final blow in a succession of adverse punches. He became a heroin addict, a vagrant and a criminal in a struggle to feed his addiction. However, he rallied from despair by establishing a relationship with God. He attended and graduated from the Latin American Bible Institute.

Since his emergence from addiction and defeat, Freddie has shared his account of struggle with countless numbers of youths who are immediately inspired by his great comeback and, more importantly, are deterred from indulging in a life of crime and drugs.

4) **Cheryl Hayes**

A former "welfare" mother and drug addict, Cheryl Hayes has risen above her dependencies on Federal welfare and illicit substances to lead a life devoted to Christian fellowship. In 1986, after floundering for 16 years, Cheryl secured a job with Wisconsin Correctional Service as a caseworker in their Outreach Home Detention Program. The job was Cheryl's first step toward self-sufficiency. She came off of welfare and began supporting her family of five children.

Ms. Hayes applied for a Habitat for Humanity home in early 1989 and is working hard with her family to put in the 500 hours of sweat equity required of a Habitat family. Soon she will be able to purchase and move into her new home.

Having publicly committed herself to Christ and the Church, Cheryl is expressing her faith by serving as a mentor for youth in her congregation and community. She served as Youth Coordinator and a Sunday school teacher at her church from 1988-1990. She developed a support group for youth with family members addicted to drugs. The support group has prove invaluable to a community ravished by drugs.

Through her many church and community involvements, Cheryl has had an amazing impact in advocating concerns related to youth development and leadership. In addition to raising her five children, Cheryl is raising a 16-year-old foster son. Her presence as a chaperon at youth activities, her participation as a counselor at church retreats, and her willingness to transport youth to and from activities, makes it abundantly clear to youth that she cares about them.

Her experience as a recovering addict, former welfare dependent, and single parent has led her to recognize and share the importance of spiritual values. She expresses a radiant faith and a profound commitment to help at-risk youth.

5) **Kathleen Smallwood Johnson**

Kathleen Smallwood Johnson is an exceptional woman whose achievements are marked by a profound belief in God and self. In 1969, when Kathleen was 14 years old, her father was brutally murdered. Just two years later in 1971, her mother was murdered. The oldest of four children, Kathleen-- still a child-- was left to raise her siblings. She enrolled in college but was forced to withdraw due to the family crisis. One of Kathleen's sister's was suicidal. The family unit became dysfunctional as they mourned the tragic loss of their parents.

Though she had every reason to lose hope, Kathleen did not. She began speaking at churches encouraging youth to surmount adversity and aspire for excellence. She reentered college and matriculated successfully. Just as the family was beginning to show signs of stabilization, in 1981 the troubled sister committed suicide, leaving three children to be raised by Kathleen. Kathleen had two children of her own. In 1983, Kathleen packed-up all the children, left Trenton, NJ and moved to Connecticut where she enrolled in the University of Bridgeport School of Law. In 1986, Kathleen was graduated and in 1987 became a member of the New Jersey Bar.

An active community as well as public servant, Attorney Johnson serves on the board of directors of the Montclair Child Development Corporation; the Montclair Library; the local NAACP; and a host of other civic organizations. She is also active in her church.

6. Brad Linnenkamp

A native of Shawnee, Kansas, Brad Linnenkamp is a living testament to the fact that he is merely "physically challenged," not "handicapped," by the disability created when he was born with cerebral palsy 23 years ago. He has filled those spaces in his life which might be reserved for self-pity with an ardent desire to help others to overcome their handicaps -- despite the limitations imposed by his own condition.

In September 1987, Brad began volunteer work in the Adult Day Care Program at the Johnson County Mental Retardation Center. This is a goal-oriented program of developmental and therapeutic services designed to maintain, increase or maximize an individual's independent functioning in self-care, physical and emotional growth, socialization, communication, education and pre-vocational skills.

Defying conventional wisdom that he participate as a client, Brad devoted three days per week to work one-on-one with those in day care on their individual objectives, assist in group activities, personal care. But most important, he provided the positive reinforcement that made a discernible difference in the lives of all who were personally touched by his considerable inner strength.

This portrait in selflessness takes on an added dimension with Brad's consistent demonstration of the courage he has shown in improving the quality of his own life by inspiring and helping others to do the same. His rapport with each client is characterized by that extra measure of support and praise that can only come from one who understands the value of achieving greater personal independence. Subsisting on his meager Social Security Income Assistance, Brad nonetheless provided his own wheelchair-accessible transportation to perform his valuable volunteer work.

In February, Brad was able to put his volunteer experience to work when he took a job as an aide assisting developmentally disabled clients at Faith Village. The dedication, enthusiasm for life and determination to enrich the lives of others earned this remarkable young man the "Extra Mile Volunteer Award" for 1989 presented by the Volunteer Center of Johnson County, Kansas. Now Brad Linnenkamp's exemplary life is being recognized nationally as he becomes one of the inaugural winners of NCNE's "Achievement Against the Odds Award."

7. Vivienne S. Thomson

Poverty, abandonment, single parenthood, life-threatening disabilities: a formidable combination of obstacles to be sure. But Vivienne S. Thomson has emerged a winner and inspiration to others by the sheer power of her will and determination.

Perhaps the inner strength of Vivienne's Native American (Choctaw) ancestors helped her to survive her first tests -- extensive burns sustained in a fire during her childhood and a fall during an epileptic seizure which induced paralysis. Then as a wife and mother of two small children, she was deserted by her husband and became a wheelchair-bound single parent at the age of 22.

But Vivienne opted to pick up the pieces of her life and work tirelessly to remove both the physical and attitudinal barriers that confront people with disabilities daily in work, shopping, travel, and the quest to live independently. In the process, she transcended the particularity of her personal struggle to pursue a broader effort to help others similarly situated or shackled by other limitations.

Accordingly, Vivienne Thomson was a four-time President of Action for Boston, an anti-poverty agency -- the first with a physical disability. Her tenure was highlighted by the establishment of a Head Start class for severely handicapped low-income children, a group for which facilities did not previously exist. She has continued as Vice President of this agency and serves as Chairperson of the Minority Disabilities Task Force which has as its goal the creation of an Independent Living Center in the minority community.

Despite yet another setback last June, the onset of the severely debilitating Guillian-Barre Syndrome which resulted in a quadriplegic condition for a period of time, followed by minor surgery, Vivienne continued her community outreach activities on behalf of others -- including Cerebral Palsy and Easter Seal Telethons - - and a full schedule of speaking out eloquently on the concerns of disabled Americans.

While Vivienne Thomson has enjoyed previous recognition as a delegate from her state to the 1977 White House Conference on Handicapped Individuals and was named Ms. Wheelchair Achiever of Massachusetts in 1980, NCNE is pleased to provide national exposure for her outstanding accomplishments through her selection as one of the first seven recipients of an "Achievement Against the Odds Award."