

learning about the way we have failed to adequately provide for those who built this country.

Actually this "Letter from a Nursing Home" came to me in the middle of a sleepless night when I was struggling to figure out some way to help my mom (grandmother) keep her home. It would have broken her heart to lose her home.

It came to me that the least I could do was express her feelings in words on paper. I was also her Power of Attorney. I wrote the letter on the 14th and before I could mail it, we, the family were called to her bedside. She died on March 18.

So I changed it from "Letter from a Nursing Home" to "Letter from Heaven" and read it as a eulogy at her funeral.

I appreciate the way you have always during your presidency tried to guarantee the rights our fathers fought for to all Americans.

SHIRLEY RONEY.

LETTER FROM A NURSING HOME

MARCH 14, 1999.

President WILLIAM J. CLINTON,  
*The White House,*  
*Washington, DC.*

DEAR MR. PRESIDENT: My name is Vaneeta Allen. I will be 93 years of age on August 11, 1999, and for most of my adult life, I have lived independently in a house I have owned.

My dad was a sharecropper. When I was a child, we never owned our own home. It was my dream to own a home when I grew up. I was the second of nine surviving children, the first girl. I wanted to be a schoolteacher but had to quit school at 13 to go to work to help support myself and my brothers and sisters. The year was 1919.

When my children were little we lived through the Great Depression and we celebrated when Franklin D. Roosevelt raised the minimum wage so we could make as much as \$1 a day in the factory.

And finally, we bought for \$5 an acre a little farm southwest of Bonnie and moved ourselves and our two surviving children into a 2-room house. We built on two bedrooms and a bathroom and a kitchen. There, we, my husband and I, spent our working years. The year was 1941.

And we sent our son and son-in-law off to war. There in that home I stood with my ears to the radio listening to the troop movements as our sons marched across Europe, afraid we would lose our sons and maybe our country. Our sons saved our country. And my son came home, but our son-in-law was nearly killed in the Philippines and spent the rest of his short life as a totally disabled veteran in and out of veterans' hospitals. Our son was killed in a car crash on April 12, 1951, at 25 years of age.

Our family bought its citizenship with blood shed on two foreign soils. But it was the price of liberty. We taught our grandchildren, half of whom were fatherless and half of whom were the children of a totally disabled father that the great price they had paid was not in vain.

We taught them about the greatness of America and how all men and women could live free.

In the early 60s, we were forced to sell our farm to the government so they could build Rend Lake there. It was the end of our farming years anyway and we needed to move away from the farm. But our grandchildren cried because they didn't want to leave that farm.

We built and moved into a home in Bonnie, a mile and a half from our farm. And there

we, my husband and I, lived together until his death in 1981, and I lived until late October 1998, when I was hospitalized after a fall and nearly died.

Now they tell me I cannot live independently. But I dream every day of going home just one more time. Now, not by choice, I am living in a nursing home. I have a nice room and I am surrounded by others who are just like me. But those of us who still are of sound mind want just to go home again.

When my husband and I retired, we thought we had adequate savings. But inflation and high medical costs have taken all of my savings. Perhaps I lived too long, but still I want to live.

Last year my total income from social security was \$6,984, but I managed to keep my home and pay my bills with that. The only other income I had was less than \$100 from renting some land. This year my monthly income from social security per month is \$582. My checkbook total is now around \$1500.

The cost of the nursing home is about \$92 per day much of which goes to medical costs, not for expensive paid help. If anything, there needs to be more money for paid help.

I have been given two options to pay—either sell my home and give up any hope of ever returning or get Public Aid Assistance. In the hope of returning home, I applied for Public Aid. Since my total income is \$582 month, out of that I must pay, to keep my home, electricity and gas \$74, water and sewer \$25, trash pick up \$15, house insurance (\$367 per year) or \$32 per month. I also have paid and want to continue to pay \$103 per month for a medicare supplement.

That leaves \$334 out of my social security to pay the nursing home. And you know what is worse of all, I am made to feel like a failure because I cannot pay out of pocket \$36,000 to \$40,000 a year for a nursing home. And there are thousands, maybe millions of me throughout this country.

Once we could borrow money on just our good names. Now our homes have become the price of our aged care. Soon I fear there will be a "For Sale" sign in my front yard and the inexpensive treasures of my life will be divided or discarded.

I take no comfort in that I am just one of many of this nation's older citizens who once put a strap around our waist, put our hands to the plow and took this great agricultural nation from a horsepowered economy to the richest most plentiful nation in the world who can put a man on the moon at will.

Must we, the elderly, who helped build this country, have to live to see ourselves stripped of our most prized possessions, our homes, our dignity, our freedom and our pride?

I know that you and Congress are about to embark on a debate on Social Security and Medicare and other issues that affect those of us who still survive though in our 90's. I hope these debates will go beyond just economics and statistics and look into the faces of those of us who make up this population. We are more than statistics. We all have a story to tell. Once we were all children. Most of us have children and grandchildren and great grandchildren.

Once you wrote in a letter to my granddaughter Shirley Roney "I have worked throughout my life to empower people who historically have been excluded from political, economic and educational opportunities. I remain committed to achieving that goal."

In that particular letter you were speaking of racial relations. I believe you when you say you have done these things. I hope that

in the remaining two years of your presidency, you will be able to finish what you have started in the areas of empowering all people who have been excluded from the opportunities for which our sons fought to guarantee to all Americans.

God Bless,

VANEETA ALLEN.●

CELLULAR TELECOMMUNICATIONS  
SAFETY WEEK

● Mr. ASHCROFT. Mr. President, in recent years the advent of the wireless phone began an extraordinary advance in the cellular telecommunications industry. As a result the cellular phone has become an accessory and a necessity in the modern technological world we currently live in. It has revolutionized communication, and has helped individuals to constantly stay connected. Today, there are over an estimated 200 million wireless phone users around the world. The wireless telephone gives individuals the powerful ability to communicate—almost anywhere, anytime.

With the ability of having a cellular phone comes responsibility. As National Wireless Safety Week comes to a conclusion, we must recognize the dangers of having and using cellular telephones, especially when driving. We must also recognize the benefits of having these phones in situations where they are desperately needed. Today, there are over 98,000 emergency calls made daily by people using wireless phones—saving lives, preventing crimes and assisting in emergency situations. Furthermore, according to a recent government study, decreasing notification time when accidents occurs saves lives—a wireless phone is a tool to reduce such a time.

The Cellular Telecommunications Industry Association (CTIA) is the international organization of the wireless communications industry for wireless carriers and manufactures. It is also the coordinator of Wireless Safety Week, and promotes using phones to summon assistance in emergency situations to save lives. It also promotes the concept that when driving a car, safety is one's first priority. The CTIA has six simple rules to driving safely while using a wireless phone, including:

Safe driving is one's first responsibility. Always buckle up; keep your hands on the wheel and your eyes on the road.

Make sure that one's phone is positioned where is easy to see and easy to reach. Be familiar with the operation of one's phone so that one is comfortable using it on the road.

Use the speed dialing feature to program-in frequently called numbers. Then one is able to make a call by touching only one or two buttons. Most phones will store up to 99 numbers.

When dialing manually without using the speed dialing feature first, dial only when stopped. If one cannot stop,

or pull over, dial a few digits, then survey traffic before completing the call.

Never take notes while driving. Pull off the road to a safe spot to jot something down.

Be a wireless Samaritan. Dialing 9-1-1 is a free call for wireless subscribers, use it to report crimes in progress or other potentially life-threatening emergencies, accidents, or drunk driving.

In a recent national poll, it was found that over 60 percent of wireless phone users have called for help in cases of car trouble, medical emergency, or to report a drunk driving crime. Close to 90 percent of wireless phone users polled said safety and security were the best reasons for owning a wireless phone.

Mr. President. The bottom line is that individuals need to assume responsibility while behind the wheel of a car. No telephone call is important enough to risk the safety of the driver, passengers, and others on the road. Cellular phones can be a distraction while one is driving a car. I urge drivers to use common sense when driving, and ask that drivers continue to act as good Samaritans. I also want to recognize the efforts of the Cellular Telecommunications Industry Association, and congratulate them for a successful Wireless Safety Week.●

#### TRIBUTE TO BOB CLARKE

● Mr. LEAHY. Mr. President, today I rise to recognize Bob Clarke, who has served for nearly 15 years as President of Vermont Technical College in Randolph. Under Bob's leadership, VTC has seen its annual budget quadruple, its annual donations have increased twelve-fold, and VTC's standing in the community has grown immensely.

Bob brought to VTC a new perspective for technical education. He has established unique relationships between VTC and the high-tech community. Currently, Vermont Technical College is providing training to employees of companies such as IBM, BF Goodrich Aerospace, and Bell Atlantic. In addition, Bob has listened to the concerns of small businesses in the state. When Vermont faced a shortage of trained auto mechanics, he established a training program in automotive technology. His willingness to listen to the needs of the business community has resulted in increased opportunities for VTC students and alumni alike, and VTC has created a qualified pool of applicants to meet the growing needs of Vermont's high-tech industry.

Over the years, I have worked closely with Bob and VTC on issues including education, workforce retraining and business development. I have been most impressed with Bob's innovation in addressing the evolving needs of the business community. His work is truly inspiring and the results have been felt

across the state. Bob has truly raised the bar for technical colleges around the country.

An article recently appeared in the Vermont Sunday Magazine which details Bob's accomplishments during his tenure as President of Vermont Technical College. I ask that this article be printed in the RECORD.

The article follows:

[From Vermont Sunday Magazine, May 23, 1999]

#### CUTTING-EDGE CLARKE

(By Jack Crowl)

Bob Clarke doesn't exactly fit the central-casting image of a New England college president. He doesn't have an Ivy League degree; in fact he doesn't have a traditional academic Ph. D. at all. Neither does he have a particularly deferential air toward the life of the mind, nor the aversion to cozy relationships with businesses that many academic leaders fear might skew their priorities and jeopardize their independence.

Instead, the president of Vermont Technical College is best known for his impish grin, the twang in his speech—he's from the Eastern Shore of Maryland—a love of fast cars, and a passion for hard work and getting things done. Pass him on the street unknowingly and you'd likely say, "That guy must be a salesman."

Which he is. Largely by selling himself and his institution to a bevy of businesses, Clarke has transformed that small and sleepy two-year, engineering-technology school into a statewide dynamo with substantial influence in the highest circles of industry, education, and government.

In his nearly 15 years as head of VTC, Clarke has seen its annual budget grow from about \$5 million to more than \$21 million, plus more than \$13 million in new or renovated buildings and facilities. Additionally, the college has spent more than \$750,000 a year over the past decade on new equipment and for several years has boasted of a totally "wired" campus for the information age.

Gifts and grants that once amounted to a paltry \$25,000 a year now total \$3 million annually. And the endowment fund, which didn't even exist when Clarke arrived in 1984, now amounts to about \$3.6 million, VTC employs nearly 500 people and offers two-year associate degrees in 18 different technical areas, plus two recently added bachelor's degrees.

But Clarke's contributions to Vermont are more significant than simply the upgrading of a single institution, important as that may be. In the process of selling VTC, he's also been selling the concept of higher education to more and more people. He's played a big role in changing the tenor of public discussion about the importance of higher education and helped move the debate from the theoretical realm of ideas to the practical world of jobs and profits.

At meetings large and small throughout the state, Clarke continually chants his twin mantras about the importance of technology in our modern society and the crucial role that higher education plays in a healthy economy because of that, "We have to have higher education as the centerpiece of our economic development plans or we're going to be in trouble when the next recession hits," he says.

Clarke was a member of Vermont's Higher Education Financing Commission, which last winter urged substantial increases in state funds for colleges and students, and whose

recommendations have been taken seriously by the governor and legislature. He brought Massachusetts economist Paul Harrington, an adherent of using occupational-education programs to help boost the economy, to the attention of the panel. Harrington's ideas were important in its deliberations.

Some traditional academic types are somewhat dismissive of Clarke in private, calling him a "showboat" or an "empire builder." But he has big fans in business and government, and he has converted some of his harshest critics over the years. "If a college president's job is to promote the institution and raise money, then by God, he does the job well," says Russ Mills, a longtime VTC faculty member and former president of the state-college faculty union. "He does a good job of making the college indispensable to the business community," he adds.

And Clarke's boss, Chancellor Charles Bunting of the state-college system, calls the VTC president "an outstanding model of leadership."

Robert G. Clarke was born in Lewes, Del. (best known in the mid-Atlantic area as the terminus of a ferry line across Delaware Bay from Cape May, N.J.), but his family soon moved further south on the Eastern Shore to the tiny Maryland town of Snow Hill. After high school, he spent two years at nearby Salisbury State College, where he met his future wife.

He then joined the Air Force, where he spent seven years, picking up along the way a bachelor's degree in occupational education from Southern Illinois University and a master's degree in the same field from Central Washington State College.

In 1978, Clarke joined the faculty of Northampton Community College in Bethlehem, Penn., where in six years, he rose to Dean of Business, Engineering and Technology while also earning a doctorate in Higher Education Administration and Supervision at Lehigh University.

In 1984, VTC was in the doldrums. Its enrollment was declining. No new buildings had been built in 12 years. It had no endowment and few private gifts. The Vermont State College trustees tapped the 33-year-old Clarke, giving him the charge to rescue the college and lead it to new heights. The rest, as they say, is history.

Last fall, the state Chamber of Commerce honored Clarke as the 1998 Vermont Citizen of the Year and the accolades flew fast and furiously. Vermont's entire congressional delegation, state and college officials, and businesspeople of all stripes joined in paeans to Clarke's hard work, vision, and leadership. He was called, in no particular order, "A man who fixes things;" "A man in a hurry;" and "Not just a man with a plan, but a man who gets things done."

Said Gov. Howard Dean, who presented the award: "Bob Clarke was talking about workplace investments and public-private partnerships before anybody else knew what they were." And, he added, "What I know best about (him) is his ubiquity. I've never been to any meeting about education and jobs, in my 7½ years as governor, that he or someone who works for him wasn't either at the meeting or was next on the appointment list."

In his acceptance speech, Clarke noted that it was relatively rare for both an educator and a non-native-Vermont to receive the coveted award, and that he was awed to be mentioned in the company of the other honorees—most of them governors, statesmen, or captains of industry. He unsurprisingly reviewed his college's accomplishments and thanked his colleagues. But