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## EDITORIAL

(This editorial is taken from a Tree Talk delivered by Jake Dunnell Friday, August 16, 1963.)

Before the summer is over, a summer in which we have done or have not done, in which we have grown or have not grown as young men, it seems appropriate to remind ourselves that one of the basic traits we have been trying to develop is, in a paraphrase of Mr. Ned's words, an ability to do and think not only for ourselves but for others. In one way or another all that has been heard in Tree Talks and Chapel can be pointed to this cornerstone of purpose. Intrinsic in its ringing challenge to us as individuals is humility, a word we have all heard many times this summer. We have heard it described as an ability to give ourselves to someone or something greater than our own immediate and personal desires – a fairly cloudy conception, I suppose, unless we can find a minute to think about it

Picture yourself standing on the rim of the Grand Canyon as the sun is setting. Dropping away some five thousand feet in a gorge about ten miles across at the top, the Colorado River cuts its way ever deeper into the face of Arizona. Since the beginning of time this magnificent example of Nature's power has been present, always bringing change. It would seem altogether fitting if we were prompted to realize how insignificant the powers of man seem to that which lies before us and comment that it gives us a humble feeling. But would this be real humility? I think not. Humility is more than that. It is not intended to make us feel small, but rather to expand our capacity for appreciation, awe, and delight; to help us stand silent before all we do not know or comprehend and then urge us to get on with the job of finding out.

Akin to this misunderstanding of humility is its all too frequent connection with timidity. We think of a humble person as too self-effacing, and not apt to provide positive leadership. History tells us that this is false. Lincoln and Ghandi were humble men, and yet we know that they had a fierce determination to carry out their destinies as they saw and understood them. Humility then is a tough, vibrant, yet highly sensitive characteristic. Where can we see it? How can we recognize it?

We can find it in the spoken word. I am reminded here of a story involving Alfred Hitchcock. As word of mouth had it, he was shooting a scene in New York City when angry clouds blew in overhead shutting off too much of the necessary light. A derelict happened by the stalled production and sidled up to Hitchcock, asking if all the idle men were being paid by the hour. On finding that they were, he suggested that a lot of

money could be saved if the scene were shot under artificial light. Patiently Hitchcock explained that the difference between indoor and outdoor lighting prohibited such a possibility. With a wave of his hand the bum took his leave. After the exchange an aide approached and allowed as how Hitchcock's words were indeed decent in the light of his present dilemma. Hitchcock's reply was that ideas come from everywhere and if one doesn't listen, he is lost. Here was humility taking human potential into account no matter how weak the flame might be.

There is humility too in a person's actions. Project yourself into the rush of a political campaign. A busy candidate, having said farewell to a crowd of well-wishers, heads for his awaiting car. He has appointments to keep and speeches to give, yet before he leaves you see him picking up stray pieces of paper left by his well-wishers. In his position he did not have to and if he hadn't, probably no one would have thought the less of him. This politician's actions were humble because humility doesn't ask what is the decent thing to do; it does it by instinct and without fuss.

Humility can be seen in failure. During the depression many persons were laid off their jobs. A boy, a mere factory worker, lost his job and with hurt and bitterness filed out through the factory gates, hating all that there was which had taken his job – his life blood – away from him. In front of him a gaunt figure in a shabby coat whistled his way up the walk. The boy ran forward, caught the man's arm and asked, "Didn't you lose your job?" The old man replied that he had and the boy immediately wanted to know why he was so happy. What was he going to do? "I think I'll go to Africa, boy," replied the man. "I understand the stars over the desert are as big as plums. Or perhaps I'll go to Rio. They tell me the lights climb from the beach all the way to heaven. The world's a big place, son, and there's enough to make any man happy if he's not afraid to go as far as his brains and his heart will take him." Here was a humility which recognized and appreciated his failure as something which he probably could not really understand, yet it was a humility tempered with the desire only to pause long enough to reflect and then get on with rectifying the situation as best as he could.

Failure's opposite provides us with another example of humility. Not too many months ago on February 20, 1962 this country found a new and exciting hero as John Glenn became the first American to orbit the earth. In the wake of innumerable things which could have cost him his life during the flight; in the subsequent glare of publicity and national adoration Glenn brought the nation to its feet cheering his courage, skill, and daring. For days he was the focus of everyone's attention. Yet recall how he put his achievement in its proper place by picturing the earth as eighty inches in diameter and saying that the first of many steps had taken the astronauts and the country, comparatively speaking, only one and one-third inches above his eighty inch prototype of the earth. His overriding hope was that his flight had added a little information to a far greater picture of space exploration and travel. Humility then is poise. It is hard, yet sympathetic and understanding. It is the proper balance of things seen, things done, and how each little endeavor fits into the larger scope of life. It is as useful and as necessary to us as is the keel to a racing sloop. It keeps us from tipping over.