**GRADUATION SPEECH**

**FOR**

**CARMEN WRIGHT**

Ladies and gentlemen, family members and friends, faculty, administrators, special guests, and of course, graduates, it is an honor to be here and have the opportunity to say a few words of congratulations and encouragement to the 2021 graduates of \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ School of Nursing. I think we can all agree that this year, more than ever before, this celebration and our sentiments have a special meaning..... I mean, in the past, we’d all been warned that life can be unpredictable, but honestly (**say this with emphasis**) **WHO IN HEAVENS NAME KNEW**???? (**Wait for the laugh**) ... You know, years ago, back in the ‘60’s, there was a popular rock n roll song that went, “Momma said there’d be days like this.... there’d be days like this, my Momma said....”. I can safely say that **NONE** of our Momma’s would have **EVER** expected or predicted the past **YEAR**!!! And who could possibly have predicted that when you graduates chose to enter school to join the ranks of those in the esteemed profession of nursing, that your timing would be **SO IMPECCABLE**???? In all honesty, it’s always commendable to want to become a nurse. Let’s also just say this.... not only do we congratulate you on your achievements, we **HONOR YOU** for the patience, resilience, courage, and care you brought to your studies and are about to bring to our communities and beyond..... welcome to the realm of the heroes!!

In our lives, at one time or another, we will all interact with nurses. And whether it’s at the doctor’s office for a routine check up and bloodwork.... or to go to a specialist or hospital for something more serious..... or even if it’s a simple visit to the nurse’s office at school, we all need to acknowledge and applaud the current and future nurses in our lives. Recently I read something that happened to cross my path.... Someone said, “Tough times don’t last, but tough people do.” Having the opportunity to receive a valuable educational foundation is a real gift. It makes us stronger... tougher.... none of us can or will achieve anything without a well rounded, detailed, practical base. Education provides the platform upon which all of your knowledge and experience will continue to build..... and if you’re **REALLY, REALLY** smart and wise, you’ll know that the secret to success in life is to **KEEP LEARNING.**... to continue to build on your stockpile of knowledge.... to take with you, no matter where you go... no matter in what strange, unpredictable circumstances you might find yourselves, like.... for instance.... a **PANDEMIC**??? ... that your knowledge builds strength and power and the wherewithal to survive, sustain, and prevail through whatever curve balls life may hurl your way. ... And if you don’t believe me... or other wise people, sometimes known as “anonymous,” heed the words of Florence Nightingale, who teaches us, “Let is never consider ourselves finished nurses... we must be learning all our lives.” Wise words, indeed.

Up until today, you’ve been somewhat “sheltered,” or so we all thought. The “real world” is right outside the gates to this stadium. Some of you have already gotten tastes of the harsh realities of life, yet you’re still here, and that’s incredible. I’ve tended to live my life by the adage, “That which doesn’t kill you makes you stronger.” Strength, adaptability, focus, ingenuity, compassion.... these are all traits that lie within each one of you. No matter where you find yourselves in the spectrum of the nursing profession, your presence and skills will be essential. Your ability and willingness to assess a situation, creatively problem solve, and take action to improve the situation, to heal, to comfort, to ease pain and fear, will be tested every day.... and probably every hour. Remember your lessons and continue to thirst for more knowledge.... more skills.... greater technique...broader strokes to mend and heal. The career you have chosen to practice... the arena in which you’ve chosen to make a difference really does **MATTER**. I am proud to stand before you and to feel your energy and enthusiasm. May you take the energy you feel today and carry it with you every day.... no matter the situation, and remember how important your contribution is. Remember to respect and serve those for whom you work... your mentors, your managers, and most of all, your patients. You’ll be forced to express and experience sympathy... remember too, the importance of **empathy**.....never lose sight of your humanity. Treat with the purpose to provide healing, or when that’s not possible, comfort. No matter what you’re going through, remember your actions make a huge difference in the lives of others.

Having said that, please know that I **KNOW** you are all heroes in the making. Thank you for making the pledge to serve others. You will soon learn how vital you are. Congratulations and thank you all!!