Opening ceremonies are an ancient tradition in academic institutions, as ancient and honorable as graduation exercises. Because commencement, however, requires the handing over of a diploma to each graduate as he strides across the stage, it has the appearance of being a good deal more functional and necessary than any opening convocation. Something definite happens at graduation, something of which the diploma is a tangible sign.

Perhaps we should institute in parallel fashion an entrance rite, with every freshman walking across the stage in the opposite direction and being handed his ID card, signifying that he has, in symbol and in fact, entered the University.

As it is, we all must feel a little foolish heralding an event that has already happened in actuality. And, in truth, ceremonies are not really necessary in a functional sense. We can begin the school year quite well without this one, could start classes as we did yesterday with never a forward look. We are all busy with our new schedules; it comes as something of a nuisance to break the class sequence, don this academic regalia, and parade across the campus.

And, in a strictly utilitarian world, such foolishness would not, as a matter of fact, be allowed to exist. Only those actions which promoted the material well-being of society would be tolerated. The sort of ceremony in which we are engaging today would be looked on as romantic excess, a nostalgic gesture toward something that no longer exists.
But it is a sober fact that we would lose something of our sense of community if we did not engage in ceremony. Granted, we could make it more dramatic, with trumpets and with fife. I had occasion to celebrate with the Cistercian Fathers a few days ago the feast of good king St. Louis, the great crusader, and I confessed to them then that I would like to get our venerable horse Crusader out of the woods and mount him to bring up the rear of our academic parade. If I could ride him down these steps and onto this platform I think we might liven up this event considerably.

Celebrations and ceremonies, whether they are lively or somber, precisely because they are not functionally necessary, serve to define a community. Most of the celebrations at this University are entirely local, having to do with rites of passage on this particular campus; about some, happily, I have no knowledge, and about others, such as Ground Hog Day, I am willing to profess ignorance. These—and I gather we are in agreement on this point—should be quite original: not imitation of hi-jinks on other campuses. They should be characteristic of our own peculiar genius, wholly UD.

But a few of our ceremonies are entirely formal; we engage in them because this University is a member of the community of academia, whose earliest ancestry is Greek and whose institutionalization began with Bologna and Paris in the thirteenth century. These are traditional ceremonies with medieval trappings; and because this University is conscious of belonging to a splendid and noble ancestry, it is proper that we make these observances with due seriousness.

At the same time, I think you must be aware that we undertake these ceremonies with some awkwardness, some sense of self-irony, in the realization that they are archaic and that we are moderns, not quite "up to" the dignity
required. I have not yet managed to balance formality and irony sufficiently to wear the University seal about my neck or have a mace carried in our academic parade, according to antique custom. I participate too much in what Donald Davidson has called the American tradition of irreverence and am aware of that same quality, I think, in you students. In the absence of a "guarded style," of just the right touch of sentiment and mockery, such trappings would be ridiculous, would be a riding of a horse upon the platform.

But if we could manage it, would not such trappings be magnificent! As it is, even our self-conscious gestures toward the archaic further define our community. As Victor Turner, the University of Chicago anthropologist, points out in an important article on ritual, "it is a mistake to think that the archaic is the fossilized or surpassed. The archaic can be as contemporary as nuclear physics." Rituals guard the thresholds of experience, he maintains; they are "proofs of the existence of powers antithetical to those generating and maintain- ing 'profane' structures of all types, proofs that man does not live by bread alone."

The threshold symbolized in the exercises this morning is, as I have already indicated, the opening of a new academic year. What we are doing together is leaving an outside world and entering into a special place, a place that is, in a way, apart from time--nine months set off away from the ordinary. It is for us the Forest of Arden, the Magic Isle, the place of formation, into which our youngest members come to be instructed--by their elders, certainly, but more by a great mythic informing power to which they become open because of instruction. Shakespeare, in his comedies, tells us something important about education when he presents the necessity for a person or rather a group of persons to withdraw from the world in order to be formed for the world.
Casting about in my limited literary repertory for other examples of the "green world" of instruction, I can quickly come up with the wilderness of Faulkner's "The Bear", with instruction by the elders in "that best of all the talking" of the huntsmen about the campfire, with instruction by a wise mentor in Sam Fathers, instruction by the wilderness itself--its squirrels and snakes and deer and dogs... and the great bear, Old Ben. The wilderness was Ike McCaslin's college, as Faulkner openly acknowledged in his allusion to it as Isaac's "Alma Mater."

Education is one of the great literary themes--the essential instruction, all too often neglected by formal and logical schooling. Perhaps it takes a poet to discern that something has gone fearfully a-wry when the educational ideal models itself directly on life, prepares a person for the specific career that he must follow in his adulthood, rather than providing him with a deeply formative experience of community. The poet, therefore, gives us the green world of instruction, the place of withdrawal where the community is formed. Many works of fiction depict such a place. In Moby Dick, the ship in which Ishmael and Ahab put forth was the Pequod, the Indian name for Destroyer. (I fear that name might be too explicit an analogue for college.) But I would point out that it is the ocean, not the ship that is the green world, the classroom for Ishmael. The whaling vessel is indeed the destroyer of the ocean, as the sawmill is of the wilderness. The great deep and its denizens, with the men who struggle with them, constitute the instructors, and Ishmael is Everyman, is every one of us; and like him we each come through our period of instruction as a sole survivor. All the tremendous expenditure of wisdom and courage by men great and small has been spent on the formation of this single unit of humanity who survives on the coffin of his myth.
But it is not so apocalyptic a vision of education that I wish to present this morning. The groves of academe are much closer to Prospero's island than to the deeps of the ocean or even to the wilderness, because it is not the individual that is being educated—it is a whole community that receives instruction and is transformed in order to do the work of the world. Perhaps I should emphasize that no Utopia is being constructed on the magic island—no idealized model of society which, if men would just behave themselves, could endure from now on. It is a finite world restricted in time and space for the purpose of formation. True, the good old Duke Gonzalo, simple-minded, innocent, wanted to build such a perfect state on the island, but his was a foolish dream.

Dreamers always seek Utopia, be it in a return to the garden or a forging ahead to the golden city of the future. And education seems to such persons as an ideal place to start. This perfection of society through schooling is close enough to the true purpose of education to constitute a dangerous trap into which a university can fall. The university as an imitation of society is frequently thrust forth as the best model for education, with vocational training its method and training for good citizenship its hidden purpose. This behavioristic concept is on the upswing today. Colleges are urged to credit for civic work in the town, for practical experience on a job. I do not propose that we disregard this thrust; we must give its proper due, recognizing the many functions which education must perform, and differentiating in our own minds the various levels of institutions making up higher education. Other institutions may define their purposes toward utilitarian ends. On this campus, however, we have a school for leaders, requiring a particular kind of instruction—and instruction conducing toward wisdom. Leaders very much need their period on the magic island. It is the threshold of that island that we step over today.
Magic as I speak of it here is the working of grace, of grace that is ever present, that lifts us again and again out of the ordinary. Every class period is a celebration. Something is supposed to happen in the classroom. It is the inner sanctum of education. And yet, the classroom is one of the points of education under attack at present. The dull lecture, the yellowed notes, the sleeping student--how easy it is to build a case against the classroom. And because learning is truly a self-instruction process, because it is a dynamic which you students yourselves must generate, it seems logical to discount the classroom, to turn an increasingly greater amount of instruction over to the student himself who proceeds at his own pace, aided and goaded by mechanical devices. In a technological age, the classroom seems inefficient and outmoded. Most universities boast that they have in large measure eliminated the lecture system.

But that is to discount the magic of the classroom. The Prospero there in front of the room does, indeed, have powers. He calls forth presences before you. He embodies virtues that radiate to you through receptors which we have no way of synthesizing. Self-learning it must be, yes, but this learning occurs in part because the self generously gives itself to the community which is the classroom.

I should warn you that if you succeed in holding yourself apart from the community of your classroom, the transformation of true education will not occur. You must go into the wilderness without compass or watch if you are to see the great bear. You must risk yourself to the experience if you are to gain the wisdom of the classroom.

I speak with some confidence of the powers our Prosperos command. I had promised you freshmen some advice on how you deal with faculty. The profes-
sors assembled on this campus are a dedicated and impressive group. If you would look at their listing, noting the institutions from which their degrees derive, recognizing the books and articles they have written, the honors they have won, you would appreciate that this cosmopolitan group would rate high on any objective listing of faculties, as, indeed, it does. But there is a quality in these faculty members not apparent in statistics. I have called that quality authority—an ability to speak first-hand about their disciplines. This authority is the quality which identifies a University teacher as distinct from a college teacher. And our faculty possesses it in large measure. Each professor, no doubt, has his own style of teaching. Some of the members of these ranks are great lecturers who will exhilarate and inspire you. Some are Socratic in method to engender in you a critical attitude. Others are quite low key in manner and may require an ingenuity on your part to make the classroom exciting and well as instructive. But every one of them possesses authority. It was a quality recognized in them by their colleagues and administrative staff when they were invited to join the faculty. It is a quality refined and extended by their tenure on this campus. You have the privilege of associating intimately with these scholars, inside and outside of class. They are true to their disciplines and they love teaching. They want to know you, to welcome you into their fields of learning and join with you in discovery. But remember that they must have their time for study, for thought, and for reflection. Do not engage them trivially. Respect their privacy in the library. Their learning is the greatest resource this university possesses. They are the masters of our classrooms.

I have talked to you today about your professors. A week ago on Faculty Day, I talked to the professors about you. What I would emphasize, however, is not the separateness of faculty, student body, and Administration, but their unity, singleness of purpose—their common community. Together we occupy the magic isle
and are led by the same powers, instructed by the same presences. Each of us foregoes something of his identity, each risks a little in the common enterprise. We must not wholly own ourselves. The academic year that is beginning is an opportunity for us to encounter together in a finite time and space the unfolding of wisdom which penetrates all limits, all boundaries.

Then when the spring portal of the year approaches, we can look back from that exit threshold and say with Gonzalo, who in his summing up of the benvolent spirit of the island, exclaimed:

O rejoice beyond a common joy, and set it down
With gold on lasting pillars.
    ... Prospero /found/ his dukedom
In a poor isle; and all of us ourselves
When no man was his own.

The eighteenth year of the University of Dallas is now officially open.