

TALKING POINTS FOR THE CANADIAN ACADEMY
(JANUARY 31, 1995)

-- Joan and I want to thank you all for your gracious welcome. I understand that the Canadian Academy just reopened yesterday, and Joan and I wanted very much to be here this week to personally thank Stuart Young and each and every one of you for your heroic response to this disaster.

-- This earthquake was the most devastating natural disaster to befall Japan since 1923. Many here died, and I was deeply saddened to learn that one young boy at the Canadian Academy lost his mother in this tragedy.

-- Many more of you lost your homes. Others among you may have lost personal belongings, including things that perhaps you had thought would always be with you, lending a sense of security. I think it will take a long time for life in Kobe to return to normal. And few of us who were in Japan when the earthquake hit we ever forget this terrible nightmare.

-- But I want to say a few words about the valor and dedication of this particular school. You know, the Canadian Academy is well-known throughout Japan for its fine teaching of our young people -- Americans, Japanese, and students from around the world. What we learned over the past few weeks, though, is that the Canadian Academy is also much, much more. We found out how brave, unselfish, and dedicated this Academy's faculty, staff, and students can be in the face of terrible danger. You all pulled together and took care not only of your own, but of others in need in your community.

-- Let me give a few examples. Your headmaster, within minutes of the early morning quake, put aside his own losses and instead hurried to the Academy to begin organizing a massive relief effort. It wasn't long ago that this very room was packed with hundreds of

dazed, disoriented people forced out of their home by the quake. (I understand there were some dogs here too!)

- - Faculty members and Japanese staff, many of you having suffering personal tragedies of your own, also quickly gathered. You took on the strenuous job of being caregivers, cooks -- and even digging toilets -- for about 450 foreign residents who took refuge here, and at one point for another 5000 members of the local community who had to be quickly evacuated and brought to the school for a day.

- - This Academy's wonderful response to the 5000 who showed up on your doorstep one day says so much about the character of this school. You knew that you had food for your own community to last only for a few days. And yet, when the local community appealed to you for help, this Academy opened its doors and you unstintingly gave of yourselves and your stores freely, even though it meant rapidly depleting your own resources. This shows a real measure of character and solidarity. If there is a lesson in this disaster anywhere, I think it is contained in this unselfish act.

- - But most of all, I want to tell the students of this school how very proud we are of you, and how much we feel for the trauma you have gone through. Those of you who were at the school when the quake hit pitched in without complaint and with a seriousness of purpose that is impressive. I know that others of you helped out in your neighborhoods and with your families. In many ways, after living through this awful earthquake, your lives may never be quite the same again. I hope, though, that you remember not only the tragedy of this disaster, but also that you keep with you the memory of how your school opened its facilities and how your headmaster, your teachers, the staff, and you yourselves gave so unselfishly to others in their time of need.

Thank you.



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