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UA37/44 One Hundred Commencements

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August 9, 1969

One Hundred Commencements

Last night, in the vast L. T. Smith Stadium, Western held its 100th commencement. And Lancaster and I were pleased to be able to attend, to review a very large percentage of that huge number of occasions. It would be nearly impossible for me to say just how many of the 100 I have been a part of, but I would be almost willing to wager that I have been at 80. In addition to the set occasions, beginning with the class of 1908 of the Life Certificate graduates, there is one other that preceded them all and, so far as I know, is not counted in the 100.

My old diary for April 13, 1908, has this entry:

"This morning at chapel period, Miss Flora Stallard, teacher of the fourth grade in the Model School, received the first Life Certificate given by Western Kentucky State Normal, and delivered an excellent address on "Better Education."

Some years later Miss Stallard, our first graduate, married John Breckinridge Thomas, of Nelson County, and became the mother of John, Jr, who was to be one of our honor students and an outstanding alumnus. After some years of teaching the the high schools of Louisville, he joined the United States Navy, decided to remain until he could retire, rose to the rank of Commander, and is now serving in some advisory capacity in the Navy as a civilian. In addition to his excellent standing in English and history here, he took his A. M. degree at Indiana University, and was so highly regarded that Dr. H. H. Carter, the head of the English department there at that time, wrote me once to send as many graduate students as I could of the stature of John Thomas. Since John entered the Navy, he has become a real scholar in Russian language and literature and has been of untold value as a consultant on many occasions. His mother, our first graduate, lived to a rather ripe old age and remained the fine-spirited, good-humored lady she had always been. Western never had better friends than Flora Stallard Thomas and her family.