Unknown to me the electrician who managed the audio system taped some chapel talks for the entertainment of his invalid wife. After I left Brown two young alumni used the tapes to make a disc record from which this material is drawn.

The indented passages are the "connectors" made by the young men.
There can be only one justification for the existence of this center of learning, or for your resort to it. Here you may make the acquaintance of ideas.

This is the voice of Henry Merritt Wriston, eleventh President of Brown University. His eighteen years on college hill marked one of the greatest periods of intellectual and physical growth at America's seventh oldest college. A man passionately devoted to the search for truth, he frequently spoke about the nature of a university.

If I were to stress the single characteristic which is essential to the life, not to say the greatness, of the University, it would be hospitality toward ideas. For a university is first of all a treasure house of ideas that are very old. They have been tested and tried times without number and have not been found wanting. The relationship of freedom to the innate dignity of the individual is a characteristic one. And if you fail here to gain acquaintance with these seasoned veterans in the age-long war against folly you will never master the art of learning.

Wriston emphasized the ideal of the Liberal Arts. He saw it as the balanced growth of individuality and commented that

You will never understand the world nor grasp the foundations of peace until you respond to the long struggle of the philosophers to identify and wrestle with the great problems of what is most worthwhile in the life of mankind. Nor will you learn what is truth unless you study its relationship to beauty, unless you seek to understand what music and art and poetry have to contribute to the knowledge and experience of reality. Those who regard such things as frills, as mere decorations or something
with which to while away an idle hour, are impoverishing themselves. As students you have no more right to squander your intellectual inheritance than to throw your money into the street.

This intellectual inheritance was preserved, he felt, in the college. Yet college was something more:

College is a place to grow up; to learn from books; to improve the mind; to acquire a modicum of social grace. But it is all wasted if you do not grow up morally; if you do not acquire, among other things, the moral courage to take some position and stand on it.

Moral courage Wriston felt was in crisis due to the pressure of the times. Conformity, the fear of being different, was in his opinion an ever dangerous threat to the American tradition.

The word controversial has become a dirty word—and that worries me because it has occasionally been applied to me. Not properly of course, but it has been applied to me. But something worse happened, for, as some of you know I am one of the few living men who knew both Alger Hiss and Harry Dexter White. The fact is I employed both of them. But a Brown man working for the Associated Press, in calling me for my impressions of White (which are quite vivid), said that he had called seventy people and of the seventy only two were willing to give information and have their names used; the rest wanted to remain anonymous. Now that jarred me right down to the marrow of my bones. Just to have known a man twenty-five years ago has apparently become so dangerous in the minds of people that they say, "Please sir, don't mention me." So I sought to restore this hole in my armor of optimism. I reviewed again the Book of Daniel. You all know who he was: he was the fellow that went into the lions' den.
He was the fellow who fed on pulse and water instead of the king's meat. He was the friend of Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego and if you don't know any more, you know the Mariners and what they did to Shadrach, Meshack and Abednego. Daniel was a man who knew what was wrong and he called it wrong, even when he told it to the king. He knew what was right and he did what was right. And he took the consequences.

Wriston pointed out examples of physical courage that are all about us; but for proper balance he felt moral courage was a necessity.

You are not lacking in physical courage. But I suggest that when the story of Robin Hood is labeled as Communist propaganda; when the children in the schools are urged not to look upon themselves as future citizens of the world but only as citizens of Illinois; when censorship of books is mounting; when security is set above freedom, how many people are ready to speak up? Most of the voices that are being heard in the United States are the voices of arrogance, the voices of bullies, the voices of those who would sacrifice freedom for security. It had better be called sterilization. There are many who regard accusation as conviction, who take rumours as evidence. The situation is well described in a play, "Robert's Wife," by St. John Irvine. In it the bishop is one of the characters and the bishop says, "This man has enthusiasm and brains and that's a combination of qualities that is rare and getting rarer. All the enthusiasts of my acquaintance have no brains; and all the brainy people have no enthusiasm. The world, he said, is dying of hot heads and cold feet." Now those of you who are oldest should have learned by experience with the Kaiser and those of you who are younger should have learned by our experience with Hitler that you cannot appease a bully. Every time you appease a bully
you strengthen him and weaken yourself. That is just as true of freedom of speech and freedom of thought as it is in international relations. If you believe in freedom, if liberty means anything to you then you must see that the Bill of Rights is observed in all its phases. Stand up and be counted among those who speak for freedom, and do not cower because there are bullies abroad in the world. Meet it in the only way it can be met, with faith and with courage and with depth of belief. Dare, if you will, to be a Daniel.

Wriston saw the threat to civil liberties especially evident in the attitude of some individuals who would attempt to censor thought in the universities of the nation.

And I say to you that if we impair the capital of the institutions which are the foundation of our scientific and our technological, our medical advance, then we are simply selling our descendents short, to the degree that the debt doesn't even threaten. When you stop to think that since 1900 the average expectation of life in the United States has increased by twenty years that is a direct and immediate reflection of the research carried on in the universities, of the training of doctors carried on in the universities and of all that has followed upon that in the hospitals of the United States.

And sometimes when some stupid-head says "Don't give them money until they use a different text book in economics"--ask him in God's name what he is talking about. Is he going to stop the development of science and of technology and of medicine in the United States until some chump finds a book that doesn't teach anybody anything?

4.
Wriston was interested in foreign affairs. Speaking at Chapel on VE Day in 1945 he foresaw that:

The hope of the world for peace rests upon two pivots: one in Washing the other in Moscow.

Addressing the seniors at chapel on the tenth anniversary of VE Day he noted the necessity for a sense of individual responsibility for world peace.

For to me it is as plain as anything that the drift of the world has been toward war. It is time now to start the hard beat to windward with peace as the ultimate haven. Ten years after VE Day turn your eyes back and consider this decade just past. If you will appraise it rightly there will come to you, as American citizens, a surge of confidence which the past behavior of our nation in this treacherous era fully justifies. But avoid at all hazards arrogance and boastfulness. For the greatness of the United States and its nearly dominant position in the world today lay upon us new responsibilities. These will require not alone courage and strength and confidence, they will require even more deep humility and profound spiritual commitment.

But frequently amidst the weightier problems of international relations he saw the humour of the issue.

You know what appeasement is? Appeasement is a negotiation that doesn't succeed. When you negotiate you give a quid pro quo. Then the question comes, if you deliver the quid will the other fellow deliver the quo? And you have to ask the question is the quo worth the quid and is the quid the quo? And if the quid isn't worth the quo or the quo the quid and if the other fellow doesn't deliver the quo when you deliver the quid that's appeasement.
Of the chances for peace he said:

Those who want a stable peace want what never was, is not now, and probably never shall be. For peace has to do with persons and persons are not perfectly stable. And when you get millions upon millions upon millions of unstable people stabling together you are going to have some instability. For it is men who make war and men only. Human nature being what it is there must be either the adventures of peace and the risks of peace or adventures of war and the risks of war.

Wriston, a lover of the democratic ideal, often spoke against those who would not grasp the opportunity to perfect that ideal. His criticism sometimes focused on the nation's Capitol.

Indeed, some Senators are among our principal security risks. Having made the violation of security a criminal offense, on their own whim they decide when they should disobey the law and publish classified materia. Even when they do not consciously reveal important information, the eternal search for headlines induces such indiscretions as would be denounced in any less august body. The Senate seems now to have decided that the legislative function assigned to it by the Constitution is dull business. Therefore they put their energies into pursuing investigations which elaborate the obvious, make mountains out of molehills, supply material to the Kremlin or just a few more black headlines.

Congress has both the right and the power to investigate but it has an obligation to legislate. With all the real and urgent problems facing us today, a helter skelter tax system, a controversial labor relations act, chaotic budget procedures, a self-defeating farm program, the whole problem of foreign relations--there is plenty for Congress to do beside looking under every bed to find a lurking Communist.
Nevertheless members rush about searching for motes in their neighbors eyes while neglecting the beam that is in their own. The Senate is one of the most ill-disciplined legislative bodies in the world. Its procedures are archaic. The method of selecting chairmen of important committees is fantastic. It gives splinter groups control of its procedures and control of its time in ways that are frivolous. In short it has a cure for everything but its own faults.

Bureaucracy caught it, too. Reporting on his services as an advisor to the State Department in Washington, Wriston gave glimpses of the red tape jungle.

Moreover, most people in the building are industrious to a fault. I've been trying to get to the office earlier than the staff sometimes. I have never yet succeeded. In the evening, when I fight my way out through the hordes of people who want to see me--what they want to see me for I've never found out--but, boy, how they like to see you. Sometime after 6 o'clock those two girls are still there; they can't leave until they can go in and take every paper that's on my desk and hide it. It's all top secret; that's because most of it is trivial.

The essence of the bureaucratic problem Wriston saw as this.

Well, if the organization is good, if the people are industrious, if they are competent, if they have good equipment why shouldn't the result be perfect? The reason is as simple as anything can be. Generally speaking they treat the boundaries of their responsibilities as nations treat the boundaries of their countries. You do not pass across from one boundary of responsibility to another without a passport and a visa. I call for some data and it requires the cooperation of two different offices.
The two offices supply each other different data and they supply me with something that makes no sense at all. The reason was just that each says my responsibility goes here—and no further. The other says my responsibility comes here—to the same spot. You are dealing across boundaries like strangers in a negotiation, and you don't even walk into his office if you can avoid it. In all my life I've never seen so much mail from down the hall. If a man wants to say something to me, will he pick up a phone and say it? No. I get a note with all the flumadiddles at the front, all my titles, index number and everything else and then "You want to buy a dog?" and it is signed.

The sense of separatism, in other words, often outruns the sense of unity. The curse of bureaucracy often lies in the beauty of its design and in the dispersal of responsibility, in the loyalty that a man has to the part, to where he works, rather than to the whole. I have thought again and again of the dictum of St. Paul, "The letter killeth but the spirit giveth life."

To Wriston the students were always his favorite audience. Often in chapel talks at both Brown and Pembroke he set for them the goals of individualism and intellectual perspective.

But if a long life is granted you, do not join that faceless multitude who yield up their God-given right to be individuals, who seek to adjust themselves to their environment and to lose themselves in the crowd, who are afraid to face reality or take a position, who go through life avoiding responsibility, going through the motions, but hiding behind their fellows. Those are the people who make citizenship sterile. Those are the people who make government costly, and often futile. Those are the
people who make the churches vacuous. Those are the people who make education a pale imitation of the dynamic force that it ought to be in America life.

Speaking at the Pembroke convocation in 1954, Wriston urged the students to forsake their hope for pat solutions to the problems of the world, to come to terms with life and to face the hazards of independence.

The Communists appeal to an all too common desire to avoid standing up and meeting the facts of life. It's easier to retire into anonymity in some great movement. Mark you this; many more people flee from liberty than are deprived of it. That is the secret of men like Hitler, of the Communists, of the McCarthyites and of a hundred lesser isms. Too many people want to avoid the pain of thought. They dread the hazards of independence. They seek to be unnoticed in the crowd. Ortega y Gasset in explaining the appeal of mass movements of fascism and communism spoke of this as an era, and I'm quoting him, in which many men "homesick for the herd...devote themselves passionately to whatever is left in them of the sheep. They want to march through life together, along the collective path, shoulder to shoulder, wool rubbing against wool, and the head down."

Fraternities he saw as a basic part of the program. But he reminded them of their inescapable responsibilities to the college community.

Fraternities must justify their position not on the basis of exclusiveness but through capacity for fellowship. Snobbery cannot be excused on the ground that it is a private vice. It runs too deeply counter to the democratic ideal. It is too fundamentally hostile to democratic practice. Every trace of it should be rooted out of this campus. By deliberate design the student body is drawn from a wide geographical range
from the whole economic spectrum, from some newly come to this country and others whose lineage reaches back to our earliest times. The liberal college is predicated upon a society fluid in structure, where every individual meets opportunity without barriers of race, religion or economic or social status. Brown University should have fraternities that are constructive forces in the progress toward appreciating people for their minds and characters and personalities—and for nothing else.

At an opening convocation Wriston stressed the importance of capitalizing on the moment and deriving from the present a sense of achievement.

Let me summarize my wish, my annual, my perpetual wish. Do not now fix your eyes on graduation. Fix your eyes on today and get the most out of today. Do not believe that life will ever be more exciting than it is now, or more important, or more rewarding or more anything else.

Speaking at the faculty club shortly before retirement, Wriston gave his colleagues inside information on the necessary versatility of a college president.

The first thing a president is supposed to do is raise money—now a lot of you put that first; but it is also, next to real estate, the most exhausting and frustrating duty. It's an enormous strain on character. When you try to tell a donor what the college is like, you're likely to be somewhat extravagant and you're also likely to make promises. I well remember a senior member of the faculty protesting because another member of the faculty called the president a liar. I can hear him now. He was an old man and he oooood between his words. He said "Oooo I do not think you should oooo call the president a liar. To be a liar a man must consciously deviate from the truth and he's been saying these things oooo so long, that he believes them himself."
In his final address to the Alumni Advisory Council in upper Manning, Wriston left them with a picture of the University which he had served for over eighteen years.

I beg of you, therefore, as you think of this beloved university, a place--this room we're in--think of its age. And cannot you hear Francis Wayland speaking to the students in chapel? Yet it is a more beautiful room today than it was then. This campus is more beautiful now than it ever was before. Our oldest building, University Hall, is more beautiful than it ever was before. This is a place of beauty and of charm. I do not believe that any boy can walk these walks for four years and not have something happen to his heart as well as to his head. Think of it therefore not alone with affection but with that sense of responsibility which comes from being members of a great society, and give to the future of Brown.