Speech at the celebration of the 77th anniversary of Liceo A-127 de San Bernardo[1]. San Bernardo, June 13, 1990

Truly, I can only tell you that I feel very much at home here. Although it has been many years since I studied in the classrooms of this Liceo, I hold it in my heart as if it were today. I attended [this] school from sixth preparatory grade—as the final year of primary education was called back then—until the fifth year of the Humanities program, for a total of six years. When I arrived in the third year, [this] school had only that grade level, and with my class, the fourth year was created, along with the fifth the following year—both as coeducational classes. That is why some of my female classmates are here today, as a preview of what school is like today. We did not have the resources back then to create a sixth [year], so I moved back to Santiago, where I completed my studies at the Internado Barros Arana (Barros Arana Boarding School).

I feel I owe a lot to [this] school; I learned so much here. I did not just acquire knowledge, and it is only right that I pay tribute to my teachers from that time. The truth is that many people were prejudiced against the Liceo de San Bernardo, a small Liceo in a small town near Santiago, believing it was not on the same level as the major educational institutions. But I was able to prove, through my own experience, that I entered the Internado Nacional Barros Arana—which was, at the time, justifiably considered one of the most prestigious schools in the country—[with] a level of preparation and knowledge comparable to that of the good students at this school.

But more than just knowledge, I learned other things at the Liceo de San Bernardo. First and foremost, I learned to perceive the sense of community among Chileans from different social backgrounds as a fundamental reality. I learned to regard as equals both my classmates who were like me, the children of professionals, and my classmates who were the children of railroad workers, retail workers, modest employees, and officers and noncommissioned officers in the Army and Air Force.

We lived and studied together, and a deep affection and strong sense of camaraderie grew among us all; and there I learned… at this Liceo, I received my first lessons in democracy. I learned about democracy through our shared Liceo experience. Another thing I learned was to respect the importance of teachers' work—to respect and admire the difficult, demanding, poorly paid, often thankless, and misunderstood task of the teacher. I would like, in remembering some of my teachers—and without intending to exclude anyone—to pay tribute to them as a student who

[1] Translator's note: In the Chilean educational system, a *liceo* is a public secondary school, equivalent to a high school in the United States or a secondary school in the United Kingdom. The "Liceo de Hombres de San Bernardo" refers specifically to a public boys' high school in San Bernardo. Now the Liceo is coeducational and is called "Liceo A-127 Fidel Pinochet Le-Brun de San Bernardo." Until 1965, primary grades were six years of compulsory schooling and six years of optional secondary education called Bachillerato or Humanidades (Baccalaureate or Humanities).

learned so much from them and who remembers them in his heart with admiration and affection: Don Roberto Ochoa Ríos, our dynamic, enthusiastic principal, always full of new initiatives, a lover of the progress of both the school and the city, and eager to integrate the Liceo not only into its specific educational mission for its students but also into a social role within the entire community of San Bernardo. Here I see one of his sons, who has been my friend ever since. The great principal, Don Roberto Ochoa Ríos.

María Cuevas de Inostrosa, our math teacher. I understand that for many of you—since this was so long ago, more than half a century—these names may not mean anything to you, but I feel it is my duty to take a few minutes to highlight them, because of the contribution they made to this school and the example they set. [María] was a great teacher. A widow, she supported a large family; some of her children were my classmates. One of them, Jorge Inostrosa—the author of *Adiós al Séptimo de Línea*, a writer who went on to become a great novelist and one of the most widely published writers in our country—inherited extraordinary talents from her. She had a great intellectual curiosity; she taught mathematics at the Liceo de Niñas and the Liceo de Hombres, and she made time to attend the Instituto Pedagógico to study philosophy, because she wanted to improve her skills and expand her knowledge.

The English teacher, Doña Ana Fricke; the chemistry teacher, Ms. Cornejo; the natural sciences teacher, Doña Aída Jaraquemada; the French teacher, Monsieur Díaz— "Monsieur Jours," "Le petit," because he was very short… (Unintelligible French words) he would say that when he was teaching and someone spoke in class—a great teacher; Don Julio Alarcón, our art and calligraphy teacher, whom we called "Cochecho," I have no idea why. Well, I mention them and pay this tribute to highlight something that you, the boys and girls studying today, may not fully understand. The selflessness, the efforts, the quiet work, the difficulty of the task, and the importance of the role of teachers.

I will never tire of emphasizing this, and if during my administration I can do anything to dignify the role of teachers and improve their conditions on all levels, you can be certain that I will do so, because, as a matter of justice and in view of the importance of their role, this is one of my primary concerns.

But at the Liceo de San Bernardo, I learned something else. I learned to feel solidarity among everyone, solidarity with the human community and with the world around us. [That] I am not just me; [that] my future does not depend solely on me, on my own success, or on my family's well-being. We are part of a community; a community that begins in the neighborhood, continues in the city, extends to the province and the region, and is expressed, above all, in our homeland, in the national community, which unites us all through a shared past that we admire and a shared future that commits us all; a community that also includes the rest of humanity.

Above all, the former students' association, always concerned with ensuring the Liceo's presence in the city, organized the spring festivals, which were not only an outburst of joy but also a testament to cultural enrichment. There, the best students and former students recited their poems; there, artists came to perform; and there, during the evening gatherings that were usually held, the artistic,

musical, literary, and oratory talents of the young people of San Bernardo—both current students and former students—were displayed.

But that was not all: Don Roberto Ochoa, as principal, was committed to involving the Liceo in social service initiatives. And so, a strong partnership was forged with the Rotary Club, a partnership with the Escuela de Aplicación de Infantería de San Bernardo (San Bernardo Infantry Training School), and connections with various social sectors. A group of us former students founded the Academia Literaria y Cultural Manuel Magallanes Moure (Manuel Magallanes Moure Literary and Cultural Academy), named after an illustrious writer and poet who lived in this city. We honored shared values and felt a sense of solidarity. And that education—perhaps along with the others—has been decisive in shaping the personality of the person speaking to you at this very moment.

I do not wish to bore you. I simply wanted to use these memories to express what I owe to Liceo de San Bernardo. And you can rest assured that, to the extent possible during my presidential term, I will not forget what I owe to the school, and I will try, in some way, to repay it. I know you need a gym. I cannot promise you when it will be built, but you can be certain that I will do everything in my power to ensure that, before my term ends, the Liceo de San Bernardo—now for boys and girls, the Liceo Fidel Pinochet Le-Brun—will have the gym it so desires.

And finally, one last word—a word addressed to the boys and girls, young men and young women who study here—to tell you that from what I have said, you should draw not only an appreciation for your teachers, a recognition of the dignity of their role, a spirit of camaraderie, and a commitment to unity among yourselves, but also, as a conclusion, the need for each of you to strive, to the best of your abilities, to give as much of yourselves as you possibly can.

Life is not handed to us on a silver platter; we shape our own lives; each of us builds our life, and we do not come into this world to receive what is given to us, but to earn our own place in society through our own efforts. We must set goals for ourselves, goals that are not too distant, but within reach. We must strive to achieve those goals, and we must ask ourselves whether we are here to satisfy our own longings or desires, or whether we are here as part of a human community to leave a mark during our time on Earth through the service we have been able to provide. The names that are remembered are those of people who have served, those who can leave this life with a clear conscience. They are the ones who have lived their lives not so much to enjoy themselves, but to contribute to building a better life for all their fellow human beings.

Thank you very much.