Dean Simeoli said I was to speak for an hour. But I notice
the whole program is only an hour long. So I'll talk for only 15 or
20 minutes. It's ok to sleep while I'm talking, by the way, since
I don't plan to give a test at the end of my lecture.

First I'd like to congratulate you. It's nice to be best in
something, to come out on top, to be a winner. You know about that
already, so I'll talk about something else—about losing, about being
a loser.

I've heard people refer to "born losers." I don't know whether
there is such a thing as a born loser, but I do believe it's true
the everyone loses most of the time. So, although you're winners
tonight, you'll be a loser most of the time.

And I see I'll have to do some persuading about this idea.

Example 1. If you're in a class of thirty students and the
instructor grades on the curve, only one student will end up on top.
The others will be "losers," if they're trying for top honors. I'll
always remember FVCC's first graduating class. There was one graduate.
It was tough to figure whether he ranked first or last. He really
fouled up the statistics.

Example 2. If you're in a footrace with five other runners, one
of you will be a winner, the others will be losers.

Maybe I'd better try to prove my claim another way. Remember, I'm
claiming that everyone loses most of the time. Think of how sports
stories would look if all facts were reported equally, instead of just
those highlighting the winners? Sample Headline: Twenty seven
batters make outs as Cardinals make 10 hits, win 6-0.

How about outside the sports world? Sample Headline: Three
hundred fifty students do not win scholarships; two winners announced.

Or how about in personal affairs? Sample Headline: Five suitors
unsuccessful as girl chooses husband.
I admit this is a strange approach to take in talking to a group of selected students, who are receiving awards or other recognition because they are winners. But if you're partly convinced that most people do lose most of the time, that you're going to be a loser more often than a winner, then maybe you'll also agree it's worthwhile talking about losing.

I hope you are not depressed at this point. No need to be. Being a loser is part of being human. To help you avoid being depressed at the thought of being a loser--of being a human--I'd like to suggest three qualities that you should cultivate in yourself.

First a few words about fairness. Athletic coaches usually try to instill in their players a quality known as fair play or sportsmanship. Except in little leagues, that is. Anyway, I assume that sportsmanship or fair play is a way of tempering the rules of a game, using unwritten rules, so that the losers can survive. Also so that the winners can survive. In the early days of this century college men didn't take LSD or smoke pot, they chewed tobacco. When the ball carrier in a football game came charging through the line with dklkdkldldklkdklkdldk the football under his arm and a chaw of mail pouch in either cheek, the man who tackled him was in for big trouble. That wasn't sportsmanlike. More seriously, in the days of chivalry, if one knight unhorsed his opponent in a tournament, he would dismount so that the contest could continue on foot to avoid taking unfair advantage over his opponent.

And a variation of the idea of fairness can be seen in the tenets of the world's great religions, all of them: Do unto others as you would have them do unto you. In recent times, pragmatic philosophers have used essentially the same idea but with a different motive, in what is known as "enlightened self-interest." The idea is that one thing you can count on is that a man is going to be mostly selfish, to look out for himself, because life is a competitive affair. "Enlightened self-interest" suggests that if you refrain from harming someone else,
he will refrain from harming you. Aren't you glad you use Dial? Don't you wish everyone did?

Fairness, fair play, sportsmanship. The all important first quality of a loser.

Nowadays we hear the phrases, "He is going his own thing." I assume that the phrase arose from some of the protest movements of our day and is a part of the newly recognized sense of individual freedom. Well and good. Individualism is to be encouraged, since we are individuals, after all. And the demand for individual freedom may be a sign that the human race is beginning to mature. However, there is one caveat I would suggest in connection with "doing your own thing." (I threw in that word "caveat" for the benefit of the scholars here. The rest of you can look it up in your Funk and Wagnells). The caveat is: If your own thing consists of throwing rocks through my windows, then my own thing may consist of chasing you down the street with a shotgun. In other words, if your own thing clashes with my own thing, then one of us must yield. The one who is intruding should yield; and if he does he is showing fairness.

I think it is especially important in a democracy that we learn to be good losers because of the necessity of accepting defeat. Acceptance of defeat is the second quality of the loser. If the majority is to prevail, then the minority must let it. There are restrictions on this arrangement, however, which I should point out. First, membership in the majority must be open to all members of the society. That is, any group should be able to form the majority on any given issue. The majority is thus not a fixed group but an ever-changing group, made up of different constituencies at different times, varying according to issues.

For example, my neighbor may be a Republican, I a Democrat. On this ground he is in the majority. But suppose he wants the street
paved in front of his house while I do not want the street paved. A referendum is held and my side wins. Thus I am a member of the majority on this occasion.

There is one other requirement for government by the majority. The majority cannot eliminate the minority or punish it because of its position. The reason for this is obvious, since the majority is a changing group. If the minority is eliminated, it cannot have the chance to be part of the majority on occasion.

It is only by accepting defeat on a temporary basis (mind you I said temporary basis), that members of the minority can hope to be part of the majority when the occasion arises. I'm not suggesting that man accept as his sorry lot whatever is thrust upon him forever. I don't suggest that you be a twentieth century Job. Rather, I suggest that you should recognize occasionally that you may be wrong or at least that you are part of a valid minority. If you believe in majority rule you will accept this thesis. And I should point out that the alternatives to majority rule are minority rule or no rule at all. The latter, of course, is sometimes called anarchy.

But there is something about man that makes it difficult for him to admit he is ever wrong—even when being wrong doesn't hurt him. Some quality of man seems to require that he be right always. Maybe that's because we are tempted to regard ourselves as perfect, or at least as the measuring stick against which we judge other people. In this way we build up a shield, which can be called pride. Our pride tends to hide the real world and to block out acceptance of facts. Pride makes it difficult for us to consider that the other fellow may be right. For if he is right, then we must be wrong.

Pride has been the single greatest tragic flaw of man since the beginning of time. Or at least it has been called that persistently. I wonder how many cave men were trampled in the dust because they were too proud to flee before an advancing dinosaur? And recall that the
Greeks saw pride as the most serious flaw in a man's character. They called it "hubris," and Sophocles built it into the theme of the play "Oedipus Rex," which most of you are familiar with. Christian theology, and other theologies saw the danger of pride. In Christian theology pride was labeled the deadlist of the seven deadly sins, with humility as the antidote. Translated into the language of the loser, humility becomes acceptance. Acceptance of one's imperfection; acceptance of the fact that, on occasion, someone else may be right, you may be wrong. Remember, I am talking about temporary acceptance. It's a matter of saying, "Ok, I'm wrong. But next time I'll be right."

This leads rather naturally to the final quality of the loser that I would like to mention—patience. If it is true that Members of today's minority have the chance to be part of tomorrow's majority, then there is hope for the minority. No need to despair. And that is the justification for advocating patience. Unfortunately, we live today in what is called a "now" culture. That means, everything has to happen now. There is no waiting for anything. Now automobile; now marriage; now success. No more of that playing in the minor leagues until I've learned to play the game well. No sir. I want to join the big action now. I'm exaggerating, of course, for effect.

But consider this. There is much discontent with the state of the world. Justly so. But there has always been discontent with the state of the world. The hue and cry today is to overturn the establishment, for it is evil. Do it now, instantly. What is demanded is a demolition job, not a remodeling job. Don't wait to work out solutions, now that there is greater awareness of problems than ever before, just destroy, destroy, destroy. By force if necessary—or maybe even preferably. Then what? A new establishment? Will it be better than the old one? I suggest you review history.

Those who advocate the use of force to create instant change, who ignore the counsel of patience, are overlooking a couple of things.
First, the use of force generally elicits a reply in force. That is already happening in America. Evidently the law of physics concerning action and reaction applies to the affairs of men as well as to objects of nature. Secondly, in the words of John Gardner, "Those who would destroy the system...fail to understand that periods of chaos are followed by periods of iron rule." That is historically accurate. It is part of the cyclic effect of history.

Patience, then. Patience you masses of losers, your time will come. Every dog has his day.

There are other qualities of the good loser, but I think that fairness, acceptance of defeat on a temporary basis, and patience are the most necessary.

If you object to what I've been saying, let me report that I am not annoyed by your objection. I could be wrong. You see, I am an experienced loser. I'm willing to admit that you may have better views on this subject than I have. I will accept your judgment, for the time being. I will be patient until I can rethink the matter.

To all of you winners, my congratulations again. Enjoy what you have earned. May you win out frequently in the future.