THE TORCH IS PASSED

Created by Randy Vader and Jay Rouse
Drama Companion
by Rose Aspinall

Characters
Robert - 17, impending graduate. Son of Judy and James. Grandson to Samuel.
Judy - 40’s, mother to Robert
James - 40’s, father to Robert
Samuel - 65, (Grandpa) Family patriarch, father of James, grandfather of Robert
John - 19, brother of Robert
RJ - 10, son of Robert
Carol - 40’s, mother of Jacob
Jacob - age 18, impending Graduate, RJ’s son

Setting
This drama depicts three different generations of the Wallace family. It opens in the mid 1990’s. With each successive generation it will be necessary to change the set enough to suggest a different home. This can be accomplished by a simple rearrangement of the furniture. Adding or changing other decorative items will give the idea that this is another place. Cover the couch with a furniture throw and it will appear to be a different couch.

Your audience may find it helpful if you include a one line description of each scene in your program:

Scene 1: The home of James and Judy Wallace. Before Commencement.
Scene 2: After Commencement.
Scene 3: Twenty years later. Home of Robert Wallace family.
Scene 4: Thirty-three years later. Home of RJ and Carol Wallace. Another graduation.

Song: Celebration of American Spirituals (pg. 3)

Song: My Country, ‘Tis of Thee (pg. 10)

Narration: (pg. 18)

Host: My country, 'tis of thee - sweet land of liberty, of thee I sing; familiar words from our childhood. These are words that we learned from our parents - our school teachers - our church leaders - just as they learned from those who came before them. Each generation of Americans has had the responsibility of passing the precepts of liberty - the foundation of our freedom - on to the next generation. Therefore, let the word go forth from this time and place that the torch has been passed.

Song: The Torch is Passed (pg. 18)
SCENE ONE
The home of James and Judy Wallace, before commencement

As the scene opens the whole household is in the midst of getting ready for Robert’s graduation. There is a banner that says “Congratulations Robert” hanging visibly in the room. There are trays of cookies covered and sitting on a table. Other types of decorations that would suggest a party would also be appropriate; an empty punch bowl with cups, napkins, a graduation centerpiece, and a photo board with pictures of Robert growing up.

Robert enters. He is obviously anxious. He stops in front of a mirror, examines his face and checks his hair. He re-tucks his shirt, looks around for his cap and gown but doesn’t see them even though they are on a nearby table.

Robert: (Calling) Mom!

No answer. He checks the mirror again and calls louder.

Robert: Mom!

Judy Wallace enters brush in hand. She is only half-way ready for Robert’s graduation service.

Judy: (She feigns mild exasperation) What now Robert?

Robert has gone over to the cookies and is lifting the cover. He is about to take one and Judy gives his a hand a whack with her brush.

Judy: Hey, not ‘til later!

Robert: (Shrugs good-naturedly and drops the cover) Where’s my cap and gown?

Judy: (As she hands the cap to Robert) Robert Samuel Wallace, they are right here where we left them! You’re going to wear them out before we ever get to the ceremony. (Holds out the gown inspecting it) Yup…zipper still works; still relatively wrinkle free; (In mock wonderment) amazingly enough, still clean and (Indicating the cap which Robert has perched on his head) looks like that tassel is still attached. (She lays the gown across the back of the couch, hands on hips) Now get yourself to the spare room and bring down the extra chairs! We’re going to need them. (Waving the brush for effect) And for heaven’s sake, let me finish getting ready.

Robert: (Ignoring her tirade, he takes a cookie. Judy raises an eyebrow but doesn’t stop him) When’s Grandpa getting here? Isn’t he late?
Judy: No, he is not late. *(Glancing at her watch)* He should be here any time now. And you know Grandpa Samuel...

Robert/Judy: Always punctual. *(They laugh)*

Robert: Man, I’ve missed Grandpa. Since he wasn’t here for his usual Christmas visit, it seems like forever since I’ve seen him.

Judy: I know. Christmas just wasn’t the same without him. *(She gives his shoulders a squeeze) But Grandpa wouldn’t miss your graduation for anything. You know he adores you. I think he’d find a way here even if it meant hitch-hiking the whole way.*

Robert: *(Grinning) I can just see Grandpa hitching a ride. *(Imitating his Grandpa)* “Step on it, Son. I have to get to my grandson’s graduation and I’m never late.” *(They laugh) I sure wish Uncle Jim was coming with him.*

Judy: I do too. But, Uncle Jim’s just getting too frail to travel anymore. We need to plan a trip to see him soon. Now enough, I’ve got to finish getting ready. You go get those chairs and stay out of the cookies!

She exits. Robert looks after her for a moment takes another cookie and pops it in his mouth. He shrugs into the gown one more time. As he checks the mirror again, the doorbell rings.

Robert: *(Yells) I got it!*

He goes to the door and opens it. Grandpa Samuel is standing there with a small suitcase in his hand.

Robert: *(Excitedly) Grandpa! *(They hug)*

Grandpa: Bobby! Just look at you. Looks like you’re all ready to go, Son. Am I late?

Robert: This? *(Indicating his gown as he slips it and the cap off) Nah, I was just checking it out. Gotta make sure nothing is wrong with it. Grandpa, you know you’re never late! *(Robert takes his Grandpa’s bag from him and sets it inside the door.)*

Grandpa: That’s not true, Bobby. I was born late - missed my due date by one day. I vowed then, I’d never be late again. It’s a vow that has served me well; kept me out of a whole lot of trouble. Where is everyone?

Robert: Mom and Dad are getting dressed. John’s still on his way back from school; he’s driving straight to the service.
Grandpa: Oh, that’s right, I forgot, he called me last week and told me. He seems to be doing well – enjoying college. He’s a smart one, that John.

Robert: Yes, sir. He’s gonna make a great engineer someday.

They walk over to the couch and sit.

Grandpa: What about you, Bobby? Last time we talked you were still pretty much up in the air. Did you come to a decision? You got a lot to offer, you know.

Robert: Grandpa, you don’t think that you might just be a little prejudiced?

Grandpa: Prejudice has nothing to do with it, Bobby. Truth is truth. I’ve lived long enough to recognize the hand of God on a young man’s life and it’s on yours plain and simple.

Robert: (Hesitating) Well, Grandpa, I kinda wanted it to be a surprise. It’s gonna be announced at graduation today when I get my diploma, but, now that you’re here and we’ve got the chance to talk, I think that I’d like to go ahead and tell you if that’s alright with you?

Grandpa: Well, Bobby, I think I’d like you to tell me however you want to.

Robert: Alright, in that case, (He takes a deep breath and says in a rush) Grandpa, I joined the service. I’m leaving for basic training next week. I’m hoping to get into the same division that you were in. (He stops and looks at his Grandpa waiting for his reaction. Grandpa Samuel doesn’t say anything for a moment)

Grandpa: (He is moved) Bobby, are you sure this is what you want? This is not a decision to be made based on some sentimentality that you might have for your ol’ grandfather and some war stories you heard him tell. This has to be right for you. That’s why I never tried to steer you one way or the other. A lot of prayer needs to go into a decision like this.

Robert: Grandpa, I know that. I love you. I’m proud of how you served this country in WWII. But bottom line, I feel like I need to do this. I’m still planning on college after my enlistment is up. I admit that I hoped that you’d be pleased, but I really think that this is the right decision for me.

Grandpa: Your Mom and Dad alright with this?

Robert: Oh you know Mom, she cried. But, she’d cry no matter what I’d do. She’ll be ok. Dad is proud, I can tell.
Grandpa: Well, son, he’s not the only one. I am too. It won’t be easy. But nothing worthwhile ever is. (They embrace)

Judy and James Wallace enter and walk over to Grandpa and Robert. They are ready to go to the graduation ceremony.

James: Dad! You made it. How was your trip? (He pauses and looks at both Robert and Grandpa Samuel. The question goes unanswered) I see Robert has given you his news.

Grandpa: (Still a little emotional, he pats Robert on the knee) Yes, he has. You’ve got yourself a mighty fine boy here, James. I don’t need to tell you.

Robert and Grandpa stand.

James: I know Dad. We’re well aware. This has been a difficult decision for him but I think he’s done a good job of thinking it through.

Judy: (Putting her arm around Robert and looking at him) It’s hard to believe he’ll be leaving next week already. (Checking her watch) But, we can talk about this more later. First we’ve got a graduation to get to and we should get going or there won’t be a decent seat left. Is everyone ready to go?

Judy retrieves her purse and they all head for the door. As they exit, Samuel gives Judy a quick hug.

Samuel: Judy, you look stunning as usual.

Judy: (Shaking her head and grinning) Thank you, Dad. Still the charmer. (She pecks him on the cheek)

After they are all off stage we hear Robert’s voice call.

Robert: Just a minute, I’ll be right back.

He runs back on stage, sheepishly retrieves his cap and gown, grabs a cookie and exits again.
Narration: (pg. 25)

Host: The same revolutionary beliefs for which our forebears fought are still at issue around the globe - the belief that the rights of man come not from the generosity of the state, but from the hand of God. We dare not forget today that we are the heirs of that first revolution. Let the word go forth from this time and place, to friend and foe alike, that the torch has been passed to a new generation of Americans. We will pay any price, bear any burden, meet any hardship, support any friend, oppose any foe, in order to assure the survival and the success of liberty.

Narration: (pg. 30)

Host: To a select few came the responsibility to protect freedom in its darkest hours. Some were not able to leave words - but their actions and sacrifices are indelibly etched on the manuscript of history in their own blood, sweat and tears. This honored parade of Patriots that gave birth to our great nation - preserved the union - and protected our interests both at home and abroad still marches strong. The torch of freedom has been passed to their children and their children's children for countless generations. They exemplified for us that the tragedy of life is not death; they taught us that the tragedy is to die with commitments undefined, convictions undeclared and service unfulfilled. Our debt to these men and women is incalculable and our pride for those who have joined their ranks can be seen on the faces and heard in the prayers of a grateful nation. In honor of warriors past and present let us salute our Armed Forces.

Song: Salute to the Armed Forces Underscore (pg. 30)

Song: Salute to the Armed Forces (pg. 32)

Narration: (pg. 45)

Host: God has declared...watch yourselves closely so that you do not forget the things your eyes have seen or let them slip from your heart as long as you live. Teach them to your children and to their children after them.

The story of our trust in God, our experience of faith, our assurance of a loving and gracious Heavenly Father, our acknowledgment of His intervention in the history of this nation has been shaped by the lives and the testimony of our elders. One of the great vehicles for teaching the wonderful truth of our God has been our heritage of hymns. Hymns have taught us - challenged us - comforted us - calmed us - and convicted us.
This is one of the great American hymns that remind us there is no other word for the grace of God except Amazing.

**Song: Amazing Grace Underscore (pg. 45)**

**Song: Amazing Grace (pg. 47)**

**Narration: (pg. 59 )**

Host: So much of what we know about the concept of freedom - both political freedom and freedom of the Spirit - is revealed to us in the Holy Scriptures. We give homage to divine truth expressed in words inspired by God... timeless words... beautiful words... wonderful words... life changing words... ancient words.

**Song: Ancient Words (pg. 59)**

**Narration: (pg. 68)**

Host: Some of the most well-known ancient words came to us as a list - the most important list in history. It is a list of ten commandments handed down by God Himself. And He said repeat them again and again to your children. Talk about them when you are at home and when you are away on a journey, when you are lying down and when you are getting up again. We have all heard the commands on this list - but tonight we are going to have a chance to learn them... in order. This was not a list to be taken lightly - it was not presented on fragile parchment or a delicate scroll- it was etched in stone.

**Song: The Perfect 10 (pg. 68)**

### SCENE 2

After commencement

*John has now joined the rest of the family. They all enter and are talking at once, commenting on the ceremony and laughing. Robert and John are obviously enjoying some good-natured ribbing.*

John: *(Grabbing Robert’s shoulders from behind, taunting)* Come on Robby, level with your big brother. Sara Randall, she’s sweet on you, isn’t she? I saw her; you’d have to be blind to miss it.

Robert: *(Laughing)* Not happenin’ Bro. I’m not discussing this with you; too personal.
John: *(Continuing to wheedle)* You can tell me, Robby. I’m your brother.

Judy: *(Taking charge)* Ok, you two. Get changed. I’m giving you half an hour free time to spend with Grandpa and then I’m putting you to work. Open house starts at 4:00 and there’s a lot to do.

John: Mom, can’t you see I’m trying to get to the bottom of something here? Ya gotta give a guy room to work.

Judy: Fine, JJ, you can work on it for... *(She consults her watch)* twenty-nine more minutes.

Grandpa: You two boys were never a match for your mother. Better to just admit defeat and do as she says. Come sit with me on the couch for a bit.

John: Grandpa, I need to bring my bags in from the car and get unpacked. Why don’t you and Rob catch up some more? Will you save me some time after the open house tonight?

Grandpa: Sure, but then you’re going to tell me the whole story about that incident in the lab at school. Rumor has it there’s a little more to it than what you led me to believe.

John: *(Resigned and shaking his head)* Alright Grandpa. *(Looking heavenward)* When am I gonna learn? Grandpa and his sources...

*John exits*

Robert sits beside his Grandpa. The rest of the family exits to change and get ready for the open house.

Grandpa: That was a nice ceremony, Bobby, a bit warm, but still nice.

Robert: I’m so glad you’re here Grandpa.

Grandpa: Very little could’ve kept me from it. This is an important time and *(winking)* just for the record that Sara is a mighty cute little gal.

Robert: *(Grinning)* Yeah, I know it. We’re planning on writing each other. But don’t tell JJ, Ok?

Grandpa: Our secret.

Robert: Grandpa wasn’t it hard for you to go to the War after what happened to Uncle John.
Grandpa: Oh, Bobby. Was it hard? When I found out my brother died, I wanted to go enlist the next day. I was so hurt and angry; I didn’t know where to put it all. I was still so young. JJ and I used to talk about how we wanted to join the service and travel all over the world. When he died, that was all gone, and all I wanted to do was make them all pay for taking him away from me. It’s a hard way to live all eaten up inside with anger and vengeance.

Robert: How’d you get over it?

Grandpa: The Lord was looking out for me, Bobby. Jim Conwell became my brother, in JJ’s stead. He helped me navigate some rough waters. It was a time of testing. I learned things about myself, things I didn’t like and I had to make up my mind fast. I could be the man God intended me to be or I could give in to my weaknesses. To my great surprise, I found out that what the Bible says is really true; when we are weak, He is strong.

Robert: I’m not sure I understand that, Grandpa.

Grandpa: That’s alright, Bobby. You just trust God to teach it to you at the right time. He will. I hope you won’t have to learn the same way I did – in wartime. But if you do...well, you just remember there are people praying for you – cheering you on. You’ll make it. Sometimes I think that Jim Conwell single-handedly prayed me home from the war. I’ll always be grateful that God arranged to bring him into my life.

Robert: He was Uncle John’s best friend, right?

Grandpa: Yes, he was. JJ led him to the Lord right in the trenches in Italy. And that brings me to something else, Bobby. There’s something that I want you to have. You know that we named your Dad after Uncle Jim. He became a real part of our family from the first day he came to see us when he got home from the war. Your brother is named after your Uncle John. You bear my name.

Robert: Yes.

Grandpa: That’s a tradition in this family. It’s just a reminder that you carry on the legacy of the person who has gone before you.

Robert: I like being named after you. It makes me feel like part of you is a part of me.
Grandpa: That’s exactly right, Robert Samuel! You get it! When Uncle Jim came home from the war and met our family and told us what happened to your Uncle JJ, he brought something to us. I’ve carried them with me every day since. Now, it’s time for me to pass them on and for you to carry them. There’s nothing magic about it. It’s nothing more than a reminder. When you see them, you remember; God is faithful.

Grandpa hands Robert a small manila envelope. Inside are the dog tags that John Wallace Junior wore in WWII. Robert opens the envelope and slides the dog tags onto his open palm and looks closely.

Robert: (softly) Uncle JJ’s dog tags? Grandpa, are you sure?

Grandpa: Bobby, there’s not one shred of doubt. They are yours. They’ve served their purpose for me.

Robert: (Heartfelt) Grandpa, thank you.

Grandpa: Just promise me one thing, Bobby. Don’t forget who you are. You are who God says you are. It’s just that simple. Other folks might think they know, but it’s what God says that counts.

Robert: I’ll try my best, Grandpa.

Grandpa: That’s all I ask, son. That’s all I ask.

Lights fade.

Narration: (pg. 83)

Host: Words from an ancient king:
(Psalm 78:1-4)
O my people, hear my teaching; listen to the words of my mouth. I will open my mouth in parables, I will utter hidden things, things from of old- what we have heard and known, what our fathers have told us. We will not hide them from their children; we will tell the next generation the praiseworthy deeds of the Lord, His power, and the wonders He has done.
(Psalm 102:18)
Let this be written for a future generation, that a people not yet created may praise the Lord. There are few things more powerful than the testimony of a witness.
Song: Witness (pg. 83)

Narration: (pg. 97)

Host: The foundations of our faith can be found in priceless manuscripts - in the stories handed down from generation to generation - and in our Psalms, hymns and spiritual songs. The torch is passed one by one, person to person, by those committed to eternal truth, those who know the importance of passin' the faith along.

Song: Passin’ the Faith Along (pg. 97)

SCENE 3

Twenty years later. Home of the Robert Wallace family

When this scene opens twenty years have passed. Robert is now a married man with children. To show passage of time, change the way Robert wears his hair and change his dress to something an older man would wear. He might be a bit heavier which can be shown by padding his waist under his clothing. The living area is changed and is now home to Robert and his family. Robert enters to find his oldest son sitting on the couch alone looking despondent. He sits down beside him.

Robert: Hey, what’s up buddy? How was school today? I thought Anthony was going to come home with you to spend the night.

RJ: He didn’t come to school today.

Robert: Why not? Was he sick?

RJ: No, Mrs. Barton told the class that something happened to his brother. She said Anthony wouldn’t be coming to school for awhile.

Robert: His brother Tim? The one who’s in the service?

RJ: Yeah. I heard it’s pretty bad. Some of the kids are saying that Tim might not make it. Dad, do you think that I should call Anthony?

Robert: Well, what do you think RJ? Do you think that Anthony might need a friend to talk to?

RJ: Maybe.

Robert: Then, I think that if it was me, I would want a friend like you to talk to.

RJ: I don’t really know what to say.
Robert: You just be his friend, RJ. That’ll be enough.

RJ: Ok, I can do that. Dad?

Robert: Yeah?

RJ: I like Tim. He always plays basketball with me and Anthony when I spend the night. He never acts like we’re bugging him.

Robert: Hard stuff, huh? *(RJ shakes his head)* Did you know that Great Grandpa Samuel’s brother died in the war? It was really hard for him.

RJ: Really? I wish I could talk to Grandpa.

Robert: Me too. I really miss him. But I know exactly what he’d say if he was here?

RJ: What?

*(Uncle JJ’s dog tags are hanging around Robert’s neck or he can carry them in his pocket. He pulls them out or takes them off and shows them to RJ.)*

Robert: He would say look at these and remember; God is faithful.

RJ: What are they, Dad?

Robert: Dog tags. They belonged to Grandpa Samuel’s brother. He would be your Great Uncle JJ. His best friend, Jim Conwell, brought them back from the war and gave them to Grandpa. Grandpa gave them to me the day I graduated from high school. I’ve had them with me everyday since. God helped Grandpa get through that terrible time and many others. You listen RJ, I know God. He’ll help Anthony’s family too. The Bible says in the Psalms that He watches over our lives. I know that’s true, because He’s watched over mine – even when I was really scared and confused. Someday when you’re older these will be yours.

RJ: Wow, really?

Robert: Really. But for right now, what do you say we pray for Tim and ask God how we can best help Anthony and his family?

RJ: *(Shakes his head affirmatively)* Ok. Dad?

Robert: Yes?

RJ: I love you.
Robert: I love you too son.

They join hands, bow their heads and lights fade.

Narration (pg. 109)

Host: Each day we have a part in passing the torch of freedom and faith. The process goes on day by day - month by month - year in and year out. We have a great cloud of witnesses cheering us on - and unborn generations who will judge us on how effectively we have run the race. Let us be certain that in the decisions we make – the lives we live - and the truth we hold sacred - that our children and our children's children will look back and find us faithful.

Song: Find Us Faithful (pg. 109)

Narration: (pg. 121)

Host: It is in the vigilance of passing freedom's torch that peace is preserved. The chain must not be broken. The most dangerous time in a relay race is when the baton is passed to the next runner. So it is with the torch of freedom and faith. We must be ready to hand off the responsibility - just as the next generation must be ready to take the torch and continue the race. The great challenges of the future must be faced with the promises provided by the proof of the past. God's truth remains constant, absolute and His faithfulness is never ending.

There will be challenges to face, obstacles to overcome and great questions to be answered. However, Jesus, the Son of God confronts our challenges and questions and offers Himself as the answer.

Song: Jesus is the Answer (pg. 121)

Pg. 130

Worship Leader: Jesus said, "I am the way, the truth and the life. No man comes to the Father except by Me." Jesus, there is coming a day when every knee will bow and every tongue will confess that You are Lord, to the glory of God the Father.