

My Commencement Speech

by Paul Steven Stone

To The Graduates Of The Class Of 2010:

You are here today at a critical crossroads of your life. For most of your 22 years you've been taught to work hard, obey the rules, listen with respect to your elders and to trust that every effort you make will receive an ample and just reward.

You recognize that sound, don't you? A few of your parents and teachers couldn't keep their opinions to themselves it seems...but let us examine the cause of their laughter.

Yes, I am afraid that for most of your life you've been handed a script from "Leave It To Beaver" and that all those wonderful principles I enumerated earlier won't take you very far down the Road of Life in today's America. In fact, if you insist on playing by the rules and trusting in the fairness of others you'll very quickly get run over and flattened like so much road kill on that very same Road of Life.

All across America speakers like me are admonishing new graduates like you to live up to principles that are no longer relevant or practical. Principles that are no longer even acknowledged in today's business world. Principles which, like fragile Louisiana marshlands, cannot survive today's overwhelming inflow of dark, viscous wealth-making ideas and ventures.

Go ahead, take a deep breath and smell the oil vapors. That's America! That's your future! It ain't roses but it sure smells sweet.

Yes, other commencement speakers would tell you to work hard, play fair and be nice as you emerge from college to make your way in the world; I'm here to advise you to look both ways before crossing the street and to pick the other guy's pocket before he picks yours.

Those other commencement speakers are frozen in time, spouting axioms and adages that long ago ran out of gas on the American Road of Life. Like scenes from an old black and white Hollywood movie they make us smile but they don't prepare us for a world that's more reminiscent of "Jaws" than it is of "Flipper."

"Be nice," they say.

I say "Be nice when it helps, cruel when necessary, vicious when it counts." Bernie Madoff was a nice guy, I am told, but he never forgot to take all the money off the table before he went home.

"Don't forget the Golden Rule" they say, most of them unable to keep a straight face while saying it.

"I say "Don't forget the Golden Rule", only my Golden Rule is a little different from theirs. My Golden Rule says "Go for all the gold, and screw the rules!"

They would tell you to, "Follow your bliss" in choosing a career.

I would advise you to follow the money.

So in short, members of the graduating class of 2010, I advise you to live richly as well as wisely, to always give to yourself first (and maybe keep it all anyway), to always take the largest slice of the pie, to choose financial gain over spiritual growth, and to never feel you have enough physical possessions which, even though they rust and corrupt (as Jesus pointed out), they also clean up pretty easily these days. You can't complain about that.

So yes, graduates, feel free to live lives of unbridled hunger, unquenchable thirst and unfettered avarice, happily unburdened by a commencement speech that urges you to seek out greater challenges while building strength of character.

For those of you who would like greater instruction on how to achieve your own wealth-based lifestyle filled with houses, boats and servants, see me at Webster Hall immediately after Dean Whiting hands out your diplomas. And don't forget to bring your checkbooks.

