

CHANCELLOR, VICE CHANCELLOR, PRESIDENT, DISTINGUISHED GUESTS, MEMBERS OF STAFF, LADIES AND GENTLEMEN AND MOST IMPORTANTLY GRADUANDS. FIRST OF ALL LET ME ADD MY CONGRATULATIONS TO ALL OF YOU RECEIVING YOUR DEGREE TODAY. IT IS YOURS - NO-ONE CAN TAKE THAT AWAY FROM YOU. ENJOY IT. ABOVE ALL ENJOY TODAY. DISMISS ALL SERIOUS THOUGHTS FOR THIS ONE DAY AND LIVE IN THE MOMENT. YOU HAVE EARNED IT.

ALMOST 35 YEARS AGO I WAS IN THE SAME POSITION AS YOU ARE TODAY – RECEIVING MY DEGREE IN LAW AT THE UNIVERSITY OF WARWICK IN ENGLAND. MUCH HAS CHANGED IN THE INTERVENING 35 YEARS BUT I AM STILL WILLING TO BET THAT, BY AND LARGE, YOU ARE THINKING SIMILAR THOUGHTS TODAY AS I AND MY COHORT OF 1977 DID THAT AFTERNOON IN THE HAUNTING BEAUTY OF COVENTRY CATHEDRAL – WHAT NEXT, WHAT JOB CAN I GET, WHERE WILL I BE IN 5-10-15 YEARS TIME, HAS THIS ALL BEEN WORTH IT. HOW LONG WILL THIS GUY TALK FOR. “PLUS CA CHANGE, PLUS C’EST LE MEME CHOSE” AS THE FRENCH WOULD SAY – “ THE MORE THINGS CHANGE THE MORE THEY STAY THE SAME”.

INCLUDED IN MY INVITATION TO SPEAK TODAY THERE CAME A VERY HELPFUL NOTE WITH REGARD TO WHAT I MIGHT LIKE TO SAY AND FOR

HOW LONG I MIGHT LIKE TO SAY IT ( 5 – 10 MINUTES YOU’LL BE PLEASED TO HEAR) AND AS TO THE CONTENT; IT IS CONSIDERED APPROPRIATE THAT I MIGHT GIVE YOU ALL SOME ADVICE AS TO THE PATH FOR THE FUTURE, YOUR CAREER, ETC.

AS IT HAPPENS I AM NOT VERY BIG ON ADVICE FOR THREE REASONS:

1. PEOPLE RARELY TAKE MY ADVICE
2. AT YOUR AGE I RARELY TOOK ANYONE’S ADVICE. PREFERRING TO MAKE ALL OF MY OWN MISTAKES.
3. I ACTUALLY BELIEVE IT IS NOT ONLY NECESSARY BUT BETTER THAT A PERSON THINKS HIS OWN WAY THROUGH HIS OR HER LIFE AND MAKES CONSIDERED JUDGEMENTS (SOMETIMES GOOD, SOMETIMES NOT SO GOOD WHICH ARE THE ONES YOU WILL LEARN FROM THE MOST) BASED ON YOUR OWN ACQUIRED KNOWLEDGE AND EXPERIENCE (MY OWN CHILDREN MAY NOT ATTEST TO THE TRUTH OF THIS) LACK OF ADVICE.

SO INSTEAD I WOULD JUST LIKE TO GIVE YOU A FEW THINGS TO THINK ABOUT

IN THE FIRST CENTURY AFTER THE BIRTH OF CHRIST. EPICTETUS THE STOIC PHILOSOPHER WROTE THAT “ONLY THE EDUCATED ARE FREE” AND I THINK WHAT HE MEANT BY THIS WAS BY ACQUIRING AN EDUCATION YOU OPEN UP MANY MORE CHOICES THAN IF YOU DIDN’T.

CERTAINLY IN A PROFESSIONAL SENSE THAT IS TRUE – YOU CANNOT BECOME A CERTIFIED ENGINEER FOR EXAMPLE WITHOUT AN ENGINEERING DEGREE, SO THE FIRST THING I WOULD ASK YOU TO THINK IS – WHAT ARE MY CHOICES AND HAVE I TAKEN TIME TO CONSIDER THEM ALL OR AM I ALREADY LIMITING THOSE CHOICES AND THE ACTIONS THAT COULD FLOW FROM THEM BY BEING TOO CLOSED OR NARROW MINDED.

WHICH LEADS ME NICELY TO A SECOND THOUGHT YOU MIGHT HAVE. SO LET US LEAP FORWARD SOME 2000 YEARS FROM EPICTETUS TO MARK TWAIN THE AMERICAN AUTHOR OR TO GIVE HIM HIS PROPER NAME SAMUEL LANGHORNE CLEMENS. MR CLEMENS HAD AN OPINION ON ALMOST EVERYTHING AND OFTEN A RATHER PITHY AND MEMORABLE WAY OF EXPRESSING THOSE OPINIONS. THUS HE SAID “I NEVER LET SCHOOLING INTERFERE WITH MY EDUCATION”. WHAT HE WAS GETTING AT HERE WAS I THINK 3 FOLD

1. JUST BECAUSE YOUR SCHOOLING IS IN ONE DISCIPLINE, SAY ENGINEERING, THAT DOESN'T MEAN YOU ARE RESTRICTED TO THAT FOR EVER AND EVER EG I AM A LAW GRADUATE WHO RUNS AN ENGINEERING COMPANY.

2. SCHOOLING IS ONLY PART OF YOUR EDUCATION IN FACT AND IN THE END IT IS QUITE A SMALL PART OF YOUR EDUCATION

3. YOUR FORMAL SCHOOLING MAY STOP BUT YOUR LEARNING OR YOUR EDUCATION SHOULD NOT. IT IS A LIFE LONG JOURNEY AND I ASK YOU TO THINK ON THAT AND ACT UPON IT.

AGAIN A NICE SEGUE INTO THE THIRD SUGGESTED THOUGHT FOR YOU TODAY. HERE I AM GOING TO EMBARK ON A HIGH RISK STRATEGY OF USING A PIECE OF POETRY OR AT LEAST DOGGEREL TO A GATHERING OF NURSES, PHARMACISTS AND MANAGERS BUT I HOPE IT MAKES THE POINT. IT WAS WRITTEN IN 1930 BY A LAW PROFESSOR IN THE UNIVERSITY OF COLUMBIA, NY, CALLED KARL LLWELLYN AND WAS TO HELP FIRST YEAR LAW STUDENTS UNDERSTAND WHAT THEY WERE ABOUT TO EMBARK ON. IT IS CALLED THE BRAMBLE BUSH

**(QUOTE BRAMBLE BUSH)**

THE MORAL OF THIS STORY IS THAT WHEN YOU EMBARK ON SOMETHING DIFFICULT AND COMPLEX IT IS LIKE JUMPING INTO THE BRAMBLE BUSH AND GETTING YOUR EYES SCRATCHED OUT BUT BY PERSERVERENCE, EFFORT, INTELLIGENCE YOU CAN SCRATCH THEM IN AGAIN AND EVENTUALLY SEE CLEARLY WHAT AT FIRST YOU COULDN'T

SEE OR UNDERSTAND. SO THE QUESTION IS WHAT IS YOUR NEXT BRAMBLE BUSH, YOUR NEXT CHALLENGE?

FINALLY WE GO TO AFRICA WHICH WAS THE FIRST PLACE I LIVED OUTSIDE OF THE UK WHEN I WAS ABOUT 3 YEARS OUT OF UNIVERSITY.

THE BANTU PEOPLE HAVE A SAYING WHICH LOOSELY TRANSLATES AS “A HUMAN IS A HUMAN BECAUSE OF OTHER HUMANS”. IN OTHER WORDS

WHAT DIFFERENTIATES YOU FROM OTHER LIFE IS THE INTELLIGENT AND EMOTIONAL INTERACTIONS WITH OTHER HUMAN BEINGS. WHAT WILL

ULTIMATELY DETERMINE YOUR HAPPINESS OR SORROW, SUCCESS OR FAILURE, PROGRESS OR STASIS WILL BE YOUR ABILITY TO DEAL WITH

PEOPLE. OF COURSE YOUR TECHNICAL SKILLS ARE NECESSARY BUT THEY WILL NOT BE SUFFICIENT ON THEIR OWN WITHOUT EXPERIENCE,

COMPASSION, EMPATHY AND MANY OTHER HUMAN ATTRIBUTES. I ASK YOU TO THINK ON THAT AS I TELL YOU A STORY ... (INSERT STORY

TO GET IN THE WHEELBARROW STORY (BELIEF, TRUST, FAITH, COMMITMENT, COURAGE, CONVICTION)

THE STORY GOES: UPON COMPLETING A HIGHLY DANGEROUS TIGHTROPE WALK OVER NIAGARA FALLS IN APPALLING WIND AND RAIN,

“THE GREAT ZUMBRATI” WAS MET BY AN ENTHUSIASTIC SUPPORTER, WHO URGED HIM TO MAKE A RETURN TRIP, THIS TIME PUSHING A

WHEELBARROW, WHICH THE SPECTATOR HAD THOUGHTFULLY BROUGHT ALONG.

THE GREAT ZUMBRATI WAS RELUCTANT, GIVEN THE TERRIBLE CONDITIONS, BUT THE SUPPORTER PRESSED HIM, "YOU CAN DO IT – I KNOW YOU CAN", HE URGED.

"YOU REALLY BELIEVE I CAN DO IT?" ASKED ZUMBRATI.

"YES – DEFINITELY – YOU CAN DO IT" THE SUPPORTER SAID.

"OKAY", SAID ZUMBRAI, "GET IN THE WHEELBARROW..."

IN THE END IF YOU ARE TO MAKE THE MOST OF YOUR EDUCATION, YOUR CHOICES, YOUR LIFE LONG LEARNING IT WILL BE IN A LEADERSHIP ROLE. SO PLEASE REMEMBER THAT YOU MAY MANAGE THINGS BUT YOU SHOULD LEAD PEOPLE.

I WILL LEAVE YOU WITH A FINAL QUOTATION FROM FORMER AMERICAN PRESIDENT ABRAHAM LINCOLN WHO WROTE...

"I NEVER HAD A POLICY; I HAVE JUST TRIED TO MY VERY BEST EACH AND EVERY DAY."

ONCE AGAIN CONGRATULATIONS AND THANK YOU.