

SUU 2003 COMMENCEMENT SPEECH
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Here you are, you have attended the University, labored for many hours storing information, you passed your exams, and the academy gave you a diploma that signifies your acquired knowledge and your capability to implement it toward doing something useful in society for which you expect to be compensated, and thus earn a living.

It is a great day indeed. The reward is well deserved and it may open many doors to you for further activity and a wonderful life. I actually did this in June of 1947, when I obtained my Engineering Physics degree from Lehigh University. I still remember the excitement, the anticipation, and the fear of leaving the protected Ivy walls and entering a cold world with which I was not familiar and which seemed to be a total mystery. After fifty three years in high tech, I have gathered a lot of information, some of which I can tell you about, during the next few minutes of my talk.

There are certain points that stand out as discoveries that I have achieved through many years of experiencing, reading, and listening to others. It is safe to say that most of us look forward to being a success. This is a word I would like to define. I believe that success is a condition where the actual performance exceeds expectations. This will insinuate that our being successful is not only a result of what we do, but, also how we set our expected performance. We are conditioned to expect a lot out of ourselves and the people around us. Most of this is very healthy, but the way we go about it has to be modified as we transcend our conditioning.

It is a fact that traditions that I believe in shape our early character and prevent us from killing ourselves before we are twenty years old. We have a responsibility as we grow, to challenge some of the concepts we have been taught by modifying their character, without producing chaos in our lives. Personal growth is equivalent to transcending this conditioning. An excellent example is our early ideas about Santa Claus. I absolutely love the image of a little fat guy in a red suit, coming down the chimney, while he parked his sleigh on the roof, and arriving in our living room with presents for everybody. When I am one and a half, or two years old, I thrill with the excitement, waking up Christmas morning with all kinds of expectations regarding my presents. But, if I am thirty seven years old and still wait for the fat guy to come down the chimney, I have a problem. When in my later years, I am told that Santa Claus does not exist, I do not get angry, and I do not think my parents told me a lie. I come to realize that the idea was appropriate at that time and stopped being useful when I became more grown up. There are several of these concepts which have to be modified, particularly as it pertains to our becoming successful in the practical life.

One example is that when we are young and we fail at something, our parents say, "it's okay, but at least you tried." As you leave these walls and enter into compensated employment, you will find out that trying does not deserve anything. The only thing that

counts are completed results. You will have to learn that no one who is successful, ever says, "I'm doing my best." "I'm doing my best" is a phrase used by a person who is about to fail and it is worthless. Can you imagine when I am about to fall out of an airplane and I ask the person next to me, "Did you pack my parachute well?" and he says, "I did my best." As I am falling at a terminal speed with a closed chute, do I really care if this fellow spent all day Saturday packing it? In life, one has to learn that the only thing that truly counts is the achievement of an objective. Never try to seek someone's pity, when you have failed, by saying, "it took a lot of effort."

This may seem heartless but it is my perception of reality. I have seen many hard working presidents being discharged. Somehow we have to come to believe that working hard is not the path to success. Working hard means that I'm doing something I don't like. Cleaning the Bar B Q after I've eaten the steak is working hard. That's why nobody does it unless you're sick. The Bar B Q looks great on the Sears floor. One party and it is all over.

Another way of working hard is when something takes a lot of effort, like refinishing an old table. One has to take off the old varnish and then apply many new coats. It can be very time consuming and it is hard work. The answer to success is smart work.

A successful endeavor always involves an intelligent design. As we embark on a new project, our activity should be the result of our having asked the question: "What do I want?" Most people ask that. This is what we call a wish. A wish is worthless unless we develop an articulated way of achieving it and this generates a vision. Leaders usually promote visions, not wishes. A vision asks another question that should be done simultaneously. "What is probable?" This second question avoids our getting involved with projects that have no way of succeeding and always result in the inevitable heartache. You see, if I ask what is probable, I would never buy a lottery ticket. Buying a lottery ticket is probably the most asinine thing anyone would do. Not only this, but buying two tickets compounds the felony, because it does not change the odds. The laws of probability are not hypothetical, they are science. It is the kind of thinking that exposes the fragility and pointlessness of that decision. The unintelligent person who buys the ticket, goes to bed thinking what he would do with one hundred million dollars reflecting the jackpot. He doesn't understand that the reason the jackpot is so big, is because nobody won, and millions have played.

I consider the process of living and even getting into a business as a game. A game is defined as any activity that goes according to prescribed rules. You have rules, you have a game. If you don't have rules, you don't have a game. The game can be frivolous or it can be lethal.

For some of you who may go into business, you should understand what a business is. It is the process of satisfying a need at a profit. If you satisfy a need and you don't make money it is called philanthropy. If you don't satisfy a need and you make money you are a crook. This means that you identify a human need before you start. Not only this, but it should be a need that is not disappearing and preferably one that is increasing. To make a

lot of money you should identify a latent need, one that has not been exploited because of the absence of a technology to accomplish that. An excellent example is the hand held calculator. Before Hewlett Packard introduced the solid state calculator on a chip, people had to buy mechanical calculators that were clumsy and expensive. Today I don't know anyone who does not have a calculator. This gave a lot of trouble to Friden and Marchant because it caused the need for their products to disappear.

If one succeeds in making money, one attracts competition. These are the people who will try to take the business away from you. If you don't like competition you should plan to fail. No one competes with a failure.

Speaking of a latent need, I am reminded of the following example: When you come from Europe you realize that in America lunch is an irritating inconvenience. Most Americans wish they did not have to stop their work to eat. This is contrary to Europe where lunch is an opportunity to develop relationships and communicate with others. So we start with an aperitif then with hors d'oeuvres, and then with the main course with wine and then desert, etc. The need in America is rapid delivery, so we invent a McDonald's. You see, all I have to do is to deliver something fast and they don't care what they eat as long as it doesn't kill them. It has to be approved by FDA. So I serve them an envelope of two soggy buns with a paper mache hamburger, a milk shake that tastes like liquid nylon and a bunch of French fries that have never been potatoes and I make a billion dollars. I have introduced society to not a delicious or beautiful food industry, but the fast food industry. Look what happens. Competition enters the field and everything is fast, tacos, chicken, and even soups.

As you can see, we have to be concerned about competition and our objective is to win. The problem we have is that in our early years we compete only in sports and there is a philosophical prerequisite to a sport. The difference between competitors is minimized so the result is unpredictable. We enjoy the uncertainty of the outcome. We have to outgrow this concept. The only reason we enter a business is to win. We don't start unless conditions are stacked in our favor. If you go to Wall Street to raise money and you tell the prospective investors, "I am an adventurer, I have learned to live with uncertainty, give me your money and let's see what happens." You'll never get any money. All you have shown is how you are going to succeed.

We have to forget what we learned as a child. Our parents told us that it doesn't make any difference if you win or lose, but it is how you play that game. There is no question that this is a worthwhile commandment, because it insinuates that one should be ethical and fair when participating in a very competitive situation. When you go into business, you should forget that. I do not mean you should become unethical. What I really mean is that the only thing that counts is winning.

In developing our expectations we should become very realistic. We should understand that all opposites coexist and they are opposite ends of one system. Our job is to always balance the opposites and choose a direction that is appropriate and in between. This applies to all value systems. Love and hate, success and failure, individual and a team

member, clean and dirty, serious and non-serious and we always find ourselves trying to find that successful balance. We eventually understand that we should adopt an attitude where we first describe a prospective path to success before we start the journey. There is a wise statement that says “if you want to drown, do not torture yourself with shallow water.” It is intelligent and appropriate to know all the rules of the game and describe the simplest and most streamlined path to success. Working hard and spending too much time on something is the activity of an amateur. When we become professional, we are distinguished by doing things well and with a minimum effort. We should forget the idea that working hard is an attribute. There is no need to take our brief case home because we interfere with the process of developing wonderful relationships and having fun by doing all the things that bring joy to our life.

We should learn to take personal responsibility for our success and our failures by being comfortable knowing that sometimes we are faulty. But, our intelligence is always measured by developing a set of priorities so that when we fail, it doesn't matter. We should learn to accept ourselves as we are and not making silly and unrealistic expectations. There is another saying, “If you feel punctured, you must have once been a bubble.”

Assuming that we follow the right technical strategy, we eventually realize the only resource we have is people. On this basis, if you achieve a supervisory position, you have a responsibility to study human nature. All company policies should go with it, rather than against it. We should give up old ideas in trying to control others and subordinates through intimidation and become an inspiring leader by showing that we are competent. We should understand that people cannot survive without the support of their environment and thus become supportive rather than continuously critical. We should realize that rank has fewer privileges because we have to live the culture we profess and become an example to follow. Never be arbitrary and always have policies that can be rationally defended by the executive staff.

As we enter the industrial world, we experience a great deal of stress that is sometimes overwhelming. We all have to understand before hand, that if we want extraordinary rewards, we have to exhibit extraordinary performance. No matter how much we want to succeed we have to know our limitations and not result in a life of constant frustration because we set our goals too high. When we hear stories of successful people, the blood, sweat and tears are not usually mentioned. We succeed through competence and perseverance, when we do not crumble under failure and we do not feel guilty, but realize, that there is work to be done. This is easier said than done, but it is a requirement.

And now for a personal note; I came to this country as a Greek immigrant in November of 1945. My father instructed me to develop allegiance and love the country where I make my bread. I have done just that. America turned out to be very deserving of those feelings. It is amazing that such a new country can become the most powerful in the world because it had an excellent upbringing, the constitution and the bill of rights. There is no question that with all our successes, we have included some failures and some shortcomings we had to overcome. But, the results show that we have been a brilliant

society that today provides ample opportunity for a very successful life for all those who are interested in being honest, learning, and becoming capable of finishing projects and delivering the expected results. You are all the recipients of such great opportunity. Keep the faith and execute in a way that your descendents are going to be grateful. Not because they were given an easy life, but because they have been given an opportunity to continue the discovery process and by delivering a more wise and intelligent ambient for their children. We are all extremely fortunate to live in this country.

As you grow, you will find that the greatest things in this world are not the result of a command. You cannot command a person to love you, have affection for you, be loyal and respectful, join your team, or even laugh. If you want all this, you get them by cultivating them. When you learn how the tree grows and you satisfy all its needs, the fruit falls in your hand without giving an order. Go into the world and become human gardeners. Make other people grow and flourish. If you apply the proper principles in your attempt to establish effective relationships with others, you will succeed and make a lot of money. But most important, you will be able to spend it with a happy heart.

Good luck and God bless you all.

Renn Zaphiropoulos