

TO BE A DREAMER OF THE DAY

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Ohio's Center for Science and Industry

Thank you, Dr. Gee.

Those of you waiting for your diplomas, take heart:
I know what you're going through.

I, too, have had to sit for hours in uncomfortable gear,
listening to others talk through formal proceedings —
when all I wanted to do was get launched!

So, I know what today is like for you.
In recognition . . . and sympathy! . . . for your plight,
I promise to stay on time.

As I considered what to say to you today,
I realized that I remembered precious little of what was said at
commencement ceremonies I've attended over the years . . .
least of all my own graduations, when I was wrapped up
in the thoughts and feelings that surround anyone
waiting for launch into a world of infinite questions —
and largely indefinite answers.

What on earth could I say that you'd remember?

What wisdom could I possibly impart in ten minutes
that you hadn't already discovered through countless
all-night talks or through an episode of the X-Files?

I've decided it's best not to attempt great wisdom
or teaching . . . but simply to tell you what has worked for me.

To share with you some of my philosophy of life . . .
to quote T. E. Lawrence.

Yes...yes -- I know -- there are only two sources
an astronaut is supposed to quote at a profound moment
such as this: Captain Kathryn Janeway or Obi Wan Kanobi!

But, I've found in T. E. Lawrence -- a somewhat renegade
European who adventured through Arabia on camelback
decades ago -- some words that are to me
a timeless message about dreams and accomplishments.

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In "The Seven Pillars of Wisdom", Lawrence wrote a verse that I keep on my office wall. It says:

All men dream, but not equally.
Those who dream by night,
In the dusty recesses of their minds,
Awake to find that it was vanity. . .

But the dreamers of the day are dangerous men
That they may act their dreams with open eyes. . .
To make it possible.

(PAUSE)

Dreamers of the day. . . act their dreams with open eyes. . .
to make it possible.

I know what my dreams once were. . .

What they are now.

What it took to realize my dreams and what it will take
to make new dreams come true in the years ahead.

And I'm convinced that for you and me to fulfill our dreams,
we must start with open eyes . . .
with open ears . . . and with open minds.

In other words, with a willingness to learn all we can
for as long as we live.

The array of options open to you will expand
in direct proportion to the investments you make in yourself. . .
the investments in knowledge.

This means continual learning and continual change
... not just learning for the sake of getting a JOB ...
but learning for the sake of getting a LIFE ...
more accurately, building and fashioning a life.

In just the 40 years since Sputnik – less than one
American lifetime – humankind has amassed more knowledge
about the stars, about the earth, about the inner workings
of our bodies than in any previous time in history.

And yet, we've only begun.

Acting with open eyes, we've made some of our dreams
come true.

And I've been fortunate to have lived some of those dreams.

I've walked in space, a tiny creature tethered to a small speck
in a vast expanse of darkness and light.

I've circled our planet every ninety minutes
from 250 miles up and witnessed its beauty --
and its fragility – in an indescribable way.

I've been to the ocean floor and seen first hand
a magical, hidden world as alive and as powerful
as the one in which we move and work – yet less well known
than the surface of the moon.

These have been life-changing experiences for me.

Each was born from a natural curiosity about our planet ...
and were built on the realization that knowledge
was the key I needed to unlock the doors
and make my dreams possible ...
that learning was the most important capital investment
for me to make.

I certainly have no complaints about the returns those investments have provided: to be an oceanographer, join the space program, lead COSI, and talk to you today.

Through all my schooling, and every day of my working life, I've tried to approach each moment with open eyes, open ears, and an open mind – to truly be a Dreamer of the Day.

To focus primarily on what I could learn, and how I could use this knowledge to make a real difference.

Many of the greatest contributors to our modern society have spent their lives investing in this way.

People like Ada Deer – Daniel Koshland – Clifton Wharton – Wilbur Gould – and Susan Insley – all of them honored here today, not for what they have earned . . . but for what they have learned . . . and passed on to us.
(PAUSE)

It was once possible to hold all the world's known science in one small place.

The famous library at Alexandria held the greatest collection of books in the ancient world, and it could be said with some accuracy that all the world's knowledge was represented in the 500,000 volumes stored there.

It was once possible for a single individual to know most of what COULD be known with the tools available at the time. In the 1800s, a person like this was known as a "Renaissance Man."

Today, our knowledge can't be possessed by any one person, stored in any one place or even quantified.

Today, our ability to generate information has outstripped our ability to manage it – much less comprehend it all.

Today, the library at Alexandria could probably be stored in a few CD-ROMS or zip drives.

And yet we've just begun.

In tomorrow's world you will discover answers for questions that today don't even exist.

In our kind of world – the world of today and the world of tomorrow – we will not survive unless we can adapt, change and constantly learn.

I urge you to make a commitment to continual learning.

That commitment is not just a good strategy. It can guide some of the hard decisions just ahead of you and those to come down the road.

I have a feeling I know some of what's ahead of you right now.

You've attended classes and crammed late at night and on weekends. Some of you have worked at crummy jobs to pay tuition or feed a family. You've worked . . . and you've sacrificed. Now you'll get your diploma . . . and hopefully a job.

I understand how hard it can be to find a job or know which job is best for you.

A little more than a year ago, I also was seeking a job. I had a lot of questions about what exactly was the job for me . . . at this time in my life.

I sought the advice of Norm Augustine, President and CEO of Lockheed Martin.

Over lunch, Norm asked me about my goals and motivations . . . and told me how his career had evolved.

I learned a lot in our conversation that day.

Norm told me one thing I want to share with you today.

He said that at each of the major milestones of his career -- when he had to consider job alternatives -- he tried to make the decision based on one thing: which job seemed to offer the best chance to learn more and create the most interesting pathway ahead.

That sometimes meant passing up a short-term payoff in title or salary -- for the sake of greater long-term opportunities to grow.

Norm said this almost always meant someone else thought he'd made the wrong choice and passed up the "better" job.

Given his accomplishments as an engineer and as a corporate leader, I'd reckon Norm had it right.

And I urge you to consider your next steps in similar terms -- focus on what those steps can teach you and where they can lead.

You will all leave this ceremony with the same piece of paper.

It serves to assure all who will meet you that you spent some time at The Ohio State University.

But, I hope and trust that many of you INVESTED your time here . . . establishing for yourself a Triple-A portfolio of learning stock.

I hope you walk out of here today with open eyes.

As you go forth, you'll find -- as I have -- that the world is your toughest professor . . . that finals come every day . . .

that you are graded not by what you know, but by what you are willing to learn . . .

that success comes from your ability to apply the lessons
that all your yesterdays have taught you,
so you can meet the challenges of each new day.
You'll find your own dreams enmeshed
with the dreams of others, bound together
in the fabric of human progress and experience.

You'll find that each time you dare to truly reach for a star,
you will achieve a little more –
whether you devote your life to raising a family,
starting a business,
improving your company's performance,
serving the public trust
or raising the world's standard of living.
In the end, we are all judged
not by what we take to the grave –
but by what we leave behind.

We are judged not by the wonders we have seen --
but by how we shared the experience with others.

We are judged not by the dreams we dreamt at night
in the dusty recesses of our minds –
but by those we dreamt in broad daylight . . .

. . . dreams we dreamt with our eyes and ears and minds
open wide.

I wish you all the fun and joy of making your boldest dreams
come true.

I hope you all will be Dreamers of the Day.

Thank you.

Dreamers of the Day, I wish you all the best.