

**OHIO STATE UNIVERSITY COMMENCEMENT**  
**John E. Pepper, Chairman of the Board of Directors, Procter & Gamble**  
**August 31, 2000**

\_\_\_\_\_, members of the faculty, parents, friends and especially the graduating class of the Year 2000. It is a special privilege to join you here today, to receive an honorary degree from this great institution and to talk with you on this wonderful day in your lives.

It was almost exactly 40 years ago – in June of 1960 – that I sat in a setting like you are in today – waiting for my diploma, wondering what the graduation speaker would say. Well, whatever he said, I must confess that the message has long left my mind.

Bearing that in mind, I will make my remarks today brief and hopefully to the point.

To begin, I would like to ask the graduating class to shut your eyes. Now don't go to sleep, but do shut your eyes – and relax – and consider for a few moments where you would like to be – and what you would like to be accomplishing – ten years from today – yes ten years from today when you return for your 10<sup>th</sup> reunion.

What does it look like?

What do you see? What do you feel?

(Pause)

Well, if you're like me when I was sitting where you are, that mental picture is probably fuzzy, ill defined, described mainly by yearnings and instincts. If that is the case, I'd say it is ok. It's natural. For in many ways, I think it is instincts and yearnings – what I'll call principles of living – that will take you to your destination, wherever that may be.

And it is about two of those principles that I have found to be most important in my life that I will talk about briefly today.

How, when all is said and done, do we measure the value of our life?

What really leaves us turned on, feeling good inside, with lasting joy and satisfaction?

In my experience there have been two things above all others.

The first is to know that I am trying to do my best in pursuit of a worthy purpose: knowing that to the best of my ability, I am becoming all I can be.

The second is to know that in doing that, I am trying to serve and help others, starting with those closest to me – my family. That's the crux of it.

But how does one go about doing this?

I have found it starts with a clear sense of purpose.

All the people I have seen who are successful have shared one thing in common. They are absolutely passionate about what they are doing – about their purpose – and it is a purpose they believe worthy of their talents and worthy of others. Quite simply, they love what they do. They love it so much work almost becomes play.

From Michael Jordan to Martin Luther King; from John Glenn, who is with us today, to Archbishop Desmond Tutu, from the professors at Ohio State whom you will never forget; to the men and women at Procter & Gamble whose contributions and characters I will never forget...they all have this quality in common: they care deeply about what they are doing....they love it.... and for that reason they keep learning, they keep improving, they go the last mile in doing it very, very well.

I found this in my career at Procter & Gamble. I loved the work, I respected the people, I found myself part of a commitment to improve the lives of people, to win vs. competition. I found a commitment to doing the right thing. Believing in the purpose of what you do.....nothing is more important.

An Indian philosopher said it well more than 2,000 years ago: "When you are inspired by some great purpose, some extraordinary project, all your thoughts break their bonds, your mind transcends limitations, and you find yourself in a new, great and wonderful world!"

I'm sure you have already found this to be the case. Consider your biggest successes...the accomplishments you are most proud of... one of your studies, a sport, an extracurricular activity. Whatever it is, I'll bet it is an activity that you love, that you believe in deeply and have devoted yourself to most completely

As you go ahead now to the next stage of your life, it will be no different.

But let me warn you.

Don't expect that what you want to be doing is going to come out and slap you in the face.

In fact, what you do first may not turn out to be your idea of the ideal job.

But....and this is the important point...the only way you'll know is to throw yourself into it and make the most of it.

I started my career in the Navy, having gone through college on a ROTC scholarship. I didn't expect to make my whole life in the Navy, but every day I tried to tackle it as if it were the only job I'd ever have. And, sure enough, while I didn't enjoy every minute of it, I found it really exciting....I learned....I grew to the point of seriously considering staying on.

But I didn't. I came to P&G. When I started, I had no idea if I'd be with P&G for a year or a career. I can still remember the day I told my parents that I was going to be selling soap for P&G. They said: "what, selling soap? We thought you were going to be a lawyer". In fact, I had seriously considered that. I had enrolled at law school and had rented a room in Boston. But I decided to defer entrance for a year to see what the world of business would be like at P&G. It was a big unknown to me, but it sounded exciting. I tackled it with everything I had. It wasn't always easy. There were many times I wondered if I'd make it. But, how I came to love it, as I discovered the intellectual excitement, the competitive challenge and the outstanding people.

My only point is to approach everything you do that way, with everything you've got. That's the only way you'll find out if you do love it. And it's the only way you'll achieve all you are capable of.

But don't become stuck either. Keep exploring to see what you really want to be. Find what you love to do.

And don't get discouraged if you don't find your ultimate calling right off the bat. After all, Sam Walton didn't start his first Wal-Mart store until he was in his mid-40's. I'm not suggesting waiting 20 years for lightning to strike, but don't be frustrated if you haven't found your ultimate career or role in life by the time you're 25 or 30.

And in finding that role, listen to your heart, not just your head. For your feelings -- your gut instincts -- are the most sensitive barometer for what you love to do.

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If using our abilities to the fullest is our first responsibility, I have found that right alongside it is the responsibility we have to others.

I don't think I've ever seen anyone who is truly fulfilled unless that person is devoting a large part of his or her life to helping others.

You'll be thinking a lot in the years ahead about how you can best be of service – what roles you can uniquely play. These roles will be multiple: your family, your profession, your church, your community.

Balancing the priority of these commitments is one of the essences -- and challenges -- of life. To be strong and lasting, I have found that these commitments must be based on one thing above all others – and that is the genuine willingness to serve...to help other people, starting with those closest to you. Nothing...absolutely nothing...brings such satisfaction.

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You will find, I think, that this quest of becoming all you can be – and of serving others – will depend on two personal qualities above all others. Those two qualities are courage and persistence.

Courage is being willing to put aside the fear of failure.

Courage is not letting the views of others deter you from something you believe in deeply.

Courage in a way is just being yourself – being a person who is described with that phrase I love to hear: “what you see is what you get”.

Courage is being willing to follow your deepest instincts, even if you're not sure where they'll lead you.

A speaker at my oldest son's graduation said something I'll never forget: “sometimes you have to ‘leap before you look’.” That's right, “sometimes you have to leap before you look”!

I suspect you know that feeling: tackling something that you're not sure you can do – but knowing in your gut it is right to do and that you need to try.

Many of the most important things I've tried to do in life are like that.

P&G's decision to enter quickly into Eastern and Central Europe right after the Berlin Wall came down posed tremendous uncertainty, but I thought it right to do.

When I agreed to co-chair the development campaign for a new institution called the National Underground Railroad Freedom Center, dedicated to improving inter-racial and interpersonal understanding and cooperation, I didn't know how we were going to raise the required \$90 million. But I believed in the value this Center could offer, and I felt that I should help make it happen.

Success on this, as just about everything else that's important in life, will require a good dose of the one other quality I want to say a word about – and that is persistence.

I cannot over-estimate the importance of persistence to success.

History is written large with the significance of persistence...but you'll find it usually is written in invisible ink.

History records the happy endings, but omits the endless hard work required to achieve them.

History celebrates the successes, but glosses over the failures along the way. Yet, they were there and they teach us a lesson.

On anything of real importance, success is only achieved because someone or some group has the persistence and the grit to overcome obstacles, to learn from defeat, to keep going.

Many of you have probably heard the story about one of our most famous presidents. He was a man who ran a country store early in his life but went broke and took 15 years to pay off the debt.

He got married, but had an unhappy marriage.

He ran for the House of Representatives but lost, not once, but twice.

So, what did he do next? He ran for the Senate – not once, but twice – and again he lost twice.

He was attacked daily by the press. He was despised by half the country.

That catalog of disappointments would have driven most people to despair. Not this man. His name was Abraham Lincoln.

I'm sure all of you could tell me who made the first manned flight. The Wright Brothers at Kitty Hawk, N.C. in 1903! Right?

But how many of you could tell me how many times the Wright Brothers had tried unsuccessfully to fly their plane before this success we read about? Five times, 10 times, 50 times?

No, they had attempted this flight over 100 times. And each time they failed. But they did not give up.

I'll always remember what has to be the shortest speech that Winston Churchill ever gave. He delivered it at his old prep school shortly after World War II.

Anticipation reigned among the graduating class and the assembled crowd. Churchill came to the podium, nudged his glasses down over his nose, and said the following: "Never, never, never, never give up". That was it. With those 6 words, he turned around and sat down.

You wouldn't be here today graduating if you didn't have courage and persistence. My advice to you is to keep nourishing these qualities, recognizing that while we may never be as good as we'd like, it's vital we try, every day of our lives.

Don't take "no" for an answer when you believe the answer should be "yes".

Don't give up if you fail to meet a goal the first time; learn from the experience; and come back again.

Pursue what you believe in with courage and persistence, above all, when you confront a tough challenge on something which you believe is very important.

For the major improvements that have to be made today -- whether they be in business or education; in child care or health care...will not be easy. They will require a deep sense of purpose and the courage and persistence to push it through.

We need teachers who can instill the love of learning and be role models for our children. We need social workers who can change lives, and doctors who can save lives. We need lawyers and business people and leaders in every field who combine professional excellence with a firm determined action to play their role in making the world a better place.

Your effort and your commitment have brought you a long way to this marvelous moment you are celebrating today with your families and friends.

Now, you are about to set out on a great new adventure.

You do so with capabilities and character in which you can take both pride and confidence.

As you go forth from here, remember -- take joy in what you do. Go for it! It is an exciting and fast-changing, opportunity-filled world out there. It is a world that more than ever calls out for the young. We need you to make it better!

Thank you.

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