

## MISSOURI VALLEY COLLEGE COMMENCEMENT SPEECH

Bert Berkley - May 8, 2010

Do you know what the snail said while riding on the back of a turtle? Wheeeeeee!

There's not a snail or a turtle in this graduating class. Each of you is a marathon runner, moving at a fast, steady pace to accomplish your long-term goal, and you've done it. Congratulations.

I am not going to tell you what to do and how to do it, and then encourage you to change the world. What I am going to do is give you some thoughts for your consideration, and then you can decide whether or not to put them in your computer, the one between your ears.

In this country there is a lack of integrity. Some people on Wall Street, in big banks, in some brokerage houses selling stocks and bonds, and others in financial institutions in many cases have lied, cheated and possibly stolen.

No one is going to jail. They caused the worst recession in over six decades, 15 million people are out of work in the USA alone, people are suffering worldwide because of the stupidity and greed of top financial people in the USA, and no one is going to go to jail. It's a disgrace.

Your generation can change that. The rule for personal integrity is simple: don't do anything you don't want on the front page of your newspaper, or on Facebook, on LinkedIn, or you don't want all of your classmates to receive a personal e-mail explaining what you did.

I want to assure you it is not necessary to do something you're not proud of to make money.

You can conduct yourself so your family will be proud of you, and still live the good life.

Let's talk about a practical way to get things done.

Have you heard the saying, Ready, Fire, Aim? Wait a minute, this guy is confused. It's Ready, Aim, Fire. If you're a soldier in combat that's correct: you're ready, in darkness you see an enemy light, and you aim and fire.

I'm not talking about anything as destructive and as unnecessary as war. What the world spends on wars and defense budgets, hundreds and hundreds of billions of dollars annually, could eliminate poverty, which I believe is the globe's largest problem, could improve health care that so many need, and could allow many more people to get a good education.

No, I really do mean, Ready, Fire, Aim. I'm referring to something you might do as you become involved in activities after graduation.

Let's say that in your job, or whatever you are doing, a project comes up. You have the responsibility to complete the project, or you are on a team to do the project.

Here's the process: take a hard look at what needs to be done, look at the pros and cons, gather information, the Internet being a good source, and then decide what the best course of action should be. That's the "ready." But don't spend weeks and weeks gathering data and then analyzing it. Analysis paralysis benefits nobody.

So you've gathered facts to justify your decision. Then go ahead and do it, "fire." Now the "aim." In advance you've understood everything won't be perfect when you take action, so you see how things work out, and where necessary, change for smoother activity, making it easier to accomplish the objective.

Ready, Fire, Aim.

And because everybody understands that they can make changes without being criticized, taking action is started sooner, and with better results.

Ready, Fire, Aim.

I'm impressed with the Missouri Valley College Maastricht Institute of Entrepreneurship. An entrepreneur is one who understands the importance of change, accepts change as a way of life, and then personally decides to change the way something is done.

All of us may not be entrepreneurs in the traditional sense of starting or leading a business, but we are entrepreneurs as it pertains to our career and our life, and we can accept the fact that new ideas and new ways of doing things are worthy of our evaluation to decide if they are beneficial.

I'm a strong believer in giving back. I believe we have a responsibility to help those who have problems, or are just less fortunate, or are in need. As a matter of fact, I believe so firmly in giving back that with a co-author I wrote a book on the subject. The name of the book is *Giving Back, Connecting You, Business and Community*. Giving back by being a volunteer is one of the most satisfying things I have ever done; and for those of you who have helped others, I know you take real pride in yourself because of what it means to those you've helped.

For those who are already spending time volunteering and understand how satisfying it is, wherever you are in the future, find a way to be there for people who need you. For those who are not spending as much time volunteering as you think you should, wherever you go next, find a way to help those who can benefit from your experience, your college education, and your interest in being a source of knowledge.

But please understand, being a volunteer can be frustrating. Those who need help don't always respond as they should. In most cases they will be unable to express how much they appreciate what you are doing. Hang in there. Don't give up.

Legitimately, you can ask why I am so passionate about volunteering and why I wrote a book on the subject. The reason is that I was in two wars: World War II and Korea. I was a First Lieutenant, Infantry, expendable. I promised that if I got out of Korea alive, I would give back. When I returned to Kansas City, I started volunteering. I have been doing it for over half a century. It has changed my life. My family, my business associates, and those I have helped hold me in higher esteem because of volunteering. The same will happen to you. You will have pride in what you are doing, and what you've done.

It's a win-win situation. You win and the people you help win. It doesn't get any better than that.

Allow me to tell you a story. An individual was on vacation in Portugal. One morning he got up early and walked on the beach. The sun was coming up, the rain had stopped, a rainbow remained, and the sky was beautiful. It was a perfect day. As he walked he saw

ahead of him a man leaning down, picking up something and throwing it into the sea. As he got closer he said, "Young man, what are you doing?" "I'm picking up starfish and throwing them into the water." "Why are you doing that?" "Well, when the sun gets high the heat is so intense the starfish on the beach die." "Young man, there are kilometers and kilometers of beach and thousands of starfish. You don't think what you're doing can really make a difference?" "It makes a difference to this one."

In a few moments you will receive your diploma and be a college graduate. You will become a very special person, as only 24.6% of American citizens have a college degree. You have abilities, knowledge, understanding and capacity that 75.4% of the population does not have. Believe in yourself. Believe in yourself.

I ask you, I ask you to pledge to yourself that every month you will work with someone and with that someone make a positive difference.

My warmest best wishes to you.