



QUINCY COLLEGE

Commencement Address

Tom Clasby - January 7, 2012

Mayor Koch, members of the City Council, President Tsaffaras, Chairman Grindlay, members of the Board of Governors, faculty and staff, most importantly, graduates, friends, all.

I am more delighted to be here with you today than I could ever express. In 1992, when I sat where you are, I could not have imagined in my wildest dreams that I would be standing before you today. So, someday, one of you may very well be delivering a commencement address.

This is a very exciting time for the College. As the Quincy Center project develops and the College moves back into the heart of our city, it will add a very important dimension to that project. As we see the rebirth of our city's downtown, the college will only add to the excitement of that project. I love to be on a college campus because people's minds are engaged and there always seems to be a spirit of optimism.

I remember well my days in the classroom at Quincy College - State and Local Government with Jim Sheets; English with Bob Waywood and Arthur Keogh; Science and Algebra with Tom Mullen; Speech Mr. White; History with Mr. Rines; Psychology with Dr. Cummings; Philosophy with Leor Alcalay.

On the wall in my office I proudly display my degree from Quincy College. I remember sitting in Mr. Rines history class and listening to him tell us about another Government office where a degree from, then Quincy Junior College, was on display. That degree bore the name Ron Kaufman, and that government office was the White House, where Ron served as an aide to President George Herbert Walker Bush. Ronnie may have set the bar high for the rest of us; however, we should never stop dreaming.

After graduating from Quincy, I went on to Franciscan University in Ohio. My time in Ohio holds very precious memories of their own. However, I must say that I believe the training I received here at Quincy, was the best for what I do today. Returning to this great city, I came on board with the C.O.A. On a regular basis I work with block grants, earmarks, and state and local officials. It was

in the classrooms of Quincy College that I learned what these things were and how they function.

Over the years in government, I've met some fascinating people and learned a great deal. I'd like to share with you today one of the most interesting things that I have learned. It is also, I believe, one of the most beneficial. It's the results of the study that was done by Harvard University called the New England Centenarian Study. This study examined why some people live for 100 years or longer. Now, most of us simply conclude that they live long because they have good genes, but the study reveals that only 30% of longevity is related to genes. This means that 70% are other factors. Some of these things are quite obvious.

So let's look at some of the things centenarians have in common. They don't smoke, they have good nutritious habits, and they exercise regularly. So far, no real surprises, but what else do they do? They make a conscious effort to maintain a positive attitude. They have a good sense of humor. They form social networks. They stay involved in some kind of a cause or mission, and they practice a faith. But are these habits simply inherent to these people, or can we develop habits that change our personality and our worldview?

Motivational speaker , Matthew Kelly, speaks about becoming the best version of yourself. I believe this ties in nicely with the data of the Centenarian study, because if we can develop the same habits that the centenarians share we will surely discover a fountain of youth. Now, Kelly tells us that our lives change when our habits change. I suspect that this is something that many of you may have found out when you began school. If any of you are like me perhaps you weren't as prepared as you could've been for college and you had to develop good study habits. If so, you know that it is true, our lives change when our habits change.

This is the time of year when many people make New Year's resolutions. Kelly suggest two keys to keeping our resolutions: number one, don't make too many of them; number two, write them down to remind yourself of them each and every day, every waking moment, every hour, place them at the center of your life make them a priority. Do those two things and you'll have successful results.

Let's make four resolutions right now, one for each of the areas of life -- physical, emotional, intellectual, and spiritual -- as recommended by Kelly.

Physical: Exercise once a week, every week, the entire year, with no exceptions. Just decide what exercise is for you. For some people, exercise might be a 5 mile run, for someone else it might be a walk around the block---- twice.

Anybody here own a million-dollar racehorse? ---- If you owned a million-dollar racehorse would you take it to McDonald's---why not?

You and I straight through the drive through. ‘I’ll have two sausage McMuffins, four Hash Brown’s, a large Coke, and a it’s 10:27am, any chance we could get some fries with that, I realized breakfast is until 10:30am, but any chance you got some fries a little early. ‘

George Bernard Shaw said we are all digging our graves with our teeth.

#2 **Emotional:** Build better relationships. The best way to build relationships is carefree timelessness. So once a month every month with the person that means most to you, spend some carefree timelessness. It’s harder to do than exercise. We all know the happiest people on the planet are those who focus on their relationships. Their lives are rich in relationships and relationships thrive on one

condition, carefree timelessness. Gift any relationship you have with carefree timelessness and that relationship will blossom, it will bloom. It doesn't matter if it's with a spouse, your kids, friends, siblings, your colleagues, your God. Whatever relationship you gift with carefree timelessness will blossom with life. This is the reason that teenagers fall in love so easily. You see that Johnny has been talking on the phone for two hours, he hangs up. You say to him who were you talking to. He says Suzy. Suzy is Johnny's girl friend. You say what were you talking about. Johnny says, "Nothing." Carefree timelessness.

How do we do it? Pick an afternoon, a night, all day and block it off. Now inevitably something will come up. Someone will call and invite you to something, or have a request for you to do something. You just have to tell them no, you have another commitment. When they ask what that commitment is, tell them carefree timelessness. You're deeply committed to it.

#3 **Intellectual**: Books.

Books change our lives because what we read today walks and talks with us tomorrow. The ideas we put into our hearts, into our minds creates the action of our ongoing lives.

You say to people, what was the most difficult time in your life. They'll say, you know about six years ago, I was down, discouraged, I was confused, I was in a time of transition. I didn't realize it at the time, but now I realize, it was a great time in my life. You say to them what were you reading at that time. Their eyes will light up. They'll say you have to read that book, that book changed my life. You have to get that book.

Books change our lives. If you want to understand history, you only have to know one thing. We become the stories we listen too. If you want to understand any part of history just ask two questions: Who were the storytellers? And what story were they telling? Understand who the storytellers were and what story they were telling, then you'll know why people lived the way that they did . We become the stories we listen too. Books change our lives. Read good books, collect good books, teach others to read the books.

#3 **10 minutes a day with a good book**: Not two hours, 10 minutes

#4 **Spiritual**. Spend 10 minutes a day in the classroom of silence seeking wisdom. Now true spiritually is always tied to some kind of service. So

develop a spirit of service. You see there's really only two types of people in the world, the passionate people, and the miserable people.

What's the difference between the passionate people and the people that Henry David Thoreau called "the people living lives of quiet desperation"? Only one thing, the passionate people have a sense of purpose in their lives, they have a sense of mission, and from that mission they're able to make a difference in other people's lives. Maybe it's their children, maybe it's a friend, maybe it's their career, maybe it's church community, nation, but they are making a difference in the lives of other people. That's what brings passion to our lives, develop a sense of service. That's what the happy people have.

If you want to be happy for an hour, take a nap; if you want to be happy for a whole day, go shopping; a whole weekend, go fishing; all month, take a European vacation; all year, win a fortune; a lifetime, then find a way to make a difference in other people's lives. Think of the five happiest people you know and chances are that's the common denominator.

Think how the world would change if a significant number of people chose, as their mission, simply to be kind to others. The author Lawrence Lovasik

challenges us to discover the hidden power of kindness. He tells us that kindness drives gloom and darkness from souls and puts hope into fainting hearts. It sweetens sorrow and lessens pain. It discovers unsuspected beauties of human character and calls for a response from all that is best in souls. Kindest purifies, glorifies, and ennobles all that it touches.

So what did I learn from the Centenarians? The same thing I learned from Kelly. That we just have to start choosing happiness, that 90% of the happiness and 90% of the misery in our lives is linked to the choices we make. It's all about choices. They are the foundation of character, the foundation of a rich and abundant life.

Now next week it's going to be our day to work out, and we won't feel like working out, because we don't often feel like working out. If we only worked out when we felt like it, we would seldom work out. This is also true with reading or helping other people. We've been programmed to judge an activity by the way we feel when we start it. We should never do this, we should judge an activity by what it produces when we're finished.

In some ways this requires us to change the way we think.

This e-mail brings this point home pretty well. It's called puddles and dandelion's.

When I look at a bunch of dandelions I see a bunch of weeds that can overtake my garden. But my kids, they see flowers for mom and white fluff you can wish upon.

When I look at it old drunk and he smiles at me, I see a smelly dirty person who probably wants money so I look away. My kids see someone smiling at them, so they smile back.

When I hear music I love, I know I can't carry a tune and I don't have much rhythm so I sit self-consciously and listen. My kids they feel the beat and they move to it and they sing out the words as loud as they can. If they don't know the words, they make up words of their own.

When I feel the wind on my face, I feel it messing up my hair and pulling me back. But my kids, they close their eyes spread their wings and fly with it until they fall on the ground laughing.

When I pray I say thee and thou and give me this and grant me that. My kids, they say, hi God thanks for my toys, and thanks to my friends and please help me keep the bad dreams away, and sorry God I don't want to go to heaven right now I would miss my mommy and daddy too much.

When I see a mud puddle I step around it, I see muddy shoes and dirty carpets, but my kids, they sit in it. They see dams to build and rivers to cross and worms to play with.

I wonder, do you think God gives us children so that we can teach them, or so they can teach us.

See we have to learn to change the way the think. If we do that, we can change our habits. And our lives change when our habits change.

So as I close, maybe just one last story. A teacher had given an assignment to her elementary school students on what they thought the seven wonders of the world were. And after much discussion, they passed in their papers. As the teacher was looking them over, she found that there was some variations, but for the most part the students all agreed that the seven wonders of the world were the Taj Mahal, the great Pyramids of Egypt, St. Peter's Basilica, the

Great Wall of China, the Empire State building, the Panama Canal, and the Grand Canyon.

And as the teacher was looking over the papers she noticed that one of the students was not finished yet. She was a shy little girl and often she took a little more time than the rest. So the teacher approached the girl and asked if she was having trouble with the assignment? And she said I am a little bit. Their just seems to be so many wonders in our world.

Then she said I think the seven wonders of the world are, to touch, to taste, to see, to hear, to laugh, to run, to love.

What of the seven wonders of your world? What are the seven wonders of your world. Have you been distracted because the rest of the class was all heading in one direction? Rediscover and reconnect with the seven wonders of your world.

Thank You.

QUINCY COLLEGE
Commencement Address
Tom Clasby - January 7, 2012

