

Honorary Doctor of Laws Convocation Address

June 5, 2005 3:00 p.m.

James MacDonald, Vice-President RBC Dominion Securities and long-time supporter of The University of Winnipeg and The Collegiate

Your honour, Mr. Chancellor, Mr. President, honoured guests, graduands, parents and friends. This is a special day for me, and it certainly is a very special day for all of you here today:

Graduates – you’ve done it!

Parents and families -- who helped

Professors and Administrators of U of W – who taught & mentored

To those graduating today, I would like to offer you my congratulations on a tough job well done!

In accepting my honorary degree, I had to agree to two conditions:

offer you “ideas and advice”

limit it to 10 minutes

Both very challenging! Therefore, I have prepared a speech. Otherwise I will be an hour. Also I can become too emotional.

This is about you – not me.

So, what is significant to you?

You have no doubt considered for months or even years: What will you do once you have graduated?

What do you want to do?

What is your goal? And how will you achieve it?

Maybe I can provide some advice here for you.

Everyone here will have a different answer to this question and how you intend to achieve it: get a job immediately, take a post-graduate degree, or maybe a trip to “chill out”, backpacking through Asia or Europe for a few months.

Whatever your final goal is, no matter how difficult this goal appears now, my advice is – go for it! You have all demonstrated the capacity and capability to apply yourselves to a number of difficult educational challenges. The rest of your lives will continue to be a

learning experience. This learning should be enjoyable. It should be an activity that you look forward to, like reading a good book.

It was 37 years ago that I graduated from University. My degree was in Business Administration, with a major in Banking and Finance.

WHY THIS MAJOR?

Because I wanted to be a stockbroker! I even made the Dean's List a few times!

Not bad for a hopeless reject from the public school system, which Dean Bend has already described.

One day, it suddenly hit me like a bolt of lightning that school was over for me -- in Grade 11. I was failing pretty much everything and University looked a long way off. As a matter of fact, it looked like an impossibility. Thanks to The Collegiate, I was able to start over again. The rest is history.

In considering what should be your goal and how to reach this goal, my advice to you today will deal with three very important elements of human behaviour – RESPECT, ETHICS, and GRATITUDE.

RESPECT -- this has already been touched on earlier by Dean Bend.

Why was I suddenly a capable student at The Collegiate? My approach to school changed because I now enjoyed the adult University environment of The Collegiate.

Why? The answer is I respected the Dean and the teachers of The Collegiate because they treated me with respect. (I guess I wouldn't act like an adult until I was treated like one!)

What is respect? What does it really mean? The Oxford dictionary defines respect as: *Avoid degrading or insulting or injuring or interfering with; Treat with consideration.*

Respect builds positive relationships with the people you will be working and living with. When you treat someone with respect, you will usually receive a response from them that is similar. This process builds on itself.

ETHICS

Ethics is another important trait you will be dealing with throughout your career. Actually, ethics and respect are intertwined, as you will hear in a moment.

Today, we have a very significant problem of ethics, both in Business as well as Politics, in Canada and around the world: In Canada, we have the recent "Sponsorship Scandal" and the Conrad Black/Hollinger debacle as examples.

I recently read an excellent piece by the U.S. entrepreneur Jon Huntsman. I would like to read to you a small edited portion of it because: A) it relates to my presentation, B) it is from the real world, and C) it is by a University graduate who has certainly achieved his goals and more!

In 1970, Jon M. Huntsman started a small firm with his brother. By 2000, Huntsman Corp. had grown to become the largest privately held petrochemical and plastics business in the world. Today, Huntsman is a billionaire philanthropist who recently donated \$225 million to establish the Huntsman Cancer Institute at the University of Utah. He has also supported organizations that feed the poor, house the homeless and protect victims of domestic violence: and he has provided numerous high school students with college scholarships.

Huntsman himself was the recipient of an academic scholarship to The Wharton School of Business where he received the Most Outstanding Graduate Award. He went on to earn an MBA. Since his graduation from Wharton, he has donated more than \$50 million to his school. (That is gratitude.)

In his book, “Winners Never Cheat”, Huntsman includes his own experiences building an extremely successful business based on “honest, ethical practices”.

The principles at the heart of his business success are easy to follow and practice:

(As I read them remember my theme: respect, ethics, gratitude.)

Treat customers, colleagues, employees and competitors with respect

Compete fiercely but fairly. (ETHICS)

Return favours and good fortune by helping out those less fortunate. (GRATITUDE)

Huntsman states: Character is most determined by integrity. Your reputation is how “others” perceive you.

Character is how you act when no one is watching.

He closes with:

There are no moral shortcuts in the game of business – or life. There are, basically, three kinds of people: the unsuccessful, the temporarily successful, and those who become and remain successful. The difference is character.

The Collegiate and the U of W certainly treat their students with respect. Graduates of both these great institutions are excellent examples of this.

You, the students gathered here today, who are about to graduate, do not have to be sold on this. You have experienced firsthand the benefits of the close, caring atmosphere at the U

of W and it is evident. This University continues to be among the Top 10 universities in Canada, as voted by their Alumni.

So, what will be your goal in life now that you are ready to enter this next phase of your journey?

I will try to answer this question from my own experience; again, something from the real world.

When I was asked what was my main goal in life, much to the consternation of my university roommates, my response was – to enjoy life!

Well, their reactions ranged from disbelief, to the fact I was a loser, to a dimwit with no imagination, to someone who lacked the commitment to challenge the world, with all of its ills and shortcomings.

You have to appreciate that I was going to school in the U.S. in the mid-60's. Vietnam had developed into a very ugly and unpopular war. The ongoing Cold War simply compounded the problem. It didn't look like Communism would ever be defeated.

I returned to Canada, and remained in Winnipeg, because it had a lot of advantages and attractions and it still does! I became happily married and my wife, Roberta, and I were very fortunate to have two wonderful sons, Ted and Graeme. Both also attended the U of W.

I also became a stockbroker, which I mentioned had seemed appealing years before. I have loved my job – for 35 years, there has never been a day that I haven't looked forward to going in to the office, and the bonus is, I have made a very good living as well!

So, have I achieved my goal in life? Absolutely! Did I accomplish a few other things along the way, besides my own self-indulgence? The answer would again be, yes.

For instance, I became involved in politics for a few years, both provincially and federally, because it was interesting and challenging. I hope many of you will also become involved to some degree as good people are certainly needed at all levels of government.

I also became involved in a variety of community services. This ranged from convenor of the ATOM A Hockey organization in River Heights for a couple of years, to serving on the Boards of a number of community and charitable organizations. In these activities, you meet interesting people and you feel good about helping others.

Presently, my focus is on the U of W Foundation and fundraising for future students at this University and its Collegiate division.

Now, back to your goals.

My advice to you would be to work towards the job or career that you really desire. Don't be in a hurry, but be diligent in working towards that goal. Money should not be at the top of the priority list. It helps, but quality of life and all that this entails – from your spouse and your family, to your health, and your job – these should be your most important considerations. Also, don't be surprised if your goal shifts somewhat over the years. This is no different than how your views will also change in a number of other areas – like the music you listen to (quieter), to the time you leave parties (much earlier)!

When you are settled into your wonderful new careers, don't forget the U of W and the students who will only be able to come to this great place if they receive support from grateful Alumni, like yourselves.

Remember, helping other people makes you feel good!

I thank you in advance for your future support to this University and I wish you all “bon voyage” on the exciting journeys on which you are about to embark!

Thank you.