

Convocation Address—August 20, 2004

I cannot convey how honored I am to be selected to speak at the convocation. On behalf of the entire faculty I'd like to congratulate you for your many accomplishments on this voyage. It has been an honor to serve with all of these faculty, diverse but united in their wonderful capabilities and positive attitudes. I'd like you to take a moment and pay tribute to them.

As I've reflected on our voyage and our community, I've been surprised at what we've done with our summer, in terms of the intensity and breadth of our experiences. One can state the obvious, we've docked at 10 ports, we have gone through disembarkation procedures at 9 of those harbors and we've even been tender with each other on several occasions.

We have formed unique bonds both on the ship and on shore. Although we've taken a gazillion pictures and videos, they cannot totally capture the emotions we felt at Janet's memorial service, or the laughter at stories and experiences we shared. How could we express in words or pictures the climbs and treks we made — volcanoes in Russia, tropical parks in Vietnam, Victoria's Peak in Hong Kong, climbing the Great Wall, and of course most challenging – all those shrines and temples! We saw shimmering rice paddies, and frolicking dolphins, the enthusiasm of Japanese baseball fans, Hiroshima on August 6th, and I think the most stellar experience, which I only have second hand – my students who were invited by the GoGos at a bar to attend 2 days of the Sonic concert in Tokyo to see Green Day and Avril Lavigne! I want you to know guys, I already have the pictures downloaded and I'm showing this all over Idaho!

For me as a teacher, I also have been transformed. I won't make a false claim that I was a mild mannered professor because none of you would believe me, but I noticed that because of the intensity of the environment – both physical and emotional, certain dimensions of my persona would emerge. So I can't deny it – I'm enthusiastic and I love life! The wonder to me is that you seem to plug into my universe and it has meant more than I can express here. So what can I extrapolate from my own heart to you in this moment?

I want to share the following message. Our life onboard this ship has been unique to this voyage. No other voyage in the past could be like it and no voyage in the future could duplicate our experiences. The idea is that we ALL made a difference to each other in our shipboard community, whether you acted consciously by joining a service group, band, or a card game, or went on certain field trips, or whether you sat in the cafeteria looking at the ocean...we all made a difference to each other. As we get ready to disembark tomorrow I'd like you to consider the precious nature of time and opportunity and reflect on what you can contribute to the world, because all of us have made a difference in our own world here and can make a difference in the worlds we return to shortly. The two keys are to enjoy what you do sincerely – fun is not a crime. You do not have to be bored with your life - engage in a career that you enjoy in your own heart first. Secondly, our mutual criterion on the significance of our lives (and I'm saving years of pain here) - is how can we serve others? At the end of the day, your furniture and your clothing labels don't matter. I drive a car that was made in 1985, but I drive that car to farming communities to give talks on China or Vietnam or symposia for our school teachers. I use the car to commute through snow, ice and the Lewiston grade in the winter – to teach blue collar, first generation college students who need to know about thinking critically about world history and social science. **It isn't what you have but what you do that will make your life have meaning.** I would like to conclude by sharing some verses from a song I wrote as a freshman in college. I can honestly say that this has guided my philosophy of life and I hope it is of use to you:

Did you see the people as they passed you?
Could you feel their happiness and woe?
Could you care about a total stranger?
Can you see me – do you know?

Oppression is a very tricky concept
It is over-talked and never thought about
Don't tell me your problems again you say
But that's the worst oppression of all

And did you see the people as they passed you?
Could you feel their happiness and woe?
Could you care about a total stranger?
Can you see me – do you know?

Revolution is a very scary daydream
We must liberate ourselves and minds to see
That although we all have our own perspectives
We must join together to be free

And did you see the people as they passed you?
Could you feel their happiness and woe?
Could you care about a total stranger?
Can you see me – do you know?

Alienation is a very tragic feeling
It strangles our ability to show
Our love and need for each other
To be accepted as ourselves and to grow

And did you see the people as they passed you?
Could you feel their happiness and woe?
Could you care about a total stranger?
Can you see me – do you know?

Now is the key to living
Experiences are beautiful and free
We will exercise the power as we have as people
And that is why we will win eventually

We will see people as we pass them
We will feel their happiness and woe
We will care for every single person
And we'll see each other and know