

UNIVERSITY OF WEST GEORGIA  
2010 SUMMER COMMENCEMENT  
ADDRESS OF  
REGENT KENNETH R. BERNARD, JR.

JULY 31, 2010

DR. SETHNA, DR. WAGNER  
DISTINGUISHED FACULTY,  
GRADUATES OF THE UNIVERSITY OF  
WEST GEORGIA CLASS OF 2010,  
PARENTS, FAMILY MEMBERS,  
FRIENDS, ELECTED OFFICIALS, AND  
GUESTS, I AM HONORED TO SHARE  
THIS SPECIAL OCCASION WITH YOU.

WHEN I WAS ASKED TO GIVE  
TODAY'S ADDRESS, I ASKED MY  
FRIENDS ON FACEBOOK WHAT I

SHOULD SAY. NEEDLESS TO SAY, I  
RECEIVED ALL KINDS OF  
COMMENTS:

\*THE BEST SPEECH I HAVE HEARD  
WAS MY LITTLE BROTHER'S AS  
VALEDICTORIAN OF HIS HIGH  
SCHOOL.

\*PERSONAL ANECDOTES ARE MORE  
MEMORABLE THAN PLATITUDES.

MAKE UP SOME STORIES, IF YOU  
CAN'T THINK OF ANY!

\*ALTON BROWN FROM THE (FOOD  
NETWORK) GAVE A  
COMMENCEMENT ADDRESS ONCE  
AND SAID SOMETHING TO THE  
EFFECT: "LISTEN FOLKS, I CAN SAY  
THIS BECAUSE I WAS BORN AND  
RAISED IN THE SOUTH, SKIP REHAB,  
GO TO CHURCH!!!"

GRADUATES OF THE CLASS OF  
2010, THIS IS YOUR SPECIAL MOMENT  
IN TIME-WHERE LIFE, PEOPLE,  
EDUCATION, AND NEW CHAPTERS  
MEET CREATING NEW HORIZONS,  
NEW POSSIBILITIES, AND NEW  
BEGINNINGS. THE DOORS ARE  
OPENING FOR EACH OF YOU, AND  
YOUR LIFE IS ABOUT TO TAKE-OFF.

IN LIFE EVERYTHING  
MATTERS: ETHICS, RELATIONSHIPS,

PEOPLE, PERCEPTIONS, AND EFFORT.

HEMINGWAY CLAIMED EVERY

PERSON'S LIFE "...ENDS THE SAME

WAY....IT IS ONLY THE DETAILS OF

HOW... (ONE) LIVED....THAT

DISTINGUISHES ONE...FROM

ANOTHER...." MANY TIMES LIFE IS

DEFINED BY PREPARATION OR LACK

THEREOF. SOMETIMES LIFE IS

DEFINED BY OUR INSTINCTIVE

REACTIONS TO UNKNOWN, OR

EMOTIONAL RESPONSES TO  
KNOWN. SOMETIMES LIFE IS  
DEFINED BY OUR VISION, OR LACK  
OF VISION. LIFE CERTAINLY IS  
LIMITED ONLY BY ONE'S EFFORTS,  
STATE OF MIND, AND PEOPLE. IT IS  
CERTAIN THAT YOUR LIFE WILL BE  
FILLED WITH CHOICES, DECISIONS,  
ACTIONS, AND INACTIONS. LIFE IS  
THE SEARCH FOR DEFINITION,  
CERTAINTY, SECURITY, AND CALM.

EINSTEIN SAID: “THE SIGNIFICANT PROBLEMS WE FACE CANNOT BE SOLVED AT THE SAME LEVEL OF THINKING WITH WHICH WE CREATED THEM.”

I KNEW AT A VERY YOUNG AGE, I WANTED TO BE A LAWYER. I WATCHED BLACK AND WHITE EPISODES OF “PERRY MASON” AT AGE FIVE OR SIX - DON’T WORRY I ALSO WATCHED “LEAVE IT TO



BEAVER”, “THE BRADY BUNCH”, AND  
OF COURSE “THE MONSTERS”. I  
SPENT A LARGE PORTION OF THE  
REST OF MY LIFE NOT  
UNDERSTANDING THAT STRIVING  
FOR A GOAL CAN BE JUST AS FUN  
AND FULFILLING AS REACHING THE  
GOAL. THE EXCITEMENT OF MY  
UNDERGRADUATE GRADUATION  
WAS A DRUNK STREAKING ACROSS  
STANFORD STADIUM PRETENDING

TO BY HERSCHEL WALKER.

UNFORTUNATLEY, THIS GUY NAMED

“LEBO” (STILL REMEMBER HIS NAME

24 PLUS YEARS LATER), DID NOT

REALIZE THAT THOSE HEDGES HAVE

A HIDDEN FENCE. IT SHOULD GO

WITHOUT STATING, BUT “LEBO” HAD

TO BE PRIED OUT OF THE HEDGES

LIKE THORNS BEING REMOVED

FROM A ROSE BUSH.

WHEN I GRADUATED FROM LAW  
SCHOOL THREE YEARS LATER, I  
MADE IT! BUT I DIDN'T FEEL ANY  
DIFFERENT. I DIDN'T APPRECIATE  
THE RESULTS OF EFFORT OR THE  
BLESSING OF THE SUPPORT OF  
MANY. IT SORT OF FELT LIKE A DUD  
BECAUSE I DID NOT REALIZE, GRASP,  
APPRECIATE, AND COMPREHEND  
THE MOMENT-FORGET THAT I WAS

THE FIRST COLLEGE GRADUATE  
FROM MY IMMEDIATE FAMILY.

PLEASE ENJOY THIS DAY FOR  
THIS IS YOUR DAY AND YOUR  
PARENTS', RELATIVES',  
SUPPORTERS', AND SIGNIFICANT  
OTHER'S. GRASP THE AIR, FEEL THE  
MOMENT, ENJOY THE MOMENT.  
TOMORROW THIS DAY WILL BE  
GONE.

YOU SEE TIME TRULY COMES AND  
GOES, AND EACH MINUTE COUNTS  
BECAUSE ANY COULD BE OUR LAST.  
MAKE EVERY MOMENT COUNT.

WE LIVE IN A SOCIETY WHERE  
THE TRUTH FOR SOME IS NOT A  
SINGLE POINT, BUT A SPECTRUM OF  
POINTS-PICKED RANDOMLY AS  
NECESSARY TO CLOSE THE DEAL,  
SELL AN AD, GENERATE A RATING,  
SELL A STORY, OR CREATE A

REALITY. EACH OF YOU WILL BE  
FACED WITH AN ETHICAL DECISION,  
WHETHER IT IS TO COVER A  
MISTAKE, UNDER DURESS TO  
PROTECT A JOB, RAISING CHILDREN,  
DEALING WITH AN APPLICATION,  
APPLYING FOR A LOAN, OR THE LIKE.  
ALWAYS FALL BACK ON YOUR  
PRINCIPLES; NEVER JUSTIFY  
ETHICAL DECISIONS THROUGH MIND  
GAMES. YOUR GUT IS ALWAYS

RIGHT. YOUR HUMAN IMPULSE IS  
USUALLY WRONG. ARISTOTLE ONCE  
SAID: “THERE IS A FOOLISH CORNER  
IN THE BRAIN OF THE WISEST MAN.”

USE AS A GUIDE, THE  
UNCONFLICTED, REASONABLE,  
AVERAGE PERSON’S PERSPECTIVE-IF  
IT SMELLS LIKE A ...IT IS A....

LIFE IS MANY MINUTES OF TIME,  
NOT JUST A SINGLE MINUTE. MAKE

ALL YOUR MINUTES COUNT. IN THE  
LONG RUN YOUR DECISIONS, GOOD,  
BAD, OR INDIFFERENT WILL BE  
JUDGED. LEAVE NO ROOM FOR  
DOUBT ABOUT WHERE YOU STOOD,  
WHAT YOU MEANT, AND WHETHER  
YOU HAD THE CHARACTER TRAIT OF  
ALWAYS BEING HONEST. AN  
ENGLISH PROVERB GOES  
SOMETHING LIKE THIS: “STUPIDITY



WON'T KILL YOU, BUT IT CAN MAKE  
YOU SWEAT.”

LIFE IS MAJESTIC, A SERIES OF  
TUNNELS-EACH OF DIFFERENT  
WIDTHS AND LENGTHS. EACH  
SHARE A COMMONALITY-LIGHT IS  
ALWAYS AT THE END OF LIFE'S  
TUNNELS. HIGHS AND LOWS ARE  
PART OF THE DRILL. THE ESSENCE  
OF EACH PERSON IS THEIR CORE-  
THROUGH THICK AND THIN. MORAL

COURAGE IS EASY TO RECOGNIZE,  
BUT HARD TO DEFINE. BE KNOWN  
FOR WHAT YOU DO, NOT JUST WHAT  
YOU SAY.

SOCIETY MISTAKENLY FORCES  
MANY OF US TO THINK THAT EACH  
DECISION SHOULD BE WITH AN AIM  
OF BUILDING A RESUME-THE MORE  
THE BETTER. I'M HERE TO TELL  
YOU, DON'T WORRY ABOUT  
BUILDING YOUR RESUME. LET YOUR

LIFE BE THE AUTHOR OF YOUR

RESUME.

I USE TO WORRY ABOUT MY  
RESUME. WHEN I GOT OUT OF THE  
MARINE CORPS IN 1992 AFTER  
DESERT SHIELD/DESERT STORM, I  
STOOD ON THE HIGHEST FLOOR OF  
ONE OF THE TALLEST BUILDINGS IN  
ONE OF THE PREMIER LAW FIRMS IN  
AMERICA. I REALIZED ULTIMATELY I  
REALLY WANTED TO MAKE MY ON

PATH, SO I DROVE BACK WEST ON I-  
20, STARTED SHERROD & BERNARD,  
AND HIRED MYSELF AND MY  
PARTNER. I DIDN'T NEED A RESUME  
ANYMORE. FUNNY THING, MY  
RESUME ACTUALLY BUILT ITSELF  
AFTER I QUIT TRYING TO  
MANUFACTURE ONE.

DEFINE YOUR OWN SUCCESS.

MY DEFINITION OF SUCCESS MAY  
NOW BE OBSOLETE, BUT SUCCESS  
FOR ME IS AN OUTCOME, A RESULT,  
NOT A MEASUREMENT.

TRUETT CATHY WROTE A BOOK  
ENTITLED: “IT’S EASIER TO SUCCEED  
THAN TO FAIL”. HIS INGREDIENTS:  
“.... SAVE 10 PERCENT, GIVE 10  
PERCENT, WORK 10 PERCENT  
HARDER....” TRUETT IS QUOTED AS  
SAYING: “.....WE AT CHICK-FIL-A

FEEL THAT BEING IN THE FOOD  
BUSINESS GIVES US THE  
OPPORTUNITY TO PROVIDE A  
NECESSITY OF LIFE-FOOD. WE WANT  
TO PLAY AN IMPORTANT PART IN  
THE EMOTIONAL AND PHYSICAL  
NEEDS OF THE PEOPLE WE SERVE,  
AND OFTEN IN THEIR SPIRITUAL  
NEEDS AS WELL....” ANYONE HERE  
EVER HEARD A CEO USE WORDS  
“FEEL”, “LIFE”, “NEEDS OF THE

PEOPLE WE SERVE”, AND  
“SPIRITUAL”? BY DEFINITION DOES  
ANYONE HERE BELIEVE THAT  
CHICK-FIL-A IS NOT SUCCESSFUL  
BECAUSE SOMEHOW THEY ARE  
CLOSED ON SUNDAYS? YOUR  
SUCCESS IS TOTALLY AND  
ABSOLUTELY DETERMINED BY  
YOUR PERSPECTIVE.

NANCY BRINKER HAD A  
YOUNGER SISTER SUZY THAT SHE

ADORED. AS THEY GREW OLDER,  
EACH LIVED IN DIFFERENT CITIES,  
BUT THEY STAYED CLOSE. THEY  
TALKED BY PHONE EACH DAY. ONE  
DAY SUZY CONFIDED THAT SHE HAD  
BEEN DIAGNOSED WITH CANCER.  
NANCY STAYED BY HER SISTER'S  
SIDE THROUGH NUMEROUS  
OPERATIONS AND MEDICAL  
PROCEDURES OVER THREE YEARS.  
EVENTUALLY, SUZY DIED. NANCY



WAS DEVASTATED. NANCY COULD  
HAVE STAYED DEPRESSED. NANCY  
COULD HAVE LOST FAITH. NANCY  
WAS IN ONE OF THOSE TUNNELS OF  
LIFE I TALKED ABOUT EARLIER.

RATHER, THAN STANDSTILL, NANCY  
PULLED THROUGH THE TUNNEL AND  
BECAME DETERMINED THAT HER  
SISTER'S FIGHT WOULD NOT GO  
UNNOTICED. NANCY BRINKMAN  
STARTED THE SUSAN G. KOMEN

FOUNDATION OUT OF HER GRIEF,  
WHICH TODAY HAS RAISED OVER A  
BILLION DOLLARS FOR CANCER  
RESEARCH. JOEL OSTEN REFERS TO  
THE BITTER WATERS OF LIFE AS  
POSSIBLY “A BLESSING IN DISGUISE.”

SUCCESS IS TRULY IN THE EYES  
OF THE BEHOLDER. DAVID MCKAY  
SAYS: “YOUR THOUGHTS ARE THE  
ARCHITECTS OF YOUR DESTINY.”

SUCCESSFUL PEOPLE NEVER STOP  
LEARNING AND AS A RESULT THEY  
DEFINE THEIR OWN HAPPINESS. I  
TOLD SOME FRIENDS AFTER MY 46<sup>TH</sup>  
BIRTHDAY, THAT I MUST BE  
MATURING. I TALK LESS, LISTEN  
MORE, AND READ EVEN MORE.

EACH OF YOU HAS MASTERED, TO  
SOME DEGREE OR ANOTHER, THE  
EDUCATION ELEMENTS NEEDED TO  
BUILD A SUCCEESFUL CAREER IN

YOUR CHOSEN FIELD, OR TO MOVE  
TO THE NEXT LEVEL OF FORMAL  
LEARNING. EACH OF YOU HAS  
BRAIN POWER, AND SHORTLY YOU  
WILL BE CONFERED WITH A  
DIPLOMA THAT RECOGNIZES A  
RIGHT OF PASSAGE. ABIGAL ADAMS  
ONCE SAID: “LEARNING IS NOT  
ATTAINED BY CHANCE. IT MUST BE  
SOUGHT FOR WITH ARDOR AND  
ATTENDED TO WITH DILIGENCE.”

YOU ARE ENTERING INTO THE  
SORRORITY AND FRATERNITY OF  
THOSE WHO HAVE BEEN BLESSED  
WITH THE OPPORTUNITY AND  
RESPONSIBILITY OF BEING  
EDUCATED. THIS, HOWEVER, IS NOT  
THE PINNACLE, BUT RATHER THE  
BEGINNING OF THE NEXT CHAPTER  
IN YOUR LIFE.

WHETHER YOU HAVE NOTICED OR  
NOT, THIS MOMENT IN TIME IS

BASED UPON A SERIES OF  
RELATIONSHIPS, AS LIFE IS ALL  
ABOUT RELATIONSHIPS. FOR MANY  
YOUR SUPPORTERS ARE FAMILY,  
FRIENDS, RELATIVES, A TEACHER, A  
PROFESSOR, A BROTHER, SISTER, A  
SPIRITUAL LEADER, A MENTOR, OR  
SIGNIFICANT OTHER. THESE  
RELATIONSHIPS WE OFTEN TAKE  
FOR GRANTED. IN THE FUTURE,  
THESE AND MANY OTHER

RELATIONSHIPS WILL PLAY  
SIGNIFICANT, AND IN MANY CASES,  
CRUCIAL ROLES IN YOUR FUTURE.

WHILE YOUR ABILITIES WILL  
PREPARE YOU TO REACH YOUR  
POTENTIAL, YOUR OPPORTUNITIES  
WILL BE DEFINED BY THE COMPANY  
YOU KEEP, HOW YOU TREAT PEOPLE,  
AND YOUR NETWORK OF  
RELATIONSHIPS. LIFE'S  
OPPORTUNITIES WILL BE CREATED

BECAUSE OF THE PEOPLE YOU  
KNOW, PEOPLE YOU SERVE, OR  
PEOPLE THAT SERVE YOU. POSITIVE  
RELATIONSHIPS WILL OVERCOME A  
RESUME ANY DAY OF THE WEEK.  
QUALITY RELATIONSHIPS WILL  
NEVER FAIL YOU. IN FACT, THESE  
RELATIONSHIPS WILL CREATE MORE  
RELATIONSHIPS OVER TIME, AND  
PROVIDE THE PLATFORM FOR  
HAPPINESS.



KNOW THAT THE VALUE OF TRUE  
HAPPINESS IS NOT MEASUREABLE  
SOLEY IN DOLLARS AND CENTS.

I SPENT MANY YEARS OF MY LIFE  
STRIVING TO CREATE  
OPPORTUNITIES. I THOUGHT THE  
MORE DOORS AVAILABLE TO OPEN  
THE BETTER. I SPENT TOO MANY  
YEARS CREATING DOORWAYS,  
UNTIL I SUDDENLY REALIZED THAT

SOME DOORS WERE NEVER MEANT

FOR ME TO OPEN.

NOW 21 YEARS AFTER

GRADUATING FROM LAW SCHOOL, I

ENJOY MY JOB MORE THAN EVER.

THE STRUGGLE TO FIND THE RIGHT

DOOR IS DIFFICULT, BUT THE VALUE

OF BEING CONTENT IS PRICELESS.

FIND YOUR DOOR AND WALK

THROUGH IT WITH CONFIDENCE.

OUR WORLD TODAY IS DEFINED  
FOR TOO MANY PEOPLE BY THE  
LENS OF A TV CAMERA, SATELITE  
RADIO, OR CELL PHONE (WITH  
GAMES OF COURSE). IT IS CRITICAL  
TO YOUR FUTURE THAT YOU  
UNDERSTAND PEOPLE ARE VITAL TO  
YOUR HAPPINESS. NOT ONLY  
THROUGH A SERIES OF  
COMPLICATED, AND SOMETIMES  
SIMPLE, HUMAN INTERACTIONS, BUT

BECAUSE THE WAY IN WHICH YOU  
TREAT YOUR FAMILY, FRIENDS,  
CLIENTS, CO-WORKERS, EMPLOYEES,  
SUBORDINATES, AND BOSS WILL  
LARGELY DETERMINE WHETHER  
YOU CAN REACH TRUE HAPPINESS IN  
LIFE. ULTIMATELY, WE DO WHAT  
WE DO BECAUSE WE BELIEVE IT  
WILL MAKE US HAPPY, IT WILL  
BENEFIT SOCIETY, IT WILL RAISE  
OUR PERSONA, AND IT WILL

ELEVATE OUR STANDING. I

ENCOURAGE YOU TO FOLLOW THIS

SIMPLE PHILOSOPHY I LEARNED AS

A YOUNG MARINE LIEUTENANT:

\*YOU CAN'T LEAD IF NO ONE

FOLLOWS.

\*YOUR TROOPS WON'T FOLLOW

YOU, IF YOU ARE IN THE REAR.

\*RESPECT IS EARNED BY DOING AND

APPRECIATING WHAT THEY DO.

IN TRYING TO CAPTURE THIS  
MOMENT, THESE WORDS FROM  
LEANNE WOMACK'S COUNTRY SONG  
HOPEFULLY PUNCTUATE TODAY'S  
MESSAGE:

“I HOPE YOU NEVER LOSE YOUR  
SENSE OF WONDER. YOU GET YOUR  
FILL TO EAT, BUT ALWAYS KEEP  
THAT HUNGER. MAY YOU NEVER  
TAKE ONE SINGLE BREATH FOR  
GRANTED? GOD FORBID LOVE EVER

LEAVES YOU EMPTY HANDED. I

HOPE YOU STILL FEEL SMALL WHEN  
YOU STAND BY THE OCEAN.

WHENEVER ONE DOOR CLOSES, I

HOPE ONE MORE OPENS. PROMISE

ME YOU'LL GIVE FAITH A FIGHTING

CHANCE. AND WHEN YOU GET THE

CHOICE TO SIT IT OUT OR DANCE, I

HOPE YOU DANCE.”(LEE ANN

WOMACK-“I HOPE YOU DANCE”)

THANK YOU AND  
CONGRATUATIONS!