

## *Shawnigan Lake School Closing Day Remarks by Gwyn Morgan*

Thank you Headmaster Robertson. And good afternoon students.... and family and friends of students. Can you imagine a more beautiful place to be a student, or a more special school than Shawnigan Lake! I hope you all understand how lucky you are.

I'm also very lucky. I started this day with my Saturday morning running team on a glorious jaunt through high forest trails overlooking the incredible fiord just to our east known as Finlayson Arm. (over there) Then, our summer ritual of a post run swim across a cool lake high in those hills. Three guys and three dogs, swimming along together. That's Boxer Nellie's favourite part! My running hat says it all: "life is good!"

An hour later, after a SLIGHT change of dress, I departed the dock in front of our home and crossed the Saanich Inlet so that I could be here with you. Where else in the world would all that be possible before noon?

Headmaster Robertson mentioned my lifelong passion for health and wellness. Fitness and the great outdoors have been key both to my enjoyment of life and to the energy and perspective fuelling my career. I know that sport and fitness is important here at Shawnigan. And as you move on to the next chapter in your lives, remember that sport and fitness is about PARTICIPATING, not WATCHING.

That reminds me of the story about a man and his wife sitting in front of their television watching a feature about medical technology. He says to her, "just so you know, I never want to live in a vegetative state, dependent on some machine. If that ever happens, pull the plug".

His wife gets up and unplugs the TV set.

Don't watch life go by, PARTICIPATE!

This day marks an important milestone in the journey of life for Shawnigan Lake class of 2010, and I'm honoured to be asked to share this special day. Graduands, what I have to say today is for you.

You are about to embark on the "post secondary" phase of your education. Have you decided where you want the journey of life to take you? Do you have a specific destination point in mind, like becoming Prime Minister, or President of a big company, or even Headmaster of Shawnigan Lake School? A few of you may have such goals, but my advice is to focus getting the most out of the journey, rather than worrying about reaching a single destination. And getting the most out of your journey means building upon the gifts you were born with and what you've learned from your parents and others who care about you, and the opportunities you have been given to learn and grow here at Shawnigan, to achieve your FULL potential.

It's been more than four decades since I sat in the graduating class of my small town high school thinking, in only three months, I'd be starting engineering classes at the University of Calgary. I was a bit awe struck at the thought of moving to the big city and competing with all those kids from much better schools with 90 plus averages. A farm kid who had not even been outside of Alberta and had never boarded an airplane, how could I know what my potential was? I couldn't have imagined that my life journey would take me to more than 75 countries, often in a private airplane no less. Neither could I have dreamed of becoming founding President of the largest company ever to be headquartered in the west, and then later in all of Canada.

So if it wasn't my goal to head a big company, how is it that it happened? Looking back, I now see that it was the basic values I learned from my parents that provided the cornerstone of my life's foundation. And propelling me forward was the knowledge that, after the sacrifices my parents had made so I could get the educational opportunity they didn't have, I

couldn't let them down. Along the way, I added eight more stones to that foundation. I want to share them with you on your special day.

The first foundation stone is self discipline. Defining self discipline is simple...decide what you want to do, and THEN DO IT. The "decide what you want to do" part is pretty easy. Where the vast majority of people fail, is the "then do it" part.

The big test of YOUR self discipline will come soon, at university or college or trades school. Unlike here at Shawnigan, there'll be no one watching to ensure you're learning your courses. You will have instructors you can learn from and others you can't. But there will be no room for excuses. Either you find a way to learn the material, or you'll fail. NOW is the time to use your inner strength to start building life-long self discipline. It's a choice between being the driver's seat of your life, or at the back of the bus.

The second foundation stone, be trustworthy. NOTHING you may gain, whether it's passing a course or financial success, is worth compromising your ethical values. And nothing is more rewarding than looking back on your life knowing that your achievements were anchored in honesty and integrity.

Third, choose your role models carefully. Many young people... and many adults; worship actors, musicians or sports stars as role models. All too often, these exceptionally talented people turn out to have no moral compass to guide their behaviour. I'm sure you can think of many who have veered off course, destroying their own lives and the lives of people around them. There are many genuinely dedicated, ethical and accomplished people who contribute much to our society through technical advancements, medical breakthroughs, educational innovation, and yes...even business and politics. They are our society's TRUE heroes. Someday, I hope you will experience the thrill of becoming a parent. NOW, today, decide to adopt as YOUR role models persons you would hope to see your future children select.

Fourth, be positive. It's easy to be depressed about the problems of the world: economic recession, environmental issues, terrorism... poverty. But your parents and I graduated in a century dominated by two brutal world wars, unspeakably horrible holocausts, inhuman communist totalitarianism and living on the brink of nuclear Armageddon. Compared to that, the world looks pretty good today. And you can help make it better.

Fifth, be curious. My father said that, from the time I could talk, I never stopped asking questions. The world is fascinating. Every day is a chance for learning and growth

Sixth, be selective. Choose friends and life partners who challenge you, stimulate you and LIFT you up. Avoid negative people who will only drag you down.

Seventh, make important life choices carefully. YOU ARE ABOUT TO MAKE ONE OF THE MOST IMPORTANT OF ALL. So far in your educational process most choices, including this school, were probably made by your parents. NOW, you must choose among many post secondary programs. And that choice will impact almost EVERYTHING about the rest of your life.

All too often, post-secondary choices are influenced by things as shallow as TV programs like "Law and Order" or "ER". Life on the farm didn't give me much time for television. And even I'd had time; there wouldn't have been any TV dramas about my educational choice. I chose engineering because I had an aptitude for science and math, and because I wanted to understand all I could about how and why everything worked. But I had no comprehension of the incredible number of fascinating career opportunities available to engineers. And I had no idea that there are more company presidents with engineering degrees than any other. Now, as Chairman of the Board of Directors of one of the world's largest engineering companies, it's fascinating to see this Canadian based company carrying out more than 10,000 projects in 100 countries.

Yes, when I made my choice, there was so much I didn't know. But one very important thing I knew was that engineers were in demand...so I could pay off my student loans and start having some fun!

You're going to be relying on your choice as you enter the most globalized and technologically advanced economy in history. And out of that globalization, a new world economic order is emerging. After centuries of European and North American dominance, the billions of people on the other side of the great Pacific Ocean to our west in China, India, Vietnam and Indonesia have thrown off failed socialist ideology and embraced free enterprise, lifting living standards at breathtaking rates. It's a time of great opportunity for those who gain the knowledge and skills needed in this new cross-Pacific economic era.

But how do find out what those knowledge and skills are? Well first of all, do your own homework... don't just accept the advice you may get from career councillors. Last Sunday's Victoria Times Colonist carried one councillor's advice to "look at your likes and dislikes"...and your sense of "what makes you happy". My advice is: don't pick a course of study just because you "like it"...that's how you choose a hobby. And with thousands of jobs opportunities out there that you know nothing about, how can you possibly know which will "make you happy"? I can tell you one thing for sure; taking a program which doesn't give you a realistic chance of getting a good job is virtually guaranteed to make you UNhappy. Find out what knowledge and skills are in demand; such as science and engineering, health care, accounting, information technology and skilled trades. And when you begin to focus in on a program, talk to as many people as you can who have built their careers on that education. And don't ever take any program without finding out whether graduates are actually finding jobs which utilize what they've learned.

Oh, I know that doing all of this sounds pretty challenging. And you want to spend the summer just having fun! But how much effort are you prepared to invest in a decision that is very likely the most important one you'll make in your whole life. A wise choice holds the potential for a rewarding and fulfilling career. A poor choice could see you working at Starbucks after years of post secondary education.

And my final message to you, Shawnigan Lake class of 2010, PURSUE YOUR OPPORTUNITIES WITH PASSION and you'll be amazed at what can happen.

Making the most of your life journey is about developing your full potential, it's about self awareness, it's about commitment.... it's about lifelong learning. IT'S BEING A PLAYER, NOT A SPECTATOR, IN THE GAME OF LIFE. And it's about waking up each morning giving thanks for the wonder of being alive, each day that is granted to you. I wish you fulfillment in the next chapter in your wonderfully unknowable, unpredictable journey of life.