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Hudson High School Graduation

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HUDSON HIGH SCHOOL GRADUATION

June 21, 1981

Exactly 30 years ago, in June of 1951, I was a member of the graduating class at Hudson High School. I do not remember the name of my commencement speaker nor do I recall what he said. This should give you some sense of the importance of what you are about to hear from me today.

Strangely enough, I do remember the title of our Valedictorian's address. It was entitled: "Footprints in the Sands of Time" and was taken from these lines by Henry Wadworth Longfellow:

"Lives of great men all remind us
We can make our lives sublime,
And, departing, leave behind us
Footprints in the Sands of Time."

I do not know whether anyone from our class ever gave any serious consideration to this message. I don't even know whether anybody even understood it. Our Valedictorian was one of my co-editors on "The Owl" and an attractive young lady. Maybe that is why I recall so much about her speech. I held the no. 3 academic ranking in the class and thus avoided the responsibility for a speech 30 years ago. As you can see, my luck did not last forever.

You must forgive my attack of nostalgia, but through the mists of memory and the dim echoes of the past, I still perceive many of the events and the people at Hudson High

in 1951. I remember the banners of blue and gold, the football games, the tennis matches, the band, the music, the Owl deadlines, the Honor Society inductions, the exams, the bus rides, the parties and, most of all, my classmates. There were indeed, happy days in 1951 and I hope you will remember 1981 with similar affection.

One other memory that remains ever green - the long - suffering faculty whose members strained mightily to educate the class of 1951. I remember them all and shall always be grateful to them, for it is they who made real our school's Latin motto - non scholae sed vitae - not for school but for life. It is my privilege to be acquainted with many members of the present faculty, and ^{I find them to be} ~~they are~~ just as hard working, long suffering and unappreciated as those who taught the class of 1951. But I say this to you who graduate today teachers, like parents, look better with the passage of time.

The world has turned many times since I received my diploma at Hudson High three decades ago. The events of that year seem to have occurred very far in the past. In 1951 cease fire talks began in Korea, although the war would last for two more years and some of the class of '51 would go to that ancient Asian land. Transcontinental television was inaugurated by President Truman, who fired General McArthur that year for making unauthorized policy statements. General seem to have that problem. J. D. Salinger published "Catcher in the Rye" and Willie Mays was National League Rookie of the Year. It was the year of another subway series, with the

New York Yankees, managed by Casey Stengel, defeating the New York Giants, managed by Leo Durocher, four games to two. At Forest Hills, it was Frank Sedgman over Vic Seixas for the National Tennis Championship. The Academy Award for best actor went to Humphrey Bogart for "African Queen" and, ^{for best actress} to Vivian Leigh for "Streetcar named Desire." Of course, some things that happened then give credence to the old saw that history repeats itself - there was an assassination attempt on the President and Congress debated tariff concessions to the Soviet Union.

Enough of nostalgia - I was invited to come here for the purpose of furnishing you with advice you can use in going out into the world. My advice is this - don't go!!

Having given you the mandatory commencement message, I now pass to a discussion of some great expectations - ours not yours. I refer to what we, as parents, teachers, relatives, friends, the entire society, all of us expect of the class of 1981. We have heard enough of what you expect of us - everything from a new car to elimination of nuclear weapons. Maybe we haven't done so well and maybe you can do better. I certainly hope so.

We expect that you will perform the duties of citizenship in a free society. In one of my legal journals there appeared a cartoon depicting a jury returning a verdict. The foreman of the jury in the cartoon addresses the judge as follows: "Your Honor, we have decided that we don't want to get involved." Unfortunately, this cartoon reflects some things

that I see in my line of work every day. People do try to avoid service on juries and grand juries; they try to avoid the duty to testify as witnesses; they fail to report crimes, even when they are victims. Some years ago, in New York City, a young woman was brutally attacked in the presence of 20 witnesses. Not one came forward to identify her attackers. We are justly proud of our constitution and system of justice in this country. With all its flaws, it's the best there is in the world. But it cannot survive without the support of the citizenry. We expect that you will help to furnish that support and that you will get involved.

One more thing about justice. As one who has toiled in the vineyards of the law for the past 25 years, I can assure you that, although sometimes obscured, the achievement of justice is indeed the purpose of the law. And after examining thousands of cases and precedents, I can do no better than commend to you the three principles of law, ^{the principia iustitiae} promulgated by the Roman Emperor Justinian in 529 A.D. He said that the principles of the law are these - to live honorably, not to harm another and to give every person his due. Our expectations respecting your sense of justice will be fulfilled if you adhere to these simple principles.

The duties of citizenship are not confined to the judicial system. We expect that you will identify, study, discuss and vote on all the important issues facing our nation - inflation and the economy, crime and corrections, social services, energy, the environment, military preparedness and

disarmament, foreign policy, equal opportunity, taxation and education, to name just a few. Your views on these matters must be communicated to your elective representatives. Better yet, become an elected representative yourself.

Robert Hutchins, while president of the University of Chicago, said this: "The death of democracy is not likely to be an assassination from ambush. It will be a slow extinction from apathy and indifference." We expect that you will see to it that democracy does not become extinct.

In your own work, whether it be in furthering your education or in employment after graduation, we expect that you will do your very best, for there never has been nor will there ever be any substitute for excellence. Recognize it and strive for it. Whatever you do, there is no greater satisfaction than a job well done. But the quest, the search, the ambition to improve - these are as important as the achievement itself.

We expect that you will be innovative - that you will work to change things that need to be changed. I am sure that you will find, as I have, that suggestions for change often are met with these brilliant arguments: 1 - We have never done it that way before or 2 - We've always done it this other way. Change for the sake of change makes no sense, but change where it is necessary is a worthy goal.

We hope and expect that you will think about others as you go about your daily business. For in a large sense, we are our brothers' keepers. We expect that you will be concerned

not only for your own families and friends and classmates but for the rest of us in society as well.

Yes, it is true that we have great expectations where you are concerned. We expect more of you than we have expected of ourselves. This is only natural, because we see in you our hopes, our dreams, our desires, our future. We wish for you all that we have wished for ourselves - and more.

One final thought before I close and bring you yet closer to the customary celebrations marking the end of your four years of study here. You will find, in the words of a song popular in your parents' day, that the fundamental things apply as time goes by. There are certain things that are basic, that never change in importance - they are just as significant now as they were in 1951 and as they will be in 2011. Love, beauty, truth and integrity; friendship, loyalty, justice and concern; respect, excellence and wisdom - these are the fundamental things that apply. Cherish them-and remember our great expectations - as time goes by.