(Delivered at 9:30 a.m. 5/16/2009 Gregory Gym to 300+ graduates. About 3000-3500 people attended. ) Draft.

Dr. Freeman, honored guests, colleagues, graduates, friends and family of our graduates, and my own dear family. I appreciate the opportunity and honor it is to speak at this graduation. Dr. Freeman thank you for that warm introduction..

Let me add my congratulations to our graduates and their families.

While I originally entitled this talk governing your life, it is really about how to make a difference in your life and the lives of others right now.

Before going on, I should note this entire talk will be posted online over the weekend. I will put it on both my facebook page(I do have one) and my page in the senior citizens website, wrinkled facebook.com. You’ll also find footnotes to the episodes of Family Guy and the Simpsons that were inspirations for my words.

We can all learn a lot about governing ourselves and others from the way the liberals Homer Simpson and the evil conservative Mr. Burns live their lives. Furthermore, A recent Rasmussen poll asking which mother had the most positive influence on America found Marge Simpson is 4th ahead of Cindy McCain and not that far behind Hillary Clinton.

I find it hard to believe I first taught here in 1969, when no one over 30 was to be trusted. Back in those days, friends with benefits was about having an older buddy who could buy you beer. And for those naive parents who don’t understand the new interpretation, let’s just pretend the old one still stands.

What an exciting day now that Chairman Freeman has finally invited a Rush Limbaugh dittohead like me to deliver this address. To paraphrase Michelle Obama, I can tell you that for the first time in my life I am proud of my Government Department.

I have enjoyed having a large number of you in my courses over the past few years.

Several of you have shared with me what you would like to hear in this address.

One said: “Tell us we will make a lot of money” O.K. you all will make a lot of money. Of course, it is often easier to make than to keep.

Another Tara Goulding said: tell us we will look as good at 40 as we look now.

O.K. With the coming medical advances, everyone will look as good in 20 years as they look now.

Tara’s boyfriend, Ryan, a recent Gov’t Department grad and friend of mine also gave me a note about what to say in this speech. Here it is.

Tara are you here?

Tara, Ryan wants to know if you will marry me? I mean marry Ryan, I am already married. Will you?

She says yes, Ryan

I knew I could bring hope and change here. My job is now done.

I could talk to you about working hard, getting inspired, being your own person, and serving your community without asking for campaign contributions. But I won’t. You are already the most community service oriented generation in our history. Yesterday a colleague and I were lamenting we could not get into college today because we had no record of community service in high school or even thought much about it then.

Good self -government starts with good principles. I want to talk about two important ones. The first is to acknowledge people around you, to express your gratitude for the little things in life. That is to give favorable recognition or notice for the actions or achievements of others.

This is one of the things you can’t learn about from government. I have yet to ever open my mail box to find a thank you note from the school board, or IRS or even Congress for anything I do including paying taxes.

I personally want to acknowledge each and everyone of you for being here today. Many more have started at U.T. than have finished. You have worked hard, often going beyond what you thought were your own limitations. You did it yourself.

Yet as independent and self-sufficient as we all think we are, we are also very dependent on or reap the benefits from the work and effort of so many other people. You could, in thought or action acknowledge each one.

Of course, the first acknowledgment goes to your parents and family who in so many, many ways have supported you in being here. Then there is your network of friends and acquaintances There is the faculty and staff of this University. There are the taxpayers and contributors from Texas and other parts of this country who have invested in your education, They subsidize your tuition, create endowments, erect classrooms and so on. There are your high school and elementary school teachers. The list goes on and on and on.

I could not mention everyone who has supported you in some way. There are businesses around this campus that have served you well, people who keep the streets maintained and your surroundings safe. You could go back to those who have fought to keep this country free and those who created the foundations for our exceptional nation

And since this is a public university and the ACLU might be watching, I won’t mention acknowledgements of a higher power etc.

How far back you go with your acknowledgments is up to you, but you can never go too far.

Our third child graduated from Schreiner University in Kerrville last Saturday. I am proud of her accomplishments. What makes me perhaps most proud is what she did on campus after the graduation.

She held an acknowledgement party to thank her friends and teachers, her tutors and the staff who organize learning support services. Each person there had made a contribution large or small to her completion of college. She even invited the President who did stop by for a while. My daughter did not need to do this. You could see how this gracious act of recognition lit up the lives of everyone who attended.

Perhaps no rule for governing your life can play a bigger role in your future success and happiness and the happiness of those around you than a rule which reminds you about sincere and heartfelt acknowledgement and gratitude.

Being a decent human being is about what you do when there is no compulsion or requirement. There is no compulsion or requirement to acknowledge or recognize others.

A second rule for governing yourself might read like this: Treat every experience as an opening to future possibilities. It would be too simple to say when life gives you lemons make lemonade. The rule is more than that. It is not positive thinking nor is it about fooling yourself. It is about creating value for yourself from whatever you are doing right here and right now.

You cannot know in the full value you will eventually find in any given experience. You get to create the value now and the value later. You write the story!

After I finished working for Chief Justice Berger, and at the Federal Judicial Center, I decided I wanted to be in a real business I resigned from my position at U.T. which had been held open while I was in D.C.

I had participated in a personal development training with a company that is now named Landmark Education.

I met the company’s CEO, Don Cox a business Ph.d. a former marketing professor at Harvard and V.P. of Coca Cola. Don invited me to work for him in California so I could learn ” business.”

We arrived in San Francisco in April of 1978. For the next several months, Alan Sager, B.S., J.D., Ph.D., was Don’s office boy. I was managed by Don’s 3 female assistants, not Don himself.

Whether it was driving my motorcycle around downtown San Francisco to get his lunch or preparing statistics or reports for meetings, either Maggie or Teresa or Linda, 3 wonderful and powerful women were monitoring my every move. To say I disliked this situation was understatement.

I knew Don expected me to get some value from this situation and I did. I continually forced myself to find value, to learn something, to enjoy whatever I was doing. After 5 months or so I was appointed the MIS Manager. Though I had never managed anything before, for the next couple of years I was a successful manager of this rather small Department.

Fast forward to January 1981. Two friends in the franchise consulting business were working with a local 5 store chain called Supercuts that wanted to become a national brand. It looked like a clean, simple low tech business. They had an innovative ways of delivering a service, managing quality control and training their employees.

Wanting to have and raise our family in Austin, Susan and I moved back in August of 1981. In the first year I opened 3 franchises Those 3 have now expanded have to 53 in three states. I quickly discovered what the experience with Maggie, Lynda and Teresa had contributed to me. I would not have made it in a business where 90+% of my 350 employees are women. Our Supercuts organization is one of the most successful in the country. 30 years later in a business that is known for a transient work force, many of our managers, stylists and office staff have been with us for more than 20 years—and they do not have tenure. This success directly relates back to the lessons learned from Maggie, Teresa, Lynda and my dear departed friend Don Cox.

No matter what you are doing right now and I mean right now, get as much out of it as you can. There will be a time, when this experience, good or bad, easy or hard, interesting or boring, will be invaluable.

The beauty of these two rules, acknowledging those who have contributed to you and creating value from each experience is that you can start them today. You don’t have go anywhere, you don’t have to pay anything, and you don’t have to do much more than what you are already doing to follow them. You can implement them both right now, for the rest of the day and the rest of your life If you do, I promise you will find life even more satisfying for yourself and those around you.

At this point in my life, in whatever I do, be it teaching or golf, working in my business and working in politics, my intention always is to get more out than I put in. Delivering this address is no exception, Thank you for the opportunity. Again Congratulations again to you new Longhorn Alumnae. Hook ‘Em