

**Pace University
Commencement Exercise
Honorary Degree Remarks
Pleasantville Campus
May 20, 2011**

Copy for University Achives

Thank you, Dr. Bardill Moscaritolo.....who we all know and love as Dean Lisa.....

I have been quiet for a few seconds because I am speechless. I did not know you were going to share all those student video testimonials. I am simply overwhelmed and so grateful to see my former students, some from a couple of years ago, offering such generous testimony.

It occurs to me that there may still be some time to process change of grade forms... :o)

Thank you, Lisa, for that gracious and generous citation. I am humbled by the recognition and honored to accept it on behalf of my faculty colleagues and so many other worthy members of our Pace University community....

It is clear that in putting that citation together, you spoke to my Mom. It is also clear that you did not speak to my kids... :o)

Trustee Healey and Members of the University's Board of Trustees

President Friedman

Senator Schumer –name not called..he appeared later

Members of the Administration and Staff

My faculty colleagues

Parents, family members, and friends

And, most especially, members of the Pace University Class of 2011

Look at you. I hardly recognize you. I'm used to seeing you in sweats and flip flops and baseball caps with reversed brims. I'm used to seeing some of you arrive in your pajamas for an 8:30 class.

Today you look rested. You're smiling and your happiness is shared by your families and friends.

You are draped in academic garb and bonded not only in appearance, but in purpose. And, that's how it should be.

When President Friedman invited me to address you, I began thinking not only about *what* I should say, but *how* I should say it. I thought perhaps you would prefer that I simply send a text message or a 140 character Tweet...

Or, that I would use cyber talk: OMG, BTW, BFF, LOL.... It took me two years to discover that LOL means "laugh out loud". I thought everyone was sending me "Lots of Love". I favor that version.

Actually, when President Friedman's letter arrived last November, I took a moment to see if the letter was misaddressed—that perhaps he really meant to invite..... Snooki or Lady Gaga.

You see, I am not supposed to be standing here—I'm not supposed to be standing here for at least two reasons.

First, I have always viewed teaching as the purest form of philanthropy and philanthropy is most pure when it is given anonymously and without much notice and fanfare.

Second, this is my land. One cannot be a prophet in one's own land and I am profoundly aware that I risk affirming that wise counsel.

But, I am comforted. I am comforted in knowing that this moment is really not about me. This moment is about us—it's about everyone here today and the role you have played in helping this class of graduates succeed.

But, most of all, this moment and this message is about you, the Class of 2011.

I want to cast my remarks, in part, as a story. *Great stories are often scripted as a journey.*

Your journey has two parts. The first part begins at what Alvin Toffler called the median point in the 50,000 years of human history—the year 1900—just six years before two young men, Homer and Charles Pace, founded Pace Institute.

History proves the Pace brothers were correct when they predicted inventions emerging from the Industrial Revolution would spawn the need for an educated populace reaching into the 21st Century.

So, pause with me for a moment and imagine you are a Pace student in lower Manhattan in 1909—three years after the founding of Pace Institute—and you stepped out of class on a beautiful September day, looked at the sky over the Hudson River and, for the first time ever, you saw a plane in flight—a plane piloted by Wilbur Wright.

It was a plane, I might add, that carried a canoe strapped to its side; Wilbur was following his passion, but he was also prepared for the unexpected. There is a metaphorical message in that for you.

Picture yourself standing shoulder to shoulder with millions of people lining the Hudson River shoreline, many in sharp contrast to the wonder in the sky given that *they* were tethered to their horse drawn wagons.

Imagine the amazement and conversational buzz as the experience stoked creative energies and predictions about the future-- a future forged by railroads and radios; autos and airplanes; fuels and Facebook; sewing machines and semi-conductors; antibiotics which increased life expectancy; and the light bulb which decreased our sleep cycles.

These inventions and more are rooted in the past 150 years—only two lifetimes out of 800 lifetimes of human history—and they define our present day existence.

And so, the first part of your journey actually pre-dates you and rests on the achievements of others—many of whom are part of our Pace legacy.

The second part of your journey begins today and it is uniquely yours. What will it look like? Here's what some say your future will bring:

- **China is likely to dominate the world.**
- **Many of you are destined to spend a significant part of your lives living in other countries.**
- **Some of you, or your children, may spend time on another planet.**
- **Powerful nations will compete for limited natural resources.**
- **Cars will be driverless. Google...yes, Google...already has a driverless car that has traveled 400,000 miles.....**
- **Conflict over interracial marriage will be a non-issue. The new issue will arise when you announce you're going to marry a replicant, a robot, an avatar. No debates over who will take out the garbage, empty the dishwasher, fold the laundry.**
- **Also, we've been warned that IBM's Watson will steal our jobs. And that:**
- **Medical technology will add decades to our lifetimes. I've told my kids I will live to be 150 years old and they will be 120 taking care of me. They, on the other hand, have said that *Watson* will take care of me.**

Now, predicting your future may be fun, but it can be futile.

The truth is we really don't know what the future will bring.

I don't think there is a specific thing about my life that I saw clearly upon graduation, except that I was on my way to serve as an officer in the Army and later marry my life-long best friend.

Consider how often we've been surprised by such natural disasters as Katrina, Haiti, and the recent Tsunami in Japan.

Consider how inept we've been at predicting such happenings as 9-11, the financial meltdown of 2008, and recent political and social upheavals in the Middle East and North Africa.

And, even if our forecasts have merit, we're not likely to believe them.

Nonetheless, commencement speeches are typically about two things: predictions and platitudes, and I am compelled to remain faithful to both.

For years, we've urged America's graduates to follow their passion—to confidently design their destiny in a world that awaits them. Good advice.

But, I believe your journey will be different. And, different need not be difficult.

Your world will present a robust, increasingly complex, multi-cultural, technologically addictive, and socially networked society likely to shape *your* life as much as you may plan to shape the lives of others.

Your world will be challenged less by discovery and invention and more *by how to live with* discovery and invention.

Said another way, it appears Marshall McLuhan was quite right when he said some decades ago: "We shape the creation of our tools and our tools then shape our lives".

If McLuhan is correct, how do you prepare for a technologically transformed world that is as likely to come to you, as you to it?

If McLuhan is correct, how do you manage an existence in which our human qualities may be subordinated to powerfully prescriptive technological systems?

These are questions for you to answer.

All I can do is offer an optimistic wish for each one of you—a wish that places great faith in our vestigial urge to *remain human* and to control our destiny, independent of forces that sometimes defy and degrade humanity.

And so, in the end it really is all about humanity, and here is the *very human existence* I hope for each of you. In fact, here is what I believe *we all* hope for you.

- **We hope you continue to learn and develop talents few can claim.**
- **We hope you remain a good person.**
- **We hope you remain trustworthy. There is nothing more unsettling than to harbor a moral breach you don't want others to discover. The more individual morality is eroded, the more our society and world are at risk. The last three U.S. economic recessions have been characterized by ethical breaches. Imagine a world in which you cannot trust your economic system, your government, the media, your religious and educational institutions,... We hope you have no part in creating such a world.**
- **We hope you manage conflict. Conflict can be good. But, conflict that is fiercely confrontational distills to war and war spawns two victims: truth and human dignity.**
- **We hope you live with difference and that you help others do the same. We hope you remain proud of your race, your religion, your gender,**

your national origin,... But, we urge you to let those factors *describe* you, not define you. Let your character define you.

- **We hope you contribute to the development of children, surely yours, as well as others’.**
- **We hope you seek silent moments in our noisy world. And, we hope you devote some of those moments to gently wondering why you exist and how you might leave the world a better place.**
- **We hope you find a friend with whom to spend the rest of your life, and in a way respectful to both of you. I know you have hundreds of Facebook friends, but I am talking about a relationship that can withstand anything short of betrayal.**

I hope you don’t mind that I take a moment at this point to pay tribute to *my* supportive and faithful friend. She is the source of strength in my life. And, no, she is not an avatar. She is Pattie O’Brien Pastore, mother of our three adult children and grandmother to our eight grandkids, ages 12 to 1.

Some of the grandkids are here today, but their real incentive is to visit the goats... We would have invited the one year old, Timmy, but he just started to walk and we’d have to call on Jim Eyring’s border collies to shepherd him around the arena.

There is one more hope...

- **We hope you remember the past. We hope you will return to your *alma mater*--perhaps even to join the faculty or staff. Or, maybe you’ll simply visit, sit by Choate Pond, and recall relationships, activities, ideas, and ambitions developed during your Pace years.**

Among all that we hope for you, I know there is one thing we need not petition, namely your capacity for empathy and caring and compassion. Those qualities are uniquely yours.

This has been an emotionally taxing year for our community and it has born witness to your loving and caring character.

We lost Luke and Aaron much too early to natural causes and we will all spend the remainder of our lives remembering DJ, whether we knew him or not. His loss only reinforces the hopes we have for you—hopes DJ would have embraced so beautifully.

Earlier, I claimed that great stories are often founded on a journey. *But, sometimes, great stories are also founded on the arrival of a stranger, sometimes a mysterious stranger, in the midst of a journey.* I have come to think that DJ was that stranger who arrived from another place to spend a short time with you, *a priceless teaching moment on the sanctity of life and justice.*

In the process DJ left you a life altering gift—a gift that came at the cost of his precious life. A gift of sorrow, caring, compassion and an appreciation for how fortunate you are to be where you are and to be looking forward to engaging the next stage of your journey. Treasure DJ's gift for the rest of your lives.

You are about to gather your possessions and your memories and move on and I am confident, *we* are confident, that when our 21st century world comes to *you*, *you* will be ready for *it*...

And as you commence the next stage of your journey, my Pace University colleagues and I join your families and friends and embrace you in a manner filled with LOL—lots of love-- a few xoxo's, a smiley face emoticon, and a prayer that your lives will be filled with peace, comfort, and all things good.

Thank you, congratulations, and Godspeed...

Joseph M. Pastore, Jr.
May 2011

