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*Some Elements of a Long and Happy Career*

**I am delighted to have the opportunity to speak today on such a joyous occasion, one that recognizes the highly select group of undergraduates who have achieved special honors. You're graduating from a proudly tough university like Carnegie Mellon -- whose students work as hard for their degrees as at any university in the country -- so the honors you've achieved carry extra weight.**

**I am especially happy to be addressing a multigenerational audience -- students, parents, and other loved ones, including lots of grandparents and siblings -- because the topic I've chosen to speak on ("Some Elements of Long and Happy Career") addresses the entire life span, or at least the part of the life span that represents a new beginning following graduation from college. Graduation weekend is a momentous occasion, and you should savor the moment -- both for the pride it evokes in you and the joy it brings to everyone who loves you. But, without being a kill-joy, I also think it's time to begin thinking about the careers you will pursue: how to build on the excellence you have demonstrated in college to shape the contours of a professional life that -- at least from a career perspective -- will provide a maximum of personal happiness, regardless of whatever special distinction and financial success you achieve along the way.**

**No doubt, the fact that I am about to turn age 70 -- with absolutely no thought of retiring -- figures in my choice of topic today, even though a half-century separates me from most of you. But I'm also led to speak about your future careers because of my own nontraditional path as a professional historian. The oddity of my career journey, I think, may add a little authority to the general points that I want to make today.**

**Since completing my Ph.D. at Columbia University in the mid-1970s, I've been a regular or visiting faculty member or fellow at more universities than most academics, including the University of Chicago, the University of California at Berkeley, UCLA, Harvard University, Stanford University, and the Pardee Rand Graduate School. In other**

**words, I've had the opportunity to compare, from the inside, the working environments at quite a few great universities, in addition to Carnegie Mellon, and to figure out which ones brought out the best, or worst, in me.**

**Second, I've worked in state government, including stints at the California State Department of Justice under Attorney General John Van de Kamp and the California State Assembly under the legendary Speaker Willie Brown. Had I been willing to leave Mr. Van de Kamp and accept an offer to work for his Democratic primary opponent, future Senator Diane Feinstein, my career might have played out very differently. But things do have a way of working out for the best. My wife and I smile each time we recall our friends' utter disbelief when we told them that we were leaving the Bay Area for Pittsburgh.**

**Third, I've worked at think tanks, most notably The RAND Corporation in Santa Monica, on a wide variety of issues in education, criminal justice, public health, and national security issues – including a controversial project that we quietly brought to Carnegie Mellon in the 1990s on the integration of gays into the military.**

**Finally, I've worked as a historian in private consulting, most enjoyably a long-term relationship with the Graduate Management Admission Council -- the folks who run the Graduate Management Admission Test, which some of you have likely taken or may decide to take in the near future.**

**Frankly, I didn't intend my adult work life to be so varied, but I've enjoyed every phase of it. These diverse work experiences provide a wide angle from which to identify a number of key elements that, in general, help to sustain a long, happy, and productive career.**

**What, then, does it take – apart from your own smarts and inner drive - - to thrive at work for forty or fifty years? I've identified four key prerequisites for you to think about. Some will be obvious to you, others perhaps not. But let me first observe that, quite coincidentally, my ideas overlap with the lyrics of a song that the North Carolina band Delta Rae, which my son manages, recently released. The song is entitled "A Long and Happy Life" -- check it out.**

- The first element I'd single out, regardless of the specific career choices you make, is the importance of finding a highly supportive work environment in which to develop your professional ambitions. Ideally, your work environment will be one that you can help shape to meet your expectations, even as a fairly new person on the job. In this regard, it doesn't matter if you're a professor, a dancer, a businessman, a second lieutenant, or any other job where you have to work as part of a group rather than as a solo practitioner. A supportive work environment is key to bringing out the best you have to give, professionally, and enables you to do so for a long period of time.

As your parents and grandparents can attest, a truly supportive work environment is often hard to find. In truth, only Carnegie Mellon and RAND enabled me to thrive long term; other work settings were often stultifying or nasty. Finding a job, or a series of jobs, that enables you to thrive long-term in your career will be one of the recurring challenges of your post-collegiate life.

- The second element I'd point to – whether you're a lawyer, a politician, a police officer, or a second-grade teacher -- is what I like to term “on fire” colleagues to work with. “On fire” colleagues are to be found in every profession, and the positive energy they emit – even if they're your boss and are critiquing your performance – builds your own potential for continuous career advancement. Most fundamentally, these individuals are driven by a dual belief in active learning and life long learning, plus – as the great philosopher John Dewey framed it – a belief in continuous intellectual growth as its own dynamic and ultimate reward.

I've been truly blessed at Carnegie Mellon to have so many “on fire” colleagues, so many Randy Pausches, who not only love teaching but who are intellectually motivated – pretty much non-stop -- to expand and challenge the truisms of existing knowledge in the fields they specialize. I urge each of you to pursue your careers with this passion and pursuit of unfettered growth -- to be that “on fire” colleague even if very few of your colleagues are. It is perhaps the single best guarantor of “a long and happy life” in your chosen career.

- the third element I'd isolate – and it is sometimes an embarrassment to acknowledge -- is my continuing dialogue with professional mentors who fundamentally shaped my career aspirations in college and beyond, indeed well into my '40s and even into my '50s. Some of them I sought out and experienced intensely, almost daily, in graduate school and afterward. Others were chance encounters or intermittent encounters with individuals – not necessarily historians -- whose habits of mind and seriousness of purpose reinvigorated or even re-channeled my career directions.

In truth, I occasionally talk out loud with these individuals -- even if I've not seen them for decades or they have long since passed away. First and foremost for me was Lawrence Cremin, my graduate advisor at Columbia University, whom I was fortunate to serve as teaching assistant and research assistant on his Pulitzer Prize winning book, *American Education: The National Experience, 1783-1876*. Cremin was the kind of man you'd never guess could even exist unless you'd witnessed him first hand.

Others came later in my life as I established myself as a professional: John Hope Franklin of the University of Chicago, a pioneer in African American history with a work ethic and sense of mission of heroic proportions; the brilliant sociologists of crime Franklin Zimring and Sheldon Messinger of UC Berkeley; the inimitable psychologist Sheldon "Shep" White of Harvard University; and the creative and kind psychologist Robert Cairns of the University of North Carolina, the only one of these great scholars with whom I ever co-authored anything.

These and several other former mentors continue to live within me; I'm always aware of their presence and I seek their guidance any time I consider a major transition in my professional life. So the message here for you is clear: remain on the look-out for new mentors to inspire you, even as you mature well into middle age and no matter how successful you are. A long and happy career often requires a boost from the best people in your own past -- those who have mattered most in motivating your own professional ambitions.

- The fourth and last element of a long and happy career is the one that Andrew Carnegie himself emphasized in his

famous saying, “my heart is in the work.” I tell you with simple candor that my heart remains as much in my work today – as both a researcher and a teacher -- as when I accepted my first fulltime job at the age of 25.

What do I mean by adopting Andrew Carnegie as my muse? Simply this: I’m uplifted daily – intellectually, emotionally, spiritually -- by the many and diverse subjects I’ve had the opportunity to study in depth since I first figured out what original historical research was all about. In the past decade, I’ve tried to bring a professional historian’s methodology to writing the history of sport, particularly the history of golf: both the men’s and women’s games, at both the amateur and professional levels. Not surprisingly, this has been great fun, not only the opportunity to unearth new historical data about early 20<sup>th</sup> century legends like Bobby Jones and Glenna Collett but also the chance to interview recent stars like Arnold Palmer, Jack Nicklaus, Nancy Lopez, and Pittsburgh’s own Carole Semple Thompson.

But apart from this recent foray into golf history, the bulk of my research has centered on the 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries and, more particularly, on the lives of children, parents, teachers, judges, probation officers, social workers, and local social activists whose lives, whose very existence, had been left out of traditional historical scholarship until only a few decades ago. I’ve devoted much of my professional life to discovering new historical data to write about these anonymous people – as, for example, in court and prison data, and in public and private school records -- so that I could bring them back to life and demonstrate how and why their lives mattered – even if, as is certainly the case in my studies of the criminal justice system, the kids and parents I study spent their lives buffeted and bewildered by social and economic forces over which they had little awareness or control.

Bottom line for a long and happy career is that – entirely separate from how much money you’re making -- you simply have to love the bread and butter details of what you do: not every instant, not every day, but pretty consistently over the long haul so that you wake up excited for the new day’s work and never feel that you’re working only to maintain your lifestyle or even your children’s well-being. I know nurses, fire fighters, judges, and many others who find this daily spark in their daily

**routines, and who retain that smile on their face because of the larger meanings they constantly rediscover in their daily tasks.**

**These, then, are a few of the lessons I've learned on the job over a varied, long, and happy career. I wish you the best of luck in finding the same contentment and hope that some of my suggestions may be of use. Hearty congratulations again on achieving special recognition from this very special college and university.**