

Administrator of the Year Acceptance Speech
March 23, 1993

By Rolfe Kerr

I'm deeply appreciative of all that has been said here. You can imagine, as you know Kirk Hart, how you must get your calculators out and divide by at least two or three that which he said. But my mind flashed back immediately, as he was here introducing me, to over 30 years ago, when he introduced me on the very first night of my mission in Great Britain on Hyde Park corner in the center of London. There he turned me loose to the wolves. I hope that this will be a more friendly audience tonight.

I am very appreciative of this particular recognition and someday I hope to be worthy of it. I am very appreciative tonight of being able to have several members of Janeil's and my family with us, and some very close friends. Could I just indulge all of you to acknowledge them. Would my friends and family please stand. There are several who were not able to be here. We have our two married daughters who weren't able to be with us. One is living here in Provo--her husband is here--just had a baby about 10 days ago and she was unable to come. Our other daughter is from out of town, plus we have a son in Japan. Hopefully he will return before we leave for our mission. Others, a brother of mine and a sister of Janeil's, were not able to be with us. We do appreciate very much including family and friends on this particular event.

I'm particularly pleased tonight to have my father here. Much has been said about him. I wish my mother were here. She passed away many years ago. My mother would have taken all of these things that were said tonight and responded, "that's just the way it is--that's just the

way it ought to be." Dad's a little more cynical.

Dad's a little bit like Rudyard Kipling's father who at one particular point was asked what he thought of the great works of his son Rudyard. To this he responded, "Well, credible. Perhaps okay." "But surely you must consider that Rud has done some great work," he was asked. He was thinking of course of the Jungle Book and Captains Courageous and any one a number of other books which were eventually immortalized under Rudyard Kipling's name. And the father, again very contemplatively, said, "Well, credible. Okay." And then the man who was inquiring said, "Certainly you think him capable of some great work?" And again with great contemplation he said, "Well yes, Rud does have a certain grasp of the human instinct that may some day lead him to write some great work."

Well obviously, Rudyard Kipling was never in danger of meaningless praise from his father. My Dad's version of that is when he would look at this program that identifies the fact that I have worked at several places--Utah State, Weber State, the U of U, Dixie College and USU a second time, and BYU--and to all of that Dad responds, "Some day that kid's going to find a job that he can handle." So he's just a little cynical tonight as this award is announced. But I don't know of any father who could have had any greater impact on a son than my Dad has had on me and my three brothers. Dad, you mean everything to me and I am so pleased that you could be here tonight. What I may try to represent and even two or three thoughts that I would like to leave with you tonight, really have their roots with a father who cared about a son enough to sacrifice, and yet to discipline, encourage, and motivate.

It's a little difficult in this particular setting to know just what would be most helpful. Some of you, in a class that Kirk Hart invited me to, have heard me describe some of my

feelings about public service, and some of the particular challenges we were dealing with at that point of time with the legislative session, and a number of challenges in the Utah system of higher education. I think I'll not comment on that tonight.

I think I will be just a little presumptuous and suggest to you a few ideas which over the years have come to mean a great deal to me and have really become the basis of a personal philosophy (if again I could be so presumptuous as to suggest that I am smart enough to develop a personal philosophy). Speaking of it in more homey terms, I have a personal creed that has emerged over the years and now includes twenty items. You don't want to hear all twenty, but maybe you could tolerate five tonight--five keys to what I think have the potential of bringing greatness--five issues which I am still working on and hoping some day to master. I do hope to suggest to you tonight some principles that may be meaningful. I will identify the five and then comment briefly on each.

First -- succeed at home first.

Second -- prepare yourself with knowledge and competence.

Third -- exceed previous levels of performance and expectation.

Fourth -- facilitate the success of others.

Fifth -- seek and merit divine help.

As students graduating from this institution with Master Degrees, project yourself ahead professionally approximately thirty years--thirty years out achieving whatever you will achieve--and think of these five principles. I can promise you that you will not have accomplished all that you can and must accomplish in any one of the five, and that you will see some constants that will occur over and over again about these principles. I will predict that if you should

choose to keep these ideas in mind, thirty years from now you will say they are every bit as important as they were in 1993.

Succeed at home first. Of all of the great things that David O. McKay said and taught, nothing is more profound and more meaningful than that oft quoted statement, "No success can compensate for failure in the home." Some of you will recognize the name Steven Garvey, a prominent professional baseball player in the 80s. He was experiencing the trauma of a failed marriage and was being interviewed by a Sports Illustrated writer. During the course of that interview it became apparent that this was the first real experience that Steven Garvey had ever had with failure. Garvey commented that it's not failing for the first time that hurt so badly, but it's failing at the very most important thing we must do in this life.

Gordon B. Hinckley describes home--the kind of home that I think we are talking about tonight.

How beautiful is that home where lives a man of godly manner. Who loves those for whose nurture he is responsible. Who stands before them as an example of integrity and goodness. Who teaches industry and loyalty. Who does not spoil his children by indulging their every wish, but rather setting before them a pattern of work and worship which will underpin their lives forever.

I want to reread that last sentence. "Not spoiling by indulging their every wish, but rather setting before them a pattern of work and worship which will underpin their lives forever."

How fortunate that man whose wife radiates a spirit of love--of compassion--of order--of quiet beneficence. Whose children show appreciation one for another.

Who honor and respect their parents. Who counsel with them and take counsel

from them. Such home life is within the reach of all who have cultivated in their hearts a resolution to do that which will please their Father in heaven.

I think that is a marvelous, marvelous description of the kind of home we are talking about. Succeed at home first.

Prepare yourself with knowledge and confidence. President James Madison made a great statement when he said, "Knowledge will forever govern ignorance. And a people who mean to be their own governors must arm themselves with the power which knowledge gives." Most importantly--and this is why I include it as I do in that statement--"prepare yourself with knowledge and confidence." All of the knowledge that you have gained during your academic pursuits will be of minimal benefit if you have not to this point, or will not, through experience and continued study and activity, create a track record of competent performance in whatever capacities you pursue. An excellent statement by John Locke, which I shall not read in its entirety, talks about a notion of the circus performers and the great athletes and so on who have brought their physical bodies to such great skill, only as result of immense effort and practice, along with some failure and getting back up, and practice and developing that competence. He goes on to say "as with the body so it is with the mind," and talks about the fact that competence, whether it be physical or mental, is that which follows the accumulation of basic knowledge. It's that competence that comes with experience, with the development of the skills that we must all pursue. So remember, prepare both with knowledge and obviously with competence. If you have to have only one, surely you should choose the competence. But you'll never be quite as competent as you must be without the knowledge.

Exceed previous levels of performance and expectation. What that really means is do

more than is expected of you. Now I obviously placed succeed at home first as number one on the list, and there is no intention of these being in an order of priority. But beyond that family notion, if I were to give you any advice that I could promise you will have tremendous impact on your future success, it will be to adopt a philosophy of doing more than is expected of you. The world is full of people who do just that which they have been assigned to do. But those who really excel, and those whom you want to associate with, are those who see beyond the minimal requirement--beyond the minimal expectation--always looking for that additional effort that they could put forward to contribute to whatever cause they are serving.

This is suggesting that we press our limits. A great statement says, "it is by the process of constantly pressing upon our limits that life gets larger." It is a great discovery that the way that I happen to be is no necessary measure of what I may become. Persist in doing the task and you will be given the power. If we work, work, and work some more in pressing our limits and progressing beyond them, our future potential is unlimited. Now keep that last thought in mind regarding unlimited potential.

This notion of exceeding previous levels of performance and exceeding the expectation is best illustrated, again if I may, by an experience that my father had. He taught us this as we were growing up on the farm, but he never, at least to my knowledge, put it to words in a way that conveyed this notion just as it was conveyed as he wrote his personal history. He described in that personal history the experience he had as a sixteen-year-old when he went to work at a canning factory to help supplement the family income. Time does not allow the development of all the details of that story, but the essence of it is that he was working alongside several adult men many years his senior. They were given a particular task on a particular day. Midway

through the day the general manager came to see how this project was progressing and found that this teenage boy had far exceeded the expectations. He had gone well beyond the assignment, had done much more than the adult men that he was working with, and he was rewarded significantly by promotion and salary increase. In writing his personal history he reflected on that experience and then put these words to that experience. He said, "I learned at that very early age that if a person will do the job at hand better than anyone else, sooner or later his efforts will be recognized and appropriately rewarded." If a person will do the job at hand better than any one else, sooner or later his efforts will be recognized and appropriately rewarded. Take that with you. Take that with you.

Facilitate the success of others. Few people in the history of American have known more success than Andrew Carnegie. Andrew Carnegie chose to give credit for his success to some very important people. He did it by what he wrote before his death that he wanted placed on his tombstone. The epitaph reads, " Here lies a man who had the ability to draw into his service people more capable than he himself." Now do you get the meaning of that? Here lies a man who had the ability to draw people into his service more capable than he was himself. And what did Andrew Carnegie do? He facilitated their success, and in their success Andrew Carnegie was able to gain not just personal success but have impact that is still known throughout the world.

Now through the variety of assignments that I have had over the years, I can say that if I had pursued those assignments concerned about Rolfe Kerr's success, then I would have failed. But if I were to one identify and attract into service or employ people who had skills that I did not have, and then facilitate their success, then the cause that we were serving together

succeeded. And if there were any success that might have come to Rolfe Kerr, it was because the institution, or the part of the institution that we were serving, was successful because good people were assisted in their assignments. So wherever you are, don't worry about your own success. Obviously that may be an overstatement; you are going to be concerned about it. I need to be realistic in that sense. But what I am saying is that you will be far more likely to succeed if you facilitate the success of all those around you. Your industry, your institution, your company, your agency, whatever it is, will be successful because you have created that environment for success.

Finally, seek and merit divine help. It is easy enough to seek--not so easy to merit. Therein lies, of course, the key. Let me read a statement from Brigham Young, and then close with a story that again is family. Brigham Young had this to say.

When you have labored faithfully for years you will learn this simple fact. That if your hearts are aright and you will continue to serve God, continue to pray, the spirit of revelation will be in you like a well of water, springing up to everlasting life. Let no person give a prayer because he has not the spirit of prayer. Neither let any earthly circumstance hurry you while in the performance of this important duty. By bowing down before the Lord to ask him to bless you will simple find this result. God will multiply blessings on you temporally and spiritually.

And I want to promise you that if you will keep your lives aright, if you seek and merit divine help, you will be blessed in your professions, you will be blessed in your families, you will be blessed in your worship, you will be blessed temporally and spiritually. And, that's the way the Lord intended it to be.

Now on a final note, there comes time in people's lives when lives are threatened. I want to go back to 1838. This is the life of my great grandfather, John Pack, who was with Brigham Young and the first company that arrived in Salt Lake Valley. He is on the This is The Place Monument as one of those who preceded the company who preceded the company into the valley. But several years before that, he and his wife were travelling to bring his very seriously ill sister and her family to live with them. When near the crossing of Grand River, a mob of 25 men on horseback came from a side road, formed a line in front of and behind them, and demanded to know if they were Mormons. They answered in the affirmative and were told that they were now their prisoners. They were taken several miles out of their way to a camp in the timber, where there were over 500 armed men under the command of Satial Woods, a Presbyterian Minister. John Pack was dragged some distance through the trees and bushes where the mob leader demanded that he deny that Joseph Smith was a prophet. John Pack refused to do so. Where upon Woods ordered that the prisoner be shot. John Pack arose immediately and addressed the crowd in such a way as to cause them one by one to retreat into the trees, leaving him alone with the leader. Finally, a voice broke the awkward silence; a voice from the trees yelled out. "Let the G...D Mormon go." John Pack and his wife were released with the order that they never travel that road again. An order he promptly disregarded.

Now I hope and I think that we could rather confidently say, that none of us will have our physical lives placed in jeopardy as was the case with John Pack, But John Pack had sought and he had merited both spiritual and temporal help, and he received it. Now my wish for all of you, for all of us, is that we might be so honored by the Lord's presence and attention. And it's a condition which you and I each control.

Now, what have I said tonight. Just simply, there are a lot of important things that you can do--a lot of important ideas that you can develop--and each one of you should have your own personal creed. Guiding principles would help you as decisions come along, and here are five that may be of some value. Succeed at home first. Prepare yourself with knowledge and competence. Exceed previous levels of performance and expectation. Facilitate the success of others. Seek and merit divine help.

The Lord bless you, and I would hope in the spirit of this occasion and in the spirit of my future assignment, that it might be appropriate to ask that blessing upon each of us, in the name of Jesus Christ, Amen.