

Abstracts from the Commencement Speech

Presented on June 7, 2002 at Parker Hall by T.Z. Chu, Class of 1952

THE ADVANTAGE OF BEING DIFFERENT

Looking at your smiling “rainbow” faces, it occurs to me that it is not likely that you will again experience what you have had here at Woodstock, until you enroll in a post-graduate school of a major university. That is - to be a part of such a diverse community of individuals from so many nations, with different cultures, religious beliefs, economic circumstances, and personal interests. It is only later in your life that you will fully appreciate the special advantage this experience affords you.

For me personally, *not to be concerned for being different* was the most important lesson I learned at Woodstock. Throughout my career I found myself at ease working shoulder to shoulder with black, white, brown, and yellow-skinned individuals. I had friends and colleagues who were Christians, Muslims, Hindus, Buddhists, or whatever. I enjoyed the company of people who were rich or poor, highly educated or unskilled, held high government or corporate positions or were homebodies. Yes, I might have been different but I was fortunately not affected

by the differences. That has stood me in good stead as I worked my way through Berkeley, through my career in developing and manufacturing scientific instruments in Asia, North America, Australia, and Europe... Because I never felt that being different was a detracting factor, I always believed that I had as good an opportunity as anyone to pursue whatever I wanted. This was the most valuable legacy given to me by Woodstock. I trust this would be yours as well.”

BEING PASSIONATE

Mohandas Gandhi once wrote in despair, *“I am sad to see how many of our men and women of India are well-bred, of high caste, of good education, and of means, who simply cannot see the truth of our case for freedom and who simply will not involve themselves in India’s problems. These good people are a curse to India – the curse of timid decency – and are a part of the tragedy of our times.”*

Norman Cousins, the founder and editor of the once highly influential magazine, *Saturday Review*, wrote: *“the tragedy of life is not death, but what we left inside us while we live.”*

President Jimmy Carter was quoted in an interview in the *New York Times Magazine* by Jim Wooten, the well-known author: *“I have one life and one chance to make it count for something...I’m free to choose what that something is, and the something I’ve chosen is my faith. Now, my faith goes beyond theology and religion and requires considerable work and effort. My faith demands – this is not optional – my faith demands that I do whatever I can, wherever I can, whenever I can, for as long as I can, with whatever I have, to try to make a difference.”*

These were, and are, men with passion. I could as easily quote from women of passion such as Annie Besant or Eleanor Roosevelt or Mother Theresa. They all achieved what they set out to do because of their strong passion

and persistence. It does not matter which field of study or what career you might pursue, but whatever you do - **do it with passion.**

Whether you choose to be a scientist or an investment banker, a musician or writer, a businessman or craftsman, an artist or athlete, or entrepreneur, or actor, or doctor, or teacher, or scholar, or minister - you can never reach your full potential without passion. You must love what you do. You must want desperately to do it. Or, you will always linger in doubt about what you might have accomplished with your life.

Passion is not an outward expression of emotion, but an inner drive. Most teachers are here at Woodstock because they feel a strong need to serve and to develop the potential of each student. They are committed to working toward world peace by creating an environment where there is mutual respect among people of different backgrounds. Your parents sent you here to study, because they are driven by the desire for you to have the opportunity to excel in whatever you might wish to explore. I have no doubt that your teachers and parents made sacrifices to enable you to be at Woodstock. That too is passion - the overwhelming desire to make good things happen to good people.”

MAKING ETHICAL CHOICES

Passion will get you the opportunity to do what you want to do. However, the greatest challenges in your life will be that of having to make ethical choices. The importance of ethical considerations is transforming our world, whether in economics, education, religion, science, literature, and - most certainly - in politics. Let me present you with two **current** examples of the difficulty of making ethical choices. Each is in a field of substantial interest to me.

My first example is in the field of economics. There is little doubt that the liberalization of international trade and capital markets has had a dramatic and beneficial effect on millions of lives in



T.Z. Chu, Graduation Speaker, addressing the Class of 2002. Background Dr. Prakash Masih, President of the Board

developing countries. While free markets are good at creating wealth, they make no distinction between right and wrong. Free markets do poorly at providing for public needs such as health care, education and unemployment benefits. While rich nations supply social safety nets for workers victimized by freewheeling competition, poor nations lack such mechanisms. What's more, the volatile international financial system is inherently biased against emerging markets. Unlike rich countries, which have the financial means to cope with the turbulences using effective monetary policy, poorer nations are whipsawed. The instability makes it harder to maintain economic growth, and this, in turn, creates political turbulences. Investors' fears of the emerging-market crash result in many poor nations being denied access to capital markets, just when they most need it.

What then is the answer? Do we stop liberalization of trade and capital markets and possibly condemn millions of people in poorer countries to perpetual poverty, marginal education and poor health? Or, do we risk the sometime punishing consequences and embark on liberalization of trade and capital markets, in order to give millions of the world's poor people the chance to have a better life?

The second example comes from the field of science. The many dramatic advances of molecular and cell biology during the past two decades have opened opportunities for unprecedented improvement in medicine, healthcare, agriculture, animal husbandry, environment, and virtually everything related to living things and life itself. The U.S. National Science Foundation (NSF) estimates that over 100 million or about 45% of Americans could benefit from stem-cell therapies. Cloning, the NSF asserts, is a superior technology for harvesting stem cells because it would mitigate problems of tissue rejection, since stem cells are cloned from the patient's own body.

The debate over cloning centers on several themes. Those opposing it believe that the process of cloning kills a *potential* human being. Or that legalized therapeutic cloning would produce stockpiles of cloned embryos for research and would inevitably

lead to cloning of a human baby. Or that the powerful medical advances resulting from cloning would inevitably lead to human genetic engineering, i.e. "the alteration, enhancement, and wholesale redesign of human nature itself" ... And, they ask, if inequality were designed into people's genes, would an "inferior" child be given equal healthcare opportunity over a "superior" child? ...

The supporters for cloning human cells, on the other hand, view these same themes quite differently. They argue that an un-implanted cluster of cells, with no nervous system, not conscious in any sense, not planted in a uterus, is not a person. Some argue that it is even less of a potential person than a stem cell derived from in-vitro fertilization. And, as NSF indicated, the potential health benefits are enormous. Since there is already a large supply of human eggs, allowing therapeutic cloning would make little or no difference to the likelihood of human genetic engineering. In any case, since cloning is already legal in several countries, including India and UK, banning of cloning by any one country would have no practical effect. The only tangible effect instead would be the loss of scientific progress and talents from the country instituting the ban.

The question is then should cloning be banned before it has even demonstrated any

adverse societal effects? After all, test-tube babies, when first attempted, also caused a similar uproar and dire predictions of terrible societal consequences. There is no dispute as to the potential medical benefits of cloning. Should the millions of patients awaiting another chance at life be denied that? Or are the potential negative consequences so devastating to society as a whole that we should not allow it to go forward?

We can find glib answers to such difficult ethical dilemmas, unless you are the person who is confronted with having to make the choice. I have given you two examples of **big** issues, but the reality is that every day we are confronted with smaller but equally vexing ethical choices...

I trust that your Woodstock education has given you guide posts to help you make choices. I trust at Woodstock you have developed skills to research and weigh facts and data to assist you in making choices. I trust that in your classes and in discussions with people you respect, you have developed the ability to make informed decisions. I trust that in your interactions with teachers, parents, friends, and the surrounding community, you have nurtured your own personal conscience. You will surely need these resources in the coming years."



Siblings from the Class of 2000 and 2002. Back Row (l-r): Akash Talwar, Tenzing Tekan Lama, Hannah Baynham, Tonikali Yeptbomi, Charisma Lepcha, Sung Yeon Choi, Gaurav Shrestha Front Row (l-r): Vani Talwar, Tenzin Nawang Tekan, Jacob Baynham, Kezia Yeptbomi, Romong Lepcha, Sung Ae Choi, Aadit Shrestha

Baccalaureate

Guest Speaker — Dr. Jim Lehman

I would like you to focus on two verses: “Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind; and love your neighbor as yourself.” (Matthew 22:37-39) and “Whatever you do for the least of these you do for me.” (Matthew 25:40) To me, these two guiding principles are the essence of our religious beliefs as well as our relationship with God and our fellow human beings. They are a reliable and helpful guide to us for all of our decision-making; and if you choose to heed and follow them, they can make a tremendous difference in your life.

Just imagine what the consequences and outcomes could be if our actions and relationships were based on these principles. In the midst of the current tensions between India and Pakistan, what could happen if Prime Minister Vajpayee and General Musharaff agreed to meet and began their discussion with an agreement that they would proceed on the basis that all their decisions would be based on a love for God and a love for the people of India and Pakistan. Suppose Prime Minister Sharon and Chairman Arafat sat down to talk and used the same protocol. What an enormous difference this could make in Asia and all over the world. What about George Bush and Fidel Castro? What about for all of us in our daily interactions with others? Would our lives, and the lives of others be different if we followed this concept? Would we treat others in the same way or differently than we do now?

The Greatest Commandment has three parts to it: Love God, love your neighbor and love yourself. This is not a multiple-choice question. It clearly states that all three aspects must act together. Frequently we hear this scripture and focus only on the first part, “Love the Lord.” But the second part is also important: “Love your neighbor as yourself.” It is not enough to only, “love our neighbor;” we cannot truly do that

unless we are comfortable with who we are. It states, “Love your neighbor as yourself.” In psychology we call that “self-esteem”. We can only love others, if we have the belief that we are human beings with self-worth. We can reach that stage only when we rely on a power higher and beyond ourselves.

By nature, humans tend to be selfish, inward looking beings. The reliance on God gives us the knowledge and assurance that we are capable of reaching out to, and truly loving others. History is full of people who were never able to do this. We can think of the Hitlers, Stalins, and many others who seemingly had only one goal which controlled their relationships and actions — that was to suppress and take advantage of others. We know the results—countless lives snuffed out or made to endure extreme difficulties. We can all think of others who have followed a similar route; perhaps in a more limited way, but equally devastating. We know the destruction that has been inflicted on countless millions of people because people were not willing to love God with their whole heart, soul, and mind, and refused to love others as they wished to be loved.

History is also full of people who have based their lives and actions on showing love toward those who needed it. For nearly 150 years, many Woodstock graduates have been following the “Greatest Commandment”. We all know of many alumni who have had a positive influence on society. Wave after wave of Woodstock graduates have poured out into the world as responsible dedicated citizens who create a positive force for good—a positive force that makes a great difference in the lives of many people!

A few years ago we were in Egypt for a conference where we met Dr. Lily Kamal. Dr. Kamal graduated from Columbia University and on her return to Egypt was offered a high position in the

Ministry of Education. She however, chose a different route. She became involved in social service at a place called “Garbage Village”, a community of more than 20,000 people who spent their lives going through tons of garbage collected daily from the city of Cairo. They sorted, recycled, and sold the materials. It was their only source of income. Can you imagine living in the midst of thousands of tons of garbage? We visited this amazing place with Dr. Kamal on a cold, rainy day which made the whole place seem even more dismal. But the atmosphere was amazing. Dr. Kamal had set up a health center, a school, an adult education center, a weaving and handicrafts project, and an area for social gatherings. She had also established a marketing cooperative so the recycled goods could be sold at a fair price. All of this was a result of a lady who believed, “What you do for the least of these...” What was once an almost unbearable existence was transformed into a community where people have hope and meaning in their lives. As Mother Theresa once said, “No one person can do everything but everyone can do something”.

What we do has a ripple effect. Our positive deeds affect what happens to other people. It is better to be a doer of small deeds than to be a thinker of great thoughts. Ideas are only the first step; there must be action that follows.

One day a Woodstock student came to see me. She said she had a BIG problem; my response was “Good, let’s talk about it.” I always like to hear a student say, “I have a BIG problem.” That shows they have been thinking and that opens the doors for reflection and creative solutions. I believe that contained within every problem are the seeds of its own solution. This student had a desire to help humanity. Her problem was how best to do that—whether to become a medical doctor or an international lawyer working for legal rights for the poor. What a great problem to have! Eventually she got

Class of 2002 at Baccalaureate



Front Row (l-r): Jung Hyun Ryu, Anjalika Kapur, Deki Phuntsbo, Vani Talwar, Ayesha Mark, Deena Thomas, Julia Ayscough, Shruti Ailawadi, Pernia Queresbi, Sanjana Sethi, Ji Hyun Ahn, Sunaina Saldanha, Nupur Mathur, Alishka Anand Second Row (l-r): Peter Konyak, Varun John, Jeffrey McAleer, Solomon Pudatte, Yowa Kimura, Kara Mae Hunerwadel, Satoko Kandahara, Tenzin Nawang Lama, Sonam Yanki Rabgye, Thejavimuo Kedatsu, Syeda Rad Rehman, Molona Wati, Kilang Yanger, Shiny Lall, Sreyasa Matinali, Lalrempuii, Naadia Mujtaba, Rebecca Bast, Ntaljay Jarukina, Daniel Mendies, Jacob Baynham, Ty Chadfield, Romong Lepcha Third Row (l-r): Syed Zaid Ahmed, Yuvraj Kohli, Tenzin Sonam Gonsar, Pema Tenzin, Monika Gunnar, Saara Terry, Kyu Yeon Cho, Supriya Kejriwal, Deepa Varghese, Nai Laicer, Kezia Yephomi, Bhutita Karpoche, Sonam Choden Dorji, Nawang Eden, Medha Gokhale, Sheena Agarwal, Sung Ae Choi, Hai Dang Nguyen, Rajat Bhargava Fourth Row (l-r): Aman Roul, Lobsang Azo, Aadit Shrestha, Dae Sin Huang, Naiban McDaniel, Ben Boden, Yo Han Kim, Peter Abraham, Seun Do Chae, Asher McRae, Sarath Sanga, L. John Pakhuongte, Kerem Sanga, Jonathan Crider, Jeremy Bass, Jetsun Delaplanque, Christopher Smith, Tandin Namgyel

involved in international development and is doing marvelous work. She is making a difference. She is a typical Woodstock graduate!

Thoughts and good intentions must be translated into action! John Stott, a well-known British theologian wrote, *A Reminder to Everyone*, "I was hungry and you formed a humanities group to discuss my hunger. I was in prison and you crept off quietly to your chapel and prayed for my release. I was naked and in your mind

you debated the morality of my appearance. I was sick and you knelt and thanked God for your own good health. I was homeless and you preached to me of the spiritual shelter of the love of God. I was lonely and you left me alone to pray for me. You seem so holy, so close to God, but I am still very hungry and lonely and cold and naked and sick."

As you leave Woodstock School; as you steer through the sometimes muddied waters of life; remember there are

guidelines that can give you meaning and direction. Of all the things I have ever said to you over the years, remember only that you leave Woodstock School with what you need to live a truly dynamic and successful life and that you can make a tremendous difference in this world! I leave with you this challenge: "Love the Lord your God with all your mind, with all your strength and with all your soul; and love your neighbor as yourself."

Valedictory Speech

By Satoko Mary Ann Kanahara — Class of 2002

My friend Deena once told me that sometimes our lives are so hectic that you feel as if you are carrying a big bucket full of colorful balls. The bucket is so full that as you walk some roll off onto the ground. But as you bend over to pick them off the floor, more balls start rolling around. Pretty soon you're in such a mess that you let go and say, "Help me, God!"

This is how I have felt during the last few days. I was rushing from point A to point B, taking pictures, signing yearbooks and saying good-bye — all at the same time. By the end of it, I just felt like saying, "Wait! Stop! What's going on?"

Then my wise mother advised me to calm down and spend quiet time alone. So I went down to the playground and sat on a swing. As I swung really high, I let go of everything. Then I realized that I actually have everything I need. It is nice to squeeze so much into these last days, but what will really remain with us are our small ordinary routines and the friendships that we built up — like walking the long way after lunch and soaking in the sun with friends, or walking around the chakkar and chilling out in the shade. The small details and our friendships are what we will look back on. Pictures will be nice to look at, but will

just lie in our photo albums. The bonds of our friendships are irreplaceable.

As I was coming to Woodstock, a friend shared the last verse of the Book of Matthew with me, Matthew 28:20. Jesus says, "And surely I am with you always, to the very end of age." This verse is so encouraging. Even when everything seems to crumble and fall apart, God is always with us and He loves us. On behalf of Euphoria, I'd like to thank once again the teachers who loved us not just as students, but as ourselves. Thank you too, to all our friends and families for your support. And Euphorians, we're an awesome class ready to move on!

Salutatory Speech

By Supriya Kejriwal — Class of 2002

Good morning, everyone. On behalf of the Class of 2002 I would like to say we are pleased to have you all with us. Today, I have a story to tell you all, a story that concerns the class, Euphoria. Once upon a time, in a far away land, in the middle of nowhere, lived a class. A happy class. A euphoric class. Somehow though, this class seemed to be jinxed. From the very beginning luck deserted Euphoria and we were left to fend for ourselves.

Unfortunately, we were the first class to stay back in Alter Ridge as 9th graders instead of moving on to Midlands as was

customary. With Midlands' reconstruction, it was the Class of 2002 that had to first bear uncomfortable living conditions, especially during senior year. Then, due to the September 11th attacks, Senior Activity Week was cancelled. And finally, with the India/Pakistan conflict, we have to deal with stricter visa policies.

Minor and insignificant though these incidents may be, they all led to one conclusion: The Class of 2002, Euphoria, was jinxed. For surviving with style, credit goes to you all, Euphoria. Cliché though this may sound, it can truly be said that it was

our unity and our positive outlook that got us through. True, we grumbled and complained but nevertheless, we moved on. We enjoyed every moment to the fullest. Constantly holding each other (Euphoria, no pun intended) and making sure we had fun times—we have made it through.

We survived being the jinxed class and still managed to be euphoric. If we so successfully overcame our bad luck and created an excellent name for ourselves, I know we are capable of doing anything. Now we leave behind our bad luck and jinx-ness and take with us a part of our class. Euphoria, reach for the stars!