

Good Afternoon,

I am honored to be here at the opening convocation to speak as a retiree. I retired from Berea College in June 2018. I spent 40 amazing years working in the office of admissions helping to recruit and cultivate outstanding classes like yours to Berea College.

I didn't plan on working in college admissions at any point in my early life. In fact, who dreams of becoming a college admissions representative? My senior year at Berea I was faced with making a choice between, taking a job in admissions and marrying my beautiful wife Deborah (who is sitting here today) and mother of our three children, Jessica, John and Joshua, or accepting a commission to Officer Candidate's school in the U.S. military.

Well, you can see how that turned out. My wife can be quite convincing when she wants to be. Not only did she support me in my work for the college, as a Berea alum, she is the recent past president of the Alumni Association Executive Council.

I would like to thank President Roelofs, the faculty, and staff for giving me this opportunity.

A special hello to my former colleagues in Admissions. That professional team of counselors that guided each of you to the front door of Berea College. They are the ones who worked to help get you here. Won't you give Luke Hodson and his team a big hand?

Now, my challenge is to fit sixty-three years of my life in a three-minute speech. That roughly comes out to 21 years per minute. Good luck!

Given the task, **I'd like to share a few brief stories!**

If I had the time in these three-minutes I would tell you stories about growing up as the youngest child within a family of ten children.

If I had time, I would talk about the impact my strong father and caring mother had on the person that I became.

If only I had the time, I would share some of the great wisdom, guidance and examples reflected by my father, who is my hero, who showed me what a dedicated father and a real man looked like.

Just, if we had time, I would tell you how I found out about Berea College, while contemplating cutting a class during my senior year, and having to avoid being chased and caught by the boy's advisor and being sent home from school. Why I ran into the auditorium where there was a Berea representative talking to a small group of students... boy what a story!

If I just had time, I would say something about the seven jobs that I worked prior to coming to Berea, from working at a mom and pop grocery store to delivering medicine and healthcare supplies to community residents on my bicycle, and oh man, that Burger King experience (Home of the Whopper) to finally, learning how to drive and service an 18 wheel tractor trailer truck.

Believe me when I say that the time I spent at Berea College was some of the best years of my life. I have many stories that began here on this ridge, some I can tell and others I'll leave to the imagination.

But what I do have time to do, is tell you that I hope you will immerse yourself into these four years. They will go by quickly. These four years will determine where you can go for the rest of your life. Your fellow students, the training, the discipline that you receive here will all play a critical role in your future success.

I began by saying that I wanted to share a few brief stories about my life. But what I'd really like to share and bring to your attention is that you are writing a new chapter in your life. Begin this chapter on a high note. Engage in the myriad of opportunities on campus, exercise discipline each day, which starts with going to class, and completing your assignments.

Lastly, here's a bit of advice that I would like to leave you with. Growing up, my parents always made us make our bed before going to school. When I got to college, I made up my bed every day. No matter how late I was trying to get to class, I made up my bed. As a father, raising our three children, standard house rule; make your beds every morning.

Recently, I came across a speech by Admiral William H. McRaven (U.S. Navy Retired). And in it I saw a flashback of my life in his speech. In his commencement speech to the graduating class at the University of Texas at Austin, he began by stating:

*If you want to change the world,
START OFF BY MAKING YOUR BED.*

As Admiral McRaven shared from his experience as a Navy Seal,

If you make your bed every morning, you will have accomplished the first task of the day. It will give you a small sense of pride and it will encourage you to do another task and another and another. By the end of the day, that one task completed will have turned into many tasks completed. Making your bed will also reinforce the fact that little things in life matter. If you can't do the little things right, you will never do the big things right.

Each of you came to Berea College to impact the world by making a difference.

Now go back to your room and make your bed! After you finish, go out and change the world!

Thank you