

The Beginning of Service

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A doctor was about to give a speech, which he had written out in his best doctor's handwriting. Unfortunately, when he stood in front of his audience, he found that even HE couldn't read it.

He looked up and asked . . . "Um, Is there a pharmacist in the house?"

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You have earned a degree. What does that mean?

A degree is not a license to plunder or take. It's a license to serve – to invest in the community and serve in a higher way than you have been able to in the past.

I hope this is the commencement of service back to your families, your community and state. Forgive me for making generalizations, but I'm guessing up to this point your lives and training have largely been about you.

That can come to an end now. You've worked hard and succeeded in a rigorous course of instruction. You have done well. Most of you will be making close to six figures or more before too long, while the average worker in the State of Utah makes around \$25,000 per year.

There is an incredible demand for your skills and training, so you will be well taken care of.

The question, at this point in your lives, will not be how to survive. Your question will be how to best live.

And then it will all be over. A mere 60 or 70 years from now we will all be facing the sunset of our lives and looking back. The important questions at that time will not be how much you made, but...

- How did you treat others?

- In what manner and how much were you able to give?
- How did you serve?

A GIFT OUTRIGHT

Remember John F. Kennedy's famous quote?

Ask not what your country can do for you; ask what you can do for your family. Your community. Your land and your state.

(Yes – I changed it a little.)

But the question remains the same: What is within your ability to give back?

One of the most fitting things President Kennedy did was to make Robert Frost America's Poet Laureate.

And one of Frost's best pieces of work is called The Gift Outright.

The land was ours before we were the land's.
She was our land more than a hundred years
Before we were her people. She was ours
In Massachusetts, in Virginia,
But we were England's, still colonials,
Possessing what we still were unpossessed by,
Possessed by what we now no more possessed.
Something we were withholding made us weak
Until we found out that it was ourselves
We were withholding from our land of living,
And forthwith found salvation in surrender.
Such as we were we gave ourselves outright
(The deed of gift was many deeds of war)
To the land vaguely realizing westward,
But still unstoried, artless, unenhanced,
Such as she was, such as she would become.

Frost gave us layers of meaning here we could explore for a long time.
Today I want to focus in on this part:

Something we were withholding made us weak
Until we found out that it was ourselves
We were withholding from our land of living,
And forthwith found salvation in surrender.
Such as we were we gave ourselves outright.

Are you withholding anything? Have you been waiting to do something, or be something until some future point in time when you think you will shine? Robert Frost suggests that you may find salvation in giving: surrender to your abilities and capacities in the land in which you find yourself.

Such as you have, GIVE. Frost says “Give yourselves outright.”

To whom?

Your family has spent time and treasure for you to arrive at this milestone. Citizens have surrendered millions to the state to fund this institution of higher learning. Your land and community have sustained you with food, civilization, protection, and friendship.

Start with them.

ANCHORS

As you begin to give of yourself you will become an anchor for your family and community.

As a Lt. in the Utah County Search and Rescue Team, I have had some firsthand experience with anchors.

- Rock climbing – the placement and role of anchors as protection.
- Climbing the Green Monster – the experience and the fall.

Anchors saved my life that day.

You will become the anchors in a society with a desperate need for good anchors.

OPPORTUNITIES TO SERVE

You will have many opportunities to serve.

History teaches that life is a pleasant low-key drama punctuated by disasters. You have a higher level of training and expertise, and a higher level of certification, so you will be able to help – to give yourselves outright - in ways that others can't.

Some of you will be pharmacists. When Hurricane Katrina hit the Gulf Coast in 2005, many in your profession were ready to give themselves outright.

When Marianne Billeter, PharmD, was hired as a clinical pharmacist at Ochsner Clinic Foundation Hospital in New Orleans, she knew she would be part of a disaster response team. She was also assigned to be part of the organization's "Team A" which was called into action during Hurricane Katrina.

The day before Katrina hit, Team A prepared for the storm by reviewing policies and running through emergency operations with core members working 12-hour shifts.

Although the hospital was equipped with 3 emergency generators, challenges in energy supply became immediately apparent. On Monday, August 29, 2005, the hurricane moved in and a series of generator failures affected workflow. The first generator blew a circuit board, but this did not affect pharmacy operations; on the same day, however, the second generator overheated and the automated dispensing carousel system for transmission of orders went down, power to the IV hoods was lost, and staff had to move a mobile hood to a surgical suite to compound nutritional solutions.

All computer systems were down for 4 days, although the automated drug-dispensing system stayed up nearly the entire time; all medications remained on override status. Ochsner was the only hospital in New Orleans that was fully open despite many setbacks. By Friday the hospital was functioning with all systems.

From a personal perspective, Billeter reported the challenge of finding a bed every night. "I slept 3 days in a medical office and 2 days in a cath lab office," she said. Staff worked in 105-degree heat as the air conditioning was down and there was only an occasional opportunity to take a 50-degree shower.

The team learned that they needed to stay nimble on their feet, react quickly, and be adaptable to rapidly changing conditions. Communication was key, as managers reported in real-time back to the group on disaster events happening in the surrounding community.

When news of the hurricane reached Biloxi Regional Medical Center in Biloxi, Mississippi, Pharmacy Director John Smith and his team prepared by discontinuing all but the essential, life-sustaining medications for patients who needed to remain in the hospital. He soon realized that he would have to "wear many hats" during the hurricane. In addition to his official role, other roles included carpenter, emergency department triage coordinator, and even temporary hotel operator as he worked to house his staff in the vacant physical therapy department.

Power went out in Biloxi the evening after the eye of the hurricane hit on August 30. Without power, patients could not receive dialysis and therefore were moved to Jackson, Mississippi. The hospital lost 14 windows due to flying debris, and Smith assisted maintenance workers by nailing plywood over destroyed panes.

Biloxi Regional is located 27 feet below sea level. When the pharmacy department took on water; medications had to be evacuated in totes. "I went floor to floor to find a cell phone that worked," Smith recalled. He was able to order the same medications listed on his previous 2 orders that had been depleted; other organizations reported that they had a hard time getting adequate supplies.

Smith posted a schedule on a day-to-day basis, but many actions and reactions occurred on a moment-to-moment basis. His chief lesson from the disaster was to plan for worst-case scenarios. At Biloxi Regional, for example, some emergency crews did not have tetanus shots. A second lesson learned was the need to keep staff motivated and to encourage people to "do what we can" during a disaster.

The Houston Astrodome became home to many. Ed Stemley, PharmD, was assigned to run a pharmacy on "a portion of the covered concrete slab in the Astrodome."

His team was given less than a day to prepare to help 25,000 hurricane evacuees who were routed to Texas. They set up an onsite pharmacy that assisted with more than 11,000 admissions. Early involvement of the information technology group and the establishment of an insulin administration clinic for evacuees was key to the team's success.

Stemley described how the Astrodome had an overabundance of volunteers and supplies. What they needed most was onsite management.

[Source: Jill M. Strykowski, MSc, RPh with Medsource Today from WebMD.]

A hurricane will not be hitting Utah anytime soon. But something else could hit us. In such an instance, I expect YOU to be the leaders, the onsite managers, the organizers, the ones who sacrifice themselves to serve their families and community.

Such as you have, you can give yourselves outright.

WORDS OF COUNSEL

Speaking to you now, with whatever global view is available to me as President of the Utah State Senate. I am asking you to give yourselves outright in four ways.

1 - SERVE IN YOUR PROFESSION

Some of you will be blessed to make discoveries that will benefit humanity.

Most of you will save lives. All of you will change the world.

Every single one of you will influence the lives of those around you. You cannot, even for one minute, escape your influence on those around you. Cultivate justice, honor and a sharp mind so that as you change the world, the changes you set in motion are for the better.

2 – SERVE YOUR FAMILY

You can imagine the kind of schedule the President of the Senate has to keep. It starts early in the morning and goes well into the night, usually ending with a dinner meeting or speech . . . and this is when we are not in session.

Needless to say I'm not home very much. This fact really came to my attention one day when I overheard my daughter tell her friend, "That's my dad. He's not home much, but I see him on TV a lot."

I realized then that I was not serving my family. We decided to make our public service a family affair. We started looking for opportunities to be together in our public service.

We also started finding more time to have fun together.

Take time to play with your kids and your spouse. It is part of the service they need, and are entitled to receive... and, yes, date your spouse as though it counts.

Because it does.

3 – SERVE YOUR COMMUNITY

One of the early pioneers to this valley was Porter Rockwell. His lifestyle was at variance with more religiously strict fellow settlers, but he was a good neighbor. People who met him, loved him, from throughout the cultural and religious landscape.

When cattle, or horses - or a person – we're lost, Rockwell was the man people would look to for help. He would cheerfully sacrifice his time, his energy, and his safety to get the job done, restore stolen livestock, and bring the missing home.

One of the old songs about Rockwell was sung to the tune of Solomon Levi. Does anyone know that song, Old Solomon Levi? You might know the tune better as "Utah Man." Here are the words:

Have you heard of Porter Rockwell?
He's the Mormon triggerite.
They say he hunts for horse thieves
When the moon is shining bright.
So if you steal a Mormon horse
I'll tell you what to do,
Get the drop on Porter Rockwell,
Or he'll get the drop on you.

They say that Porter Rockwell
Is a scout for Brigham Young –
He's hunting up the suspects
That haven't yet been hung.
So if you steal one Mormon girl
I'll tell you what to do,
Get the drop on Porter Rockwell
Or he'll get the drop on you.

When there was danger to the community – from indigenous people, murderers, outlaws, or the federal government - Rockwell was chief among the respondents, and he had a rescuer's power because of his good attitude, willing self-sacrifice, and superior expertise.

Be that kind of person.

The history books record him constantly saying, "Wheat."

He would use the term when he wanted to tell you things were good. When he offered a toast, he would often raise his glass and say, "Wheat!"

It makes sense to me. There are lots of good things to say about wheat.

4 – LIVE SO YOU CAN LOOK BACK AT YOUR LIFE WITH GRATITUDE AND JOY.

Live so you don't have to make any big changes on the final day of your life

Live so you can look back and say, "That was good."

Live so that when the sunset comes, you can leave in peace – and that those who stay behind will be able to watch you leave with peace in their hearts as well.

PREDICTIONS / CONCLUSIONS

I predict that sometime in the next twenty or thirty years, I will need your help. You probably will not remember me. I will be older then. I will walk slower. I may not be able to see as well as I do now.

I will not hold the position in government that I do now, and so will have lost some of the company and interest of those who now claim to be my friends.

I might be a continent away, in a position where my life will be influenced by your work, or I may be standing right in front of you. My life could be in your hands.

I hope you will treat me well.

I hope you will not be too hurried to listen. Or too impatient. Or too obsessed with shallow pleasures that ultimately do not matter.

I hope that your eyes are clear, and your mind is sharp, and your heart is kind. I hope your professional judgment is unclouded.

I predict that I will see a few of you again when we are all very old men and women. We'll sit on a porch somewhere and make comments about the weather. I'll tell that joke about the doctor's handwriting again, and you will laugh again, because we will all have forgotten today's speech.

At that time I hope to look at your face and know you have been an anchor in your profession, an anchor in your family, and an anchor in your community. An unsung anchor, perhaps. Most are. But I hope we can all look back and say, "That was good."

Remember that part in "The Gift Outright" by Robert Frost . . .

Something we were withholding made us weak
Until we found out that it was ourselves
We were withholding from our land of living,
And forthwith found salvation in surrender.

Give yourselves outright.

I'll see you again, and when I do I want to hear a report on how you've done.

WHEAT!