

“Finding (And Enjoying) Your Own Road”

Thank you, President Steve Lewis, faculty, Speaker Sviggum, Senator Neville (Neh-vill), Representative Tuma, Northfield officials, guests, and most importantly you – the students of Carleton College.

Also ... greetings to Herr Schiller, who was kind to drop by. And probably smart, too, since these executive protection folks who travel with me tend to act first and ask questions later when ninjas suddenly appear with a head.

This is a perfect message for Schiller to hear because I want to talk today about having fun while we each find, and enjoy, our own way in this world.

There was a moment, some months ago now, when I talked to over 1,000 business leaders at an evening speech. It's usually a pretty dressed up, buttoned-down event, but that night I had them rolling in the aisles. I looked out at all those usually serious people who were doubled over and said, “Look at this – we're doing the people's business, governing the state with a smile on our faces and a laugh in our hearts.”

I see that same quality of humor in this audience today.

- The first day of college with a smile on your faces and a laugh in your hearts.
- A college president who enjoys a good joke.
- A college mascot who is a stolen head.

What do you think – would I fit in good down here if I decided to go back to college?

I actually did go to college way back before I started wrestling. One of my buddies enrolled at the University of Minnesota, and I used to go over there to go to class with him. As I told President Yudof the first time I was invited over for a tour after the election, it was a great way to get a college education without paying anything!

While I'm on the subject of college tuition – which is probably the most mis-reported, misunderstood of all my initiatives as Governor – let me say a couple of things.

First – education received 70 percent of all new spending in this biennial budget. I recommended far more spending for higher education than the legislature ultimately allowed.

But it was my comments about self-sufficiency and the wisdom of planning that got the attention ... even on Jay Leno.

It's a simple fact that going to college costs money. How many of you spent time working and planning to get here today?

SEE? It's a fact. It's the truth. And some people don't like to hear the truth. Politicians and bureaucrats have spent too much time talking about making life easy with their latest programs to admit that it's a challenge to pay for a college education.

And SHOULD be a challenge.

It's just a fact of life that we appreciate more what we earn ourselves. I know, because I've lived it. I've seen the difference in my own son, who's just your age – who is heading off to chase his own dreams of working in film on the new Sean Penn movie. There is a huge difference between how he takes care of something he buys himself, and something that he's given. It's human nature.

President Lewis informs me that more than 8 out of 10 of you are working 10 hours a week. Most of you rely on summer work earnings to pay your way, and many earned scholarships. You freshman have evidently saved more money than your colleagues at other schools. To all of you I say: GOOD WORK!

That same ability to stand on your own that brings you to this convocation today is the same grit that will help you make a good decision about what road you take out of Northfield when you leave Carleton.

- Some of the roads out of Northfield are gravel,
- some are two-lane paved county roads,
- and of course, the fast-lane Interstate is just a few miles away.

The choice about which road to take is yours – just like the choice was mine.

I took the Interstate south out of Minneapolis to Kansas City with \$200 in a 1975 Chevy and a dream to wrestle. My own “Ventura Highway” covered the world with exit ramps that took me into Navy Seals, professional wrestling, acting, radio, being a mayor of a major city, and now the nation's first Reform Governor and author!

Those first miles got covered alone. But I had my parents, my brother, and a handful of my southside friends from Minneapolis who I've had for life right there in my heart while I chased those dreams.

Along the way I added a wonderful wife, and we added two wonderful children. As I wrote in my book, it's a very tight circle of people who have kept me grounded all these years. I still have the annual trip up north with my southside guys. Last Monday I took the afternoon to watch my daughter, Jade, ride at the State Fair horse show.

Kids keep life in perspective. One day somebody asked me if being elected had a big effect on my kids. I told them that my daughter has a new boyfriend and was so busy thinking about that she didn't even know I was the Governor.

TRY NEW ROADS WHILE YOU ARE AT CARLETON.

I've said many times that I've earned a PhD since I became Governor.

Even farmers need about four degrees to get by today – economics, agriculture, business – and probably political science so they can figure out what those rascals in Congress are up to. Farming isn't about planting, nurturing and harvesting crops anymore. It's about reading world markets, hedging bets, and negotiating all the laws and subsidies that control their lives.

Today it's not so important WHAT you know – it's that you can FIND it when you need it. It's the skill of learning and the interest to keep learning that separates the winners from the losers.

A liberal arts education sets you on that path for life. Take classes in as many things as interest you.

SOME OF THE BEST LEARNING COMES FROM STOPPING BY THE ROADSIDE TO VOLUNTEER AND HELP SOMEBODY ELSE.

President Lewis tells me that you are a group that takes action. The freshman class pitches in at the Nature Center, and most of you volunteer, which I believe in whole-heartedly. I'm the conditioning coach at Champlin Park High School again this year for football. It's a bright spot in my week to be with the guys and be part of a team.

(Of course, when you volunteer you have to judge what you're good at – it's not likely that I'd sign up for afternoon physics. I know a lot about conditioning people, and so that's what I've signed on to do, working with a great group of young athletes.)

The Constitution guarantees you only a very few rights. You have the right to live free, go out, and compete. You have the right to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness. I think that as a society we have an obligation to help out when we can.

There's an obligation to lead others through challenges. I always tell my guys, "I'll never get mad at you for losing, but God help you if you quit on me."

Don't quit the tough stretches of road. Travel through them. Learn from them.

Take a few roads that weren't on your own map. These are the years to venture out.

But then, it's also wise to know when it's time to get off the Interstate and slow down.

My good friend Arnold Schwarzenegger tried to convince Terry and me to live in Los Angeles after the success of Predator. By that time, we had two small children. The question I had for him was this: Where will they go to school?

Remember, I'm a believer in public education. I went through the Minneapolis Public Schools and consider that I had a world class start on life.

Arnold said, "They go to private school of course."

I'm not knocking private schools, but I believe that I owe it to my kids to let them grow up in a place where anybody with means had abandoned their public schools. A neighborhood is only as good as its residents' commitment to it.

So Terry and I moved back to Minnesota to raise our children and be close to our families. It was the best parenting decision we could have made. Be prepared to make personal sacrifices if you choose to become parents. And if you aren't prepared to make sacrifices, don't take on the responsibilities of children. The consequences for them and for society are too great.

HERE'S ANOTHER TIP FOR GOOD TRAVELING: TAKE GOOD PEOPLE ON THE TRIP WITH YOU.

That's what I did when I got elected. Two weeks ago, Skip Humphrey came up to me after a meeting and said that I had assembled the best cabinet of any state in the nation – bar none. I believe he is right.

When I ran as a candidate, I often said, "I don't know." It was the truth.

Let's face it – a lot of time we DON'T know. Issues are too complicated. Consequences are too many. The research is too much for any one person to have a total handle on it.

I think the expression is, "Two heads are better than one."

Free yourself from any embarrassment over not knowing, and surround yourself with others who might have more knowledge, a different point of view, or even just the time to help find answers.

IN SHORT, I AM URGING YOU TO LIVE LIFE TO THE FULLEST.

I RAN FOR GOVERNOR TO FIND OUT IF THE AMERICAN DREAM STILL EXISTS IN ANYONE'S HEART OTHER THAN MINE.

The will of the people is still the most powerful force in our government. We Americans don't know the word "can't."

There is a brand new generation in Minnesota that has come into our electoral system. You are part of that new blood that is bringing new life, new ideas, and new honesty into the public debate.



The old fire and brimstone speeches have been entertaining – but it’s time for down to earth honesty as we grapple with tough questions in a time of fast change for inner cities, suburbs, regional centers, and rural areas in between.

In some ways, wrestling politics aren’t all that different from the brand of politics I’m dealing with now. Toughing it out in the ring against hails of insults and dealing with all the backstabbing and betrayal and infighting – what better training is there for public office?

I’m really not kidding.

Some days, when I look at my administration through the warped mirror that the media holds up to it, I feel a long, long way from the guy who first ran for mayor to save a wetland area in Brooklyn Park. I feel a long, long way from that snowy day on my Inaugural Week when I released a bald eagle in that same wetland.

But every day, I know my administration is making a big impact in the right directions. I know we are on the right road – traveling with the vast majority of Minnesotans who want to drive right up the middle. Not off on the shoulder to the extreme right or left.

THERE ARE THREE THINGS I BELIEVE IN THAT I WANT TO SHARE AS A
“ROADMAP.”

I’ve talked a lot about self-sufficiency today. I encourage you to make personal decisions that you can live with your whole life, without expecting government to step in and make up for ones that you find hard to live with.

Second, if you value your personal freedoms, step up to ensure that during your adult lifetime, government doesn’t dictate more of your decisions than you do. I believe in a limited, accountable role for government to SERVE THE PEOPLE – not the other way around.

In the book “Death of Common Sense,” Philip Howard writes, “Our regulatory system has become an instruction manual. It tells us exactly what to do and how to do it. Detailed rule after detailed rule addresses every situation lawmakers and bureaucrats can think of. Is it a coincidence that almost every encounter with government is an exercise in frustration?”

The bottom line is this: The two generations before you haven’t done a very good job – we wanted to have our cake and eat it, too. We wanted government to provide all these programs and give us tax cuts. We talk about world competitiveness and yet hold our own farmers down with subsidies. You young people are smarter than that. You need to vision what you want to inherit and make sure that common sense rules the day.

This leads to my third and most important point: If we have stupid laws, it happened because the people allowed it to happen. By not voting, or by not participating in the debates in St. Paul and Washington DC and every other capital in the country, the people let this happen.

The people are taking government back into their own hands. It's about time. Philip Howard writes in his book that the take-over by government regulation has happened because we've been missing "one indispensable ingredient: use of human judgment."

It started in Minnesota last November when we led the nation in voter turnout. I think high voter turnout and breaking the monopoly on our two-party system is why we led the nation in tax cuts this last session, too. The Republicans and Democrats finally realized the electorate was awake and felt accountable for delivering results. It was good, but I still am not satisfied.

In every election, I want 70 percent turnout. I want every single one of you to vote in every election. I want you to think about running for township officer, or school board, or the legislature, or for Governor.

If a kid from the southside of Minneapolis can return to Roosevelt High School as the new Governor, you can do it, too.

It's the way our founding fathers intended it to be: any citizen has the chance to take a turn, and then return to their fields or their business or, in my case, maybe the beaches of Kona.

- Be independent.
- Depend on yourself and good people you trust.
- Work hard.
- Live your own dreams and enjoy finding your own way to achieve them.
- Get informed, vote, and take your turn.

Here at Carleton, enjoy the years at a place where all these things are valued.

Whatever you do, keep your sense of humor. The world doesn't have enough of it today.

Thanks for having me here today.