

## COMMENCEMENT

Good Morning! Wow! What a true honor and pleasure to be here with you. My fellow Embry -Riddle Alumni...How's that feel? Alumni! That is YOU now! It should feel really good, you should be proud! A terrific accomplishment and a great way to set yourself up for success. Your degree from Embry-Riddle is extremely well respected and highly regarded. So enjoy this moment, you deserve it!

Embry-Riddle made my extraordinary career at Southwest possible. I'm very grateful. I'm grateful for my parents, believing in me to chase this dream which I had from a young child, supporting and allowing me to attend this tremendous school. Not only did ERAU set me up for success with highly respected degrees. The knowledge I gained specific to our industry has helps me understand aircraft systems, not just to the application level but to the correlation level. The deeper knowledge of meteorology benefits me on every flight. However, one of the best aspects of ERAU is the staff and the students. This school develops great leaders, leading by example. Working hard and treating the students with respect, kindness and truly getting to know and showing interest in each student. Does Larry Stephan and Chancellor Ayers exemplify this? Absolutely!!! They and their fellow staff members encourage you, the students to treat each other with respect and work as a team towards a common goal. I am grateful every day for the education and friends I have gained through Embry-Riddle. Look to your left and look to your right, life is about relationships. Keep your your friendships, they're invaluable.

I am extremely grateful for Southwest Airlines. I was offered a pilot position at both Southwest and United within the same week about thirty one years ago. (That ERAU degree paying off again! To all

the parents out there...the money you spent on this education was worth it's weight in gold!) Both airlines were terrific options, however I truly admired the way Southwest Leaders treated their employees...with respect, very kindly and as family. Sounds familiar right? Of course..it did help that Southwest had the best balance sheet. Even then, Southwest had more cash and less debt than all the other airlines combined, which remains the same to this day. Southwest had the best safety record world wide and maintains that today. Who would of thought...that small Texas Airline would grow to carry more passengers than any airline in the world. Over 4200 flights and 500,000 passengers per day. Wow, it's been a phenomenal time at Southwest, we work hard and play hard. Southwest empowers every employee to assess each situation, use common sense and good judgement. Starting with Herb Kelleher and Colleen Barrett, now continuing with Gary Kelly, our leaders encourage and support us to "Own It". Similar to the atmosphere at ERAU, we have a culture of respect, kindness and family atmosphere that we share with each other, which trickles down to how we treat our passengers.

As you enjoy this well deserved honor attaining your degree, it will soon be time to show your true grit and tenacity. Keep focused on your long term goal. You must resist distractions and have the perseverance to achieve long term goals. I had a few fellow classmates resist taking a temporary pay cut or temporary relocation that was necessary to gain experience or build flight time. An example would be the friends that while building their flight time were offered a positions making six figures in careers which they just tolerated. The pay was more lucrative than initial flying positions required to build flight time. Before they knew it...years past, then they would walk out of their office looking up to the sky seeing an airliner fly over, realizing they could be flying it, making

even a better income and enjoying 18 days off a month. Oh my! Dig deep, stay safe and think long term!

How many pilots do we have here? Let's hear it! I love it and you'll love it. Let's hear for our engineers, meteorologists, mechanics, global security, business and all our team members in our complex and dynamic aviation world. The mutual respect in this industry for our fellow teammates is huge, we all have the same goal...safe, friendly and efficient air travel. However, I would like to share a word of wisdom for the pilots...while your building your flight time and throughout your career...You must continually use good judgement. You must use all your resources as a pilot, continually assessing and reassessing to make safe decisions. You must trust that inner instinct of whether a situation is beyond a reasonable risk. An example, If you are being pressured to continue a flight when the weather is a factor, to a point that you feel it's an unacceptable risk, trust those instincts and either delay, hold or divert. Using sound good judgment will keep you safe while you build your experience to work for major airlines. Are the major airlines safe? Were they safe 40 years ago? Absolutely, even 40 years ago, airlines were the safest mode of transportation...and today, the airlines are even safer. The risk of which YOU need to mitigate is the path to build your flight time. So please, use good judgement, continue to prepare well for every aircraft and every flight, and you will achieve an exceptional, long and fulfilling career.

Speaking of fulfilling, how many of you give back by volunteering? Raise your hands if you you give back! Way to go! There is almost nothing more fulfilling that knowing that you have made a difference. Through Southwest Airlines, I have had the pleasure of helping build a wonderful program called the "Adopt-A-Pilot Program". Yes, I've been adopted several times by 5th grade classes. A matter of fact, over 800 of our 10,000 pilots volunteer in

this program every year. Throughout the last 20 years, literally thousands of 5th grade classrooms have participated in this mentor program. The program includes 4 or 5 visits to the classroom where the pilot helps bring the mathematics and geography the children have learned to an application level along with teaching some basic aerodynamics. Southwest provides books to each student and supplies the necessary supplies for some fun experiments related to Bernoulli's Principle. In addition, they supply a large wall map of all our destinations for the children to track the pilot's flights throughout the program. It's terrific to see the kids apply the math and geography they have learned, and help make STEM fun and interesting. Even with this great STEM experience, what makes this program so effective is the main focus of the Adopt-A-Pilot program...core values. We emphasize and practice our "FLIGHT" values: Fearlessness: to fearlessly chase your dream. Leadership: having positive, passionate and strong communication skills. Imagination: to be able to visualize yourself in the role you dream of. Grateful: to appreciate and express it. Honesty: truly the only way to gain trust and respect of others. And last but not least, to have the Tenacity to never give up until you've reached your goal.

Fortunately, I've had the pleasure of witnessing these children's eyes light up with intrigue and excitement. Some children are just thrilled to have some attention, unfortunately many do not have parents that take the time to simply listen or to give guidance. If you can make a difference in just one child...is it worth it? Absolutely! A kinda funny story is, a couple years ago, on two separate occasions, I was walking through the PHX Airport in uniform when another pilot in uniform from a regional carrier approached me and said; are you a Captain Nancy? After I said yes, they exclaimed..OMG! You were my Adopt-A-Pilot in the 5th grade! I of course, said ...Yikes! I couldn't possibly be that old! But truly, what a special bond and special moment that was.

Another tremendous focus item throughout AAP, is to emphasis the confidence for these children to say “No” to vaping, smoking or illegal drugs. I’ll ask the children, is it more likely to see a weak person or strong person to say No? Who are you going to be? The strong person or the weak one?

No matter what your passion, you’re already a role model, now go out there and find a way to make a difference. Whether it’s with with the elderly, children, animals or the cause of your choice. Just make the time, it will make you a better person, inside and out.

Please remember to always be grateful, Lead by example, each day try to make someone’s day, be safe, do the best job you can everyday and find time to give back. It’s simple, this will make YOU eternally successful.

Soon you will join a company and may build a family of your own, you owe it to your fellow employees and to your family members to do the best job you can every day.

I’m most grateful for my family. Our beautiful and talented daughter Brooke, who has a heart of gold and works so very hard, and of that Hottie right there...my patient, talented and loving husband Doc. You two are the world to me.

Thank you Embry-Riddle for the education, leadership, friendship and opportunity to be here this glorious day with you, the graduates, my ALUMNI and our tremendous future!

Thank you to those of you who committed to the military to protect our freedom and our beautiful, remarkable United States of America.

I will close with a quote from my dearest mentor, Colleen Barrett, President Emeritus, Southwest Airlines. **LEADERSHIP**. Leadership is Not a title or a position, but rather it's a "way of life" and those who share it with enthusiasm and care for others will always be content and successful.

Go out there, give it your all, have a ton of fun and **NEVER** give up!!!