

(ERAU Prescott Dec 2016)

Good morning and greetings to all of our honored guests; to the university faculty, administration, and trustees; families, friends; and of course, most especially to our new Embry Riddle graduates.

I'd like to thank you for inviting me to share this day with you. It's really an honor to be here; but I have to tell you, it's also really difficult for me to believe that it was "only" 30 short years ago that "I" was graduating from Embry Riddle.

Right up front, I'd like to say, that if you don't remember anything else I say today, and most of it you probably won't, please remember that you should always be very proud of choosing Embry Riddle as YOUR university. I am a testament to the fact that the success you've had here at Embry Riddle will prepare you for whatever next step you plan on taking. I know that my time here was one of the key things that allowed me to not only pursue my passion

for all things flying, but also to be standing here before you today as a NASA astronaut who flew in space.

So...In the spirit of sending you off to a proper celebration, I'll try to be speedy.

I was blessed with the opportunity to fly on 2 space shuttle missions, to “walk” in space for 6 ½ hours, and to spend over 100 days living and working with my amazing crew mates on our most awesome International Space Station. It's still very surreal to me that I had the opportunity to see our planet from a 250 mile vantage point, travelling at 17500 mph, and circling it once every 90 minutes.

I stand here before you today as an example of what can happen if you follow a dream.

Before flying in space, I had read some comments from early astronauts who used the word ‘insignificant’ when they described their reaction to seeing the Earth from space – they

described it as our insignificance in the grand scheme of a very large universe. I always hoped what they really meant was that they were humbled; that they were in awe of what they saw.

I was so pleased, that from the first time I looked out the window of my space ship and every time I looked out the window after that, I had this sense of everything having its place and reason – I was humbled. I was in awe. And what I absolutely felt is that we ARE totally significant.

Here we all are, riding on our home planet - our spaceship Earth. Situated at the perfect distance from the sun and providing us with everything we need to survive. And I believe each of us does have a place and reason. Sometimes that place and reason aren't all that easy to figure out, but I think that's ok, and maybe it's just another humbling part of what life is all about.

So today I'll share a couple thoughts I've had as I've been figuring out my place and reason. This might seem a little strange, but I'm going to present this based on some words I share with my friends when they're getting married – but with a little twist to go along with your graduation, with your commencement to this next stage of life. The words are basically a toast to Passion, Adventure, and the Golden Rule. These words definitely apply to a successful marriage, but I think they also apply to a successful life in general.

(Passion)

The what and who you love, and are in love with, are the best things to use to help guide you. Find your passion.

The what and who we love provide our best inspiration. Inspiration and new perspectives lead to opportunities. I think there's a reason why each of us enjoys different things. These things help ground us and help us make better choices. They provide us with a different

perspective of ourselves and of all those around us.

I think this is why things like flying and our space program are so awesome. I was really fortunate to grow up with a dad who loved to build and fly planes. As a family we spent a lot of time when I was growing up hanging out at the local airport. My dad shared his passion for flying with me and I believe it was the single biggest influence on the path I took for school and a career. And on top of that, neither of my parents ever used the word impossible. So be true to yourself and let the things you enjoy help guide you. Find your passion.

(Adventure)

Treat life as an adventure.

Adventure comes through love and passion. Adventure in life is about being bold and curious, it's about seeking happiness through awe, and it's about sharing what you love with the people you love.

Adventure also involves challenge, and challenge presents opportunity.

Always challenge yourself- Go outside your comfort zone, a lot. Being outside your comfort zone is where the magic happens.

And the only real limitations are ones we place on ourselves. Don't place limitations on yourself!

Adventure and challenge also means that things don't always go as planned.

The Seal motto is: 'the only easy day was yesterday'. I try to look at the bright side of this motto and think of every day as a new adventure. An adventure and opportunity to figure out how to make good things happen. Treat life as an adventure.

(The Golden Rule)

Take the high road - Always do your best - Don't forget the golden rule.

In life, treating people the way you want to be treated is a big deal. It's about recognizing

that your character, the way you treat other people, and your motivation in life is what really defines you.

One of my favorite quotes is by Ghandi – “Be the change you wish to see in the world.”

The way you treat other people is what will help you look outside yourself and find ways to improve the lives of those around you, to make a difference in the world, to be the change.

Our space station motto is “off the Earth, for the Earth”. I love this. It sums up completely why we do things like explore space – we do it to improve life here on earth. Kind of the ultimate in doing unto others – being the change – and living the golden rule.

There are amazing opportunities out there. So don't forget about the Passion, Adventure, and the Golden Rule.

I'd like to close with a couple other thoughts.

Just a little over a week ago, the last of our original Mercury 7 astronauts and the first human to orbit our planet, John Glenn, passed away. John Glenn lived an inspirational life – If we look at his life we find that he lived it with Passion, like an Adventure, and by the Golden Rule. He believed that “We are more fulfilled when we are involved in something bigger than ourselves”

That's what I've loved the most about being an astronaut. Working with people that are passionate, adventurous and live the golden rule --- they dream big, take action, and also know how to have fun --- and to be fulfilled by something bigger than myself.

I wish the best for all of you – I hope you find your way to something bigger than yourself. Here's to your success and happiness and that all your dreams come true.
Go Eagles!!