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Washington is nothing if it is not a city where laws are made. In fact, not long after my arrival I encountered a number of laws which, while not officially on the books, may in fact say more about the way this country operates than most of the official acts of the Congress.

For example, of interest to the University community should be Bressler's Law, which states, "There is no crisis to which the academic world will not respond with a seminar."

For politicians there is a law, as well; the First Law of Political Leadership, which says, "Find out where the people want to go, then hustle yourself around in front of them."

And finally a law of general application, Hickey's Law: "When you're looking at the bank clock for the temperature, the time will always show up."

As well as serving the useful purpose of reminding us not to take ourselves too seriously, these "laws", like the laws that the Congress enacts represent our efforts to recognize and deal with the forces of change -- for that is much of what public policy-making is about. It is in a sense, what today represents for those of you who are graduating, and it is, in my view, what our nation's primary efforts are directed toward as we begin the decade of the 80's.

By almost any standard of measurement, those of you who are today graduating will be entering as full citizens a country and a world undergoing an unprecedented transition.

At no time in our history since the Great Depression has America been confronted by so many fundamental changes. And in the successive kaleidoscopic slide of events we seem perilously close to losing our sense of ourselves and worse, our faith in ourselves as a nation.

This vertigo is understandable; for in the flow of each day's fresh new situation -- whether unsettling economic news or distant invasions -- we tend to focus on the individual moment and lose the play of the whole and the continuum of our history.

We should leave for another time a discussion of why we have arrived today at this convergence of events that means monumental change -- the new world energy reality, the maturation of American industry, the re-awakening of Moslem national identities, the re-structuring of the world's economy, the aspirations of newly realized African nations and the other developments which comprise our daily diet of news. Suffice it to say that this nation has faced these kinds of tests in each successive generation and that it is our ability to measure and manage the change that inevitably lies before us, that has marked our history and now will determine our future.

If we are to guide this change constructively, then we must look to laws -- not necessarily those of the Congress, but rather the laws of experience -- to describe a course of conduct by which to frame our choices. So in the time-worn tradition of commencement speakers everywhere, let me address this group of soon-to-be graduates and offer for your consideration samplings from Poor Goldschmidt's Almanac, or Five Rules of Thumb in Search of a Hand.

The first law is perhaps the simplest: Stay with the fundamentals.

This is a statement as much about our habits as about our values. For I believe that there must always be a firm hand on the tiller of change, the fundamentals that remain true and have lasting value regardless of the direction of the winds of change.

For us as Portlanders, Oregonians and Americans those habits and values can be found in our true affection for our families and neighborhoods, the city which remains a community. It is expressed in our strong attachment to the land and our sense of stewardship for it -- the feeling that we are responsible to future generations for the care of the resources which have been vouchsafed for us; and that to deplete those resources casually would be to mortgage thoughtlessly the birthright of our children.

It is expressed in our people's long-standing habits of hard work and productivity; in our nation's historical commitment to work as an ethic that offers every person an expression of self-worth and a ladder of opportunity.

These are the fundamentals that have been the promise of America -- not because they have been given to us or guaranteed. Rather they are the product of a people who, having witnessed tumultuous change, have sought to define what finally matters in all the world and have been willing to sacrifice everything but freedom to preserve those basics.

The second law is really an exhortation to young people to do what you do best: question old assumptions. This is really the precious and painful gift of each new generation to its parents.

It is painful because the questioning of comfortable old assumptions too often reveals their obsolescence. And it is precious precisely for that reason; because it is our best hope for remedying the intellectual myopia that can accompany age. But if we are to avoid the complacency that makes us the victims of change, then we must welcome the scrutiny of those assumptions which guide our conduct as a nation.

We assumed in the past that energy would always be plentiful and cheap. On that assumption we built a life-style of gas-guzzling cars, suburban sprawl, energy-inefficient plants and homes and work places. Today that assumption appears folly -- and part of the pain we are feeling in our economy reflects our effort to adjust to a new assumption about the cost and availability of energy.

We assumed in the past that our nation was rich enough and vast enough to support any level of waste -- that the costs of throw-away cities and unnecessary public works projects could easily be paid for out of our national treasury. But today we face an unprecedented time of national capital scarcity: a time when money, like energy, has become both expensive and scarce, and waste and inefficiency are assumptions we can ill-afford.

At other times the young people of America have had the clarity of vision to question our basic assumptions about foreign policy and pointed out the tragic folly of our position in Southeast Asia; or called upon our national conscience in the issue of civil rights for all Americans.

Who knows what assumptions you will ask about -- our treatment of senior citizens, our system of health care, the degradation of the global environment or our capacity to end the world in nuclear holocaust? But it remains to you to define your own involvement in the world you enter by the questions you ask of it.

Every good set of laws, by definition, has a corollary and so Goldschmidt's 3rd Law is really a corollary to the second: This is the corollary of "It's never been done before."

Rare, indeed, is the new job-holder or trainee who, having discovered a fresh approach to an old problem, hasn't been told, "It's never been done that way before." This usually means you're really on to something -- although to the older and wiser hands it's supposed to indicate a line not to be crossed.

Usually these are imaginary lines and, like obsolete assumptions, badly in need of crossing. For innovation is the life-blood of our nation; our country owes its life to visionaries who saw that democracy had "never been done before."

Two hundred years later we are still a young and growing nation, with much more in front of us as a people than what is already behind us. Are we to accept the proposition that it all has already been done?

Let's hope not.

Let's hope that there is much that has never been done before, that the genius of each generation will find expression in inventiveness in seeking and finding new opportunities where previously there were only invisible lines.

This same long-term sense of our future is defined in Law Four, which concerns the dignity of dailiness.

Impatience is an American hallmark. Accustomed as we are to success, we anticipate even more its prompt arrival. We want economic recovery, now. We want a solution to the energy problem, now; and more now. Never mind the fact that in any number of these issues we are paying a bill that took 40 years to come due; or that the complex forces at work, which demand to be heard and deserve representation, make simple solutions false solutions.

In personal terms, we want success, now, as well, and that is well and good as a main-spring for direction so long as it does not do violence to the dignity of dailiness.

For in both national and personal terms, we win success and find solutions only in the difficult effort of each day, in the repetition of simple acts, in the steadfast pursuit of simple aims. Today there is a national energy program, not because of a single herculean effort but because of the daily efforts by millions of people -- many of them not in government at all -- each lending support in a personal small way. There is in the life of each of us this opportunity to make in daily life a contribution, however small, to the national whole. And it is this dignity of daily life which makes America unique, which imbues it with a special quality, which makes the whole of our nation greater than the sum of its parts.

Finally, the Fifth Law: reward risk-takers.

I am deeply troubled by a national attitude which could, I believe, if left unchecked, be devastating to our future, particularly our political future. We seem intent upon practicing the old art of "shooting the messenger" if we don't like the message. Particularly at a time of change and challenge, the implications of this compulsion are potentially disastrous.

It was Demosthenes who told the Athenians 2,000 years ago: "Our peril comes from those who seek to please us, rather than serve us." And it is no less true today than it was then.

Today we can ill-afford to define leadership as the art of telling us what we want to hear.

Today we can ill-afford to reward risk-taking and integrity with political defeat.

For the message we would send across the country would be disastrous. Avoid controversy, we would say. Turn back the forces of change, don't guide them, we would vainly say. For all those in the political process -- and again, that goes far beyond the category of elected officials at all levels, it includes those who work in government, those who serve on boards and commissions, those who look to government for meaningful assistance and clear signals -- the message would be that we prefer to avoid the truth rather than confront it. We prefer to ignore hard reality for pious simplicities. We prefer clinging to the shell of the past rather than taking a hand in shaping our future.

For the real challenge before us, it seems to me, is one of imagination and maturity and courage, to see our future, to build the way toward it, to pursue it relentlessly. We have the talent -- it is here in this audience today and across the country. We have the resources and the history and the will. Now we must harness these forces, marshal them in common pursuit of our common goals, and, working together, take heed of the words of the poet Goethe: "Whatever you can do, or dream you can, begin it. Boldness has genius, power and magic in it."

Good luck to you all.

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