

Mesa State College
Grand Junction, Colorado
Distinguished Alumni Award Remarks
By Tim Scates

October 24, 2003.

Thank you –

- Rick Adleman, Director of Alumni Relations, for the courtesies extended to my family and me.
- Bonnie Henson, President of the Alumni Association, who sent me a letter in early May about this award. At that time, she could not have known that I delayed a response for a couple of reasons. One of them is that, in May, the betting odds were that I would be posthumously recognized.
- I give thanks to the committee who selected me for the award. The second reason, for my delay last May in responding, is that I appreciated any delays of a public announcement. This made less likely any efforts to organize a recall vote.
- Lynne and I also thank Dr. Gingerich and his wife for their hospitality and courtesies.

I offer evidence that I am a lucky guy!

- Over 50 years ago, Lou Gehrig of NY Yankee fame, said, “Today, I am the luckiest man on the face of the earth.”
- Today, I say that, of anyone known to me personally, I am the luckiest man in the world.
- You may be luckier than me. Nevertheless, I can testify to the following events:
- In 1945 – At age two years – with me inside the house - our family home in Clifton burned to the ground. I was pronounced dead, and placed in an ambulance for delivery to Martin’s Mortuary. That pronouncement proved to be inaccurate.
- In 1952 – At age nine years, at The Falls of the Grand Valley Canal, located east of Mantey Heights, I nearly drowned – rescued by one of my brothers. We waited nearly 25 years to tell my parents.
- In 1969 & 70 – As a 26 year old draftee, in South Vietnam with The First Infantry Division, I survived nearly 400 nights and a few days of jungle

combat along the Ho Chi Minh Trails along the South Vietnam & Cambodian border. The movie “Platoon” purports to be about my unit in the Big Red One.

- In 1997 – After a diagnosis two years earlier of a rare neuromuscular disease, Myasthenia Gravis, I underwent an open-heart Thymectomy procedure experimentally to attempt remission of the slow destruction of my skeletal muscles. Two post-surgical pulmonary embolisms were nearly fatal – the remission attempt failed – and since then steroidal and other drugs have stabilized the effects of the disease.
- In 2002 & early 2003 – Over a period of some six months, I had many undetected pulmonary embolism episodes until, in early 2003, a VQ lung scan revealed 44 blood clots nested in my lungs. For two months thereafter, I had the thinnest blood this side of rat poisons!
- In 2003 – Tests to determine the cause of the pulmonary embolisms revealed advanced inoperable pancreatic cancer that had metastasized in the liver. A CT scan revealed a baseball-sized tumor on the pancreas, ten large marble sized tumors in the liver, and cancer protein cells in the blood in an amount 175 times the maximum normal range.
- In early April of this year, my oncologist (who is wonderful) offered us Chemotherapy as a chance for a few additional weeks, the prediction of losing all of the hair on my head, quickly losing 70 or 80 pounds, suffering excruciating pain, dealing with the side effects of Chemotherapy, and becoming terminally sick. I started Chemotherapy.
- My family and friends were at my side and they had me in their prayers for the Chemotherapy sessions, other tests, and doctor consultations.
- Over the course of weeks, I shed the pain that had accompanied the treatment for the blood clots, gained 30 pounds, dealt with the side effects of Chemotherapy, and came to realize that the prediction of my impending demise is not well founded.
- Last week after an MRI, we received confirmation that the tumors are gone. Given my circumstances at the time of the cancer diagnosis, my doctors say that I have had a dramatic response to Chemotherapy.
- Given that I have shrunk over 1” in height, gained 65 pounds, and did not lose a single hair on my head during the treatment of Myasthenia Gravis

and Pancreatic Cancer, imagine what will happen if I am diagnosed with another terminal disease that is to be treated with pizza and ice cream. I cannot wait!

- Moreover, I am pleased to testify that I am the luckiest man I know!

There have been events that have shocked me.

- After what I thought was a mostly typical childhood and youth in this community, one of the events that most shocked me occurred at a church in Clifton where about 50 of my family members gathered for a reunion – this was some 20 years after I graduated from G.J. Central High School.
- In the church, a former high school music /choir teacher, Carrie Spitzer, who was loved by my family, stood directly before me and openly wept in the presence of all of my extended family -- my wife, my daughters, my brothers, sisters-in-law, nephews, and nieces. Mrs. Spitzer said to them and me, “I am so happy for you because I always thought that you would go to prison.”
- What Carrie Spitzer did not know at that time was that an elementary principal, Mrs. Blackwell, with tears of joy amidst remembrances of my schoolyard anarchy, previously had said the same thing to my father and me – right down to the prison reference.
- Please understand that I had no police record except for speeding tickets. I was just a little too juiced with energy. I did not understand that if you do not know where you are going, any road will get you there!
- When I started college at Mesa, I made a vow, that I never revealed to anyone at the time, to change my personality and find a path that lead to a productive future.
- In 1961-63, I attended Mesa State (then Mesa Jr. College) and – after two years at Mesa -- was shocked when the Mesa faculty selected me as an outstanding student. I was a 6’2” beanpole, weighed 125 pounds, and had a head full of carrot red hair.
- After transferring to Colorado State College (now UNC) I was shocked in 1965 when the students elected me as student government president. I was

still a 6'2" beanpole, weighed 145 pounds, and still had a head full of carrot red hair.

- I was shocked in 1965 when the brightest, loveliest women on campus – a national competitor in speech events and a well-known sorority student – married me. Lynne has been my wife for 38 years. I am a lucky guy!
- Just prior to college graduation, in 1966 I was shocked when UNC President Darrell Holmes offered me a job in the President's Office as his assistant, but then I was really shocked when that was trumped by an offer to be a legislative aide to Congressman Wayne Aspinall – a position that I had not sought. I was now 6'3", still weighed 145 pounds, and still had a head full of carrot red hair.
- In 1968, I was working for Congressman Aspinall and attending law school at night – at 6'3", now weighing 220 pounds, and with a head full of carrot red hair. I was shocked when drafted by the US Army for the Vietnam War – and 14 months later returned from Vietnam at 6'3", weighing 170 pounds, and nearly bald.
- I was shocked when I graduated from law school at American University and, in 1972, got the job that I really wanted with a law firm in Denver. It led to 30 years of a fruitful and enjoyable practice of law in finance, real estate, and corporate law.

This is an award preceded by grace in my life.

- I have given testimony of events that shocked me and how I am lucky.
- It is by grace that my family heritage – centered on core values based upon our faith – came from loving parents, brothers, sisters-in-law, and my wife's parents. These persons modeled for me an uncommon legacy. They are the values manifest in personal relationships that are easily adapted to common living.
- It is by grace that, since our childhood and after approximately 55 years, the common bond of friendships exists with Alan and Judy Workman, Joe High, and Jim Stewart – all of whom are here today. They can give testimony that – collectively -- we have not seen ourselves as uncommon, but as persons in a long-term common friendship.

- It was the grace of Congressman Aspinall, who tolerated my youthful eagerness and mentored my professional and personal development. Often Mr. A. was like another earthly father. I was common, when he was making uncommon contributions.
- The grace of wonderful clients and law firm colleagues has allowed me to enjoy unusual opportunities in the practice of law. I was common, and allowed to pursue uncommon opportunities.
- In recent years, it has been the grace of my daughter, Julie Ferris, who has taught me the joy of co-founding and operating a business together.
- It is the grace of my family – my wife Lynne, our daughters Julie and Jill, our sons-in-law Mike and David – that they love and support my professional, business, and personal interests.
- Beyond that, we share affection and love in our family that is common to us – that epitomizes the dignity of each of us. A Chemotherapy session and the Chemo blahs are not so bad when your family is with you.
- In so many ways, I represent the common man and woman, not the exceptionally talented person and not the person whose achievements are exceptional.
- For the most part, I have sought to take advantage of some opportunities in my lifetime within the lifetime of the opportunities.

I now come to the influence of Mesa State in my life.

- A product of Grand Junction Central High School, in 1961 I came to Mesa committed to the start of a college education and the fun to be experienced on a college campus. Shortly after starting college, Dean Jay Tolman asked me to tutor English to a new foreign student – Parviz Khooshnoodinejad. When I met him, he barely knew anything more than the words “Coca Cola”, “hamburger”, “how much?” and “thank you.”
- In that experience, I realized that he was somewhat lost and needed a few people to show the way.
- Beyond whatever I contributed to the education of Parviz, I learned a few things. I consciously applied them

1. I learned that, over the next several years, equipped with a college education I wanted to be comfortable in my own skin and effectively deal with other persons, events, and society.

That consciousness nurtured a slightly different identity than the image in the mind of my high school choir teacher and elementary principal. I wanted an identity consistent with my family heritage and the knowledge that I was acquiring in my classes at Mesa.

2. I learned that I enhanced my education when, for reasons never entirely clear to me, as a freshman at Mesa a hunger and thirst for knowledge strongly gripped me – a condition and attitude that made both my studies and grades easier.
3. I learned that there is a synergy and magic of classmates, professors, classrooms, study experiences, and the fun of being in a campus environment.
4. I learned that my personal identity, the hunger and thirst for knowledge, and the magic of pursuing an education on a college campus was the place where:
 - I sought to cross over from the threshold of provincialism to an understanding of the societies of people on this small planet – regardless of our customs, faiths, histories, and differences.
 - I sought a place to cross over from the threshold of limited knowledge and inflated self-importance to the opportunity of unanticipated knowledge and some measure of humbleness.
 - I sought a place to cross over from the threshold of youthful anarchy (Mrs. Spitzer had me pegged!) to become a productive citizen.

Eventually, over time measured as much be decades as years, as a fellow citizen, especially as a husband, parent, and grandparent, I desire to share the common legacy with you and all others – as a nation of people over the past 220 years – who have kept the social contract of democratic traditions – inching forward to guarantee the dignity of every person.

This is the most fundamental goal of every common man and woman. It is among the best possible legacies of democratic institutions. It is on the college campus,

like Mesa State, where some of us first seriously understood that an education includes tools to equip us to advance the dignity of every person.

I am pleased to accept this award. I thank Mesa State for investing in me when some thought the return on the investment was doubtful. I know that this award may shock some people. I know that I am a lucky man! I accept it on behalf of every person who shares the common pursuit of human dignity.

Thank you!