

Class Reunion speech by Robert Tabachnikoff

As I look around, I realize that we have more in common today than we had back at Central. We are all members of AARP, we all collect Social Security, we are all eligible for Medicare and we all get senior discounts wherever we go. So far so good.

I used to be very interested in the theories of Freud and Jung about the phenomenon of aging and Erik Erikson's famous doctrine of Integrity and Despair. Well my friends, forget about it. Today we are living in the era of Zoloft, Paxil, Viagra and mood stabilizers; at last we are coming into the SCI if era of Brave New World or 1984 better late than never.

In an anthology of short stories, I read that the best reunions are in dreams or with ghosts. If I believed that, I wouldn't be here tonight. So I ask myself, why am I here tonight? Maybe it's like salmon, swimming upstream to spawn I know for sure I did not come here to spawn!!!! Maybe I want to remember girls, my first dates, the prom, driving to Atlantic City late at night on a double date. I want to remember the excitement of getting my driver's license. I want to remember my acceptance to Penn (and forget my rejection to Princeton). It is here, I remember my parents most vividly and their pride in their sons Robert in the 206 and Barry in 212. They thought Central was a great place and they were right. I want to remember what it was like not to watch the news or agonize over politics and government scandals. I want to remember what it felt like to be carefree.

About 25 years ago, a neurologist and a Central Alumnus, met my uncle and asked about me. He was told that I was an OB/GYN in Sarasota, Fla. " That's all ?" he said, " I expected big things of him." Later when I heard the story, I was puzzled. I thought being an OB/GYN in Sarasota was not all that shabby. What did he expect of me? What would he have thought if he had learned that 5 years later I was in the Army and in Belgium, or that in 1990 I was sleeping in a tent in the desert of Saudi Arabia, poised to enter Iraq? Sounds like life was going from bad to worse. I came home safe a sound but I didn't become a general. I did get to teach at the Medical School at the university of South Carolina. I know it's not Harvard or Yale, but I enjoyed teaching and the students enjoyed me.

So why am I here? Probably to recapture the feeling of youth and immortality, the confidence that I could do anything, go anywhere.

A while back, a colleague said to my face "You could have done a lot better, but you could have done a lot worse". What the hell did that mean? Was it an insult or was it sarcasm? I had been thinking about this for a while when one day, on MSNBC, I saw a familiar name : Ira Einhorn . Many of you know the sad story of the murder of Holly Maddox, a Bryn Mawr coed. I knew Ira both at Central and later at Penn and never thought of him as a violent person, certainly not as a murderer. But he did jump bail and was on the run for about 20 years until he was arrested in France and extradited and convicted of murder. He will spend the rest of his life in a Federal penitentiary. Ira did a lot worse than any of us.

Epilogue

I retired 8 years ago and have found time to read, travel and make music. Unfortunately, I have discovered that I am not nearly as talented a musician as I thought I was and that it probably was a smart decision to study medicine.

Anneke and I just celebrated our forty-fourth anniversary and we spend as much time as possible with our children and grandchildren. We live in a small town in Southern New Hampshire and are surrounded by apple orchards, horse and dairy farms, fields and forests.

Most of the things that have happened to me in the past fifty years were not planned or even well thought out. Events occurred in rapid sequence, with lots of compromise and adjustments.....still, I know it all worked out for the best.

I wish all of you good health and financial security, without which happiness becomes a struggle. I feel proud to be counted among the 206 class alumni.