

President's Charge to the Class of 2009
Commencement Ceremony, May 9, 2009
President Thomas C. Galligan Jr.

I know right now our students are thinking about one thing—graduation—and hoping we will move on with this ceremony so we can get to the conferral of the degrees. And we will. But for now, I want to ask you to take a deep breath, sit back, reflect, listen, and enjoy the moment because moments like these pass too quickly.

While today is a day of celebration, it is also a day to remember the good times, the not so good times, and all the friends you made during your time at Colby-Sawyer. One of those friends was your classmate, Corey Worsham, who passed away in 2006. For Corey, there is a chair that stands empty today. That is what his classmates wanted, for Corey to be with them in spirit. Corey's family has also joined us today to congratulate you and share in your joy. They are part of our Colby-Sawyer family.

So, while you cannot wait to graduate, please take a moment now to remember Corey; remember, if you knew him well, your time together in the residence hall, in the dining hall, in the classroom, or on the soccer field. Let's take a moment to honor our friend, classmate, teammate, student and family member, remember those moments with Corey Worsham, in silence.

Thank you. It is, after all, those little moments that add up to a wonderful life, while the big moments, like walking across the stage today, can get lost or confused over time. So, cherish the moments--whether it was a moment in class when that intellectual light bulb went on or the moment you fell in or out of love or the moment you won a championship or the moment someone bought a piece of artwork from you or the moment you finished your Capstone project or the moments you realized the dining hall was serving chicken nuggets or the moment you won at Whacky Bingo. Whatever that moment was, grab it and hold onto it.

For anyone who likes movies, I would recommend a little film directed by and starring Orson Welles and released in 1941 called Citizen Kane. It is the story of one man, Charles Foster Kane, his creation of a media empire and his insatiable lust for power, recognition, and love. Citizen Kane was based on the life of the newspaper magnate, William Randolph Hearst. It was

controversial when released, both in its treatment of its fictionalized subject and in its film technique. Today it is one of a handful of films that legitimately vie for the title of the Greatest American Film ever made. The film begins as Kane, an old man in a palatial estate with a big “No Trespassing” sign on the gate, lies clutching a snow globe. Then, he utters his last word—“Rosebud”—and, as he leaves this world, he drops the snow globe which shatters on the ground.

As the story of Kane’s death breaks, reporters rush out to try and unlock the mystery of “Rosebud.” The film follows one reporter’s journey to unlock the mystery. Was Rosebud a person? A lover? A pet? Who knows? Does unlocking that mystery hold the key to Kane’s life, his drive, his successes, and his failures? The reporter never finds out. He never discovers the meaning of the word Rosebud. But we viewers do find out. In one of the earliest scenes in the film we see Kane, as a boy, sledding. Then, his sledding is interrupted by his mother who calls him in and informs him that she is sending him away because he is heir to one of the world’s largest gold mines. It is young Kane’s unexpected wealth that separates him from his mother and sends him off on his quest for power and celebrity. Then, about two hours later, at the very end of the film, as the reporter gives up his quest to discover the meaning of Rosebud, the camera pans to a group of workers burning some of Kane’s old possessions. One of the workers throws a sled into a furnace and, as the flames consume the sled, the camera zooms in on a word painted on the sled. By now you have figured out what that word is, even though everyone in the film looking for big meaning could not. That word on the sled is “Rosebud.”

So, you see after all the incredible successes, battles, failures, triumphs, loves, and losses in the life of Charles Foster Kane, the one thing he remembered at the end, the one thing on his mind as he died was a sled—a symbol of perhaps the last truly happy moment in his life. The little things, and the little moments often matter more to us than the big ones.

When I asked my own father what he remembered most from his childhood he did not tell me about honors, awards, or accomplishments. He remembered wagon rides and ice cream. When I asked what he recalled about college and law school he remembered the food—favorably—and the stories he used to hear from visiting missionaries who were returning from far off continents. When he graduated from law school he remembered being afraid he could never succeed in the world if he wasn’t able to take a late afternoon nap. He remembered a

friend of his from Oklahoma who had a raccoon coat and a car called a Stutz Bearcat. He remembered the little moments, and he remembered the special people.

Like your families, my wife, Susan, and I have a child who is graduating from college this spring. As Sarah, like you, prepares to enter the post-college world, I remember a lot but, in particular, I remember that her first sentence was “I did it.” Neither Susan nor I can remember what she did but we remember she said it! I remember her dance recitals and her birthday party at McDonald’s—an event she shared with her older brother, Patrick, whose birthday is just a few weeks after hers. I recall when she was experimenting with some sort of exercise wheel on our stone kitchen floor and cut her chin open. I remember the friends: Emily, Jennifer, Megan, Madison, Libbie, Julie, Caitlin, and more. I remember running the first ten miles of the Cincinnati marathon with her until she picked up the pace and ran away from me. I remember a wonderful combination of little moments and people.

As you graduate and depart from your-home-away-from home in New London, you will carry many memories of Colby-Sawyer with you. These memories of defining moments and of people you have come to know and love here have shaped your college experience, and many of them will be with you all your life. As you prepare for your walk across the stage today to retrieve your diploma and for the many big changes to come in your lives, remember to cherish the moments—both the big and the small—because it is all these moments and the people in your lives that will shape and guide and bring joy and meaning to your lives. Have a great one. Thank you.