MOTIVATIONAL SPEECH

FOR

SHAWN PERRY

Hello everyone!!! It is a pleasure and a real privilege to be able to take some time to share some thoughts about my favorite subject… **YOU**!!! Really!! I know, I know, in the privacy of your own homes, in your own way, you might occasionally take some time to contemplate about life, raging “maturity,” how the heck you got where you are, and if “the parade will pass you by.” I am here to tell you that if it does, that wasn’t your parade!!! You have all spent the better part of your well-lived lives to get here, and now that you’re older and wiser, it’s time to celebrate and enjoy!! Every day we see slogans and reminders that “Sixty is the new forty,” and “Seventy is the new fifty.” I wish 250 dollars was the new Million… and in a way it IS, but that’s another lecture!! (**Wait for the laugh**). We’re bombarded with inspirational messages that tell us that we’ve earned our wrinkles because we’ve laughed, our grey hairs are rewards for caring about loved ones, and scars show we’ve lived. The truth is, we have, you have, and the best is yet to come…. **Ya Gotta believe**!! John Barrymore said, “A man is not old until regrets take the place of dreams.” I have two things to say about that quote. The first is that we are here to acknowledge ourselves and make sure we **ALWAYS** have our dreams, and the second is…. if you know or remember who John Barrymore is, then congratulations!!! You either are **MUCH** older than you look or you’re **REALLY** interested in twentieth century entertainment and popular culture…. and if anyone’s first thought was that he was Drew Barrymore’s grandfather, you’re probably a little too young to be here today!! (**Wait for the laugh**).

A man named John Wagner said, “ Don’t let age get you down. It’s too hard to get back up.” (**Wait for the laugh**). Aha!!! You laugh now… who would **EVER** have thought that the day would come when you were able to relate to the jokes and maxims that used to make your parents and grandparents nod in familiarity? Well, for many of you, that time has either arrived or is approaching, but here’s the good news…. Baby Boomers and their somewhat older big brothers and sisters are the youngest senior citizens this world has ever had the privilege to know!! Those of you that are just about to “hit your stride” and welcome the perks of that new “status” also know that age is really just a number. The most important part of being older is that now you have the **wisdom** to appreciate all that you’ve waited for.

It was Oscar Wilde who said, “ I am not young enough to know everything.” He has a point. Some may see the certainty of “knowing everything” and dogged conviction to maintaining principles in young people as what some call, “the arrogance of youth.” One of the truly great advantages of being older is having the wisdom and experience to know that you don’t know it all; in fact being mature can be defined with a simple phrase. “I don’t know what I don’t know.” Gone are the days… for most of us… of jumping to conclusions and forming opinions that lack concrete foundations. We know better. We know and understand the consequences when we don’t keep our word. We thrive in the principles of accountability and responsibility- even when we don’t feel like it. We know that there is nothing we MUST do, but now we’re old enough to consciously choose what we really WANT to do. If we have lived long enough and well enough… at any level…. a person does not need to have material wealth to have common sense and personal satisfaction… then we have an appreciation of what it takes to succeed in life… and that has **EVERYTHING** to do with defining success in our own unique terms. A mature person who is comfortable in his or her own skin knows that life is not a competition against anyone else but yourself. It’s a race to see how much we can do for ourselves, how much simple joy we can allow ourselves to have, how good we can be to our bodies and minds, and how much we truly respect and admire our talents, our wisdom, and the contribution we make to ourselves and the world.

According to an article about global health and aging found on the National Institute on Aging website, people born in 1900 were for the most part not expected to live to be much more than 50 years old. In East Asia, life expectancy was a low 45 years old in 1950 but has increased to more than 74 years in this day and age. It is predicted that by the year 2050, the chance of living to 100 or more will have increased by over 1000% from 2010 projections. That can mean only one thing…. it’s time to get busy!! (**Wait for the laugh**).

Thanks to technology and medical advancements, we’re living longer, we’re feeling better, we’re generally healthier, and we’re more informed.

The photographer Mario Testino teaches us, “My favorite words are **possibilities,** **opportunities**, and **curiosity**.” I think if you are curious, you create opportunities, and then if you open doors, you create possibilities.” Mr. Testino, himself a baby boomer, is considered to be one of the great fashion photographers of our time. Apparently he practices what he preaches. He is still very active and his work constantly appears in publications around the world. He has been awarded an OBE by Queen Elizabeth and from the looks of things; he doesn’t seem to be slowing down. We can all learn from him… from his interest in his work, his passion for life, and his clear and obvious point of view. His success is no accident. He puts himself out there, even at almost 62 years of age. Mario Testino is no different than any one of us.

In Matthew 5: 13-16, we learn, “You are the salt of the earth, but if salt has lost its taste, how shall its saltiness be restored? It is no longer good for anything except being thrown out and trampled under people’s feet. You are the light of the world. A city set on a hill cannot be hidden. Nor do people light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on a stand and it gives light to the whole house. In the same way, let your light shine before others so that they may see your good works and give glory to your father who is in heaven.”

Ladies and gentlemen, we are here today so that I can make it very clear to each one of you that **YOU** and **YOU** and **YOU** (**point to the audience**) are **THE SALT OF THE EARTH**. Your contribution to the world is just beginning. Each one of you is a unique light. You bring the flavor… the spice… the missing ingredient to the party. Others may have youth but you have something far more valuable…. you have experience. You have the capacity to be more self aware- to recognize what it is that you’ve dreamed about… now it’s time to make a plan and put it into action. Everything you’ve done up to this point was merely dress rehearsal and each one of you has an **ABUNDANCE** of energy and resources within you to find your dreams and live full, rich fun and interesting lives. Too many of our friends and neighbors, family members and colleagues sit around waiting for life to happen to them and that is **NOT** the way to find true happiness or personal satisfaction. You may have a different kind of energy than you did when you were younger and that’s fine. Learn to be adaptable to suit your needs… that’s the first key to success.

So having said all of that, what’s **YOUR** dream? What’s that **ONE** thing that’s been on your bucket list that you thought was just not possible to achieve or attain? Picture just one thing…. for starters…. and raise your hands when you’ve got that thing…. As soon as I see every hand raised… and for you SHY ones, just a crook of the elbow will tell me you’re on board!!! (**Wait for the laugh**)… okay…. I see it’s working…. and you **KNOW** what this means? It means **YOU** can **STILL DREAM**!!! Congratulations!!!

Now… what’s the **SECOND** step you would have to take to make that dream come true? What is needed to make that dream a reality? Don’t make it some big, hard to reach, unattainable goal… if you were to put one foot in front of the other, where would it lead you? What’s your path? For some of you it might be to improve your health while others may have always had a dream of a second career. Think of what’s TEMPORARILY stopping you from living a fuller and more complete life and then see what you might be able to do to ‘shake up your molecules” and start the process to personal satisfaction…

The thing to always keep in mind is this: where there’s life there really is **HOPE**. And every journey has its bumps and twists and turns, but that’s what we truly live for. It may get uncomfortable and you may be challenged and confronted, but each one of you is young enough, resourceful enough, and vital enough to make your dreams a reality.

The first step will always be the steepest, deepest stretch, but I invite you to persevere and see where your new reinvented road might lead you. And keep something else in mind… As well as there are resources to support your place in life, you may discover that your satisfaction lies in being an inspiration for others…. Try to examine your life and your contribution to your world- your family, friends and community, and see where you might be needed…are there local schools or organizations that could use your wisdom? Is there a blank notebook waiting for your deep thoughts that are just aching to be a novel? Is there a garden that needs your watchful eye and green thumb, or an exercise class with a stationary bike just aching for you to keep it company for a few hours a week? There is so much to discover right in our own worlds, and you just have to dream and then put the pieces together to create the richest experience for yourselves… and others.

The English comedienne Dawn French had this to say,” Why would I moan about getting older- what’s to worry about???” You know what? She’s right. Having the privilege of getting and being older really is a gift denied to so many, so let’s celebrate US… and make the best of these wonderful lives we have!! Have fun, dream big, and thank you all!!