**GRADUATION SPEECH**

**FOR**

**PHILLIP CLINGAN**

Hello everyone. To family and friends, faculty and alumni, distinguished guests and esteemed Deans, I would like to take this opportunity to acknowledge and extend individual and collective thanks and appreciation for all of the support and mentoring that has been so liberally shared among my fellow graduates throughout our tenure as students here at \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_. Leonardo Da Vinci said, “Learning never exhausts the mind.” I prescribe to that theory…. In fact, and I think you’ll all agree, that as the saying goes, “The more you know…” the more one’s **capacity** to know grows geometrically as well. It has been a privilege to attend this course and to earn my Doctor of Psychology degree. I know I speak for my classmates and colleagues when I say that it has been an incredible experience to challenge our depth of understanding while honing our skills and building our reserves that will be integral to supporting others to, in turn, discover and sustain authenticity in all phases of human interaction.

I have had the opportunity and the challenge, throughout my life, to be involved in some incredible experiences. From my early years in Bixby, Oklahoma, where I learned the value of teamwork…. GO Spartans!!… to my twenty-one year career in the military, where I proudly served in the U.S. Army through eleven deployments in twenty-six countries, to my education in Law and Justice and legal studies, and on to my teaching career, one word comes to mind…. **Insight**. I have discovered that each experience and every lesson informs the other and works to deepen the understanding gained that I am able to share with those i encounter. While I have dedicated my life and professional career in support of others and I stand before you searching for the most pithy and meaningful message I might possibly impart, I must share something said by the English author Mark Haddon. He said, “No one wants to know how clever you are. They don't want an insight into your mind, thrilling as it might be. They want an insight into **their own**.” I believe we are all vehicles of change and understanding and as I work with others to learn and to teach, every “**AHA**!” moment serves to inform the next.

To that point, insights one gets in the process of expanding one’s experience, are not always found in the larger moments of life, but as we go on we learn to appreciate the smaller incidents that seem fleeting but stay with us and serve to effect tremendous change. Like a trim tab on a boat’s rudder, although it is a seemingly insignificant bit of the scheme, when put into use, it steers the vessel on course.

We all have those small moments that stay with us…. That wind up creating a ripple effect that spreads and emanates throughout our lives. I remember many years ago reading a book called “The Razor’s Edge” by W. Somerset Maugham. As I recall, the lead character was looking for the meaning of life… he needed to find depth and purpose. Through a long, soul searching journey, he wound up meeting a wise man who lived in seclusion on a mountain. Our hero was told that this wise man would place him on the path to enlightenment. The wise man gave him a pile of books and sent him to climb further up the mountain with the caveat to not return until he “got it.” Off he went to discover the meaning of life.

As he got to the top of the mountain, he found some shelter and began to read the books, the only thing he discovered was that he was cold…. Really **REALLY** cold. He kept reading until he could no longer bear the conditions and he did the only thing he could to survive…. He started to burn the books to create some warmth in order to save his own life. When his time on the mountain top was done, he went back down and met the wise man again. Upon explaining what happened, he realized he had truly gotten the secret of life… **SURVIVAL**. My memory of that story has stayed with me and that insight has guided me for many years.

Each one of us travels a unique path in life and as we travel, we learn. That’s why we’re here…to recognize the lessons placed in our path, to pay attention, and to have the privilege of insight… of appreciating enlightenment, which, even in its simplest incarnation, is the greatest gift we can receive. Today’s graduation marks a highlight in the lives of my fellow graduates and myself, but I invite all of us to look inside and find those seemingly small moments that stay with us… pay attention to them…

I want to thank all of you again for the honor of learning with you, and I would like to thank my family…. My wife, Linda, our five children, (**Do you want to name them individually?**), and most importantly, to my grandson Elliot, who, at three weeks old, is the purest source of insight I know! Thank you and congratulations!