

Bill Ruppert's Commencement Address
University of Missouri School of Natural Resources
Saturday, December 15, 2012 11:30am

Dean Payne
Director Ryan
Faculty
Parents of the graduates
And the stars of today's event - **YOU, THE GRADUATES!**

Good Afternoon!

When I mentioned to my wife that my commencement speech today would be limited to 5 - 8 minutes, she replied: **"This will be a first - good luck!"** She knows I enjoy sharing information with people - I suppose this characteristic inspired me to pursue a career in marketing and sales.

I promise, I WILL be brief and to the point...

As students of MIZZOU, we all have all enjoyed a memorable and favorite professor. As I have spoken to a number of School of Natural Resources graduates currently employed within my industry, the name of a professor here at the SNR is frequently mentioned, actually a professor who is here with us today
- **you know who you are**😊

During my tenure as a MIZZOU student, my favorite professor was not only an outstanding educator, but probably the only GENIUS I have ever had a close association. This professor made learning:

- **interesting**
- **enjoyable**

- **and HIGHLY APPLICABLE** (very important for my particular learning style!)

He eventually became an important mentor and close friend as I pursued a student project here on campus.

One day, me being a very non-smoker, I ASKED, Professor, WHY do you smoke so many cigarettes?

His reply:

“Bill, I realize smoking is not good for my health but it’s something I do REALLY well”

An ACTIVITY I am particularly good at is removing and managing for invasive woody plants at my southern Boone County rural property. A few weekends ago, while removing and burning mass quantities of

- **multiflora rose** (I would like to know who to blame for introduction of this nasty pest to North America!)
- **autumn olive**
- **and bush honeysuckle**

I had some quality time to think about beneficial content for my speech today.

During my 5 years, yes, 5 years (I was on the extended student plan...), of receiving a great education at this institution, MIZZOU ultimately provided me with a TOOLBOX made with such basic knowledge associated with:

- **the written and spoken language**
- **sociology**
- **psychology**
- **logic**
- **math**
- **AND science**

During the latter years of my MIZZOU student experience, I enjoyed the opportunity to lead and engage a student designed, student funded, student implemented and student maintained small botanical garden once located behind the CAFNR Ag Building. The garden, named the **Woodland and Floral Gardens**, provided a student experience that began to ADD TOOLS to my emerging toolbox. I began to understand the principals of collaboration and team work necessary to realize the completion of a landscape project. Projects are more than brick and mortar, they are about lasting relationships and knowledge building.

Upon graduation, the first 10 years of career experience was gained while working here at MIZZOU. My first 10 years on the career trail included working for wonderful line-up of visionary leaders:

- Starting with the Chancellor
- the Director of Institutional Research and Planning
- the Vice Chancellor for Administrative Services,
- the Director of Campus Facilities
- and the Campus Architect (I ultimately, and appropriately, worked my way down the administrative chain of command . . . a story for another venue...)

While working with these leaders, who appreciated my talents but were not directly connected to my professional specialty, significantly ADDED TOOLS to my toolbox by mentoring me with such skill sets such as:

- **communication protocols**
- **technique for authoring letters and project proposals** - accomplishment - working with MO Highway Dept to place directional signs leading to MU for the very first time
- **understanding the administrative thought process required for realizing goals** - wow, this is a BIG one!

All professional experiences realized during and after your tenure at MIZZOU ARE HIGHLY VALUABLE - don't discount those that may not seem to apply to your core area of professional interests.

Tools acquired during my first 10 years working at MIZZOU have exponentially increased during the last 23 years working in the private sector and working for my own company. I often smile when I think of the impact of the skills (or tools) acquired at MIZZOU. The University of Missouri provided me with both an outstanding education and early years of experience.

ALSO - A WORD OF ACQUIRED WISDOM (wisdom is only gained with age):

during your professional career, I encourage you to consider IN-KIND service to BOTH professional organizations associated with your industry AND non-profit charitable organizations. You will expand your personal and professional perspective and experience AND you will continue to add TOOLS to your toolbox - both knowledge and people connections. (My mother often told me: You can NEVER know too many people!)

In other words, GET INVOLVED beyond the work day!

Once again, CONGRATULATIONS and ENJOY your life of adding tools to the fine quality toolbox provided by your MIZZOU education!