

University of Florida
College of Public Health and Health Professions
Alumnus of the Year

Speech by Robert C. “Hap” Davidge
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To be selected as 2008-2009 Alumnus of the Year is certainly a surprise and quite flattering. Thank you, especially those of you who were responsible for the selection. It puts me in mind of Mel Brooks and his great line from “Robin Hood Men in Tights”: “It’s nice to be king.” Well, it’s nice to be recognized, even for just a few moments. I am particularly pleased on this occasion to share with you the secret of my success — my wife of 48 years, Drew. Thank you! I am challenged however to offer remarks, even for a few minutes, equal to the honor I feel, moreover, equal to your attention. I will try to do you justice.

The thing that probably sets me apart from most everyone else in the room is I am now retired. Barring an economic catastrophe, I will stay retired and my career has not only peaked, it is finished. So how do I view it from the “brown side of the sod” so to speak. In many ways my career was rather pedestrian. I didn’t solve world hunger or find a cure for AIDS yet I did have some success and I couldn’t be happier. I never entered healthcare to make a lot of money and neither did I think about awards or recognition. I had two specific goals: I needed to provide for my family and I wanted to do gratifying work. Fate and the U.S. Air Force made me a medic before going to college so I had a head start in selecting a field of interest. After finishing undergraduate work in accounting and finance I wanted to do more.

The University of Florida had an upstart master’s degree program in health care administration and offered me an assistantship. I had a family and needed the money. My recently-acquired background in finance helped me decide. The rest is history. I was not the

smartest guy in the class nor did I make the best grades. I did make good grades however and I worked hard. Neither was I one of those people who had a long-range career plan. As homely as it sounds, my plan was to work hard and do good things. If I did that, maybe good things would happen. I did and they did.

There is something profound about my simple career and I suggest to you it has to do with other people. We are all like that turtle on a fencepost — he didn't get there by himself. Look around, especially in education and health care, there is a universe of people who will back and support others who are striving to make good things happen. Work hard, help others and you too can have a successful and satisfying career.

My final thought on this occasion is a quote from an unknown author:

BE CAREFUL

Be careful of your thoughts,
thoughts become words.

Be careful of your words,
words become actions.

Be careful of your actions,
actions become habits.

Be careful of your habits,
habits become character.

Be careful of your character,
character becomes destiny.

Thank you again!