

# Texas Woman's University

DENTON DALLAS HOUSTON



Excerpts from the  
**Commencement Addresses**

2009-2010

# Table of Contents

**Ms. Mary Ann Odom. . . . .4**

Ceremony I – December 19, 2009  
College of Arts and Sciences

**Ms. Donna Israel . . . . .5**

Ceremony II – December 19, 2009  
College of Health Sciences  
General Studies Program (College of Arts and Sciences)  
School of Library and Information Studies (College of Professional Education)

**Dr. Ray Braswell. . . . .6**

Ceremony III – December 19, 2009  
College of Professional Education  
College of Nursing

**Mr. Chris Reading . . . . .7**

Houston Ceremony – December 20, 2009  
Institute of Health Sciences – Houston Center

**Ms. Rae Lynn McFarlin . . . . .8**

Ceremony I – May 14, 2010  
College of Arts and Sciences

**Ms. Phebe Phillips. . . . .9**

Ceremony II – May 14, 2010  
School of Management (College of Arts and Sciences)  
Department of Kinesiology and Nutrition and Food Sciences and  
Program in Health Care Administration (College of Health Sciences)

**Dr. Michael Wiebe. . . . .10**

Ceremony III – May 15, 2010  
College of Professional Education  
Department of Communication Sciences and Disorders (College of Health Sciences)

**Dr. Ann Scanlon McGinity. . . . .11**

Ceremony IV – May 15, 2010  
College of Nursing  
Dental Hygiene Program, Department of Health Studies, School of Occupational Therapy and  
School of Physical Therapy (College of Health Sciences)



## **From the Chancellor**

Dear Friends,

It is with great pride that I present to you these excerpts from the commencement addresses of 2009-2010 at Texas Woman's University.

Commencement speakers have a difficult job. They must be inspirational, hold the attention of an excited audience – and be brief. Such an accomplishment is deserving of a wider audience. I am happy to share these excerpts with you.

It is our tradition to invite TWU distinguished alumni, business and community leaders and graduating students to be commencement speakers. It is fitting that we present to our new graduates those who exemplify the difference one person can make to society, and those who, like themselves, are moving forward confidently to take their place in the world.

I hope you enjoy these words as I did.

Dr. Ann Stuart  
Chancellor and President



## Ms. Mary Ann Odom

*Retired executive, Hallmark Cards, Inc.  
Kansas City, Missouri*

- Climbed to the top of the creative ladder at Hallmark Cards, Inc., to become the company's first consulting stylist
- Led the first team in Hallmark's International Division to develop product lines for the global market
- TWU Distinguished Alumna, 1995

**Ceremony I – Dec. 19, 2009**  
**College of Arts and Sciences**

When I was 10 years old, I would take my allowance each week and go to Hairston's Bookstore in Athens, Texas and buy a Hallmark Storybook Doll card. I decided that when I grew up, I would like to work there. I felt that any company that could make something so beautiful surely had to be a wonderful place to work ... and it was.

**My wish for you is that you do what you love in your career and that you always strive to do your best. It is a unique and winning combination.**

Working in a large corporation gave me good insights, so I am going to skip the platitudes today and share with you some lessons learned – sometimes the hard way. These are very simple and straightforward, but I assure you, they will be extremely helpful as you begin your careers.

1. The most important one – work your passion. Enjoy what you do. Then, your “job” is no longer a job; you are simply being paid to do what you love to do.
2. Don't be afraid to fail. It's okay. The most important thing you have is your talent and brains, so learn to trust your instincts. As you continue to evolve, you will just know when something is right or wrong.

3. Stay in the eye of the storm. In today's unsettled economy, there are so many changes going on. In your new workplace, there may be rumors circulating. Don't get caught up in that. Just keep doing what you are doing and let that all revolve around you.
4. Don't chase rewards. The level of expectation will be relatively high for you. Raises, rewards, compliments will come in due time – usually when you least expect it – and, truthfully, doing your best is its own reward.
5. Create surprises. At Hallmark, the Product Marketing Division would survey the marketplace – what was selling, what was not – and submit product requests based on their research. Often, we felt the requests were baby steps and not quite fresh or new enough. We would give them what they wanted, but at the same time, surprise them with one or two other directions. Ninety-nine percent of the time, the surprise would be the winner. So, look for a better solution and learn to respect detail – and always maintain a high standard for yourself.

It has been such an honor for me to speak to you today. My wish for you is that you do what you love in your career and that you always strive to do your best. It is a unique and winning combination.

# Ms. Donna Israel Ph.D., RD, LPC, FADA



President and CEO, Professional Nutrition Therapists  
Dallas, Texas

- Nationally recognized dietician, psychological counseling therapist, speaker and educator
- Provided medical nutrition therapy for more than 10,000 individuals during her career
- Achieved “Fellow” designation with the American Dietetic Association, the world’s largest organization of food and nutrition professionals
- Ph.D. in nutrition from Texas Woman’s University, 1982

**Ceremony II – Dec. 19, 2009**

**College of Health Sciences**

**General Studies Program**

**School of Library and Information Studies**

As a TWU alum, I have a perspective from having sat where you are today. I didn’t come to this campus until I was 37 years old, after a 17-year career in the field of social work and counseling in state hospitals, schools and universities, and was the mother of five teen-age children.

I graduated here at 40 with a Ph.D. in nutrition to a new career as a registered dietitian. Since then, my failures and sadnesses have taught me best, as those life events always opened doors to my successes.

A few other TWU graduates gave me a message for you. You will find that your path will continue crossing those of other TWU grads, as mine has with each of these.

TWU Regent Lola Chriss received her bachelor’s degree from TWU and is manager of health promotion and benefits for Texas Instruments. Her message: “As a graduate of TWU, you will be well positioned to use your education and life experiences to fulfill your personal goals, professional endeavors and to make a difference in your community.”

Dr. Carmen Roman Shriver received her master’s degree from TWU and is now professor of nutrition at the University of Texas Health Science Center, San Antonio. Her message: “Never lose sight of where you came from and how you got here. Be good and truthful in your actions, but determined about your dreams, for the distance between here and there is short, yet complicated. Search further to keep your flame alive, i.e., fly higher than where you are so you can see far.”

Dr. Carol Ireton-Jones earned her doctorate at TWU and is now a nutrition support dietitian and my partner at Professional Nutrition Therapists. Her message: “The challenges are worth it! Seek out challenges and do not settle!! Most people are a phone call (or email) away and will be happy to talk with you, give you advice and maybe even give you a chance!”

**My failures and sadnesses have taught me best, as those life events always opened doors to my successes.**

One of my eight beloved grandchildren would not let me come home without quoting Dr. Seuss. This comes from his book *Oh, The Places You’ll Go!*

“You’ll get mixed up, of course, as you already know. You’ll get mixed up with many strange birds as you go. So be sure when you step, step with care and great tact, and remember that Life’s a Great Balancing Act. And will you succeed? Yes! You will, indeed! (98 and  $\frac{3}{4}$  percent guaranteed.) Kid, you’ll move mountains! Today is your day! Your mountain is waiting, so get on your way!”



## Dr. Ray Braswell

*Superintendent, Denton Independent School District  
Denton, Texas*

- Oversees one of the largest school districts in the state of Texas, opening 20 new educational facilities in 10 years
- Twice honored by the Texas Association of School Boards as one of the top five superintendents in the state and as Superintendent of the Year for Region 11
- Adjunct professor, TWU Department of Teacher Education

**Ceremony III – Dec. 19, 2009**  
**College of Professional Education**  
**College of Nursing**

**H**ave you ever used the phrase “What goes around, comes around?” When you use it, what is the context or purpose? The phrase generally is thought of more as an expression referring to a payback of an adverse nature.

The origin of the phrase reveals that it was not intended to be used in a negative fashion. It actually was meant as a statement of an optimistic, positive approach to living. The real meaning became lost somewhere in time.

I did a little research on the phrase and found its Russian equivalent: “As the call, so is the echo.” That sounds inspiring; almost classical. It’s a powerful metaphor that can remind us of a good way to approach life. But what does it really mean and how does it relate to today’s address?

Today represents a new beginning or perhaps a new chapter in your life. You have worked hard to be here today, but my guess is you had some help along the way.

First, you had support. You would not be here today without the support of others. This support comes from many places and many people. Here are just a few:

Your parents or immediate caregivers supported your vision and your plans throughout your life. These adults made changes every day in their lives to make this day for you possible. Don’t forget to thank them.

Second, you had influences from other people you encountered in your life who guided and shaped your decisions and provided you support and direction. Friends, relatives, former teachers, coaches, counselors and others touched

**The next time you hear the phrase “What goes around, comes around,” do me a favor. Think upon these words this way: “Others have gone before me, so that I may go today.” And in going, I wish you Godspeed and good luck.**

your life by insisting that you take responsibility for your decisions – both wise and unwise.

Finally, you had the training and educational experiences this university provided that have prepared you for the role you are about to undertake.

Much has been put in place over many years to bring you to this point in time – to this day. The “call” has been made by others; it is time for you to “echo.” It is now your time, your turn to make a difference.

What will you do with the opportunities that this degree and this education provide? How will you work to provide the same opportunities for others? How will you provide the “call” so someone else can “echo?”

In closing I have one request. The next time you hear the phrase “What goes around, comes around,” do me a favor. Think upon these words this way: “Others have gone before me, so that I may go today.” And in going, I wish you Godspeed and good luck.

It is your time to echo.



## Mr. Chris Reading

*President and CEO, U.S. Physical Therapy, Inc.  
Houston, Texas*

- As CEO of Physical Therapy, Inc., leads the nation's third-largest operator of outpatient physical and occupational therapy clinics
- Previously served as Senior Vice President for Operations of HealthSouth, one of the nation's leading healthcare services providers
- Member of the TWU Institute of Health Sciences-Houston Center Ambassador Program

**Houston Commencement Ceremony – Dec. 20, 2009**  
**Institute of Health Sciences – Houston Center**

It is with great pleasure that I am able to be here today as you celebrate the completion of a significant milestone in your life.

As mentioned during my introduction, I have been blessed to have the opportunity to lead a successful company. More importantly, I have a wonderful family. My wife Sherri and I have five children. Our youngest daughter, Gracie, turned 3 a couple of weeks ago.

Gracie came to be our daughter in a little different way than our other children. She was born on the other side of the world, in Southern China. You could say she was born in our hearts at that time, although it would take three long years to bring her home.

From what we now know, she was placed in a small shoe-box wrapped in a little red cloth, and placed next to a bike rack at an elementary school in a small town in Southern China. She was likely only a day or two old, and she was very, very tiny. She was taken to a local orphanage and joined hundreds of other little girls who for one reason or another came to be in that place at a very young age.

So what does any of this have to do with graduation today? I will explain if you will indulge me.

I have enjoyed a pretty easy life, as far as lives go. I was blessed with great parents, like many of you, and they gave me love, support and encouragement along the way. And while in my younger days I struggled greatly with school, I

**The world has many challenges,  
but if you focus on being the best you can be,  
strive for an extraordinary life and avoid  
settling for “good enough,” my guess is that  
you will one day look back and be pleased.**

always felt that I could overcome with hard work and persistence. I didn't allow other people to define for me what I should do or what I was capable of achieving. As I stand before you today, an unlikely CEO of a successful company, I am a living example that hard work, faith and perseverance do pay off.

Gracie has reminded me what is truly important in the world: Live life to the fullest, regardless of your current challenge or circumstance. Hope and strive for the impossible. The world has many challenges, but if you focus on being the best you can be, strive for an extraordinary life and avoid settling for “good enough,” my guess is that you will one day look back and be pleased.

Graduates, this is your time. Make the most of it!



## Ms. Rae Lynn McFarlin

*TWU Student Regent, 2009-2010  
Summa Cum Laude Graduate, May 2010  
Bonham, Texas*

- One of only 60 recipients of a national fellowship from Phi Kappa Phi, the most selective all-discipline honor society in the U.S.
- Also received one of only 46 National Consortium of Measurement and Signals Intelligence Research Scholars Program awards, funded by the National Science Foundation
- Graduated with bachelor's degrees in chemistry and mathematics

**Ceremony I – May 14, 2010**  
**College of Arts and Sciences**

It truly is an honor to give the commencement address to you and to be one of your fellow classmates. We have worked countless hours to make it to this turning point in our lives.

Now that we have graduated, where do we go from here? Typically everyone tells us, “You will be successful in whatever you do,” or “I wish you nothing less than success.” Our society puts so much emphasis on that seven-letter word. Graduating today is a significant mark of success. But what exactly is success, and how do we achieve it?

Before achieving success, you must first define it. When it comes down to it, real success lies in how you define it for yourself.

Your personal success cannot be founded on what others see fit for you. What is success worth if it is achieved because someone else wanted you to do it? So the question is, “How do you define success?”

Once you are able to define success for yourself, you must set forth to achieve it. When I think about achieving success, it reminds me of learning how to drive a vehicle with a standard transmission. Being a country girl, this is an absolute “must!” It took some time to learn. The same is true for achieving success – it requires determination, time and patience.

When learning to drive a standard, you must master the

**Before achieving success, you must first define it. When it comes down to it, real success lies in how you define it for yourself.**

clutch. The transmission cannot function without it. The same is true in your quest for success – you must have a support group. I wouldn't have the confidence or motivation to achieve all that I have achieved at TWU – much less stand before you today and speak – if it wasn't for the support of my friends, professors and, most importantly, my family.

As you take this next step in your life, think about how you define success and the steps you plan to take to get there. Whatever you plan to do – travel the world, go to graduate school, join the workforce or take some time off to think – don't just listen to your head; listen to your heart. You might not know what you want to do, but down deep you usually know what you love and what makes you happy. So follow your heart, and I can guarantee you will achieve the success you long for.



## Ms. Phebe Phillips

President, Phebe Phillips Company, Inc.  
Dallas, Texas

- Grew her one-of-a-kind plush toys start-up business into a \$3 million company
- Designs showcased in Neiman Marcus stores since 1984 and carried by F.A.O. Schwartz, Victoria's Secret, J.C. Penney, Michael's and other top retailers
- Noted philanthropist who donates her toys to disadvantaged children around the world

Ceremony II – May 14, 2010

School of Management

Departments of Kinesiology and Nutrition and Food Sciences  
and Program in Health Care Administration

Today, you create a legacy for you and your family. Your parents and supporters can brag about you; you – yes, you – can brag on yourself. Most importantly, you have now become a bigger role model for your children, and they, because of you, will seek a higher education.

In short, you just changed the world!

I want to tell you about my life and the unexpected and ever changing opportunities that come everyone's way. Hence, the title of this speech: "Everything is Perfect ... I Changed."

I graduated from Southern Methodist University with a degree in film and journalism. I chose it because my mom thought I would look really good on television. I didn't last long in that business ... I changed!

I decided to follow my heart and my imagination. I began my toy company in 1983. My big break came in 1984 when the buyer for Neiman Marcus called. The relationship and business has never stopped growing.

In 2008 and 2009, the U.S. economy tanked. Retail dwindled and a new toy regulation was enacted that raises the testing price for each product. Financially, it caused me to temporarily halt my business ... I changed!

Why am I here today speaking to you about toys? Because I am one of you. I just finished my chemistry final yesterday ... I changed!

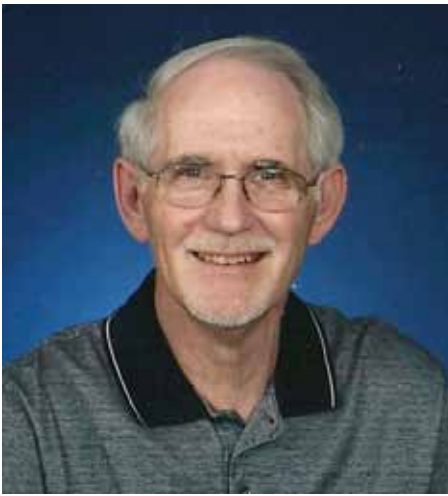
**Your degree is yours forever. It stands solid as a great achievement. When change happens, it will give you more options.**

In 2006, my husband and I traveled to California. Mac got a very toxic food poisoning. There was a possibility he wouldn't make it. Today he is fine ... I changed!

I enrolled in classes to get all the prerequisites needed for a master's degree in clinical nutrition, and will begin the master's in a year or two. I have plans for a doctorate. I chose nutrition because it is a field with endless and ageless possibilities.

Along with school, a new toy line is being developed and I am transforming my characters into soon-to-be-published storybooks. I am also creating different products for other stores outside the children's market. I stand before you as an example that change will be with you your entire life; that one is never too old or set in one's ideas to change; and on occasion, a glass of lemonade, made from life's lemons, can taste pretty good.

Your degree is yours forever. It stands solid as a great achievement. When change happens, it will give you more options.



## Dr. Michael Wiebe

*Cornaro Professor of Teacher Education,  
Texas Woman's University  
Denton, Texas*

- Noted scholar whose research on the impact of the “No Child Left Behind” education legislation was published in the *National Science Journal*
- Served with distinction for 10 years as dean of the TWU College of Education and Human Ecology (now the College of Professional Education)
- Recipient of the 2009 Cornaro Award, TWU’s highest faculty honor

**Ceremony III – May 15, 2010**

**College of Professional Education**

**Department of Communication Sciences and Disorders**

As the name of this ceremony suggests, today is a beginning, not an end. In a sense, your degree marks the close of an apprenticeship and the beginning of a career as a scholar.

As you prepare to leave this university, allow me to share some thoughts about becoming a scholar.

When I was much younger, our trips were in the family car. Our journeys took us along two-lane roads with relatively few distractions between towns. From 1925 through 1963, Burma Shave signs were a pleasant diversion and made our trips more enjoyable. The signs were placed at regular intervals, and each contained part of a jingle. The last sign was always “Burma Shave.”

So, as you launch your journey as scholars, imagine the little red signs.

The first sign comes into view and reads “Live to learn.”

Success will be achieved when you can recognize the difference between memorization and mastery; between what you understand and what you don’t; and between earning a living and living a life.

Our second sign reads “Embrace mistakes.”

Failure is always a potential outcome in discovery, but scholars learn to profit from the experience and use it to explore new opportunities.

**In this ceremony, your diploma represents the baton that passes to you the content, the quality and the integrity of our professions. Tend it with care and celebrate the day you will pass it to the next generation.**

The third sign reads “Add some fun.”

As a scholar, never take yourself too seriously, and do everything in your power to make learning enjoyable and even fun.

The last sign reads “A scholar makes.”

Scholarship evolves from formal education, but not necessarily from completing a required curriculum.

In this ceremony, your diploma represents the baton that passes to you the content, the quality and the integrity of our professions. Tend it with care and celebrate the day you will pass it to the next generation.

As you start your journey as scholars, remember the little red signs along the way:

- Live to learn
- Embrace mistakes
- Add some fun
- A scholar makes.



## Dr. Ann Scanlon McGinity

Chief Nurse Executive and Senior Vice President of Operations  
The Methodist Hospital  
Houston, Texas

- Led The Memorial Hospital of Houston's successful "Magnet" re-designation, the highest international distinction for nursing excellence
- Recipient of numerous grants and awards for her work in psychiatric nursing and home care, and an accomplished writer and lecturer
- Member, TWU Board of Regents

**Ceremony III – May 15, 2010**

**College of Nursing**

**Dental Hygiene Program, Department of Health Studies,  
School of Occupational Therapy and School of  
Physical Therapy**

**Y**ou start here today as a graduate clinician. With time and in time you will become a healer.

The call to be a nurse or a therapist – to be a healer – is among the most unique of all callings. It is far more than the notion of simply wanting to fix, to make better, to stop suffering. It starts there, but as you have learned these past few years, real healers have nothing to do with fixing anything or curing anything. They have everything to do with being present at the journey of another and a companion along the way.

How in the busyness of your daily life as a nurse or therapist do you capture the special and significant moments when a patient chooses you to be their healer? How do you recognize it is occurring and how do you remain present?

Your own wise heart will tell you, if you pay attention.

A few tips for the journey then ....

Always be your best self. If you don't know who that is, start listening ... your patients will help you figure it out.

Always be different. Be innovative, be fearless, be creative and take risks. The only question you ever have to answer is: Is this the right thing to do for this patient?

Always persevere and work as hard as you can. There's so much life to learn from your work that you must pay attention. Never give up believing that you and you alone make a difference.

Always be positive. Always ask: What's been gained here, not what was lost.

Always take action. It's your job, it's no one else's. Lead from wherever you are.

**Always persevere and work as hard as you can. There's so much life to learn from your work that you must pay attention. Never give up believing you and you alone make a difference.**

Always focus your energy and time. Don't let anyone distract you from the healing work you must do. Time is the only gift you have – yours and your patients'. Use it wisely.

And the final one:

Never work for or with folks who do not inspire you, who do not support your creativity, who do not challenge you to be your best. You're worth far more than that to the world!

On behalf of all those future patients who will cross your life and who will call you by name, I am grateful for having you as a colleague on this incredible adventure of ours!