

**Honored Alumnus Scott B. Citino's Address
At 130th Salem High School Alumni Association Reunion & Banquet
May 28, 2011**

I would like to thank the Salem High School Alumni Association for this very special honor. It's wonderful to be able to come back home after all these years to receive this award in the presence of my family, friends, teachers, classmates, soon to be new graduates, and the Salem community. I thank you all. I would especially like to congratulate the scholarship winners that were introduced tonight. Even though I don't get back to Salem often, I'm very proud to be from Salem and from what I saw tonight, Salem has a lot to be proud about.

I was born in Salem, grew up here during the 50s, 60s, and 70s, married my Salem High School sweetheart, and received my entire early education here from St. Paul's grade school to Salem Senior High. In 1975, when I graduated, the world was a little different than it is today – landlines were used for calling friends (some of us still even had party lines), text messaging was writing on a piece of paper, folding it into an airplane, and flying it across the classroom to your friend, typing was done on a typewriter, photos were shot on film, muscle cars were still in, gas prices were soaring - we complained about gas being 45 cents/gallon, the thing to do on Friday nights was cruising the town, going to the drive-in, or slow dancing to Stairway to Heaven at the after football dance. Bill Gates and Paul Allen had an idea to develop operating systems for small computers and Microsoft was born, which would propel us into the computer era and, thank God, the war in Vietnam finally ended.

I was sitting where you will be sitting tomorrow at commencement wishing the thing was over, so we could get on to the parties, but I was also a bit scared about what the future would bring. My education in Salem, along with some hard work, had gotten me into my dream school, University of Notre Dame, but would I be able to compete there with all the brightest kids from around the country? As it turns out, my education from Salem grounded me well and with added hard work, I did alright at Notre Dame and then at The Ohio State University, College of Veterinary Medicine.

I am really a person of few words and few people get to see me dressed in a suit and tie – you are more likely to see me rolling in the dirt with a rhino, slogging through the swamp after a Florida panther, or following an Mbuti pygmy guide through a Congo forest looking for the elusive okapi.

My love and passion for nature and animals was born and nurtured in the woods, farms, and lakes around Salem. Now that passion takes me all over the world to work in a variety of ecosystems on numerous threatened and endangered animal species. It allows me to work on some of the difficult questions facing the natural world and to transfer my knowledge and passion to others. Some people call it knowledge or technology transfer, I call it passion transfer.

But enough about me – it is exciting to see the bright young people here tonight that are just beginning their journey. You have a lot to be proud of and you are the world's hope for the future.

A few words from a person that trains and teaches a lot of bright, young people from all over the world:

You will have a lot of people giving you advice about your future– some of it will be good, some of it bad. Successful people quickly learn to discriminate between good and bad advice. It is imperative that you learn this quickly.

Successful people also become good judges of character and surround themselves with colleagues and friends of good character they can trust and expect good advice from.

You don't need to plan your life out to the nth detail. Have a plan but keep your eyes and hearts open and be willing to change.

Your first priority should be to learn what your options are. You don't need to be in a rush to choose your life's work. What you need to do is discover what you like and what you have passion for. You have to work on things you like, if you want to be good at what you do. Don't let others decide this for you. When you are good at something, it makes you valuable.

School teaches us how to do things; it doesn't necessarily teach us *what* things are really worth doing. You are now moving into a world where there is an ethical dimension in everything; you have to figure out what's really worth doing. If you don't, you run the risk of chasing achievements for achievements' sake, possibly at the expense of doing great things.

When you do figure out what you want to do, always gravitate toward mentors that are working on the hardest and most difficult questions and problems. Greatness only comes with difficulty and hard work.

I generally don't like to quote other people, but I will quote the great Jedi Master Yoda, "Do or do not... there is no try." Make good decisions and when you decide to do something, finish it.

Never get disheartened, because you don't think that you can't do what other people can. People who've done great things tend to seem as if they are a race apart. And most biographies only exaggerate this illusion, partly due to the worshipful attitude the biographer has toward their subject. In fact I suspect if you had the sixteen year old Shakespeare, Einstein, or Barack Obama in school with you, they'd seem impressive, but not totally unlike your other friends.

Don't be afraid to question the status quo and be an agent of change. Don't just follow the crowd; innovate and you can be a pioneer to your generation. Great people are always pioneers in one way or another.

And lastly, be thankful and always give back to your family, friends, community, profession, and world, because true happiness only comes from giving.

I hope that someday you will be able to come home to receive this honor from your old high school. Thanks again.