



**John T. Broderick, Jr.**  
**Dean and President, UNH School of Law**  
**UNH Honors Convocation**  
**Keynote Address**  
**May 20, 2011**

- President Huddleston
- Chairman DuPont
- Members of the board of trustees
- Distinguished faculty
- Family
- Friends
- And especially the class of 2011

It's a genuine honor to be with all of you on this very memorable May afternoon. This is a very important day in the lives of the graduates and all who have gathered here to celebrate their many achievements. I thank the University for asking me to be a part of it.

Being here today reminds me of the advice former New York governor Mario Cuomo received from his favorite priest at St. John's University on the eve of his first commencement address. "Mario," he said, "being a commencement speaker is a lot like being a body at an Irish wake. They need you to hold the party but they really don't expect you to say very much." I'll keep that in mind and I'll try to be brief.

After twenty-two years as a trial lawyer and fifteen years as an appellate judge, I am now the dean of the University's law school. I must confess that leaving the bench is an adjustment.

My family, for example, doesn't stand quite as quickly when I enter a room -but I am growing to accept that. In my dreams, as my wife would say. My new job is wonderful, but it certainly has its challenges.

A dean I know recently gave me some sobering advice about faculty relations. "John," he said, "being a dean is like being a groundskeeper in a cemetery."

"How's that?" I asked him.

"You have a lot of people below you but no one is listening."

I hope he's wrong. All the graduates here today have two things in common: they have distinguished themselves through high academic achievement and they have rightly earned the high expectations they and we have for their futures. But there are two important things that may separate you, the graduates, from others in the promising lives that lay ahead of you: the reputations you could strive to earn and your capacity for leadership.

Whatever success you may achieve in your chosen careers will be of little value unless your reputation engenders respect. You need to turn square corners in the years to come, even if it means you don't get the job, the client, the raise, or the promotion you wanted. Cutting corners has consequences. Just ask Martha Stewart. The saddest days I spent on the New Hampshire Supreme Court were the days when we disbarred a lawyer. It wasn't the result of not being smart that got lawyers into trouble. Money, power, and influence can sometimes be secured with a wounded reputation – or sometimes they can create one.

But the unique comfort and self-fulfillment borne of respect is earned a brick at a time and comes about by placing principles ahead of narrow self-interest. At the end of the day, no one is long remembered for their net worth, but they may be remembered for the value they added. Mother Theresa comes to mind. I've never heard a eulogy that began, "He was a mean-spirited, self-focused, belligerent person whom we all loved and admired because he did so much for himself."

You get to choose your reputation, so I encourage you to choose wisely. It's your most valuable asset. It takes a lifetime to build it but you can lose it in an instant of bad judgment or worse. You can almost never get it back.

Becoming a leader can fundamentally change your life and, more importantly, it can help you to positively affect the lives of countless others. During my life time, I've been fortunate to come to know and witness several state and national political leaders up close; I've worked with and for some exceptional lawyers; I've represented some accomplished business executives and companies; I've served with some extraordinary judges and even headed a branch of state government myself. After thirty-eight years on the playing fields, I have come to witness and better understand the principles and prerequisites of successful leadership. Some are intuitive, some are learned and refined over time, and all are important.

I challenge every graduate here today to become a leader in whatever sphere seems most appealing to you. This new and impatient century will demand more than your intelligence;

it will demand the constant commitment that real leadership will summon. I also challenge all of you to live your lives just a step beyond your comfort zone. That yet unmapped territory will allow you to realize your full potential for leadership. You will find that adapting and "pressing the envelope" are more inspiring, and rewarding than staying well inside your personal boundaries and doing only what you are certain you can do well. Leadership demands growth. So does commitment to something larger than yourself.

In my life experience, leaders, wherever found, share many common strengths. I recommend that you do all you can to acquire them in the years ahead.

- Leaders understand that real leadership is never about them. It's about visioning a destination and inspiring others to reach it with them. It's about results and responsibilities. Bill Gates understands that; Dennis Kozlowski of Tyco never did. Neither did Bernie Madoff.
- Leaders understand that you always get more with respect than authority. If you have to pull rank, you're not really leading. [Paul Hellsmith story; Connecticut executive story]
- They know that power and authority never equal privilege. They merely reflect your responsibilities to others and your obligations to achieve something of value.
- They know it's never about whether it's legal or even ethical. It's about whether it's fair and honorable.
- They know there are very few important people in the world, but, sadly, there is no shortage of self-important ones. They know the difference.
- They recognize that loyalty matters and that loyalty is not just another word for enlightened self-interest. They know that loyalty begets loyalty.
- They don't take themselves too seriously – they know they are never as important as others may think. They are too busy leading to have time for the vanity of self-importance.
- They know that everyone counts and that inclusiveness invests people with a purpose larger than themselves.
- They understand that real change rarely happens in the shadow of a small idea and that risk often becomes the only path to making a meaningful difference. Don't be afraid to take risk.
- Finally, they take time to lighten someone else's load – even when they don't have time themselves.

[Biden – train station]

(Clinton – Stoneyfield yogurt)

As I close, let me suggest how important it is for all of you of high achievement to retain your humility. In my own life and career, I know I stood on a lot of shoulders in order to be accorded the privilege of speaking to all of you this afternoon.

Your experience will be very similar to mine. Indeed, without the help of parents and the struggles of many grandparents you might not even be occupying a seat at this wonderful convocation. Whatever else you do with your hard-earned degree, I urge you to prepare your shoulders for others to stand on. It's your generational duty and it will be your legacy. Make it one you're proud of. You get to choose. Thanks for listening and best wishes in all you do.