



LOWRY HILL

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THE VIEW OF “A 90-YEAR-OLD MAN”

When I received the voicemail message asking me to speak this evening, I was driving down River Road on my way home from work. My first thought was that this was an assignment for a 90-year-old man. My second thought was “They think I am old.” I have always held an image of myself as someone who was just getting started, an individual with potential, and someone at the dawn of his career. My conclusion is that I may need to revise my image. Most importantly, when preparing my remarks for tonight, I took the perspective of a 90-year-old man; the perspective of someone looking back in order to look forward.

I also want to thank my good friend Steve Heinen. A few months ago, Steve gathered a group together from this program in an effort to help me to better understand what really happens here. It was most helpful.

Let me begin with a brief description of our business at Lowry Hill, so you have some background on our firm. Then I will make a few comments about thinking within our evolving world. Finally, I will proceed by telling four brief stories. Each story will end with a question, as one of my other goals is to seed you with some questions to think about in the days to come.

Lowry Hill manages nearly \$6 billion of assets for approximately 280 families in over 40 states throughout the United States. The people that are Lowry Hill come from the legal, accounting and investment professions. Our work is the process of integrating the financial and investment needs of these families and foundations so that their assets work toward their ultimate goals, which so often revolve around their values and what they cherish as human beings. Often this involves passing along a legacy to children or to the community through philanthropic gifts or a foundation.

Each client is unique, yet there is commonality in the skills that must be brought to bear when working for them.

Lowry Hill is people. More importantly, we need people who think well. So, I want to begin with what we are looking for in the people we bring into Lowry Hill to do the work of our firm. A few years ago, I drew a matrix of what I termed the “thinking skills” of the people we wanted at Lowry Hill. This past year, I encountered a book written by Howard Gardiner, a professor at Harvard and an expert on intelligence. Since reading the book, *Five Minds for the Future*, I have adopted the categorization that Gardiner outlined. One of my primary responsibilities is to find people who think well and then once they are at Lowry Hill assist them to become even better thinkers.

Gardiner’s book highlights five minds that are needed to operate in our evolving economy. The first is the disciplined mind, which is a mind that knows the work of their profession. The individual has attained the required education and has operated in the profession such that he understands the technical skills needed to perform the job. This is not enough to get hired; the world is full of technically competent individuals from good schools.

The second mind is the integrated mind. This is a mind that is capable of taking disparate pieces of information from within a profession and applying that information in a creative form to an issue. It is the application of technical capabilities beyond a simple rote task. Again, this mind is necessary to do the base level work at most firms.

The third mind is the creative mind. This is a mind that “thinks outside the box” and takes information from a variety of different disciplines and areas and integrates them into new solutions and new methods for operating. This mind is also required for most all business for it is these minds that innovate and create differentiation for a business.

The fourth mind is the respectful mind. This is a mind that is capable of dealing with individuals at all levels of an organization and community in a respectful way. The individuals that are in a position below them are treated as well as those that occupy a position above them in the hierarchy of the firm or community. We all want to work and live in a respectful environment.

Finally, but most importantly, the individual must have an ethical mind. This is a mind that understands the nuance of ethical issues, that understands ethical issues are not black and white but

often gray and hidden in the depths of complex decisions. It is a mind that sees that the ends do not justify the means. Rather, the manner in which we conduct our work says so much, so loudly, about our work.

Now, if one were to look at how someone acquires these thinking skills, these minds, you'll find that only a few are gained through a formal education. Most are ingrained in you by your parents, by your coaches, by your teachers, by your community, by your acknowledgement of the good in individuals you admire, by your various experiences in life. They are the work of mentoring in its broadest definition of the word.

So, let me tell four stories that, as I mentioned earlier, will all end in a question. Questions that I believe are important to ask ourselves as we think about mentoring in our society. Throughout our lives, we will all serve as a guide for others. And, at other moments, we will seek guidance.

My first story is a personal story that dates back a few years. I'd like to begin it with a quote from George Bernard Shaw who said: "The only man I know who behaves sensibly is my tailor; he takes my measurement anew each time he sees me. The rest go on with their old measurements and expect me to fit them."

A few years ago, I was traveling to Chicago for the day and was taking a cab into the city from Midway Airport. One of my habits is to develop a conversation with cab drivers, for it is my belief that cab drivers are like the tailor noted in the quote from Shaw. Often, these individuals are new to America and their perspective can help us to see ourselves anew. We began our conversation talking about where he had come from. He was from Yemen and had been in the States for some five years. He had a three-year-old daughter and five-year-old son. And, he had come to America for the opportunities that it promises all new immigrants. He had settled in Chicago because he had relatives in the area that could support him in the initial months. We talked of Yemen. We talked about being a Muslim in a country built on Judeo-Christian principles. At times, he became impassioned about what he both liked about America and what he did not like about America. Finally, I asked a question. If you could change one thing about America, what would it be? He took little time to answer. "You chose your heroes badly."

This is the observation of a man who sees America with fresh eyes. In our search for heroes, we often celebrate celebrity. We exalt in their renown and are titillated by their personal failure. If we

seek those that entertain us with their personality and then are disappointed by their human failure, we will grope from one to another in a hopeless search for unattainable perfection. We must be guided by principle in our search, for how we define our heroes will ultimately provide the foundation for our culture. It is an important question. And, so I ask, “Who are your heroes?”

My second story deals with a personal experience of mine. I would like to say that it is a unique experience, but I have had other leaders tell me that they encountered a similar situation when they had become appointed to lead their organization. About a year before I became the managing principal at Lowry Hill, Peter Glanville told me that I was going to succeed him. But, he wanted to mentor me for a year or so before retiring and giving me the position. So, we would meet for an hour or two every other week, and he gave me various materials to read on leadership. He handed the first article about leadership to me with the comment: “This might be a good person to emulate.” It was a story about Jesus and his interaction with the Twelve Apostles. The expectations were a bit daunting.

During this time, I also came to rely on my good friend Malcolm McDonald, a fellow trustee at the Wilder Foundation, for guidance. As we got closer to the announcement of Peter’s retirement, my discussions with Peter and Malcolm got much more concrete with respect to the workings of Lowry Hill and some of the nuances of the position. It is important to note that I had managed no one other than my assistant prior to assuming the job. One day, Malcolm and I had breakfast; I came in with a detailed plan—complete with boxes and arrows. I even went so far as to have two or three pages with every individual at Lowry Hill listed on the pages. My recollection is that he never even looked at my collection of materials. All he said was: “What is it you really want to accomplish?” The emphasis was on “really.” I had become so infatuated with my new position that I had lost sight of this important question. It is not the titles we will ascend to in our career or the dollars we will receive in compensation; it is much more. And, so I ask you this question as well: “What do you really want to accomplish?”

My third story comes from a sermon that Phillips Brooks gave in 19th century Boston and was provided by Peter Gomes, the chaplain at Harvard University. Phillips Brooks was a renowned preacher of his day and is best known as the composer of “O Little Town of Bethlehem.” I quote Brooks, who is speaking to a Harvard graduating class: “What shall we make of some man rich in attainments and in generous desires, well educated, well behaved, who has trained himself to be a light and help to other men, and who, now that his training is complete, stands in the midst of his

fellow man completely dark and helpless? These men are unlighted candles....So dark in this world is the row of cultivated man to whom there has come no fire of devotion, who stand in awe and reverence before no wisdom greater than their own.” We will all find wisdom in different places. For some it will be a pious exploration found in the *Koran*, the *Old Testament*, or meditation. For others, it is a journey found in the works of Shakespeare, the lines of Wordsworth, the notes of Mozart. A good guide can help light that candle of wisdom. And, so I ask you the question that all generations since Job have asked: “Where shall wisdom be found?”

My last story is a bedtime story that I have told to my daughters over the years. It is supposedly a true story, as told to me many years ago. However, my sense is that my telling of it has drifted so far from the truth that it must be deemed metaphor. It is the story of a young French man who went off from his small town in France to fight in the Great War. After the war, he returned to his town only to find that the area surrounding had been destroyed. Trenches cut large gashes through the country side, wildlife had abandoned the area in search of more consistent food sources, and the area was deserted but for what remained of the war. The man returned to his craft of being a cobbler, married, and had a daughter. Eventually, he looked out at the countryside destroyed by the war and decided to do something about it. Late each afternoon, he would strap on a belt that had a water bottle and a seed bag attached to it. Each day, he walked about the fields with a walking stick, scratching aside the dirt, dropping a seed in it, covering it again with dirt, and squirting water on it. Others from the village eventually saw his effort and joined him with their own water and seed. Over the years, the villagers continued to plant. In time, trees and vegetation returned to the area. Then, wildlife and streams returned. Years later, the land was made a national forest by the French government.

We share a generation together. It is but a brief moment. What seeds are we planting that will make our world better not a year from today, but many years from today? What will we leave to those who follow us?

When I think back on the mentors who have made me who I am, I think of Tim Taylor, the hockey coach at Yale; Malcolm McDonald, my good friend mentioned earlier; Father Rick Mertz, the former pastor at the Assumption Parish in St. Paul; and Peter Glanville, my predecessor as managing principal at Lowry Hill. I grew to know all of them earlier in my life; all have become good friends. And, all of them have a unique attribute so important to being a good mentor. They did not supply me with the answer, but rather asked the right questions.

And, so tonight, I leave you with those four questions: Who are your heroes? What do you really want to accomplish? Where will you find wisdom? What will we leave for those who follow us? A good guide can help us get started on our journey.

Let me conclude. The work of the world will continue to flow to us. It must be done. However, we have a greater need than ever for balanced individuals who approach their work with a kind heart, a courageous spirit, and a disciplined and ethical mind. We need wise men and women in this world. There will be mistakes, but if we forgive ourselves and have the courage to forgive others, we will endure. The gentle push of a mentor can illuminate a path that will allow us to build a career, but in the end we may find that they push us even further. They may help us to make a noble contribution to the work of this world and in so doing we may find a rich life in the process. The work that we celebrate tonight is noble work, important work. We will see its fruits in the many years to come.

Again, thank you for giving me the opportunity to think about this topic and address you this evening.