

Bill Rea ? Future looking good



?The children now love luxury; they have bad manners, contempt for authority; they show disrespect for elders and love chatter in place of exercise.?

Socrates

The end of another school year means graduations, and plenty of young people starting another phase of their lives.

While my wife and I don't have children, her brother does, and the proud aunt and uncle recently watched our nephew accept his Grade 8 papers and now looks in the direction of high school.

I've also got to meet, over the last week or so, some of the top scholars from the local secondary schools.

There have been a host of other recent examples as I have encountered school students getting ready to move on to the next stages of their lives. At the risk of sounding like one of those representatives of the proverbial older generation (kind of hard to cover up when you have the abundance of grey hair and creaking joints as I), I have to say I'm looking at what's coming with quite a bit of confidence and optimism.

We have all been hearing complaints about kids today. I have heard people complain they don't understand the meaning of a day's work or responsibility or the value of money. They seem to spend the bulk of their time with their devices, texting all the time. There are some who wonder if they are capable of having a normal conversation, as we older folks would understand the concept.

And there are always stories about young people who have been caught doing some particularly dumb things. The problem is they have been caught being dumb for centuries.

On the other hand, it has been my experience that age doesn't always make one smart, and there are plenty of stupid people out there with more grey hairs than me. And I think just about all of us did a couple of acts in our youth that we shudder about when we think of them today.

That's one of the main reasons why I get a little angry when I hear people around my age group or older criticizing those who are younger, because the same quotes were applied to me and those in my age group, and they have been used for more than 2,000 years. I refer you to the quote I used to open this piece. Socrates wasn't always right, you know.

Since we have to assume that the people who are going to be running things around here 10 or 20 years from now are not going to be much worse than those they will replace, I think I can feel a certain amount of confidence, and a lot of envy. And I think thoughts like that are expressed a lot around this time of year, especially at school Commencements.

There was an interesting example just recently, as United States Chief Justice John Roberts addressed his son's Commencement.

I have never been terribly impressed with Roberts. I think the main memory I carry of the man dates to January 2009, when he swore in Barack Obama to the Presidency for the first time. It seems Roberts committed the Presidential Oath to memory, or at least that's what he tried to do (it really shouldn't have been that difficult a task). But in fact, he blew it, and just about everyone watching knew it, including Roberts himself.

But we all sometimes fail, and indeed, that was one of the points he was trying to make to the young grads he was addressing. I found the address on YouTube, and I have say to my opinion of the man went up sharply after I watched it.

It was an address filled with the usual soppy stuff one expects for such an occasion. But rather than wishing the graduates plenty of luck and good times in the years to come, he took a different, and somewhat more realistic approach. He wished them a certain amount of tough times and hard luck.

?From time to time in the years to come, I hope you will be treated unfairly, so you will come to know the value of justice,? he told the grads. ?I hope you will suffer betrayal, because that will teach you the importance of loyalty.?

?I hope you will be lonely from time to time, so that you don't take friends for granted,? he went on to say. ?I wish you bad luck from time to time, so that you will be conscious of the role of chance in life, and understand that your success is not completely deserved, or that the failure of others is not completely deserved either.?

?I hope you'll be ignored, so you know the importance of listening to others,? Roberts added. ?And I hope you will have just enough pain to learn compassion.?

Like I stated above, he used that platform to be pragmatic and realistic, and give those in his audience a glimpse of what's to come, no matter whether they deserve it or not.

We have all heard the expression that life is not fair, and you don't get through too many years without learning just how true that is. It is true there have been a few occasions over the years when fortune has been particularly good to me. I accept those times, without shame or feeling an inclination to apologize for my good luck. There have been the other times, when I have taken a good, solid sucker punch from the hands of fortune.

We all have similar stories, and we learn to deal with them, if for no other reason than we have no choice.

I guess Roberts had the idea that there's no better time for these people to get used to that reality than the present.

His words were wise and the meaning was clear. And people have been learning all about the message for thousands of years.