

**SIR PETER MOORES' ADDRESS
ON RECEIPT OF HON DEGREE FROM
THE UNIVERSITY OF THE WEST INDIES
CAVE HILL CAMPUS, BARBADOS
SATURDAY, OCTOBER 25, 2008**

Your Excellency, Chancellor, Vice Chancellor, Pro-Vice Chancellors, other distinguished members of the platform party; Fellow Graduands; Ladies and Gentlemen.

I am bidden to address you, and do so not only on my own behalf but also in the names of my co Honourands Dr. Cardinal Ward and Baroness Patricia Scotland who is, of course, much more skilled than me in public speaking.

All three of us are very grateful and deeply honoured to receive degrees which have been earned by deeds, not study or labour. The University has been very gracious. Thank you.

From her I can speak only for myself.

You might ask what I'm doing in the Caribbean. In Barbados since the early 60's, my answer is I'm her by accident. My father bought a hotel in Bermuda in the 40s. He had made himself a great deal of money but he was not very adventurous. But, he decided to have a look at Barbados and took my mother on holiday to Sandy Lane in the early 60s.

When he came back he said "I have been to the most wonderful place in the world!! But, I couldn't afford to go there again. I got to work and found some good cheap tickets and persuaded Sandy Lane to give me, as we were also hoteliers, a substantial discount, and brought my wife here. I thumbed my nose at my dad and came to Barbados for the first time.

Let me tell you a little about my dad. He did not have the wonderful education you and I have had. He left school when he was 14 and a half. He went to work for Cable & Wireless and while he had that job he started Littlewoods Pools in 1923. In 1932 he started Littlewoods Mail Order Catalogues and in 1937 he opened his first Littlewoods Chain Store.

He was just getting into his stride when the Second World War broke out. With that he condensed the activities of these first two companies and turned the enormous officers over to war work. He and all his girls, without any experience started making barrage balloons, and shells, and parachutes, and they took apart and packed down lorries for shipping to North Africa. They built pontoons and finally landing craft for D. Day,

and when peace was declared he had to convert everything back to the offices that had been closed six years earlier. Later it was stated in the papers that he was Chairman of the largest private business in the UK.

Not surprisingly by 1946 he was vastly overworked and the doctor ordered him to take a long holiday. He liked walking in the South of France, but the UK only permitted £100 of foreign currency per annum outside the British Commonwealth. He set out for Bermuda, which in those days you reached by flying to – Reykjavik, Iceland, Greenland, Newfoundland and New York – hardly restful. But, he got there, and rested up and finally returned, having bought a deserted hotel there! This rest gave him time to think and to consider his financial future and the implications of the heavy death duties then in force. By 1949 he had sliced up his company among his close family – while keeping one magic share for himself.

I had grown up with this dynamo and quite unconsciously been trained by him. As a child I went to the office in his car with him and had lessons in what would be called “sit next to Nelly.” I was inside the barrage balloons watching them stick down the seams. I found my nanny making shells.

Officially my education consisted of boarding school at nine, Eton at 12 and a half for six years, a gap year and two years at Oxford, but all that time I was spending half the holiday times on practical matters within his mail order company: stock control, wages, office administration, dispatch, transport, accounts. I saw how he got things done. I think I then thought – this is all quite natural. Now I doubt it, but I’m very grateful.

Then I called a halt. I was doing no work. Oxford was teaching me nothing. I persuaded the ex-manager of the Liverpool Philharmonic to get me a place at the Akademie de darstellende Kunst in Vienna and a place as a production volunteer at the Vienna State Opera. For three years I worked 9.30 a.m. until 10.30 p.m. with mornings off on Saturday and Sunday, and when the opera closed for the summer I went to the Bayreuth Festival and then worked at the Lake Festival and another year at the Geneva Festival.

When I was due to finish at the Vienna Akademie, there came a letter from my dad to say that if I wanted to go into opera, he offered to buy back the Littlewoods shares which I had, for a large sum of money.

At that point I needed to get myself a job in a North German opera house. On the other hand I could go back to Littlewoods and take a hand in

what looked to me like a major reorganization of our company structure which to me, seemed to be looming and I did, and I was right.

The Moores family sort-out that happened in 1964 was not only a sub division but a tax avoidance plan. UK tax in those days was vicious. I remember there was one year when income tax came to over 100 percent – and they call that legal.

My children were allotted shares in their own right for tax reasons, so I felt no compunction in handling 50 percent of the shares allotted to myself to a new and discrete charity – The Peter Moores Foundation. Littlewoods was a private company. There were little or no dividends and the shares were unquoted, and consequently had little or no capital value for the present. Gradually dividends increased and since 1990 capital sums have been dispensed. Then it was a question of wait and see.

In the 1960's we bought Alan Bay on Sandy Lane beach and had it redesigned by Oliver Messel. In Barbados over 40 years we improved and rebuilt and moved until I ended up at Springhead. Here I got what is called “an offer you can't refuse” for the land, followed late by the same again for a plot where I intended to build another house up there.

The construction of the Peter Moores Foundation provides for almost any kind of charity work. I know where I wanted to go in 1964, if I had had the money, but who knew what would be helped by others or by Government, and what extra needs there may be in the 2010s? Quite often help can be given more by thought, support and organization (small cheques are usually little more than palliatives to the giver's nerves). Larger cheques should only be given to those who are showing that they can do, they have done, some of what is needed. Cheques are paid out year by year as progress is made (or not). We seek not to give advance guaranties.

We first arranged a Barbados retail scholarship in conjunction with Littlewoods in 1974, to go and see another retail company, and we have had over 20 young Barbadians during those 23 years there. Then in 1991 we set up the Peter Moores Barbados Trust with an annual grant to pay out at their discretion and make recommendations to the PMF in England for special Barbados donations.

Lastly the Scotland Beef Project, which did not succeed.

In 1958 I had started with my own money supporting promising opera singers. PMF UK has for than more 25 years supported the training of young singers. More expensively we have made 75 recordings with

Chandos of well known operas (Boheme, Rigoletta, Don Giovanni, Macbeth, Salome, and all in English Translational).

The idea is to remove that aura of exclusiveness with which fund raisers surround them. I happen to speak Italian, German and French but when people sing to me in a foreign language I understand it – it goes into my brain. But, if they sign to me in English it goes straight into my heart. I feel that singing in English opens a door to people which may have kept them away from opera in languages they don't understand.

Then there are dozens and dozens of operas you never heard of between Don Giovanni, Barber of Seville, Rigoletto and La Traviata which are nearly as good but completely unknown because they are less perfect or more expensive to stage. Opera Rara are expert at putting out complete authentic versions in the original text (to maximize international sales). We have helped record 22 of these.

A total of 97 opera sets.

The Public Orator was told you what the Peter Moores Foundation has done for Barbados, which not only saves your time but also my embarrassment. He cannot tell you what we will do. We have the funds for some years yet and we have sturdy Trustees: Sean Carrington, Sir Cecil Graham, Lady Smith, Jean Goddard, and Geoffrey Ramsey. A new Trustee was appointed on Monday, Jennifer Alleyne (her father, Neil Fitzwilliam, was one of our first trustees). May I ask you to join me in my thanks to them all.

Lastly but most importantly, I must that the University for the honour conferred on me – a DLIT of which I hardly feel worthy.

I and my fellow honourands Dr. Cardinal Ward and Baroness Patricia Scotland owe much to the University for the work that it has done, what it have advised, which vastly overreaches our poor contributions to Barbados, a place that I love and honour.

One only needs to observe driving down the road from the considerations and courtesy paid by one driver to another, that Barabados is still a much more civilized place than England.

What words of wisdom could I possibly offer young people as you go out into the world? You have just graduated and you and your families have every right to be proud of your achievement, and to celebrate it – to which I and my fellow honorands add our warmest congratulations. We know that your academic success could not have been achieved without tenacity and dedication to your goal. But, that's for starters, because graduation is just the beginning of the Great Big Learning Curve of Life –

an exhilarating roller-coaster ride that you are now in prime position to embark on, armed with the knowledge, discipline and training you have acquired here at the Cave Hill.

Well, I certainly have had many more years than you, to learn from my mistakes; also to learn from others.

Just don't leave your tenacity and dedication behind on the Campus when you step over into that wider world. Us "oldies" have witnessed all too often what has happened to educated young people who never came near to reaching their goals, mainly because they never got round to defining what those were, or even believing in them.

But, I know from my own experience that even when you have your goals in place, things don't always work out the way you have envisaged. So my first piece of advice would be, always be prepared to learn – especially from your mistakes and difficulties, because these are often the most valuable lessons you can have. Of course, you should aim for success in your career and in your relationships, but do not be deterred or downcast by failures. These are bound to happen. You would not be human, otherwise. And often the greatest lessons can be learnt from a failure – if you were prepared to learn.

Your education at the University of the West Indies has given you a wonderful springboard from which to launch the rest of your life. But, now you shape the trajectory of your career, your commitment to your fellow citizens, wherever that may be in the world will depend on the decisions you make that may be in the world, will depend on the decisions you take. Education is a great passport, but it's up to you how to manage your voyage through life.

As a child by dad lived over a fish and chip shop in Lancashire, in the North of England, and left school when he was 14 1/2. That was the norm for working class people (in England) in those days. He has a basic education but that did not deter him from using his native wit and intelligence.

By the time I was born (in 1932) he had launched his business empire and made his first million. But he recognized what a good education could offer, and made sure that his four children benefited from opportunities that he had never had. He also believed in putting back into his business and into society what he had gained from it. He thus instilled in us children the notion that nothing of value is gained without hard work and there is nothing more valuable than sharing the fruits of your labours.

Mind you, that didn't stop me from quitting Oxford University after two years whilst reading modern languages. I thought they could be taught better, or, at any rate, there were better ways of learning a modern language. I was still keen to learn, just not in that system. I'm not sure whether that showed an independence of mind, or youthful rebellion, perhaps a bit of both. I am not suggesting that mine was a good example. But I did go to Vienna where I had a fantastically interesting three years as a voluntary production assistant at the State Opera, whilst studying at the Academy of Music and Dramatic Arts. That was a great combination of practical and academic experience and I certainly learnt German. And that is really what I am saying to you: your academic knowledge is a great bonus in your voyage through life, but you will only fully realize its benefits when you harness it to practical purposes.

Whilst I was waltzing around Europe – having a lot of fun, but also learning a helluva lot about music, art and people, I had little idea of how I could best use that experience. I had developed a passion for opera as a boy. So I might have made a not-very-inspiring stage director, or tied my hand as an artists' agent. It was a call from my dad that concentrated my mind and set me off in a different direction altogether. "Go on working in opera or pull my weight in the family retail business in Liverpool," and that meant learning the ropes from the ground floor up. You could say that was my dad's purpose more than mine. It was quite a sea-change but what I discovered, once I'd knuckled down, was that it gave me the opportunity to explore ways of channeling the passions in my life more effectively than would ever have been possible had I hung around stage doors looking for a job. I'd been earning my keep for a few years, and, using my own money, had helped out several musicians at the start of their careers, but nothing in any organized way. It got me thinking about what young artists – mainly round about my own age – most needed to develop their potential. And no, it wasn't necessarily a matter of money, or at least, not directly so.

Providing access to good advice, or to good dentistry, or to comfy shoes could be of equal importance. A change in the way family finances were organized made me realize that I could do a lot more, especially in the arts and education, if I set up my own charitable foundation. So that's what I did in 1964. I found that running the Peter Moores Foundation has certainly utilized my education and all my early experiences in the arts, whilst I hope I've been able to bring to its projects some of the commercial knowledge gained from my business experience during the 36 years I did my family duty with Littlewoods. I guess that's what I mean by discipline and learning to adapt circumstances to your purpose.

I first came to Barbados after visiting Bermuda with my dad who was developing business interests there. I was struck not only by its natural

beauty but even more by the huge potential of its greatest resource – its people – YOU. There have been huge changes in the forty years or so that I have been coming to the Caribbean – both in these islands and globally. Paradoxically, the world has become far less parochial whilst becoming a whole lot smaller – at least in terms of communication, travel and shared economies. It has been great to see citizens of the Caribbean increasingly taking their rightful part as global citizens – whether that be in the fields of commerce, medicine, education, science, other space exploration – you name it.

There will be many more changes in the next forty years. YOU, the Class of 2008, have it all before you. You have earned a great start in life. Be proud of that, and use it. Use it to remember that the willingness to learn will enrich you all the days of your life. Add to that tenacity in pursuing your goals, a determination to fulfill your passions and the discipline to harness those to the good of mankind.

I wish you all a rewarding future, in whatever forms that may take. And I thank you, Chancellor, for the honour of giving this address.

Thank you all.