

Michigan State University
Commencement Ceremony for the
College of Communication Arts and Sciences
June 9, 1989

That was a gracious, even impressive, introduction for this appreciative 75 year old alumnus who has flunked retirement and may now be facing the dawn of senility. However, I have told myself that as long as I have 70% of my marbles (a good local norm in Washington), I'll hang in there at the FCC for another two years or more. Actually, I feel too young to be this old! When Senator Goldwater asked me at my last confirmation, "Commissioner, are you willing to serve your full term?" I answered, "Yes sir -- if God is willing, I am willing." I'm glad I survived three different Senate confirmation hearings and that they are now history. However, there could be some advantage to age if I were going through the inquisitional kind of confirmation hearings they conduct in Washington these days. Now, with the involuntary celibacy of the golden years, I could say with conviction -- "No, I'm not a womanizer -- at my age, I am now a fantasizer." I could even repeat my old claim that I now like to play R rated movies backwards because at my age, I like to see people get dressed and go home.

But regardless of chronological age, I am comforted by my delusions of adequacy. And I'm guided somewhat by Malcolm Forbes' saying, "You are never too old until you admit it or are no longer around to deny it." But it is hard to believe that I graduated from MSU in 1935, three years before Ted Turner was born!

Anyway, I appreciate all pre-posthumous eulogies and awards these days. However, in the next better world, I want to come back reincarnated as Ted Turner!

I want to be colorful, free wheeling, enterprising, successful and rich like Ted.

I want that song "My Way" to really apply much more to me than to Frank Sinatra -- just like Ted.

I want to be a world champion yachtsman -- I want the adulation of beautiful people.

I want to own major league baseball and basketball teams like the Atlanta Braves and Atlanta Hawks.

I want to take a struggling UHF TV station (Channel 17) in Atlanta and convert it into a thriving, world's first superstation now reaching 29 million households!

I also want to be reincarnated in that other world as both chairman and president of Turner Broadcasting Systems (TBS) which owns and operates the CNN network (that scooped all others in the current Chinese revolution), Headline News, Turner Program Services, Turner Entertainment Co., World Championship Wrestling, and the recently launched TNT-Turner Network Television reaching 29 million cable homes. TNT seems destined to become cable's premier network with a complete variety of programs.

I'd like to originate the Goodwill Games in partnership with Russia, go hunting with Fidel Castro, and have the excitement of an almost takeover of the CBS network.

I'd also like to win the Radio-TV News Director Association's prestigious Paul White Award for distinguished service to electronic journalism that Ted is receiving this coming September.

I'd love to be the leading exemplification of his slogan (prominently displayed on my desk), "Lead, Follow or Get Out of the Way."

Ted is at his individualistic best when he invades the FCC as his own lobbyist . . . a Commissioner is subjected to the full range of power salesmanship -- pleadings, harangues and threats. He leaves your office with either your vote or your heart in his pocket. (I feel he would probably prefer your vote).

I can't buy all his persuasive arguments -- but I must confess to you that after he left my office last time -- I turned to my staff and said "There is one helluva guy. I'd like to be Ted Turner in the next world." So, it is a real pleasure to be able to present this "hell of a guy" at the commencement exercises of my beloved alma mater.

I give you a world class communications leader and great American, Ted Turner.