BRUCKHEIMERS URGE CENTRE GRADS TO GO OUT AND MAKE A RUCKUS

May 26, 2009 | BEN KLEPPINGER, CENTRAL KENTUCKY NEWS

Centre College sent 269 new graduates off in style at its commencement on Sunday, May 24, 2009. For the second year in a row, about 85 percent of Centre's graduating class graduated on time in four years. President John Roush said the rate is the highest in Kentucky.

This year, commencement featured famous film and television producer Jerry Bruckheimer and his wife, preservationist and writer Linda Bruckheimer. Mr. Bruckheimer has produced many highly successful movies, including the two "National Treasure" films, "Pearl Harbor," "Bad Boys," "Bad Boys II" and the "Pirates of the Caribbean" trilogy. He also has produced the hit TV series "CSI" and its spin-offs, "CSI: Miami" and "CSI: New York." Mrs. Bruckheimer has been editor of the women's magazine Mirabella, written several novels and produced two award-winning animated PBS specials. The couple shared the stage at Centre's 186th commencement, encouraging students to work for their dreams. Mrs. Bruckheimer is a native of Bloomfield, a small town between Lexington and Elizabethtown. Her family moved to Los Angeles in the 1950s, but she said she never stopped being a Kentuckian. "They yanked me away from Kentucky, and as a result I became a furious teenager," she said. "I must admit I remained a furious teenager well into my 30s." Mrs. Bruckheimer said she had to drag her husband Jerry kicking and screaming back to her home state, but once he got here it was love at first sight. The couple now own a large farm in Bloomfield. Mrs. Bruckheimer has helped preserve and protect many old buildings in Kentucky, and Roush credited her with revitalizing one small city's downtown area. Mrs. Bruckheimer said she and her husband were saddened by construction projects they saw ravaging Kentucky's hills and valleys as the years went by. "We soon realized that development fever was spreading like lava across Kentucky's countryside," she said. "Anybody who's watched a bulldozer destroy a 19th-century church to pave a parking lot... knows this is not progress."

Mrs. Bruckheimer said fortunately in the last 15 years she's seen a substantial change in environmental awareness. Throughout her speech, she talked about the American dream. Many believe the American dream to be dead or past its prime, she said, but the dream is not dead. It simply needs people like Centre's new graduates to pump new life into it, she said. "You are Kentucky's future," she said. "You are our nation's future. Make a ruckus." Mr. Bruckheimer followed up his wife's speech with his own thoughts on pursuing dreams. Mr. Bruckheimer said he learned about Centre College and all of its prestigious achievements, one thing occurred to him. "Centre College is a school I would have never gotten into," he said. Following the audience's laughter, Mr. Bruckheimer went on to tell how he graduated from the University of Arizona, which was, at the time, listed as one of Playboy's Top 10 party schools. Mr. Bruckheimer also talked about his role in his wife's preservation work. He said when Linda told him about what she wanted to do, he got behind her financially. "I gave her an unlimited budget, and somehow she managed to exceed it," he said jokingly. "Plot lines of reality.

Mr. Bruckheimer began the meaty part of his speech talking about facing the fear associated with life's adventures.
"Reality is fraught with lousy plot lines, bad ads and even some sad endings," he said. "Ultimately, you are responsible for writing the scripts of your own lives."

A good attitude and dedication to your dreams is far more important than academic achievement, though, he said. "All the impressive degrees and resumes may get you in the door," he said. "But today, maybe more than ever, that will not be enough."

Mr. Bruckheimer explained how he had seen many other people during his life who wanted to achieve his level of success, but they were unwilling to put forward the effort.

He encouraged the graduates to leave Centre and go out into the world and put everything they have toward their dreams.

"Every generation has the same challenge," he said. "It's your turn to step in front of the lights."

After the degrees had been passed out and the audience had flooded the new alumni with applause, Centre's Student Government Association President Jacob Raderer spoke on behalf of the graduates.

Raderer said the commencement was a "formal goodbye" to a college that had become home for many students. He said while at Centre many students learned invaluable lessons they could not have learned elsewhere, but those lessons aren't the ones students learned in the classroom.

"I'm talking about other things," he said. "The things you can't prove you know, other than how you live your life."

Raderer said the community at Centre is a special one - a holistic one that is good for the mind, body and spirit. "Centre has given us what we need," he said, "an education beyond any other, friendships to last a lifetime and a place to call home."

Raderer thanked the students' parents, the Centre faculty and staff and everyone who has made Centre what it is. Then he offered his fellow students a send-off.

"We have made a difference at Centre," he said. "And now we move on to make a difference in the world."

President Roush offered the graduates some parting thoughts, asking them to remember all their experiences, both good and bad, at Centre, and encouraged them to pursue excellence.

"We are proud of you, we will miss you, we love you," he said. "Godspeed."

—END