

第2回 学部合同入学式

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What is fame? Well, that really depends on your definition. There are as many paths to fame as there are stars at night. It can be by virtue of genetics, which is by birth, or the result of hard work. It can be by accident or by design. It can result in one's profession or it can be someone's hobby. It can be enduring, something that lives on for the ages like Albert Einstein's discovery of relativity. Or it can be fleeting, the briefest moment in the sun, a momentary spotlight. Like when Sir Isaac Newton discovered gravity when an apple fell on his head. Or it can be like a fireman who is on the evening news because he climbed up a tree to save a trapped kitten.

In 1968, the famous American artist Andy Warhol, exhibited his first international retrospective exhibition at a gallery in Stockholm. The exhibition catalogue contained his statement that "In the future everybody will be world famous for fifteen minutes." In today's world, it would be fifteen megabytes.

Perhaps Mr. Warhol was trying to play down his sudden burst of fame as an artist in the 1960s. However, fifty years later, as things have turned out---because of the communications revolution, because of technology, because of the Internet, because of our celebrity culture, because of reality television, or because there are so many different ways for which every person might attain Warhol's proverbial fifteen minutes---his prediction isn't so far from the truth. In fact, his prediction has been translated and used in almost all languages. You would probably say, "TSUKANOMA NO MAY-SAY."

But is fifteen minutes of fame really enough? The accepted definition of fame is someone who is widely known and recognized. Did the fireman's saving of a kitten change the direction of the world? Did everyone suddenly run about looking for kittens to save? Indeed, by Warhol's definition one can attain fame by becoming "famous for nothing." You know what I mean. Everyone here today is likely to have met, seen, or knows of a person who is famous for nothing---attaining celebrity status for no particular reason. Everyone knows people who are famous because they are, say, offspring or related to an important or famous person. "He is the son of so and so!" Or became associated with a famous person. "She is so and so's girlfriend." These are people who really are famous for nothing. No achievement, no discovery, no particular skill or talent. I don't want to pick on anyone, but as an example think of Paris Hilton, or, say, the Kardashian sisters. In their case, I believe, they belong to the category of "famous for being famous." They achieved their initial fame from their deceased father, Robert Kardashian, was O.J. Simpson's friend and defense attorney. You may remember that O.J. Simpson was a very famous football player who was accused of murdering his wife.

We must not confuse fame with celebrity status. For me, Andy Warhol's definition is not for fame. It is simply for celebrity status. Now there is nothing wrong with celebrity status. It is quite natural for us to admire someone of public prominence, like a movie or television star or a great sport figure. And so on.

But I would argue that to be famous, you really should be someone who remains known beyond his or her lifetime. Most everyone aspires to be famous because it suggests notable deeds, but only a tiny fraction of the world's population fit the definition. It has to be someone who is respected and honored as well as famous. Someone who is renowned by virtue of a deed that will have a lasting and positive effect on civilization. To me, fame is achieving something of great value. To be a role model for others to follow.

It could be for a scientific breakthrough, like Einstein or Newton, or being very skilled at a sport, like Babe Ruth or Ichiro Suzuki, or producing remarkable art, like Michelangelo or Kose Kanaoka of the T'ang Dynasty, or writing great works, like William Shakespeare or Banano Yoshimoto or for being a great humanitarian like Mother Teresa or Chiune Sugihara.

I can go on and on because the subject of fame lends itself to so many different meanings and variations that I would probably need all night and then not be finished. But you all understand what I am saying. We all only have one life to live. Most of us would like our life to be productive, to count. But fame cannot be achieved because you consciously try to achieve it. That kind of fame is usually fictitious, artificial, and dangerous. Real fame for most of us is achieved in the normal course of our life.

You all know the story. Chiune Sugihara did not set about to become famous. Indeed, he was by nature a non-assuming soul. His wife Yukiko writes that "he was a serious and disciplined person. Faithful to his routine." He had an innate talent for languages. As a young man he followed his conviction to become a teacher rather than the doctor that his father wished him to be. From his early youth he had a strong moral code which he followed throughout his life. While studying at Waseda University he responded to an advertisement looking for students to study abroad for the Foreign Ministry. As a result he found himself as a clerk for the Foreign Ministry in Harbin and then, because of his linguistic abilities found himself teaching Russian at Harbin Gakuin University. By the age of 32 he was working for the Japanese Embassy in Harbin, becoming known as one of the foremost authorities on Russia. In 1939 he was appointed Deputy-Consul General for the Empire of Japan in Kaunas Lithuania during World War II.

Fate handed him an opportunity in his life that presented a fork in the road. One direction would follow orders of his superiors, the other direction would follow his moral code and conscience. He chose the latter because it was of a higher order than his superiors. His choice was not made to become famous, just the opposite, it would get him into trouble. But the choice he made was because he knew it was the right thing to do. His act saved the lives of some 6000 souls. I was one of those trapped. I was eight years old. Our fate was doomed. The Nazis were surely out to murder us because we were Jews. And we had nowhere to flee, nowhere to go. Sugihara was our only hope. A transit visa to Japan.

Many years later I became a friend to Sugihara's oldest son Hiroki. He had devoted his life to the memory of his father. I sometimes would join Hiroki to tell our stories. He as a five year old inside the Embassy. Me as an eight year old trying to escape the Holocaust. Hiroki

explained that when his father asked the Foreign Ministry for permission to issue the transit visas, the Ministry responded with this.

Concerning transit visas request previously **stop**. Advise absolutely not to be issued to any traveler not holding firm end visa without guaranteed departure ex Japan **stop**. No exceptions **stop**. No further inquiries expected **stop**. Foreign Ministry Tokyo.

In violating his orders, Chiune told his family that even a great hunter cannot kill a bird that comes to him for refuge. His family supported his decision. By giving visas to 6,000 desperate and innocent people whose only crime was that they were Jewish, Sugihara achieved greatness, immortality and fame. He became a hero for humanity and a model for everyone to follow. He was named as one of the world's Righteous. May his courageous deed live on forever!