

Text of Honorary Degree Ceremony

On September 14, 2011 I was awarded an Honorary Doctor of Fine Arts by California State University. The citation reads:

Robert Nathan Danziger is a committed energy environmentalist, lawyer, inventor and musician. His career linking the sciences, humanities, and the arts embodies the interdisciplinary values integral to the Vision Statement of California State University, Monterey Bay.

Mr. Danziger founded the Sunlaw company, reflecting his interests in alternative energy and law. He has worked in a variety of areas related to his environmental interests, including for Khosla Ventures (biotechnology due diligence); for National Semiconductor (smart grid); Goal Line Environmental Technology (catalysis, nanotechnology); Calera (cement from seawater and CO2); Gridpoint (smart grid, electric and hybrid vehicles); Google (electric and hybrid vehicles); Carmel Highlands Inventions (most recent patent, electricity from the non-carbon portions of coal, acid mine drainage remediation, in situ coal gasification), and Cogentrix (CO2 management options for coal-fired power plants focusing on making wood or masonry-substitute materials from greenhouse gases).

As inventor, Mr. Danziger has six issued patents, including one for a "Walking Chair," a medical assistive device for individuals with back problems. In addition, Mr. Danziger has five music albums to his credit. He has composed several sound sculptures, including 1910 Nocturne, which played as part of the exhibition "Painting by Moonlight" at the Monterey Museum of Art in 2009, and "Steinbeck's Chinatown" which debuted in April 2010, and ran until July 4, 2010, at the National Steinbeck Center in Salinas. Mr. Danziger has connected with the CSU Monterey Bay campus in a variety of ways, including his support of community partnerships in the arts and humanities, and his participation as a lecturer in the Osher Lifelong Learning Institute.

In recognition of his accomplishments as an innovative and cross-disciplinary thinker, the Board of Trustees of the California State University and California State University Monterey Bay are proud to confer upon Robert Nathan Danziger the honorary degree of Doctor of Fine Arts.

As-Delivered Remarks of Robert Danziger in Connection with Receiving an Honorary

Doctor of Fine Arts from California State University at Monterey Bay

September 14, 2011

Introduction

President Harrison & Provost Cruz-Uribe, Chairman Bains, Deputy Chairman Waters, Faculty, My wonderful wife Martha, Family and Friends, thank you for being here.

Dr. Harrison, I recently learned your career has been dedicated to the study, teaching and practice of social work. My Mother was a social worker, and she spoke often in her last few weeks about how fulfilling, how comforting, how warm it made her feel to have been a social worker, it was an extremely important part of her life.

My father grew up desperately poor in a difficult household with a very sick mother. He didn't have so much as a birthday party until Mom came along. Despite his childhood suffering, He and my mother gave my sister Ronna and I everything we needed to live a successful life. I have to believe he was Mom's most successful project, and they broke the chain of poverty and the associated social ills that usually pass from generation to generation. Just like social workers try to do every day.

When you called me earlier in the year to tell me about this honor my mother had recently passed away, and I told you I would dedicate, and do now dedicate this Honorary Doctor of Fine Arts to my Mother, Shirley Delores Rotstein Danziger.

PART I

I appreciate all the kind things being said about me. But I do have one big regret: I did not accomplish one of the most important goals I had set for myself. This was to achieve, in my lifetime a kind of universal prosperity, coupled with energy independence and a clean environment, of the sort we enjoy here in Monterey.

Sunlaw Energy Corporation, the company I founded, did build and run a real-world commercial, unsubsidized powerplant, where the air coming out was virtually cleaner than the air going in – the first and still the only such plant to do so. I composed the music for a documentary about [building] the plant and amazingly won the New York Film Festival Best Original Music Award. Sunlaw had a perfect safety record, hosted a wildly successful kids and professional mural program, was the first plant ever to achieve 100% reliability – availability, all while sponsoring the groundbreaking Shades of LA program that collected pre-1960 photographs of all the different ethnic communities in Los Angeles. We made good paying jobs that didn't cannibalize other jobs. We set an example that has yet to be equaled, and cannot be bettered.

To achieve this we had to take on opposition from all points of the political compass, and the determined, often threatening opposition of commercial, governmental and activist entities.

The next generation you are training will hopefully have a chance to make this kind of performance commonplace, although partisanship is the enemy of prosperity, the enemy of energy independence, and most certainly the enemy of a clean environment. For these and many other reasons, I hope our current political situation changes to make such things prudent and possible.

There's a famous scene in the movie "American President" in which an environmental lobbyist played by Annette Benning, and the President played by Michael Douglas kiss on their first date. She tells her sister:

I gotta nip this in the bud. This has catastrophe written all over it. The sister replies: The man is the leader of the free world. He's brilliant, funny, and handsome. He's an above-average dancer. Isn't it possible our standards are just a tad high?

Like many in this room, almost all of us in this room, my goals are a tad high. I know that. I clearly wanted, though, to be a positive footnote in the history of our time for having achieved a universal dream – prosperity, coupled with energy independence and a clean environment. I wish I could've done that.

PART II

I was a funny kid, a giant kid. In fact I was the biggest person in school from the 2nd grade on, and was never in a room with someone my size for over 30 years. Starting at the age of two, maybe earlier, I was told thousands of times, thousands of times, I was going to die soon because of my size. Add to that a back broken when I was 18 - - The cliché is "live each day as if it were your last." The real world effect has been to demand of myself to do all I could, as completely and wholeheartedly as I could, for as quickly and as long as possible.

I liked this pressure, that's the weird thing, I liked this pressure - it worked for me. I came up short often, but I did learn to muster every side of me to accomplish something big and tangible. I liked that at any moment I could honestly stand before any man or God. But in all this I learned how limited I am, how limited all human beings are, but specifically myself. Somehow or other the mystery of all we don't know now comforts me.

I do need to note though, that even though I was being told I was going to die, I never believed it – and at this time I would like to note that I was right and they were wrong.

PART III

Some have noted the broad range of areas I have been blessed to make a contribution – My experience as a musician, a job that requires innovation and invention every working day, made each new experience, every new area I found a way into, a canvas for my creativity. A platform for invention. I love that.

Maybe my biggest break was getting the job at California Institute of Technology's Jet Propulsion Laboratory. JPL at Cal-tech was a truly elite think tank that I'm

told *had*, and I believe still has, more triple PhD's than anywhere else in the world, and at the time was the Lead Center for all alternative energy research in the United States. I had no undergraduate degree, a second level law degree, and had only gotten through high school by the grace of God and the tolerance of the school administration. I want to thank Mr. Tunney who is here today, and thank you for overlooking a few of those things, I appreciate it. [audience laughs] - That's a knowing laugh from my sister.

Because of my law review articles on solar energy I was invited to give a seminar at JPL – the first step in their hiring practices. I prepared my talk “The Legal Implications of a 1 Megawatt Solar Power Plant” very much like the one up the hill here at CSUMB. *Unbeknownst to me JPL had just received a contract to write a report for Congress on “The Legal Implications of a 1 Megawatt Solar Power Plant.”* The same exact title, it was a pure coincidence, but they decided to overlook my relative lack of credentials and hire me. When I got the job Dean Friesen of my law school told me, “When one of these guys is telling you the nature of the universe or predicting the future, if they are not floating 6 inches above the ground it's just an opinion.” He told me my opinion was as good as anybody else's. That was really great advice.

After a couple of years at Jet Propulsion Laboratory I started planning for my alternative energy company Sunlaw Energy Corporation. At that time there was not a single successful alternative energy company in the US, maybe the world. The 16 PhD economists who I worked with at JPL urged me not to be the first.

The cliché is that the pioneers get the arrows. The functional problem was the virtual non-existence of experienced banks, lawyers, accountants, insurance agents, libraries, training programs, college courses, engineers, builders, regulators, utilities, or ways to reliably measure ultra-low emissions. It all had to be created, it all had to be invented, and whoever was the first company had to lead these efforts. Who else can?

I waited as three companies got into the business, then JPL converted me to a consultant and I started Sunlaw. Within 6 months all three of the companies ahead of me had gone bankrupt. I was out there all alone. It was very naked and very windy.

But inventing all day, every day, felt completely natural to me, because of my background in music, and being taught to invent on a schedule at JPL. JPL gave me a front row seat to experience what might be judged the greatest invention and engineering achievement of the 20th century when they sent the Voyager spacecraft one billion miles to Saturn and were less than 1/10th of a second behind schedule and just a few feet off course. I challenge us to drive home that well. At a billion miles.

I lucked into a rare moment and became sought after by institutions that would never deal with someone like me as the industry matured. Sunlaw was jazz, sculpture, and performance art. I was 27, the youngest CEO in the alternative energy business anywhere in the world, and I was born to do this.

I do want to note for the record there were about 20 people on the front lines with me, I wasn't truly alone, but I was the leader in the early days, and the key decisions were mine to make.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion I have many things to be grateful for. Such a long list.

- Founding and running an energy company that caused worldwide emissions and energy consumption to be reduced by billions of tons, has made the world cleaner than if I had not come along.
- I got to work with a great team, and be their leader.
- I got to build some really big stuff. I'm a guy, love big tools. What can I tell ya, I love stuff like that, love things that make big noises and go boom. I like that stuff. That was fun.
- And thank God I was given the inventiveness and determination to prosper despite my physical challenges.

I leave you with the story of the most beautiful thing I ever saw. It was at the Vernon Elementary School that Sunlaw had adopted. The poorest school in the school district in the dirtiest zip code in the United States. We had a career day where we brought in world-class professionals from every continent to come and talk with the kids. The president of Disney or the head of the Chilean phone company, great musicians, businessmen and women, magicians, academics and artists. We asked them to speak for five minutes about their family and in the next five minutes give a professional presentation just like they would to their most esteemed colleagues. When they talked of their families it created an emotional connection to everyone there, and these hardened world-class pros would spend hours, sometimes many days, with the children. The kids loved it and I loved it too.

One day Martha and I went over to the school, and the students in the Special Education class took us into their room and closed the door. They positioned themselves on the empty floor. The teacher put on an angelic toy piano version of "White Christmas." And they began to dance. A young girl whose body twisted permanently to the side balanced herself against a challenged boy who could stand straight and proud, and he beamed while she danced as if around the maypole. Several other groups of kids also combined to make their bent bodies part of classic arrangements moving in time with the music. It was what every artist seeks – a perfect moment.

I found out the teacher, this hero, [note: The Teacher's name is Adriana Moran] had looked through hours and hours of ballet and other dance videos, to find world-class dances that used positions that her students were born to. She showed these kids the beauty in their bodies, where society was telling them they were ugly and unwanted, and they did it, they found the universal beauty in themselves. It was the most touching dance I have ever seen, and not because they were handicapped kids, it's because it was just beautiful.

President Harrison, this University and this place we live in is a special place, a blessed place. We are singing a great song, harmonizing with generations past and generations yet unborn.

Let's keep the music flowing. Thank you for this opportunity to do a brief solo.

[Applause]

**note: *sections in italics were accidentally omitted from the actual speech.*