

## To Dream the Impossible Dream

By Ken K.H. Leung

I told Ken Krieger after one of our planning meetings at Google that I am going to give a very broad, very deep, Dean Kamen style, 30 minutes speech at Cal Games, and Ken said to me, "Oh. You know, there is something to be said about being concise. You can say a lot in five minutes." And I said, "Yeah, Yeah, Yeah. On the other hand, I can be just like Dean Kamen." And Ken said, "Fair enough." Oh, don't worry folks, I am not going to drag you through one of those. My speech is now only twenty two minutes.

Ok, I know we are all tired, we all want to go home, get some sleep... How about this, I have in my hand a shorter version, it's about 10 minutes. Let's make a deal, I will give the short one so we can all go home early. In exchange you guys have to read the long one when I post it on Chief Delphi? Sounds good? I need a little support here! Good!

I was going to talk to the students here today... About how there are no dreams in this world anymore; how I wish JFK and Dr. King are here because frankly our leaders are doing a terrible job being role models for us; and how we need to break through the barrier created by the culture around us.

But what I really want to tell the students is this.

It is not easy growing up in this world. In fact, it's incredibly difficult.

In a year or two, many of you will go off to colleges. It will be the first time for you to be in charge of your own schedule, your studies, your classes. It will be the first time writing a check, worrying about tuition, making a living. And will be the first time seeing the thousands of classes without the slightest clue what they are or why you should care.

It will be completely overwhelming and you won't even know it. You might try to fake it, even managed to get some good grades, but all these time you struggle with three big questions every college student ask themselves:

Who am I? What do I want? How do I fit into this world?

It is very difficult to answer these questions, when, for the first time, you will be feeling the weight of your entire life on your shoulders, the weight of the entire world on your shoulders. It is even more difficult to answer these questions in a relative world where everyone is right and no one is right; in a world where everything seems to be connected, when in fact we are very much disconnected from one and other. And it is incredibly difficult to answer these questions, when people are constantly fighting with each other, countries behaving like they are the only one that matters, as if we are at the pinnacle of our society and everyone is fighting for that one square inch of real-estate at the peak.

Unfortunately, I can't tell you the answers to these questions. No one can. You have to find them yourself. What I can do is tell you about the steps that led me to my answers, and maybe one day you can tell me yours and we can compare notes.

Growing up in Hong Kong was my first step. Coming to America, learning English was another. Then I took more and more steps when I went to high school, joined the Gunn Robotics Team, and more and more steps when I volunteered at competitions, met awesome mentors like Ken Krieger, Jason Morrella, Andy Baker, Joe Johnson, and Dave Lavery. And more and more steps:

"Atlas Shrugged" by Ayn Rand, "Zen and the art of motorcycle maintenance" by Robert Pirsig;

"All the president's men", "Team of Rivals", a story of Lincoln and his cabinet, Thomas Paine, Rene Descartes, John Stuart Mills, Emmanuel Kant;

The West Wing, All 11 seasons of Frasier,

"A Structure of Scientific Revolution" by Thomas S. Kuhn, "Fahrenheit 451" by Ray Bradbury, "Founding Brothers" by Joseph J. Ellis, "Origin of Species" by Charles Darwin, "Surely You're Joking, Mr. Feynman" by Richard Feynman...

And the last step that brought me here today... Ceal Craig, team 1120, Eugene Brooks, team 1280, Mike Schmit and Phyllis Schmit, 1351, Lonny Weissman, Deborah Epperson, team 668, Dave Sheridan, 766, Laura Rhodes, 100, Randy Lam, Assistant Regional director, Alvin Cheng, 581, Pavan Datta, Ted Shinta, 115...

And the critical step that happened two years ago, during a winter in Wyoming, when I was sitting in the snow next to a river, with a clear blue sky and complete silence around me, thinking about the world, thinking about my writing, and suddenly this idea came to me and I found my dream.

Of course that dream has been changing and evolving since then, but nevertheless it gave me a set of beliefs, a set of tools, a set of directions to move forward with, and it was like nothing I have ever done before.

I can't tell you what that dream is, at least, not yet, because I am not ready. But what I can tell you is one day, I hope to finish my degree, have my own career; and one day, I hope to have a family, and kids of my own. I will have to teach them how to speak, to read, to watch TV. And I will get them started on Emmanuel Kant, you know, just to give them a head start.

Then they are will do FIRST Lego League, and Vex, and join a FIRST team just like the rest of you. And a few years after that they are going to colleges, just like the rest of you.

And that's when the troubles begin because I will start hearing words like "Driver's license", "parties", "boy friend/girl friend", and the most dreadful of all, "tuition". But I am not going to stop trying just because it is hard. I have to teach them how to think, how to find their dreams, and I am not going to stop trying just because it is hard. And I have to provide them with a better future, and I am not going to stop trying just because it is hard!

Because I have been thinking, I have been reading, and this is who I am, and this is what I want!

I can't give you any answers today, but I believe you have to be curious, you have to want to learn, you have to need to learn. And you have to choose to be successful, just like you are going to choose to beat the Technokats, Team Hammond, the H.O.T. Team, Wildstang, but I have a feeling you already know how to do that.

It is incredibly difficult growing up in this world.

I know it will be hard to imagine your life in the next 5 years, 10 years...

I know there are times when you are frustrated and angry that the world is the mess it is and you don't know why.

I know there are times when you are full of ideas and want to speak your mind.

I know there are times when you want to call yourself an engineer when you finish building your robot.

I know there are times when you are so terrified of speaking in front of people you look up to.

That's ok, that's all part of growing up. I want you to know it is all worth it.

To be able to read a book and truly understand where the author is coming from,

To be able to look at the world and truly appreciate how beautiful it is,

To write a speech and deliver it in front of people you really care about,

Holding your child for the first time knowing you have done everything you can to provide him or her a better future...

Trust me, it's worth it.

It is incredibly difficult growing up in this world, but you are not going to stop trying just because it is hard, right? Good, because that's not going to stop me from trying neither. Because you've got a star to catch, and so do I!

There are not enough teachers, scientists, engineers, doctors in this world,

there are not enough curiosities, characters, substances in our culture,

And we can do better, and we must do better, and we will do better,

And we are going to absorb and challenge everything we hear, we read, we see,

and we are going to be curios, passionate, interested,

Not because we are told to, not because we are taught to,

but because of who we are, and where we are going,

and we choose to aim for the stars and dream the impossible dream today!

Thank you so much for all your hard work the past 6 months. Thank you so much for coming today. Thank you, Thank you, Thank you. See you next year at Cal Games 2007! And thanks for listening, you guys are like family to me!