

Graduation 2008

Acceptance Speech by Honorary Graduate Jack Petchey OBE

Ladies and gentlemen. Chancellor

I'm 83 next week. My school teacher said that I was a "slow learner" but I didn't realise that I was to be this slow! It's taken me a few years to achieve this Doctorate but they say it's better than never!

I did look up the Oxford Dictionary for "Fellow" and one description was "A person regarded with contempt - but I read on and it said "A member of a learned society" -which is much better!

I am a supporter of academic education but I'm also a believer in "Life" education.

A person may not have the skills, or the interest, or the background or family support for academic knowledge but does have the interest and skills for "education of life" - outside academic.

My own personal case, I had no interest in school, I only wanted to "work" - which I did - being prosecuted for working under the age of 12 years old - and my parents gave me no support - nor encouragement – to do homework or extend my learning outside of school hours. We had no dictionaries, no encyclopaedias, no maps of the world, no books at home at all. In fact, the first dictionary I ever had was one I bought when I joined the Royal Navy so that I could write home!

Not everyone has the ability, inclination, or the means to go to university or college, and we should encourage these people to learn skills which will benefit them all their lives.

The point I'm trying to make is that I believe there should be alternative learning other than academic - such as:

- Positive Thinking
- Trade skills
- Life skills
- Sports skills
- Personal Development skills
- Good Citizenship skills (being kind & helping others).

I also feel that we all have a duty to give back to society, to help the youth of today, to help them gain confidence and self esteem and they, too, can help other people. Many young people today need encouragement, praise and a chance to shine. Our Foundation gives these young people the chance to fulfil their dreams, and the encouragement to try. Our motto is "If you think you can, you CAN".

I never thought I would be here today - but here I am! This University also shares similar ambitions and has a proud history of working with schools - the youth organisations. On behalf of all these - thank you!

Also, thank you very much for the confidence and honour you have placed with me today!

Thank you for listening.