

How exciting for you all ... such a significant day in your lives that you are so to be congratulated on. To be surrounded by family and friends to honour you and celebrate with you – for many it is your first key to the door and others your next key on your chosen path. How wonderful for you all; and I have to say pretty mind blowing for me to be here too particularly sharing the podium with such a star – Evonne Goolagong Cawley

I've heard the expression of someone of my age being at the twilight of their career, however I think that underplays what has still to be done in life. I'm not sure how my Grandchildren want to hear this but whilst there is breath in me, I'll still be working on an idea or even an ideal

It's almost become an essential phrase in life doing what you're passionate about. Passion is a word if bandied about loosely will lose its meaning but at its very essence it's the best word I know for what I can share with you.

What is so important is that unless you're one of the lucky ones who knows right now what career or life choice you are on (though even then, times change so quickly there are roads to travel we don't even know about yet). It won't always hit you right between the eyes and you have to work on the search for it and search I did for 20 years to find out what I was passionate about; what would engage me mentally and emotionally and continually challenge and excite me. It's not that I'm such a slow learner but because of reasons I couldn't control I left school at 14 when my parents lost their business, our home and everything that went with it and though offered a scholarship to stay on at school, we are talking 1959, very different times when it wasn't considered the norm for girls to go to university. And isn't it so different now!!!

But in my way I made up for it by having so many jobs it would make your hair curl Always hungry for knowledge; always wanting to do something better – some people might say driven.

We all know of hardships in life but I'm also a great believer that of luck in life too if you're open to seizing it.

So the luck of my life is that this career of mine that has given me the most exciting opportunities along

with the hard work still surprises me and I often have to pinch myself to believe it. Yet it was right in front of my nose and I hadn't realised it; and here's the luck; it wouldn't have happened unless I had met my wonderfully eccentric husband of mine whose crazy idea it was to farm Pheasants, that led us to settle in the Barossa!

Having been brought up in a family where food was so important to us no matter through good times or bad, I had this love of food and whilst never taught to cook, inherited an instinct that makes it the most natural thing to do but the secret to my success came from the Barossa; armed with the first part from childhood, I learnt the rhythm of the seasons, we were farmers first and I simply cooked what we grew and what our neighbours grew in the beginning never following others just relating to the produce at hand which was the result of the strength of our Mediterranean Climate. So I learnt one step in front of the other just immersing myself in learning totally fascinated by food and all that comes from that, and the rest is history....

Its given us as a family hard work and great satisfaction of doing something well and always with an edge of difference and it has given me a platform to share the things I believe in that all revolve around food and an appetite for life with all its meanings – and there are many.

I have to say though, searching as I was, I was enjoying the journey and not living my life waiting for the solution but always with my mind open to possibilities; I really can say nothing I did was wasted; waiting on tables and washing dishes that I can assure you I did; teaches you too and in fact I'm not beyond doing it now if I'm needed on a frantic day in the Barossa.....

Even if what it teaches you is that you want to work harder to find a path with more challenge and satisfaction.... While you're on that path by the way, it takes a really clever person to be a great dishie!!!! Ask any Chef.

Enough of me; you accepted the challenge when you entered University and today in graduation again I congratulate you – now with the key it's the choices you make from now on that can open your world enormously. You have the proven ability to take the next step on this truly exciting journey called life. And nothing will help you more than understanding yourself; understanding what are the principles most important to you – what makes you tick; what makes you happy; what fulfils you and what are the principles you will fight to protect.

In looking into yourself for this will help you with those choices but even that doesn't mean it will be easy. There are such opportunities before you and we can hope for great successes but I don't know one meaningful life that has had a straight road with no bumps in it; you have proven your capability and that brings with it the responsibility to do something with this key to the door and the bumps along the way are as important as the successes; if you can ride these out by learning from them; by finding something positive out of a failure then you move on, but stronger. How you face the difficulties in life will be the measure of you.

Be open to opportunities; risks are part of the journey and I can assure you flexibility, an enquiring agile mind, a work ethic and a positive nature can lead you anywhere you choose to go.

YOU ARE ON YOUR WAY;

GO WELL

DO WELL FOR YOURSELF

AND FOR SOCIETY

Maggie Beer AM