

Who's So Special?

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<http://marquetteeducator.wordpress.com>

By my informal count, I've attended more than 50 commencement ceremonies over the years. I can't begin to recall most of them, and although I shouldn't say so, there are some I'd rather forget, because of keynote speakers who fell fall short of engaging!

Thankfully I can report that most of the ceremonies have been very satisfying. Seeing the looks on the faces of the graduates and their families and friends always warms my heart.

The 2010 mid-year graduation, however, will be one I'll definitely remember — for at least one reason most readers wouldn't ever guess.



But here's a foreshadowing of what made this commencement so memorable for me — **my executive assistant, Carol Stachewicz, graduated**. That's nice, but so what, you might ask, since lots of people walked the stage on December 19, 2010, at the U. S. Cellular Arena.

Well, here's so what — Carol started in the MU Mailroom in 1992 and began taking classes in 1997. For the past 13 years, she has taken a course or two at a time, in the evenings and on Saturdays mostly, not only during the regular academic year, but also in the summer.

Trust me when I tell you that taking a course at a time while working full-time is BY FAR the hardest way to acquire a college education. I haven't seen her transcript, but I'm guessing she took over 40 courses that way. By doing so, she earned her Bachelor of Science degree in the College of Professional Studies.



In her 18 years at Marquette, Carol managed to ascend from her modest beginnings to the vital role she holds now. She worked with distinction in various positions along the way. Before I arrived, she worked for two previous deans whose thoughts, words, and actions were surely normal compared to mine. Now she holds the dubious distinction of having to watch the back of an unusual dean like me, and to her credit, on my watch she's performed with skill and grace for the past 6 1/2 years. Frankly, for a multitude of reasons, I'd be lost without her.

Now I should probably mention that Carol turned 60 on December 17th. That would make her about 38 years older than most students who earn an undergraduate degree. In any case, the convergence of her birthday and the completion of her academic journey somehow seemed fitting. It might also be telling, if not fitting, that her name appeared dead last in the commencement program and that she and a classmate were the final ones to be seated after all the graduates' names had been called.

Anyway, just a few moments earlier, as she was walking across the stage, I intercepted her before she reached Dean Bob Deahl and Father Wild. At that point, we exchanged a heartfelt congratulatory hug. ***And so you know, THAT's what I'll remember most of all***