

**Comments by Dick Thompson**  
**Presentation of the 2004 Spencer Award for Sustainable Agriculture**  
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It is very nice being the winner here today. Not everything that I have done has been a winner. I want to share some things, to the younger generation, that I have learned and am still learning about finding our destiny.

We are born with a plan or destiny. Failures or bumps in the road help us find where we fit and to find our destiny.

Competition helps us do our best in school, sports, and the show ring. Working hard and giving your best to every situation in life is a good goal; just getting by will not produce many successes in life.

However, aggressive competition or wining regardless of the cost is destructive. There was time in my life that I wanted to do away with competition because of what I saw going on with the coaches in high school sports during the 70s. Now being older and maybe a little wiser, competition has a place in building good character and success.

Success is needed for self worth. If we feel worthless, we are no good to our self, and no help to others. I was a skinny kid with zits who was picked on. If you are being picked on, remember the bully has less self worth and more problems than you do.

Living on easy street all the time does not build good character traits. Some hardships are good for the soul. Problems in life are needed to help us grow up on the inside. I'm 72 and still growing up. There are days I don't like growing up, but now I realize problems have a purpose and this bump in the road is leading to someplace positive. No problems, no inside growth.

Problems and failures are opportunities for change. We have a choice to be bitter or let these bumps in the road make us a better person.

We think these problems are outward, but really the biggest problem is inward. It's attitude or how we look at things. The mountain that is ahead of us may be only a gopher mound. Successes of the past help change the mountain into a gopher mound. When problems arise, we should ask, what is the lesson here? I have to talk to myself every day about this one. Do I try this, or try something else, if nothing works, I call it a corner situation and it is time to look up to find your destiny.

Competitive winning in early life brings confidence for more success. If there are winners, there are losers. Success brings responsibility to help others find their destiny. The competitive lifestyle should change to a complementary life style. Being at the right place at the right time saying or doing the right thing is a bingo, a home run. Helping others succeed is more rewarding than succeeding yourself. In this case, everybody wins and there are no losers.

We can't give up. We must stay in the game or try something different. Change! Get along, but don't go along. Be your own destiny. Be a good listener, especially to those close to you. Be a good observer. Be slow to speak, engage our brains before opening our mouths.

We wish you well in finding your destiny. Hopefully these comments will be helpful to someone in this audience today. Thank you very much.