

# Hamlet's Soliloquy

(from Shakespeare's *Hamlet, Prince of Denmark*, Act III, Scene i)

## HAMLET:

To be, or not to be—that is the question:

Whether 'tis\* nobler in the mind to suffer

*\*it is*

The slings and arrows of outrageous fortune

Or to take arms against a sea of troubles

And by opposing end them. To die, to sleep—

5

No more—and by a sleep to say we end

The heartache, and the thousand natural shocks

That flesh is heir to. 'Tis a consummation\*

*\*resolution*

Devoutly to be wished. To die, to sleep—

To sleep—perchance to dream: ay, there's the rub,\*

*\*problem*

10

For in that sleep of death what dreams may come

When we have shuffled off this mortal coil,\*

*\*life*

Must give us pause. There's the respect

That makes calamity\* of so long life.

*\*tragedy*

For who would bear the whips and scorns of time,

15

Th' oppressor's wrong, the proud man's contumely,\*

*\*contempt*

The pangs of despised love, the law's delay,

The insolence of office, and the spurns

That patient merit of th' unworthy takes,

When he himself might his quietus\* make

*\*death*

20

With a bare bodkin\*? Who would fardelst bear,

*\*dagger*

To grunt and sweat under a weary life,

*tburdens*

But that the dread of something after death,

The undiscovered country, from whose bourn\*

*\*\*border*

No traveler returns, puzzles the will,

25

And makes us rather bear those ills we have  
Than fly to others that we know not of?  
Thus conscience does make cowards of us all,  
And thus the native hue\* of resolution  
Is sicklied o'er with the pale cast of thought,  
And enterprise of great pitch and moment  
With this regard their currents turn awry  
And lose the name of action.

*\*natural color*

30

# Roger Ebert: The Essential Man [Excerpts]

By Chris Jones

*Esquire*, February 16, 2010

- 1     **For the 281st time** in the last ten months Roger Ebert is sitting down to watch a movie in the Lake Street Screening Room, on the sixteenth floor of what used to pass for a skyscraper in the Loop. Ebert's been coming to it for nearly thirty years, along with the rest of Chicago's increasingly venerable collection of movie critics. More than a dozen of them are here this afternoon, sitting together in the dark. Some of them look as though they plan on camping out, with their coats, blankets, lunches, and laptops spread out on the seats around them.
- 2     The critics might watch three or four movies in a single day, and they have rules and rituals along with their lunches to make it through. The small, fabric-walled room has forty-nine purple seats in it; Ebert always occupies the aisle seat in the last row, closest to the door. His wife, Chaz, in her capacity as vice-president of the Ebert Company, sits two seats over, closer to the middle, next to a little table. She's sitting there now, drinking from a tall paper cup. Michael Phillips, Ebert's bearded, bespectacled replacement on *At the Movies*, is on the other side of the room, one row down. Steve Prokopy, the guy who writes under the name Capone for *Ain't It Cool News*, leans against the far wall. Jonathan Rosenbaum and Peter Sobczynski, dressed in black, are down front.
- 3     "Too close for me," Ebert writes in his small spiral notebook.
- 4     Today, Ebert's decided he has the time and energy to watch only one film, Pedro Almodóvar's new Spanish-language movie, *Broken Embraces*. It stars Penélope Cruz. Steve Kraus, the house projectionist, is busy pulling seven reels out of a cardboard box and threading them through twin Simplex projectors.
- 5     Unlike the others, Ebert, sixty-seven, hasn't brought much survival gear with him: a small bottle of Evian moisturizing spray with a pink cap; some Kleenex; his spiral notebook and a blue fine-tip pen. He's wearing jeans that are falling off him at the waist, a pair of New Balance sneakers, and a blue cardigan zipped up over the bandages around his neck. His seat is worn soft and reclines a little, which he likes. He likes, too, for the seat in front of him to remain empty, so that he can prop his left foot onto its armrest; otherwise his back and shoulders can't take the strain of a feature-length sitting anymore.
- 6     The lights go down. Kraus starts the movie. Subtitles run along the bottom of the screen. The movie is about a film director, Harry Caine, who has lost his sight. Caine reads and makes love by touch, and he writes and edits his films by sound. "Films have to be finished, even if you do it blindly," someone in the movie says. It's a quirky, complex, beautiful little film, and Ebert loves it. He radiates kid joy. Throughout the screening, he takes excited notes — references to other movies, snatches of dialogue, meditations on Almodóvar's symbolism and his use of the color red. Ebert scribbles constantly, his pen digging into page after page, and then he tears the pages out of his notebook and drops them to the floor around him. Maybe twenty or thirty times, the sound of paper being torn from a spiral rises from the aisle seat in the last row.

- 7 The lights come back on. Ebert stays in his chair, savoring, surrounded by his notes. It looks as though he's sitting on top of a cloud of paper. He watches the credits, lifts himself up, and kicks his notes into a small pile with his feet. He slowly bends down to pick them up and walks with Chaz back out to the elevators. They hold hands, but they don't say anything to each other. They spend a lot of time like that.
- 8 **Roger Ebert can't remember** the last thing he ate. He can't remember the last thing he drank, either, or the last thing he said. Of course, those things existed; those lasts happened. They just didn't happen with enough warning for him to have bothered committing them to memory — it wasn't as though he sat down, knowingly, to his last supper or last cup of coffee or to whisper a last word into Chaz's ear. The doctors told him they were going to give him back his ability to eat, drink, and talk. But the doctors were wrong, weren't they? On some morning or afternoon or evening, sometime in 2006, Ebert took his last bite and sip, and he spoke his last word.
- 9 Ebert's lasts almost certainly took place in a hospital. That much he can guess. His last food was probably nothing special, except that it was: hot soup in a brown plastic bowl; maybe some oatmeal; perhaps a saltine or some canned peaches. His last drink? Water, most likely, but maybe juice, again slurped out of plastic with the tinfoil lid peeled back. The last thing he said? Ebert thinks about it for a few moments, and then his eyes go wide behind his glasses, and he looks out into space in case the answer is floating in the air somewhere. It isn't. He looks surprised that he can't remember. He knows the last words Studs Terkel's wife, Ida, muttered when she was wheeled into the operating room ("Louis, what have you gotten me into now?"), but Ebert doesn't know what his own last words were. He thinks he probably said goodbye to Chaz before one of his own trips into the operating room, perhaps when he had parts of his salivary glands taken out — but that can't be right. He was back on TV after that operation. Whenever it was, the moment wasn't cinematic. His last words weren't recorded. There was just his voice, and then there wasn't.
- 10 Now his hands do the talking. They are delicate, long-fingered, wrapped in skin as thin and translucent as silk. He wears his wedding ring on the middle finger of his left hand; he's lost so much weight since he and Chaz were married in 1992 that it won't stay where it belongs, especially now that his hands are so busy. There is almost always a pen in one and a spiral notebook or a pad of Post-it notes in the other — unless he's at home, in which case his fingers are feverishly banging the keys of his MacBook Pro.
- 11 He's also developed a kind of rudimentary sign language. If he passes a written note to someone and then opens and closes his fingers like a bird's beak, that means he would like them to read the note aloud for the other people in the room. If he touches his hand to his blue cardigan over his heart, that means he's either talking about something of great importance to him or he wants to make it clear that he's telling the truth. If he needs to get someone's attention and they're looking away from him or sitting with him in the dark, he'll clack on a hard surface with his nails, like he's tapping out Morse code. Sometimes — when he's outside wearing gloves, for instance — he'll be forced to draw letters with his finger on his palm. That's his last resort.

...

- 12 **Seven years ago**, he recovered quickly from the surgery to cut out his cancerous thyroid and was soon back writing reviews for the *Chicago Sun-Times* and appearing with Richard Roeper on *At the Movies*. A year later, in 2003, he returned to work after his salivary glands were partially removed, too, although that and a series of aggressive radiation treatments opened the first cracks in his voice. In 2006, the cancer surfaced yet again, this time in his jaw. A section of his lower jaw was removed; Ebert listened to Leonard Cohen. Two weeks later, he was in his hospital room packing his bags, the doctors and nurses paying one last visit, listening to a few last songs. That's when his carotid artery, invisibly damaged by the earlier radiation and the most recent jaw surgery, burst. Blood began pouring out of Ebert's mouth and formed a great pool on the polished floor. The doctors and nurses leapt up to stop the bleeding and barely saved his life. Had he made it out of his hospital room and been on his way home — had his artery waited just a few more songs to burst — Ebert would have bled to death on Lake Shore Drive. Instead, following more surgery to stop a relentless bloodletting, he was left without much of his mandible, his chin hanging loosely like a drawn curtain, and behind his chin there was a hole the size of a plum. He also underwent a tracheostomy, because there was still a risk that he could drown in his own blood. When Ebert woke up and looked in the mirror in his hospital room, he could see through his open mouth and the hole clear to the bandages that had been wrapped around his neck to protect his exposed windpipe and his new breathing tube. He could no longer eat or drink, and he had lost his voice entirely. That was more than three years ago.
- 13 Ebert spent more than half of a thirty-month stretch in hospitals. His breathing tube has been removed, but the hole in his throat remains open. He eats through a G- tube — he's fed with a liquid paste, suspended in a bag from an IV pole, through a tube in his stomach. He usually eats in what used to be the library, on the brownstone's second floor. (It has five stories, including a gym on the top floor and a theater — with a neon marquee — in the basement.) A single bed with white sheets has been set up among the books, down a hallway filled with Ebert's collection of Edward Lear watercolors. He shuffles across the wooden floor between the library and his living room, where he spends most of his time in a big black leather recliner, tipped back with his feet up and his laptop on a wooden tray. There is a record player within reach. The walls are white, to show off the art, which includes massive abstracts, movie posters (*Casablanca*, *The Stranger*), and aboriginal burial poles. Directly in front of his chair is a black-and-white photograph of the Steak 'n Shake in Champaign-Urbana, Illinois, one of his hometown hangouts.

- 14 He believes he’s had three more surgeries since the removal of his lower jaw; Chaz remembers four. Each time, however many times, surgeons carved bone and tissue and skin from his back, arm, and legs and transplanted them in an attempt to reconstruct his jaw and throat. Each time, he had one or two weeks of hope and relief when he could eat a little and drink a little and talk a little. Once, the surgery looked nearly perfect. (“Like a movie star,” Chaz remembers.) But each time, the reconstructive work fell apart and had to be stripped out, the hole opened up again. It was as though the cancer were continuing to eat away at him, even those parts of him that had been spared. His right shoulder is visibly smaller than his left shoulder; his legs have been weakened and riddled with scars. After each attempt at reconstruction, he went to rehabilitation and physical therapy to fix the increasing damage done. (During one of those rehabilitation sessions, he fell and broke his hip.) He still can’t sit upright for long or climb stairs. He’s still figuring out how to use his legs.
- ...
- 15 **There are places where Ebert** exists as the Ebert he remembers. In 2008, when he was in the middle of his worst battles and wouldn’t be able to make the trip to Champaign-Urbana for Ebertfest — really, his annual spring festival of films he just plain likes — he began writing an online journal. Reading it from its beginning is like watching an Aztec pyramid being built. At first, it’s just a vessel for him to apologize to his fans for not being downstate. The original entries are short updates about his life and health and a few of his heart’s wishes. Postcards and pebbles. They’re followed by a smattering of Welcomes to Cyberspace. But slowly the journal picks up steam, as Ebert’s strength and confidence and audience grow. *You are the readers I have dreamed of*, he writes. He is emboldened. He begins to write about more than movies; in fact, it sometimes seems as though he’d rather write about anything other than movies. The existence of an afterlife, the beauty of a full bookshelf, his liberalism and atheism and alcoholism, the health-care debate, Darwin, memories of departed friends and fights won and lost— more than five hundred thousand words of inner monologue have poured out of him, five hundred thousand words that probably wouldn’t exist had he kept his other voice. Now some of his entries have thousands of comments, each of which he vets personally and to which he will often respond. It has become his life’s work, building and maintaining this massive monument to written debate — argument is encouraged, so long as it’s civil — and he spends several hours each night reclined in his chair, tending to his online oasis by lamplight. Out there, his voice is still his voice — not a reasonable facsimile of it, but his.
- 16 “It is saving me,” he says through his speakers.
- 17 He calls up a journal entry to elaborate, because it’s more efficient and time is precious:
- 18 *When I am writing my problems become invisible and I am the same person I always was. All is well. I am as I should be.*

- 19 He is a wonderful writer, and today he is producing the best work of his life. In 1975 he became the first film critic to win the Pulitzer prize, but his TV fame saw most of his fans, at least those outside Chicago, forget that he was a writer if they ever did know. (His Pulitzer still hangs in a frame in his book-lined office down the hall, behind a glass door that has THE EBERT COMPANY, LTD.: FINE FILM CRITICISM SINCE 1967 written on it in gold leaf.) Even for Ebert, a prolific author — he wrote long features on Paul Newman, Groucho Marx, and Hugh Hefner’s daughter, among others, for this magazine in the late 1960s and early ’70s and published dozens of books in addition to his reviews for the Sun-Times — the written word was eclipsed by the spoken word. He spent an entire day each week arguing with Gene Siskel and then Richard Roeper, and he became a regular on talk shows, and he shouted to crowds from red carpets. He lived his life through microphones.
- 20 But now everything he says must be written, either first on his laptop and funneled through speakers or, as he usually prefers, on some kind of paper. His new life is lived through Times New Roman and chicken scratch. So many words, so much writing — it’s like a kind of explosion is taking place on the second floor of his brownstone. It’s not the food or the drink he worries about anymore — *I went thru a period when I obsessed about root beer + Steak + Shake malts*, he writes on a blue Post-it note — but how many more words he can get out in the time he has left. In this living room, lined with thousands more books, words are the single most valuable thing in the world. They are gold bricks. Here idle chatter doesn’t exist; that would be like lighting cigars with hundred-dollar bills. Here there are only sentences and paragraphs divided by section breaks. Every word has meaning.
- 21 Even the simplest expressions take on higher power here. Now his thumbs have become more than a trademark; they’re an essential means for Ebert to communicate. He falls into a coughing fit, but he gives his thumbs-up, meaning he’s okay. Thumbs-down would have meant he needed someone to call his full-time nurse, Millie, a spectral presence in the house.
- 22 Millie has premonitions. She sees ghosts. Sometimes she wakes in the night screaming — so vivid are her dreams.
- 23 Ebert’s dreams are happier. *Never yet a dream where I can’t talk*, he writes on another Post-it note, peeling it off the top of the blue stack. *Sometimes I discover — oh, I see! I CAN talk! I just forget to do it.*
- 24 In his dreams, his voice has never left. In his dreams, he can get out everything he didn’t get out during his waking hours: the thoughts that get trapped in paperless corners, the jokes he wanted to tell, the nuanced stories he can’t quite relate. In his dreams, he yells and chatters and whispers and exclaims. In his dreams, he’s never had cancer. In his dreams, he is whole.
- 25 *These things come to us, they don’t come from us*, he writes about his cancer, about sickness, on another Post-it note. *Dreams come from us.*

- 26 We have a habit of turning sentimental about celebrities who are struck down — Muhammad Ali, Christopher Reeve — transforming them into mystics; still, it's almost impossible to sit beside Roger Ebert, lifting blue Post-it notes from his silk fingertips, and not feel as though he's become something more than he was. He has those hands. And his wide and expressive eyes, despite everything, are almost always smiling.
- 27 *There is no need to pity me*, he writes on a scrap of paper one afternoon after someone parting looks at him a little sadly. *Look how happy I am*.
- 28 In fact, because he's missing sections of his jaw, and because he's lost some of the engineering behind his face, Ebert can't really do anything but smile. It really does take more muscles to frown, and he doesn't have those muscles anymore. His eyes will water and his face will go red — but if he opens his mouth, his bottom lip will sink most deeply in the middle, pulled down by the weight of his empty chin, and the corners of his upper lip will stay raised, frozen in place. Even when he's really angry, his open smile mutes it: The top half of his face won't match the bottom half, but his smile is what most people will see first, and by instinct they will smile back. The only way Ebert can show someone he's mad is by writing in all caps on a Post-it note or turning up the volume on his speakers. Anger isn't as easy for him as it used to be. Now his anger rarely lasts long enough for him to write it down....
- 29 **His doctors would like to try** one more operation, would like one more chance to reclaim what cancer took from him, to restore his voice. Chaz would like him to try once more, too. But Ebert has refused. Even if the cancer comes back, he will probably decline significant intervention. The last surgery was his worst, and it did him more harm than good. Asked about the possibility of more surgery, he shakes his head and types before pressing the button.
- 30 "Over and out," the voice says.
- 31 Ebert is dying in increments, and he is aware of it.
- 32 *I know it is coming, and I do not fear it, because I believe there is nothing on the other side of death to fear, he writes in a journal entry titled "Go Gently into That Good Night." I hope to be spared as much pain as possible on the approach path. I was perfectly content before I was born, and I think of death as the same state. What I am grateful for is the gift of intelligence, and for life, love, wonder, and laughter. You can't say it wasn't interesting. My lifetime's memories are what I have brought home from the trip. I will require them for eternity no more than that little souvenir of the Eiffel Tower I brought home from Paris.*
- 33 There has been no death-row conversion. He has not found God. He has been beaten in some ways. But his other senses have picked up since he lost his sense of taste. He has tuned better into life. Some things aren't as important as they once were; some things are more important than ever. He has built for himself a new kind of universe. Roger Ebert is no mystic, but he knows things we don't know.



- 34 *I believe that if, at the end of it all, according to our abilities, we have done something to make others a little happier, and something to make ourselves a little happier, that is about the best we can do. To make others less happy is a crime. To make ourselves unhappy is where all crime starts. We must try to contribute joy to the world. That is true no matter what our problems, our health, our circumstances. We must try. I didn't always know this, and am happy I lived long enough to find it out.*
- 35 Ebert takes joy from the world in nearly all the ways he once did. He has had to find a new way to laugh — by closing his eyes and slapping both hands on his knees — but he still laughs. He and Chaz continue to travel. (They spent Thanksgiving in Barbados.) And he still finds joy in books, and in art, and in movies — a greater joy than he ever has. He gives more movies more stars.
- 36 But now it's getting late, which means he has his own work to do. Chaz heads off to bed. Millie, for the moment, hasn't been seized by night terrors, and the brownstone is quiet and nearly dark. Just the lamp is lit beside his chair. He leans back. He streams Radio Caroline — the formerly pirate radio station — and he begins to write. Everything fades out but the words. They appear quickly. Perfect sentences, artful sentences, illuminating sentences come out of him at a ridiculous, enviable pace, his fingers sometimes struggling to keep up.
- 37 Earlier today, his publisher sent him two copies of his newest book, the silver-jacketed *Great Movies III*, wrapped in plastic. Ebert turned them over in his hands, smiling with satisfaction — he wrote most of it in hospital beds — before he put them on a shelf in his office, by the desk he can no longer sit behind. They filled the last hole on the third shelf of his own published work; later this year, another book — *The Pot and How to Use It*, a collection of Ebert's rice-cooker recipes — will occupy the first space on a fourth shelf. Ebert's readers have asked him to write his autobiography next, but he looks up from his laptop and shrugs at the thought. He's already written a lot about himself on his journal, about his little childhood home in Champaign-Urbana and the days he spent on TV and in hospitals, and he would rather not say the same thing twice.
- 38 Besides, he has a review to finish. He returns his attention to his laptop, its glow making white squares in his glasses. Music plays. Words come.
- 39 *Pedro Almodóvar loves the movies with lust and abandon and the skill of an experienced lover. "Broken Embraces" is a voluptuary of a film, drunk on primary colors, caressing Penélope Cruz, using the devices of a Hitchcock to distract us with surfaces while the sinister uncoils beneath. As it ravished me, I longed for a freeze-frame to allow me to savor a shot.*
- 40 Ebert gives it four stars.

Read more: Roger Ebert Cancer Battle - Roger Ebert Interview - *Esquire*  
<http://www.esquire.com/features/roger-ebert-0310#ixzz2CW0YOtky>

## **What Is a Life Worth?**

**To compensate families of the victims of Sept. 11, the government has invented a way to measure blood and loss in cash. A look at the wrenching calculus.**

By Amanda Ripley

With reporting by Nadia Mustafa and Julie Rawe in New York and Karen Tumulty in Washington

*Time*, February 11, 2002

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# Human Life Value Calculator



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### HOW MUCH DO I NEED?

#### Human life value calculator

The human life value calculator has been designed to help you assess your financial value to those you love by estimating the future financial contributions you will make to your family ... or, more starkly, the financial loss that your family would incur if you were to die today. For the purposes of this calculator, a human life only has economic value in its relation to other lives, specifically a spouse or dependent children. Therefore, if you have neither, the calculator will not generate a result.

Please note, this calculator will provide only a rough sense of your human life value, which can be a factor in determining the amount of insurance you should have in your financial portfolio. Typically, the amount of life insurance someone needs is less than his or her human life value due to the availability of other sources of income (e.g., existing life insurance coverage, Social Security benefits, etc.). For an analysis of your life insurance needs, please visit the [Life Insurance Needs Calculator](#) or contact a professional agent or advisor in your area.

This calculator projects typical lifetime income for someone with the characteristics you provide in the input section, less taxes and expenditures devoted to your own consumption, plus any fringe benefits your family receives from your employer, such as health insurance, and the services you provide around the house. The resulting estimate is an approximate measure of your net financial contribution to your family - your human life value.

This human life value calculator should not be viewed as a comprehensive assessment. For example, you will notice that it does not account for the specific occupation and education of you or your spouse. Also, to simplify your responses, only general information is sought regarding your non-wage income, which impacts both your consumption and your income taxes. Furthermore, the dollar value of your fringe benefits is assumed to be equal to the average for someone of your income and family situation. Nevertheless, we believe that, given the limited information the calculator is using, it is the best estimate available. Click [here](#) for more information on the assumptions used to generate these estimates.

**Enter only numbers or letters, no commas or dollar signs.**

1. Your age at nearest birthday:

2. Sex:

3. Your planned retirement age (e.g., 65):

4. Major occupation category:

- Executive, Administrative, and Managerial  
-(e.g., Chief Executives, Managers, Accountants, Marketers, Buyers)
- Professional Specialty  
-(e.g., Engineers, Scientists, Teachers, Lawyers, Doctors, Nurses, Artists)
- Technicians, Computer Programmers, and Related Support  
-(e.g., Electrical, Mechanical and Health Technicians)

4. Sales  
-(e.g., Real Estate, Insurance, Retail and Personal Services)
5. Administrative Support, Including Clerical Support
6. Service and Public Safety  
-(e.g., Food, Health and Cleaning Services, Police, Firefighters, and Security)
7. Farming, Forestry, Fishing
8. Craft, Repair, Skilled Laborers  
-(e.g., Mechanics, Construction Workers, Textile and Food Production, Inspectors)
9. Operators, Fabricators, Laborers  
-(e.g., Machine Operators, Motor Vehicle Operators, Assembler, Rail Transportation)

5. Your annual wage earnings before taxes:

6. Does your employer provide fringe benefits?

7. Do you have a spouse?

If yes, then:

Age of spouse:

Is spouse employed?

Spouse's planned retirement age (e.g., 65):

Spouse's annual wage earnings before taxes:

8. Annual non-wage earnings (e.g. investment or rental income)

9. Ages of children under 23:

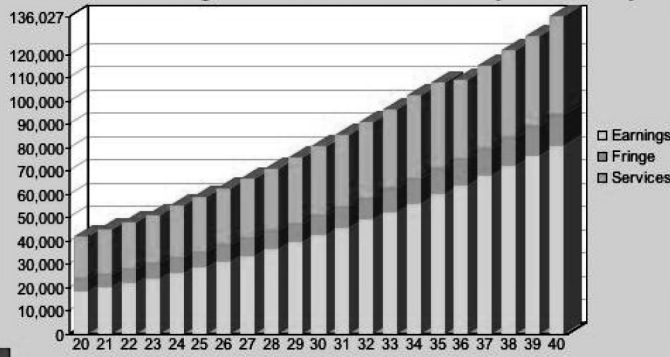
[Return to calculator input](#)

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**Modify Input**

Your estimated human life value - the value today of your future contributions to your household - **\$661,219** or about **37** times your current annual income. If you were to die today, this amount is roughly what your family would need to maintain the same standard of living they will enjoy over the course of your anticipated working life. The graphs below provide a step-by-step overview of how your approximate human life value has been estimated.

**Your future gross contributions to your family**

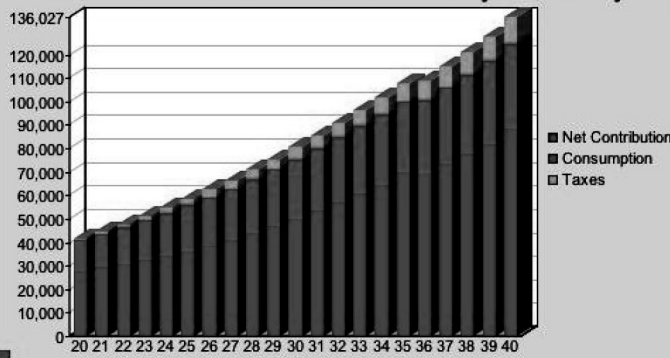


Services	\$ 379,412
Fringe	114,762
Earnings	547,498

Total: \$ 1,041,672

This graph shows projections of your annual earnings, fringe benefits and household services for each future year. These projections were based on the information you provided, along with data from the U.S. Census, the professional economics literature, the U.S. Chamber of Commerce and various research universities.

**Your future net contributions to your family**



Services	\$ 379,412
Fringe	114,762
Earnings	547,498

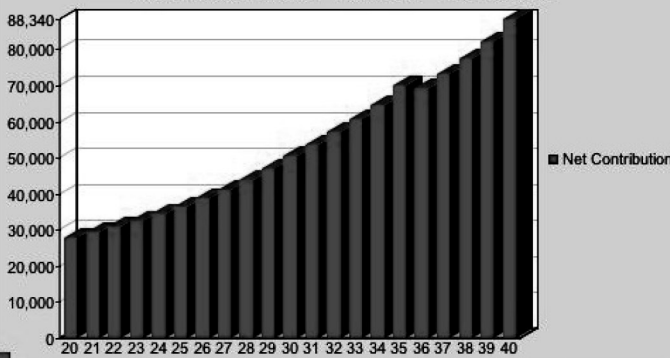
Total: \$ 1,041,672

Taxes	- 63,233
Consumption	- 317,220

Net Contribution \$ 661,219

This graph shows projections of your consumption and income taxes. They were derived using information from the United States Bureau of Labor Statistics and the Internal Revenue Service. When your consumption and taxes are subtracted from the sum total of your earnings, fringe benefits and services, the result is the net financial contribution you are likely to make to your family in each and every year. This net contribution is also shown in the graph.

**Your estimated human life value**



Present Value of Your Human Life Value = \$661,219

This final graph isolates the net contributions illustrated in the graph above. They comprise your human life value. The dollar value listed above is the amount of money that would need to be invested today - in a risk-free investment - to replace this human life value in the event of your death. Said another way, it is the amount necessary today to provide the same standard of living to your family that you would have provided had you lived.

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# What Is The Value Of A Human Life?

By Kenneth Feinberg

May 25, 2008 4:00 AM

Washington attorney Kenneth Feinberg specializes in alternative dispute resolution. He managed the compensation funds for the Sept. 11, 2001, attacks and Virginia Tech shootings, and he has worked with victims of human radiation experiments and Holocaust slave labor.

- 1 What is an individual life worth? Do our lives have equal value? Struggling with these questions led me to my belief.
- 2 After Sept. 11, I confronted the challenge of placing a value on human life by calculating different amounts of compensation for each and every victim. The law required that I give more money to the stockbroker, the bond trader and the banker than to the waiter, the policeman, the fireman and the soldier at the Pentagon. This is what happens every day in courtrooms throughout our nation. Our system of justice has always been based upon this idea — that compensation for death should be directly related to the financial circumstances of each victim.
- 3 But as I met with the 9/11 families and wrestled with issues surrounding the valuation of lives lost, I began to question this basic premise of our legal system. Trained in the law, I had always accepted that no two lives were worth the same in financial terms. But now I found the law in conflict with my growing belief in the equality of all life. “Mr. Feinberg, my husband was a fireman and died a hero at the World Trade Center. Why are you giving me less money than the banker who represented Enron? Why are you demeaning the memory of my husband?”
- 4 My response was defensive and unconvincing. At first I gave the standard legal argument— that I was not evaluating the intrinsic moral worth of any individual. I was basing my decision on the law, just as juries did every day. But this explanation fell on deaf ears. Grieving families couldn’t hear it. And I didn’t believe it myself.
- 5 I was engaged in a personal struggle. I felt it would make more sense for Congress to provide the same amount of public compensation to each and every victim — to declare, in effect, that all lives are equal. But in this case, the law prevailed.
- 6 Last year, however, in the wake of the Virginia Tech shootings and the deaths of 32 victims, I was again asked to design and administer a compensation system, this one privately funded. And I realized that Feinberg the citizen should trump Feinberg the lawyer. My legal training would no longer stand in the way. This time all victims — students and faculty alike — would receive the same compensation.

- 7 In the case of Sept. 11, if there is a next time, and Congress again decides to award public compensation, I hope the law will declare that all life should be treated the same. Courtrooms, judges, lawyers and juries are not the answer when it comes to public compensation. I have resolved my personal conflict and have learned a valuable lesson at the same time. I believe that public compensation should avoid financial distinctions which only fuel the hurt and grief of the survivors. I believe all lives should be treated the same.

Independently produced for *Weekend Edition Sunday* by Jay Allison and Dan Gediman with John Gregory and Viki Merrick.

# 'You've got to find what you love,' Jobs says

*This is a prepared text of the Commencement address delivered by Steve Jobs, CEO of Apple Computer and of Pixar Animation Studios, on June 12, 2005.*

*Stanford Report, June 14, 2005*

- 1 I am honored to be with you today at your commencement from one of the finest universities in the world. I never graduated from college. Truth be told, this is the closest I've ever gotten to a college graduation. Today I want to tell you three stories from my life. That's it. No big deal. Just three stories.
- 2 The first story is about connecting the dots.
- 3 I dropped out of Reed College after the first 6 months, but then stayed around as a drop-in for another 18 months or so before I really quit. So why did I drop out?
- 4 It started before I was born. My biological mother was a young, unwed college graduate student, and she decided to put me up for adoption. She felt very strongly that I should be adopted by college graduates, so everything was all set for me to be adopted at birth by a lawyer and his wife. Except that when I popped out they decided at the last minute that they really wanted a girl. So my parents, who were on a waiting list, got a call in the middle of the night asking: "We have an unexpected baby boy; do you want him?" They said: "Of course." My biological mother later found out that my mother had never graduated from college and that my father had never graduated from high school. She refused to sign the final adoption papers. She only relented a few months later when my parents promised that I would someday go to college.
- 5 And 17 years later I did go to college. But I naively chose a college that was almost as expensive as Stanford, and all of my working-class parents' savings were being spent on my college tuition. After six months, I couldn't see the value in it. I had no idea what I wanted to do with my life and no idea how college was going to help me figure it out. And here I was spending all of the money my parents had saved their entire life. So I decided to drop out and trust that it would all work out OK. It was pretty scary at the time, but looking back it was one of the best decisions I ever made. The minute I dropped out I could stop taking the required classes that didn't interest me, and begin dropping in on the ones that looked interesting.
- 6 It wasn't all romantic. I didn't have a dorm room, so I slept on the floor in friends' rooms, I returned coke bottles for the 5¢ deposits to buy food with, and I would walk the 7 miles across town every Sunday night to get one good meal a week at the Hare Krishna temple. I loved it. And much of what I stumbled into by following my curiosity and intuition turned out to be priceless later on. Let me give you one example:



- 7 Reed College at that time offered perhaps the best calligraphy instruction in the country. Throughout the campus every poster, every label on every drawer, was beautifully hand calligraphed. Because I had dropped out and didn't have to take the normal classes, I decided to take a calligraphy class to learn how to do this. I learned about serif and sans serif typefaces, about varying the amount of space between different letter combinations, about what makes great typography great. It was beautiful, historical, artistically subtle in a way that science can't capture, and I found it fascinating.
- 8 None of this had even a hope of any practical application in my life. But ten years later, when we were designing the first Macintosh computer, it all came back to me. And we designed it all into the Mac. It was the first computer with beautiful typography. If I had never dropped in on that single course in college, the Mac would have never had multiple typefaces or proportionally spaced fonts. And since Windows just copied the Mac, it's likely that no personal computer would have them. If I had never dropped out, I would have never dropped in on this calligraphy class, and personal computers might not have the wonderful typography that they do. Of course it was impossible to connect the dots looking forward when I was in college. But it was very, very clear looking backwards ten years later.
- 9 Again, you can't connect the dots looking forward; you can only connect them looking backwards. So you have to trust that the dots will somehow connect in your future. You have to trust in something — your gut, destiny, life, karma, whatever. This approach has never let me down, and it has made all the difference in my life.
- 10 My second story is about love and loss.
- 11 I was lucky — I found what I loved to do early in life. Woz and I started Apple in my parents garage when I was 20. We worked hard, and in 10 years Apple had grown from just the two of us in a garage into a \$2 billion company with over 4000 employees. We had just released our finest creation — the Macintosh — a year earlier, and I had just turned 30. And then I got fired. How can you get fired from a company you started? Well, as Apple grew we hired someone who I thought was very talented to run the company with me, and for the first year or so things went well. But then our visions of the future began to diverge and eventually we had a falling out. When we did, our Board of Directors sided with him. So at 30 I was out. And very publicly out. What had been the focus of my entire adult life was gone, and it was devastating.
- 12 I really didn't know what to do for a few months. I felt that I had let the previous generation of entrepreneurs down - that I had dropped the baton as it was being passed to me. I met with David Packard and Bob Noyce and tried to apologize for screwing up so badly. I was a very public failure, and I even thought about running away from the valley. But something slowly began to dawn on me — I still loved what I did. The turn of events at Apple had not changed that one bit. I had been rejected, but I was still in love. And so I decided to start over.
- 13 I didn't see it then, but it turned out that getting fired from Apple was the best thing that could have ever happened to me. The heaviness of being successful was replaced by the lightness of being a beginner again, less sure about everything. It freed me to enter one of the most creative periods of my life.

- 14 During the next five years, I started a company named NeXT, another company named Pixar, and fell in love with an amazing woman who would become my wife. Pixar went on to create the worlds first computer animated feature film, Toy Story, and is now the most successful animation studio in the world. In a remarkable turn of events, Apple bought NeXT, I returned to Apple, and the technology we developed at NeXT is at the heart of Apple's current renaissance. And Laurene and I have a wonderful family together.
- 15 I'm pretty sure none of this would have happened if I hadn't been fired from Apple. It was awful tasting medicine, but I guess the patient needed it. Sometimes life hits you in the head with a brick. Don't lose faith. I'm convinced that the only thing that kept me going was that I loved what I did. You've got to find what you love. And that is as true for your work as it is for your lovers. Your work is going to fill a large part of your life, and the only way to be truly satisfied is to do what you believe is great work. And the only way to do great work is to love what you do. If you haven't found it yet, keep looking. Don't settle. As with all matters of the heart, you'll know when you find it. And, like any great relationship, it just gets better and better as the years roll on. So keep looking until you find it. Don't settle.
- 16 My third story is about death.
- 17 When I was 17, I read a quote that went something like: "If you live each day as if it was your last, someday you'll most certainly be right." It made an impression on me, and since then, for the past 33 years, I have looked in the mirror every morning and asked myself: "If today were the last day of my life, would I want to do what I am about to do today?" And whenever the answer has been "No" for too many days in a row, I know I need to change something.
- 18 Remembering that I'll be dead soon is the most important tool I've ever encountered to help me make the big choices in life. Because almost everything — all external expectations, all pride, all fear of embarrassment or failure - these things just fall away in the face of death, leaving only what is truly important. Remembering that you are going to die is the best way I know to avoid the trap of thinking you have something to lose. You are already naked. There is no reason not to follow your heart.
- 19 About a year ago I was diagnosed with cancer. I had a scan at 7:30 in the morning, and it clearly showed a tumor on my pancreas. I didn't even know what a pancreas was. The doctors told me this was almost certainly a type of cancer that is incurable, and that I should expect to live no longer than three to six months. My doctor advised me to go home and get my affairs in order, which is doctor's code for prepare to die. It means to try to tell your kids everything you thought you'd have the next 10 years to tell them in just a few months. It means to make sure everything is buttoned up so that it will be as easy as possible for your family. It means to say your goodbyes.

- 20 I lived with that diagnosis all day. Later that evening I had a biopsy, where they stuck an endoscope down my throat, through my stomach and into my intestines, put a needle into my pancreas and got a few cells from the tumor. I was sedated, but my wife, who was there, told me that when they viewed the cells under a microscope the doctors started crying because it turned out to be a very rare form of pancreatic cancer that is curable with surgery. I had the surgery and I'm fine now.
- 21 This was the closest I've been to facing death, and I hope it's the closest I get for a few more decades. Having lived through it, I can now say this to you with a bit more certainty than when death was a useful but purely intellectual concept:
- 22 No one wants to die. Even people who want to go to heaven don't want to die to get there. And yet death is the destination we all share. No one has ever escaped it. And that is as it should be, because Death is very likely the single best invention of Life. It is Life's change agent. It clears out the old to make way for the new. Right now the new is you, but someday not too long from now, you will gradually become the old and be cleared away. Sorry to be so dramatic, but it is quite true.
- 23 Your time is limited, so don't waste it living someone else's life. Don't be trapped by dogma— which is living with the results of other people's thinking. Don't let the noise of others' opinions drown out your own inner voice. And most important, have the courage to follow your heart and intuition. They somehow already know what you truly want to become. Everything else is secondary.
- 24 When I was young, there was an amazing publication called The Whole Earth Catalog, which was one of the bibles of my generation. It was created by a fellow named Stewart Brand not far from here in Menlo Park, and he brought it to life with his poetic touch. This was in the late 1960's, before personal computers and desktop publishing, so it was all made with typewriters, scissors, and polaroid cameras. It was sort of like Google in paperback form, 35 years before Google came along: it was idealistic, and overflowing with neat tools and great notions.
- 25 Stewart and his team put out several issues of The Whole Earth Catalog, and then when it had run its course, they put out a final issue. It was the mid-1970s, and I was your age. On the back cover of their final issue was a photograph of an early morning country road, the kind you might find yourself hitchhiking on if you were so adventurous. Beneath it were the words: "Stay Hungry. Stay Foolish." It was their farewell message as they signed off. Stay Hungry. Stay Foolish. And I have always wished that for myself. And now, as you graduate to begin anew, I wish that for you.
- 26 Stay Hungry. Stay Foolish.
- 27 Thank you all very much.