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cc: (bcc: U ZAW AUNG/Snr Engr/CSM/ST Group)
Subject: Post Reunion (16): Sayagyi Dr. Aung Gyi

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Post Reunion (16)
Sayagyi Dr. Aung Gyi's speech at Reunion and SPZP
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Mr. Chairman, my Sayas, my former colleagues, friends, RIT graduates,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

Before I begin to say anything, I would like to request you to take the word "RIT" as to stand not only for Rangoon Institute of Technology but also BOC College of Engineering and Faculty of Engineering, Rangoon University. I am using RIT only, just for convenience sake.

Having said that, it is with a chestful of emotions that I am standing before you, trying to say a few words appropriate and befitting to this important and joyful occasion. My overwhelming emotion is, needless to say, happiness - happiness which results from seeing my Sayas, my friends, my former colleagues, and RIT graduates alive and well, after so many years. My happiness is also mingled with a certain amount of pride: pride arising from the knowledge that we have fond memories and a sense of belonging and attachment to the good old institution as well as to one another.

We are fortunate that we could all gather here to exchange our life experiences, both good and bad, and to reminisce about our past when we were at RIT. While we are doing that, we all must have noticed that all of us have changed quite a bit since we last saw one another, at least physically, some more so than other. We all now have a few gray and also less hair, we have a few wrinkles on our face; maybe we also lost a few teeth and can not see or hear as well as we did before. Some of us also lost the memory a bit and become forgetful about lots of things such as forgetting names for example. This, as we all know, is life and nature of things. Everything changes and nothing is permanent. But fortunately we still have our values. Our values such as respect and gratitude for the elders and teachers, caring of our respective children and family members, helping our friends, and attachment, and gratitude to the institution which nurtured us to meet the challenges of life, are still with us. They have not changed. This Saya Pu Zaw Pwe and reunion is a testimony to those values.

I must now pause and thank and congratulate the Organizing Committee for their untiring and selfless efforts to make this event possible and successful. This Saya Pu Zaw Pwe and RIT Alumni reunion is, as far as I know, once-in-a-life-time event. As far as I am concerned it is already a resounding success with the cooperation and great enthusiasm that I have seen. I hope this will be the beginning and not the last of our get-togethers. When my wife and I paid visits to Myanmar in 1996, 1997 and 1999 we had mini get-togethers with RIT Alumni. When I was here a few years ago we also got together with a few RIT Alumni. I understood that Saya U Aung Khin also had one mini get-together here some years ago. But these get-togethers were not on a grand scale as the one that we are having here now. However the spirit of camaraderie and friendliness among RIT Alumni mini get-togethers, was the same as the one that we find here now. If you look around you, you will find that all of us came here from different parts of the world, indicating the great attachment and respect that we all have for our old institution and also for one another.

While I was preparing for this speech, fond memories of the years that I spent as a student, as a teacher and later as Rector at RIT came flashing through my mind. Without going into details, I remember that all my teachers, including Saya Num Kock and Saya U Ba Toke who are here with us, were good inspiring teachers with kind hearts. When I became a teacher and later the Rector at RIT, I noticed that my colleagues were good and dedicated people who tried their best to teach what they had learnt from good Universities and Institutions abroad. They made conscious efforts to raise the level of education at RIT so much that the students were fully occupied with classes, studies, projects, and homework. I have to mention here that my Sayas and my former colleagues were, and still are honest, compassionate, gentle and kind people. Within this context I would now like to take this opportunity to offer my humble apologies to my Sayas and colleagues for the wrong things that I may have done or said which might have hurt them in anyway in the past.

As for the students, I remember that they were good, intelligent, and energetic students in general. Since I was also involved in extracurricular activities of the students, I had more interaction and gained more understanding of their needs and feelings. Like most of the other teachers I tried my best to be helpful to them not only in their studies but also in any other problems that they needed my help. Because of the compassion that I had shown for them they became more communicative, and listened to what I had to say most of the time. Like a breath of fresh air, the first batch of female engineering students were among us, I believe in 1958. So far as I remember they did as well as or some even better than the male students in their studies. I remember that as a teacher I felt very good and satisfied whenever some students did well in their studies or did well in their careers after they left school. These are fond memories that I still have with me about the students at RIT.

As you probably know, I left RIT and Myanmar in 1977 to join Unesco. I then migrated to Canada to join International Development Research Centre (IRDC) in 1981. For your information, IRDC is a Canadian Agency which funds research projects for development in the developing countries. I retired from IRDC in 1997. Looking back to the past, I must say that I spent the best years of my life at RIT, challenging and troubling at times, but on the whole happy and satisfied with the job that I was doing.

Now please let me take a few minutes of your time to share with you my thoughts, which I believe are some important elements of life. You might not agree with me to what I am going to say. At least, in that case, you might take them as food for your thoughts. If I sound like lecturing to you now, you must remember that the habit of a former teacher dies hard.

When I was young and immature. I had great admiration for people with high I.Q. (Intelligence Quotient). I also tended to think in those days that I was quite intelligent. After going through life experiences with ups and downs I became to realize that high Emotional Quotient (E.Q.) or emotional mastery is more important in life than high I.Q., to cope with adversities, disappointments, failures and sometimes even tragedies. No one that I know of, escapes the negative impacts of life in one form or another. If you have emotional mastery you can deal with and overcome these negative impacts and still get ahead in life and be relatively happy. One thing that can help us is to have optimism, hope and courage in life and to minimize the negative thoughts and creeping pessimism. It will be wrong to classify anything in life in opposites either in black or white. One can neither be fully optimistic nor fully pessimistic all the time. There is a gray area which is neither black nor white, and so long as the dominant part of this gray area is optimism, things will turn alright in the end. I read in one of the books long time ago that the Chinese word for "crisis" denotes both risk and chance (opportunity). A pessimistic person would tend to look at the crisis as the big risk and will despair and do nothing, whereas an optimistic person will look at it as a challenge and opportunity and will do something with courage and determination and overcome the crisis. He or she might fail in doing something. But without failures one will not know success. In short, although we will not be able to

master the circumstances, and situations in life, we sure can try to master our thoughts and emotions to meet the challenges of life. Here are the spiritual sides of us or our respective religions might be helpful.

Now that I am getting old and getting inflicted with aches and pins here and there, especially when I get up in the morning, I begin to realize that the important part of my life is to keep myself in good health. There are lots of books and doctors telling us how to keep ourselves in good health. The simple gist of the whole message is to have some form of physical exercise or activity to keep our weights down; and to eat nutritious food and avoid or cut down fatty, sweet, salty and high cholesterol food which are harmful to our health. As you know, it is easier said than done. What I know is we do need to make conscious efforts to keep ourselves in good health by taking physical exercises and by eating nutritious and non-fattening food. One thing is for sure, if we are not in food health we will not be able to enjoy our success or good things in life, and we will be, relatively speaking, unhappy.

When I was young, my grandmother used to tell me to get ahead in life I would need luck, brain, and industriousness. She was right of course. But one important element in life that she missed telling me was to develop and have good social relationships with all the people that I would come across in life, including family members. No one can live and get ahead in life alone. Each one of us at some stages of our respective lives needed and got help from someone to move on with our lives. From my personal experience, I noted that one must be non-egoistic, not too aggressive, be polite, be helpful, and tries to understand and respect other person's points of view, needs and feeling, to develop good social relationships. Here I would like to add that each of us can judge who is good, who is bad, who is untrustworthy, etc. and avoid bad people and associate with good people to the extent that each of us can.

Each one of us had twenty four hours a day and the one who can budget and manage his/her time day by day, week by week, month by month, year by year according to his priorities and short term and long term goals will get ahead in life better. One should use the time and even manipulate it and not waste it to achieve one's short term and long term goals. One must also be patient if the short term and long term goals are not achieved in budgeted time. So long as the time is used and not wasted, one will reach his/her goals in due course.

I hope every one present here will agree with me the importance of financial management at the personal or family level as well as at the business level. At the business level there are of course financial plans and budgets for the present as well as for the future. One should likewise have financial plans and budgets at personal/family level for the present and future, to spend, save and invest within one's available means. As you know money is neutral. If you are wise, money will treat you well; and if you are foolish it will not stay with you for long. Like time, one's hard-earned money should be used and not wasted.

The last thing that I would like to point out to you is the danger of complacency. If you own a business and if you are complacent after a certain level of success, your business will suffer, simply because you fail to keep up with the changes in the market conditions and because of the intense competition one faces nowadays. Likewise at the personal level we should be wary of complacency. We should try not to be complacent by improving ourselves and keeping ourselves busy mentally and physically. Life thrives on activity and activity is the proof of our existence. No one is perfect and there is always something that each of us can improve upon. If we do that, at least we will not be bored, and may achieve some fulfillment in life.

With these remarks I now conclude my speech. May you all be successful and happy in life. May you have a pleasant stay in SF.

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U Myat Htoo gave me today a hard copy of Sayagyi's speech [with some revisions by Sayagyi].

If there are errors in the transcription, please let me know.

With metta,
Hla Min

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