



Featured Alumnus Andrew F. Puzder

Andrew F. Puzder is the College of Liberal Arts and Social Sciences' 2009 Distinguished Alumni Award Recipient. Mr. Puzder graduated with a Bachelor of Arts in History and became CEO of a large restaurant corporation.

Where you are at now...

When did you graduate and what is your degree in? Bachelor of Arts of History in 1975

What is your current occupation? CEO of CKE Restaurants, Inc (Hardee's and Carl's Jr.)

What do you enjoy most about your job? When I took over CKE, the Company was in survival mode. It has been extremely rewarding for me to watch our team turn this company around and then to see it grow even in a very challenging economy. I particularly enjoy visiting our restaurants, meeting with our employees and customers and chatting with the people who fill the jobs we've saved as well as the new ones we've created. We try to instill an entrepreneurial spirit in our employees and particularly in our managers. This is a company tradition dating back to our founder Carl N. Karcher. There is nothing more rewarding than giving people the opportunity to succeed on their own merit and then watching them take advantage of that opportunity.

What was your first job? When I was 10 I started cutting lawns on a small tractor our family owned in the Cleveland suburb where I lived (Russell or Novelty). I also made a little extra money (\$5 a week) taking care of our neighbors horses. My first salaried job was working in a Baskin Robbins Ice Cream Shop in Chagrin Falls when I was 16.

What are your interests? I enjoy jogging and working out. I am an avid reader, particularly of history (my major at CSU). Right now I'm reading scholarly biographies of each of the Roman Emperors starting with Julius Caesar (although technically speaking he never actually became an emperor). I am on the biography of Hadrian at the moment. I am also rereading Ayn Rand's books, which I first read some 40 years ago when I was 19. They had a major influence on me back then but actually seem even timelier now. My wife and I are big Lakers' basketball fans (although we would love to see the Cavaliers win a championship). We have some Lakers' floor seats and we go to as many basketball games as we can each year. We also enjoy getting away and traveling and take a couple of trips each year. Two of my younger children (17 and 11) are musicians and we share that

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interest. My non-musician son (14) and I enjoy fishing, which is something we just started doing together recently but something that I did a lot as a kid growing up in Ohio. We also love it when my daughter (30) visits and my two older sons (37 and 34) visit with their wives and our 4 (soon to be 5) grandchildren.

What is your most valuable possession? The thing I value most in my life is my wife, but I don't believe that I possess her. I'm just grateful that she sticks around (or that she let's me stick around). My faith is something of inestimable value that I do possess. My ability to think rationally is also something I feel is of inestimable value.

What do you value most in others? Independent thought, reason and courage.

What is a little known fact about you? I voted for George McGovern. I was young.

Back to your college days...

What was your favorite class? Constitutional History with Professor Cary (along with a couple of other American History courses I took with him). I also enjoyed my Philosophy courses with Professor Fox, my Oriental History courses with Professor Mandelker and my Medieval History courses with Professor Runyon. I enjoyed Latin but can't remember the professor's name. In spite of that memory lapse on my part, I do remember that he was a terrific instructor.

What is the importance of CSU in your life? CSU provided me with the opportunity to get a high quality education at a cost I could afford. Without CSU, I'm not sure what I would have done. I was accepted at Case Western Reserve but couldn't afford the tuition. My parents were unable to help me and I was unqualified for assistance based on my sex or race so I had to work my way through school while supporting the wife and two sons I had by the time I graduated. With the education I received at CSU, I was able to get into

Washington University School of Law, make Law Review and proceed with my career.

What advice do you have for students? First: Finish. It really is worth it. Second: Remember that while an education is important, it is a stepping stone. An

education does not entitle you to success. Rather, an education makes it easier for you to succeed. It is ultimately your level of determination and ambition that will lead to your success or failure. Finally, whether you agree or disagree with your professors, listen to them, particularly with respect to political issues. Question what you hear and then make up your own mind.

What was the best thing about Cleveland for you? I grew up on the East Side in what was then still rural Ohio. We could see cows grazing outside our classroom windows at West Geauga High. But I always felt like I was close to a major city where I could support professional sports teams (the Indians and Browns when I was a kid) and take advantage of the world class cultural benefits (such as the Symphony and the Art Museum). We really had all the benefits of a big city combined with the benefits of growing up in a rural environment. Because of Cleveland's vibrant Rock and Roll scene, I also had the opportunity to make a living and pay for college playing in bar bands and working in Dick Lurie's Guitar Studio at the corner of Cedar and Lee. That was a really fascinating time and I got to know and play with a number of amazing musicians.

Up till now and into the future...

What are your proudest achievements? I wrote the Missouri law the Supreme Court upheld in the case of Webster vs. Reproductive Health Services which states that human life begins at conception. I have always been very proud of that.

As an attorney, I managed to keep Carl N. Karcher (the Founder of CKR Restaurants and the Carl's Jr. brand) from having to file for bankruptcy despite 26 obligations and claims against him, any one of which could have forced him into bankruptcy. Carl was a very proud man and did not want to end his career in bankruptcy.

I am also very proud of the job our team did in saving CKE Restaurants from bankruptcy, preventing the Hardee's brand from slipping into extinction and building a strong, profitable company.

What are your goals? I want to see CKR Restaurants continue to grow while serving as an example of what people in a free economy, providing a superior product and better service, and who are willing to work harder, longer and smarter than their competitors can achieve without government protection or assistance.