

High School Valedictory Speech 2008

Parents, teachers, our beloved principal and fellow graduates:

We have now all been together for four years. And as everyone knows, high school is the best years of our lives.

We have shared many laughs together, many sorrows and the sweet taste of victory both on the athletic fields and in our classroom exams as well.

We have faced adversity and won. Who could deny the statistics that we have lived every day of our high school lives together? Twenty-six unplanned pregnancies, 22 abortions, three drunk driving deaths, six B&E convictions and a drug-dealing sting operation that netted sentences for many of the senior class. Yes, we have known adversity and survived, flourished, even.

We know that with all the great knowledge and learning passed onto us by our very learned and motivated teachers that we are very well prepared to face the world.

We are confident and secure, moving into the working world beyond high school, knowing that we have the skills to get good jobs, raise families, construct vast corporate empires and fashion a brave new world with the vision of our own generation.

But best of all we have grown to know each other and respect one another in our four years together. We know that the friendships forged here will last us a lifetime. I know this is true, because as a graduating class we all truly love each other, down deep.

Platitude, platitude, platitude, platitude, platitude, platitude, lies, lies, lies, lies, lies, lies, bullshit, bullshit, bullshit, bullshit and more lies.

Valedictory speeches are designed to make everyone feel happy about themselves and about wasting four years of our lives. Valedictory speeches are designed to protect us against the truth. The fact that a graduate is delivering the speech is supposed to make you think that the vice-principal didn't edit and approve every single word in advance. The truth is to be scrupulously avoided in Valedictory speeches, because the staff are afraid that we can't handle the truth.

To quote the famous American philosopher, Paul Simon: "When I look back on all the crap I learned in high school, its a wonder I can even think at all."

So what is the truth?

We have spent four years in this minimum-security institution, mostly to keep us off the streets.

Our teachers are mostly people who graduated high school, did more school and then came back here to teach high school. Most of them have no life experience, because they have never been out of school, ever. They are afraid to get real, full time jobs. They have taught us little, beyond an unnecessary hatred for Shakespeare, because they have little that they can teach us. They don't know much more than we do.

Of our administrative staff let's just say that they are incompetent. How else can you explain year after

year getting a personal schedule that lacks room numbers?

Our principal has been largely absent all year long, if indeed she exists at all. This explains why a group of students have held lunchtime gatherings in her office all year long and no one noticed. Check the top right desk draw for cigarette butts.

So can one truly say that four years of being cooped up with unimaginative teachers, useless administration, a non-existent principal and several hundred malicious and ignorant trolls masquerading as “students” constitutes “the best years of our lives”? If this were true then our only chance for salvation would be suicide.

Fortunately the truth is better than all the lies.

First the bad news: high school is largely a waste of time, but then you all know that. The trolls you shared your classrooms with here, will almost all be thankfully forgotten by next week.

High school shouldn't end with a graduation ceremony, because it creates the false expectation that we are now qualified for something, that we have some skills, when we don't. A significant number of graduates sitting here today can't write more than their own names and can't read anything more complex than a cereal box. Adding single digit numbers together without a calculator or writing a carefully reasoned essay is out of the question. Of course most can MSN Message all night: “You smell” “No, you smell” or play “Halo3” for 96 hours straight. Of course these are all useful skills that employers are actively seeking. “Wanted: experienced gamer to play Halo3 all day at work, start at \$100,000 per year”. Face it: high school qualifies you to work at Wal-Mart or McDonald's, provided that you take additional training on how to be nice to people.

The good news, and there is good news in all this truth. You can now go to college or university and get an education. Learn useful skills, like computer programming or economics. Become a physician, writer, lawyer or dentist. Learn how to make a difference in the world. You will meet new people with ideas you have never considered. Some will be philosophers and some will be jihadists. You will learn how to tell the difference. Please don't become a teacher, the province is flooded with them right now, most are working selling classified ads.

When you walk out of this door tonight, toss your worthless high school diploma, assuming that they actually handed you one and not a blank sheet of paper. Forget high school, forget the trolls who invaded your personal space. Get an education, meet people, help solve the world's problems. Get a life. Don't be nostalgic for the sentence you served here. Never give this place a second thought. Be free.

And, be warned, if you foolishly come to your 25th high school reunion in 2033, all you will find is that everyone is just as stupid and pointless as they are today, but 25 years older, much fatter and much more bald.

Goodnight.