



## **Goodbye, Haverford**

*Biagio DeSimone*

I had no idea how I was going to feel about graduation until I was standing at this podium, but all I kept telling myself was Biagio please do not cry.

For two reasons, I avoided writing this speech for a very long time.

The first reason I neglected writing this was that I had no idea how to do it and for the first time, Google could not help me on a school assignment.

Every time I searched for good graduation speeches ... Ellen DeGeneres' speech in 2009 would always lead a website's top 10. Now even though with blonder hair I may look a little like Ellen DeGeneres, Ellen and I have very little in common and her speech was no help to me.

Secondly, I never felt as if this day would actually come and at the same time I never really wanted it too.

So last night when I finally did sit down to begin writing ... it was not my fingers that brought words to paper ... but rather the words were given life by the memories I replayed in my mind as we have all grown up together from awkward freshman to slightly less awkward seniors.

The past four years have been nothing short of special, and it is sad to say that today is the last day all of us will be in one room ... together. Ideally, I could re-play the Class of 2019's greatest moments, but they are far too plentiful and some far too inappropriate.

To all the faculty sitting in front of our class today, thank you. I know it has not always been easy with our class. You have been more than our teachers. You have taught us lessons from textbooks, but the most valuable things we have learned from you came outside of the lesson plans. In some way, all of you have shaped the young men sitting on this stage today.

Describing our class, a great man in our nation's history once said, "I'd rather laugh with the sinners, than cry with the saints."

The Class of 2019 are the sinners that Billy Joel wants to laugh with. From the first day of freshman year, we were pinned as that class that comes once every 10 years. There is a lot of personality sitting on this stage right now.

God-bless Senora Lambour who had a section with Jesse Goldman, Neetish Sharma, and me ... all at once.

And whether it be through the wackiest of sidetracked conversations, the sharpest of objects thrown at one another, falling out of chairs, or the temperature outside permitting us to take off the jackets; each time a classroom was filled with students from the Class of 2019 ... a teacher was in for a wild adventure. Why you chose to teach at an all-boys school with boys as crazy as us, I do not know.

But from all of us, thank you for making that decision and helping us become who we are today.

This heartbeat that pumps our classes personality ... is owed in full to the parents who gave us our heartbeats 18 years ago. All of you amazing parents have dedicated your lives to grow your baby boys into high school graduates. As we walked across the stage to receive our diploma, I am sure you all saw the same boy walking into his first ever day of school with a backpack larger than him and a smile with half his front teeth missing.

While physically we have grown ... certainly more so than we have mentally ... we ask that you keep viewing us as if we were those same young boys on our first day of school ... because we are going to need your help for years to come. We will need your guidance when we go to college, advice when we buy our first home, and when we finally start families of our own, we will need you as grandparents.

We are forever in debt to you for all the sacrifices you have made to raise us into who we are today and giving us all the blessing of a Haverford education. This day is not possible without mom and dad ... and that is why today is about you. To all the grandparents, parents, siblings, and family ... thank you, for everything.

Now while I wish I had the answer to life that almost all graduation speeches have, I do not think I have it. I am 17 years old with a lot to learn. What I do have is a lot of good stories from growing up with these boys and my family. I have both sad and joyful memories; both of which are important to learning about life.

One of my more despairing memories happened one night while I was doing my homework at the kitchen table and my uncle Michael walked in our front door. Michael was always around the house so I thought nothing of it. He sat down and asked for cranberry juice which caught my eye. My uncle did not drink the juice. The man who once always smiled ... looked sad and defeated. I just let it go and did my homework. When he left I didn't get to say goodbye, I figured he would be back another day.

But when my mom closed the door behind him, she cried standing there. With no emotion and without realizing it, my brain didn't think it but my mouth said: "he has cancer doesn't he?"

It was in this moment I realized that nothing in life matters except for life itself. The fact that you woke up today and were able to breathe is a blessing. So I guess my answer to the mystery of life would just be to enjoy it. Make the most of it. Every day, do something productive and make the most of it. If your near a dance floor, do not sit at a table and watch others dance, get in the middle of that floor and break it down. Take advantage of every opportunity, because one day, your whole world can be flipped upside down, just like my uncle Michael's.

Do not be afraid to take risks like how AJ told us in the eighth-grade yearbook. When the book asked, how do you go outside of your comfort zone, AJ responded: "by eating applesauce." Challenge yourself to push your limits every day even if it is something small like trying applesauce.

Be passionate about what you do and set the world on fire as you build a life with the toolkit Haverford has given you. This school has given you a foundation in liberal arts education, a strong character, but most importantly it has built you with a network. A network of boys that will always have your back. And although it is time to say goodbye, I would like to say ... shall our paths cross again another day.

No matter where life takes you; remember to always make the most of it, work hard, and always try the apple sauce.

I love you guys and thank you for everything. Thank you, Haverford.