



High School Graduation

June 10, 2012

Speech by Henry Brown, Class of 2012

Good afternoon parents, teachers, family, and fellow students.

I'm honored to have been picked as the second speaker to represent the Class of 2012. And a bit surprised. But mostly honored. Rachel and I were interesting picks, in that we didn't know who was expected to provide the laughs and who the sentiment. We decided that we couldn't decide, and chose not to force those categories upon ourselves, leaving us with no structure whatsoever to speak of. This made it quite difficult for us to write our speeches. To make matters worse, I'm not a big fan of public speaking, and while my writing is okay, I don't write in my own voice; I don't use any contractions, and say things like "insomuch as" and "notwithstanding" (which happens to be my favorite preposition). I toyed with a number of ideas to try and make the speech-writing process easier. I wanted to construct a speech the body of which would be completely titles of songs. It was going to be called "On The Run" (Pink Floyd) or maybe "Here We Go Again" (Ray Charles), and it was going to be great. Unfortunately, I didn't have the patience, and gave up before starting. My peers suggested I wear one of my award-winning Halloween costumes today, and let it do the talking, but I was afraid we would be told about the importance of religious symbolism, or I would end up having to vacuum popcorn off of the floor of Lisner. In the end I decided to start by talking briefly about what I experienced at GDS, and see where that took me.

Have you ever heard that it's not a good idea to eat potassium right before rigorous exercise? Well, thanks for letting me know! I figured a banana would be a good breakfast before I had to put my skills, (or lack thereof) on display on the first day of soccer preseason freshman year. The combination of my athletic prowess, excellent breakfast choice, and outgoing nature when I meet new people made for quite an enjoyable time. While there were no cuts made to the roster that year, every party involved was surprised I made the team. My number was this close to being retired, but the process wasn't completed because of some minor technicalities, such as the coaches not agreeing to retire my number.

After the season ended, I found it troubling to be leaving school at 3:30 every day, so I decided to commit my winter to theater. I attended the lights workshop, at which I knew there would be upwards of a dozen students, all of whom were fairly knowledgeable on the topic of lighting. As it turned out, I was the only one in attendance. Lighting was pretty fun, but I never meant to get so involved in theater. I tried out for the tennis team, notwithstanding my elders, who I looked up to in more ways than one, threatening to break my knees if I chose sports over theater. My "elder" was pretty convincing at 6' 7" or 6' 9" or whatever, so I tried to balance theater and tennis. Fortunately, (I guess,) I was even worse at tennis than I was at soccer, so I didn't offend anybody too much.

At the same time that I was committing all of my free time to theater, while trying to stay in the sports realm, as well as getting involved in the local and regional math teams, and moving into the world of visual arts, it became apparent what is so special about GDS.

It's not an easy thing to do to maintain strong grades or to stay awake and fully present in class when a student is delegating all of his time to each of four or five extracurricular interests. After all, each of us only has one "all of our time." However, you couldn't pick a better group of people at making the impossible happen than the class of 2012. Whether regarding the sports teams, the debate team, *It's Ac*, Quizbowl, language and culture clubs, math team, theater, or any of the other communities at GDS, our class' involvement was impossible to ignore. Part of the reason we were able to excel to such an extent was our ability to manipulate stress into a polished end product. No matter what endeavor we took on, we were able to produce amazing work knowing that the FReP or Senior Paper is due in less than a week; that tonight is opening night; that these are the MAC Championships, and now is the time to leave it all on the field. We can easily identify the adrenaline rush that comes from this realization, and we know what to do with it to make sure that we write a strong paper; put on an above-high-school level production; and become the MAC champs. We did all of these things and should be proud knowing that this is unique to GDS and that our class is especially productive in this manner. I'm comfortable saying that we're a pretty good group of kids, all around.

That's not to say that we didn't have our fair share of encounters with the administration. From music in the forum, to the possibility of offending the Mayans and their wonderful, rich culture with our run in theme, Tom & Karen seemed ever-present in our day-to-day affairs at GDS. However, I have to concede that when I tried to burn down the school with the fog machine,

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they were pretty chill about it.

As we have been at GDS for some of the most formative years of our lives, there are experiences we will carry with us forever. I believe these are the most important things we are taking with us from GDS. Kevin Barr, would he were here, warned me against asking you to invoke anything in my speech today, but as the day comes to a close, I'd like you to think back on those little snippets that you know you will never forget. In my case, since I can only speak for myself, it's telling Will Ley not to worry about it when you've shoved some bare wire in a socket, Yka's "Hey!" when she sees you in the hallway, and the sense of fulfillment at the end of a significant event--be it strike, the recovery of our weather balloon, or the end of this ceremony today. To one looking in at our lives, these mementos may seem random, but they will stick with us for the rest of our lives and continue to define who we are as people.

GDS has given each of us a lot. GDS has given me a lot. We're taking a lot of gifts out with us into the real world, be they gifts of morality, gifts of curiosity, or, as the case may be, gifts of the supply room. It is for these gifts that I would most like to thank GDS. I'd also like to thank our teachers, family, advisors, friends, mentors, and anybody else that I somehow haven't included in my speech today. It would have been a helluva lot harder without you.

Congratulations to the Class of 2012!