



High School Graduation

June 8, 2008

Speech by Jacob Ansbacher, Class of 2008

Thank you to my family who supported me, to my teachers and administration who challenged me, and to Robert Asher, my parents and Don Baer for helping me with my speech. I also owe a special thanks to Nick Baer, who helped me with the comma placement for my speech and also for making sure I went to bed at 8:30 last night so I could be well rested for today.

I'd like to begin with a story. I was a young lad sitting at the kitchen table eating raisins from one of those little red boxes. At this point in my life, I enjoyed playing with my food as much as I enjoyed eating it. And apparently these raisins were getting close to my nostril area because my Mother said,

“Jacob, don't stick that raisin up your nose.”

In response, I glared back at her, held the raisin in plain sight and with one swift motion . . . stuck the raisin as far up in my nose as I possibly could.

At this time, in case it is necessary, I would like to remind the audience that at GDS the graduation speech is not necessarily delivered by the valedictorian.

After a short trip to the hospital and one valuable lesson learned, I came to the realization that this was not just a mere lapse in judgment but instead a sign that I was born to be a GDS student. I had a sense of curiosity for things I didn't understand and I challenged authority with regard to what I thought was right, and most important, I learned a lesson about empirical research.

But seriously, in my fourteen years at GDS I have been part of a class full of individuals who aren't afraid to be curious or confrontational. And in sync with these students, GDS has been an institution that challenges the mind and accepts change. Where else would students choose to take a challenging course in either science or math when you get the same amount of credit for

taking the regular course? Where else would the administration hold an assembly just so students can point out the faults of the school, and where else would students perform a sit-in in the library with the sole purpose of extending library hours after school? Not only does this prove that our grade is a bunch of dorks but it also shows that we have a respect for learning and the ability to see what is wrong and to try to fix it.

But, even more than that, each of these examples is about appreciating the here and now and making the most out of life while we are living it. This brings us to an important question, for this moment:

How do we continue to live our lives with these ideals as we move on and accept more responsibilities? How do we live in the now and continue to appreciate each moment when everyone seems to be so focused on the future? Today is a day of reflection on which we look back upon our accomplishments and prepare for what lies ahead. But mostly today is just a day...and so I ask you for the next few minutes not to look forward or reflect backward but instead to bask in the gloriousness of the present — right now.

Many of these epic moments are overlooked because we are all so stressed about college and getting good grades. So, next time Nina Prytula makes a comment and all of a sudden an entire book finally makes sense, cherish it. When Jon Burghart's booming voice makes every passage seem magical, even if it's because he's attached to a microphone that he's unaware of, cherish it. When Anthony Belber cheers you into the finish line, and even though you're gasping for air and in my case, sweating profusely, you still manage to run just a little faster, cherish it. And when Laura Rosberg does all those theater things, I'm sorry I don't really know what goes on in theater, but cherish it.

Then of course there are those ridiculous moments, like seeing Harold Newton wearing a harness for the first time as he belays you up a climbing wall. Cherish these moments too, because they are burned in your memory anyway.

When I heard that I was to be the speaker for today, I did what any sensible person would do in the situation. I looked through my book of poems.

And, eventually, I came upon *The Station* by Robert Hastings, which captures what I believe it

means to live in the moment. Come on, my Father e-mailed me this poem a few hours ago.

But here it goes...

"When we reach the station, that will be it!" we cry. "When I'm 18." "When I buy a new 450ST. Mercedes Benz!" "When I put the last kid through college." "When I have paid off the mortgage!" "When I get a promotion." "When I reach retirement, I shall live happily ever after!"

"Sooner or later, we realize there is no station, no one place to arrive. The true joy of life is the trip. The station is only a dream. It constantly out distances us."

If you know me at all you know that my motto has always been to leave tomorrow for tomorrow. And if you don't know me you're probably thinking, "Who is that kid?"

But seriously, I like this poem because it reminds us that happiness is not so far away. It is with us as we sit here together, amongst friends and family and enjoy the festivities of today. Hastings reminds us so eloquently to "climb more mountains, eat more ice cream, go barefoot more often, swim more rivers, watch more sunsets, laugh more, cry less."

This poem reminds me of another renowned artist's work. The Ataris' song, "Here in this Diary" reminds us to cherish each moment, because our youth is what we make of it.

The chorus goes, "Being grown up isn't half as fun as growing up, these are the best days of our lives."

This is not to say that I have a problem with growing old. I can't wait to learn a trade, start a family, and eventually eat dinner at 5:30 and wear my pants real high on my waist.

And, by the way, at this time I would like to thank my grandfather for coming to see me graduate today. Hearts, Poppy, Hearts!