



High School Graduation

June 4, 2006

Speech by Kevin Barr, Class of 2006

Good afternoon. If you look at your program, it says that I am to offer comments. I believe that this is a change from past programs. The implication seems to be that I am not to give a speech or read entire chapters from my favorite books. To make sure of that fact, Peter Branch, operating under the ruse of the construction project, even ordered all the books in the library packed and stored.

As *Moby-Dick* would be packed in a box somewhere out of reach, I decided that for my part of the ceremonies, I would just rap the lyrics to an Eminem song, but sadly Jodie Foster beat me to it in her speech last week at U. Penn. So, I am stuck. I could be completely original, but remarks at graduation are supposed to channel the wisdom of the ages. Leave it to our seniors, though, to give me a way out. Unlike Jodie Foster, our seniors understand the one great cardinal rule of life: rock and roll is a young person's game and no one should ever quote songs by anyone younger than oneself. So it was that Hannah the Cruel, fronted by Laura Zax, closed out the recent senior banquet with a medley of Beatle songs. Since then, I have been humming those songs, thankful that the current crop of rock and rollers still honor their musical forbears. But it has made me wonder. Does life really go on, if we sing *obladi, oblada*? Why would anyone keep all his money in a big brown bag inside a zoo? Why was Lucy in the Sky with diamonds? It's a nice thought, but when folks are in their twenties, should the height of their ambition be just to hold somebody's hand? And no matter what we might wish, we do not all live in yellow submarines. But what about John Lennon's final little bit of wisdom, that all you need is love, that there's nowhere you can be that isn't where you were meant to be, and that it's easy?

Almost all of you know by now that it isn't easy. Some of you have lost parents; some of you have lost homes. Friendships have come and gone. Yet here you are, beautiful kids, all of you, ready to go off and make your way in the world. I would like you to remember that if love isn't all you need, it will carry you pretty far in this world and it is a better anodyne than power, money, or momentary physical gratification. John's claim notwithstanding, there may be somewhere in

this world that isn't where you were meant to be, although, as Melville says, it is well to be on friendly terms with all the inmates of the place one lodges in.

Take the gifts that you have been given by nature and schooling out into the world, be open to all you encounter, and when times seem particularly tough, remember love may not be all you need, but acting as if it is might just make this world a little less broken.

Take care of each other and yourselves. We love you.