

2010 Salutatorian Speech by Beth Elaine Lipton

Good evening, everyone! I'd like to welcome faculty, family, friends, and our guest speaker Congressman Burgess to the 2010 Coram Deo Academy commencement ceremonies. As salutatorian, I've been granted the opportunity of telling you about our class – where we've come from, who we are, and what makes us different from any other graduating class at CDA. We're a group that goes back a long way. Two of us have survived Coram Deo since 4th grade, and a few more joined the class in 5th. When the teachers brought in some new kids the next year, we knew they were our type – smart, good, kooky – and we knew we'd added a few more friends to our wolf pack. It's been six years since then; we've come a long way. But just how much? This year, I've been given the privilege to present more than a simple speech – a poem, a real class portrait in words. Ladies and gentlemen, Congressman, I would like to present "We Have Grown Up."

The last pencil of the last student
Circled the last answer
Of the last test high school would ever require

And there was much rejoicing

Because all of us –
All of us –
the class of two thousand and ten was completely and utterly done.

Finished, Dr. Heitschmidt would say,
because turkeys are done, and students are finished.

Completed.

We are complete.

Some of us lived with only the thought of reaching commencement –

Get through the years, get through the years

And you may read what you like

Do what you like

Be what they always told you you could be.

Some of us never thought we'd get here

To a crowded auditorium

Waiting for a piece of paper with our name on it
that told those who didn't or couldn't believe
that we were complete. Completely finished.

But I look at the kids next to me,
grown-ups now,
wearing the same blue robes with the same blue cardboard on their heads

This is my class.

But the blue robes and cardboard hats
don't do us justice.

You see, we aren't a class anyone could put a label on.

We aren't the party class.

We aren't the nerdy class.

We aren't the sporty
or the preppy
or the sheltered
or the awful class.

We are a collage.

A mash-up of it all.

A grand conglomeration of
Actors

And the audience that sees them

Athletes

Artists

Academics

Always on time or always late

Abusers of the caffeine in Dr. Pepper

An unseemly bunch who, at the beginning of 10th grade,
couldn't write a decent thesis statement.

We were told this and did our best to remedy the situation.

We were a mash-up of nervous freshmen

Who started messily and learned how to fly
to get off the ground like the Wright brothers in 1903.

We are memory-makers.

Easy-going, hard-working.

A group of kids who remember joking with Mr. Rector

The time Will put his picture everywhere on campus
to be discovered in the most unlikely places.

The days when the PA system would sing Handel's Hallelujah chorus
and the days when it sounded like a car horn underwater.
A bunch of kids who remember the sticky-floors and insect-filled-ceilings of a campus under
construction
and recording history's grand design on transparent plastic sheets
And saying something was "based on" in rhetoric
Because saying "based off of" was incorrect.

We are a wild bunch.
As hopeful as fairytales and as determined as ever anyone was.
We dream.

We owe it to teachers and mentors,
those who taught us the Iliad and European history
Algebra and theology
Who put up with dragging couches into logic classrooms
And screaming Rebel yells from 1864 –
those were the people
who took the elements,
the actors, athletes, and academics,
the ones who were caustic
and the others, who, like chemistry's noble gases
were just fine as they were.
The teachers who took the time
to put us into place – to make art instead of a mess.
They taught us to think.
To think independently
and as a class.

So now we think and muse,
continuing to create,
to win with humility
and lose with honest pride in our efforts.
We have grown up.

But I look at the grown-ups next to me
wearing the same blue robes with the same blue cardboard on their heads
This is my class.
But the blue robes and cardboard hats

don't do us justice.
Because no one can see our hearts
like candles
Bright with the white light of hope
Bright with future
Bright with the lamp of Christ that lives in us.
We are a collage,
memory-makers,
dreamers and hard workers
thinkers.
We have grown up.