

Kyle Keane's

2007 Commencement Speech

It is an honor to be here in front of you this day, our graduation day. Beyond that it is an honor to be a, now, alumni of this great institution. I have gained invaluable hands on experience and a wealth of specialized information. This has been a fantastic chapter of my life, but it is nice to be on the last page, anxiously awaiting that last sentence to end. Patience, though, will serve us well, for there are a few more paragraphs left, and this **will be** on the test, won't it?

Here we are, now, in a moment as unique as any other. There is something strange though about this experience. It maybe the surreal sensation of accomplishment, or the anxiety of growing up, or the embarrassment of distinction, or maybe it is being alive. There is an energy today, a disbelief and a hope, wound up so tight, but marked by a feeling of endless expansion that I will no longer try to name, rather I will embrace.

Congratulations are in order of course to all of us who are receiving our diplomas today. Also though, to the families and friends who have made this possible: Congratulations this is your achievement as well. And to the professors who have given so much of their lives teaching generations of curious minds: This is your achievement as well. To the staff and donors who have supported us through it all: this is your achievement as well. This day is more than a chance to accept praise and recognition, it is our chance to say thank you. So, thank you for believing in us when we were young, and thank you sincerely for helping us when we were dumb: we couldn't have done this without you, this is your day too.

A rarity in college life is peaceful reflection. Our destinations overlapped and never ceased, we could not afford to celebrate a job

well done, for there was always another job to do. We should take advantage of this opportunity then, to check ourselves: our motives, our plans, our hopes, and our dreams; to reflect on what we have done to get here and what we shall do to get where we wish to go. In the spirit of reflection, I would like to read a poem by Robert Penn Warren called, "Evening Hawk."

From plane of light to plane, wings dipping through
Geometries and orchids that the sunset builds,
Out of the peak's black angularity of shadow, riding
The last tumultuous avalanche of
Light above pines and the guttural gorge,
The hawk comes.

His wing
Scythes down another day, his motion
Is that of honed steel-edge, we hear
The crashless fall of stalks of Time.

The head of each stalk is heavy with the gold of our error.

Look! Look! He is climbing the last light
Who knows neither Time nor error, and under
Whose eye, unforgiving, the world, unforgiven, swings
Into shadow.

Long now,
The last thrush is still, the last bat
Now cruises in his sharp hieroglyphics. His wisdom
Is ancient, too, and immense. The star
Is steady; like Pluto, over the mountain.

If there were no wind we might, we think, hear
The earth grind on its axis, or history
Drip in darkness like a leaking pipe in the cellar

This is a fitting poem for a rite of passage. It reminds us that the errors we have made are our most precious resources of wisdom, and that we must take advantage of today to learn from them. Taking

for granted the education that our professors have given to us everyday is not the routine that led us to this graduation. Now however, the teachers will become more subtle and the lessons more important than ever.

Our scientific training gives us the knowledge to do fantastic things, but we must also consider the great ramifications of our actions so that we may leave this world a better place than we found it. Generations past have created the Atomic Bomb, **D**ichloro-**D**iphenyl-**T**richloroethane (otherwise known as DDT), and refined petroleum. These developments were born with a hope for a better future for mankind and helped create the turmoil that surrounds us today. However, this agonizing tension that we know as reality can be our guiding force in co-creating a more symbiotic relationship with nature. It is that which we see everyday that can teach us the most.

There is an unmatched importance in experiencing every moment of life with our full attention. Without mental presence there is no conscious learning, without this learning there is no self recognized growth, and without that self knowledge we are not fully human.

Before I wrap this up, I want to thank the physics department for their time and energy. I could not have asked for a better group of people to learn from and with. Your patience and understanding have been beyond reproach. Thank you all from the bottom of my heart. Also, on a personal note, Dr. Filowitz and Dr. Gillespie, thank you again!

I would like to end with a Sanskrit proverb that I found in Drop the Rock:

Look to this day,
For it is life,

The very life of life.
In its brief course lies all
The realities and verities of existence,
The bliss of growth,
The splendor of action,
The glory of Power—

For yesterday is but a dream
And tomorrow is only a vision.
But today, well lived,
Makes every yesterday
A dream of happiness,
And every tomorrow a vision of hope.

Look well, therefore, to this day.