

The Oyster Bay High School Graduation 2017

Farewell Speech

by Valedictorian Jack Casey



Good afternoon, and welcome, Oyster Bay Class of 2017 to the final moments of your high school careers. Today marks the finish line of the marathon that is high school, and you all have endeavored long enough to reach this

point, whether it is attending extra help at the crack of dawn to do well on a history test, spending an exorbitant amount of time perfecting supplemental college essays, or working so hard on an assignment just to test your limits. You know what, I take it back; high school is more like a mile than it is a marathon. Of course in both events, you must pace yourself, and if you start off too quickly in either, you certainly will burn out, just like in high school, but high school is four years long, similar to the four laps that make up a mile.

As freshman, we were explosive off the starting line and filled with energy – every step was passionate, and we couldn't wait to get on to the next lap that was sophomore year. This lap was like freshman year, but evidently more difficult. To stay alive with the competition, we needed to stay up later

and work even harder – then came the dreaded junior year. This lap was without a doubt the most difficult. Standardized tests, more APs, and Driver’s Ed were all squeezed into one exhausting year. At times, we felt like giving up, but we keep our chins up. Our bodies felt completely drained, but there was still one more left. As you transition into the final lap of a mile, an official dings a bell to let you know you’re almost there. The sound of that bell is like finding out what college you’ll be attending in the fall. You feel revived; you start to believe you can make it. Your feet move, but you can’t feel them. Everything seems like a blur, but you just keep pumping through because it’s too late to give up. You’re on the home stretch right now, seconds away from crossing that finish line you waited all of these years to see.

From beyond this moment in time, you will all branch outwards beyond your small Oyster Bay community and flourish along the much larger paths you will take in this place denoted as the “real world”.

Now I would like to read a short poem titled “Time is” by Henry Van Dyke:

Time is

Too Slow for those who Wait,

Too Swift for those who Fear,

Too Long for those who Grieve,

Too Short for those who Rejoice;

But for those who Love,

Time is not.

As we strive forward, we leave behind memories, heartfelt love for one another, and our youth, but in exchange, we are granted acceptance into new places, universities, careers, and friendships, all of which inevitably will mature us into wiser, more grownup people. Graduations, just like birthdays, are events that are supposed to make us feel older, but do we really feel that way? For parents, the answer might be yes, but for us graduates, do we feel like true adults yet? The day you turn eighteen might just feel like any other day; the number associated with your identity moves up just one figure. Ten years will pass, and it might feel like a breeze. We must learn to recognize that life always begins now and that there is nothing more precious than time – not even gold.

British philosopher Alan Watts said, “Life exists only at this very moment, and in this moment it is infinite and eternal. For the present moment is infinitely small; before we can measure it, it has gone, and yet it exists forever. . . .” The clock will only go forward, and you must recognize that there is no benefit to running against it. Always looking behind you is a good way to ram straight into a wall. Find the middle ground between being overly cautious and overly anxious so you can enjoy now. Be curious and use your gifts to their fullest potential, and more importantly, forget the money.

We live our whole lives worrying about numbers. Our age, total income, the number of likes our pictures receive on Instagram and even our GPA should not define our happiness. Happiness stems from having good friends and family and doing whatever it is you truly love. Money is not the key to

wealth, and sophistication is not the ingredient for serenity. As Confucius once put it, “Life is really simple, but we insist on making it complicated.”

Look, I’m not suggesting in any way to give up, go out and be hobos for the rest of your lives, no, not at all. Find whatever it is you enjoy the most, whether it be painting, writing, engineering, it does not matter what it is; find a way to turn that into a career. What is the sake of occupying a job that pays well if you find no satisfaction in it? The best feeling in the world is waking up doing whatever it is you love the most. If you have not yet found your passion, it is still there – buried deep below the layers of life you have yet to explore.

It may sound like I’ve been preaching, but I believe that it’s the voice inside of me that’s been screeching. I’ve been immersed in this terse verse that I’ve been working on recently. This speech, it has become a part of me, and I’ll rap through it because I know that’s been my destiny. Success has only one recipe, but it’s not determined by your pedigree. Keep your tenaciousness readily, and you’ll see the results improve steadily. Take notes in your mind, we call those memories.

It has been a pleasure working alongside all of you as we’ve grown over these last four years. Thank you to all of the teachers and guidance counselors who have put up with me. Your commitment to our success is seemingly unparalleled. I would especially like to thank my parents, who have instilled good values in me, and given me the confidence to work my hardest. With all of your help, I have found true happiness. Thank you, and congratulations, Class of 2017.