

June, 2005

The graduation speech of Valedictorian K. Beard:

Fellow students, teachers, friends, and family members, it is a great honor to have been nominated valedictorian of the Karafin graduating class of 2005. It takes a lot of effort, hard work, and perseverance to earn this title. It takes good grades, and a good attitude towards achieving our goals. It's often a lot of pressure for valedictorians, and it is often a lot of pressure for valedictorians, and I'm not just saying that because I get to give you this speech. People expect a lot out of you when you're the top dog. One big mistake can cause you to fall below your rank. You have a reputation to keep up, and that's quite a burden. But each obstacle I've encountered in the past, I've overcome and become stronger, as most likely many of you have.

Each graduating student here came to this school for their own reasons, whether it's not fitting in with their old high school or simply because it was recommended by their advisors, or for any other reason. For many of you, four years of high school have been challenging. Not so much academically, as many of you have found the curriculum rather easy, but mentally and emotionally challenging. Some of you may have been picked on or bullied in your early or possibly even later years of high school. Some may have struggled with their grades or have been held back. At least a few of you must have lost a friend or family member that was very close to you. Just around Christmas last year I lost my grandfather. If they were still here now, they would be proud of us for such a long way we all have come.

The very privilege to graduate and earn our diplomas is a valuable privilege indeed. Some people aren't as lucky as we are to live in such an advanced and well-educated nation. Some nations are so poor and underdeveloped that their educational system is very limited, if there is any system at all. Children grow up in a rural community and do what their predecessors had done, generation after generation, never advancing. The majority of us take our schools for granted. The U.S. is one of the best-educated countries in the world, with one of the highest success rates among students. Many of us here graduating will be heading off to college this fall, and many among us, if not all among us, will likely become very successful in life. I, for one, am very thankful to live in a nation where you can learn well and achieve to the best of your ability.

I would like to especially thank the faculty and staff, and the parents or guardians of us graduating students. We never could have gotten this far without their help, and at this graduation they finally see the result of all the effort they have put into us. Even in our greatest times of desperation, they never gave up on us for a second. I give a big thanks to the teachers for their support and for nominating me valedictorian. I also thank my parents for their constant care and understanding, and my grandmother and Mr. and Mrs. Smith for showing up for this important occasion. And again, thanks to the staff for guiding us in our quest for success and for teaching us well.

During this monumental milestone of our lives, let us always remember the best of times at our school. The talent show this year was extremely good, and I would like to compliment my good friend Rocco for his extraordinary performance there. The student council did an excellent job organizing the senior picnic, as well as Mr. Ryder for his skill at the grill. And it boils down to this celebration right now. This will most likely be the last time we of this graduating class will see each other again, so let us savor these last moments together before we go our separate paths. Let us make these final memories a lasting impression on our minds. Let us enjoy ourselves and have a good time with each other.

As I come near the end of my speech, we all must look forward to what the future holds for us. We should all hope to become successful in life, and seize the opportunity to do so. It has come around the time for us to make our own decisions. It is a major step forward in our lives, and there is no turning back. Let us think not of this as the end of a journey, let us think of it as a new one. So let us prepare ourselves for this great journey and strive to be the best that we can be.

Thank you.