

GRADUATION

June 5, 2010

Mrs. Buckley, Ms. Stevens, members of the School Committee, Mr. Cavallo, your class advisors, Mr. Dorman and Mr. Kry, on behalf of the administration and with the Class of 2010, I welcome all of you to this morning's celebration.

As I welcome you to your first and only high school graduation, I recall the words of one of my favorite Yankees (and, yes, Mr. Racine there are not too many of those guys), as in Yogi Berra's observation that, "the future ain't what it used to be."

Today, as we celebrate your past achievements and herald your future, we come together, in this place, for the last time - - and in so doing, underscore that you face a very different world than that of recent Granby graduates and those from the more distant past - - and, in that stark reality, there is both unbounded opportunities and perilous challenges.

Upon my graduation, for example, I chose and was fortunate to pursue the same profession for 43 years, all played out in just three communities within 30 miles of each other along the I-91 corridor, pretty much the norm for many in my generation and those that succeeded it (as in your parents, for example). Today and tomorrow - your tomorrows - will not allow you that comfort level, for yours' is a highly mobile, changing, challenging, competitive, compacted, international community with demographic, social and economic realities which will not allow you to experience what those before you have had in terms of employment certitude and longevity. Today, as the Class 2010, like it or not, you will be catapulted in the next ten, twenty and thirty years into the apex of the second quarter of the 21st century, and into a world environment that will contrast vividly with the world you have experienced - - - AND, you need to be ready for it! For example, next Monday, June 7, 2010, will mark the longest war in American history, 104 months, one that has and will continue to call upon your generation and some of your Granby peers into an unknown, dangerous and unpredictable future. As many of you spent the Memorial Day weekend on your class trip or justly relaxing over the three day break signaling the beginning of Summer, my wife and I had the privilege and honor to go to the Walter Reed Hospital, in Washington, visiting with injured young men from

my son's National Guard company currently serving in Afghanistan. While we were there on a personal basis for our son and for ourselves, in a larger professional sense, I was there to represent you and your generation, your teachers, especially those who have "worn the uniform," as in Mr. Robert, Mr. Smith, Mr. Berneche, and Mr. Dorman and our greater Granby community - - and I was proud to do so as your educational leader. Today, as you leave us, you will step into the blazing sunlight - - to live your lives fully at a time and into a future in which our country and world desperately needs you to be your very best - - - for a very long time! On the journey ahead, take with you the essence of who you are and that which no one can ever take from you - - your education and your ethics - - both having taken firm root here on fertile ground - - Granby ground!

As you prepare to leave us with your passport, your diploma, in hand, into a culture that unfortunately has replaced heroes with celebrities, I ask that you take a moment: look back, reflect on those who have brought you here and who will be called upon again to sustain you in the days ahead. As always, start at home, with recognition, appreciation, and love to parents, grandparents, siblings, extended family members, and advocates, all who have been there for you. Let your appreciation next come to the here and

now, recognizing all of your teachers and staff members through your Granby years, from pre-school and West Street to East Meadow, to the junior high school and, finally, to these last four of high school. Make no mistake, you are here today because of your work and perseverance and I congratulate you for that. But, now as our faculty celebrates with you today, I ask that you recognize their work, perseverance, and, yes, patience, support and encouragement. Today, consider these to be your real heroes at home and at school. As you prepare to take on a different role on a larger and more difficult stage, I urge that you not forget from where you came and your support network that got you here - - for they ought to be your real heroes.

Our 82 graduates each have an individual story to tell, some we know well with joy and others with pain, as each has travelled their own road to where they are today. Some of these 82 stories are very public, and others known only to a few. But, all are here today and ready to go forth, - - to turn new pages and write new chapters, using some familiar characters and settings but open and welcoming to many new ones to complete the open book ahead of them.

Personally, I thank you for the opportunity to have travelled these roads with you over the last four years. I ask that your lasting lesson from me be that you not so much conform but rather inform, and then transform, both self and others - - in a world very much in need of being both informed and transformed.

As we prepare to leave and say goodbye, my personal regret is that I came upon you, and your immediate predecessors and successors, late in my professional life. But the advantage of that for me is in that as you are my most recent experiences, your flame will burn more brightly - - and longer. Thank you for allowing me the experience of working with you. I have cherished the experience of having my education enhanced in your hands.

Good luck and God Bless. And as you leave, take the very best of Granby with you and a resource for the days ahead.