

2013 Senior Dinner Speech

Upper School Head Jim Reynolds

No matter how many times I find myself at the Browning Senior Dinner, I am always amazed at the speed at which it comes. It seems like just yesterday that I watched the members of this class climbing the Jacob's Ladder element at Sharpe Reservation during the Form VI retreat in early September. Browning odd couples working together; Zach Magill's portable speaker providing the music for this class's first opportunity to display its cohesiveness; Jeremy and Colin struggling but successful; Zack and Lucas zipping up the element; Will and Wilf working their way towards the top; and Jose Llamas and Evan Blumenthal figuring out a route; Adam and Miles high-fiving before attacking the ladder. And now, a short nine months later, we are gathered to celebrate the successes of these young men who are the Class of 2013.

Their success is the product of many people working together to help these young men reach this moment. We would not be here tonight without the partnership of faculty, parents and students.

Our faculty is first rate, and they are the engines that drive the successes we are here to celebrate. Without their dedication, perseverance, rigor and optimism, tonight's gathering would not happen. They have cared deeply about the progress this class has made for as long as your sons have been at Browning. They have believed in your sons' possibilities even during the darkest academic times. But their efforts never flagged, and eventually your sons joined the faculty in the focused mission to help each young man achieve to the best of his ability. As always, I salute this faculty and thank them for their hard work and for their steadfast belief in each and every student they encounter.

Another crucial piece of the partnership is you, the parents. You chose Browning for your sons. You trusted this faculty, staff and administration to help you with creating for your sons the opportunities they are now faced with. While I speak to you as a single entity, each family has traveled its unique winding road to reach this point. Your sons have been accepted to outstanding colleges and universities because this is the dream you had for them when they were very young. Who could have predicted that the young men of this class would be heading to art schools, engineering programs, Ivy League campuses? You did. Our dreams for our children are intrinsically connected to the choices we make for them before they can tell us, "I'll do it myself." Frankly, not one of these young men has reached this point independently. He has you to thank, and I am confident that deep down, he knows it. Thank you for being engaged and supportive of Browning. It has been a pleasure working with you.

And finally, we have the Class of 2013. Gentlemen, it has been interesting, to say the least. You have reached a significant milestone in your young lives. On June 5, you will walk out of Christ Church a Browning alumnus. Your future will be more in your hands than it has ever been up to this point. It will become your obligation to stretch yourself beyond the limits even you can conceive. You are

young, but you are not so naive as to not understand the importance of the moment. Believe in the best iteration of yourselves. Expect the best from yourselves. Don't do it because you know your parents expect it of you. Do it because you dare to challenge yourself to be outstanding. As I hope you have learned, success in the academic environment is not about the grade you receive, but about the depth of your commitment to your own future. Engage. Join a club you never thought you would join.

Several years ago, Evan Thomas, the journalist and historian, gave Browning's commencement address, and he said something very interesting thing. He said that when he got to Harvard as a freshman, he promised himself that he was not going to let himself fall into a clique of New Yorkers. He was going to expand his social circle beyond those who had grown up like himself in New York City. He wanted to meet different people and to learn about their experiences. That was a bold choice he made. Be bold. You have so much to offer others, and you must be confident enough to believe that others have much to offer you.

It has been an honor to work with you over the past three or four years. You are on life's runway, engine purring, flaps up, awaiting the word to start rolling down the tarmac.

Gentlemen, you are ready for take-off. Now soar.

Thank you.