**14894, Steve Borklund**

Good Evening Ladies and Gentlemen,

I am thrilled that you asked me to speak tonight. It’s hard to believe it’s been 50 years since we graduated, isn’t it? I think our generation has lived to see the most dramatic changes in our lives than any generation before us. In 1966, life was just so different from what it is today.

When we were children there were not vaccinations for children to prevent them from suffering terrible diseases. Today they are common place and our children are saved the misery of those illnesses. Other diseases like polio no longer affect people of any age, at least in the United States. Today our doctors are seeking cures for more challenging things like cancer, AIDS, and Ebola.

When we graduated from high school people were excited when they were able to “princess phones” that came in different colors with a dial that lit up. From that time to now we have moved from hard line phones to cell phones that are not only as small as Star Trek communicators, but they will do just about anything your desktop computer does.

And, speaking of computers, Wow, look at how they’ve changed. Back in the 60’s computers took up entire rooms and were mainframes. There was no internet and storage was done on large circular tapes, not tiny little thumb drives like we have today. Back then in order to work on computers you had to speak special computer languages that look like Greek to the rest of us. Today everything is in windows for us common folk while the computer geeks still work in their programming languages behind the scenes. And, look at how small computers have gotten. Like I said previously, computers have changed drastically. What use to take up entire rooms, now fit on a desktop, laptop, a tablet or even your smartphone. Now, if we could all just be as smart as our phones. Even our cars are operated by onboard computers and now come with Wi-Fi.

While we were growing up the newest rage was all the new cars being designed and sold. For those of us who graduated in 1966, our first cars were most likely bulky, black sedans. But, during our high school years cars began to come in different styles and different colors. The first national highways were being built, including the famous Route 66. Today we are in the position of rebuilding those roads after 40 years of use by Americans with a hunger for road trips. Back then it was a novelty if a car had an automatic transmission, but today the new rage is hybrid cars that run alternately on electricity and gasoline. There are even some small “city” cars that exclusively run on electricity. Parking garages not only have special parking places for compact cars, but now they have special parking places for those electric cars to recharge their batteries while the owners shop.

It used to be the highlight of our week to go to town on the weekends or at least go to the movies with friends. Drive-in movies were a hit with families and teenagers. Today they are almost non-existent. Shopping at any time, but especially at holidays made the stores crazy places sometimes. Today shopping has changed drastically. Some people shop for deals and bargains using their smartphones to research which store has the best bargain, even scanning special coupons to their phone to use at the checkout. Another way people shop today is online, a term we had never heard of when we were young. Most stores have an online “presence” today, but the biggest online conglomerate is Amazon. There is nothing you can’t find on Amazon, who started as just a bookseller. Now individuals even sell things on Amazon.

Speaking of books, have any of our class become authors? Yes, No? For centuries becoming a published author was an arduous journey to write and then find a publishing house who would deign to even consider an unknown. Today, anyone can become an author if they know how to communicate clearly and are dedicated to learning the process of self-publishing. The cost of production used to be a consideration that prevented many people from even thinking about publishing their own work. But, that too is different now that it’s possible to create e-books. Your book is completely electronic, with its content protected from theft and change. Never again will you be required to physically print any publication.

With all these dynamic changes, you would think that we’ve seen it all. But, I don’t think so. I think that all the rapid changes that we’ve witnessed in our lifetimes are just the beginning. Up to the 20th-century things moved along at a rather sedate pace. But, think about it. In the 20th century (with a little overlap at the tail end of the 19th century) we succeeded in inventing powered cars, airplanes for commercial as well as military use. Those in business, medicine, science and most other fields couldn’t function without computers. Landline phones are nearly non-existent. And cars nearly drive themselves now.

What about the next 50 years? What do you think will happen? We are already seeing doctors diagnosing over a Skype connection on the computer. Students are going to school on the internet to keep out of the dangers of inner city schools. They’ve been predicting flying cars ever since the 60’s, but we may yet live to see them. Who knows, we might come to the point where we have a mind connection with our computers and simply “think” what command we want to give. We could all work from home and never have to go out and fight “rush hour” ever again.

What about medicine? What diseases will we conquer? Instead of human transplants will we have computerized organ transplants like in the Robin Williams movie Millennium? How long can humans live? How long do we want to live?

What new ideas can be invented? Will we return to the space race and set up settlements on Mars or other planets? Will the new space race be led by the government and military or will it be led by large corporations and billionaires who can afford to do what they want without raising people’s taxes?

We have lived in one of the most dynamic generations of history, but I believe we will see things even more outrageous and dynamic in the decades to come. It just depends on how long we live how much we will see.

Congratulations Class of 1966 for being great achievers and setting the mark high for those who came after us.

Thank you