**15136, Roderick French**
Good Evening Ladies and Gentlemen,

I am honored to be invited back to the high school where I graduated in 1979 to receive this award for my professional achievements and community service. Let me assure you that I cannot take full credit for what I’ve accomplished in life. You see, the man I became had everything to do with the lessons I learned while growing up. Many of those lessons I learned while walking these halls.

Like every high school student I took a variety of classes. Some of them I liked and some of them I despised. But, I had to finish them all so I could graduate, and like very teenager, I couldn’t wait to graduate and get on with my life. But, I soon learned that life was not a sprint, it was a marathon. Once I was out in the “real world” I learned very quickly why my teachers drilled all those life lessons into whatever course we were studying. I learned that high school isn’t just learning a lot of facts and figures, passing a test and then going out to conquer the world. I learned that each and every one of the lessons our teachers taught us had an application for our life after high school.

I am very grateful for the long term relationships that I developed with my teachers. As hard as they were on me to learn my lessons in high school, they have worked just as hard to encourage me when I was struggling while building my life. They were also my strongest supporters when I succeeded at something.

Being a student here also gave me a group of some of the best friends in my life. Some of my achievements wouldn’t have happened if we hadn’t worked on them together. Others my friends were my best cheerleaders and others my friends wisely warned me against pursuing. Thankfully, I knew when to listen to them.

One very important lesson I learned was that just like life is a marathon not a sprint, I also learned that life is a journey not just a race. We start out young and make our way somewhat carelessly in our youth. We don’t sit down and make a plan, we just take each opportunity as it happens. Then, as we grow older we learn that the only way to really succeed is to make a plan and follow it through.

Our teachers did try to teach us that in school, but lessons like that, the ones that couldn’t be answered with a multiple choice or true/false answer, take a while to sink in. We have to experiences that require the use of those skills before we realize their importance. I’ll never forget the first time I was working on a project and suddenly I had memory of a project we did in high school where I had to make a plan very similar to it. “Wow, I thought to myself.” My teacher actually knew what he was talking about.

After that incident I started to think back to those high school lessons whenever I had a plan or make or a project to make work. I realized that my teachers weren’t just trying to keep me out of trouble, they were actually teaching me valuable life skills. I started tracking some of those lessons so I could use them in multiple situations. Although I am honored to receive this award, the real credit goes to my teachers for the real life lessons they taught me. And, I will always value the life-long friendships I made with both teachers and the friends I made in high school. Friends like that will always be there for you, come rain or come shine. I can honestly say that high school was one of the best periods of my life, not just for that time period, but for the relationships that developed from it.

I am honored to receive this award tonight. Thank you.