**GRADUATION SPEECH**

**FOR**

**RANDY RYAN**

Hello.... to family and friends, colleagues and faculty, Vice Provost \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_, distinguished guests, students, and of course my fellow graduates of the Stony Brook School of Nursing, it’s a privilege to have the chance to speak to all of you at these commencement exercises. It’s great to see such a large and enthusiastic

crowd, all gathered to support this class and our accomplishments. As I look around at all of you, the word that comes to mind.... the expression that obviously means so much to me, is “**connection**.” For the past \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ years, this class has traveled a road together... we’ve studied together, attended classes together, formulated our future plans together..... and yes, we even... **SHOCKER**..... complained about test questions together.... (**Wait for the laugh**), and **ALL OF IT** served a purpose.... our connections really serve as our “neural network” in our lives.... while modern definitions may limit that expression to computer language, as members of the medical community... and life itself, the phrase gives us a little visual insight to how all of us are intertwined. The poet, Alfred Lord Tennyson said, “I am part of all that I have met.” Although today represents the last time we will all formally be together, our network and connection is not limited by simple geography. I know for sure that the memories we have made here at Stony Brook will serve to fuse the bonds we have formed. We’ve done some great work together and in many ways, we created something beyond a network... we’re **FAMILY**. (**If you want you can say**)... we’ve traveled the same route together....and though we had fun while maintaining our purpose...it wasn’t quite like “National Lampoon Family Vacation” **FUN**.... **( or pick another funny travel movie the grads relate to and wait for the laugh**)...but didn’t we all have a **BLAST** when over **TWENTY FIVE** of us attended the annual nursing convention in Nashville, Tennessee??? I know **I DID**!! We were together cheering each other on as our group learned they won multiple awards and scholarships... and there were the times we needed consolation and agreement...

Today, as we prepare to take what we have learned and apply ourselves to healing, tending, and supporting others, I can’t help but smile.... remember all the passion and pathos we invested.... on **TEST QUESTIONS**??? (**Wait for the laugh**). Remember all the countless hours we spent studying, neurosing, **SOBBING** about how we thought certain questions were “unfair” on some exams?? That was just an “appetizer...” a little taste of what professional nursing would conspire to deal to us.... and you know what? We **SURVIVED** those tests.... we learned the coursework, and we realized that we **MUST** be prepared in order to serve the patients and professionals that will take up such an important part of our lives.

I want you all to know.... or remember, that I am standing in front of you, not just as a fellow graduate and “**model student**...” (**say that with animation and wait for the laugh**)...I’m standing here .... **I THINK**.... because I started out doing everything **WRONG**. Yes... this **PARAGON** you see before you was a **BAD CHILD** who was rapidly descending down a rabbit hole of self destruction.... but somehow... through the connections and people that are the best parts of me, namely my wonderful family who were rooted in a more self fulfilling reality, I joined the Navy... I not only got to “**See the world**” as the slogan reminds us, I got a chance to see myself and my life from a refreshed perspective. I promised myself that if I ever got the opportunity to go to college, I was going to take every chance I could to make something of myself and if opportunity wasn’t there presenting itself in front of my face, I was going to go out and **FIND IT**. As the expression goes, “If opportunity doesn’t knock, **BUILD A DOOR**.” And that’s how I got here...

Graduates, we have met the requirements... we’ve done our “hard time” in school... we demonstrated dedication, hard work, and perseverance. We learned by **DOING**... not just **FREAKING OUT**, and saw that we were and are capable of being caring and compassionate professionals. We had incredible mentors and teachers like the Chair of the undergrad nursing department and faculty advisor (**please fix if necessary**), Dr. Carol Della Ratta, who shared her heart and soul and intention so that we would succeed with our studies. From being advised and mentored by faculty members that **REALLY** invested their time, expertise, experience, and energy just so that **WE** have a shot at success, I **realized**... and remind myself **every day,** that “Through perseverance, dedication, and compassion**, ANYTHING** is possible.”

We have **OFFICIALLY** bid **FAREWELL** to.... thinking that we’re still students... although we will **ALWAYS** be learning... in life and in the nursing profession, and **today** is the day we become authentically **accountable**. Today is the day we take pride in our devotion to this profession. Today is the day we pledge to proceed with our careers as though our lives depended on it... because other lives **DO**... today we pledge to empathize with patients, professionals, family and friends, and we vow to treat others with the respect and care just as **WE** would want to be treated.

I want to acknowledge my step dad, \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_, my step mom\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_, my sisters, \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_, my nephew Andrew and of course my roommate, \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ for encouraging me, being patient and supportive with me, for listening to me and stopping me when **THAT** was needed, and for reaffirming my faith in humanity. It is thanks to them and their love and caring, that I want to meet, network with, and partner with as many great people and organizations as I can. None of us can exist in a vacuum, and I have learned to take nothing for granted while counting all of the blessings I have in my life.... and from the “unfair test questions” to the inspiration of the faculty and encouragement from all of you, I really believe, and this is absolutely true for **ALL OF US**, that we are about to enter a profession that will have a seismic impact on those we treat. They will need our skills and common sense.... they’ll require our patience and our resourcefulness, and most of all, they will **REALLY** need our connection and human touch. I know each one of us has the ability to make a positive contribution to nursing and I **CANNOT** wait to follow your careers and lives as we enter this respected profession.

Congratulations graduates and thank you all!!