**GRADUATION SPEECH**

**FOR**

**OLIVER ROZAL**

Ladies and gentlemen, family, friends, and faculty, school officials, Superintendent \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_, and of course, most of all, graduates, thank you so much for inviting me to speak with all of you. (**If there is anyone in particular you want to acknowledge and thank, Do that here**). I would like to extend a special acknowledgement of thanks to \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_, who graciously invited me here today, to speak with all of you.

A wise man once said, “The person who graduates today and stops learning tomorrow is uneducated the day after.” it’s been thirty years since I sat where you are sitting today... **THIRTY** years since I attended my own commencement ceremony from this school, \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_. A lot has happened since then. Graduates, you weren’t even born yet and wouldn’t be for at least another decade or more. Your parents might not have even known each other way back then.... but one thing I know and have learned is the wisdom and the truth of that expression. The other thing I know for sure is that the theme of today’s commencement exercises, “Education: Changing Lives” is also crucial to keep in mind in these times of global competition and technological advancement. Simply put, education is our **FOUNDATION**. Awareness is our **FUEL** that propels us to live fuller, wiser, more enriched lives.

I’ve heard this expression, “I don’t know what I don’t know.” You know what? It’s true!!! No one has any idea of what they **DON’T** know. It is through interest, healthy curiosity, and a desire to have a well equipped “tool box” that drives us to live and learn. In this room today, so many diverse, unique people have gathered.... educators and grandparents... civic leaders and siblings, mothers, fathers, young children, and teens, and the **ONE THING** that forms the common bond throughout is this: there is **ALWAYS** something new to learn. Education does more than inform.... it **inspires**... it frees us to make informed choices... it gives us the power to make proper decisions. Knowledge encourages us to go beyond our boundaries.... **NO MATTER WHAT**.

As you graduate from middle school and high school, you may think this graduation ceremony marks the **COMPLETION** of your education... **WRONG**!!! This is just the **BEGINNING**!! You’ve learned how to **learn**... It’s not called a **COMMENCEMENT**” for **NOTHING**!!! The education you’ve received so far is a **foundation**.... you’ve learned about history and math, literature and science.... you’ve learned what it’s like to work within a group, how to deal with success and failure, and **ALL** of it... every single lesson, has **value**. Everything you’ve done and tried won and lost, given to your fellow students and taken from your teachers... **advice**, that is ... (**Wait for the laugh**) ... it all serves the purpose of making you stronger, more interested, and **INTERESTING** adults. In a world in which we see information traveling faster, competition increasing in every sector and in every community, it is **NOT POSSIBLE** to be “over-educated.” It’s also not possible for any one of you to question your importance in this world. Each one of you is unique. You have talents and skills unlike any other person in this room. Your interests are special and someday, if you **REALLY** concentrate on how you will use your uniqueness and all that you’ve learned to make your mark in this world, you **WILL**.. Don’t let anyone tell you otherwise. I once heard of a proverb that says, “If you think you are too small to make a difference, you have **NEVER** been in bed with a **MOSQUITO**...” (**Wait for the laugh**).

It’s far better to really indulge your **ITCH** to learn and know things. (**Wait for the laugh**). Our lives change every day. Nothing stands still. With an education to guide your way, **ANYTHING** is possible. As I said, thirty years ago, I was sitting in **YOUR SEAT**... I had no idea what life would look like in 2019, but I knew, thanks to what I **LEARNED** here, that I wanted to explore.... I wanted to know **MORE**... and I searched for my path in life. Thanks to the lessons I learned here, I discovered my interest in (**Name 2 or 3 hobbies or interests**) \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_, and \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_. I found my curiosity and calling in (**Name your profession**) \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_, and I learned about the world and how to find and live a fulfilled life. (**Talk about your family**). Now I have \_\_\_\_\_\_\_ children, \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_, and I encourage them to learn... to **KEEP** learning... as I am now encouraging you and as I have done for myself.

Education gives us **HOPE**. It allows us the opportunity to be aware and to change our lives and live the best life possible. Having a foundation and encouraging the desire to learn is critically needed in achieving goals. Education breeds understanding... it encourages success. Through education we discover and strengthen our skills, we nurture our talents, we acknowledge and grow our values, our positive attitude, and we boost our self confidence.

I’m old enough to be able to look back, see from where I have come.... think about the road I’ve traveled throughout life, and acknowledge the opportunities I have discovered and taken, the mistakes I made, the missed chances I’ve left behind, and it all adds up to the blessings we find in our lives. Those blessings... those gifts we discover within us, are so much sweeter and so much more valuable when we have the knowledge and understanding to really respect and appreciate them.

Graduates, I know some of this might not sink in for a while, but let’s think together for a minute. Think about what life was like when you were younger... say five years ago. Think about what interested you and what you thought you “couldn’t live without.” Now think about your lives today. Think about how much more you know and what life means to you.... think about how much more you are capable of understanding... even from these past five years... Now imagine multiplying that knowledge ten or twenty or more times...

...Because knowledge builds on itself...If you’re open to it...and imagine how interesting your lives **CAN** be thanks to determination, patience, and the willingness to learn. I promise you, your lives will be changed for the better through your interests and passion to learn, grow, and share with others. For those of you not able to continue your education, that’s okay too.... you’ve been given the gift of curiosity and appreciation through the education you’ve received. Everyone needs to be true to their own unique pace in life. Having a fulfilled, productive life... on your **OWN** terms, is the greatest success.

I want you to know that I am very proud to be a native son of this town, \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ and I am even **MORE PROUD** of all of you. Keep up the good work... make your positive mark in this world.... and I look forward to learning about all of your accomplishments in the future. Congratulations!!! Thank you all!!