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88th Commencement Class President's Address

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Bobby Brooks '06, Senior Class President
88th Commencement
May 21, 2006

Well, while I was thinking about this speech last night my mother told me, "Just don't mess up the gown or trip off the stage!" So, I suppose by that criteria I'm doing alright so far.

In preparing for this day, I went around to many of you and asked about your future plans, and where you are going from here. I was struck by how many of you have a clear idea and specific plans all laid out for yourselves. My immediate thought was, "I wish you guys wouldn't do that, you're making the rest of us look bad."

But then there were a great many of you who said that your futures are uncertain, that you have no idea what is about to happen. Now, I know there are a lot of parents out there saying, "We know what's going to happen! They're going to move back home and start mooching off of us again, that's what's going to happen!"

Then I realized the obvious: whether we have our lives scheduled down to the minute, or no plans at all, none of can be sure what is going to happen next, and that is OK. I can be sure that that is OK because those who have come before us faced a much steeper uphill battle than we face today. An example:

In 1941, a young woman named Mary was living with her husband Bobby in suburban New York. While by no means wealthy, the two lived comfortably on Bobby's salary as an attorney with the New York Central Railroad. By all standards they led a good life.

Shortly, Bobby began to notice the steadily increasing amount of war material being moved by rail all across the country, and figured it was only a matter of time before America became involved in the war already raging in Europe. So, being a man of tremendous foresight, Bobby told his wife to go into New York City and buy everything they would need to live for two years, in case the war reached U.S. shores and they were forced to live in underground bunkers.

This may sound like science fiction today, but for Americans of the 1940s, it was very real. Needless to say this was not the life Mary had counted on when she graduated from Wellesley College and married a successful attorney. But, like so many of those days, she accepted Plan B, and carried on through the long days of World War II and all the hardships that went along with it. She even went on to have three successful children and seven grandchildren, of which I am one. And if it sounds like I'm bragging about how great my grandmother is right now, I am.

The point is that if Plan B was no big deal for our grandparents on the eve of one of the scariest, most uncertain times in our history, it is certainly not a problem for all of us in the freest, most powerful country on earth. So, there is certainly no need to panic over a graduate school rejection, a poor job interview, or an unexpected turn of fortunes.

All these things will happen to us at one time or another. But Plan B is always out there, and there's no shame in taking it. My grandmother couldn't be here today, but I know she would be

very proud of this scene — a group of bright, ambitious people ready to take on their new responsibilities in the world her generation gave us.

It has been a pleasure spending these four years with you. I do think that oftentimes, it's not where you are that matters, but who you are there with, and I'm very happy to have been here with all of you. Congratulations and I wish you all the best. Thank you.