

Dedication

(Slightly rewritten from the original of 2016)

The idea to gather all of my commencement addresses together into a booklet and to make that booklet available to whomever may wish to own a copy was born because of a Facebook post by Lori Murray, a member of the La Center High School Class of 1980 and one of my first seniors. She simply asked me if I had saved all of my speeches. Yep. Of course, I had no idea in 1983 that I would still be speaking at graduation 36 years later, in 2019, the year of my retirement. Nevertheless, I hung on to the hard copies of my speeches. I simply put them in plastic sheets in a notebook. For those first years, all I had was the typed copies of the speeches as we did not have any computers in the district. Once computers came along, saving speeches became less dicey. And then several years ago, I typed up those early speeches so I would have an electronic copy of them, too.

Obviously, then, I have Lori to thank for the idea of bringing these 36 speeches together. But it was two members of the Class of 1983 that actually started this whole tradition when they decided to lead their class in choosing me to be the graduation speaker that year, Baine Wilson and Will (formerly Bill) Carter, who have been my good friends since long before they graduated. I clearly remember agonizing over that first speech. I wanted it to be original and devoid of advice for the graduate. That had been done. And then one evening as I was driving home after chaperoning a dance, I came up with the idea of telling a story about each graduate. Trust me when I tell you that is not an easy thing to do. For the first 10 years or so, I was able to share an anecdote about each student, but as the classes grew larger, that became more difficult, so I finally gave in to the inevitable and shared stories about some of the graduates. I guess that was okay with the senior classes because I continued to deliver the speech until I retired.

Back to Lori. She suggested that I dedicate this booklet to the Class of 1980 and write about her class in the prologue. Instead, I have written a brief memoir about the classes at whose graduation I did not speak: 1980, 1981, 1982, and 1988. In addition, I have added a few memories to my speech for the Class of 1992, as I went in a more serious direction that year. I know it's not the same as having an actual speech transcript, but it's the best I can do (and if you think recalling specific memories 30 or more years later is easy, give it a try).

After I resigned as the Senior Class Advisor, a position I held from 1983 through 2014, speaking at graduation became even more fun as it was my sole responsibility at graduation. From 1983-2019, I told stories and shared memories of 1161 La Center High School graduates. It makes me weary just to think of writing and speaking about so many students; however, I also feel exceptionally honored to have been asked year after year to deliver "the speech". Now I am happy to make these speeches available for downloading on my website, along with my history book, *La Center High School: Its History and Its Graduates*.

Sharon Bryan (aka Ms. Bryan)

Printing

I had Visions in Print in Vancouver, WA do the initial printing of 50 books in August of 2016. After expenses (printing, cover stock, binding combs), I will put all of the profits into printing more books as needed and into my classroom. Now what could I purchase for Room 118 that would make these last few years of my teaching career enriching, rewarding, and fun for both me and my students?

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The Class of 1980

Graduation: June 6, 1980

This is something of a daunting task, trying to write up some sort of memoir about a group of students that graduated from high school nearly 37 years ago. But as you guys like to remind me whenever I see you, you were my first group of seniors and should certainly be the most memorable. True enough. I have said this numerous times over the years, but with the exception of the first year of my life, I believe I learned more from September of 1979 through June of 1980 than any other time in my life, and you were my teachers.

When I stood before you in Room 9, the smallest classroom in the world, on that day in early September of 1979, I was terrified. Had I been wearing boots, I would have been shaking in them. And I have no doubts that **Mark Burk, Dave Pettit, Marty Morris**, and a good many others could smell my fear. Frankly, I had very little idea what I was doing. (Based on the lesson plans--or should I say lack of lesson plans--and various files in the classroom, the guy before was not in much better shape.) Still, I forged ahead, worked my ass off, and tried to teach you something about reading and writing. I don't know that I succeeded but I tried darned hard.

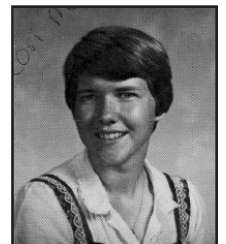
And just so we are clear, the ONLY books I had available to use in Senior English were an anthology of English literature and *The Lord of the Flies*, so it's high time you stopped blaming me for making you read *The Lord of the Flies*, which, by the way, is actually a darned good book. You know, I have attended your 10, 20, and 30-year reunions, and at least one of you has given me grief for that book each time. If you want me to attend the 40-year, you must all agree to back off. Okay?

Anyhow, let me list a few of the memories of you that I have been able to dredge up from the depths of

my memory.

Mark Burk immediately comes to mind. After one particularly unproductive, uninspired, and all-around crappy day, I was sitting at my desk (the very desk, by the way, at which I am now sitting and typing this memoir) looking thoroughly defeated, probably on the verge of tears when Mark came up to me and said something along the lines of, "Ms. Bryan. You just need to learn to relax. They're going to pay you whether or not we learn anything." Ha! I want you to know, Mark, that I took that as a personal challenge from then on out. I'm sure you know this and knew it then, but whether or not you--or the thousands of LCHS students since--learn anything is pretty darned important to me.

Lori Murray and I have been friends ever since I first arrived in La Center. Not only did Lori remind me of my best and oldest friend, but she immediately endeared herself to me with her wealth of knowledge about the La Center School District, which she shared freely with me, and her remarkable ability to get me anything I needed. I still don't know how she managed that. Probably my favorite memories of that year are of the times I would be driving the old highway from Woodland to La Center (remember, I live in Kelso), and I would encounter Lori walking along the road. Of course, I would always stop to pick her up and we would chat on the drive to school. Sometimes, though, Lori would be driving that old green pickup she had, and, I'm amazed to remember, but we would sometimes race along the old highway, me in my 1964 Buick Skylark, trying to pass each other on that one short straight stretch about midway between La Center and Woodland. I cannot believe I actually did that with a student!



Of course, I will always recall **Julia Louise Pettit, Lynn Buckbee, and Kim Reed** as a trio. Don't you all? They may have given me some grief that year, but they were usually kind and funny, too. Didn't Julie

have a big old crush on our exchange student, **Marco DiPietro**? That's how I remember it. And Lynn and Kim were just hell on wheels.

Speaking of wheels, I distinctly recall one afternoon when **Kristie Winchell** asked me if she could go to the library, which was just down the hall from Room 9. I said yes, but moments later I saw her drive by my window out of the parking lot. Hmm... perhaps she meant some other library.

I had no choice but to get to know **Tracy Wiley** well because for half of the year, he was the only student in my sixth period class. A second student joined the class second semester but for the life of me, I cannot recall who that was. If you know, please share.

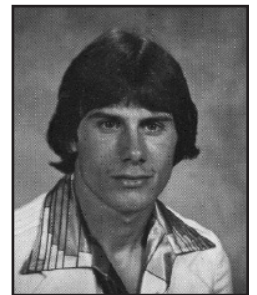
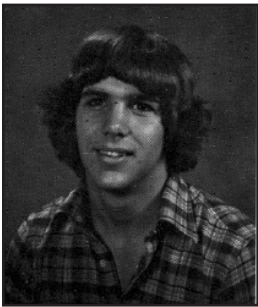
Ah, **Pete Moss**, or should I write "Peat Moss". I still tell the story about that first day of school in 1979 when Pete introduced himself to me. I was certain, absolutely certain, that he was lying to me about his name and just trying to make the young, new teacher appear stupid, so I refused to accept that his name was Pete Moss. Finally, you all convinced me not only that his name was indeed Pete Moss, but that he spelled Pete P-E-A-T. By then I felt so bad that I fell for it. Arghhh. (Since then, I have had students named Misti Winters, Jack Daniels, and Stoney Hodge, but nothing has topped Pete Moss.)

Of course, I still remember the very sad time of the school year when **Brian Huss** and **Todd Murphy** died in a car accident. I remember on the day of one of their funerals, all of the students that were not attending were herded into the gym, where they played basketball or volleyball or something while most of the rest of the school attended the funeral. We were definitely a smaller, more tightly-knit school then.

And I will never forget **Marty Morris**. How can you forget a fella that not only assigns you the nickname of "Bulldog" but then does his impression of a bulldog in class, when he thinks you're not looking. (Just as an aside, the nickname did not last many years. I'm back to just plain old Ms. Bryan. Perhaps the kids have a nickname for me, but I am unaware of it.)

Let me tell you what I remember about **Dave Pettit**. The truth is, during that 1979-80 school year, Dave and I did not like each other. For whatever reason, we did not hit it off. I distinctly recall one spring afternoon when Dave, Sherry Schutt, and I had a meeting with Mr. Morris because Dave and Sherry were failing Senior English. As a brand new teacher, I did not yet know just how things work or what the protocol was if you had a couple of seniors that were failing a required class, so I had made no effort to contact parents or administration. The point of the meeting, of course, was for Mr. Morris to let me know that failing these students this late in the year was not a good idea, and I might want to rethink that decision. I remember that Dave was particularly angry and he yelled at me, "You can't give me an F just because you don't like me." In the least professional moment of my career, I responded, "The fact that I don't like you has nothing to do with your F!" Ouch.

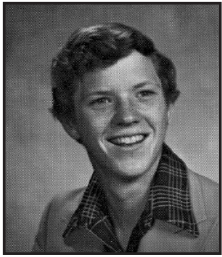
But here's the rest of the story. Some years after you all graduated, Dave became an employee of the school district, though I can't recall just how much later. At any rate, I was a little shocked when I passed him in the hall one day. In fact, I wasn't sure if it was Dave or his older brother. Throughout that year, we would see each other now and then and sort of smile and nod, but we never spoke. One day, though, we finally stopped to talk to each other, and we continued to do so now and then. We finally talked about that year we spent together and buried the



hatchet. Now I consider Dave one of the nicest, most pleasant, most humble people that I know.

Besides Julie, I have remained friends with **Sherry Schutt, Theresa Haasl, and Kristin Norden**, largely via Facebook, but that's the real joy of Facebook, huh?

Bill Cole. A man that died way, way, way too young. I did not see Bill for a number of years after you all graduated, but I'll never forget one Friday evening when he walked up to the concession stand at the football game, where I was working with my seniors, and said, "Hi, Ms. Bryan."



I immediately responded, "Hi, Dennis." because I thought he was Dennis Weaver, Class of '81. Bill just laughed, told me who he was, and then said something like, "It's okay, Ms. Bryan. Denny is my cousin." I had no idea. I saw a lot of Bill over the years, especially when his and Sandy's kids reached the high school. He was a constant and very supportive presence during those years and after. When you were all in school, he was so very kind to me. I know it was pretty obvious that I was having a rough year, but he was always so darned cheerful and kind to me, which I will never forget. Even after he became ill not so many years ago, his eternal optimism shone through. I really loved that guy.

One of the great joys of teaching for many years at a small school is that I have been able to teach the children of former students. In the Class of 1980, I have enjoyed teaching the kids of **Julie Pettit, Dave Pettit, Tim Winn** (his daughter Jenny was my first second generation student, Class of 1997), **Kristin Norden, Bobbie Anderson, Lynn Buckbee, Bill Cole**, and **Kristie Winchell**. If I missed someone, I apologize. I'm not getting any younger, you know.

Yep, the Class of 1980 was my first and best teacher when it comes to the art of teaching. I look forward to that 40-year reunion, but remember. I

don't want to hear one damn word about *The Lord of the Flies*.

The Class of 1981

Graduation: June 5, 1981

Writing about the Class of 1981 is a bit more of a challenge. You, as a class, represent the paradox of my teacher memories. By that, I mean that I can remember each of you so very clearly and place you in the correct year of graduation, though I do not necessarily have a specific story; however, if I think, say, of the Class of 2008, I cannot recall just who graduated that year. I have to visit the class photos, and then my memory comes alive. I'm sure my ability to easily remember a class from 35 years ago as opposed to one from just a few years ago has a lot to do with the smaller classes (just 34 grads in 1981 versus 87 in 2008).

But it's more than that. I think it's so much easier for me to remember you because you had such a powerful impact on the teacher that I have become. Like the Class of 1980, you taught me a great deal. Like you, I was young and impressionable. Unlike you, I was trying to figure out this whole thing called teaching. By the time the Class of 2008 rolled around, I was fairly fully formed as a teacher.

But enough of that. Let's see what I can recall about the Class of 1981. Certainly Deena and Deana come to mind, **Deena Burk** and **Deana Cone** (who later became Deana Kahn, or as I like to refer to her, Deana Cone Kahn). I remember the two of you always together and just getting a kick out of high school. I also think of **Gene Cathey** and **Sean Emerson** as sort of a tag team, a tag team of brains. You two definitely kept me on my academic toes as a very young teacher.



Debbie Haas comes to mind because she bought my first ever button to sport at school. In fact, I still have it, though it's a bit battered now. Nevertheless, this started my tradition of collecting buttons and wearing one to school nearly every

day for the past 36 years. Needless to say, I have a good many buttons given to me by students, some so inappropriate I cannot wear them at school!

Wayne McPherson was my yearbook photographer, and he always took photos from the level of his hip. I don't know why. Who could forget **Mark Winn's** hair? I would have killed for such thick, wavy hair; it was just so 80s!

I think of **Tim Pettit** with fondness. Here is another young man that died too young. During my second year at LCHS, when I was still stationed in Room 9, I was terribly in need of a bookcase and who do you suppose built one for me in Mr. Barton's Woodshop class...Tim Pettit. And this was a great bookcase. When we moved up to the new high school in the spring of 1993, I had nowhere to put Tim's bookcase in my new classroom, so I handed it off to my pal Maggie Romine, the librarian. And when the new high school was remodeled and the librarian no longer needed the bookcase, I handed it off to Dave Pettit. It seemed appropriate to keep it in the family. And it was so well built, let me tell you.



Mark Phillips and **Carl Ledbetter** are two more students that I remember as a team, good natured, upbeat, always getting a kick out of life. Oh, and they were just as cute as could be. I also have fond memories of **Lynne Liston** on my yearbook staff, and I was so sorry that she, too, died so young this past spring.

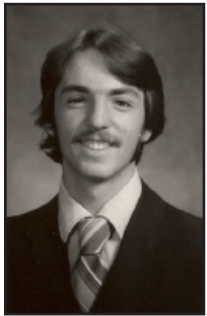
I may not have a specific memory or story about all 34 of you, but I do remember you all so clearly, and I so enjoy keeping up with some of your lives via Facebook. **Maria Lofgren**, for example, is a Facebook pal, and although I cannot read a word of her posts because she, of course, writes them in Swedish, the pictures tell me most of what I need to know.



The Class of 1982

Graduation: June 11, 1982

Writing about the Class of 1982 is a bit easier than writing about the Class of 1981 because I had these students in class when they were sophomores. Still, 34 years have passed since I have seen most of them. I'll do my best.



When he was a senior, **Dan Harkness** was my yearbook editor. During the summer of 1981, Dan was part of a group that I accompanied to a yearbook conference in Logan, Utah. If I recall correctly, Dan's folks drove him to Utah while the other participants and I trusted our travel plans and lives to Greyhound (I did not trust my Datsun 210 to make such a long trip, and I was terrified to drive students). Dan became so engrossed in the training and in his role as future yearbook editor that he began to call me not Ms. Bryan, but Sharon. Ha! Fortunately, once his senior year began, he reverted to addressing me as Ms. Bryan without my having to say anything.

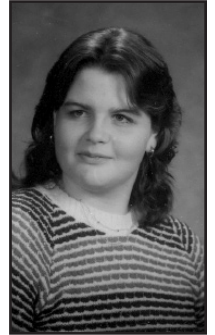
Sandy Perry and **Rhonda Morris**, of course, I remember as a team of good pals, and I have run into them a few times in the past 34 years together. The boys in the class that gave me a run for my money included **Joe Chambers**, **Ray Morris**, and **Jon Murphy**. I can't remember anything specific that you did, but I remember clearly that you definitely gave me grief. That's okay. That's how teachers learn.



When it comes to the brains of the Class of 1982, I certainly recall that **Anita Groves** was one sharp cookie. Ironically, when one of my recent LCHS grads headed off to WSU, he ended up in an academic group led by Anita's daughter. It would seem that intelligence runs in the family. **Mike Baker**,

of course, was my yearbook photographer, and we yearbook advisors never forget our photographers.

Bart Buckbee I remember at least partly because of his massive amount of red hair. Plus he was just a really nice guy. Probably my clearest memory of a 1982 graduate concerns **Becky Rhoten**. During your senior year, the yearbook decided to raise money by renting a movie, showing it down in the cafeteria, and charging admission. As I recall, we made a healthy chunk of change showing *Wait Until Dark*, starring Audrey Hepburn. At one point in the movie, Alan Arkin unexpectedly jumps out to try to stab Audrey Hepburn's character. It's a great moment in the film and always makes the crowd scream and jump. But the best reaction came from Becky, who not only jumped high but also shrieked loudly. Afterwards, Becky came up to me and said something like, "Way to go, Ms. Bryan. You actually made a tough girl like me, Becky Rhoten, scream."



The Class of 1983

Graduation: June 3, 1983

Parents, friends, distinguished guests, and graduates,

I agree wholeheartedly with the theme of the Class of 1983, "The Future Lies Within Ourselves," and I believe that the future of these students will be built in great part on the experiences of the past four years here at La Center High School. For that reason and one other, I have chosen to concentrate on the past rather than the future of these 44 students.

I feel a special bond with these kids because a little less than four years ago, we all arrived at La Center High School. Most of them were short, immature freshmen who were not particularly interested in English. Except for **John Bettesworth**, who I am convinced was never short.

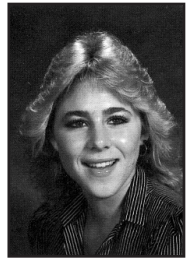
During our four years together, I have collected a great many memories of these students, memories that now bring a smile to my face, though at the time, I may not have smiled.



My first meeting with **Carrie Washburn** was anything but congenial. Her boyfriend had just punched a hole in the cafeteria wall and she was rather upset that I wouldn't let her go after him. Somewhere out there, a substitute teacher will never be the same again after the day that she had to deal with not one, but three **Randy McCanns**, thanks to the combined efforts of Randy, **Gary Snyder**, and one other student.

I shall always remember **Brian Harkness** as the boy who could listen to rock and roll the loudest of anyone at 8:00 in the morning. As a sophomore, **Steve Hart** aced the science fiction trivia contest when he named all the star ships in the fleet and their call numbers. And as a senior, he bored me to tears with an endless string of railroad compositions.

Jina Wattenbarger amazed me with how often she could be tardy to first period. And my fondest memory of **Misty Jernagan** is of the day that Randy McCann tricked her into discussing her CWP cheat notes over the intercom. Of course, Misty didn't know that the intercom was on and the entire school was listening.



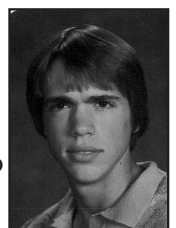
After a week-long trip to Utah two years ago, the image of **Shelley Scott's** suitcase is permanently etched in my memory because no larger suitcase exists in the entire world. **Julie Housholder** was also on that trip to Utah and somehow she survived five days on only french fries and Coke.

Most students possess some degree of talent in forging signatures for absences and tardies. Not **Dean Stanley**, though. I lost count of how many times he came late to Reading Appreciation and handed me a tardy slip that read, "Please excuse Dean Stanley for being tardy" and was signed, Dean Stanley.

The names **Teena VanDinter** and **Vicky Shattuck** just naturally seem to go together, and that is how I will remember these two girls and how they drove poor **Ben Heidegger** crazy in Foxfire. I suppose that is why Ben would sometimes excuse himself to the bathroom and never quite return to class.

Like Vicky and Teena, **Kelly Ayers** and **Laurie Collins** will be remembered as a team, a team that livened up Reading Appreciation with their spirited discussions and their ganging up on **Mike Jacobson**. Besides his constant good humor, what I will remember most about Mike is how much time he spent in the hall interviewing anyone who would talk to him.

I still am, and probably always will be, suspicious of how **Glenn Voshell**, the first student to submit his guess as to how many shoes were in the showcase,



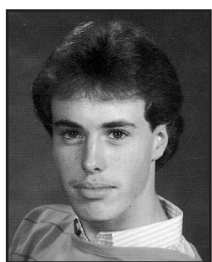
guessed the exact number of shoes.

As a freshman, **Stacey Black**'s hair style reflected her personality, just plain wild. Four years later, though, she is one of the classiest, most pleasant ladies in the senior class. And on top of it all, she has muscles that she would be glad to show you. No one thought it humanly possible to earn as many art credits as **Kevin Soma** and **Ken Bruley** did. Still, they managed to sandwich all those required classes somewhere in between all that art.

Audry Fontana's class standing as valedictorian was not easily achieved. I never knew anyone who could become so depressed about a math class, but she is without a doubt the most talented English student I have ever worked with.

I am convinced that VICA is financially sound only because of the efforts of **Susan Fawcett**, who was always begging me to buy cups, a raffle ticket, or something to help support her club. **Jeff Aske**, on the other hand, I shall remember as the most quiet member of the Class of '83, at least in my classes.

Lisa Prince's pink shoes, which have been captured on film for you tonight, are indelibly embedded in my memory as are the truly horrendous candids of **Kelly Kruse** that my photographer always managed to take.



I have so many memories of **Baine Wilson** and **Bill Carter** that it is difficult to choose the most memorable ones. For Baine, I think I will never forget, no matter how hard I try, her hair on the mornings that she got up late, or her inability, despite two years as the Sports Editor of the *Procedo*, to draw a layout correctly and with a ruler. If the truth be known, it was actually Bill Carter, not I, who flooded the darkroom.

Not only did **John Bigelow** subject me to an endless supply of tasteless jokes, but he also covered my desk with footprints, tried my patience to the limit in College Writing, and enlightened me as to the deeper meaning of "Bat me a fungo minkie".

As a teacher, I always assure my students that there is no such thing as a dumb question, but **Penny Eagle** destroyed that theory when on St. Patrick's Day of this year she asked **Mark Morales** if he was Irish. No one enjoyed or encouraged me to plan yearbook parties more than **Donna Ward** did. And I just want to let both Donna and John know again how impressed I was with the quality of their research papers.

My most vivid memory of **Dan Hidalgo** just happened a couple of weeks ago. Dan was doing a little extracurricular reading during lunch when I happened through the lounge. But don't worry, Dan, your secret is safe with me, for now. Our other exchange student this year, **Sigrid Matre**, amazed everyone with how much she could eat despite being so small and how fast she could run.

Tenth Grade Composition conjures up images of **Jerilyn Klingbeil** losing more comp. books than anyone in the history of the class and of **Lyle Brown**'s inability to avoid talking to **Bobbi Skillings**.

Having the student lounge located right outside your classroom door can be a bit of a problem since those couches seem to attract students to them. Though I never kept track of who I chased out of the lounge the most over the past four years, **John Bettsworth** has to be high on the list. The Bettsworth family, by the way, cleaned up on the Student of the Month awards this year when both John and **Sandy** received the award.

Though I am well acquainted with most of the members of the senior class, some students I only had once or twice in class: **Mike McRobert**, **Bill Soehl**, **Sue Wozny**, **Paula Harris**, **Pam Peterson**. Still others I never had in class: **Debbie Sprenger**

and **Troleta Baird**. Nevertheless, I came to know these students a bit through our coverage of them in the yearbook.

These graduating seniors have survived a great many experiences at La Center High School and they too have collected memories. I trust that they will rely on these experiences and memories to help guide them as they make the transition from high school to college, the working world, or whatever direction they move in.

Of the four graduating classes that have passed through the doors of La Center High School since I arrived, the Class of 1983 is the most intelligent, talented, and ambitious group of kids I have had the opportunity to teach. If the future truly does lie within them, I am sure it is in excellent hands. It has been an honor to speak on behalf of these students and it has been a joy just to know them.

Thank you.

The Class of 1984

Graduation: June 3, 1984

Nearly four years ago, we started an advisory program here at La Center. What this meant to me was that I would have a group of approximately 25 freshmen under my direction. I would try to keep them on track for graduation and more or less be a counselor to them. Needless to say, I was thrilled when 25 freshmen literally stormed into my room on that first day of school in 1980. Most of those students sit before you now, on the verge of graduating.

When the kids first asked me to speak at their graduation, they requested that I model my speech after the one that I gave last year. However, when I started to share bits and pieces of my speech with them, some kids began to regret that request. Apparently, they were unsure as to what I might reveal about them. At this point, though, they have no choice but to sit back and wait their turns.

When the 3:00 bell rang on the last day of school for seniors last year, **Tim Taggart** was overwhelmed with excitement and ran down the hall screaming that he was now a senior. Unfortunately for Tim, Mike Jacobson overheard his outburst and convinced Tim that it would be in his best interests to wait until the following September to publicly proclaim his senior status.

I was calmly enjoying the peace of my prep period one day four years ago when Ms. Martin's class next door erupted into uproarious laughter. When I ventured over to find out what was happening, **Angie Straughan** was in the midst of presenting her pet peeve speech, the topic of which was her little brother. I'll never forget how hard we all laughed when she described the time he attacked her using a live chicken as his weapon.

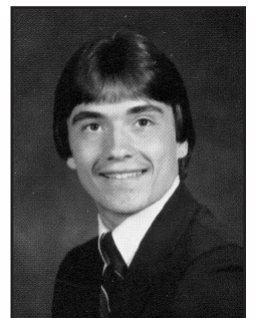
When he was a freshman, **Chris Peasley** went out for football. At the time, Chris could not have

weighed more than 90 pounds and when I saw him in full uniform. I was torn between laughing hysterically and fearing for his life. Fortunately, though, Chris grew up and when he donned a football uniform as a senior, he was considerably more formidable, at least to me.

Last year, I advised the production of a Foxfire-type magazine about the people of La Center. **Trisha Loewen** was a member of the *Brigadoon* staff and she and her group decided to do a story about Joe Johnson, a man who lives in La Center and has an old home packed with antiques. As Joe led them through his home, Trisha and her group asked him questions and took pictures of the various antiques. When Trisha and her fellow staffers came out of the darkroom with that roll of film, I knew we had a problem. So, they had to return to Joe's to try again. . .three more times! Fortunately, after the fourth roll of film, we were able to scrape together enough photos to do the story.

Jay Davis somehow managed to get through high school without ever completing a class with me. It's not that he never started any classes with me; it's just that he never finished, for one reason or another. I've come to know him a bit, though, through our coverage of him in the yearbook.

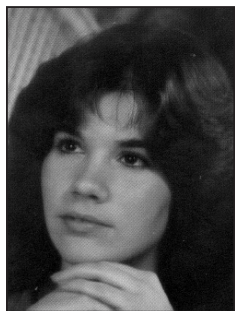
One day when these kids were freshmen, Ms. Martin and I were sitting around talking about them. She asked me which boy I thought would change the most by the time they were seniors. She had a better imagination than I do. It's difficult for me to picture freshman boys as anything but freshman boys, so I said that I had no idea. She told me that when **John Maxwell** came out from behind those Clark Kent glasses, he'd be a new man. And sure enough, when John walked into school last August, I barely recognized him.



When he arrived at La Center last fall, our

exchange student **Eduardo Borrero** didn't know a great deal of English. A student brought Eduardo to me that first morning of school so that I could give him directions to the shop. In my five years at La Center, I have never ventured out to the shop, so between my directions and Eduardo's English, I'm not sure that he ever arrived.

When he was but a freshman, **Theo Howe** was not a model student. But Theo has come a long way. As a senior, Theo was an excellent student in College Writing. I only wish he'd been more successful at conquering that tardiness problem.



As a freshman, **Angie Page** had the same kinds of problems that Theo did. In fact, I used to worry about her a bit. But she too turned herself around and took advantage of what La Center had to offer her. This past year, Angie was a devoted member of my yearbook staff and she excelled in all three of my college prep English courses. During spring trimester, she was also my aide. She graded papers, typed, ran errands, and I could always depend on her to be where she said she would be. Well. . .except for that day I told her she could go to the library. Five minutes later, she drove by my window on her way out of the parking lot. Maybe she thought I meant the Vancouver Library.

Every now and then, I'll get someone on the yearbook staff who simply cannot grasp the significance of the word deadline. No amount of ranting, raving, nagging, or threats helps. So this year, I tried something new. **Wayne McLean** hates to lose a bet, so I bet him \$10.00 that he would not make his first group deadline. We made that bet in early-November and his first deadline was March 25. Wayne still hasn't paid me that \$10.00, but if I can beat him down to the office tonight and nab his diploma, I may just collect.

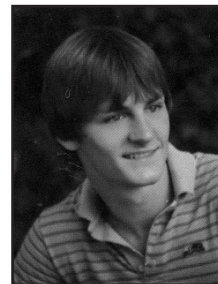
Gerald Skillings was another dedicated, hard-

working member of the yearbook staff this year. He wasn't much interested in copywriting, drawing layouts, or photography, though. Gerald's favorite activity was leaving the room. Everyday after he had thrown an eraser at Sue Schrader, Gerald would beg me to let him run an errand. I figured he could do the yearbook more good if he was out of the room, so I dreamed up lots of errands.

Ray Weaver understandably was voted the most athletic member of the Class of 1984. Whether he was playing football, basketball, or baseball, Ray was always hustling to help the team. I only wish Ray would have been so energetic in yearbook. Fortunately, though, he could come through in a crisis, a much needed skill since production of the 1984 *Procedo* was basically a nine-month long crisis. Any time I needed a layout drawn in a hurry, I knew I could count on Ray, that is until the baseball team took a few weeks off to make up their missed games.

Priscilla Hall was yet another senior on the staff of the 1984 *Procedo*. Priscilla was always in class, she drew attractive layouts, she conducted her interviews professionally, she wrote interesting copy, and she made her deadlines. Priscilla's only problem was that she wrote the absolute worst headlines in the history of yearbooking. In only five minutes, she could come up with a dozen or so truly atrocious headlines. All I could do was delegate headline writing to another member of her group and award Priscilla the prestigious Awesome Irwin Award for Excellence in Headline Writing.

Two weeks ago, **Mike Dockter** and a classmate were involved in a heated discussion about sports. Mike contended that playing football resulted in fewer injuries than playing volleyball. His classmate argued just the opposite. To strengthen his case for the safety of playing football, Mike cited some statistics that he had come by. Where was Mike when he collected this proof? In the emergency room begin treated for a football injury.



When **Colleen Koitzsch** and **Joleen Portukalian** were freshmen, they shared a common characteristic. No one could whine better than they could. Woe to the teacher who had them in class together. But as they grew older, both girls overcame this malady. Colleen is now able to maturely explain to me why she missed her deadline in Yearbook, and Joleen never whines when she tells me, on a daily basis, that she wishes she'd never taken American Lit., English Lit., or College Writing.

It's always a difficult situation when a student can't graduate with his own class, and it's even more difficult to return to school the following year to complete your education. But both **Rob Lester** and **Louis DeGrande** did just that, and I think they deserve special recognition for their perseverance. They wanted those diplomas and they earned them.

I haven't had **Jennifer Jordan** or **Diane Lynch** in class since they were sophomores, but I haven't lost touch with them completely. This past year especially, I have often had the chance to discuss their extracurricular hallway activities with them.

Matt Groves is one of those quiet students who rarely spoke up in class or anywhere else. . .until he became a senior. He was tolerable in American Lit. and English Lit., but when springtime and College Writing arrived, I knew I was in trouble. Despite his terminal senioritis, though, Matt continued to display his economy with words in his writing. The topic of one of Matt's papers was "how to remove and replace a car engine". After a thorough and eloquent explanation of how to remove the engine, Matt ended the paper by writing, "To install the new engine, simply reverse these steps." Needless to say, Matt rewrote the end of that paper.

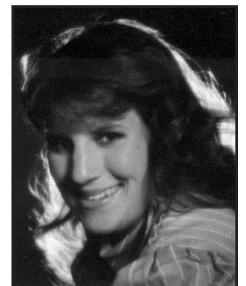
Wendell Koprek was another member of my College Writing class this spring. His senioritis, though, was considerably more advanced than Matt's. Wendell would come to class about every other day, and when I would ask him for an admit, he would smile and very pleasantly say, "What do I

need an admit for? I don't need this credit anyway?" Fortunately for Wendell, he really didn't need that credit.

Where silence is concerned, **Joann Blatter** is the female version of Matt Groves. Up until a month ago, I don't think I had heard Joann utter more than 25 words, and that includes the time she took Speech in the ninth grade. When we were both working at registration in May, though, Joann had no trouble explaining to the rowdy freshmen the dangers of aggravating a senior, especially one who was scheduling them for the following year.

Sue Schrader is not nearly as inconspicuous as Joann, no matter how hard she tries. For instance, one day this year she tried to sneak a TV into Yearbook so that she could catch the reunion of Luke and Laura on "General Hospital". If it wasn't for the antenna, she might have succeeded.

Lisa Fillman has been the most vital member of my yearbook staff for the past three years. Her photographic skills are certainly evident in our award-winning yearbooks. However, Lisa's rise to fame was not without its problems. It took me two years to train her not to lock my keys in the darkroom everyday. And she's much better at remembering where she left the lens cap and the camera. I had to give up, though, on teaching her the importance of darkroom cleanliness. After three years, I've become quite used to having Lisa around, so when I realized a few months ago that she was going to graduate, I began to panic. I stopped worrying, though, when I found a rather suitable replacement for Lisa, Eric Fillman.



As you can see, knowing and working with a group of teenagers for four years is rarely boring. I'd like to thank these kids for all of our fun times, and I'd like to congratulate them on their accomplishments. I'm going to miss them all.

The Class of 1985

Graduation: June 14, 1985

According to Miss Manners, “Graduations are held to mark the end of the sufferings of people who have been paying staggering tuition bills, nagging about homework until their own lives have no longer been worth living, or despairing that the efforts of their ancestors to achieve a modicum of civilization have been lost under their supervision.”

Miss Manners goes on to say that “the relief of these people on finding that one of society’s most obvious goals has been achieved often borders on the hysterical. Otherwise sensible and reserved parents will attempt to involve their graduating children in odd forms of exhibitionist behavior, and encourage younger siblings to do the same. They will create havoc by taking pictures at every possible moment, and when they are unable to accost strangers to find outlets for bragging, they will exchange such remarks with each other in unnaturally loud voices.”

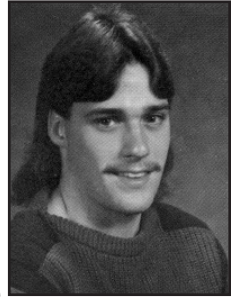
I must agree with Miss Manners that graduations often benefit parents more than they do students. And so with her thoughts in mind, I dedicate my speech tonight to the parents of these 46 students.

Miss Manners concludes her thoughts on graduation by saying that “all this must be endured with grace by indulgent graduates. Not looking ashamed of one’s parents, no matter where they demand to be shown, whom they insist on meeting, and what they cannot be prevented from saying, is a rite of passage certifying the maturity of the graduate.”

The key word here, I believe, is maturity. These 46 students certainly appear to be quite mature, but was it always so? I wonder.

Had you been able to sit in on one of my Ninth Grade Speech classes, you might not only have questioned the maturity of these students, but also

your own sanity. Even the most macho of freshman boys would often be reduced to a quivering mass of Jello when faced with speaking before his peers. **Todd Buckbee**, for example, loved to razz his classmates as they tried to present their speeches. Fortunately for them, Todd had a slight, but consistent verbal tic—he cleared his throat constantly. Poetic justice was eventually achieved one day, but you really had to be there to appreciate the spontaneous group throat clearing effort that finally put Todd in his place.



Pat and Mike Chambers also provided some memorable moments in Ninth Speech. For one assignment, the students had to recite a poem in front of the class. Although Pat and Mike were given perfectly innocent poems to recite, by the time they were done, I’m sure Robert Frost was turning over in his grave.

Some students were more reticent about public speaking than others. **Todd Brothers**, for instance, informed me on the first day of class that he had no intention of presenting any speeches. Since 90% of his grade would be determined by his speeches, Todd’s attitude posed a bit of a problem. Fortunately, Todd overcame this shyness and has not hesitated to open his mouth since.

The fact that **Michelle Ward** and I are alive and on this stage tonight is nothing short of a miracle. Although Michelle would present the most eloquent speeches in ninth grade, she worked herself into such



a frenzy before each speech that we both almost suffered a nervous breakdown, to say nothing of what Michelle’s mom went through. When it became apparent that Michelle would be the valedictorian of her class, I wasn’t sure I would be able to take the pressure of her preparing another speech. Once again, though, we have both survived.

Tenth Grade Composition also inspired a few mature moments for the Class of '85. Deeply etched into my mind is the day that **Theresa Morris**--following in the footsteps of her brothers--attempted to duke it out with one of her female classmates. Fortunately, **Ken Snyder** was there to grab one girl while I grabbed the other.

As far as exceptional writing performances go, **Tony Hansen** has to be the hands down winner with his Pulitzer Prize winning expose on the dangers of artificial Christmas trees. **Steve Burger** is the only student I have had who believed that he was required to bring a basketball to class everyday.

Rick Hart provided what was probably the most unusual Tenth Composition incident. As is always the case in September, the temperature was in the 80s, the air conditioning wasn't working, and the bees were thick. Having put his comp. book to good use in slaughtering yet another bee, Rick then grabbed the book in the wrong spot and was promptly stung by his book.

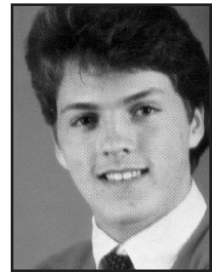
Casey Aske has always been a rather quiet young man, and yet I knew that beneath that apparently calm facade there lurked another Casey. My suspicions were confirmed one day in English Literature. We had been reading *Macbeth* aloud for three or four days, and Casey had declined to participate. On the fifth day, though, I needed someone to play the part of a murderer, and the zest with which Casey volunteered for the part worried me.

If you have ever observed 30 ninth graders together in a room, one thing immediately becomes apparent: the boys and the girls do not act the same. While the boys are usually throwing paper and pencils at each other and inflicting verbal barbs on anyone within earshot, the girls are generally sitting quietly, perhaps talking in a normal tone of voice, maybe



reading, or on occasion looking in a mirror. There are notable exceptions to this rule, and in the Class of '85, **Amy Ward** is that exception. As a freshman, Amy had wild, long red hair, her voice could be heard clear from the middle school, and she was not averse to physically and verbally abusing her classmates, both male and female. As a senior, however, Amy had short, stylish red hair, she never once told me at the top of her voice that the class was stupid, and she only hit her sister. To quote a cliché, "You've come a long way, baby!"

Although my favorite story about **Kirk Mills** did not occur while he was in high school--at least I don't think it did--it bears repeating. Kirk received a chocolate bunny one Easter, and he liked it so much that he took it to bed one night. During the night, unfortunately, Kirk had an accident, one which Kirk lived to tell about, but not the bunny.



The last day of school last year was not a red letter day for **Jimmy Wattenbarger**. Jimmy hasn't spoken to me all year, so I just want to let him know that I don't hold a grudge. You see, the last day of school is traditionally a somewhat crazy time. Among other things, students tend to become rather fond of water balloons on that particular day. Jimmy was one of those students last year, and I had the poor sense to venture into the student parking lot at 3:05. No doubt you can discern what happened. But like I said, Jimmy, I don't hold a grudge. By the way, I hear those graduation gowns are fairly water resistant.

If you had to choose one member of the Class of '85 with whom to play poker, I would advise you not to select **Eric Fillman**. Every time Eric exited the darkroom after a developing session, I would ask how things had gone. Eric's response never wavered. "Fine," he would say with a deadpan expression. When I saw the actual film, though, I discovered that "fine" meant anything from fantastic to trash.

I wish I had an anecdote about each member of the Class of '85, but there are several students whom I haven't had in class since they were sophomores. Though they haven't graced my classroom in some time, I do have memories of these students, too. I will always remember **Darlene Bright** and **Donna Fawcett's** determination and willingness to complete each and every assignment, a rare quality in a student. Poor **Teri Beschorner** had the misfortune to be the office aide fifth period this year. I say unfortunate because Yearbook was fifth period and I am extremely negligent about filling out an attendance form that period, so Teri had to harass me everyday to get the job done.

There is a group of senior boys whom I will remember because they loved my English classes so very much: **Jim Cargill, Herb and Vince Kruse, Tim Petersen, Jeff Warren,** and **David York.** Although I did not have our exchange student **Sigi** in class this year, he and I did become acquainted throughout the year. The incident involving Sigi that I will remember most happened just a couple of months ago. Apparently Sigi had just purchased a new shirt, one that he was quite proud of and wanted to show off. When he wore it to school, though, three other boys had on the exact same shirt.

Some students I will always remember in pairs. **Susan Albrecht** and **Kari Manwiller**, for example. Though they are quite good friends, Sue and Kari at times seem to be complete opposites. Sue, for instance, is not a quiet girl. She never hesitates to let you know her opinion. Kari, on the other hand, is a very quiet girl. One of my favorite stories about Kari occurred last summer when she toured Europe with an honor band. When Kari was staying with a host family in one of the countries they visited, she didn't want to impose on the family at all. In fact, she thought it would be too much of an imposition to ask for a glass of water.

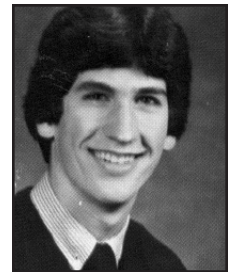
Some students I will remember for the volume of their voices. **Heidi Humphrey, Lynda Forge, Wes Heidegger,** and **Curtis Washburn** were always so

very quiet in my classes. **Katrina Heniken**, on the other hand, was never quiet. In fact, when Katrina was in class next door to my room this year, she could actually be heard over my sixth period freshmen, no small feat.

Other students I will remember for their determination to earn a high school diploma. I congratulate **Aaron Erickson** for all of his hard work but most of all I congratulate him for putting up with his brother.

When he was a sophomore, **Wes Jones** enrolled in my Foxfire class. Wes and his group were working on a story about the Cantagree Farm just up the road, and part of their assignment was to photograph the people involved in the story. The group members not only had to take the pictures, but they also had to process the film, which was, to say the least, a learning experience for most of the kids. Wes and his group were not as fortunate as some of the other groups. They had to return to the Cantagree Farm four times before their film turned out. If they saw Wes headed up the road with his camera even today, I'm sure the Griffith family would run and hide.

If you happened to stop by the school this past Wednesday morning, you would have had an excellent chance to observe what I appreciate most about **Scott Murphy**--his sense of humor. When I pulled up to school that morning, the lawns and athletic fields were covered with for sale signs--120 in all, a classy prank that was four months in the planning. I have no doubt that Scott was the ringleader.



Lorraine Norman is a handy person to have on the yearbook staff. In fact, she and **Theresa Morris** would make quite a tag team should they ever decide to get into professional wrestling. Lorraine was responsible for finagling **Casey Aske** into doing some artwork for the yearbook this year, and when he was a bit slow in producing the artwork, Lorraine put him

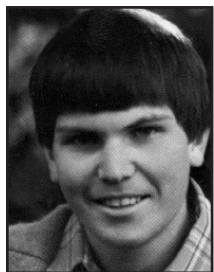
in a half nelson a few times a week just to show him that we were serious.

What I will remember most about **Jeff Scott** is his obsession with bass fishing. I not only had to read about bass fishing in his compositions--one of which was no less than ten pages long--but I also had to listen to bass fishing stories. Since Paul White is not here tonight, I am safe in telling you that I blame him for Jeff's condition.

I guess **Patty Pettit** wanted to take it easy her senior year, as so many students do. The first clue I had that Patty was becoming just a bit tired of school was when I would see her boyfriend carry her books to English everyday. Then one day as I was lecturing and the kids were taking notes, I noticed that Patty wasn't writing anything down. When I inquired as to why she wasn't, Patty explained that Pat took all of "their" notes. Fortunately, Patty never asked if Pat could take her exam for her, too.

If you had to choose one student from the Class of '85 who always looked the best and had the most cheerful disposition, my selection would be **Tina Seebald**. Even when she wore jeans, Tina looked stylish, and she always had a smile on her face and something pleasant to say.

What can I say about **Troy VanDinter** that **Scott Murphy** hasn't already said? Troy is one of those students who you can't help but like, but at the same

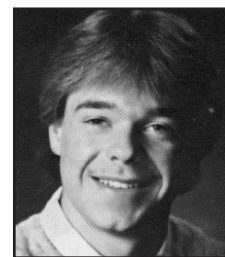


time, he makes you wonder if it was a good idea to do away with corporal punishment. I think Troy missed the main emphasis in his English courses this year. Although I told him that he was to improve his writing and literary analysis skills, he seemed

to think that his job was to annoy Melissa Kolbe and **Todd Cash**. I have to hand it to Todd for his infinite patience with Troy. I can't even begin to count how many times Todd had to go in search of his Peechee, his books, or his pen when he left these articles unguarded around Troy.

Barb Wagenman is one of those students who was such a nice, quiet girl as an underclassman. Then she took Yearbook, a class which has been known to transform otherwise quiet people into motor mouths. Barb never really got out of hand, but I do seem to recall a certain day when she and a couple of her classmates decorated their clothing with the use of a chalkboard eraser.

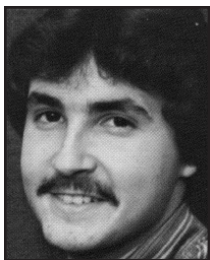
I only had **Bryan Wilson** in class once, but that was enough. I was able during that time to convince Bryan that it was somewhat important for him to put his name on his assignments. One of my students in Tenth Composition this spring wrote a paper involving Bryan. It seems that she and Bryan rode one of the roller coasters at Magic Mountain together when the music students traveled to California over spring vacation. Although the ride gave her a good scare, Bryan's only comment was that the roller coaster was just like his driving.



Until she took American Literature this spring, I had not had **Lesley Emerson** in class for quite some time. I do have a vivid memory of her, though, from the beginning of this school year. When I first saw Lesley in September, I thought she had had some traumatic experience over the summer. Her hair seemed to have turned white. Her sister, however, assured me that such was not the case, and after a while, Lesley's hair returned to normal.

I haven't had **Marti Chapman** in class for a couple of years, but I thought I was going to earlier this year. As I was standing outside my door on the first day of school ushering students into my room for sixth period, I thought I heard Marti's voice in my room. I thought this odd since I had ninth graders that period. When I entered my room, however, I found that the source of the voice was not Marti, but her little brother Joe.

When I met with my Advanced Composition class for the first time last fall, I explained to them some of



the basic requirements of the course and what I expected of them. When someone asked how long the papers they would be writing would have to be, I replied that the students the year before had written papers as long as fifteen pages and as short as three pages. At that point, **Tony Collins**, who apparently didn't know what he had gotten himself into, turned to **Troy VanDinter** and said, "As short as three pages!" To Tony, three pages was a novel.

As I said at the beginning of this speech, it was dedicated to the parents of tonight's graduating seniors. If you have been surprised or even shocked at the behavior of your son or daughter, don't let it worry you. There are just some things a teacher can't put in a progress report.

Tonight is quite an important night for these students. Although it is certainly a time for looking to the future, it is also a last chance to look back on the years that have led to this one event tonight. That is why I chose to concentrate on the past and my memories of these kids. Tonight is also my last chance to tell them as a group how much I have enjoyed their personalities, their work, their pranks, their thoughts--in short, them. Enjoy your lives and think fondly of La Center High School. We shall always think fondly of you.

Thank you.

The Class of 1986

Graduation: June 6, 1986

I'd like to say a few words about life at a small high school. Just for your information, from our perspective here at La Center, a small high school is one which has fewer than 300 students or one which we can beat in football. As we discovered this year, there are no other small schools in the Trico League.

Here at La Center High School, we are a tightly-knit family. For the most part, the students know all of the teachers, and more importantly, the teachers know all of the students. A small school offers many distinct advantages over a larger school. For example, it is virtually impossible to get lost at La Center High School, both literally and figuratively. Furthermore, students have more opportunities to participate in school life—including sports, clubs, and student government. Besides these two advantages, teachers and students at a small school tend to know each other better, which leads to many positive results.

It is important that you gain an insight into small school life, because doing so will help you better appreciate what is to follow.

Picture this, if you will. It was the first day of school in 1981. The lunch bell had just rung at 11:30, so I proceeded to the teachers' lounge to join my colleagues in a leisurely 25-minute lunch. Five minutes later, there came a knock at the door. When I opened the door, a student informed that a large group of kids was congregating outside my door. Only seconds later, my principal rushed in, apologized for the mix-up, and informed me that my fourth period class met from 11:30 to 12:30, not from 12:00 to 1:00. I needed, she said, to hurry down to my room and let these kids in.

And who do you suppose was milling around outside Room 9? Eighth graders! You see, the middle school in 1981 was overcrowded, and to alleviate the crunch, the "powers that be" allowed each high

school teacher one section of middle schoolers. My assignment was Eighth Grade English. Among those students who stampeded into my room on that September morning five years ago were **Don Bratton, Adam Henley, Richard Mottner, Ronna Davis, Greg Taylor, Alison Bayard, Kathy McPherson, Curt Fontana, and Karen Warner.**

I had had all summer to ready myself for this onslaught, yet no amount of planning could have adequately prepared me for that year. What I will most remember about these kids is the lesson they taught me. From Don, Adam, Richard, Ronna, Greg, Alison, Kathy, Kurt, and Karen, I learned why I do not teach middle school. Because I do not want to.

My memories of the other 40 students on this stage are many and varied. And although some of the events I will relate seem humorous now, there is a chance that I did not laugh at the time.

Les Voshell and **Dan Uskoski** stand out as a team in my mind, as well as in the minds of several other teachers. While Dan showed me just how easily I can lose my temper when a water balloon is involved, Les taught me the joys of having a junior in a freshman English class during the last period of the day. It's not that Les was ever a problem--though of course he was--it's just that freshmen are so easily amused.

What I will remember most about **Todd Monges** is his handwriting. When Todd turned in his first essay in Tenth Comp., I wasn't sure he was an English-speaking student. In the area of horrendous handwriting, **Monique Kiphart**, though, could give Todd some stiff competition.

It has been quite a while since I have had some of these kids in class, yet I can still recall their volume levels in class. While **Dawn Dallas** and **Denise Kruse** were relatively quiet girls, I don't believe **Becky Baird** followed their example.

Although I have never had **Jeff Duval** in class, he is etched into my memory because I misspelled his

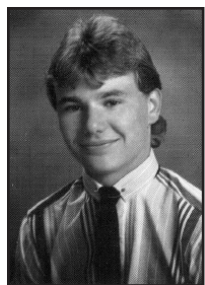
name throughout the entire yearbook and had to go back and correct all of my errors.

It takes a good deal of courage and determination to return to high school for a fifth year to earn a diploma. That's just what **Troy Sabo**, **Kim Finney**, and **Frank Mazna** did, and I think they deserve a special congratulations for their accomplishments.

As is always the case, there are a few members of the senior class whom I have never had in class. The lucky people this year include **Lisa Pierce**, **Lea Tackett**, **Colette Spengler**, and **Ron Myers**. These poor kids probably don't even know how far it is from the Bat Cave to Gotham City. Actually, I had Ron in American Literature, but for some reason, he only stayed one day.

I suppose I should have included **Drew Livingston** among those students that I have never had in class, but I feel that I know Drew quite well. You see, Drew used to sit on the floor outside the faculty room during lunch, and about every other day, I would trip over him as I exited the room.

Randy Peasley, as I recall, is a bit of a pyromaniac. Earlier this year, **Bobby Ayers** and **Greg Taylor** burst into Yearbook, roaring with laughter. It seems they had been witness to ace chef Randy as he demonstrated how to prepare a flambeau, and when the time came to ignite this delicacy, Randy only had lighter fluid at his disposal. The result was a near meltdown.



I shall always remember **Ben Wagenman** as a consistent violator of our public display of affection rule.

Although she had some stiff competition this year, **Dina Fuller** just may take the cake for the longest amount of time needed to write a 100-word block of yearbook copy--five months.

When these kids were freshmen, I stumbled into

an ideal situation. During spring trimester, my Ninth Grade Literature course was comprised of only eleven students. If that wasn't heaven enough, all eleven were female. Just imagine--twelve weeks in a row without a ninth grade boy. Among these girls were **Michelle Ritola** and **Traci Maesner**. Because of that ideal literature class, Michelle, Traci, and I got off to a wonderful start together, and our relationship has only improved with time, even though both girls joined the yearbook staff this year and witnessed a side of me at deadline time that they did not know existed.

Although I have a vivid memory of **Melissa Kolbe**, I really can't share it now because Melissa's parents are in the audience, and I don't want to get her in trouble on this particular night. I'm certain, though, that Melissa and Brandi know to what I am referring. What I will most remember about Melissa, I think, is her consistently cheerful, exuberant personality and how she would stop by each morning to chat about life in general and about how insufferable teenage boys can be.



Since he was a freshman and probably long before that, **Wayne Rivers** has been the epitome of a model student. He reads and writes beautifully, he studies constantly, and he even turns his work in on time. He simply is the ideal student. Or so I thought. Just a few weeks ago, I had to fill in for Mr. Preston in Consumer Ed., and who do you suppose was smuggling a water balloon into the room? Wayne Rivers! You just never know.

When he was but a sophomore, **Jimmy Peters**, as we addressed him then, was heavily into break dancing. For reasons unknown to me, the hallway just outside my door was a prime break dancing location. And so each afternoon at 3:00, Jimmy and his cohorts would plug in their ghetto blaster, crank up the sound so that the middle school could hear, and proceed to spin, whirl, bop, and glide their way

into my heart. Since the hallway was carpeted a year later, my hearing has slowly returned.

Jeff Fraijo is a two-year veteran of the yearbook staff. Because of his skill and dedication, he was assigned the most difficult tasks related to producing a yearbook--to bodily evict any non-staff members who entered the room, to time the melting of snowflakes to determine exactly when school would be dismissed, and to place slimy green frogs in my desk when I wasn't looking.

Bobby Ayers is another *Procedo* veteran and his tasks were equally strenuous. During the yearbook staff's brief yet unforgettable stint on the stage this year, I could always count on Bobby to initiate new staff members by depositing them in the drama prop box. And nobody could focus a camera like Bobby could, unless you closed your eyes.

My most vivid memory of **Dwayne Gilliland** happened just this year in English Literature. It might be indelicate of me to launch into a graphic description of this incident, so let it suffice to say that neither I nor Dwayne's fellow classmates will soon forget that particular episode.

When **Mike Haasl** was a freshman, he was the nicest, most human ninth grade boy I had ever encountered. I even sent a letter to his parents that year, complimenting them on raising such a fine child. I don't mean to imply that Michael isn't still the same pleasant young man now, but I would pay money to see him get his head shaved when he goes into the service.

I have only known **Amy Peasley** one year, but from the first day she walked into my classroom last August, I knew there was work to be done. In the first place, she had a curious habit of slurring her words. For example, "you all" became "y'all", a term which she used to excess. I invested many hours trying to save Amy's speech, but to no avail.



I finally threw in the towel when she composed and performed an updated version of *Macbeth*. If I may quote from this play, "Hey, Macbeth dude, what's buggin' y'all?" The South has risen again and Shakespeare is turning over in his grave.

Some students I will best remember because of what they have written in my classes. **Darin Baker**, for example, captivated me with his in-depth, intellectual analysis of "Gilligan's Island". Perhaps **Ted Page's** most memorable composition dealt with what he would be like at his ten-year high school reunion. And I quote, "In a time when many feel the social squeeze, I feel the old knock in the knees. Living in an age of singles, I am too stubby to mingle." Life can be pretty strenuous at the ripe old age of 28, Ted.

Gayle Dockter wrote a delightful essay earlier this year in which she described what life was like with her little brother Gregory. I chuckled as I read about Gregory's antics. A few months later, however, I substituted in Ms. Tatro's second grade class for just 45 minutes. Besides gaining a new respect for elementary teachers, I encountered Gregory up close and personal. He was not quite so amusing in person.

Very often, students reveal in their writing what they feel most strongly about. In one of her compositions, for instance, **D'Dee Hering** wrote, "When I was a kid, cartoons were simple--two mice being chased by a cat. It was basic. We all knew what the purpose of Pixie and Dixie was--to teach our kittens how to be rid of small pests. Unfortunately, it never worked when I tried to rid myself of my younger brother."

And who could forget **Lynn Webberley's** scathing denouncement of "Mr. Rogers's Neighborhood"? Not only did Lynn ridicule Mr. Rogers's color coordinated socks and cardigan, but she also attacked his attempts to talk to a picture frame and to build sandcastles out of dry sand. Nothing is sacred anymore.



One other thing I should mention about that year I taught middle school, although it pains me to remember, is that in addition to teaching Eighth Grade English, I was also given the distinct honor of advising the publication of a middle school yearbook. Try to imagine a group of seventh and eighth graders in a room with rubber cement, rulers, and Exacto knives. Among my staff members that year were **Chauntell Stevens, LeeAnn Hering, Brandi Jernagan**, and **Jodi Huber**. These girls must have been gluttons for punishment because what do you suppose three of them did in high school? Joined the yearbook staff.

After five years of **Brandi Jernagan**, I cannot forget her somewhat disgusting sense of humor. Besides nauseating her fellow staff members with after-lunch nursing stories, Brandi ventured into the hall one day when the Chemistry class was burning sulphur, inhaled a big whiff, and announced that it smelled just like home. If there's a party at Brandi's tonight, I'd think twice about going.

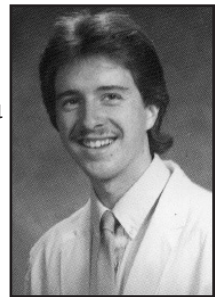


I think what I will most remember about **Jodi Huber** is her creative project for *Macbeth*. Jodi fashioned one of the Weird Sisters out of paper mache. To say the least, her witch was most unique, but what topped off her creation was painting the witch's face green with oil paint. A week later, you see, the poor thing's face peeled off. Nevertheless, Jodi's Weird Sister creates an impressive picture perched next to Eric Fillman's *Macbeth-on-a-stick*.

I have had **Tina Spaulding** in class nearly ever trimester of her high school career, and during that time, she has always been rather quiet, shy, and undemanding. As a junior, however, Tina joined the yearbook staff as a section editor. Yearbook must bring out the worst in a person because it was during her junior year in Yearbook that Tina uttered her first swear word, directly at Dwayne Gilliland.

When I was selecting this year's staff, I chose Tina and **Jeff Erickson** as co-editors, thinking that Tina's shy, retiring, meticulous personality would nicely complement Jeff's somewhat more aggressive personality. As it turned out, however, I think Tina did a superb job of preparing Jeff for his basic training in the Air Force.

There are so many things I could say about **Jeff Erickson**. I could tell you about the movie version he made of *The Pigman*, but you really have to see that movie, and I use the term loosely, to believe it. Or I could tell you about how he used to steal all of my green M & Ms. I could describe his basketball career, but that wouldn't take very long. Maybe I could tell you about what a wonderful Weird Sister he was. Or I could tell you how, as a freshman, he barely edged out Tina Spaulding to win the Boo Radley Look-Alike Contest. There are many other things I could tell you about Jeff, but I don't think this is the appropriate place.



Before I bid these kids a final farewell, I'd like to say a few words about my profession. During the last three years, a good deal has been written about teaching and teachers. The public has been told that the teaching profession no longer attracts the best and the brightest to its ranks. The average life span of a teacher entering the profession today is seven years. Furthermore, our colleges, we are told, are no longer adequately preparing prospective teachers for the job which they are expected to do.

All in all, the picture which has been painted of my profession is quite bleak. What you so rarely read about in the media, however, is what is good about teaching. I could toss out a list as long as your arm of the positive aspects of teaching in general and teaching at La Center High School in specific, but I hope that the memories I have shared with you tonight are proof that teaching is still an exciting and enjoyable profession.

If seven years is now the average life span of a teacher, I have reached old age, but I plan to teach yet for a long, long time, and with students like these, that shouldn't be difficult at all.

Thank you.

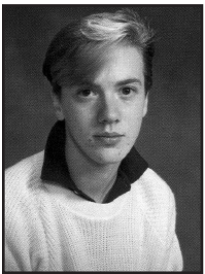
The Class of 1987

Graduation: June 5, 1987

My purpose here tonight is quite simple. I am to acquaint you with the Class of 1987. Most of you are here to watch one particular student graduate, and for many of you, the other 49 kids on this stage are strangers. There was a time in my life when these 50 students were strangers to me, but that seems like a long, long time ago.

The high point of the evening for these young men and women is now close at hand--the giving and receiving of that long-anticipated diploma. From your vantage point in the audience, the 50 graduates-to-be appear exceptionally calm, cool, and attentive. But do not be fooled! They have not always behaved in this fashion, nor have they exuded the same maturity that you see before you now. Allow me to illustrate my point.

I will begin tonight with **Matt Reich**. When Matt was a sophomore in my Tenth Grade English class, he would greet me everyday with the same question:



“Free day today, Ms. Bryan?” Rarely did my answer to this question vary, yet if I actually did bestow some free time on Matt, he would immediately become bored and ask me for something to do. I thought Matt would outgrow this habit, but I was wrong. When Matt joined my Media

Now class this last trimester, he resumed the same habit. Fortunately, though, the question had changed over the years. This time, he constantly asked if we could watch the movie “Repo Man”. Not wanting to lull the class into a coma, I refused.

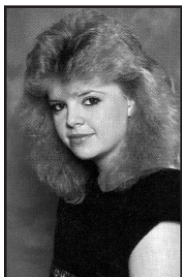
My first memories of some of these kids come not from their freshman year in high school, but from their seventh grade year in middle school. You see, these students were in the seventh grade during that fateful year when all high school teachers had

to teach one class a day of middle school students. As if having to teach Eighth Grade English wasn’t torture enough, I was told that I must also teach a mini-course. And since I was already advising the high school yearbook, why not create a middle school yearbook? That question seems logical only to someone who has never advised the publication of a yearbook. Among the members of that yearbook staff were **Taby O’Brien, David Svir, Dave Howe, Cory Aske, Shannon Snyder, and Mary Bettsworth**. Though I was terrified to turn this group loose with Exacto knives, photographs, and rubber cement, we did manage to finish a yearbook. I keep a copy of this publication to remind me why I do not teach middle school today.

Hans Brannfors is a very accomplished member of the Class of ‘87. He was recently voted the most talented student in the Culinary Arts program at the Skills Center. Yes, Hans has come a long way since his freshman year when he donned a skirt, lipstick, and a hair ribbon and modeled in the Homecoming Assembly Fashion Show. And speaking of fashion, I must tell you about **Doug Breen**. You see, Doug is a rebel when it comes to his attire, and I admire that quality in a student. If you really want a treat, you should ask Doug to model his hot pink plaid trousers. They are something to see. No discussion of high school fashion would be complete without some mention of **Melissa Nienhuser**. Now I haven’t had Melissa in class since she was a freshman, but at that time, she dressed much like her classmates--nothing loud or flashy. But when she became a sophomore, something happened. First, the color and style of her clothing began to change. Then her hair began to take on shapes that I did not know were possible. You would really have to see Melissa in all of her various styles to know just what I mean.

Glenn Hancuff and I met for the first time just this last trimester when he enrolled in Media Now. I finally decided that Glenn must be an avid moviegoer because every time I turned out the lights and started a movie, Glenn thought that he was in a real

theater. He would either promptly fall asleep, or . . . well, Glenn's girlfriend was also in the class, so you can probably imagine the rest. **Shelley Schutt** was also in Media Now. To help assure that the students were closely watching each movie, I would prepare quizzes over the plots of the movies. It's not that my quizzes were that picky, naturally, but Shelley soon began to take notes during the movies to help her remember what had happened. When we watched that classic of science fiction, "The Day the Earth Stood Still", Shelley was careful to copy down those famous words, "Gort, Klatuu barrada nickto". Though I didn't ask that particular question on the quiz, Shelley will probably never forget that phrase, and it will no doubt be extremely useful in her life.



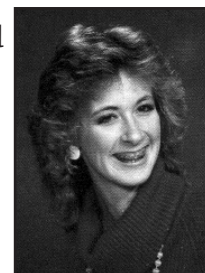
Perhaps the worst part of an English teacher's job is having to read hundreds of compositions each school year. While I am always thrilled to see the writing skills of my students improve, the average composition tends to be a tad dry. Every now and then, though, a student will select a truly innovative topic. **Dennis Barker**, for example, captivated me with his comparison of lakes and lagoons. **Teri Baker** wrote a fascinating piece about a trip that she once took. I would relate the details of this excursion, but I promised Teri never to let her mother know, and I wouldn't want to break a promise to a student. Perhaps the most disgusting, though well written essay came from **Jenny Thatcher**. If you know Jenny at all, this shouldn't surprise you. You see, Jenny composed a process paper in which she graphically described how a person with braces could consume food without grossing out everyone present, except, that is, for the teacher. While I am on the subject of composition, I should mention a research paper that **Renee Chadderton** turned in this year. Renee is fascinated with the common cat, and so chose this as the topic of her research paper. She did a fine job. In fact, she was so thorough that she told me things about the common cat that I had hoped

never to hear. Her classmates found her paper most entertaining.

Three of the students on this stage tonight have provided me with vivid memories because of their dramatic pursuits. **Jennifer Matt** is perhaps the most demure and quiet girl in her class. As a student in my English classes, she rarely spoke out and never caused any trouble. So imagine my surprise to see her reeling about on stage playing the town drunk in *Our Town*. The other two students I am about to mention did not distinguish themselves in the drama class, but in my English Literature class. For their creative *Macbeth* project, they chose to produce a scene from this wonderful play. Naturally I like to encourage these creative endeavors among my students, and I refrain from being critical so as not to damage their egos. However, since this scene took place a year and a half ago, I feel safe in telling both **Angela Walstad** and **Allen Reed** that during their performance, I sensed Shakespeare turning over in his grave.

Some students distinguish themselves in the memories of their teachers through their volume. For example, I shall always be grateful to **Michele Humphrey, Jocelyn Klingbeil, Nadene Leifson, Kim Mottner, Pat Learned, Pat York, and Larry Passmore** for how quiet they always were in class. The flip side of that record, though, is the gabbers, those students whose constant dialogue is hindered not even by a fire alarm or an explosion. Among these talkers are **Mike Tillotson, Kevin Kertzman, Angela Gragg, Kim Thornton, and Trena Workman**.

Dianna Steen is always one who loves to gab, but I shall remember Dianna for a different reason. You see, I am convinced that somewhere along the line, Dianna must be related to Groucho Marx because she is the queen of the non sequitur. A non sequitur is a statement that does not logically follow what has come before it. Let me give you an example. I



remember one day in Ninth Grade English when the class was deeply involved in a discussion of *To Kill a Mockingbird*. Out of the blue, Dianna raised her hand and said, "Ms. Bryan, do you like strawberries?" Yes, Dianna, do you have some.

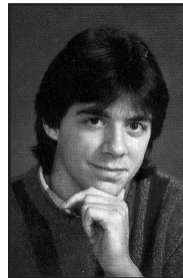
Three members of the Class of 1987 have distinguished themselves in a somewhat different manner. **Jason Machia, Brian Owens, and Roger Warden** have never taken an English class from me. I don't know how they managed this feat, but there are several eighth graders who would be interested to know their secret.

One duty of the teachers at La Center High School is to step into the halls between classes to ensure that students are passing in an orderly manner and abiding by the school rules. Some teachers view this duty as a pain, somewhat akin to bus duty or bathroom supervision. I, however, find this five-minute period in the hallway to be most edifying. While in the hall, a person may see and hear a great deal. For example, I have witnessed countless violations of our beloved PDA rule. **Lori Smith, Joe Stadler, Lyn Larson, Evie LeBouef, and Scott Uskoski** have been some of the prime offenders of this rule, which Mr. Kubiacyk would be happy to explain to anyone after the ceremony. **Art DeGrande** is another frequent visitor to the hallways of La Center High School. After four years, though, Art still hasn't figured out just when it's okay to be in the hall and when it's not. During this past year, **Marsha French's** locker was just across the hall from my room, so I saw her visit her locker several times each day. Marsha is generally a calm person, but I must say that she could become quite violent where her locker was concerned. The battle scars on her locker will support my observations. My last hallway story is about **Beth Freeby**. Very often on her way to CWP, Beth would stop at my door to chat, but, you see, Beth has one favorite topic of conversation--her health. I always tried to be sympathetic to her latest ailment, but I thought I would probably do better to introduce her to my mother-in-law. I am certain they

would get along famously.

It is not uncommon here at La Center High School for students to change their names. Last names I can understand, but some students see fit to change their first names. **Tom Walker** is just such a student. For the first half of the year and in previous years, Tom had always spelled his name T.O.M. Seems simple enough. But then suddenly one day, he turned in a paper with his name spelled T.H.O.M. I thought about this for quite some time, and decided there was only one thing I could do. So since that day, he hasn't been Tom Walker to me or his classmates in College Prep English; he has been Thom Walker. Fortunately, Thom has been a good sport about all of the ribbing that has resulted.

I have just one high school yearbook story to relate tonight, and this will be my last ever yearbook story. One day last year when the yearbook staff was still meeting here on the stage, I made the mistake of briefly leaving the room. When I returned, everyone



was busily working on their layouts, and the room was deadly silent. I knew immediately that something was wrong. Moments later, I heard a tapping sound emanating from somewhere on the stage. Naturally, none of my devoted staff members had a clue as to what was happening.

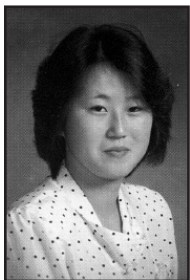
As the tapping increased to a steady pounding, I traced its origin to the drama prop box. As the staff members roared with laughter, I unlatched the box, and out crawled a slightly peeved **Paul Albrecht**. Needless to say, Paul did not enroll in Yearbook this year.

La Center High School has been blessed this year with three foreign exchange students. **Mike Boesen** is from Denmark. And I must say that I have never seen a student adapt to life in America with such ease. Mike was a member of my sixth period Tenth Grade English class, and he experienced no difficulty in fitting in with his American classmates. In fact, it's a bit disturbing just how easily he became one of the

gang. I might add that Michael was also quite adept at picking up our language, as evidenced by the many, shall we say, colorful metaphors that he has now mastered.

Heike Enderle is from West Germany. Though Heike is nearly the same age as our sophomores here, she is considerably more mature than they are, so when she joined my fifth period Tenth Grade English class, where maturity is at a premium, I was a bit worried. You see, I had to sit Heike right behind the most energetic, talkative student in the entire tenth grade. Of course, I won't mention this red headed boy's name, but Heike simply didn't know what to make of him at first. As the weeks passed, though, she became accustomed to his behavior, though I would occasionally catch her shaking her head in wonderment at his actions and words.

Our last exchange student this year is **Hisako Irie** from Japan. This has been a year of firsts for Hisako. She ate her first pizza and liked it. She saw "The Wizard of Oz" for the first time and loved it. She

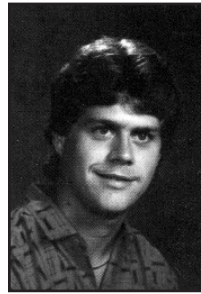


even carved her first pumpkin and won the "Legend of Sleepy Hollow" pumpkin carving contest in American Literature. Yes, Hisako has had a great deal of adjusting to do this year, but she has succeeded. How do I know this? When she and I went out to eat one night, she ordered

french fries and hot chocolate for dinner. Now that's American!

I will always remember **Trish Heidegger** and **Heidi Groves** as a tag team. Heidi was always the quiet, patient half of the team. When the elementary students would converge on the student store at 3:00, she would calmly dispense candy to them. Trish, on the other hand, was not quite so patient. She would sneer at each small student as she barked, "Whaddya want?" I took it upon myself to help Trish develop more patience this year. What better way to nurture this quality than to make her read Dostoyevsky's *Crime and Punishment*, twice!

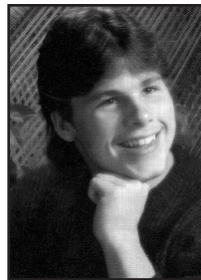
I will finish my address tonight by traveling back to that seventh grade year one more time. While I was blessed with a section of Eighth Grade English, my colleague, Ms. Martin, was fortunate enough to



teach a section of Seventh Grade English. On one day during that joyous year, two of her more devoted students came to her, each bearing a note. According to these notes, which were identical, these two boys had contracted a terrible disease, one which could at any moment necessitate their leaving the room without permission. In addition, neither boy would be able to do any homework that year because of this disease. Ms. Martin was naturally distressed and immediately agreed to the terms of the notes. However, she told **Quent Haugen** and **Erik Waite**

that she would call each of their mothers and express her sympathy, a reaction that neither Quent nor Erik had anticipated.

I hope that you now have a better feel for the Class of 1987. They are certainly unique, and they have provided me with a good many fun moments. I shall miss them all. Thank you.



The Class of 1988

Graduation: June 10, 1988

You know, 1988 was a tough year for me personally, which is part of the reason that I did not speak at your graduation. Ironically, some of my most memorable students are members of the Class of 1988. Had I spoken at graduation, I might well have mentioned some of the following anecdotes.

I don't wish to begin on a sad note, but I will begin with **Kelly Kays** and **Jeff Pummell**, two young men that tragically died so very young and so soon after graduation. When these boys were freshmen and sophomores and I would assign students to read a novel independently. Jeff and Kelly, along with **Jason Woodside** and **Brett Brothers**, insisted on reading books involving much shooting of guns, usually in some kind of warfare. By the time they were juniors, I had had my fill of reading their essays about books involving guns, so I made a new rule. When they arrived to class on the day of novel selection, their books could not have guns on the cover. What do you suppose their solution was? Yep, they all tore the covers off of their novels.

Just as an aside, when I consulted the little notebook in which I occasionally made notes about memorable student activities, I find that on October 2, 1986 (holy cow...30 years ago!) I wrote the following, "Jason Woodside seriously bit Kelly Kays." Hmmm...perhaps these boys read too many books with guns on the cover.

What I most remember about **Robby Shaffer** was the year he played the Stage Manager in the Drama class's production of *Our Town*, a play that I know very well. Early in the performance that I attended, it became clear to me that Robby had not memorized his lines well, and the Stage Manager utters many, many lines in the play. When he was stumped, Robby would roam about the stage, look thoughtful, and desperately try to recall his dialogue.

Needless to say, he did not fool me a whit.

Besides constantly entertaining me with his witty prose in Ninth Grade English, Tenth Grade English, and Advanced Composition, **Andrew Rivers** amazed me with his notebook each year. By the middle of every year, Andrew's notebook would look as though a bomb had exploded inside it. Andrew never did figure out the purpose of those three shiny silver rings in the notebook. Ever since, though, when I have had a student with an appallingly disorganized notebook, I stop to tell him/her about Andrew and how, despite his God awful notebook, he went on to earn his Ph.D. in Physics and has literally discovered new galaxies, proving that the organization of one's notebook in high school has no bearing whatsoever on one's future success in life.

One of my earliest memories of the Class of 1988 occurred when they were ninth graders. Somehow, I ended up with a class of Ninth Grade English that consisted of 26 boys and 3 girls. Holy cow! And the three girls in the class were **Angie Bakker**, **Suzette Snider**, and **Melissa Ritola**. I learned early on that a mixture of Angie Bakker and John Norman was truly a bad combination, so once I discovered that the girls were gifted students of English, I separated them from the 26 boys and designed an independent course of study for them, one of my better ideas. I'm not sure I could have taken a full year of the Bakker/Norman rivalry.

I remember a lot of things about **Tony McNeal**, and not just because I have had both of his kids in class in recent years. For example, I recall that during his freshman year, the old high school was still in the midst of its remodel and when the school year began, the student bathrooms did not yet have stalls. Oh, they had toilets, but no stalls. I figured the lack of stalls probably did not bug the boys too much, but I knew the girls would be appalled, so I designed a solution, which I dubbed "The Bathroom Bag". It consisted of a plain brown sack into which I had cut eyeholes. I also decorated it a bit and made it available for any female student that wished to "do

her business” but remain anonymous in the face of no stalls. I remember that Tony got such a kick out of The Bathroom Bag and borrowed it himself once or twice.

I don’t actually remember this, but I wrote it down in my notebook, so it must be true, but apparently **Pam Wood** was pretty much never in her assigned seat. I do remember, though, that **Christie Maxwell** had a cat she had named Retard and about whom she sometimes wrote and gave speeches.

And while we’re on the subject of speeches, I see in my notebook that **Mike Starfas** once delivered a thrilling speech (I’m pretty sure I was being facetious here) about his family’s brown Datsun.

Adrian Bricker...who remembers his mullet? I do. And I remember the morning he came to school sporting only PART of his mullet; for some reason, Adrian had shaved off most of the hair on the top of his head. It was, needless to say, an odd look, so of course I had to ask Adrian why he had shaved part of his head. Well, it seems that when Adrian was getting ready for school that morning and began to apply a healthy dousing of hairspray to his impressive mullet, he forgot that he had a lit cigarette in his mouth. Sadly, the combination of aerosol hairspray and a lit cigarette resulted in him singeing the hair on just the top of his head, and rather than shave all of his hair, he left the long stuff in the back and just shaved a trench down the middle of his head. Kids.

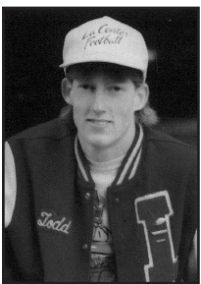
I hope these musings will show the Class of 1988 that while I chose not to speak at your graduation, I most definitely remember you and think of you with fondness.

The Class of 1989

Graduation: June 2, 1989

Traditionally, graduation is a solemn occasion, a serious rite of passage through which nearly all of us have passed or will pass during our lives. Tonight marks the culmination of some four years of hard work for these 46 students, and this ceremony will undoubtedly be marked by a great deal of happiness, an occasional tear, lots of hugs, and above all, dignity. We must never lose sight of the serious nature of high school commencement because tonight, these 46 children are transformed into 46 mature, responsible, and reasonable adults. Therefore, my speech tonight will be in keeping with the dignified nature of the students and tonight's occasion.

On that note, I will begin by describing the time that **Todd Straughan** attacked his sister with a live chicken. Actually, that's an old story. Instead, I'd



rather tell you what it was like to have Todd in my Film Study class. Everyday, Todd would sit in the front row, his eyes glued to the TV screen. The problem was that Todd would become so physically involved in all of the movies that he became a distraction to his classmates.

Westerns were particularly difficult because if someone would get shot, Todd would also get shot. As the bad guy died, so too would Todd die on the floor. Classmates were beginning to fail quizzes because they watched Todd far more than they watched the movies themselves.

Any discussion of Todd must logically be followed by one about **Vince Snider**. Actually, I only had Vince in class once, but I have heard a good deal about Vince from other people. It seems that Vince has an especially effective means of obtaining any seat in a classroom that he desires. I don't know how to put this tactfully, but Vince's method is most successful

following lunch. In fact, he has been known to clear not just one seat, but at least half a classroom.

Occasionally, our students become involved in truly creative projects. **Robert Harris**, for example, made a movie last year with **Robert Hill** for U.S. History. While their intent was to be serious, their use of local talent--and I use the term loosely--and budget special effects created just the opposite effect. **Jamey Snyder's** creative performance in version #1 also added to the film's comedic quality. Did you guys ever share that film with your folks?

Robert Hill thinks I'm going to get up here and tell you what a rotten speller he is, about how at Knowledge Bowl meets, the other team members had strict instructions to physically restrain Robert should he attempt to answer a spelling-related question, about how Robert misspelled his own name on more than one occasion. But I want you to know, Robert, that I wouldn't do that to you. As your teacher, I am far above having to stoop so low just to get a laugh.

Tom Renner is another unique speller, though he has mastered his own name. Tom is the only student I know of to spell fiancé PHEEONCE. And when we read *Crime and Punishment* a few months ago, Tom referred to the pawnbroker as a "pond broker". We all agreed that pond broking sounded like an interesting profession.

School, as we all know, can be a hazardous place, from the student parking lot, to the packed hallways, to the restrooms, to the athletic field. Some hazards, though, are disguised as seemingly innocent objects. Take the student desk, for example. It appears to be so harmless, yet as **Jana Shaffer** discovered, the student desk can inflict injury. One day as Jana was climbing out of her desk, she twisted her knee, and before I knew it, she had undergone surgery and missed a week of school.



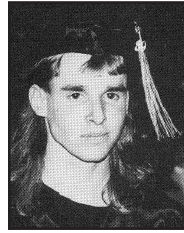
The hallways of any high school are sometimes a dangerous place to pass the time, and thanks to **Will Chipman**, such is the case here at La Center High School. It's not that Will is a violent young man, but he did invent a new sport this year, hall wrestling. Perhaps Will was simply seeking additional wrestling practice, but **Chris Copeland**, **Floyd Burk**, and **Marc Smith** spent the better part of this school year trying to avoid participation in this new activity.

The senior hallway is always an interesting place to be, especially during class changes and lunch. In fact, I acquire a good deal of knowledge about students just by standing in the hall between classes, information which parents may find interesting. For example, I am well aware of **Wendie Soule's** extracurricular hallway activities.

As always, a few members of this graduating class have somehow avoided taking any of my English classes. Of course, I try not to take this personally, but a teacher does wonder. This year's lucky group includes **Karla Traffie**, **Robert Harris**, **Jeff Papke**, **Troy Passmore**, **Tom York**, and **Shawn Graham**. This doesn't mean, however, that I know nothing about these kids. One day last year, for example, several teachers noticed that their staplers were missing and in a discussion during lunch, these teachers could discover just one common element in all the heists--**Shawn Graham**. While Shawn had been quite clever in lifting the staplers, he didn't fence his goods soon enough. When the principal opened Shawn's locker later in the day, out poured some five staplers and the Great Stapler Mystery was solved.

Some students here at La Center High School are constantly on a quest for individuality. **Dana Sabo** and **Karen Fuller** are two such students. Their fascination with Sid and Nancy and with safety pins has astounded their classmates for the past two years. As Karen and Dana have discovered, though, being an individual is more fun if done in pairs.

Adrian Smith also strives for individuality, in his appearance, in his speech, and in his lifestyle.



Thanks to Adrian, I now know how to survive a heavy metal concert. Should I ever temporarily become insane and attend such a concert, I know how to avoid going blind and being crushed to death. Perhaps Adrian's most predominant characteristic, though, is his speech. If Adrian does not like what is happening in the class, school, or his life, you will know immediately upon hearing his favorite word--bogus!

Earlier this year, our devoted high school secretary, Gail Hunter, started a fine new tradition. She began to keep a jar on her desk stocked with goodies, mostly jellybeans. For a short time, it seemed that I was the only lover of licorice jellybeans in the entire school. Soon, however, I realized that I had competition and from a student, no less. On more than one occasion, **Chris Warren** and I battled for the last black jellybean in the jar. Fortunately, though, Chris finally realized the benefits of deferring to age.

English teachers know of just two surefire means of shutting up the loudest, most obnoxious student--either remove the student from the room or teach a unit on public speaking. I have seen the rowdiest braggart completely humbled by having to stand in front of his peers and coherently present a speech. While she is not an obnoxious braggart, **Grace Stuart** can create her share of noise in a classroom, but when her speech class started nine weeks ago, her fears caught up with her and she was nearly paralyzed by the idea of having to speak in front of her classmates. However, she persevered, despite a few tears, and completed her first speech.

While I'm on the subject of speech class, I am told that **Mark Silliman** created quite an impression during his demonstration speech earlier this year. As he was showing the class how to make chocolate chip cookies, Mark wore his mother's apron. However,

Mark is a bit taller than his mom, so the apron was about as useful to him as a bib.

As teachers in training, we were taught that there is no such thing as a stupid student question or a stupid student comment. After ten years of teaching, however, I have come to realize that this is a bald face lie. It's not that my students are unintelligent, but they do occasionally spout words before engaging their brains. For example, after watching "Dr. Strangelove" for an hour one day, **Gina LeBouef** asked Mr. Owen if the movie was true. If you have seen "Dr. Strangelove", you'll understand what I mean.



Andy Wooldridge has also been guilty of asking a dumb question, but of a slightly different nature. The first time Andy asked me in Media Now if the class could watch "Repo Man", I said no. The second time Andy asked, my reply was the same. Apparently Andy didn't take me seriously. The twenty-third time he posed that question, he received the same answer. Nevertheless, Andy persevered to the end of the course, but never did we suffer through "Repo Man".

To illustrate how students sometimes utter stupid comments, let me tell you about **Gerald Blakeman**. One day when I was doing hall patrol, I overheard Gerald referring to our principal as "Chrome Dome" because his hair is a tad sparse on top. You can see what I mean. The irony of Gerald's statement is that his hairline is receding quickly and it won't be too many years before he catches up with Mr. Hopkins.

Linda Catron and **Kimberly Bell** were both enrolled in my sixth period class this year and both found the classes quite profitable. Linda raked in the money selling candy to her classmates, especially during Media Now. I guess she felt that since we watched a number of movies, the crowd should have access to a snack bar. Kimberly, on the other hand, was quite a lucky young lady. First, she won the "Legend of Sleepy Hollow" pumpkin carving contest. Then she won the "Wizard of Oz" trivia contest. And

lastly, she won prizes by selecting more 1989 Oscar winners than her classmates.

If any of you know **Shanin Combs**, you are no doubt aware of how strikingly attractive she is. Surprisingly enough, though, Shanin has experienced a good deal of difficulty acquiring a Prom date. As a freshman and sophomore, she was escorted by a boy of whom I disapproved. Last year, I felt Shanin's date was a distinct improvement, but Shanin did not agree as her date was a girl. The Prom date situation this year was looking equally bleak for Shanin. First, she considered hiring an escort. Then she mulled over the idea of buying an inflatable doll clad in a tux. At the eleventh hour, though, Shanin coerced **Jeff Papke** into escorting her, and I breathed a sigh of relief.

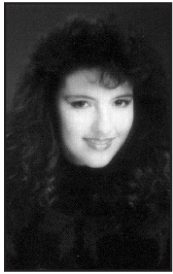


Wendy Ritola and **Nicole Maesner** have been something of a team during their high school years, so it's no surprise that during our study of *Macbeth* earlier this year, they opted to prepare their creative project together. The project was a clever one in which they made a little cupboard of horrors which consisted of several jars containing various ingredients that the witches would toss into their boiling cauldron. I was a little unnerved, though, when I discovered that the tooth of hound was genuine and that Wendy's little brother Dan had somehow obtained the tooth. I wonder, do the Ritolas have a dog?

Some kids agonize over just what I will say about them in my graduation speech. Will I reveal some deep, dark secret of which their parents and grandparents are unaware? **Beth Wilson**, however, is confident that I have nothing on her, other than the fact that her last name is Wilson, and believe me, here at La Center High School, that means something. But I'm here to warn you not to



antagonize Beth Wilson in any way. You see, last year, Beth got into a fist fight with a classmate, and though she sported quite a shiner for a week, Beth got her licks in, too. Occasionally, such fights do happen at school, but Beth is the only girl I know of who has duked it out with a boy.



Some of our students here at La Center High School lead double lives. **Tonia Shambo**, for example, is a quiet, reserved, almost shy girl during school hours. I am told, however, that she becomes an animal at hockey games. In fact, one of her favorite pastimes is to stand behind the plexi-glass wall as the players smash their pucks into the glass.

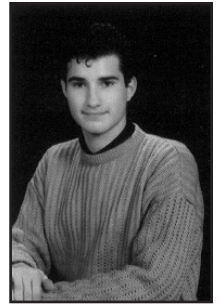
Adjusting to life in America is always a difficult task for our foreign exchange students, and while most kids are successful in adapting to American life, there are always a few things about our lifestyle that bother foreign students. **Harumi Sugiyama**, our exchange student from Japan, explained her pet peeves in a speech just a few weeks ago. Apparently, Harumi is most bothered by our American public restrooms. Harumi finds it unnerving to view other people's feet in a bathroom.

Teaching students how to write is rarely an easy task. While some students are fluent writers, others are terrified of putting pen to paper to write something coherent. It is these frightened writers that can drive a teacher crazy. As freshmen, **Jerry Warren** and **Lee McPherson** would write a sentence and then bring it up to the teacher to be checked. As sophomores, they would write a sentence and then bring it up to the teacher to be checked. As juniors, they would write a sentence and then bring it up to the teacher to be checked. Do you see a pattern developing? I see no need to comment on their writing habits as seniors.

While I'm on the subject of students driving teachers nuts, I'd better talk about **Mat Chamberlin**.

Over the years, Mat has employed a number of methods to push me over the edge. First, there are his jokes. . .well, at least Mat thinks they're jokes. Then there is his way of always asking questions which I have just answered. Lastly, there are Mat's practical jokes, for example, tying fire crackers to my chair or stealing the lens out of my overhead projector. Life will certainly be boring without Mat around.

One of the toughest skills for a freshman to acquire is that of selecting interesting topics for a composition. **Jake French**, however, never had trouble with his subjects. I recall a certain paper he wrote as a freshman in which he compared a Volkswagen bug to a Lamborghini. Interestingly enough, in the final analysis, the VW won. Through the years, Jake never lost his sense of the ridiculous as evidenced by some of the answers he would spout during Knowledge Bowl competitions. On more than one occasion, in fact, his teammates denied that Jake was actually a member of the team.



On the first day of school when these kids were sophomores, I was demonstrating how tough a disciplinarian I am, especially concerning notes passed during class. "I love to share these notes", I told the kids, "in the faculty room at lunch, so either don't pass notes or watch what you write." Moments later, **Mary Ward** slipped a note to **Shawn Haugen**, a note which I promptly confiscated. After class, I opened the note and discovered this, "Isn't Ms. Bryan nice, Shawn?" "Gee, Mary, she is so nice; she's my favorite teacher. Is she yours, too, Mary?" "Oh, yes, Shawn, and I love it when she takes my notes. How about you, Shawn?" Well, at least I wasn't duped by freshmen.

They say that opposites attract and nowhere is that maxim more clearly evident than in high school sweethearts **Kelli Montei** and **Ben Barnes**. Kelli is a vivacious, verbose ex-cheerleader whose ability

to chatter at warp speed assures her of a career as an auctioneer. Ben, on the other hand, is a young man of few words and even less intonation. In fact, over the years, Ben has acquired a nickname in my classes—Mr. Monotone. To truly appreciate Ben’s voice, you must hear him do Shakespeare. That rumbling you will hear is simply the Bard turning over in his grave.

While I am on the subject of opposites, I’d like to tell you about **Sheila Shultz**’s Prom date this year. Sheila is an extremely meticulous and conscientious girl. Most of the time, she appears to be quite calm and serious. Her date, however, is a tad off-the-wall in his behavior and is prone to be forgetful. As a result, a couple of weeks before the Prom, Sheila’s date turned over all of his money to Sheila for safekeeping, just in case. Unfortunately, when they actually arrived at Prom, he forgot to turn his car keys over to Sheila for safekeeping and instead promptly locked them in the car. Needless to say, Sheila’s date ended up having to call a locksmith to retrieve his keys as the coat hanger trick was unsuccessful. On the brighter side, though, since Sheila had her date’s money, they were able to pay the locksmith.

Like Sheila, **Katrina Harkleroad** is another shy,



even-tempered, quiet girl. Needless to say, I was astounded to hear that she would be attending Prom with perhaps the most off-the-wall student at La Center High School, a young man whose non sequiturs rank second only to those of Groucho Marx. I haven’t been able to glean many details about the date,

but reliable sources have told me that Katrina’s date was so obsessed with not spilling any food on himself that the two barely conversed during their dinner.

When it comes to a sense of humor in the Class of ‘89, **Andrew Reed** and **Brian Richardson** certainly have to take the cake. Andrew is one of those rare students who just loves to be helpful, especially if being helpful involves leaving the classroom for extended periods of time. To be even more helpful,

Andrew has taken to writing notes to be excused from certain classes. After writing these notes, Andrew then folds them in half so that the note itself is not visible, and then he has Mr. Wellman sign the notes. Typical Andrew Reed notes might read, “Andrew has permission to visit Mars” or “Andrew has permission to go to Vancouver for lunch.”

Brian’s sense of humor has been heavily influenced by massive doses of “Saturday Night Live”. For example, he loves to re-enact a skit debating the qualities of the Bleu Cheese cooler. Brian’s obsession with “Saturday Night Live” has become apparent in his behavior at school. For instance, he was involved in a gag one day in which he and some classmates drew the outlines of bodies on the surface of the student parking lot. To make the crime scene more realistic, Brian next had a car drive over the forms and then peel out, thus leaving skis marks on the body outline.

As you can tell, the members of the Class of 1989 are unique individuals, occasionally annoying, often witty, surprising, fun, and always challenging. I shall miss their presence at La Center High School. Thank you.

The Class of 1990

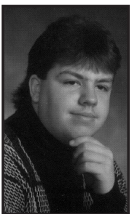
Graduation: June 8, 1990

The Class of 1990. . .there's so much to say about this group that I hardly know where to begin. Certainly they have left their mark on La Center High School in many ways. They demonstrated their pride and determination by leading our football team to a victory over Stevenson, ending a 37-game losing streak that spanned five years. They demonstrated their creativity by inventing a new version of Jeopardy which I have titled "Full Body Contact Cutthroat Jeopardy". I would just like to reiterate to Jamey Wolverton that if he hadn't thrown that block, my team would have won! They demonstrated their intelligence by garnering admission to a number of prestigious universities and winning lots of dollars in scholarships. And they have demonstrated their individuality through the events I'm about to discuss.

I always picture **Marc Fitzgerald** and **Scott**



Baker as a tag team of sorts. They just seem to operate best together. Last year, Scott and Marc took my Film Study course and were so enthralled with "Snow White" that for days after they were overheard singing "Someday My Prince Will come" in a lovely falsetto voice. A couple of years ago they and a classmate tried to earn a few extra credits by completing an independent study in auto body painting. Unfortunately, the teacher whose truck



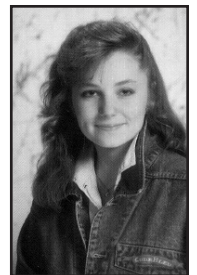
they painted wasn't thrilled with the quality of their work, but I guess it's difficult to do an excellent job in the dark.

We were blessed this year with two outstanding exchange students, one from Brazil and one from Hong Kong. After knowing **Gido Prado** for a while, I was reassured to discover that American students are not the only ones in the world to have lousy memories. Gido was constantly having to go in search of his book, his pen, or his composition. In

the faculty room one day, we imagined what it would be like for Gido to join the Brazilian Army. "Where's your gun, Gido?"

High school freshmen will sometimes do unusual things to survive academically. **Jennifer Cerveny** and **Janell Kiphart**, for example, couldn't plow through *The Hound of the Baskervilles* and *To Kill a Mockingbird* on their own, so they would read to each other over the phone each night. Ms. Romine nicknamed **Jeremy Tryon** "Monte Hall" when he was a ninth grader because instead of doing his work to earn a passing grade, he would constantly want to make a deal. As a freshman in Ms. Romine's class, **David Sprenger** gave his demonstration speech one afternoon out on the baseball field. David was showing his classmates how to start a motorcycle, but I guess he got carried away because once he had started the motorcycle, he zipped off across the field for parts unknown, leaving Ms. Romine in a cloud of dust.

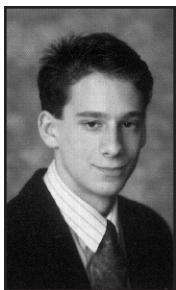
I'd like to spend a few minutes tonight telling you about kids who drive me nuts, and I'll begin with **Melani Oleson**. Melani's main goal in English this year was to get out of the classroom. About three times a week, she would come up to me halfway through class with some pressing reason why I should let her leave the room. "I have to. . .uh. . .run off ASB ballots" or "I need to. . .hmm. . .get ready for the pep assembly. Yea, that's the ticket."



I've never even had **Pete Slempa** in class, but he nearly drove me crazy this year when I tried to get him to deliver his photos for the slide show. After two months of my hassling him daily to bring these two pictures, he finally came through. But then a couple of days later, he decided he wanted to use a different senior photo, so he took back the one he had given me, promising to bring the new one in later that day. Two weeks later, I received the new senior photo. **Karen King** was about as bad when it came to remembering to bring her baby picture. She was

becoming so annoyed with me that I thought she was going to hit me if I reminded her just one more time.

Since I have never had **Bryan Maxwell** in class, I asked his classmates for a little information. However, most of what they told me could not be repeated in public. The least offensive tidbit they offered is that Bryan smells like a cow. Fortunately, I discovered this is not a personal problem. Rather, Bryan works on a dairy farm in the mornings and he sometimes comes to school wearing the boots he wore on the farm. As a result, Bryan has his pick of seats in the student lounge each afternoon.



Pete Smith is a quiet, unassuming young man, one whom you would never suspect of anything devious. But I know the real Pete Smith. Just a couple of weeks ago, all of the clocks in the high school mysteriously stopped working. Later, I discovered that Pete had tampered with the system while studying his English in the back room of the library.

That same week, Pete stole Melani Oleson's car. When the power went out at Prom a few days later, you can bet I was looking for Pete Smith.

Johnny Johnson is another quiet and unassuming member of his class. But then one day last year when we were reading *Crime and Punishment* in World Literature, Josh Smith noticed that the picture of Raskolnikov--the protagonist--bore a striking resemblance to Johnny. If you have ever read *Crime and Punishment*, you'll understand why we have been careful to keep all axes away from Johnny since that time. **Bobby Kysar** is so quiet and unassuming that I couldn't dig up an ounce of dirt about him.

If you want to anger an English teacher, all you have to do is pick on Shakespeare. It's bad enough to criticize *Macbeth* or *Romeo and Juliet*, but **Camille Marcotte** committed perhaps the biggest Shakespearean faux pas when she asked Ms. Romine, "Shakespeare? Isn't he that guy that wrote *Julian Lennon*?"

I believe **Shelley Pummell** has a great future ahead of her as a character actress. Since she became involved in our drama program, Shelley always seems to play a frumpy, old maidish type of character. There is, however, a rowdier side to Shelley as I witnessed earlier in this year when she and Lisa Buckbee ripped the doorknob off of my classroom door. **Jon Warner** may also have a career in the movies because many of the girls at La Center High School agree that he could easily win a Patrick Swayze look-alike contest.

Violence aimed at teachers is a rarity here at La Center High School, but occasionally it does occur. One day last year, **Rich Easter** was innocently playing with his Yoyo next to my desk near the end of class. Rich would forcefully fling the Yoyo out in front of him and then draw it back in. One time, though, he flung it out, the string broke, and the Yoyo slammed into the door, missing my head by just inches.



While I have tried my hardest to come up with a humorous anecdote about each member of this class, I must confess that three young ladies have me stumped. **Tori Meredith, Jana Traffie, and Lori Lane-Silliman** are the nicest, most pleasant seniors you could hope to teach. They just don't do stupid stuff like their classmates. What I can tell you is that Tori is an accomplished writer, Lori does a great impression of Snow White and is a first rate teller of ghost stories, and Jana has opened my eyes to the reality of living in a big family.

Some students are surprising because of the skills they possess which are not readily apparent at school. At Prom, for example, I discovered that **Brian Dodge** is a complete maniac on the dance floor. He danced with such zeal that he even sustained a knee injury. Mr. Sahling was kind enough to loan me one of **Robby Dolezal's** papers, so I was able to learn that Robby is an enthusiastic hunter. In fact, on one apparently innocent deer hunt, Robby was pursued by a black bear which he was later able to kill. **Leo**

Wong possesses one of the most interesting skills among his classmates. He is a palm reader. One day during Tenth Grade English, Leo read the palms of a number of sophomores and what he foretold was certainly fascinating. Misti Davis was not happy to learn that she has a short lifeline, but I'm afraid Emily Mencke's parents have the most cause for concern, though I can't elaborate.

Shelley Fuller's senior year has had its ups and downs. On the up side, just a month ago she was crowned Prom Queen. Unfortunately, moments before the coronation, all the power went out in the high school, so Shelley was crowned while Mr. Hopkins stood up in the balcony and shined a flashlight down on her. Shelley and her king, Scott Baker, then attempted to dance while we all hummed "You've Lost That Loving Feeling". On the down side, fifteen minutes after arriving at senior skip, Shelley lost her car keys in the ocean and spent the rest of the afternoon trying to find a locksmith who would travel 50 miles to make a new key for her car.

Several members of the Class of 1990 are record holders of one kind or another here at La Center High School. **Chris Learned**, for instance, has visited the ladies room more than any other student in our 30-year history while **Kevin Kopkie** has earned more credits in the hallway than in the classroom. I never knew we offered a class called Hall Monitor 101, but I'll tell you, at this stage of his high school career, Kevin could teach that class.

No one in the entire world has consumed more Diet Pepsi than **Misti Haasl**, and I mean no one. If she ever gave up Diet Pepsi for Diet Coke, the Pepsi Company would be in a world of hurt. In fact, Misti loves this drink so much that she even had a bottle of Diet Pepsi in her hand in one of her senior photos.

You might want to let **Adam Engelhardt** precede you out of the parking lot tonight because

I am told that he holds the record for wrecking the most cars. Perhaps he destroys so many cars because he no longer wears his glasses. It seems Adam was becoming tired of people asking him if he is John Denver's son. **Jennifer Richardson** is undoubtedly the quietest member of her class. Although I have had Jennifer in class all four of her years in high school, I don't believe I have heard her utter more than 100 words, and that includes two speech units.

Larry Bonneville's claim to fame is a slightly unusual one. You see, Larry is the member of his class who is most out of touch with reality. At Prom, Larry informed me that his grandfather is a king, though he couldn't recall king of what. And at the pep assembly to send the softball team off to the state tournament, Larry mistakenly believed himself to be a rap singer, and what's even funnier is that he thought he had rhythm.

Kim Williams wins the award for most patient senior. Through four long years, she has endured the eternal presence and attitude of Jeff Thornton, yet she is probably the only member of her class who has not inflicted bodily harm on him, and believe me, he deserves it. I believe **Kevin Taylor** has the worst sense of humor among his classmates. He just didn't see the humor in my calling him by his brother's name during his entire junior year, and he certainly did not appreciate the 43 handouts I delivered to the seniors this year. I guess I won't say a word about how his new glasses make him look like Clark Kent.

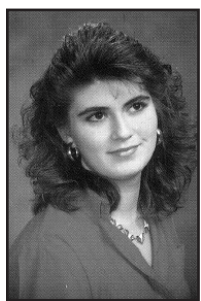
The award for most inspirational member of this group goes to **Duane Humphrey**, who coined the phrase "We believe!". Members of the yearbook staff credit Duane and his phrase with singlehandedly leading the football team to that victory over Stevenson. **Nicole Stolee** has to be the least photogenic member of the Class of 1990. In nearly every slide of Nicole taken for tonight's show, Nicole is making some sort of hideous expression. In fact, in at least one slide, Nicole is making a gesture which



I believe indicates her opinion of math. Another area in which Nicole excels is creativity. Nicole's letters of appeal to the attendance committee were so graphic and touching that we actually had to pass around the Kleenex each time we read them.

Certainly the neatest member of the Class of 1990 is **Michelle Brammer**. Michelle is fastidiously tidy in her appearance, in her school work, and in her life in general. In fact, Jeff Thornton maintains that Michelle even uses a knife and fork to eat a Twinkie.

Now that I have discussed kids who hold records, let me tell you about some members of the Class of 1990 who are obsessive. **Beth Spencer**, for



example, is obsessed with her own fingers. During English Literature, she could amuse herself for hours just by pretending that her fingers were people or dogs. She even included sound effects, depending on what these characters were doing. By the way, Beth adamantly opposes the use

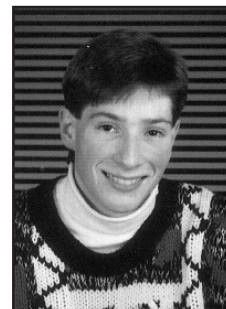
of Mr. Bubble to bathe children, but you'll have to consult her personally to find out why.

Rich Hall has a slightly different obsession--dirt biking. Of the dozen or so compositions that the kids wrote this year in Advanced Composition, about eight of Rich's somehow related to dirt biking. No doubt you can imagine my thrill at reading all of these. Some of you may not know that Rich's two older brothers are married to Misti Haas's two older sisters. I once asked Misti and Rich if they planned to continue the family tradition, but neither one showed a great deal of enthusiasm for the idea.

In terms of interest, **Mike Dennis's** obsession for me ranks right up there with dirt biking and watching paint dry--professional wrestling. Every Monday morning, Mike would recount the highlights of the weekend's wrestling events for us in class. Mike once loaned me a tape on which he had recorded a special about Alfred Hitchcock movies. Unfortunately, the tape was labeled "Wrestlemania" so people who saw it

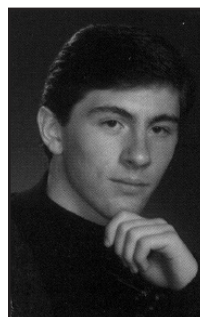
lying on my desk mistakenly believed that Mike had converted me into a wrestling fan. Nothing could be farther from the truth.

Todd Kestner may want to kill me for this, but he too has an obsession--girls! During the course of his high school career, I'm sure Todd has had no less than 87 girlfriends. Of course, he and one particular girlfriend, who will remain nameless, were a couple on and off about 50 times. When we would travel to Knowledge Bowl meets, invariably Todd would know at least one girl from each opposing school. This year alone, Todd attended three proms! At the state FBLA conference this spring, Todd demonstrated his obsession with girls by not returning to his hotel room until 2:00 a.m. I don't know Todd, but you must be some kind of buff guy to attract all these women.



The operative word for **Erin Woodside** is cow. We're talking serious obsession with bovines. Erin wrote papers about cows, she gave speeches about cows, she has cows on her clothing, she has cow jewelry, she has cows on her checks, and she even had her senior picture taken with a cow. I suppose it's only appropriate that she was selected as the State Dairy Princess.

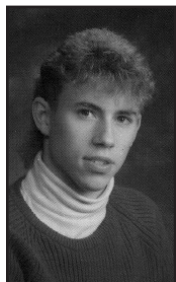
Kevin Braun's obsession is perhaps the most dangerous one of all. You see, I believe that Kevin lives for math, and if he is not careful, like Mr. Johnson, Kevin too will move to Montana, begin to wear tacky floral shirts which clash with his pants, regularly attend an event which is the largest of its kind in the world, and slowly come to resemble Groucho Marx. In short, Kevin will become a wilderness mathematician.



The only way to save yourself, Kevin, is to reread *The Sound and the Fury* at least once each year until this obsession passes. And always heed the sage words of your beloved English teachers: "Math

is bad!"

I must discuss the eating habits of **Jamey Wolverton**. Jamey is amazing not only for what he eats, but for how he eats. The formal, serious nature of tonight's occasion prohibits me from discussing the contents of Jamey's diet. By the way, let me advise you never to bet Jamey that he



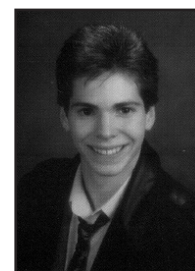
won't eat something. At any rate, I can expound on his methods of eating. In Ninth Grade English one day, Mona Heidegger was presenting her demonstration speech in which she showed her classmates how to construct a banana split. Mona created a mouth-watering dish which everyone

wanted to sample, but she had forgotten to bring a spoon. Undaunted, Jamey found his fingers worked just as well as any old spoon would. On a Knowledge Bowl trip this year, I was again subjected to Jamey's eating style. We stopped for pizza that night, and I sat across from Jamey. Near the end of the meal, Jamey commented to me that he hadn't made any mess at all. Not three seconds later, Jamey knocked over his pop glass, flooded the table with Pepsi, and convinced me that he hadn't made much progress since that banana split.

Crissy Bakker is such a model student and human being that it is difficult to find any indiscretions in her past. . .difficult but not impossible. Last year, Crissy and Jamey Wolverton visited Crissy's sister at Stanford University to check out that university's high academic standards. On their return, Crissy told her mom, who works in the high school office, that they hadn't attended any parties during their visit. Unfortunately, Jamey told Mr. Hopkins a slightly different story. Later that day, Crissy stopped by the office where Mr. Hopkins asked her about those darned parties in front of her mom!

Lisa Buckbee has been doing some serious vocabulary building this year. Early in the school year, her classmates in American Literature discovered that she didn't know what an enema

was. We tried to tell her in a delicate way, but words seemed to fail us. Finally, **Josh Smith** came up with an accurate description. According to Josh, an enema is like going water skiing and falling down but forgetting to let go of the rope. Josh has a way of choosing just the right words, though he can't always spell them correctly. As a freshman, for instance, he once spelled the word "judicious" as "Jew dishes". I couldn't let this opportunity pass without at least mentioning the uncanny effect that Josh has on high school girls. You see, a certain freshman girl, whom I will not embarrass until she is a senior, developed a raging crush on Josh this year, much to Josh's dismay. While I can't reveal the name of this young woman, I can tell you that Josh causes her palms to sweat!



Tonight marks the end of an era, ladies and gentlemen. In 1968, the first of the **Heidegger** children graduated from La Center High School, and tonight, **Mona**, the last of the Heidegger children, will graduate. Now I have had the pleasure of teaching roughly six of the Heidegger children, and they have all been such pleasant, intelligent,



dedicated people. Well, actually, Trish and Liz were a bit of a problem, but that's past history. It's not that Mona doesn't fit that bill, but I believe she is the first Heidegger to actually serve time in In-School Suspension. It seems that Mona racked up a few too many tardies early in the school year. I guess Mona has a history in ISS, though, because she told me she had done time in sixth grade for beating up Adam Engelhardt. I commented to Mona that I couldn't imagine La Center High School without a Heidegger in it, but she told me not to worry. Her oldest nephew will be a freshman next year. The streak continues.

Some students distinguish themselves at school through their attire. As a freshman, **Carla**

DeGrande wore the shortest, tightest skirts you can possibly imagine. I could not have worn these skirts even at birth. **Carol McPherson**, on the other hand, has made a bold fashion statement of another kind. Her favorite article of clothing this year? A charming pair of men's boxer shorts. She even sported these shorts in one of her senior photos, and I'll bet money that she's got them on under her gown right now. I have never had **Brian York** in class, so I had to snoop around a bit to discover something about him, and it seems that Brian deserves mention in the fashion section of my speech. According to his classmates, when Brian was in the third grade, he quite often wore a lovely ensemble consisting of a blue shirt, green pants, and rubber boots.

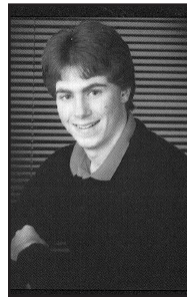
While I'm talking about fashion, I'd better introduce **Brook Livingston** and her hair, which has a personality of its own. Brook's hairdo has inspired



her classmates to break out in song, and Jamey Wolverton even wrote a composition in which he compared Brook's do to a beehive. I am told that during one lazy, warm day in CWP, an innocent bee flew in Mr. Owen's window, buzzed by Brook's hair, became disoriented, made a beeline for Brook's do, and was never seen again. For a brief period following Earth Day this year, however, Brook abandoned her big hair when she realized that she used so much hairspray to achieve her do, she was punching her own hole in the ozone layer.

I have now arrived at the 52nd member of the Class of 1990, a student who just days ago offered me \$10.00 not to reveal the truth about him tonight since his grandmother is here. Fat chance, **Thornton**! I can tell you that **Jeff** is an excellent writer though his topics tend to be somewhat odd. In one composition, he compared himself to Santa Claus. How are these two similar? Santa is often referred to as St. Nick while Jeff once had a parrot named Nick and he has several nicks in his football helmet. One of his favorite writing topics

is the human anatomy. Jeff further demonstrated his love of English this year when he taught a variety of dirty words to his native Spanish tutor. While I am confident that Jeff will one day be a successful writer, earlier this year he had settled on two entirely different careers--kick boxing or professional wrestling. However, he soon abandoned these choices when we reminded him that he knew nothing about either, except for a few highly annoying sound effects. My own 10-month old child is probably permanently damaged after Jeff came to visit one day. After feeding my



son a chocolate cupcake, Jeff then hung him upside down over my white couch. During Film Study last year, Jeff sat in a group with Lisa Buckbee and the two of them would drive me to distraction with their constant bickering which occasionally erupted into physical violence. Earlier this year, as he was playing caveman with Lisa and carrying her on his shoulders, Jeff purposely dumped her in the gravel. Lisa's poor knees still bear the scars of his brutality. Ironically enough, in the last couple of months, Jeff and Lisa have started to get along quite well, if you know what I mean. And don't think we haven't all had some fun with that.

If colleges of education across the country could paint an accurate picture of the experience of teaching high school, I'm not certain what the outcome would be. The negative aspects of teaching are certainly no mystery. No, our salaries are not enormous. No, we do not always receive the respect we are due. Yes, some of our students are substance abusers and severe discipline problems. But I must tell you that each year when this night arrives, the rewards of teaching become clear to me and I am absolutely certain that I have not made a serious vocational error.

Thank you.

The Class of 1991

Graduation: June 7, 1991

While every school year is unique, the 1990-91 school year has been most eventful. From the passing of the bond for a brand new La Center High School, to the war in the Persian Gulf, to the wonders of electronic mail, to our insect infestation, to the softball team's seventh place finish at the State Tournament, things have been hopping all year long at La Center High School. For these 36 seniors, however, most of the events of the year pale in comparison to tonight's festivities. So without further delay, let me introduce you to these folks and share a few secrets.

If I were you, I wouldn't give any grief to **Heidi Snyder** and **Daniale Copeland** because I haven't encountered two tougher girls since Pam Brockmoller went out for the football team ten years ago. I personally know of two students that Heidi has coerced, shamed, threatened, and physically abused so that they would complete their credits and graduate on time. This past fall, as the Kalama football team was running by a crowd of us at the concession stand, Daniale--all 87 pounds of her--boldly stepped forward and began to harass these 250 pound behemoths because they were winning the football game.

On the flip side are those students who didn't utter more than 50 words during all four years of high school. **Walter Piele** and **Heather Furgeson** are among these quiet types. In fact, Heather didn't even come close to 50 words during World Literature this year, but then again, **Jenni Bevans** is in that class, so no one really stood a chance. I am told that Walter comes to life, though, when placed in front of any video game.

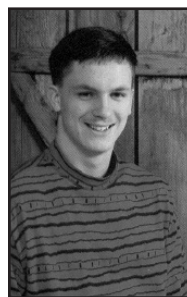
Some students in the Class of '91 are memorable because of their hair. **Bobbie Catron**, for example, has the best hair in the senior class bar none. **Jason**

Russell, on the other hand, has the least amount of hair and what he does have is going fast. I don't know how sensitive Jason is to the subject of his hair loss, but I do know that **Josh Lawton** is quite touchy about the texture of his hair. In fact, rumor has it that his nickname is Top Ramen.

Some students stand out because of their unhealthy or annoying habits. **Jim Barnell's** bad habit is that every morning he stops up at the Texaco and buys Twinkies and chocolate milk for breakfast. I know this firsthand because I continually run into him when I am buying donuts. What's annoying about **Warren Burk** is that last year he was Ms. Romine's aid during my prep period and we kept doing battle for the Xerox machine, and it's never like he had one quiz to run off. No, he had to be Xeroxing plays, or novels, or something that took a few hours.

Annette Ritola is another abuser of the Xerox machine, but that's not her most irritating trait. I don't know if you can tell from where you're sitting, but Annette has the nicest tan of anyone in the high school. In fact, she's had that tan since September, and I'm tired of her looking healthy when the rest of us are shark bait.

If **Justin Steen** ever comes to your house, don't let him sit on the furniture. Believe me, you'll regret it. You see, Justin can't stand to sit up straight, so



as soon as he sits down in a desk, he begins to exert pressure on the back of the chair. Within about a week, he has converted that student desk into what we affectionately call the Justin Steen recliner. Some of these desks have been bent back so far that students have to grab hold of the desktop to keep from sliding out under the desk. Now if each student desk costs approximately \$100, I figure that in his four years here, Justin has amassed a bill of about \$144,000.

Every now and then, a female student comes along who was born with one of those voices that

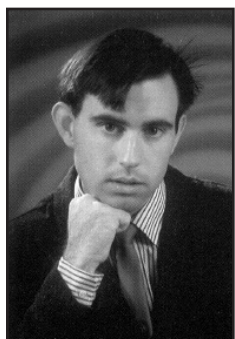
rivals fingernails sliding down a chalkboard. You know the type. . .these girls don't just ask if they can use the restroom or make a phone call; they plead. Their lives are constantly in crisis and they just can't seem to make deadlines because they're so busy. In short, they are the whiners! Now don't get me wrong. I love these girls. They're intelligent, they're funny, they're helpful, but they have that voice. In the Class of '91 they're **Monique Sebunia-Lahti** and **Heather Millison**.

Since 1983, it's become something of a tradition for me to stand up here each year and help you become acquainted with each member of the graduating class. If I'm lucky, at the same time I



can publicly humiliate students who have inflicted four years of torture on me. Nearly all of the kids know, too, that I keep a notebook safely hidden in which I try to record their more ridiculous antics or statements. Knowing that, though, some kids still slip up and reveal things to me that they know I'm going to repeat at graduation. **Patty Renner**, for example, has had some very interesting dreams during the last four years. Although she despises math--and what sane person doesn't--she once dreamt that she and Mr. Johnson were . . .well. . .rather close. And just this year, she dreamt that years after graduation, she went to a bar and **Joe Liston** was the featured dance entertainment.

And while I'm on the subject of **Joe**, let me tell you what I'll most remember about our esteemed



ASB president. First of all, he does the Pledge of Allegiance in slow motion. Secondly, when he dances, he looks like he's trying to put out a fire. Third, he has sported some of the most bizarre haircuts and dos in his four years. But my fondest memory of Joe happened earlier this year when the kids in Advanced Composition

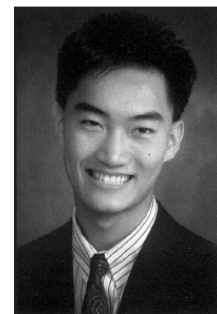
were debating whether or not boys ought to wear earrings. Joe's only comment was, "If I came home with an earring, my dad would buy me a pair of pink panties."

As you gaze on these 36 young adults, you're probably saying to yourself, "Boy, these people look so pleasant, so self-assured, so mature." I'm here to tell you that such was not always the case. The high school freshman is a unique being, sometimes childish, sometimes unwise, occasionally funny, and nearly always annoying. **Bryan Ostreim** was, perhaps, the most irritating member of his class as a freshman. No matter where he was in the building, Bryan mistakenly believed that he was in band class, and regardless of what object he had in his hands, he saw only drumsticks. No doubt you can imagine the rest, dude! What I most remember about **Dawn Krois** as a freshman are her skirts, which were as short as is possible without breaking the law. Every time I saw Dawn walking down the hall, she would be tugging away at her skirt and looking uncomfortable.

My most vivid memory of **Brandi Wismeth** happened during Homecoming Week of her ninth grade year. On Inside Out Day when everyone turned their shirts and pants inside out, Brandi really took the theme to heart and strolled into school wearing a black bra and black panties on the outside of her clothing.

I was going to tell you what a quiet guy **Jamie Gola** is, but he recently supplied me with better material. A few weeks ago, several students and I attended a play at Clark College.

After consuming pizza, we all split up and agreed to meet at the theater at 7:45, but when seven kids hadn't arrived by 7:58, I began to get annoyed. At 8:10, Jamie and his six classmates trooped into the theater and announced that Jamie had locked his keys in his car in the Fred Meyer parking lot. Since they were unable to break into the car and time was running out, seven kids-

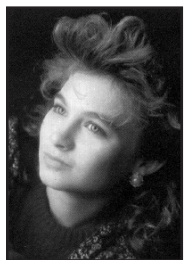


-including a couple of rather large boys--piled into **Shannon McNeal's** Volkswagon bug and somehow made it to Clark College in about five minutes. The really juicy details of the story, however, involve juniors, so I'll have to deliver the rest of the story at this time next year.

What I will most remember about **Jason Rivers** is that even though this year's graduating class consists of just 36 students, I've never really met this guy. In fact, every time I needed something from the seniors, be it a photograph, money, or a graduation order, either his mom or his brother Jeff would bring it to me. I think perhaps Wayne and Andrew warned him to steer clear of me. **Matt Shultz** is another student whom I have not had in class, but his classmates assure me that he is the world's worst tipper and he tells far too many bad jokes.

Eric Cerdena is memorable for three reasons. First, he was incredibly skinny as a freshman and he's still skinny. I hate that. Second, he hates to write, and not just papers. He even hates to write his name at the top of the page. He hates writing so much that he'd even rather do algebra than have to write a sentence. Lastly, throughout his entire high school career, he used the exact same excuse every time he didn't have his book, his pen, or his assignment with him. "I left it in Justin's truck."

Every few years it seems that a student comes along who has an interesting name, or at least a name which can be interpreted in more than one way. For



example, in 1980, there was Pete Moss. As a brand new teacher determined not to be made a fool of, I refused to believe this guy's name was really Pete Moss. After a half an hour, though, the kids convinced me it was true, and I felt so bad that I even let Pete dupe me into believing that Pete was spelled

P-E-A-T. A few years back, it was a girl named Sandy Beach. The interesting name in the Class of 1991 is **Misti Winters**. What I shall most remember about Misti is that, like me, she is an Anglophyle and loves

to catch up on the latest dirt concerning the royal family.

One of the most enjoyable aspects of teaching high school is that teenagers constantly keep us amused with the embarrassing or stupid things they do. And even if we don't personally witness these antics, we have a very efficient grapevine to keep us informed. For example, I have it on good authority that **Gary Waliezer's** date with Becky Stokke a few months ago didn't work out too well, but even more shocking is that Gary does not know who Merv Griffin is. Gosh, how will he get through life?

While I'm on the subject of **Becky Stokke**, you need to know that she has suffered a good deal of ridicule because of her forehead; however, there must be something appealing about that forehead because Becky has had nearly as many boyfriends in four years as Todd Kestner had girlfriends. In fact, at Prom this year, Becky and her date spent more time on the golf course than in the ballroom.

I'm afraid our La Center grapevine has its weaknesses, though. For the past several weeks, I've been trying to dig up some dirt on **Julie Barker** and **Cathy Weese**, but I have failed. It seems these two just do nothing wrong, at least at school.

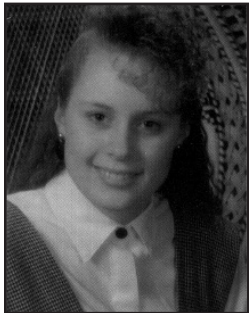
While I'm discussing foolish things that students have done, let me mention **Jenny Russell**, a student who has always been extremely responsible and reliable. That's why I was so surprised when Jenny came into Advanced Comp. fifteen minutes late one day this year and handed me an unexcused tardy slip. It seems that Jenny had jumped the gun on lunch and gone an hour early. She discovered her error when she finally noticed that everyone else in the lunch line was a foot shorter than she was.



Perhaps the most foolish thing that **Shannon McNeal** did during her high school career was to mistakenly walk into the boys lockerrroom. Now how anyone can mistake the boys lockerroom for

the girls lockerroom is a mystery to me, but Shannon managed this feat. I won't go into any details, but the boys lockerroom was occupied at the time, much to Shannon's chagrin.

Another of my informants tells me that **Kirsten Petersen** frequently embarrasses herself by locking her keys in her Volkswagen bus. Just recently, Kirsten had to pry open the hatch, slither under a bunch of shelves in the back of the van, and crawl over the seat to reach the front seat and retrieve her keys. However, when she got to the front of the van, the keys were not in the ignition; they were in her pocket.



Tricia Dodge's most embarrassing moments seem to center on toilets, no pun intended. Last year, she discovered that one toilet seat had been bathed in black ink; unfortunately, she was just a few seconds too late in her discovery. And on the Disneyland trip last year, Tricia inconvenienced her roommates twice by plugging up the toilet. I am told that a song was even composed in honor of Tricia and her bathroom blues.

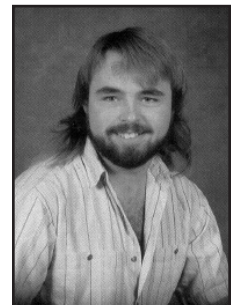
A couple of years ago, **Travis Kolbe** and a classmate went on a camping trip. While they were down near the river one day, they spotted a bunch of money floating down the river, so they waded in to retrieve it. Travis was feeling pretty lucky until he saw his own wallet float by and he realized the money they were gleefully collecting was his own.

For **Vicki Sunrise**, Prom was an all-around embarrassing event. To begin, she forgot to wear deodorant. If that wasn't bad enough, when Vicki, her date, and her friends went to The Chart House for dinner, none of them realized just how expensive the meal would be. In fact, Vicki didn't even pay any attention and she ordered the lobster, which was so spendy that its price was not even listed. When her date, who will remain nameless, pointed out that he

only had \$60, she had to change her order.

What I will most remember about **Michelle Smith** is her incredible obsession with Randy Travis. You should see this girl's locker; it's a shrine! **Denise McRobert** is memorable because she is the most even-tempered, pleasant person you could hope to meet. During all four years of English, nothing we did seemed to phase Denise. When the rest of the class was plotting my demise in the midst of *Pride and Prejudice*, Denise happily continued to read, recognizing great literature when her classmates were oblivious to it.

The teachers of La Center High School will not soon forget **Todd Norcott**. Not only does he know every teacher's Xerox code, but he also does the best impression of Dana Carvey doing George Bush that you could hope to see. Whether he was skulking after Mr. Hopkins as he tried to hide the spirit jug, inventing a new verse for "The Joe Song", hijacking Mrs. Bevans' overhead projector and demanding donuts for its return, sporting a button that read "Drug and lice free", or merely imitating my laughter outside the staff room door, Todd livened up the halls of La Center High School and taught many students that it's okay to march to a different drummer.



Every year I struggle to write a conclusion to this darn speech. I certainly want you to know that I have enjoyed being your advisor. But I also want to leave you with a little teacherly advice. As a class and individually, you 36 people have suffered more than your share of tragedies and setbacks in your young lives. Nevertheless, you have survived, learned something from your setbacks, and gone on. As you become wrapped up in the joys and the struggles of life beyond high school, remember that things are not always as bleak as they may appear to be and that three good doses of laughter each day is good for your disposition. And always think fondly of good old LCHS, even when we move up the road.

The Class of 1992

Graduation: June 12, 1992

Our ceremony tonight is a mixture of the traditional and the nontraditional. On the side of tradition, we have a relatively formal ceremony featuring the principal as emcee, speeches by the valedictorian and salutatorian, the conferring of diplomas, and, of course, “Pomp and Circumstance”. On the nontraditional side, we offer 32 students decked out in purple and green caps and gowns sporting blue and white tassels. Furthermore, while most graduating classes select lofty, philosophical themes, the La Center High School Class of ‘92 instead has chosen a theme which accurately reflects the collective personality of the group. Faced with this odd potpourri of tradition and innovation, I have chosen to be nontraditional by being traditional. In other words, while these 32 students and many of you expect me to share a brief and humorous anecdote about each of them, I will instead be keeping with the spirit of nonconformity which the Class of ‘92 has inspired in me.

In his classic work *Walden*, Henry David Thoreau wrote, “Why should we be in such desperate haste to succeed and in such desperate enterprises? If a man does not keep pace with his companions, perhaps it is because he hears a different drummer. Let him step to the music which he hears, however measured or far away.” Tonight’s graduates have always heard a slightly different strain of music than those around them, and they have not hesitated to march to their own drummer. Whether it is **Kolleen Bouchane** weaving chopsticks or shoes into her hair or **Ben Lassiter** screaming “BANG” when his gun failed in *The Phantom of the Opera*, nonconformity and innovation are predominant traits of the Class of ‘92.

High school is a tough place to be a nonconformist, let me tell you. Peer pressure is alive and well and just as powerful as it was ten, twenty, and thirty years ago. Everyone wants to belong to

something, and too many teenagers compromise or sacrifice their values and beliefs to that end. Quite frankly, I know a good many adults who are guilty of the same mistake. But there is most definitely a risk involved in going public with ideas, feelings, and actions which break the mold. We risk the loss of friends, of that sense of belonging which is so vital to us all. In some cases, we become the object of scorn and ridicule. I am particularly reminded of one of last year’s graduates, a young man who chose to look and act differently from his classmates. And although some students were bold enough to ridicule him in public, he bore such criticism calmly and enjoyed a certain sense of freedom which few high school students enjoy. I admired him.

Ultimately, though, we must live with ourselves before we may live with anyone else. At some point in our lives--perhaps when we graduate from high school--we must take stock of who we are and what we believe. And then we must begin or continue to reflect our beliefs in our actions. For some, this will lead to a relatively traditional life with flashes of nonconformity while for others it will lead to that road “less traveled by” of which Robert Frost writes.

I urge the Class of ‘92 to listen to that voice within each of them--call it conscience or intuition or anything else--and to let that voice guide them in the thousands of daily decisions which face them now and will continue to face them in life after high school. As Ralph Waldo Emerson wrote, “Nothing is at last sacred but the integrity of your own mind.”

Frankly, I'm not quite certain why I decided to take a more serious route with my speech for the Class of 1992. The huge irony of this speech is that shortly after I spoke at the 1991 graduation, I was sort of fired from speaking at graduation. (I'll go into that after I retire.) At any rate, the Class of 1992 was outraged that I was not going to be allowed to speak at their graduation, so they went to bat for me and had my firing overturned. Whatever the reason for my taking my speech in a different direction, here are the stories I would have told about the Class of 1992.

I think it is fair to say that when they were in high school (maybe earlier), **Jenny Bevans** and her little sister Tiffany did not always get along, but I recall a



day when Jenny decided to change her ways. It was after we had read a short story entitled "The Scarlet Ibis", in which a big brother becomes irritated at his little brother's weaknesses, so he runs off and leaves the boy to try to catch up to him in a pounding rainstorm. When the little brother

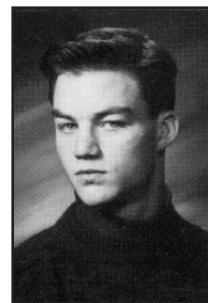
does not appear, his big brother returns to find him, and the younger boy has died. Poor Jenny! She was so moved by the story that she was nice to Tiffany... for a whole day!

And while I'm on the subject of emotions, I made a \$5 bet with **Mark Erickson** on May 10, 1991 that he would cry at his own graduation, which was more than a year away. Easiest five bucks I ever made. (Those tough boys never think that graduation will move them to tears. I know differently.)

I recall one day in Tenth Grade English, a class by the way in which I had all four Jennies from the Class of 1992--**Jenny Bevans, Jenny Bosch, Jeni Rusk, and Jenny Smith**--when **Sam Roller** pilfered the top portion of my overhead project. Needless to say, the projector did not work too well without the lens, so I became a little peeved when it was missing and no one would admit to having taken it. Then Jenny Bosch reached into her backpack to retrieve something and out popped the missing part. Jenny

screamed and proclaimed her innocence while Sam quietly chuckled at the back of the room. And I shall never forget Jenny's stories about her grandma who sent her checks for 50¢ for her birthday or her impression of a man with no arms. (One of the funniest, most entertaining students of my career)

Naturally, when I think of Sam I cannot help but recall **Iver Stokke**. According to my little memory notebook, Iver loved to star in homemade videos, especially if he could carry a chainsaw. And I distinctly recall one day in class when Iver, who rarely raised his hand to contribute to a class discussion, did just that. I was stunned, to say the least, and when I called on him, he asked me if I knew why, when geese fly in a V-formation, one line of the V is always shorter than the other. I thought, "Wow! Iver is actually speaking up in class and this sounds pretty darned fascinating," so I told him that no, I had no idea why that was so. His response? "There are fewer geese in that line." Arghhh! (I like to tell my current students this story about Iver. When a student raises his hand in class, a teacher never knows what she is going to hear.)



If I were to give out awards to students from the



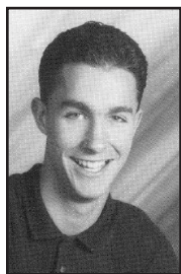
past 37 years, **Jodie Harrison** would receive the "Open Mouth, Insert Foot" award for a comment she made in Tenth Grade English one day when we were reading *A Raisin in the Sun*. I'm sure you all recall that play...ha! At any rate, the wife of the protagonist finds herself pregnant, and without

thinking, Jodie blurted out something like, "Oh, my God! Isn't she 30? How can she be having a baby?" Then **Jenny Bevans** elbowed Jodie in the ribs and told her to hush up. You see, just a few weeks earlier, I had returned to school after having my son Tony. And I was 32 at the time.

My strongest memory of **Seth Hopkins** involves

a sound, the sound of his tennis shoes clomping down the hall. That boy had enormous feet and I could hear him headed to my classroom from a mile away.

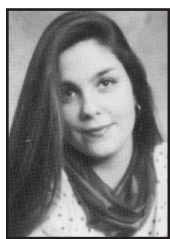
Seth's fellow basketball player pal was, of course, **Jake Watson**. Who doesn't remember Jake hauling around a basketball his entire senior year. I also recall Jake constantly eating. He would plop that big old athletic bag of his down by his desk and by the end



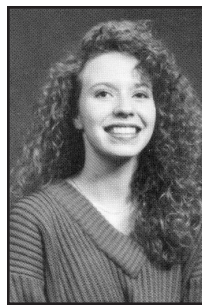
of any period, the entire perimeter of his desk would be littered with candy wrappers, fruit peels, empty milk cartons, etc. But my favorite memory of Jake happened on a beautiful spring day during lunch. I returned to my classroom from lunch, only to discover that all of the student desks, my stool (still have that darned thing), and my overhead projector cart (projector included) had been relocated to the lawn just outside my classroom. Everything was neatly set up and all of the members of Advanced Composition were politely seated in their desks, ready for class to begin. So we had class outside! It was simply brilliant and hilarious. But the funniest part happened when Mr. Hopkins made Jake haul out the vacuum cleaner and give my room a thorough vacuuming before the kids returned the furniture to the room.

One last basketball player memory involves **Eric Sheldon**, who during a game at Ridgefield, was trying to save a ball from going out of bounds. In the process, he accidentally slammed the ball into his little brother's head, but at least we ended up with the ball.

During the spring of 1991, as some of you may recall, we had the Great Head Lice Scare, one of the



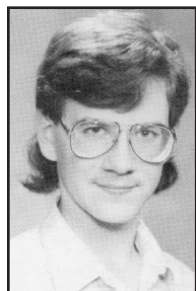
few times I recall a head lice crisis at the high school. That was a crazy day. At any rate, **Emily Mencke** and **Kolleen Bouchane** were hanging out in my classroom that afternoon, joking about people overreacting to the scare and



just having a good time. Then they were called down to the office to be checked. When they returned to my classroom, Kolleen looked positive stricken, and Emily appeared ready to burst. Yep, Kolleen had the little critters, and you all remember how long and thick her hair was then.

Emily was clean, but she certainly seemed to be enjoying Kolleen's misery.

One day in Tenth Grade English, we were playing a game of story continuation, where someone begins to tell a story and then shouts out the name of a classmate, who must then continue telling the story.



Every time the story came around to **Ben Lassiter**, toxic waste was somehow involved. But then Ben muffed it one time when the story came around to him and could not come up with anything quickly. The rule was that if you did not pick up the thread of the story immediately, the class then devised a way for you to act out dying. Ben was instructed to "die in a blender." And when **Stacy Schaer** blew it in the same game, she had to die going down a toilet. (I gotta remember to play that game this year in Tenth Grade English.)

I don't recall if this occurred in Tenth Grade English or Advanced Composition, but I showed the class Alfred Hitchcock's *The Birds*, which not a single student enjoyed. I must have been less mature then because after the negative reaction to the film, I broke you into groups and demanded that you write a glowing review of the film, which you did. I still have a copy of the paper the girls in the class wrote. It still makes me laugh.

One of my memories of **Erica Schader** involves a little trip that she took, as a junior I believe, to the beach. Apparently, she told her parents that she was headed to the beach with a girlfriend when in reality, she took the trip to the beach with Jamey Wolverton. It's okay, though, as they ended up married to each

other a few years later. Ha.

There you go, Class of 1992. Sorry I did not share these stories back on June 12, 1992. Better late than never.

The Class of 1993

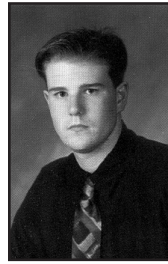
Graduation: June 11, 1993

During the last two weeks of school, the air conditioning in my classroom quit working, the backs of three desks snapped off, and my door handle fell to the floor one afternoon. In addition, where student desks occasionally rub up against the wall, the beige paint is chipping off, and that awful institution green paint which graced the entire high school before the remodel nine years ago is becoming ever more apparent. In the faculty room, the refrigerator is developing a distinct aroma, which none of us wishes to investigate, and no one quite trusts the chairs in there anymore. Finally, we've just about finished up the giant 7-year old crossword puzzle in the women's restroom, thanks largely to the efforts of Mrs. Bevans. I think the message is clear. It's time to move on.

But more importantly, it's time for these 59 young adults to move on, to leave the halls and classrooms of La Center High School and find a niche for themselves in the world. Before we allow them to do so, however, I'd like to paint a relatively brief picture of the Class of '93 for you. Each class that passes through here leaves its mark in one way or another. Some classes literally leave a mark while others we remember with warmth and a few chuckles. The Class of '93 has been a terrific group--to teach, to advise, to coach, to banter with, occasionally to discipline. Allow me please to illustrate some of their predominant traits.

Chief among the characteristics of this group is intelligence. I probably wrote 35 or 40 letters of recommendation for students in this class, a sure sign that they will be continuing their education beyond high school. **Julia Verdin** certainly demonstrates this trait. A couple of weeks ago, Julia was trying to put the date on her quiz, but she couldn't

quite remember what the date was, even though it happened to be her eighteenth birthday. Then there was the time earlier this year when Mr. Johnson



hired Julia to babysit his sons one Saturday from 6:00 to 12:00 a.m. while he and his wife went to a play. Mr. Johnson could not figure out who would be pounding on his door at 6:00 on a Saturday morning. **Scott Weaver**, too, has consistently shown intelligence throughout his high school career.

One day late last summer, I was cruising through Woodland when I passed Scott on the freeway. What struck me as odd was that Scott was driving less than the posted speed limit and that when he saw me, he sort of slunked down in the seat so as to be inconspicuous. Actually, he was wise on both accounts because, you see, Scott did not yet have a driver's license.

Another admirable trait of the Class of '93 is that these kids truly view their teachers as role models and they often try to emulate us in their own lives. **Andy Thornton**, for example, tried to drive exactly like Ms. Romine this past winter when so many of us traveled from the boys basketball playoff game in Kelso to the girls basketball playoff game in Toledo. Unfortunately, the state patrolman had no sympathy for Andy's plight, and Andy learned the hard way that those who attempt to keep up with Ms. Romine on the freeway either receive a ticket or commit bambicide.

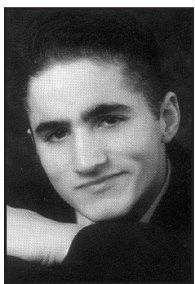
Daring would be another appropriate adjective to describe this group of kids. Not only will **Thomas Wolverton** drink anything, which he did earlier this year in front of the entire student body, but he will also sing English ballads to the tune of "Yellow Submarine" in front of the entire class and for only a few candybars.

Perhaps the trait which this class possesses which I like the most is that they always show respect for their teachers. Last year, for instance, when **Bryan Brammer** earned an A on his *Odyssey* exam, he



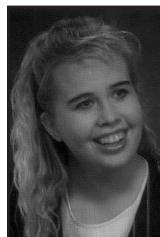
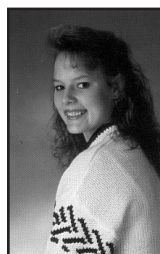
actually dropped to the floor in the hall and kissed my shoes. **Wade Winston** and **Jerome Erickson** demonstrate a similar reverence for me as they proved last fall when they brought brownies to class after having suffered a humiliating defeat in a brain game that we occasionally play. I thought that the brownies had a rather odd texture, but since the boys had eaten some first, I joined in. Moments after I finished my brownie, Wade laughingly admitted that those were not walnuts in the brownies. They were milkbones.

In addition to the traits which I have already mentioned, the members of the Class of '93 are exceptionally tolerant of situations and people which are foreign or somehow odd to them. In Film Study this year, for example, I chose to show "West Side Story". Big mistake. Every time the Sharks or Jets would break into a tune or even threaten to do so, **Jeff Van Tol** would drop his head and slowly shake it back and forth, yet he never said a word. While I'm speaking of tolerance, I should mention **Allen Bolen**. When he was a freshman, Allen and I got off to a rough start. I don't know how many times I sent him packing that year, yet he stuck with me and I with him and four years later, we get along great, which is amazing because Allen and I have completely different viewpoints. In fact, the only thing we would probably agree upon is that we don't agree on anything. One other exceptionally tolerant student is **Paul VanBreemen**. I have misspelled Paul's name for nearly his entire high school career, yet he has never become angry about it. You'll notice, Paul, that I did get it right in the slide show.



If you're looking for a bizarre sense of humor, this is the group to see. Take **Shawn Taylor**, for instance. When Shawn was a freshman, his mentor group and mine got together for a Christmas party and gift exchange. Shawn had brought this huge, beautifully wrapped package for the exchange, and I simply had to have it. I managed to end up with it and when I unwrapped

it, it contained only a roll of blue toilet paper. That's certainly odd enough, but Shawn had enhanced the appearance of the roll with a brown felt pen.

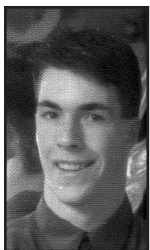


When it comes to being kind, humane, appreciative, and compassionate, the names **Kim Schaer** and **Sara Wood** immediately come to mind. When she was a freshman, Kim came to me one day complaining of the way Scott Weaver was breathing. Apparently he was making too much noise, and Kim was wondering if I would please ask him to stop breathing. Last year, Kim and Sara couldn't stand the suspense of not knowing whether or not their boyfriends had rented a limousine for Prom, so they ransacked Bryan Brammer's room until they found the receipt for the limo. If that wasn't bad enough, when the limo arrived, Kim and Sara complained because it didn't match their gowns!

Matt Barnes demonstrates yet another trait of the Class of '93--reliability. Last year when he ran for the office of ASB president, Matt did not promise his constituents the moon--no increased school spirit, no improved cafeteria food, no better activities. Instead, Matt promised students something that really mattered to them and he delivered on his promise. He had the water fountain in the main hallway repaired.

If a sense of adventure is your forte, **Davey Roller** is the man for you. Actually, until this week, I was not aware of Dave's bent for excitement, and then I watched this video that the current ASB officers produced for next year's officers. I honestly didn't know that the Roller family car could travel that kind of terrain and survive. By the way, have your folks seen that video yet, Dave?

Lastly, I'd like to mention that the Class of '93 is quite responsible financially. In fact, they will be donating approximately \$600 toward the



cost of the entry mat at the new high school. Perhaps **Bryan Brammer** best exemplifies the fiscal wisdom of his class. When the basketball team stopped for dinner on the way home from a game this year, Bryan claimed he had no money, so Coach Lapp promised to buy him a hamburger. While Coach Lapp was on the phone to the newspaper, though, Bryan convinced Herm to buy him a burger, and when Forbes got off the phone, he also bought Bryan a burger, which Bryan then sold for a buck. Of course, Bryan had plenty of dinner money with him the whole time.

As you can see, the Class of '93 is anything but mundane. For the past four years, they have entertained us, amazed us, frustrated us, pleased us. Now it's time for them to leave us.

Before I close tonight, I'd like to share a few thoughts about change. Certainly graduations are about change and so too is life. Graduation always makes me wax nostalgic, and I have been particularly bad this year because we are celebrating our last graduation in this building.

Before I first came to La Center in 1979, the principal of the high school gave me directions to the school. He told me that I would pass through the business district and shortly after that I would reach the school. Well, I grew up in Portland, so when I arrived at La Center High School for the first time, I did not realize that I had passed through the business district on my way here. Then I actually entered the high school. The first thing that struck me was that everything was this bluish green--the walls, the floors, even the furniture. And I thought, "Well, I can stand this for a year."

Five years later, I was still here and everything was still institution green. One of my most vivid memories of that school year concerns the student parking lot, which resembled the lunar surface far more than a parking lot. At the start of the 1984 school year, I could weave my Datsun 210 between

potholes without actually having to drive into a pothole, but by the end of the school year, the holes had expanded and that task was impossible.

But then the remodeling of this building was completed and we all had a new lease on life. No longer was everything institution green. Brown and orange became the predominant colors. Of course, not everything was operational by the start of the next school year. For example, there were no clocks or bells, nor were there any stalls in the restrooms. The worst inconvenience, though, was that there were no locks yet on the faculty restroom doors, and those doors open right into the hallway. That's when we developed the buddy system.

Nine years later, we face an even bigger and far more exciting change as we open the doors of a brand new and beautiful La Center High School. Such a lot of change in 14 short years. Certainly these 59 students have changed a good deal in that same time. Tonight they face one of life's bigger changes as they leave school and in many cases each other. It's an exciting yet bittersweet time for them.

And so I leave these very special people with a few words from Karen Kaiser Clark: "Life is change. Growth is optional. Choose wisely." Good luck and Godspeed.

The Class of 1994

Graduation: June 3, 1994

When the school year began for the students of La Center High School in early September of 1979, I was a 22-year old rookie whose favorite TV show during her youth--besides "Gilligan's Island", of course--had been "Room 222", a program on which all of the students were eager to learn and no one misbehaved. As I soon discovered, "Room 222" was not a particularly instructive show when it came to real life education. Nevertheless, I survived that school year and during those 180 school days, I learned more about myself, about teaching, and about learning than I have ever learned before or since.

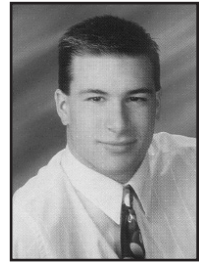
One thing which I know now is that it is far better to be a 15-year veteran of education than a newcomer. We have had a number of new or fairly new teachers in the building this year, and as I listened to their trials and tribulations, I was continually reminded of my first year here at LCHS. At 22 and just four years older than my seniors, I believed that my greatest asset as a teacher was the lack of a generation gap. After all, their music and interests were very close to my own. I used to wonder what would happen as I aged. My students would always be 15-18 years old, but I would not remain 22. How could I continue to relate to teenagers as I moved closer and closer to 30, and now to 40? I don't even want to think beyond 40.

Well, I'm happy to report that my students and I get along quite well, though I am now older than some of their parents. It's true that our interests are not so similar these days. I, for example, own no CD's by 10,000 Maniacs nor do I tune in to "Beavis and Butthead". My students, on the other hand, have little appreciation of The Beach Boys. One thing which we all do agree on, though, is that TV doesn't get much better than "Gilligan's Island" or "The Brady Bunch".

With the theme of learning in mind, I'd like to familiarize you a bit with the Class of '94 by sharing what they have taught me.

When they were freshmen, **Lyle Erickson** and **Jason Rose** reinforced my notion that freshmen will always be a bit gullible. If you want the entire story, you'll have to get it from Lyle and Jason, but let me just say that it involves cash, a seemingly bribed teacher's aide, and a phony quiz. While I'm on the subject of Lyle, one other lesson which I have learned about high school freshmen is that they ask the most entertaining questions. So, Lyle, have you figured out the difference yet between a hernia and a hemorrhoid?

In all fairness to Lyle, I should add that he has become far more clever over the years. In fact, last year he was involved in the big brownie caper in English Literature. The end result of that incident was that everyone in the class--including me--ate brownies laced with dog biscuits. Hey, they looked like walnuts to me!

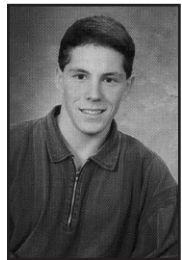


Another important lesson which I have learned over the years is that high school students just love to be creative; consequently, when I teach *The Scarlet Letter* in CP American Literature, the students' final project is to produce a video taped version of one or more scenes from the novel, complete with original costumes, sets, and dialogue. I allow students a good deal of poetic license, but nothing could have prepared me for the tape which I received last year from **Scott Eversaul**, **Jessica Russell**, and **Shelly Adams**. I only hope that no copies of that production are still in existence.

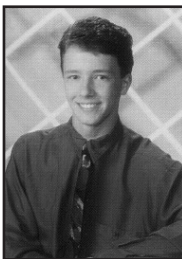
While some students are content to remain quietly in the background during their high school careers, others prefer to draw as much attention to themselves as is humanly possible. **Janel Renner**, for example, told me just a few weeks ago that I could say absolutely anything about her at graduation; she

just wanted to be sure that I used her name in my speech. Since I have Janel's permission, I have to tell you that as a freshman, Janel used to drive me nuts with her talking. She is a most demonstrative young woman and when, as a ninth grader, she heard something which shocked her, or angered her, or made her happy, Janel would emit this high-pitched shriek and then she would not stop talking until she ran out of breath or had completely vented her feelings. You know, some things just don't change over time.

Another senior who has taught me that old habits die hard is **Peter Newman**. Peter's problem as a freshman was that he simply could not remember to bring a pen to class. Most students outgrow this problem, but just a few weeks ago, I was watching Peter's group as each student was completing a quiz. Three of the four students in his group would scribble a couple of answers down on the page, and then each would hand the pen on to the next student. Only three students actually had pens, so one student was always without. However, when I called for the quizzes, everyone had had enough pen time to complete the quiz. Naturally, when I inquired as to which member of the group had forgotten a pen, I was not shocked to hear that Peter was "the culprit". (note card incident)



One member of the class of '94 has taught me just how big of a difference one student can make. As some of you know, **Leif Olson** has been a moderately important member of our Knowledge Bowl A team

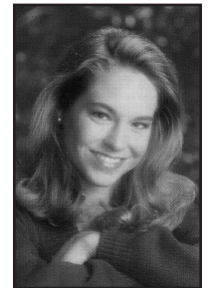


for four years. This year, after the team had swept the first three regular season competitions but before they won the last competition, defeated Hudson's Bay, took first among 27 teams at the regional competition, and placed third among 45 mostly

AAA schools at the state tournament, we received a letter from the Knowledge Bowl coach at Kalama High School. He was hosting the final regular season

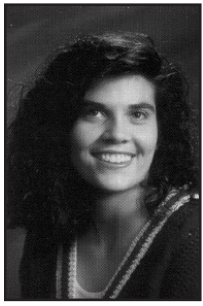
competition and its customary for the host coach to send out a letter about a week before the contest to remind us to be there. At the end of his letter, the Kalama coach, a rather jocular man, announced that the Kalama School Board had recently passed a policy which forbade any student by the name of Leif from entering the school buildings. In response to this new policy, all of our team members, including Mrs. Bevans and I, sported nametags which read "Hello, my name is Leif." Except for Leif. . .He wore a tag which said, "Hello, my name is Iver."

Every now and then, a student comes along who is perhaps just a bit too uptight about school. Such students represent a challenge to me because while I do not want to dampen their spirit for knowledge, I also do not wish to see them burn out before their senior year rolls around. In the Class of '94, that student is **Julie Bakker**. As a freshman in keyboarding, Julie was terribly concerned about her grade, so when a chance to earn a little extra credit rolled around, she grabbed at it. Julie's theory was that it never hurts to pad your grade a bit, even if it's already 111%. As a senior, Julie has relaxed a good deal where grades are concerned, yet the quality of her work has not suffered one bit. After all, she is the co-valedictorian of her class, and I'm happy to report that she was quite satisfied with the 98% that she earned in English Literature this semester.



From **Alex Yamashita**, I learned that some students are more suited to a classroom setting than to an independent study, especially seniors in their last semester of school. Alex had put off reading *Crime and Punishment*, so he decided to buckle down and read it one weekend. Apparently Alex was unaware that the book is some 447 pages long. Then he decided that he would come in one afternoon and complete all of the quizzes in a single sitting, all 22 of them. Needless to say, Alex did not develop a great love of *Crime and Punishment*.

When these seniors were in the tenth grade, we read one of Steinbeck's novels, *In Dubious Battle*, and as is my custom, I quizzed the kids each day over the reading assignment. I'm not exactly sure why--perhaps food is quite prominent in the novel or maybe I was just hungry when I wrote the quizzes--but on at least half of the quizzes, I would ask what the characters had eaten. It wasn't really a difficult question because the only food these people ever consumed was meat, beans, or grease. However, **Cymany O'Brien** picked up on this food theme and never let it die. Since *In Dubious Battle*, we have read a number of novels together in college prep English and taken at least 150 other quizzes, yet during the review prior to nearly every quiz, Cymany has asked, "What did they eat?" From Cymany, I have learned not to include food questions on my quizzes.

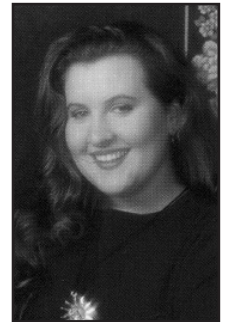


Tanya Jones taught me that a high school teacher and a freshman can indeed have something in common. In our case, it was that we were both devoted fans of "Twin Peaks". I always looked forward to those mornings after the show had aired because I knew that Tanya and I would share out latest views on who had killed Laura Palmer, and when "Twin Peaks" met its demise, I was so pleased to know that Tanya too had latched onto "Northern Exposure" for her weekly dose of quirky television.

And speaking of quirky, let me say a few words about **Erin Dunbar**. Erin is not herself a violent person at all, but she loves horror fiction. The more violence in a book, the better she likes it. For example, when we recently read *Pride and Prejudice* in English Literature, Erin detested the novel so much that each morning when she came into class, she would explain to me what method she had used to keep herself awake long enough to struggle through the evening's reading assignment. When we read *Frankenstein* right after that, she had no such difficulty. Furthermore, when Erin's group produced a video version of *Macbeth* as their creative project,

Erin quite naturally played the part of the murderous Macbeth. Finally, what do you suppose the topic of Erin's research paper in Advanced Composition was? Vampires!

Helping students to become better writers, to find their own voices in their writing has its ups and downs. Sometimes, after I've encountered one too many run-on sentences or I've seen the contraction of "you are" spelled YOUR for the 20th time in one set of papers, teaching math begins to look pretty attractive. But then along comes a writer such as **Sara Larsen**, and I forget about all of those thesis statements which begin, "In this paper I will. . ." Sara continually restores my faith in student writers, and I'd like to share just a bit of a paper she wrote last year about her grandfather's dogs. "First in this long line of mentally impaired dogs came Sparky.



This small black pup seemed pretty normal, until ironically, he lived up to his name. While wandering my grandpa's cow field one day, Sparky slipped and rolled down a steep hill into a bonfire that happened to be burning there, scorching off all his fur. Now don't worry, he survived, and his fur eventually grew back; but frankly, Sparky was never the same. He lived several more years, until he died when a sharp-shooting neighbor castrated him in a fit of rage. It's a good thing they didn't name him Lucky."

As did the students who graduated before them, the Class of '94 has taught me a great deal, so as they enter this new phase of their lives, I'd like to leave them with one final thought. I don't make any secret of the fact that I love being a high school teacher. Not every moment is wonderful; that's not the way of life. However, most of my days here at La Center High School are good ones, and I feel a sense of accomplishment at the end of the day and especially at the end of the school year. Whatever success I have enjoyed as a teacher is a direct result of loving and believing in what I do. May all of you have the same luck.

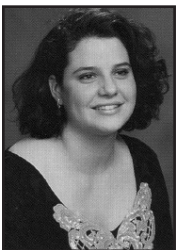
The Class of 1995

Graduation: June 9, 1995

This tattered sheet of paper which I now hold in my hand contains a list of all of the comments which we teachers may include on the progress reports and report cards which the high school sends home to you parents. To be completely honest, we have on occasion--say, at the end of a particularly stressful week--devised alternative comments, but so far, Mr. Hopkins has vetoed all of those.

As parents, you have probably glanced at these comments and wondered just what the heck we mean by a comment such as #34--slow to get on task. After all, the comments are somewhat general. To clear up any confusion about these comments, I thought I would illustrate a few of them, using members of the Class of 1995 as examples.

I will begin with #61--punctual and on time:



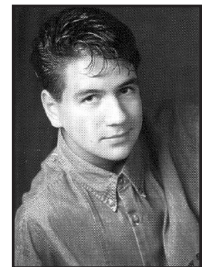
attends class regularly. **Becky Furgeson** is always in class on time with virtually no exceptions. . .wait. . .there was that minor incident a couple of months ago. Becky was a student in my third period World Literature class this year, and when she did not come

to class on April 27, I was a little surprised because I had seen her in the hall earlier in the day. About halfway through class, **Wendy Giroux**, one of Becky's research partners, came up to me and expressed concern at Becky's absence; consequently, I sent Wendy in search of Becky. Wendy returned some five minutes later, and she looked worried. She had visited several locations around the school, including the music room, where Becky is an aide for Mr. Bentson-Royal second period. Through the window of the locked door, she could see Becky's coat and books, but not Becky. Fearing some bizarre accident involving musical instruments, I next sent Wendy to borrow Gail's keys so that she could break into the music room. Another ten minutes passed, and

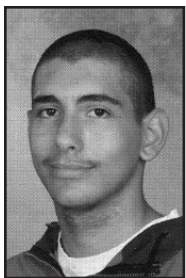
finally Becky and Wendy walked through the door of my classroom. Wendy immediately shot a playful glance my way while Becky inconspicuously tried to reach her seat. Unfortunately, by this time the entire class had figured out that Becky had fallen asleep in the music room and when Becky shouted, "It's not funny", we only laughed harder.

I sometimes use comment #11--shows exceptional interest in physical education--just to see if anyone actually reads those darned comments. However, **Robin King** certainly embodies this notion, and not just because she is an 11-time letterperson here at LCHS. In her younger and less mature days, Robin would occasionally pull pranks that would get her in trouble, especially in PE class. Now, I don't want to reveal the exact nature of Robin's major PE faux pas--because I like my job and my income--but I'm sure she'd be willing to tell you out in the Commons after the ceremony.

Comment #88--does not suit up for class consistently--is another favorite of mine. While I realize that it is intended for PE, I just like the sound of it. In the Class of 1995, **Ryan Schouten** is the best example of comment #88. One day a few months ago, Ryan missed school because he could not find his shoes. When I asked one of Ryan's buddies why he could not find his shoes, he told me that Mrs. Schouten had collected all of Ryan's shoes during the night and hidden them. Needless to say, I was intrigued, but knowing Ryan's pals, I was also somewhat skeptical. As a result, I called Ryan right then and there, and sure enough, he was Shoeless Ryan Schouten. While Ryan would not fess up to me just why his mom had spirited away all of his footwear, I suspect that she was trying to persuade him to pick up after himself. I assume this approach worked because he has not missed school due to a lack of shoes since then.



Comment #46--comes to class prepared--could mean many things, but when I think of this



comment, **Jason Misner** immediately comes to mind. Throughout most of last year, Jason would come to class wearing an orange parka, and in the center of the chest of this parka was a pouch. In that pouch, Jason had nearly any item you might need--snacks, money, a library card, photos of friends, dental floss, chewing gum, a nonfunctioning pen. Unfortunately, the pouch was not quite big enough to house Jason's text or his notebook, so while he was prepared for most of life's little emergencies, he was rarely prepared for class.

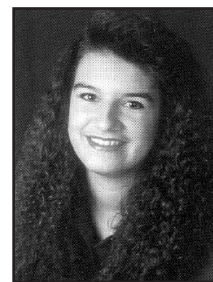
Few students at La Center High School do not qualify for comment #19--needs to pay more attention. Take **Danny Ransier**, for example. When Danny was a freshman, he was riding with a friend in a car and decided to impress some fellow students. When you are a freshman in high school, it is cool to spit out the window, so Danny did. Spitting out the window is still fairly cool as a senior, but by then you realize it's more effective if the window is rolled down. **Lynne Rahoi** is another student who could stand to pay more attention now and then. I am told that she was vacuuming the house one day when one of her mother's prized birds had the run of the house. Somehow Lynne managed to suck the bird part way up the vacuum; fortunately, though, the bird survived. **Amanda Calnan** is normally a very observant young woman, but I guess she does not always listen as closely as she might. For many years, Amanda labored under the impression that the title of that classic Johnny Rivers song was "Secret Asian Man", not "Secret Agent Man".

One of the newest members of the Class of 1995 is **William Orozco**, a young man who joined my Film Study course at the start of the second semester. Comment #1 is best illustrated by William--student works well in lab situation. While it is true that Film Study is not a science course, I have often felt during class that I am in the midst of a giant science experiment. When William, a very mild mannered young man, first arrived in class, he joined a group

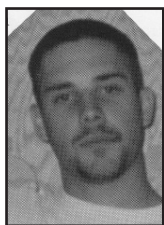
including **Jeremy Rehfeldt**, **Ryan Schouten**, and **Buck Harris**. At the time, Ryan and Buck were going through their Monty Python stage, and occasionally while they were doing their Holy Grail schtick, I would glance over at William, who continued to work throughout their routine, but he would have this puzzled, incredulous expression on his face, as though he couldn't quite believe that human beings could act like that.

Another popular comment which could mean a variety of things is #56--skills could be improved with more practice. I believe this comment applies to **David Bolen**, and here's why. When Dave's little sister Kim was delivering her ASB election speech about a month ago, she described a childhood incident in which her much adored brother David had attempted to inflict bodily damage on her by chucking boulders at her. He was initially unsuccessful in his attempt. As I pictured David heaving a round object at a target and missing entirely, I was immediately reminded of the free throw which he shot at the state basketball tournament as a sophomore. With more practice, he might have avoided that air ball.

Mr. Johnson's favorite comment is #50--talkative. Next year, I'm going to suggest that we remove the word "talkative" from the comment sheet and simply insert a picture of **Misti Smith**. During the three years that I have been Misti's English teacher, I have asked her to quit talking at least 7000 times. In fact, we have progressed to the point now where words are not even necessary. Often when she ought to be reading silently or writing a paper, Misti will gab away until suddenly she becomes aware that she is the only member of her group who is off task. Feeling somewhat guilty, she will glance my way, I will give her "the look", and the chatting will cease, for about five minutes. Earlier this year, Misti commented to me that she often develops headaches when she talks too much, to which I responded, "You must be in excruciating pain all of the time."



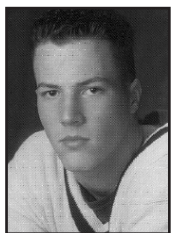
One comment which I have used quite sparingly over the years is #54--requires exceptional amount of supervision. One of the students seated below me, however, certainly qualifies for #54, **Buck Harris**. For many teachers, their biggest challenge related



to Buck was simply keeping him in the classroom. One day when he should have been elsewhere, he threw open Miss Eddy's door while her class was in progress, tossed in a wadded up piece of paper, screamed "Incoming", and then threw himself on top of the wad of paper, a cruel thing to do to a brand new teacher. During one hot afternoon when Mrs. Heaton had her door propped open, Buck dropped to his belly and proceeded to crawl under the tables in her room. Mrs. Heaton did not spot him until he had reached the far corner of the room. Did I mention that Buck is going into the service after graduation?

I had Buck in class all year during fifth period, the last period of the day, and he almost never made any attempt to exit the room. One day I decided to ask him why, when he spent most of the day roaming the halls of LCHS, he seemed content to spend 55 straight minutes in my classroom. While I was hoping to hear that my class was just too fascinating to miss, what Buck told me was that he spent so much time earlier in the day visiting people, he was just too darned tired fifth period to visit anyone else.

I use comment #4 quite often--student has shown improvement, and the student who I believe is the most improved member of his class is Mr. **Troy**

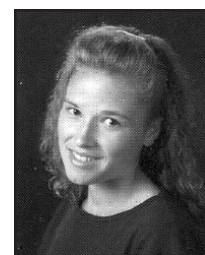


Schader. Late in his freshman year, Troy committed one of the cardinal sins in my classroom; he used a pencil to complete a quiz. Although Troy will now deny it, he became furious with me when I gave him a zero on that quiz. In fact, he barely spoke to me during Tenth Grade English, and when I would kid him about "the pencil incident", he would merely grunt at me. Fortunately, we have overcome any animosity about the event and even developed a sense of humor about

it. Just yesterday, I gave Troy a graduation card featuring a #2 pencil, and he kicked himself for not taking his World Literature final in pencil.

At this point in the year, comment #52--poor attitude--applies to nearly every student and teacher in LCHS. However, in the Class of 1995, I believe **Ben Mencke** best exemplifies this comment. Ben's attitude in Advanced Comp and English Lit had deteriorated so far by mid-May that even **Matt Wood** was beginning to complain, so I thought I'd try a little experiment. I bet Ben \$8.00--the cost of Senior Breakfast--that he could not maintain a positive attitude for 90 straight minutes, the length of our class period. Ben pondered my wager for quite a long time and after extracting a promise from the class that we would not dress funny or go out of our way to provoke his disparaging comments, he agreed to the bet. I'm happy to report that Ben won this bet, though it took all of the false cheerfulness that he could muster. Ironically enough, at the end of that very same day, Ben won another \$10 in the attendance lottery, proving that it literally pays to have a positive attitude.

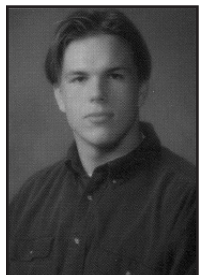
I have been blessed with a wonderful student aide this year, **Janá Smith**, but it is not because of her work as my aide that I have chosen Janá to illustrate comment #51--often puts forth extra effort. Unbeknownst to me, the kids in my World Literature class organized a Mother's Day celebration for me this past May. Unfortunately, the day of the festivities coincided with the school's annual blood drive. Janá was apparently in charge of the cake, but she was nearly late to the surprise party because she had given blood.



Although she was supposed to lie still for about 30 minutes after donating blood, Janá needed to return to class with the cake, and she pleaded with the blood mobile people to let her leave early. I'm not certain that she had the cake with her, but I do know that she staggered down the hall, occasionally slamming into lockers, as she made her way back to class. I call that

putting forth extra effort. By the way, the cake was unscathed.

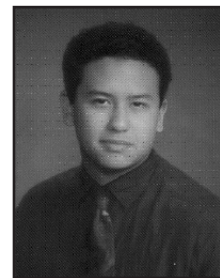
Comment #73 is a very positive one--student is willing to assume responsibility. While some students are quite willing to assume responsibility, they are not always prepared to do so. Take **Misti Smith**, for example. I know I've already picked on Misti, but this next story just has to be shared. Misti's dad was apparently trying to teach her a bit of car maintenance one time, including how to add oil to her car. He explained how you insert the funnel into the oil receptacle and then drain the oil into the funnel. Being a responsible young woman, Misti went off to accomplish this task, but she soon returned and announced to her father that the funnel was far too big to fit into the oil receptacle. There was just enough room for the dipstick.



To illustrate Comment # 8--student is creative and imaginative--let me tell you a little bit about **Mike Beckham**. Last year during Homecoming Week, Mike wore an air mattress to school on Water Floatation Device Day. That's creative. When Mike and his pals Vance, Matt, and Ben conspired to create a video version of *Macbeth* this year, they carried their project a step further and filmed *Macbeth* starring in famous scenes from famous movies. My personal favorite was Mike playing *Macbeth* playing *Shaft*. In his never ending quest to find innovative ways to present the daily bulletin this year, Mike once pretended to be a lounge singer and belted out the announcements in a performance that would have made Bill Murray of "Saturday Night Live" fame proud. Mike's creativity made itself known early in his high school career when he was quoted in the yearbook. According to Mike, "Starting high school was like wearing a new pair of underwear; first they feel uncomfortable, but soon they become a part of you."

I have just two comments left to clarify for you, and one student will serve as an example for both,

Mr. **Vance Ruppert**, or as we all know him, Yo Yo Rupper. Comment # 63 reads "other activities interfere with classwork". When Vance turned 18 earlier this year, I gave him one of my most treasured possessions, a bag of plastic spiders. Naturally, I trusted that Vance would know when it was appropriate to use these items and when it was not. After all, he was 18. So what did Vance do? The very next class period when he should have been doing his class work, he employed one of the spiders to frighten Jackie, one of our exchange students. Unfortunately for Vance, that evening he and his dad were at Fred Meyers and ran into Mrs. Bounds, in whose room the spider incident had occurred. After Mrs. Bounds jokingly explained the incident to Mr. Ruppert, Vance was grounded for a week, and he blamed me.



Though you may not be aware of it, Vance is a perfect candidate for Comment #78--displays outstanding physical skills. Vance demonstrated his superior athletic ability in a skit at a pep assembly this year. In the skit, **Mike Beckham** and **Beth Olson** challenged **Judd Hunter** and Vance to a ballet duel. Mike and Beth would perform a maneuver, which Judd and Vance would then attempt to duplicate. Needless to say, Beth looked much better in her tutu than Vance did in his, and when Judd and Vance attempted to perform the lift movement which Mike and Beth had done so flawlessly, Judd had to call over a few of his buddies to hoist Vance a few inches into the air.

I'd like to end tonight by telling you about a funny thing that happened to me at the state basketball tournament this year. A man tapped me on the shoulder following one of our games and without introducing himself, he told me that he had attended his nephew's graduation the previous spring and complimented me on my speech. I thanked him, and before he departed, he warned me that I ought to be careful because that speech just might become a

tradition. I quietly chuckled to myself and wondered where this guy had been when I really needed him. . .back in 1983.

And that got me to thinking about my first graduation speech and the Class of 1983. . .about Bill and Baine, “kids” who are now 30 years old and my very good friends. When the Class of 1983 invited me to speak at their graduation, I was quite honored, but mostly I was terrified. I struggled with that speech for months and finally came up with the idea of telling a little story about each of the 46 graduates.

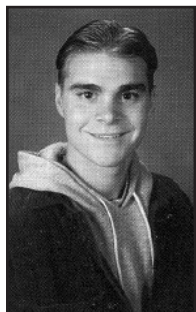
And so I told those stories, the idea caught on, and I stand before you now--12 senior classes later--thinking that I cannot retire from teaching with full benefits for another 27 years. By that time--if I haven't gone over the edge from reading freshman compositions or viewing student productions of *Macbeth*--I'll be up here telling stories about the graduates' grandparents.

To tell the truth, last June after 12 years of graduation addresses, the speech was beginning to feel like a bit of a burden, and, of course, I had experienced my annual visitation of what I call “the dream”. While the surroundings and the students change, the gist of the dream is always the same. The graduation ceremony has begun when it suddenly occurs to me that I have neglected to prepare my speech. Thinking there is still time, I rush off to a classroom somewhere to quickly throw a speech together. When the dream occurred last year, I decided that perhaps it was time to retire this tradition.

And then came **Bryon Harker**. Bryon's arguments to convince me to speak this year ranged from “You know you'll regret it if you don't speak and someone else does” to “1995 is a much better year to end your speaking career on than 1994. It's a more even number.” Nearly every morning for two or three weeks,

Bryon would pop into my room first thing in the morning to offer one argument or another, and you know what finally occurred to me? Teenagers can be really annoying.

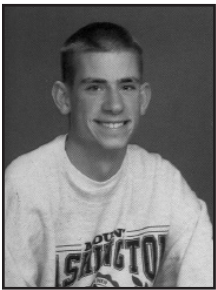
And you know what else occurred to me? I'm kind of glad they are.



The Class of 1996

Graduation: June 7, 1996

1996 has been a milestone year in many ways for both La Center High School and for me personally. First of all, we won our first ever Class A boys basketball state championship. In addition, the drama and music classes joined forces and produced our first musical, at least in my tenure. In the area of academics, one of tonight's graduates, Ms. **Anna Lassiter**, is receiving not only her high school diploma, but also her Associate's Degree from Clark College, and Amy Cordova is receiving her high school diploma at the ripe old age of just 16. I'm happy to report, too, that not a single instance of soured milk was reported to the cafeteria during this school year, due in large part, I'm sure, to the efforts of ASB president **Rusty Kissinger**, who was also mildly successful in ensuring that the boys bathroom was adequately supplied with toilet paper throughout the year.



My personal milestones have really only served to make me feel older. For example, for the first time in my career, my principal is younger than I am. Furthermore, one of my students inadvertently addressed me as "Grandma" one day in front of the entire class. And finally, one of my ninth graders this year is the daughter of one of my seniors from the Class of 1980. If I really wanted to feel my age, I might dwell on the fact that the first time I spoke on behalf of a graduating class of La Center High School, these students sitting before you were four and five years old.

In many ways, the Class of 1996 is a milestone group itself. They are, first of all, the largest class to graduate from La Center High School. In fact, at 74 graduates, the Class of 1996 is 50 students larger than its counterpart of just 12 years ago. In addition, they are the last class to have known two La Center

High Schools because they spent their freshman year on the other campus. Another way in which these students are special is that they are the first senior class in history on whose Senior Skip Day Mr. Johnson did not purposely give an exam.

Any way you look at it, tonight is a big night for these 74 kids. In fact, 34 of our graduates are the very first child in their family to reach this milestone. On the other hand, 26 families are watching their youngest child graduate tonight, and in some cases, that last child represents a long line of graduates stretching back quite a number of years.

I believe the Class of 1996 illustrates quite well how the La Center School District is changing and is very much a mixture of the newcomer and the old-timer. For example, 33% of tonight's graduates came to the district sometime during their high school years, while 29% have attended La Center schools since kindergarten. In addition, eleven of these graduates have parents who graduated from La Center High School, and five even have grandparents who are LCHS graduates.

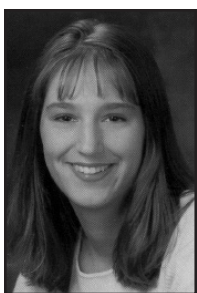
But now the time has come for them to move on--many of them to college, some into the military, some to work, and some of them. . .well, some of them we just want out of the building. But before we let them move ahead, let's head back in time and recall some moments with the Class of '96.

I'd like to travel back some ten years to share my first memory tonight. I had been called over to the elementary school to substitute for Linda Lee Tatro for about an hour one afternoon. This was a pivotal afternoon in my life because my experience with those second graders cemented in me the notion that I was indeed meant to be a high school teacher. My first task was to instruct the kids to write a letter to Santa Claus listing everything they wanted to receive for Christmas, so I said something clever like, "Ms. Tatro would like you all to write a letter to Santa Claus and tell him what you want for Christmas." Seemed straight forward enough to me. I'd expected



the kids to get right to work, but instead, half of them broke into tears while the other half stared at me in a stunned silence. Only one little girl was brave enough to speak to me, so she stood up and explained that Ms. Tatro would first ask them to take out their pencils and a piece of paper. Then this same little girl leaned to the kid next to her and said, "I know Ms. Bryan; she's really not so mean." That little girl was **Tiffany Bevans**.

I did not come to know **Anna Curtin** until her junior year, but she has truly become a part of me, and I'll never forget her or the way she always referred to the Count of Monte Cristo as the Count of Monte Crisco. My favorite story about Anna, however, concerns a dinner stop the volleyball team

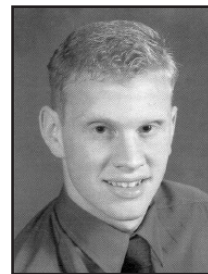


made a few years ago. It seems that Anna had begun to complain bitterly to her teammates that the Sprite was really flat, at which point her teammates informed her that she was drinking water. Although I'm not one to gamble, every now and then a sure thing comes along and I have to take advantage. A few months ago, the seniors were discussing the end of school, and Anna proudly proclaimed that she would not cry on the last day of school. I couldn't resist, so I bet her \$5.00 that she would indeed shed a few tears on June 3. Anna had the disadvantage of never having been a senior on her last day of school while I had the advantage of having endured 16 such days. I knew that I could not lose, and I didn't.

While I am on the subject of Anna Curtin, I must mention **Jared Newman** and **Tom Shaffer** because Anna tortured these two poor boys all year long. I had all three students all year long during the last period of the day, and Anna just couldn't help harassing Tom and Jared, about the quality of their school work, their clothing, their hair styles, their backpacks, their athletic accomplishments. In fact, poor Tom did double duty during the first semester

because he and Anna were in both my first and fifth period classes. Actually, I can only feel a little sorry for these boys. You see, I don't have seating charts in class, and they would always choose to sit in a group with Anna, so perhaps they enjoyed the abuse.

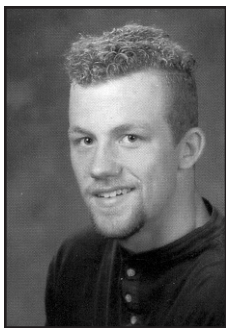
Nathan Williams, one of our valedictorians tonight, reminds me of a young man who graduated eight years ago, Andrew Rivers. Both have a great love of science and neither one could organize their notebook if their very lives depended on it. In fact, Andrew was lucky if he could even find his notebook. I am happy to report, though, that one month ago, Andrew earned his Masters Degree in Astrophysics, so I guess that notebook thing isn't too important, Nathan.



Speaking of a complete lack of organization, **Ralph Wells** comes to mind. I would rate Ralph as the most improved member of his class in terms of study skills. When he was a freshman, I had Ralph in Ninth Grade English, and quite often when I would check to see that Ralph was on task, he would instead be picking lint out of his bellybutton or staring out the window. I didn't have Ralph in class again until this past fall, and I noticed quite a change in him. He may not have been on task every minute of the period, but he produced some fine work in Foxfire and I never once saw him clean his navel.

One of the more enjoyable traits of teenagers is that they can surprise you every now and then and sometimes in a humorous way. Take **Danielle Hall**, for instance. Danielle and I only became acquainted in her last semester of high school, but it did not take me long to discover that Danielle's life is ruled by sincerity, honesty, and order. One day Danielle was sharing her senior photos with me, and I noticed that in one photo she was holding a guitar. It was only later that I learned Danielle has never played a guitar.

Several members of the Class of 1996 are hard-working, ambitious individuals. If you have ever seen



Seth Stephens on the basketball court, you know this to be true of him. During his last semester of high school, however, Seth really poured it on. Let me describe his schedule. He did not have a first period class, he was an aide for Mrs. Hill second period, then he had PE with Coach Lapp, he was an aide for Mr. Hill fourth period, and then he had an early dismissal. Perhaps the most strenuous activity Seth engaged in during his last semester of high school was trying to lift that championship ring he and his teammates bought. If you're interested, Seth, Rusty, Tom, or Sherman would be happy to show you their rings after the ceremony.

I promised Mr. Johnson that tonight's graduation ceremony would contain no derogatory remarks concerning mathematics. I can't remember why I made that promise. . . some moment of weakness. . . but I did. Nevertheless, I do have a math-related incident to share about one of tonight's graduates. Early in the school year, Mr. Penrose dropped by Mr. Johnson's classroom, and while he was there, he informed the kids that he had been a teacher of math and science. **Rusty Kissinger**, however, did not believe him, so as proof, Rusty demanded that Mr. Penrose cite the quadratic formula. Immediately Mr. Penrose said "If $ax^2 + bx + c = 0$, then $x = \frac{-b \pm \sqrt{b^2 - 4ac}}{2a}$." Rusty stared at him for several seconds before he retorted, "Lucky guess."

As has been true for a good thirty or so years now, teenagers often express their individuality through their hair. In the Class of 1996, the unique hair award would have to go to **Brandon Klinke**, who during the past four years has sported an afro, a ponytail, pigtails, braids, a shaved head, and a variety of bandannas.

Anna Lassiter sported fairly normal hair throughout high school, but she did wear her share

of unusual hats. In addition, she and her good friend Noney Long would get together every now and then to bake up a batch of cookies. Trust me when I warn you never to eat a cookie which has been prepared by Anna Lassiter. I think it is fair to say that Anna has a flair for the unusual. When she was a freshman in my Ninth Grade English class, Anna delivered an oral book review of *A Tale of Two Cities*. To capture the attention of her classmates, she desperately tried to light a Barbie doll's hair on fire and then she proceeded to hack off its head. Needless to say, she had their attention.

The cardinal rule when preparing any kind of work on the computer is to save often. When I take a class to the Mac Lab and remind the kids to save their documents every 10 minutes or so, several students have been known to scoff at me. **Andy Kestner** learned this lesson the hard way just two weeks ago when he was revising a lengthy paper for Film Study. When Andy accidentally rested his foot on the on/off switch of the power strip connected to his computer and the screen went blank, I distinctly heard Andy mutter a few words under his breath.

Our relatively new high school here is at times a wonder. During late spring, most of the classrooms are quite warm by the time fifth period rolls around. The one exception to that is Room 113, the Mac Lab. In fact, when I take students to that room now to prepare a paper, I warn them to dress appropriately because the temperature rarely rises above 55 degrees. I shall never forget **Misty Snider** huddled over her keyboard, desperately rubbing her hands together to get that blood circulating so that she could type a few more lines.

The last time I had to send a student to the office for extremely inappropriate behavior was in 1991; however, I had a class last year that I would describe as high maintenance and on more than one occasion, I was tempted to remove a student or two. You see,



the class was Film Study and it was comprised of 24 boys and three girls. Each girl was absent two to three times a week, so often it was just the boys and I. The class leader was Mr. Buck Harris, who graduated last year, but I feel I should give credit to members of the Class of 1996 who helped to make that class the experience that it was--**Roger Gregg, Dez Hayden, Jeremy Arionus, Jason Nemjo, Patrick Reinard, and Jack Erickson**, who hounded me into speaking here tonight.

Roger Gregg desperately wanted me to share one of his favorite high school memories with all of you tonight, but I am not going to, primarily because I enjoy my job, my home, and eating. However, I feel certain that Roger would be happy to describe this memory for you later on, as long as he does not reenact it out in the commons where the original incident occurred. And while I am on the subject of the commons, I am reminded of an incident that happened during our first year in this building. As you may know, every classroom in the building is equipped with a TV and VCR, and that includes the commons. . .or at least it used to. The first time I noticed the VCR in the commons, I remember thinking, "This will be trouble." Sure enough, about a month into the school year **Kevin Samuelson** briefly employed the VCR to entertain the lunch time crowd. Until then, no one just how quickly Mr. Hopkins could move.

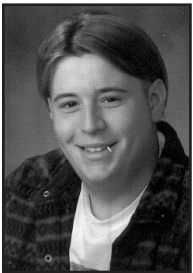
One of the reasons that I became a high school English teacher is that I love a good book, and I enjoy sharing good books with my students. In World Literature this year, I was blessed with 29 college-bound juniors and seniors, but four of those students stand out most clearly in my mind--**Kari Ostenson, Jennica Bagley, Amiya Sawyer, and Cara Warner**. Each time we started a new novel, Cara would ask me if it was good. Often I was tempted to say, "No, Cara. This book has absolutely no redeeming qualities. We're only reading it so that I may make your life miserable for a few weeks." I often wondered what

Cara expected me to say. I don't know if it meant anything, but by the time we finished reading each book, Kari's book would either be in two pieces and she'd come up to borrow my tape or she would have wrinkled the pages so much that the book was no longer usable. Jennica, on the other hand, was either six chapters behind our reading schedule, or she would finish the book in three days. And Amiya couldn't begin any discussion or reading assignment until she had applied a little hand lotion, thus causing the room to smell like roses for the remainder of the period.

There was a time in the not too distant past when 10 or 12 of the graduates in any given class would have been my students for all four of their years here at LCHS. Not so anymore. In fact, I believe **Brianna Yamashita** is one of just three members of the Class of 1996 to hold this distinction. Of course, I've often wondered what I would do if such a student went off to college and failed miserably because of poor reading and writing skills. Brianna is a superb writer, which is her fault, not mine. However, I learned early in the game that there was no sense in limiting the number of words Brianna could use in a piece of writing. If I asked for 500, she would use 1000. If I asked for 5000, she required 10,000. She is very consistent. Fortunately, she is also a joy to read.

While I'm speaking of good writers, I should mention **Lupe Mendez**. Even as a freshman, Lupe was an inspired writer who tackled meaningful, complex topics. Why just a few weeks ago, her Ninth Grade English teacher, Maggie Romine, shared with me that Lupe had written a moving essay about why students should pick their noses. In her research paper this year, she tackled the issue of mental illness. Hmm. . .no connection, I'm sure.

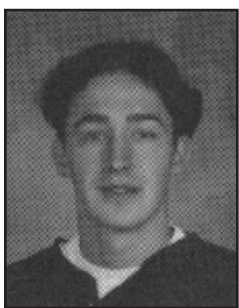
I have always been leery of health and fitness experts. I don't know why, but I feel justified in this distrust, especially after what happened to **Mandy Rasmussen** last year. At about 4'10" tall and less



than 100 pounds, Mandy is, not surprisingly, the smallest member of her class. Nevertheless, when a fitness expert visited school last year to help the kids determine their fitness level, this genius informed Mandy that she was four pounds overweight. Personally, I think the man should be shot.

Surprising though it may be, two of tonight's graduates suffer from serious phobias. I say surprising because these two graduates are strong, athletic young men whom you would not guess could know such fear. What **Rusty Kissinger** fears most is basketball practice with Coach Lapp. In fact, Rusty wrote about this fear earlier this year in a paper which some of you heard him read at the winter sports banquet. Let me share an excerpt with you now. "The clock hand soon reaches 3:00, a moment which marks the beginning of the end for our team. The words "on the wall", in a distinct New York accent command us to squat against the wall for two minutes of hell! As the steadily growing pain begins to build, my leg muscles feel as if they're going to burst. Coach paces back and forth in front of us delivering his usual "You guys aren't ready to play" speech. As the saliva shoots out of his mouth in all directions, our eyes are beginning to water with the smell of his breath. This morning's breakfast must have been garlic bagels."

Sherman Gore's fear is far more unusual than



Rusty's. You see, Sherman has an uncanny fear of Fabricland stores, due to traumatic visits there as a child with his mother. It seems that Becky would spot a Fabricland and sprint for the door before Sherman even knew what was up. Resigned to several hours of wandering aimlessly through

aisles and aisles of fabric, Sherman could find release only in torturing his little brother. To this day, the smell of fresh cotton sends him reeling.

While I am on the subject of Sherman, I'd like to tell you about a system of student classification which some teachers employ, at least in staff room

discussions. First, we have our low maintenance kids, those who work well independently, ask the appropriate number of questions, easily follow directions, require little in the way of discipline, and cause few if any headaches for their teachers. On the other end of the scale we have the high maintenance students. These kids often come to class unprepared and are surprised when we become peeved at their lack of books, paper, and pens. In addition, they are slow to get on task, quick to veer from the task at hand, and easily distracted by the smallest of interruptions, such as the clock, a car driving down the road, their own fingernails, and any hint of physical discomfort. These are the students who feel the need to share with me every sentence they have written, who ask to visit the restroom at least once each period, who continually ask the question which I have just answered but to which they were not listening, and who occasionally annoy students around them. Normally, low maintenance students remain low maintenance throughout their high school careers while high maintenance students slowly but surely require less maintenance as they mature and become more independent.

In his last month of high school, Sherman has defied the normal course of events and become an extremely high maintenance student. For example, although Sherman knows my rules of novel reading, he would stare at me in confusion when I would hand him the quiz he had missed following an absence, and stammer, "You mean I have to take this quiz now?" And then there was the research paper experience. First, he couldn't find his disk. Then after he'd spent hours organizing his note cards and paper clipping them together, all of the paper clips fell off in his backpack, and he had to start over. The one area in which Sherman definitely excelled was in lending emotional support to his classmates. . . well to one of his classmates. Frankly, I'm not sure how Sherman ever managed to type that research paper with only one hand on the keyboard most of the time.

One of the very best things about being a teacher, besides the pay of course, is that our jobs have a

definite beginning and ending each year. And as each school year wanes, we teachers notice unmistakable signs that we are all ready for the end of the year. One of the standard road marks in the last few weeks of school is that when a student knocks on the staff room door during lunch, no one moves a muscle. If the student is persistent, we might eventually yell, “Whaddya want?” Another obvious indication that the end is in sight is that even Mr. Johnson becomes a bit lax where discipline is concerned. Why, his students have even been known to be in the halls flying paper airplanes, sometimes into the classrooms of hard-working English students engaged in a final exam. Perhaps the most telling sign this year, though, can be seen in the Scrabble tournament currently under way in the staff room. A few days ago, several of us were gathered around the table bitterly complaining that the team of Mrs. de la Cruz and Mrs. Stupfel had just scored 90 points on a single word. Then we began to notice the kinds of words that we had been playing, words like idiot, worsen, vice, bungle, and hobo. Clearly it is time for the 1996 school year to end.

I wanted to end my speech tonight with some kind of math problem, but there are so many problems associated with math that I decided on a poem instead, a poem which addresses a common question some students ask when they have been absent, “Did I miss anything?”

Did I miss anything?

Nothing. When we realized you weren’t here we sat with our hands folded on our desks in silence, for the full two hours.

Did I miss anything?

Everything. I gave an exam worth 40% of the grade for this term and assigned some reading due today on which I’m about to hand out a quiz worth 50%

Did I miss anything?

Nothing. None of the content of this course has value or meaning.

Take as many days off as you like: any activities we undertake as a class I assure you will not matter either to you or me and are without purpose

Did I miss anything?

Everything. A few minutes after we began last time a shaft of light descended and an angel or other heavenly being appeared and revealed to us what each woman or man must do to attain divine wisdom in this life and the hereafter. This is the last time the class will meet before we disperse to bring this good news to all people on earth

Did I miss anything?

Nothing. When you are not present how could something significant occur?

Did I miss anything?

Everything. Contained in this classroom is a microcosm of human existence assembled for you to query and examine and ponder. This is not the only place such an opportunity has been gathered but it was one place and you weren’t here.

Before we send them on their way, I’d like to thank the Class of 1996 for being here, most of the time, for treating us to lots of thrills and laughs, and for enriching our lives. Good luck and try not to miss anything.

The Class of 1997

Graduation: June 6, 1997

At the end of my first year of teaching here in La Center back in 1980, my principal sat me down and said he had reservations about rehiring me. I was only on a 1-year contract. However, he said, I had made a good deal of progress during the year, so he decided to keep me around. You can only imagine how bad I was at the start of that school year.

As much as I learned in college, I did not learn how to be a teacher. In fact, most of what I know about teaching I learned from the La Center High School Class of 1980, my first and toughest group of seniors. Since then, I have merely refined what they taught me.

Tonight, I'd like to share with you my ten rules for how to be a good teacher.

RULE NUMBER ONE: Be aware of the quirky habits of your students and adjust your teaching style as necessary.

Anthony McGillivray, for example, is not a morning person. Although I have had Anthony in class all four years, it was not until this year that I had him first period. What a difference a couple of hours makes! When I had Anthony in fifth period World Literature last year, he was usually happy and productive. This year, though, Anthony would crawl into my classroom at 8:00 each morning, throw himself across a pair of tables, and spend the next 15 minutes bemoaning life in general. Fortunately, as the period wore on, his mood improved.

In "Peanuts", Linus has his security blanket. At La Center High School, **Courtney Devert** has her coat, and she does not like to be without it. One day last week when the relative humidity in my classroom had reached 100%, Courtney suddenly exclaimed, "I'm dying!" and she removed her coat, much to the surprise of her group mates and me. However, I'd bet money that under that graduation gown, she's

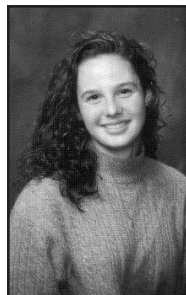
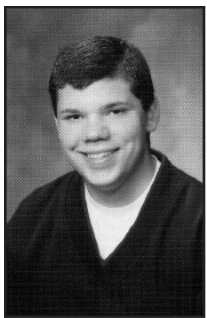
wearing a coat.

Jana and Deanna. Deanna and Jana. They just go together. In fact, during the past four years, I have had **Jana Copeland** and **Deanna Cole** together in Ninth Grade English, Tenth Grade English, American Literature, World Literature, and Film Study. I tried to separate them once, but it didn't work. They even share a locker. One day I passed by them as they were cleaning out their locker, a task which they do not undertake often. They would remove one item of food--a carton of milk, a sandwich, a banana--and then they would fight about who owned the food. Jana and Deanna. They're like peanut butter and jelly.

As a teacher, what you have to realize about **Mike Hollifield** is that he will view every request you make of him as unfair, unjust, and too demanding. Once you have asked Mike to do something, he will sigh, throw his arms into the air, and exclaim that you're picking on him again. And it doesn't matter what the request is. Michael, quit talking to Justin and watch the movie. Michael, sit down and finish your assignment. Michael, you need to bring your notebook and a pen to class. Michael, read the book. Over the years, I've come to realize that Mike's protests are not personal. If you ignore them, he'll quiet down and sometimes comply with your requests.

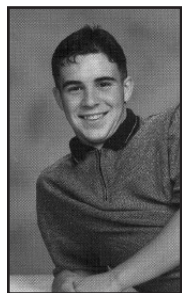
Shelley Gwinn is one of those quiet, hard-working, intelligent students who just never complains, at least not outloud. However, Shelley does have a way of showing her unhappiness. . .the raised right eyebrow. I believe everyone in the senior class is familiar with this expression of Shelley's. I myself have been the recipient of more than one raised eyebrow.

Have you ever followed **Erin Williams** from downtown La Center out to the freeway? Believe me, you'd remember it if you had. People jog up that hill faster than Erin drives up it. And when she reaches the crest of the hill--where, let's face it, most of us exceed the speed limit--the old brake lights



come on. But as Erin will point out to you, a speed limit is just that, a limit. It doesn't mean you have to go that fast.

If you've ever spent five minutes or more with **Mark Winston**, you have heard him giggle. And the boy will giggle at anything, however inappropriate. At the post-championship game celebration in Tacoma this year, a poor sophomore girl was choking on something and was truly in distress, which, of course, caused Mark to giggle uncontrollably.



At that point, Herm VanWeerdhuizen came up to Mark and exclaimed, "Geez, Winston, not everything's funny." And what did Mark do? He giggled.

RULE NUMBER TWO: Be aware of the challenges your students face outside of the school day.

Last year when I had **Jeremy Phillips** in class first period, he would often arrive looking exhausted and fall asleep at some point during class. When I asked him what the problem was, he explained that he worked every evening after school. I was a little sympathetic at that point, but lots of kids have after-school jobs and still come to school rested. As it turns out, though, Jeremy was riding his bike to and from his job each day, and he worked in Vancouver.

Katarina Nikolic, our exchange student from Macedonia, earned one of the highest grades in World Literature this last semester. She is a superb reader and writer, but I used to wonder how she could get anything done at home. After all, she lives in the same house with freshman Brandon Cole, and that boy never stops talking. And if living with Brandon is not challenge enough, right next door are **Derek** and Dustin **VanWeerdhuizen**.

RULE NUMBER THREE: Advise a class or a club. You'll get to know the kids outside the classroom and have a little fun, too.

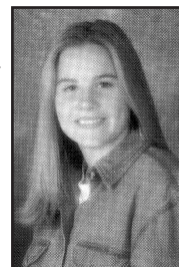
For a number of years now, Mrs. Bevans and I

have coached the Knowledge Bowl team, and this year the varsity team attended the state tournament. That means that Mrs. Bevans and I got to spend a lot of time with **Erin Williams**, **Heather Delaney**, **Eric Olson**, **Nick Henley**, and junior Chris Armstrong in a minivan. When you cram seven people into a minivan and drive eight hours to Wenatchee, the van will not only look bad when you arrive, but it will also smell bad. By the time we got over Bluiitt Pass, a restroom had become an urgent necessity, so we stopped at the first store we came to. It had a restroom out front with a big sign on it. "Closed for the Winter" **Nick Henley** was desperate, so he tried to hike up a mound of dirty snow to go around to the side of the building, but he promptly sank in up to his hips. We didn't bring home any hardware, but we had a great time and we did eventually locate an unlocked restroom.

My other hobby is advising the senior class each year. To earn money this year, **Erin Williams** talked me into chaperoning Parents' Night Out. In a nutshell, parents from the community drop off their 7-10 year olds at the high school, where they spend the next 13 hours making my life miserable. Erin had done a fine job of organizing the event and rounding up her classmates to work, but she had not adequately prepared me for all that could happen. For example, do you know what happens to little kids when they eat pizza and pop and then around the gym full speed for an hour or two? And when the ugliness began, do you think any of my dedicated, hard-working seniors were anywhere in sight? Ha!

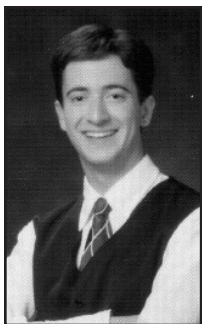
RULE NUMBER FOUR: Let your students express their creativity every now and then.

Kim Bolen just loves to ham it up in the classroom. Whether she is the doomed Arthur Dimmesdale in *The Scarlet Letter* dying a very melodramatic death, one of the Weird Sisters from *Macbeth* whipping up a batch of witches' brew, or Juliet, standing on a chair and proclaiming her love for Romeo (played



by Bob Taylor), she brings great literature to life and entertains her classmates.

And speaking of **Bob Taylor**, he not only does a fine Romeo, but he can make things, too. As a freshman, Bob read *Hatchet* for his independent novel. Part of the assignment required him to produce some sort of creative expression of the novel, so Bob made. . .a hatchet. I wish you could see it up close so that you could observe the fine workmanship. I'll cherish it forever. (Note: I still have the hatchet in 2016...though in two pieces.)



No one responds more enthusiastically to a creative project than **Jake France**. As a freshman, he read *The African Queen* for his independent novel, and while most of his classmates were producing mediocre posters for their creative projects, Jake recreated the river in Africa and the boat itself and filmed it all in his bathtub, complete with voice over narration. It was great. And last year in America in Literature and Film when the kids had to pair up and review a film in front of the class ala Siskel and Ebert, Jake convinced **Harmonie James** to dress up as Ebert, which was a stretch for someone as small as Harmonie.

Kari Miles expresses her creativity through her storytelling. I don't think a week went by when Kari did not excitedly burst into the classroom and exclaim, "Oh my gosh, Ms. Bryan, you won't believe what just happened to me!" Then she would proceed to tell me about some bizarre incident that could only happen to Kari. One other thing you should know about Kari is that she loves to sing. I had a boom box with a microphone in my classroom last year, and Kari just could not resist grabbing that mike and serenading the class. And while Kari is a fine athlete and an excellent student, there's a reason why she is not in the choir.

RULE NUMBER FIVE: Attend extracurricular activities. Doing so shows students that you're interested in all that they do, and these activities can be fun.

When these kids were freshmen, **Jake Smith** played on the JV basketball team. He was so short then that he would frustrate his opponents by buzzing around them kind of like an insect. I used to tell Ms. Romine that I loved to watch Jake play but that he had no future on the varsity squad. Which shows you why Forbes is the basketball coach and I am merely the fan.

I have never had **Michael Renner** in class, but I do have an indelible image of him looking like some sort of Civil War casualty with that big old bandage wrapped around his head during the Toledo and Cashmere games this year. Nothing seemed to slow him down.

Scotty Miller and **Devin Barboza** comprise the **Derek VanWeerdhuizen** Fan Club. They are the ultimate basketball fans, but you don't want to sit too close to them during a game because they can become a little too zealous in their support of the team. I sat in front of Scotty at the away Woodland game this year, for about five minutes. I am told that if you're a teacher here at LCHS, you don't want to run into Scotty outside of school. Apparently, Mrs. de la Cruz had the misfortune to encounter Scotty in a movie theater. Before the movie had even started, everyone in the theater knew who Mrs. de la Cruz was and where she taught. In fact, Scotty nearly had the crowd on its feet applauding her.

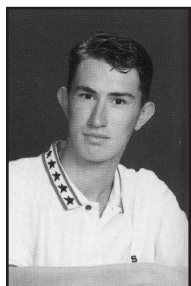
By emceeing the first ever Mr. La Center Pageant this year and watching **Danny Alanko** as he captured the title, I learned that disco is definitely not dead and that there is at least one young man in the world today who still owns a pair of white polyester pants.

RULE NUMBER SIX: Don't be afraid to assist your students in the dating department.

I didn't actually do anything to help **Jeanna Manning** and **Aaron Pershall** get together except

that I had them both in Foxfire and they sat at the same table. I was a little afraid for them early in the relationship, though, because Jeanna was so touched by the notes Aaron would send her that she would read them outloud in the hallway to anyone who seemed interested, much to Aaron's chagrin.

Angela Evenson and **Tiffany Schultz** do not require assistance in the dating department. In fact, these two girls make good use of their travel time between the Skills Center and LCHS by picking up young men on the freeway.



Every year when Prom time rolls around, I let my juniors and seniors know that if they need assistance in finding a Prom date, I can help. Needless to say, **Derek VanWeerdhuizen** jumped at the chance. Taking a different approach this year, I put together a little flyer outlining Derek's noteworthy

qualities, and I posted this flyer in the hallway. Before it had been too badly defaced, a young lady approached me and indicated interest in attending Prom with Derek. As you may know, Derek is quite shy and unsure of himself, so he put off asking her for a few weeks, until it was crunch time. And then, being the romantic that he is, he stood in my doorway just as class was beginning, and shouted across the room, "Hey, Natalie, want to go to Prom with me?" Natalie being **Natalie Norman**. By the way, she said yes.

RULE NUMBER SEVEN: Never loan your keys to a student.

A SUB RULE OF NUMBER SEVEN: Never keep your school keys and your car keys on the same ring.

It's bad enough when you actually give the keys to a student and he misplaces them, but imagine a student taking a teacher's keys as a joke. And imagine that student forgetting that he has taken the teacher's keys as a joke and going home with them in his pocket. And imagine the teacher's panic when she cannot find her keys. And imagine her anger

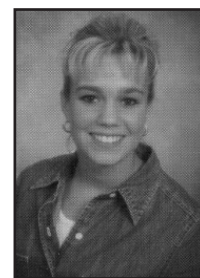
when she has to call her husband to bring her a spare set. And imagine her husband's irritation at having to drive from Portland to Camas to get the spare keys and then out to La Center to deliver them. The teacher was Mrs. Stupfel. And imagine the teasing that **Garret McKay** has endured since that fateful joke three weeks ago.

RULE NUMBER EIGHT: Get yourself a notebook and write down the humorous or embarrassing things your kids say and do. Occasionally, this notebook will come in handy, especially at graduations and reunions.

Earlier this year in English Literature, **Jake France** was feeling especially profound one day when he wrote in an essay, "In Medieval times, death was a way of life."

Students are occasionally cruel to one another and during an elementary school field trip to a fishery, **Harmonie James** was the victim of such brutality. Apparently the kids wanted to get an idea of just how big a salmon really is, so they made Harmonie lie down and then they placed a fish next to her. The fish was bigger.

Last year when the boys basketball team was doing quite well and boasting that they would win the state championship, **Kari Miles** decided that she had heard enough. Confident that their boasting would amount to nothing, Kari bet the boys that if they won the title, they could shave her head, along with those of the coaches. I don't think Kari slept much during those two days between the boys winning the title and the head shaving ceremony on Monday. However, the boys let Kari off the hook and merely snipped off one little braid.



How many of you know what TV program has aired every weekday at noon on Channel 12 for the past 30 years? And is there anyone in America today over the age of three who cannot identify the "Perry Mason" theme song? Yes. . . **Mark Winston**, who in a trivia game earlier this year assured his teammates

that he knew the theme song I was playing and promptly yelled out, "Matlock!"

Dayna Watson has said a lot of funny things over the years. She's one of those kids who just says what's on her mind. During Homecoming Week, we had just listened to an announcement that the following day was Pajama Day. And then in typical Dayna fashion, she said, "Do you think Mr. Penrose will come to school in his pajamas. What would that look like?"

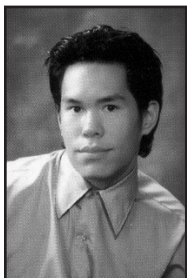
RULE NUMBER NINE: Be aware of your students' eating habits. It will help you understand them better.

Christie Fout drinks five bottles of Pepsi a day. . . five. In fact, she starts off her morning with one. At precisely 9:15 each morning, I know she will be at my desk asking to go to the restroom. She's like clockwork.

It's always fun to go to a fast food restaurant with **Erin Williams**. I love to watch the restaurant worker as Erin orders a cheeseburger with everything on it but the burger.

Some students are noticeably affected by the food they consume. For instance, I had **Mark Winston** first period this past semester. Sometimes I would pass by him in the hall about five minutes before class began and he would finishing up his breakfast. . . .poptarts and Pepsi. And then I'd know that I was in for it, that for the next 90 minutes Mark would be the human pinball and my classroom would be the pinball machine.

The most fun involving food that I've ever had at school happened during our Medieval Feast in English Literature this past fall. We had researched authentic medieval recipes on the Internet and everyone in class had taken one or two recipes to prepare. **Daniel Chong**, for instance, attempted to make a dish called Fritter of Milk, which consisted of deep frying some kind of batter. During the first batch, Daniel was splashed with a little grease, so



he promptly renamed his recipe something which I cannot repeat here and instead showed up to the feast with a bag of peanut brittle. During the feast, when someone passed Daniel the gingerbread, which did not involve baking, he stared at it, tried to pry the spoon from it, and then said, "Isn't this the stuff that made the Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles mutants?"

Jake France is still upset that his cuskynoles were not a big hit. However, none of us were quite sure what was in a cuskynole, so we ate them with caution.

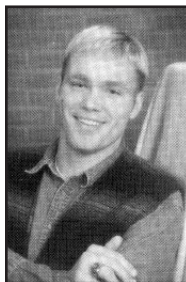
Overall, the food at our feast was pretty bad, but we had a grand time picking on each other's dishes, and we discovered why the average life span of a medieval man was just 35 years.

RULE NUMBER TEN: Learn to live with senioritis. It has just one cure. . . .graduation.

Warm, sunny weather is a leading cause of senioritis, and such was the case with **Chris Kroll**. During this last semester, any time the day would be beautiful, Chris would beg me to hold class outside. "Chris," I'd say to him, "I cannot teach Film Study outside."

Devin Barboza developed a particularly powerful case of senioritis. In fact, he used more prearranged absence forms in nine weeks than most students use in four years.

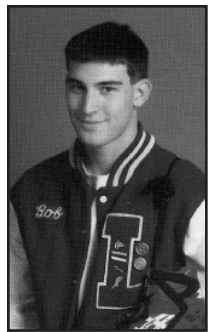
At one point during her last semester, **Danyse Bagley** discovered that her grade in Film Study had dropped rather dramatically because she had neglected to make up some missed work. I have a rather strict policy about makeup work, but Danyse knows me well. One afternoon, she showed up in my classroom with tears in her eyes and a Mr. Goodbar in her hand. What could I do?



As nearly any senior will tell you, by the end of the school year, I do not tolerate whining, especially from seniors. When **Michael Renner's** senioritis set in, however, it took the form of whining. Apparently none of the graduation choices which

his classmates had made pleased Michael. He would come to my room during second period--along with several other displaced or unmotivated student aides--and complain bitterly about the graduation gowns, the medallion, the music for the slide show, the senior party. . .you name it, he didn't like it. My normal response to whining seniors during May and June is, "Deal with it." With Michael, though, I took a different tact. For example, I told him that it didn't matter what color the graduation gowns were or what the medallion looked like; he would look stunning in anything. And when he griped about the senior party and how it wouldn't be any fun, I said, "Michael, if you're there, it will be fun." He didn't fall for any of this, so I told him to quit his whining.

The only truly terminal case of senioritis that I witnessed this year was that of **Bob Taylor**. Bob's disease manifested itself in many ways, but his most severe symptom was an uncontrollable urge to sneak out of Accounting and come to my room during second period, where a small group of seniors camped out each day, occasionally consumed bagels, and often broke my belongings. Countless times I had to shoo Bob back to class. Sometimes Mrs. Bounds would come looking for him. He must have become fairly intolerable in the last weeks of the school year because one day Mrs. Bounds called me during second period and asked if Bob could come visit.



The last case of senioritis that I would like to share involves **Nick Henley**. Nick's illness hit him early in basketball season this year, but since he had to attend school all day to practice and he had to practice to play, Nick could not afford to be absent. The only time he was in luck was on days when Forbes did not hold practice, which was not often. It was a given that on a day with no practice, Nick would be absent. In English Lit, we named such days Henley Holidays. And just to be rude, one of us would call Nick's home precisely at 8:15 a.m. to check up on him. Nick's mom thought it was so nice that his classmates would call and be concerned about him.

And while we were concerned, mostly we just hoped we could interrupt his sleep and annoy him.

Many of these students know that I have a little notebook in which I have been making notes for the last 15 or so years. This is that notebook, and I have never let another person glance in it. Some day when I am old and gray (and that's not today, Derek), when I have no more papers to correct, when I don't have to reread *Crime and Punishment* for the 33rd time, when Mrs. Bakker is not demanding that I turn in my attendance, when I no longer have to track down lazy seniors who have not yet ordered their cap and gown, I'm going to crack open this notebook and write a book about teaching high school in La Center, Washington. And because they have been a pleasure to teach and to advise and because they have taken up several pages in my notebook. I shall dedicate an entire chapter to the Class of 1997.

The Class of 1998

Graduation: June 5, 1998

I'd like to begin tonight by telling you about two former students of mine. The first graduated from LCHS in 1986. Her high school years were anything but smooth sailing. Her parents had split up, her dad moved away, and her boyfriend had the nerve to graduate a year ahead of her. In short, she was kind of a mess, and I worried about her a good deal. We kept in touch over the years, and despite other trauma in her life, she has grown into a mature, independent, and confident woman. In fact, just this past winter I hired her as my financial advisor. Of course, managing my wealth is not exactly a full-time job.

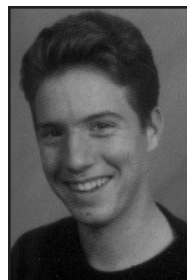
Less than a week ago, I was having my hair cut and when I was chatting with the stylist, she asked if I worked around here, here being Kelso. I said no, that I was a teacher at LCHS. She immediately shouted, "I knew it!" Apparently nine years ago, she had attended LCHS for about two months during her freshmen year and she'd been in my English class. Frankly, her name was familiar, but I had no memory of her. Fortunately, although she had hated the principal, she told me that I had been nice to her.

So what's my point? Is it that former LCHS students for the most part grow up and become hard-working citizens? No, although I think most do. Instead, what these two women made me realize is that I need to apologize to the Class of 1998 for my somewhat bad attitude during the last part of this year. It's not that they haven't given me cause to be fussy with them, but ten years down the road, one of them might be investing my life's savings for me or standing behind me with a pair of sharp scissors, and frankly, I'd prefer their memories of me be fond ones.

In an effort to be somewhat brief, I thought I would speak of students tonight in groups. My

first group consists of **Chris Armstrong, Josh Edington, Angela Hanks, Ben Hayden, Julie Hoeflein, Josh Kvavle, Bobbi Lockwood, Jeramey Pearson, and Cole Shaffer**. What these nine students have in common is that, for whatever reason--and mind you, I don't take this personally--they never took an English class with me. What this means for them is that they probably do not know how far it is from the Bat Cave to Gotham City, they do not know the meaning of the word "snorefest", and they have not been properly indoctrinated as to the value of algebra in their later lives.

Those students whom I would include in the Ultra Studious Group are **Matt Smith, Justin Reuter, Nick Schlentz, Jesse Trigg, Renee Wallace, and Carrie Kissinger**. Matt is so studious that he worked extremely hard in his last semester of high school to nip that tardy problem in the bud. He was coasting along on a string of on-time arrivals that reached well into the upper single digits when disaster struck one morning, an unsympathetic La



Center policeman parked on Matt's route to school. So not only did Matt incur an unexcused tardy, but this particular one cost him \$180. During the three years that I have known **Justin Reuter**, his love of learning has been reflected in the organization of his notebook. Somewhere along the line, Justin never discovered the purpose of those three shiny silver rings in the notebook or of notebook dividers. Nevertheless, Justin inserts every returned paper into his notebook. Of course, if he had to locate any one particular assignment, it would take him weeks to do so. And I won't even get started on his handwriting. Clearly, **Nick Schlentz** and Justin Reuter were separated at birth. At least, their notebooks and handwriting would indicate that such was the case.

In Foxfire this year, **Jesse Trigg** and his groupmates started out with a bang. Only days after I turned the kids loose to interview the subject of their stories, Jesse and company rushed down

and interviewed Elmer Soehl. Then they spent the next two weeks bragging to their classmates, who had not yet completed any interviews, that they were well ahead of the game. After a few weeks, their classmates had caught up to them and soon left Jesse and his pals in the dust. Then Jesse spent the next two months dreaming up excuses as to why his story was not written, why no photographs had been taken, and why the story was not ready to go to press by deadline. Another ultra studious student is **Renee Wallace**. Renee is so diligent about her schoolwork that other students often flock to her for assistance and advice. Why, when I had the students of Advanced Comp pair up for the big research paper during the last part of this year,



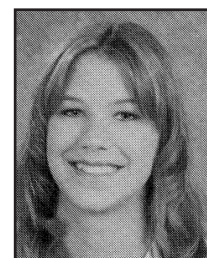
Dustin VanWeerdhuizen literally threw himself at Renee because he was so eager to learn. In fact, I am told that were it not for Renee, many seniors might not have survived CWP this year. **Carrie Kissinger** is a devoted and hard-working member of the yearbook staff. She even

enrolls in extra periods with Mrs. Hill so that she can improve the yearbook, or so she says. Every time I venture into Room 121 when Carrie is supposed to be working on the yearbook, I catch her watching *Top Gun* or, I'm ashamed to say, *90210*.

Though it may be difficult to believe, some students in the Class of 1998 fall into the Quiet and Well Behaved category, well nine of them anyhow. **James Jensen** has quite literally never been loud or rude in the time that I have known him. Unlike his classmates, he has never complained about any book I have asked him to read, and believe me, that is rare indeed. At some point during *Crime and Punishment*, nearly every student reaches a breaking point, but not James. **Melissa Arends**, too, is almost always calm and serene. The only time I witnessed her break composure was during our Medieval Feast last year in English Literature. To determine the queen of the feast, the girls in the class had to attack a loaf of bread with a coin baked into it, and whichever

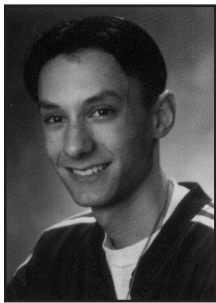
girl found the coin ruled as the queen of the feast. Melissa put her classmates to shame and then quietly ruled the feast of nearly inedible food. The only real noise I have heard from **Amanda Tronson** occurred a few weeks ago when she tried to snack quietly in World Literature during reading time. Although I do not allow kids to eat in my room, I realize that some students sneak a snack or two. But if you want to get away with sneaking food, Amanda, don't choose pretzels.

Atahan Yengin is our exchange student from Turkey. As is true with nearly every exchange student I have known, Atahan is extremely polite and quiet. Unfortunately, near the end of the year, he began to adopt a somewhat traditional habit of American students, being tardy to class. Still, he was very quiet when he would enter my room, and if I noticed him, he'd flash a big smile my way. It's a great smile, Atahan, but I still marked the tardy. Sometimes when I pair students up for oral presentations, I'll group a quiet student with a more, shall we say, extroverted kid. So when



Amanda Lausche was a sophomore, and we were preparing for group presentations, I paired her with Devon Carroll. Poor Amanda. I don't think she ever forgave me. While she tried to present information about the 1920s in a serious way, Devon did his impressions of Jacques Cousteau and William Shatner. They were a pair to remember. **Steve Ritola** is another student who isn't too chatty, so I was a little surprised when Steve sold eight ads in Foxfire. I couldn't imagine Steve approaching all of those strangers and asking for money. I asked Steve's Foxfire partner, Ryan Sexton, who also sold a good many ads, just how Steve had managed to be so successful in selling ads. Well, Ryan confessed, the ad selling was actually a team effort. Steve drove to the businesses and Ryan did all the talking. I would also include **Mike Evans** in the quiet and well behaved group. I've only had Mike in class once--last year--and he rarely said anything. Of course,

he also hung out with a couple of senior girls, so he could barely get a word in edgewise. **Matt Stephens** was new to La Center High School during this last semester, and he has been nothing but pleasant, hard working, and quiet. When I found out that he's friends with Mark Winston, I was amazed. I didn't



realize that Mark Winston knew anyone who was hard working and quiet. For three years now, I have had **Joey Cerdena** in class, and I truly consider him a very quiet and well behaved young man. He may spit a sunflower seed or two across the table every now and then, but

for the most part, he is very polite and obedient. Of course, Joey benefits by comparison. You see, during all three years, he has sat at a table with **Kris Kuper**, **Matt Smith**, and **Justin Reuter**. One last quiet and well behaved student I'd like to mention is **Mike Wood**. . .no, wait. Wrong group.

Some students are memorable because of their voices. Take **Alice Lockwood**, for example. Alice has one of those voices that lets you know she's in the room. In fact, when I take roll, I don't actually have to spot Alice in the room. If she's there, I'll know it. **Erin Brown** also has a distinctive voice because no matter what the situation, he's always very soft-spoken. That's fine when we're talking one-on-one, but it can be difficult to hear across a classroom or, say, at the Prom with booming music in the background. I'm sure Erin is sick of me asking him to repeat things. The last student in this category is **Elsa Hartshorn**. Elsa is a young woman who takes grief from no one, and this quality is apparent in her voice. When Elsa calls out, "Ms. Bryan," I'm not always sure if she's angry at me or just has a question.

Although all members of the Class of 1998 are unique, some are more unique than others. When I first had **Justin Fuller** in class last year, his hair was bright green, greener than Astroturf. I realize students express their individuality through their hair, but I could not resist asking him, "Why green?" To which he replied, "It pisses off my dad." Later in

the year, by the way, he experimented with purple. And speaking of hair, **Nick Mouser** has distinguished himself in two ways related to hair. First of all, in cold weather, Nick almost always sports a stocking cap, which he will take off at some point during the period. Unfortunately, his hair always remains in the exact shape of the cap. And secondly, for reasons which are not completely clear to me, two weeks ago Nick shaved his legs. Since I first met **Adam Carroll** three years ago, he has had a ponytail. It's the only way I could tell him and Devon apart. Suddenly at Prom this year, Adam showed up with no ponytail, and I was stunned. In fact, I was concerned that perhaps Adam was beginning to conform to more traditional conventions. My fears were allayed, though, when Adam showed up to school the next week wearing one of his many irreverent tee shirts.

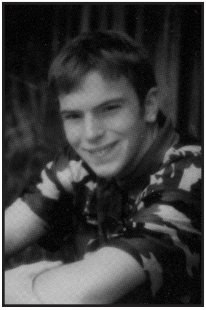


Finally under the unique student category, I must mention **Renee Dunn**. What makes Renee unique is not her hair or her clothing or even tan which she always has, even in the dead of winter, but instead it is her very slight and not widely known verbal tic. There is a certain

word in the English language which Renee cannot master. Let me quote Carrie Kissinger in a paper she wrote about Renee: "Renee also has an interesting use of a few everyday words. For example, to Renee, whether you're a guy or a girl, you don't wear underwear. You wear underwears. My basketball teammates would vouch for this as they often hear this used in a common phrase from Renee before each home game, 'Oh shoot, I'm going to have to wear green underwears during the game!'"

High maintenance students are those who require an exceptional amount of a teacher's time, energy, creativity, and most of all, patience. Not surprisingly, the Class of 1998 boasts a few such students. Take **Jeff Fuller**, for instance. I had Jeff in class just one time, in Foxfire this year. Foxfire is the kind of class that requires students to be very self-motivated and self-disciplined. I had to be able

to trust kids to work in the hall transcribing taped interviews and to behave while away from school grounds, a perfect match for Jeff. When I would let Jeff and his groupmates work in the hall, invariably an e-mail would arrive from an irritated teacher within ten minutes of Jeff exiting my classroom. “I just caught Jeff Fuller tackling freshmen in the hall” or “Is Jeff Fuller supposed to be sleeping in the hall?” High maintenance. **Ryan Sexton** is another high



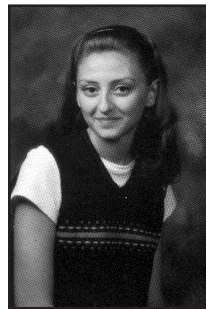
maintenance student, but Ryan rarely tries to leave the classroom. Instead, he finds other ways of demanding my attention. One day my American Lit class was working in the library doing research. Suddenly, the TV in the library popped on, so the librarian turned it off. Moments later, it again came on.

Again, the librarian shut it off. A few more minutes passed, and again the TV mysteriously started up. Immediately, I suspected Ryan. I scanned the crowd, trying to spot the guilty party, but everyone was wearing a poker face. When we returned to my classroom, a student informed me that Ryan was indeed the culprit and possessed a TV remote, so I jokingly began to inspect his backpack. You have to understand that Ryan has an enormous backpack, and he was so calm and relaxed as I began my search that I figured I must be mistaken, so I ended my search with just one compartment unexamined. Later that day, Ryan confessed that the TV remote was in that last compartment.

Doug Phillips was a bit of a high maintenance student when I had him in class last year. At least once a week, he would say to me, “Why do we have to do all this reading?” And I would reply, “Doug, if you hate reading why did you enroll in a college prep literature course?” While some kids begin as high maintenance and evolve into lower maintenance students, others do the opposite. We call this phenomenon Senioritis, and no is immune. . .not even the ASB president. Except for that nasty little incident her freshman year when I had to yell at her

(and which I promised not to mention tonight), **Liz Vis** has been a model student. But just a couple of months ago, I handed her a copy of Dostoyevsky’s *Crime and Punishment* to read and her entire demeanor changed. Suddenly, her quiz scores fell, her eyes glazed over, and she began to sing odd little songs with Bethany Norman. Once I took *Crime and Punishment* away and handed her *The Count of Monte Cristo*, she bounced back and again became a low maintenance student, for the most part.

Every now and then, a student comes along who just surprises the heck out of me. As the school continues to grow, I find that I become familiar with some kids in the hall, but I don’t really get to know them until I have them in class. And then I sometimes discover that the student’s hallway personality is quite different from the real student. A perfect example is **Bethany Norman**. For two

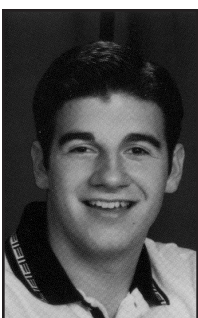
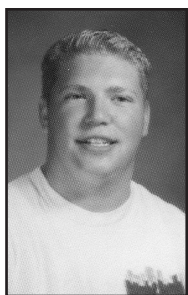


years, I thought of Bethany as that tall, slender, quiet girl who was Natalie’s younger sister. Then this year I had Bethany in class, and I soon discovered that appearances can be deceiving. My first hint that Bethany was not quite what I had thought came when she tried to teach us how to play a game

which involved trying to drop a penny into a paper cup. I can’t even tell you how you were supposed to accomplish this task because it’s too shocking. But what really convinced me that hallway Bethany was not classroom Bethany was her very aggressive and dogged pursuit of a young man. The poor boy never knew what hit him, but the students in my fifth period class certainly enjoyed watching the chase.

Rachel Newman is another student who has just recently taken me by surprise. I would never have guessed that Rachel could play Tina in *Tony and Tina’s Wedding* so convincingly. She had a great New York/Italian accent, she lip synced to Madonna beautifully, and she uttered things during the wedding that I just wouldn’t have expected from Rachel.

Mike Wood is surprising in many ways, but what most amazed me about Mike was how quietly and smoothly he could glide out of the classroom unnoticed, especially for a young man of his brawn. As far as I can tell, though, from having encountered Mike in the hall countless times when classes were in session, he had lots of practice. And speaking of surprising activities in the hallway, I am reminded of **Maureen Coffey**. Oops, sorry Maureen. I wasn't going to mention that when your mom was in the room. **Nate Dorsey** is the most friendly and pleasant young man a teacher could hope to have in class, but never have I seen Nate more friendly than at Prom this year. I have certainly never seen him that friendly at school. **Jamie Morton** has also surprised me on occasion. As a sophomore, Jamie astounded me with her vocal solo which was broadcast over the TV. And this year, I have been amazed at the variety of excuses she has dreamt up for missing class, things like getting her nails done, sleeping, getting a tattoo, going out to lunch. You name the excuse; she has used it.

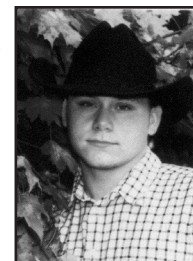


What distinguishes some members of the Class of 1998 from their classmates is that I shall always think of them in pairs. In fact, it's difficult even to think of them as separate entities. For three years now--through four credits of English--I have had **Matt Smith** and **Kris Kuper** in class together. They have always sat together at the same table, and their relationship is marked by two traits. First, they cannot tolerate absolute silence in the classroom; such quiet causes them to giggle uncontrollably. Secondly, if given time to work together on an assignment, within two minutes their discussion will turn to either baseball or football, depending on the time of year. Actually, they have a third predominant characteristic. They love to torture **Missy Aguirre**. I've tried to teach Missy how to fend off their attacks,

but I've concluded that Missy enjoys the abuse.

Kenny Butcher and **Matt Strickland** are also an inseparable pair as are **Alicia Williams** and **Katy Hiler**.

It may surprise you to learn that high school students sometimes complain about things here at LCHS. In fact, I notice this trait in many seniors near the end of the school year. **Kathy Gonzalez**, for example, likes to visit me every now and then to remind me that Mr. Johnson is mean, to which I usually reply, "If he's so mean, Kathy, why did you sign up to be his aide?" **Stewart Osborn** did not always care for my selection of movies in Film Study. As we watched *The Birds*, for example, I could hear Stewart muttering under his breath, and as the film progressed, I watched Stewart battle to stay alert. When the film was finally over, he turned to me and said, "This movie is well named. It is **for** the birds." Last year during Foxfire, **David Ramsey** had a legitimate reason to complain. He was a little scared about having to go out into the community and interview someone. What if the person wouldn't talk or only answered questions with a "yes" or a "no". I suggested that David and his group interview Joan Wolverton about the wine making business, and I assured David that he'd probably only have to ask Joan one question, and she'd do the rest of the work. And that's just what happened. He posed a question and Joan talked about the wine making business for the next hour. What David complained about was that he then had to transcribe the entire interview, and it took hours.

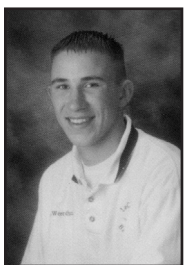


I've grouped a few students together because their names can be troublesome. Take **Jennifer Price**, for example. On the first day of Tenth Grade English three years ago, I did the unthinkable. I called her Jenny. An honest mistake, but believe me, I have paid for it. And then there's **Jenny--not Jennifer--Sievila**, spelled S-I-E-V-I-L-A. Now in all honesty, I nailed Sievila correctly the first time, but at basketball games for the past three years, I have

heard announcers pronounce Sievila at least a dozen different ways. These are the same announcers who don't miss a beat saying VanWeerdhuizen. One of our exchange students this year is **Rachel**, and Rachel's last name is spelled **X-A-V-I-E-R**. Xavier, right? Wrong. Chevairre.

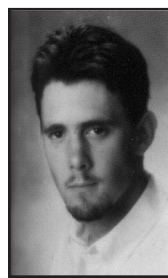
Joseph Blecha and **Dan Duncan** don't know it, but they have left a lasting impression on me. You see, each one has a brother just one year younger than they are, and for some reason, I keep calling their younger brothers Joseph and Dan, though I really ought to call them Vic and John. I don't know why I do this. Mrs. Bevans says it's the first sign of old age in teachers.

What some members of the Class of 1998 have in common is that they suffer from certain physical problems. **Shanna Vinson**, for example, managed to step off a curb and sprain her ankle on one of the music trips to Disneyland. The upside of Shanna's misfortune is that because she was wheelchair bound, she and her pals got to go to the front of every line at Disneyland. Although I have not personally witnessed it, a certain junior assures me that **Kelsey Bluth** has fallen down in nearly every one of her cross country races. She also managed to flush her chapstick down the toilet one time and has difficulty keeping food in her mouth. Although **Joey Hord** is not given to falling down during his races, he recently developed an ailment in my classroom which caused half of the students to seek new seats far from Joey. Thank goodness for those remote control fans in my room. **Carina Carlson**'s physical problem was not so much an ailment as, well, an exposure to the elements. It seems that during the recent production of *Tony and Tina's Wedding*, Carina's costume let her down.



We have now arrived at the last two members of the Class of 1998, students whom I just can't manage to categorize. Most of you know **Dustin VanWeerdhuizen** as that tall guy who likes to shoot baskets

from slightly beyond the half court line, but there is more to Dustin than meets the eye. In fact, he can be as troublesome to teachers in the classroom as he is to opponents on the court. One day last year, for example, Dustin had managed to pilfer someone's TV remote, and he had positioned himself just outside the door of the room next to mine where Mr. Holmes was thrilling students with a math lesson. Those darned remotes work on any TV in the building, and Dustin nearly drove Mr. Holmes crazy flipping that TV on and off. Besides doing impressions of William Shatner, Jacques Cousteau, and Austin Powers, **Devon Carroll** is a very subtle young man who always takes my instructions seriously. For example, when I warned the Foxfire kids not to abuse their privilege of being able to drive off campus to



conduct interviews, Devon knew I meant business as evidenced by his waltzing back into the building a half an hour late to second period wearing a Burger King crown. If you know Devon at all, you know he possesses the gift of gab, so much so that early in this last semester, I offered him a quarter if he would just quit talking for three minutes. He did, but it would have cost me \$675 to keep him quiet the entire semester. To give you an idea of how much Devon likes to talk, his mom told me that when Devon and Adam were toddlers, friends of the family used to express amazement that Adam ever learned to talk because he got so little practice with Devon around.

Well, there you have it. . .all 61 members of the Class of 1998 who are here tonight. It's been a few years since I mentioned everyone, and I thought tonight might be my last chance to accomplish such a feat. At last count, the Class of 1999 included 110 members.

In closing, let me just say that if I should meet any of you ten years down the road and you're standing behind me with a pair of sharp scissors, please remember that I mentioned your name here tonight.

The Class of 1999

Graduation: June 11, 1999

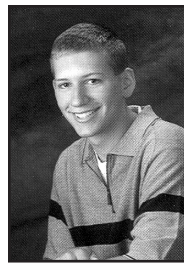
This is the 16th commencement speech which I have delivered at La Center High School, and frankly, I'm sick and tired of trying to find a new way to open the darned thing. I was so desperate and devoid of ideas this year that I began to watch CNN broadcasts of college commencement speakers, hoping that I could steal an idea from one of them. When that failed, I decided simply to tell you that I've run out of clever openings and then get on with it. If you've been to an LCHS graduation since 1983, then you pretty much know how the speech is going to go. I won't be sharing many words of wisdom or advice for the future. Let's face it, if these kids haven't heard my many words of wisdom and advice for the future during normal school hours, they're not likely to pick up on them tonight. So instead, I'll just share a few memories of these students with you.

Six years ago, Allen **Bolen** graduated from La Center High School, and frankly, I never thought there could be another student quite like Allen. That is until I met his brother **Chris**, who is graduating tonight. Allen used to take great delight in trying to trip me up, and I must admit that he was successful on occasion. It did not take long for me to discover that this is a family trait. One day last year, Chris and his good pal **Brian Taylor** were quietly working in my classroom during fifth period when out of the blue, Chris asked me if I thought **Eli Bluth** was a big loser. I responded that I didn't even know Eli but I doubted that he was a big loser. Chris and Brian persisted, doggedly trying to get me to say something derogatory about poor Eli. I'm happy to say that I didn't fall for their little ploy, which was lucky because at the time, Eli was hiding in my room.

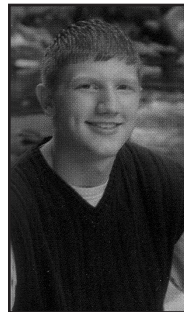
Eli is one of 15 students in the Class of 1999 whom I have never had in class, aside from his one clandestine visit to my room. Nevertheless, I know one thing about him. He procrastinates. When the

seniors ordered their caps and gowns last November, Eli did not submit an order, nor did he respond to my letters home, my notes at school, or my one-on-one hallway reminders. In fact, Eli became terrified at the sight of me, so much so that he would turn and run when he saw me headed his way, a sure sign that he still had not ordered that cap and gown. Then one day just about a month ago, I ran into Eli in the hall and he didn't run, a sure sign that he had finally submitted that darned order. I believe what finally motivated Eli was my threat to personally sew a gown for him.

Two names which you can often hear uttered



together, in the office, in the principal's office, or in the staff room, are **Larry Monfort** and **Dan Curtin**. Strangely enough, Larry and Dan were born on the very same day. Larry and Dan are the kind of guys who make an indelible impression on teachers, especially teachers who are new to the building. I first knew Larry and Dan when they were freshmen in my Ninth Grade English class, and they were a bit high maintenance. This year I had them together in Advanced Composition and English Literature, and to tell you the truth, they didn't give me a lick of trouble. Still, they



got into their share of mischief this year. In fact, I have never known a student to have more difficulty in the parking lot than Dan Curtin. My only advice, Dan, is that if you're going to misbehave in the parking lot, don't do so in front of the driver's ed teacher.

We have a few senior couples in the Class of '99, and it seems most of them have planned their schedules so that I have them together in class. Usually, that's not a problem, but every now and then when they're experiencing a bit of domestic tension, it spills over into class. Take **Christian Campbell** and **Danielle Chicks**, for example. Rarely have I ever seen these two fuss with each other, but one day in

class, they had a small argument over whether or not Danielle ought to wear dresses more often. While Christian was pleading his case that she should wear more dresses, he attempted to enlist my support. Unfortunately for Chris, I have not worn a dress to school since 1981. They must have resolved their dispute, though, because I did see Danielle wear a dress to class once.

Cristina Fehr and **Jeff Gaudet** comprise another entertaining senior couple. Jeff is actually a very quiet guy, while Cristina spends much of her time railing against those who would put an “h” in her first name and those who would mispronounce Jeff’s last name.

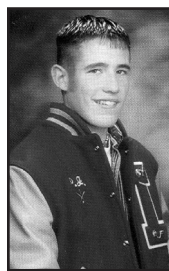
Parents, I have a request to make of you. Please do not give all of your children names which begin with the same letter. It’s too hard on teachers. It took me a year and a half to stop calling **Brian Taylor** by his brother Bob’s name. And even now, I occasionally slip up. Just a few weeks ago when kids registered for classes next year, I noticed the name Brent Taylor on one of my class lists. Brent, if you’re out there in the audience, I apologize now for all of the times that I undoubtedly will call you either Bob or Brian next year.

Siblings do not necessarily have to have names that start with the same letter to cause me problems. **Katie Bloomquist** will back me up on this one. Early this year, I kept calling her by her sister Bonnie’s name. She finally became so exasperated with me one day that she said, “Ms. Bryan, Bonnie’s gone. Get over it!” Besides her name, what I shall always remember about Katie is that she loves all things Victorian, and she is quite an expert on the Titanic.

Mindy Calnan and **Holly Plumlee** know me well. Both of these girls were lucky enough to do a bit of traveling this year. Holly spent a few weeks in Ireland at the start of the school year, and Mindy just recently traveled to Hawaii. I also benefitted from

their travels as both young women were kind enough to bring me samples of the local chocolate. Mindy is especially good at catering to my love of chocolate. When she prepared her creative project for *Macbeth* this year, she made a wheel of fortune to which she had attached several types of candy. I left her project on the back counter, knowing that in a chocolate crisis, I could sneak back there and pilfer one of the candybars. However, my third period Film Study class apparently could not stand the temptation of all that candy one day during a film, so Jon Newman led a raid on the wheel of fortune, and by the time they were finished, all that remained was the black licorice.

If I had to pick the two most humorous students



in the Class of 1999, I believe I’d go with **Peter James Rasmussen** and **Nephresha Singletary**. Every now and then during my prep period this year, Nephresha would stop by my room to entertain me with stories, sing me a song, explain why she hates to wash her hair, or complain about Mr. Johnson not giving her enough work to do. She has a true gift for storytelling. Peter, on the other hand, loves to razz his classmates, and he’s darned good at it. Fortunately for Peter, he is also quite quick, which comes in handy when his classmates



don’t much care for his razzing. Peter also entertained the scholarship committee a few weeks ago when on the honors and awards section of the application, Peter listed that he had been chosen the Biggest Flirt of the Class of 1999. Many members of the scholarship committee were impressed by that, Peter.

Some members of the Class of ‘99 I will remember not because of any one incident, but because of a particular trait or habit. **Brooke Santos** is a fairly quiet girl, although she speaks out in class more than she used to. But when that girl puts her pen to paper or her fingers to the keyboard, she always creates a thing of beauty.

There are two things I'll always remember about **Cory Fowler**, her beautiful red hair and her laugh. Cory does not laugh out loud all that often, but when she does, she has one of those laughs that infects the entire class.

While I'm on the subject of hair, I must mention **Dustin Johnson**. I can barely describe Dustin's hairdo during basketball season. All I can say is that it involved lots and lots of hair gel and time. When he was finished, he kind of looked like he'd just survived a tornado, and that's how he looked when he played the game. Then when he would emerge from the lockerroom after the game, his hair would be very neatly combed. Apparently neatly combed hair does not intimidate opponents.

Seniors near the end of their high school career can surprise teachers in many ways. Some students who have consistently performed well throughout high school may suddenly decide enough is enough and coast through the last few weeks, while others will surprise us in a more pleasant way. When I handed *The Grapes of Wrath*--a 600-page novel--to the 26 students in American Literature early in April, there were audible gasps and sighs. I believe I heard a few words, too. By the time we finished reading nearly a month later, though, nearly every student had read nearly every word, and the unit turned out to be one of the most enjoyable of my career. Students who had never earned an A on a literature exam before amazed themselves, among those **Marty Heintz**. On the day I handed back the exams, Marty was so excited that he called his dad during lunch, but his dad didn't believe him. So Marty took his exam home and showed it to his dad, who still wasn't quite sure it was legitimate. Mr. Heintz, I'm here to tell you that Marty earned that A all by himself and it's completely on the up and up.

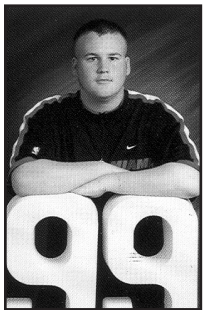
Every year, it seems there are always a couple of seniors who develop senioritis early in their senior

year. This senioritis will manifest itself in many ways: Inability to arrive to class on time, inability to arrive to class at all, surliness, that sort of thing. **Michelle Maylone** definitely came down with a case of senioritis about midway through the year. Fortunately for Michelle, she had **Renee Woody** by her side most of the day to prod her through. The disease hit **Chris Strickland** much earlier in the school year, about September 2, I think. Just this week, Chris was telling me that he found Physics, which he took last year, much easier than Film Study, which he took this year. Well of course, I told him. It's always easier to do well in a course when you're actually there.

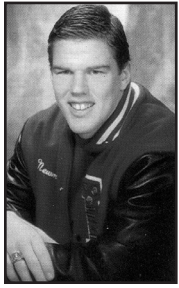
In a few of my classes, I require the students to keep a notebook, which I grade on neatness and thoroughness. However, my notion of neatness and thoroughness does not always jive with that of my students. Take **Nick Turner**, for example. Nick's notebook has been fairly well organized all year, but it has one problem. It has no cover or back. Just the three rings somehow holding the contents together. And **Clint Freeman**'s notebook is the exact opposite. His has both a cover and a back, but Clint apparently is unaware of the function of those three shiny silver rings. When he gets a paper back, he merely stuffs it into the notebook. In fact, his notebook looks like an explosion occurred inside.

If I were giving out hall of fame awards to seniors tonight, **Julie Brandt** and **Amanda Newman** would easily win the award for the nicest, most polite seniors. The only time I had Julie in class was last year, and we got to know each other fairly well. This year, though, I almost never see her, but when I do, she never fails to give me a big hug. I like that in a student. As for Amanda, she was always there at basketball games to help her grandma up the bleachers at the start of the game and back down at the end of the game.

Speaking of the **Newmans**, I must say a few words about **Jon**. The guy is a great big teddy bear, and some of my favorite memories of Jon come from



basketball season. Not only does he do a superb impression of Coach Lapp, but he's also fun on the court. He can shoot free throws underhanded (when we have a BIG lead) and he can set a screen that will send players much smaller than he literally flying across the court. But my favorite basketball memory of Jon comes from his sophomore year when the boys won their second state championship. I ended up staying at the same motel as the two teams, and, in fact, my room was right in the midst of the boys' rooms. After a win, the boys would get a little rowdy, to say the least, but one night, I heard a primal scream which made my hair stand on end. It didn't take long for me to recognize the voice as Jon's. I was in a bit of a quandry as to what I should do, but in the end, I did nothing and remained safely in my room. I figured, heck, Forbes and Herm are getting paid to deal with this. Just a few months ago, Jon told me what had happened that evening to make him scream, so if you want to know, ask him.



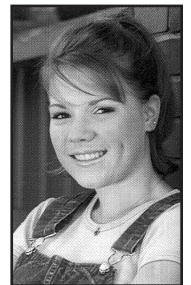
Dawn Kroll and **Jenny Honeywell** can pretty much talk me into anything--like emceeing the Mr. La Center Contest--but they go about it in very different ways. Jenny is just so darned cheerful and optimistic all the time that it's darned near impossible to say no to her. Dawn, on the other hand, will look at me with those sad puppy-like eyes and softly croon, "Please, Ms. Bryan". Before I know it, I've agreed to whatever she asks, too.

Laura Carreno is an eternally cheerful young woman, and I've thoroughly enjoy her presence in Film Study this year. One day, Laura came into my classroom at the start of fifth period, sat down at her table, gave me a big smile, and said, "Where is everybody today? Are we in the Mac Lab?" To which I replied, "They're all probably in their fifth period classes, Laura. You're an hour early." Sorry, Laura, I know I said I'd keep that a secret, but it was just too good to not use.

I debated whether or not to share the following

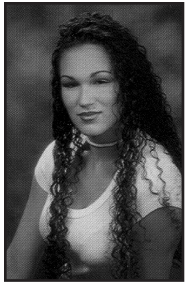
story tonight, but then I decided, "What the heck!" One of the most creative students I have in class is **Becky France**. When we studied *Macbeth* earlier this year, Becky performed a shadow puppet show for her creative project, and it was exceptional and elaborate. Not only had she cut out several intricate shadow puppets, but she had also set up a screen at the front of the room with a bright light shining on it to cast the shadows. Then Becky crouched down behind the screen and manipulated the puppets while reading her script at the same time. The class was fascinated. Unfortunately, one of her puppets was consistently being uncooperative, so much so that at one point the normally mild-mannered, quiet Becky uttered a particular word quite loudly. I'm fairly sure this word is not in the original Shakespearean version of *Macbeth* but desperate times call for desperate measures.

Holly Kestner is the sort of kid that I would adopt if she ever needed to be adopted. Not only does she have those famous Kestner cheeks, but she is full of life and mischief. Earlier this year, she could not start off the day--and I've had her first period all year--without a giant Dr. Pepper. Then she decided that was unhealthy, so she tried to wean herself off of the Dr. Pepper, at one point substituting Jolt Cola, I believe. Another day during first period, she was feeling feisty, so declared that it was "Hit on Raymond Mosley Day", Raymond being a young man in the class. Raymond did not seem to object to that plan at all. And when Holly does not know the correct answer to a quiz question, she will instead write down something which she is certain will shock and amaze me.



After having **Jenny Khater** in class for the past two years, I have discovered that we have many things in common. For instance, Jenny is a tall, slender young woman with long, beautiful dark hair, and I . . . okay, so we don't look much alike. But we do share two traits. First of all, she loves chocolate as much as I do. If I needed a quick chocolate fix to

get me through second period, she could help me out and vice versa. The other trait we share is somewhat

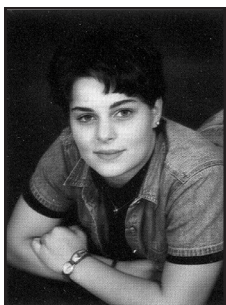


ironic. Last year, the glasses I was wearing were on their last leg. Not only were they about 15 years old and miserably out of fashion, but one arm had broken and I had repaired it with a bandaid. About once a week, Jenny would look at my glasses, shake her head, and exclaim, "Woman! Why

don't you break down and get some new glasses?" So last summer I did, just to get Khater off my back. Jenny wears glasses herself, only when she needs to see, and what do I discover this year? Her glasses are broken, too, but she'd rather be blind than use my bandaid trick.

If any member of the Class of '99 is destined to become an attorney, it would have to be **Randy Ney**. Randy is a great kid to have in class. He almost always completes his work, he asks incredibly thoughtful questions, and he's a witty guy. The reason I think he'd make a good attorney, though, is that he loves to argue, and he especially likes to argue with me about quiz answers of his which I--or my highly competent aide--have marked incorrect. Granted, Randy has been right a few times, but his arguments sometimes border on the ridiculous. For example, my question might ask, "What was The Count of Monte Cristo doing as he waited for his enemy to enter the house?" If Randy was unsure, he'd write something like, "He was breathing" and then argue with me when I marked it wrong.

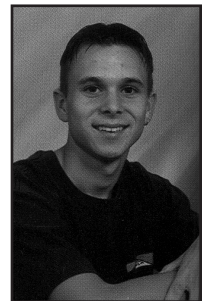
Lacey Woodside takes issue with the following story--claiming that it involved not her, but her brother Darin--however, I have it on good authority that indeed it was Lacey who pulled the following stunt. It seems that on the very first day of her school career here in La Center, Lacey became so disruptive in her kindergarten class that the teacher was forced to call in the principal, Linda McGeachy for assistance.



Miss McGeachy practically had to drag Lacey down to the office, and as she spoke on the phone with Lacey's father, the chairman of the school board, she had Lacey pinned to the wall as Lacey kicked and screamed. We still have to call home on Lacey every now and then, but the kicking and screaming seem to have stopped.

For the first time this year, I had **Brandon Lien** in class, and I truly did not know what to expect from him. As it turns out, he is quite a witty fellow, but what I'll most remember about Brandon is his smile. Not every academic task I asked of Brandon resulted in a grin, but when he's happy, he has a smile to rival that of Tom Cruise.

If there's one thing I truly appreciate in a student it's wit, and I have found a worthy opponent this year in **Brandon Schmitz**. This past Monday, my seniors walked into World Literature fully expecting to take their final exam over *The Count of Monte Cristo*. When I announced that their graduation present was that they did not have to take the exam, Brandon gave his girlfriend Tiffany Linsday a big hug and a kiss. Then he looked up at me and said, "I kiss her, Ms. Bryan, because I cannot kiss you."



From the moment that I met her on the first day of her freshman year, **Jenny Winn** has taken great delight in ignoring my instructions. When I would ask the kids to number their papers from 1 to 10, Jenny would instead label hers A through J. When I would circle a misspelled word on one of her papers, she would exclaim, "But Ms. Bryan, that's how I spell that word!" When I would ask her to please close the blind by her chair so that we could start a movie in Film Study, she would explain that she was too tired to reach up and do so. This has been a constant source of amusement for the two of us. But now it's my turn to disobey. You see, I have several bulletin boards in my room on which I have pinned up the photos that seniors have given to me over the years.

The oldest photo is of a handsome young man from the Class of 1980, who just happens to be Jenny's dad. When Jenny gave me one of her photos a few months ago, she pleaded with me not to put her photo next to her dad's. However, Jenny, in the spirit of civil disobedience, that is exactly what I'm going to do. So there.

Shy, retiring, unassuming, quiet. . . never have these words been applied to a group of senior girls consisting of **Jessica Larson, Nikki Nevels, Jodi Settles, and Olivia Smith**. You have to see these girls in action to believe them. Between classes, they will congregate in the middle of the hallway outside of the library, shriek and scream at each other,



and protect the LC in the carpet there from the impure footprints of underclassmen. As I passed by them several times this year, I found myself experiencing *deja vu*, and it took me some weeks to figure out where the feeling came from. Suddenly it

occurred to me that I had witnessed a very similar scene some 20 years ago at the old high school. There used to be an LC on the tile floor down there in front of the office, and it was considered sacrilege to walk across it. Should an underclassman make that fatal error, he would promptly be picked up by a group of seniors and find himself dusting off the LC with the seat of his pants. Jessica, Nikki, Jodi, and Olivia not only reminded me of that custom but of three other senior girls who loudly defended their LC, Kim Reed, Julia Louise Pettit, and Lynn Buckbee. This need to protect the LC must run in the family because Jessica Larson is, in fact, the daughter of Lynn Buckbee.

Before I leave these four young women, I must tell you that they all intend to move in together following graduation. Hope that's not a big secret, girls. At any rate, if you could see the four of them erupt almost daily into arguments, spats, and disagreements as they sit together at the same table in my classroom, you would understand my concern at them cohabitating. Frankly, watching the four of them under one roof could become a new spectator

sport. I know I'd pay money to watch.

If I tried to tell you something about all 95 graduates, we'd be here all night. We may be anyhow, so I'll wrap this up. For my final exam in American Lit this past Wednesday, I stole an idea from Mr. Johnson, a math teacher. I asked the seniors to write a page on the most important things they had learned in their 12 or 13 years of education, and I'd like to share a few of their words with you now. One girl wrote, "In kindergarten, I learned that you should never be too shy to tell the teacher when you have to go to the bathroom. The results could be a little wet." A young man explained, "In middle school, I learned what to do and what not to do. For example, I figured out what teachers' classes were the easiest and which ones were the hardest. Now Mrs. Nesland's math class seemed so impossible to pass when, on the other hand, it wasn't as long as you did your work and kept your mouth shut. Then the biggest thing I learned was to respect everyone, no matter who they are." Another young man wrote, "In kindergarten, I learned how to spell the word 'cat' and also how to pick up the ladies at recess." Finally, one student wrote, "I see where I was and where I have come and I see that somewhere I have grown up. I don't know where it happened or how, but I know it happened. Somewhere along the way I left my childish things behind and I became the me I am today."

I'm nearly finished, but I wanted to tell you that a big topic of conversation in the staff room this year was a pay increase for teachers. We were discussing this very issue one day at lunch, and as I do almost everyday, I was sitting next to my good friend, Don Landes-McCullough, art teacher supreme, architect of the recent Arts Crawl, director of many wonderful drama productions, and a very witty guy. During a lull in the conversation, Don turned to me and said, "Even if we weren't getting a raise next year, I'd still be here. I love what I do." And so do I. We get to spend our days with your children, and for that, we thank you. But please, don't forget my little hint on naming your children. Thank you.

The Class of 2000

Graduation: June 10, 2000

About three weeks ago, I arrived to school one morning and headed through the office as I always do. As I passed through, I noticed a young man in the waiting area, but I continued walking until one of the secretaries said, "Sharon, this young man is waiting to see you." So I turned toward him. He smiled, and said, "Do you remember me?"

I stared at him for a few seconds before the secretary said, "Class of 1984." Within moments, I realized who he was and I said, "Oh, yes Shayne, I remember you." Apparently, he was in need of photo ID for some reason and wanted to borrow a yearbook with his picture in it. So we walked down to my classroom, and as I was searching for that 1984 yearbook, I said to him, "Do you want to know what I most remember about you in high school?" Honestly, he didn't seem all that thrilled to hear what I had to say, but that didn't stop me.

"It was Homecoming Week of 1984, Toga Day. You had just passed by me in the hall between classes, and as you walked away, one of your buddies flipped up the back of your toga." There are just some sides of your students that you don't want to see.

At that point in my story, the young man appeared anxious to leave, so armed with my personal copy of the 1984 yearbook, he and I strolled back down toward the office, and as we reached the exit, he said, "Do you remember so and so--and he named another former student--and I said, "Yes. In fact, she and I are good friends."

And as he headed out the door with my yearbook, he said, "Yea, she was my parole officer." And he was gone. With my yearbook.

The point of this story is that if he had only worn the proper attire under that toga 16 years ago, he might have avoided a life of crime and the need for a

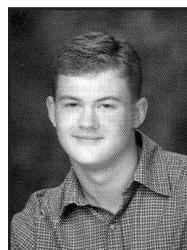
parole officer.

Not really. The point of my story is that if you're one of my students and you do silly things in school and I see you do these things or hear about them, they could haunt you 16 years down the road. Or they could haunt you tonight.

As I speak about a few kids tonight, I'm going to ask them to stand so you can easily pick them out of the crowd.

When **Laura Slack** was a freshman in my Ninth English class, she had quite a temper. She even duked it out with a classmate one memorable day, which caused me to move more quickly than any of these students thought possible and gave birth to a saying which Kjell Rice has never let me forget. But the funniest thing Laura did that year happened on a day when I was absent. Apparently, Laura and my sub had a bit of a spat, and the sub sent Laura to the office. Not content to go quietly, Laura stormed toward the door. Unfortunately, she missed the handle and slammed into the door with her entire body, which made her even more angry. Once she finally got the door open, she tried to vent her fury on it by slamming it, but we have those doors that just can't be slammed, so by the time Laura finally exited the room, her classmates were in tears.

Actually, I remember students not only for their antics but for their wit, too. **Peter Gross** is a man of few words but vast knowledge. In fact, he wrote his research paper last winter on German fighter tactics in WWII. In truth, he probably didn't actually have to do any research, but he did some to humor me. Last year, we were playing a game in which the kids listen to a sound byte and then answer a question about it. One byte was of FDR's "Date which will live in infamy" speech, and the question was, "In what state did the events referred to in the speech occur?" The first group to take a crack at the answer said something like Oklahoma. The second group came a



little closer and named California. Peter was in the third group, and after group two missed, Peter shook his head and said, "You people are scaring me."

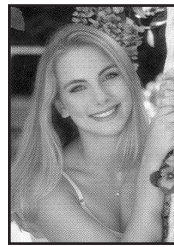
Throughout his high school career, **Wes Elliott** has suffered from an irrational fear that Mr. Johnson does not like him. I have continually reassured Wes that Mr. Johnson does indeed like him and that his gruff exterior is just an act. But Wes finds that hard to believe because whenever he passes Mr. Johnson in the hall and says hi, Mr. Johnson either grunts at him or merely nods. "Wes," I say, "That's just his way of saying good morning." Another thing you should know about Wes is that he can be pretty witty when he writes. Last fall, he wrote a paper about the good things at La Center High School, one of which is track. Wes loves track. And in Wes's own words, "The best thing about track is simple. . .women in spandex."



Heather Kapezynski is a very sensitive and kind young woman, but I'm afraid I offended her sensitivity and kindness last year when a huge fly was buzzing relentlessly around my classroom. To rid my classroom of this pest, I offered the first kid to exterminate the fly a 50¢ reward. Heather immediately protested and suggested that we capture the fly and release it into the wild. Unfortunately, just as she was finishing up her plea, someone nailed the fly with a book.

Brandon Cole was a member of my Ninth Grade English class. His dad is Bill Cole, who was a student of mine 20 years ago, and I can recall a ridiculous thing or two that Bill did, but I won't share that here. Late in the year, the kids were doing a group project, and Brandon was teamed with Hollie Sexton, Tim Rinaker, and one other student who is not at La Center anymore and who was just lousy in a group. In fact, I had to bribe Hollie, Tim, and Brandon to work with the kid, but they showed real teamwork. While Hollie and Tim produced the actual project, Brandon's job was to keep the other student occupied so that

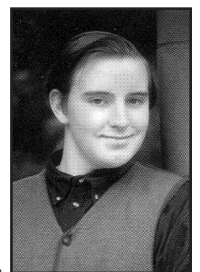
he would not distract Hollie and Tim. Brandon may not have learned much about the project, but he succeeded quite well in the area of teamwork.



While I'm on the subject of **Hollie Sexton**, I must tell you that she is as boy crazy as I have ever seen a teenager. In fact, she always seems to have a trail of young men falling all over themselves for her. Just last fall, three young men interested in Hollie converged on her house at the same time. I don't know if Hollie invited them or it was a coincidence, but when the pressure became too great, Hollie simply ran up to her room and went to bed, leaving all three young men sitting together downstairs, staring at each other.

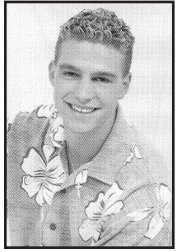
Some of my students scare me. Take **Kristin Anderson** and **Joe Kosak**, for example. A couple of months ago in English Literature, we played a little game called Outrageous Truths. Each of us made a list of three true statements about ourselves and one false statement. Then I put all of these statements on the overhead and we all tried to determine the lies. One of things which Kristin wrote is that she once glued her brother to the toilet seat. And Joe wrote, and I quote, "I have been on fire." What scares me is that both of these statements turned out to be true.

Samm Hawkins is a unique individual, and I greatly admire his freedom of spirit. One of the ways in which he demonstrates this freedom is in his attire. So far this year, Samm has come to school in a puffy shirt, not unlike the one on the *Seinfeld* episode, epaulets, spats, and pink jammies. Just last week, he came to class sporting a fencing mask. At Senior Breakfast yesterday, Samm toasted his classmates for putting up with him and said, "If I'd come to school dressed up like Napoleon anywhere else, I'd have been persecuted."



Many years ago when I was a young La Center

High School teacher, I met a woman named Hazel Mazna. We became good pals, and Hazel used to

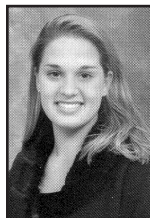


tell me a good deal about this nephew of hers. It would probably be more accurate to say that she raved about him, his intelligence, his talent, his honesty. Frankly, I found it all a bit hard to believe. After all, the kid could only have been about five years old

then. By the time I finally had this kid in class when he was a junior, I discovered the truth. Hazel had not done him justice. The young man I am speaking of is **Matt Lambrecht**. Matt is truly an amazing young man, but you should know that he has surprised me two times during this school year. The first time occurred when we were playing a rousing game of Password. Sounds like all we ever do is play games, huh? At any rate, the boys team was lagging woefully far behind the girls team, so they resorted to a painfully obvious method of cheating, and even convinced Matt to play along. I repeat, though, that “oicket” is not a word, Matt. . .and Tim. The second time that Matt surprised me occurred just one week ago when I attended the Millennium Groove Ensemble concert. Not only did Matt croon “I’m Too Sexy” to a crowd of over 500 people, but at one point in the show, he actually shook his booty.

Heather Towse, would you please stand up? I don’t have any humorous stories about Heather to share with you, but I think you should know that she is one of the kindest, most pleasant students that I have ever had in class. I just wanted you to know.

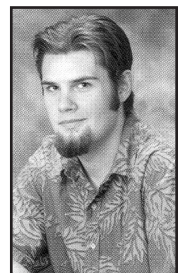
While I do have a humorous story or two I could tell about **Molly Hayden**, instead I’d like to tell you why I call her Super Woman. If any student has ever taken advantage of the opportunities available to her in high school, it’s Molly. During her four years here, Molly has been involved in our music program, student government, and athletics. In addition, along with nine other students, she spent more than a year preparing for the show band concert which happened last weekend,



and it was incredible. This year, Molly competed in the Miss Clark County pageant where she won a scholarship. And over the years, Molly has been the student we all go to when we need something done and we need it done well. That banner on the back wall, for example. Molly painted it. And when you view tonight’s multimedia presentation, know that Molly spent hours and hours putting it all together with very little help from anyone else. She’s a very humble young woman and probably none too pleased at my words, but she deserves to be recognized. She is Super Woman.

Marques Blalock-Howard and **Matt Young** have a couple of things in common. Both of them are excellent athletes. Not only does Marques have a state championship ring from his freshman year in basketball, but he just captured two state titles at the track tournament in Cheney a few weeks ago. And besides wracking up all kinds of football awards, Matt Young once high jumped 6’7 1/2”. In addition, while Marques owns more pairs of shoes at age 18 than I have owned in my 43 years, Matt has the world’s largest collection of football tee shirts. One last thing they have in common concerns their mothers. Matt never arrives to school in an unironed tee shirt, and Marques. . .well, Marques still does not cut up his own Eggo waffles. Wendy. . .Billie. . .this has got to stop. You’re making the rest of us mothers look bad.

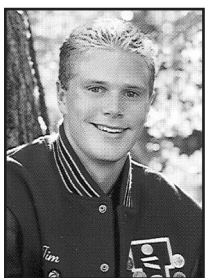
Like Samm Hawkins, **Kjell Rice** is not the kind of young man who worries about what other people think about him. So earlier this year on Color War day when all of the seniors were donning the color pink, Kjell arrived to school in a lacey pink dress, which was a tad small for him and didn’t quite zip up all the way in back. At one point during the day, a fellow student asked Kjell if it bothered him to come to school in a lacey pink dress, to which Kjell replied, “Yes, I’m wearing a dress. Obviously, I don’t have a problem with that.” I’ve known Kjell since he was a freshman, and I’ve gotten very used to having him around, so when he asked to lead a game one day



before spring vacation, I was happy to let him run the show. And he did a great job. But when I was walking down the hall to lunch a few hours later, it suddenly occurred to me that I don't even have Kjell in class this year.

Tami Roche and **Tosha Schultz**. Tami and Tosha. Tosha and Tami. Even their names go together well. For the past four years, Tami and Tosha have been dating the same young men, both two years older than they are and both LCHS grads. When Tosha and Tami were freshmen and sophomores, their boyfriends were juniors and seniors, so they were able to attend Prom. And when Tami and Tosha were juniors and seniors, their boyfriends were out of school, so they were also able to go to Prom. But I must tell you that when I ran into Tami and Tosha's boyfriends at Prom this year, the fourth La Center Prom for each young man, they looked like one more Prom just might put them over the edge.

Tim Rinaker is one of just two members of the Class of 2000 whom I have had in class all four years. He first distinguished himself as a freshman when he and Hollie Sexton conspired to steal chocolate



from my desk when I was out of the room. Normally, that would destroy our student/teacher relationship, but he didn't confess his sin until he was a junior. As a sophomore, Tim enrolled in Foxfire and teamed up with senior Devon Carroll to write a story on former LCHS teachers. Of

course, my students knew when they left the building to interview people, they were to go directly to the interview and return as soon as the interview ended. Some students, though, took a few detours and some students were very obvious about their detours. Take the day, for example, when Tim and Devon strolled into the school halfway through second period sporting Burger King crowns. That resulted in yet another email from the principal.

I don't know if Mr. Penrose and Mr. Holmes know

this, but one year ago tomorrow, Tim and about half of the junior class skipped school to see the premier of the new Austen Powers movie. By the time Tim was a senior, he was having trouble getting dates. In fact, for Homecoming this year, Tim and his good pal Matt Young had to take blow-up dolls to the dance. They even took them to dinner at The Olive Garden before the big dance and had their pictures taken with the dolls at the dance. Quite a kid.

I really wish that time and my memory would allow me to tell you something about all 71 members of the Class of 2000, but at least you have a hint of what these kids are like.

Since I began tonight by telling about a former student who reappeared in my life just recently, I'd like to end the same way. About three months ago, Eric Fillman, LCHS Class of 1985, gave me a call, said he was going to be a contestant on "Who Wants to be a Millionaire," and asked if I would be one of his phone-a-friends. Needless to say, I was thrilled to accept. Of course, as some of you know, Eric made it to the hotseat, but the audience gave him a bum steer at the \$4000 level, so he walked away with \$1000 and a free trip to New York. He never got a chance to call me, which was just as well because I would have given him the wrong answer, but not on purpose. I tell you this because Eric also participated in that Toga Day during Homecoming Week back in 1984; however, Eric was properly attired under his toga. As a result, 16 years later, he won a little money on the millionaire show, got to meet Regis Philbin, and has never had to deal with a parole officer.

To the Class of 2000, it's been a great run. I'll miss you.

The Class of 2001

Graduation: June 16, 2001

I'd like to begin tonight by taking a little survey of the audience. This may require some of you out there to exert yourself, but please humor me. First, if you are a graduate of LCHS and the parent of one of tonight's graduates, please stand. Now, if you are a graduate of LCHS and the grandparent of one of tonight's graduates, please stand. If you are a graduate of LCHS and the great grandparent of one of tonight's graduates, please stand. Finally, will all of you out there who are graduates of LCHS please stand. Thank you.

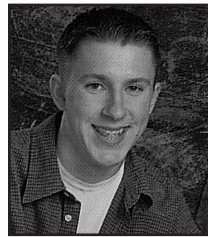
Throughout our lives, we are part of many families, and each of these families has ties that bind us together. All of you who stood moments ago are a part of the family of La Center High School. Members of the Class of 2001, the moment you walked through the doors of La Center High School for the first time as a student, you joined that family, and the bond formed then is only strengthened by your graduating here tonight. The family of La Center High School was first formed in 1922 when Hazel Cook and Alvin Olstedt became the first two students to graduate from La Center High School. And now the 84 of you join an 80-year old family comprised of some 2582 other alumni who have donned caps and gowns before you. You are, I believe, in good company.

Whether or not you know it yet, this place and the people with whom you have spent your time have had a tremendous impact on the person you are today. During your time at LCHS, at least one person, and probably many, have looked out for you. That person may have been a classmate, a coach, an advisor, an administrator, a teacher, the librarian, or some other adult in the building. Along the way, though, there have been people here to see you through the tough times, to make the daily grind a little more tolerable, and to celebrate your successes.

If that isn't family, I don't know what is.

I don't know about your family, but mine is made up of all kinds of people. Some of them are warm and witty, some are a little odd, some are occasionally irritating, some I just don't want to claim as members of my family. Such is the case with the Class of 2001. I'd like to introduce you to a few of them.

Seniors, if you hear me utter your name, please stand so that everyone here in the gym--some 1200 people--can get a good look at you. I'll start with



Nick Marshall, because Nick always started with me. During every single quiz Nick took in English this year--and I quiz a lot--Nick would finish and then ask, "Is there a bonus question today?" And if there was no bonus question, he would

become quite put out, even to the point of writing me notes on his quiz, questioning my judgment and my fitness to be a teacher.

Another interesting character in the Class of 2001 is Nick's girlfriend, **Katie Waliezer**. I had Katie first period last year, and nearly every day, she would arrive to class and immediately consume two



cold Poptarts. Katie had a tough time staying healthy last year, and when I suggested that the Poptarts might have something to do with that, she wouldn't hear of it. Katie rarely wants to believe me. A couple of months ago she and her pals were

anticipating graduation, and Katie swore that she would not cry at the end of the school year. Now in 22 years, I have seen the toughest, most macho football playing males reduced to sobbing babies on graduation night, so I felt safe in betting Katie a dollar that she would cry at some point before all was said and done. She paid me last week.

The best laugh in the Class of 2001 belongs to **Jessica Heroux** hands down. When Jessica cuts loose with her laughter, it isn't long before the entire

class is in an uproar, laughing out of control.

Speaking of witty students, I have to introduce you to **Kyle Brown**. Kyle was in American Literature this year, where we read *The Grapes of Wrath*. One thing the kids have to figure out about the novel is the significance of the title. At one point in the novel, some female characters develop a bit of gastrointestinal distress--if you catch my drift--after eating green grapes. As we were discussing this incident, Kyle nonchalantly said, "Well, I guess we know why they're called the grapes of wrath now."

Students are constantly surprising me, but the biggest surprise of this year for me was **Kathleen Kosak**. By nature, Kathleen is a quiet girl who does not care to be the center of attention. For their final project during our study of *Macbeth*, students worked together in groups to produce a scene from the play. They were the set designers, the directors, the costumers, and the performers. When I introduced the assignment, Kathleen was not thrilled. However, when her group performed, Kathleen was the star. Not only did she play a convincing murderer, but she then assumed another role later in the scene, and she stole the show. I believe there is a thespian lurking there.

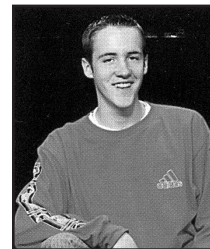
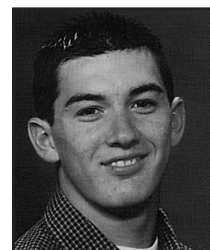
Another fine *Macbeth* performance was delivered by **Bryon Cole**. In Shakespeare's time, all roles were played by males, and in keeping with that Renaissance spirit, Bryon played the part of Lady Macbeth. And at least part of his costume consisted of a lace tablecloth. He was stunning.

Like Kathleen and Bryon, **Summer Raya** surprised me a bit this year. One day during Film Study, Summer turned to me and asked how to spell the name Jeanette. I gave her the standard spelling and then asked why she needed to know. At the time, she was filling out the form to indicate how she wanted her name on her diploma. As it turns out, Jeanette



is Summer's middle name. Naturally, I was somewhat struck by the irony of the situation. . .the symbolism of the diploma versus the spelling of one's own middle name.

Brooks Turner is not a name that any of us will soon forget here at La Center High School. In fact, in my classroom Brooks has been immortalized, and I'm not even sure he knows it. You see, for years I have not allowed students to eat or drink pop in my classroom. And then last year I had Brooks in Film Study during second period. Brooks would arrive to class just about the time that his breakfast was wearing off, so as soon as the lights would go down on film viewing days, I would hear the crinkle of a paper bag followed shortly by that unmistakable release of pressure as a bottle of pop is opened. I fought the battle for a while, but Brooks was persistent. Then one day I noticed that Brooks paid better attention to the film or the assignment if he could eat. And he would bring sandwiches that were a work of art. In fact, everyone at his table would partake. I finally reached the conclusion that Brooks was simply more productive on a full stomach, so I backed off the no eating and drinking rule, and I have named this new freedom The Brooks Turner Memorial Eating Rule.

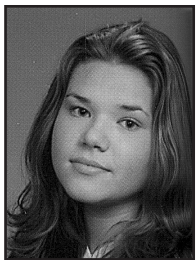


I'd like to introduce you to the Taylor boys, **Brent and Scott**. Not only are Brent and Scott cousins, but they are also very good pals. At times, it seems, they are inseparable. When it comes to attendance at school, mornings are not good for the Taylor boys, at least first period isn't. By third period, though, when I had the two of them in Film Study, they were usually there and fairly alert. This past Monday was the last day of school for seniors, and when third period began that day, I was disappointed to see that Scott was not there.

Naturally, I asked Brent where his cousin was. He told me to wait a second, pulled a walkie talkie out of

his pocket, held down the button, and said, "Scott, where are you?" A voice replied, "I'm on my way." At that point I confiscated the walkie talkie from Brent, held down the button, and said, "You'd better be." There was a long pause before I heard, "Who is this?" Moments later, Scott entered the classroom, and we had fun with the walkie talkies for the rest of the period.

While I'm on the subject of attendance challenges, let me introduce you to **Amanda Curtin**. It took me more than a year, but I finally figured out one of the keys to getting Amanda to class. Never say to her, "See you tomorrow." If I would utter those words to her on her way out of my room, it was the kiss of death. I would not see her tomorrow. In fact, it became something of a joke between us. If I would inadvertently slip and say, "See you tomorrow," Amanda's eyes would light up as though I had given her permission to be absent the following day.



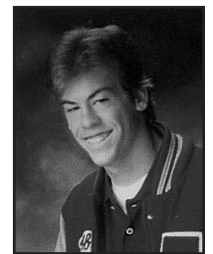
One of Amanda's good friends is **Lisa Hagan**. Lisa is an excellent student whom I have enjoyed in more than one class. In fact, during first semester this year, she was in my room three periods a day. What I find humorous about Lisa is that when she asks me a question, she won't let me answer it. She keeps talking. I used to get a little frustrated, and then I would interrupt her to ask if she wanted an answer to the question. We've worked together long enough, though, that I don't have to interrupt her anymore; she'll ask a question and chat away. I'll just stare at her and eventually she'll say, "I guess I should shut up, huh?"

One of my goals as a teacher is to create a classroom where every student feels comfortable and is willing to share his thoughts about literature and films during discussions. I must be doing okay because a few weeks ago when the students were presenting their Siskel and Ebert projects, **Trever Stradley** was raving about his group's film, *The Godfather*. In fact, as Trever described his favorite

scene, he accidentally slipped and uttered a particular word. . .in its adjective form. Almost immediately, Trever realized what he had said and looked completely stricken. It was a great look.

I met **Leigh Anne Crawford** on the first day of school her junior year. I saw the last name Crawford on my roll and when I glanced at Leigh Anne, I could immediately tell that she was a sibling of a few other Crawford girls I had had in class, so we struck up a conversation about her sisters. I told Leigh Anne that I had had Dana Crawford in class a few years back, and I asked her to remind me just when Dana had graduated. I was more than a little shocked when she told me that Dana had graduated in 1980, my first year here. And I was further amazed when Leigh Anne told me that another student of mine, **Veronica Melchor**, who is also graduating tonight, is Dana's daughter. In fact, Leigh Anne, who is Veronica's aunt, is two months younger than Veronica.

If you're interested in meeting the most unique individual in the Class of 2001, let me introduce you to Mr. **Bobby Rispler**. When he was an underclassman, I used to pass Bobby in the hall and I'd think to myself, "I wonder what that guy is like." And this year, I found out. Bobby is an incredibly thoughtful, insightful young man who just happens to like to wear his hair in spikes. In case you're wondering how he achieves those spikes, it requires a lot of blue Elmer's glue. This glue can be a problem, though. On one of our recent hot days, Bobby went swimming with some of his pals, and not only did his spikes collapse, but a glob of blue glue dripped off onto his back where it dried and hardened, and Bobby had to spend the evening peeling the glue off of his back.

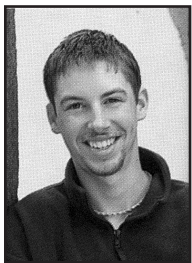


When it comes to unique, **Kari Anderson** could give Bobby a run for his money. One of Kari's great loves in life is musicals, especially the musicals of the 1950s. I used to think she spontaneously broke

out in song only in my class, but then one day as I was walking down the hall, Kari burst out of Mr. Hill's room doing a rendition of "Singin' in the Rain", including Gene Kelly's dance moves. Kari is also on a quest to find 50 different songs that contain the names of the 50 states. I'm not sure just how far she's gotten, but she's making good progress.

I'd like to take this opportunity to apologize to **Jamie and Renee Morken** and **Joe and Jeremy Walker** for all of the times I could not tell one twin from the other. I have two serious handicaps as a teacher. I tend to call students by the names of the siblings, and I'm a complete idiot when it comes to identical twins. Sometimes I could tell Jamie and Renee apart because of their hair, but that was impossible for Joe and Jeremy. I'm happy to report, though, that I have gotten to know all four of them well, and I can now distinguish between them. .usually.

There are a lot of things I'll remember about **Cody Freeman**. There's that fishing hat he's been sporting for several weeks now. I still say you were robbed on that one, Freeman. There's also his passionate hatred of Kobe Bryant and the Lakers in general. But the most vivid memory I have of Cody is my view of him from the front of my classroom. Cody loves



to talk sports, and he would become completely engrossed in discussing last night's sporting events with Bryon Cole each morning. In fact, often times he would not notice that I had even started class. More than once, I stopped what I was doing and simply stared. And then the rest of

the class would do the same. But Cody would keep chatting. Eventually Bryon would notice all of us staring, and he would hint to Cody that it was time to be quiet. At this point, Cody would look up at me and exclaim, "What?"

It is my own personal theory that most of us are lucky if we maintain a friendship with just one of our pals from high school. We tend to go our own

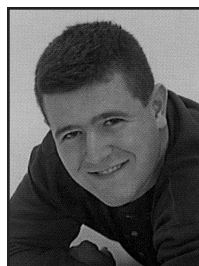
separate ways following graduation, and it becomes difficult to keep up the friendships. One of the friendships from the Class of 2001 that I'm quite certain will still be intact many years from now is that of **Tara Kansanback** and **Nicole Carlson**.

When I asked my seniors to write about their favorite moments in high school, Tara wrote this: "My best high school memories of all come from the times I got to spend with my closet friends, but especially Nicole. All of the times that we just sat around doing nothing and talking about everything. I will always remember and cherish all the times that we laughed and cried together. She's always going to be the best friend I ever had."



Vanessa Williams has added her own unique touch to the Class of 2001, but just yesterday, she pulled a stunt that was not only hilarious but also captured on tape. All during Senior Breakfast, Vanessa had been holding paper cups up to her ears and exclaiming that she could hear the ocean. Near the end of breakfast, one of the senior parents with a video camera approached Vanessa and asked if she could still hear the ocean. Vanessa said that she could and grabbed the nearest cup to prove it. Sadly, the cup was full of milk.

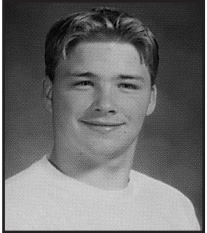
To demonstrate how important each student is to the family of La Center High School, let me introduce you to **Eric Marshall**. Eric has many friends, but his four best pals happen to be juniors, Bo Henderson, Andrea Hayenga, and Jennie Dorsey. I had all four of these kids in first period this year, and each morning, moments before the tardy bell sounded--and occasionally after--, they would enter my classroom together as one unit. This past Tuesday--our first day without seniors--first period began and none of these three juniors were in class. About two minutes later, they entered looking somewhat dejected. When I asked why they were tardy, Bo informed me that they



had been out in the hall having a moment of silence for Eric.

Because I only teach junior and senior English courses anymore, my memories of these students stretch back just two years for the most part, but there are exceptions to this. Back in the fall of 1988, we were down in the old high school. On the first day of school that year, I had gone back into our tiny little xerox room which doubled as an office to make a few copies, and there sat **Lisa Bakker** in her mom's office chair, her legs dangling and her head drooping low. It was her first day of kindergarten. She looked terribly sad, so I went over to her, and I said, "Lisa, is something wrong?" She looked up at me, her little mouth quivered, and she choked, "I'm scared!" I don't think the fear lasted long, though, because by the end of the day, she was back over at the high school, skipping around the office and bumming change off her mom to buy a can of pop.

The last student I'd like you to meet tonight is **Jon McHugh**. A couple of months ago, Jon said to



me, "Ms. Bryan, did my mom ever skip class when she was a senior?" Jon's mom is Bobbie Anderson McHugh, and she was a student of mine 21 years ago. Apparently, Jon and his mom had recently had a discussion about skipping class

and she had told Jon that she did not skip school when she was a senior. I told Jon, who, by the way, has very good attendance, that I couldn't remember that far back. Strangely enough, though, I've been working on a little project for the past few years, and I just happen to have access to the attendance books for many years, including 1980. Bobbie, would you please stand up? Do you want to stick by that story of never having skipped class? Do you know how many days you were absent your senior year? 40!

Unfortunately, the size of our graduating classes in the past few years has precluded my introducing you to all of them. I wish that I could. But at least you have some idea what the Class of 2001 is like.

Before I return to my seat, I'd like you seniors to focus your attention on the front row here where six members of the Class of 1951 are seated. These folks know what the family of La Center High School is all about; that's why they're here tonight to celebrate with you. Those six people represent 25% of the Class of 1951, so if the Class of 2001 follows suit, 21 of you will return some time in June of 2051, a little older and whole lot wiser and still very much a part of the family of La Center High School.

The Class of 2002

Graduation: June 15, 2002

I first walked into La Center High School in August of 1979. I was 22 years old, I was eager, and I desperately wanted a teaching job. And George Kontos hired me. I was up to the challenge. I was going to introduce my students to the world of great literature. Under my guidance, they would all learn to write with style and eloquence. Every one of my students would graduate from high school knowing when to use TO, TOO, and TWO.

And do you know what happened? My students were oblivious to the nobility of my mission in life. They could not see that my sole purpose was to help them to become better people. Instead, they were mean to me. Some of them misbehaved, they skipped class, they didn't do their homework, and they nicknamed me. . .Bulldog. After one particularly unsuccessful lesson, I was sitting at my desk, feeling and no doubt looking defeated, when one of the senior boys, one who just plain scared me, sauntered up and said to me, "Ms. Bryan, just put your feet up on the desk and relax. They're going to pay you whether we learn anything or not."

This little story brings me to my theme tonight. . .change. One of the benefits of a graduation is that it causes us to be a little introspective, to see how far we've come. As for that failed lesson of 1979 and the comment of the young man, my reaction in 2002 would be much different. First of all, there are far fewer lousy lessons. And when they occur, I don't feel bad; I try to figure out what went wrong so I can do better the next time. If a student uttered such a comment to me today, I'd definitely have a retort, but I won't share it with you here.

The La Center High School of 2002 is much different from that of 1979. In 1979, we were down on the other campus, and what is now the middle school had not even been remodeled yet. My

classroom was so small and the students sat so close to each other that they pretty much had to cheat. It was hard not to. As for technology, forget about it. In the office there was no Xerox machine, no Risograph, no computers. We had a hand-crank ditto machine whose counter was broken. And if you got in line behind Mr. Wellman, you might as well go back to your room and write everything on the chalkboard, because by the time he finished, you'd be an old lady. The bright spot of my classroom was that it had air conditioning. Of course, in the eight years I was in that classroom, the air conditioning only worked about five days.

In 2002, we have three different copy machines in the teacher workroom, all powered by electricity and none of which involves ditto fluid. And my classroom in 2002 comfortably accommodates 30 students, 27 computers, lots and lots of books, and the myriad stuff that I have accumulated over 23 years. And instead of a view of the student parking lot, I look upon a lovely wooded scene. While my current classroom is not air conditioned, it is somehow less frustrating to endure the heat there than it was to endure the heat in a classroom with nonfunctioning air conditioning.

Yes, a lot of change has occurred during my 23 years at La Center High School, but one thing which has changed very little is students. Oh, we have twice as many as we did in 1979, but they are not so different from their counterparts of 23 years ago.

When I started teaching Senior English in 1979, we had two books, a great big anthology of English Literature and the novel *The Lord of the Flies*. The seniors did not want to read either of them, but I forced them to, and they still carry a grudge. I have attended both the 10 and 20-year reunions of the Class of 1980, and at both, several alumni harassed me about *The Lord of the Flies*. "Hey," I explained, "we didn't have any other books to read and we had to read something." In 2002, I have oodles of novels, more than we can read in a year. I can pick and choose from among them. Yet what do you suppose

happens? Students complain. When I handed *The Remains of the Day* to **Holly Workman** three weeks ago in English Literature, she glared at the book with disgust and barked, "Is this available on tape? I don't want to read this." **Zach Martinez** had a violent reaction to *Like Water for Chocolate*, a book which I did not select simply because the word chocolate is in its title. When Zach wrote a persuasive essay about the novel trying to convince me the book was intended strictly for women, his first argument was that the novel "kept him from having manly thoughts."

When I went around the room that first day of Senior English in 1979 so that students could tell me their names, one young man introduced himself as Pete Moss. I was not about to fall for this obvious lie. "Come on, what's your real name?" He insisted that his name really was Pete Moss. But I refused to give in to what was clearly a practical joke on the new, young teacher, so I kept at him. As it turns out, his name really was Pete Moss. I felt so bad about harassing him that I fell for it hook, line, and sinker when he told him his first name was spelled P-E-A-T. My trouble with names continues a bit. While no one in the Class of 2002 is named after stuff you put in your garden, some do have unique names. Take **Jennifer Nemjo**, for example. On the first day of school last year, **Melanie Holmes** informed me that while her name is Jennifer, everyone calls her Nemjo. And so for two years, I, too, have called her Nemjo. And I've typed nothing but Nemjo on all of her senior handouts. I just don't feel right calling her Jennifer. I didn't want to tick off her parents, though, so you'll see her full name in the program. And then there's **Shawn Shannon**. . .or is it Shannon Shawn. I get it wrong about half the time. But so does Mr. Hill, so I'm not alone.

About 15 years ago, I had a student in Film Study named Matt Reich, and everyday, Matt would ask the same question. "Ms. Bryan, can we watch *Repo Man*?" And everyday, I would give the same answer. "No!" I had actually seen *Repo Man* and it is a terrible movie. Needless to say, I was more than a little shocked on the first day of class last fall when a girl in Film Study



asked, "Ms. Bryan, can we watch *Repo Man*?" I felt a little déjà vu and a bit of nausea, until I learned that **Stephanie Thompson** is the niece of Matt Reich. By the way, I have never shown *Repo Man* in Film Study, and I never will, just in case there are any other relatives out there lining up to take Film Study.

Another area in which students have changed little in 23 years is the occasionally overwhelming desire they have to escape the classroom. One day in 1980, one of the senior girls asked to go to the library, and I said yes. Two minutes later, she drove by my window heading out of the parking lot. I guess I should have specified which library. I am rarely absent from school, but one day this year when I was gone, **Dan Honeycutt** asked my substitute early in the class period if he could visit the restroom. He never returned. Once I returned the following day, he also never again asked to go to the bathroom. About six weeks ago, Dan came up to me and said that he would pay me \$20 if he had no more absences for the rest of the year. I said that sounded good to me, but then it occurred to me. If he is absent on the last day of school, how am I going to collect my \$20?

Public speaking does not come easily to the typical high school student. In fact, most students would rather stick pins in their eyes than speak in front of a crowd. About 12 years ago, I had Peter Newman in Ninth Grade English, and his speeches were always an ordeal. He would start off strong, then suddenly pause and look completely stricken. Then just as suddenly, he would recover and continue.



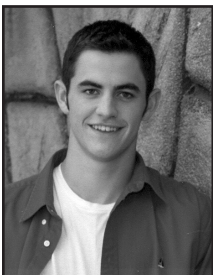
Sarah Carner is something of an exception to this rule. Not only did Sarah eagerly audition for the role of class speaker for tonight's ceremony, but her classmates elected her even though I messed up and left her name off the ballot.

But you should know that Sarah has one predominant goal tonight in her speech, to keep her grandparents

awake. I'm going to be keeping an eye on them, Sarah.

Nearly every teenager has at some point in his high school career fallen asleep in class. This has been true of students throughout time. Seven years ago, I had a student named Becky Furgeson and one day she did not show up for class, even though her classmates were sure she was in school. Turns out she was an aide for the choir teacher the period before mine, and when I sent a kid down to the music room to see if she was there, they found her sound asleep on the floor. She would be in good company in the Class of 2002. The first snoozer I'd like to tell you about is **Sterling Baune**, who slipped into such a deep slumber that even the bell ringing at the end of class did not awaken him. **Mark Wade** was an especially humorous sleeper. Mark slipped into a nap last year during World Literature when the rest of his classmates were deeply engrossed in one of our many fascinating novels. Unfortunately for Mark, he must have had a bad dream because he woke himself up with a rather loud noise, and then he turned to another student and said, "Was that me?" Finally, you need to meet **Danny Rispler**. Danny made a point last year in Film Study of sitting at one of the tables at the back of the room. That way, he could prop his head up on the counter during film viewing and catch a few Zs. Show the folks what you looked like for most of your junior year, Danny.

In the Class of 1980, there was a trio of students who were exceptionally good pals. . . Julia Pettit, Kim Reed, and Lynn Buckbee. They always seemed to be together, and they very often drove me nuts. In the Class of 2002, **Jennie Dorsey**, **Andrea Hayenga**, and **Bo Henderson** form a similar trio. During their

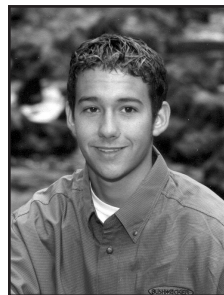


junior year, though, they had a fourth member, Eric Marshall, but Eric was a senior and his graduation broke up the group. On the day after seniors finished up last year, Jennie, Andrea, and Bo came into English Literature late, something they had never done before. When I

asked why, they explained that they had been having a moment of silence out in the hall for Eric.

Some of you parents out there are watching your very first child graduate from high school tonight, while others are perhaps attending their last high school graduation. Of those families that are watching the youngest child graduate, I wanted to mention two in particular because I feel we're reaching the end of an era. Fourteen years ago, David Kestner graduated from La Center High School, and tonight the sixth and final Kestner child, **Susie Kestner Schmitz** graduates, and like her siblings before her, she has those eternally rosy cheeks. Nearly 20 years ago, a young man by the name of Wayne Rivers first entered my classroom, and during his four years of high school, he must have written about 30 papers, each and every one about baseball. Sixteen years after Wayne graduated in 1986, the youngest Rivers, #8 in the group, **Brandon**, graduates tonight, closing out the Rivers era at LCHS.

One area of school life which has changed tremendously in 23 years is that of film viewing. In 1979, the staff vied for a single projector, the kind that made that distinct clicking sound. And we always kept a roll of scotch tape on the cart because about half the time when you were showing a movie, the film would break and you'd have to tape it back together. My first classroom in the old high school



was not very deep, so I'd have to back the projector up quite a ways so the image would fill the movie screen. One time I backed it up a little too far and the take-up reel was jammed against the wall and couldn't turn. When the lights came on at the end of the film, I discovered all of the film lying on the floor. Not so anymore. Now I have my own LCD projector, a 7-foot wide movie screen, a DVD player, and surround sound. If the students in Film Study had popcorn and better chairs, my classroom would be as good as a movie theater. And while my students in 1979 were stuck sitting in desks, **Aaron Metro** has found

a more comfortable way to watch a movie. On film viewing days, he brings a body pillow and stretches out on the floor right in front of the screen. And he even shares his pillow with classmates, including **Robby Shaffer**.

And **Robby** brings me to another area in which students have changed little. . . skipping class. Yes, the students of years past were known to skip a class or two, and Robby is proof that this tradition has not died out. This past spring, Robby skipped Film Study one day to referee a basketball game. Robby's seat was right up at the front of the room where I stand when I'm conducting class, and the day after he skipped, he wouldn't even look at me. So I just stood there and stared at him. Finally, he couldn't take it anymore and he confessed and invited me to yell at him. Anything to end the staring.

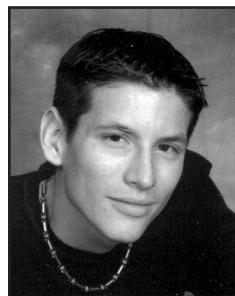
One of the most enjoyable things about being a teacher is simply chatting with students outside of class time. I had **Jeremiah Conley** in first period Film Study this year, and he often arrived to class 15 or 20 minutes early, so we had lots of chances to chat. And we did, about all kinds of topics. Not surprisingly, movies came up a lot. In fact, one day early in the year, Jeremiah loaned me a copy of a Cary Grant movie, *Destination Tokyo*. He really liked the film and thought I would, too. However, I could never remember to watch the darned movie, and it became quite a joke between us. No doubt Jeremiah is convinced that he has seen the last of *Destination Tokyo*. So I thought it only appropriate that I return it to him tonight.

Throughout the years, there have always been students who put more effort into an assignment than teachers expect. In the Class of 1990, there was Jamey Wolverton, who made a charming movie about one of his parents' wine-tasting parties. A few years ago, there was Renee Woody who painstakingly stenciled flocked stars onto her movie star poster.

And in the Class of 2002 there are **Jubilee Pfeifer** and **Jennifer Fernandes**. Their filmed version of a scene from *Macbeth* is incredibly powerful and features elaborate costumes, sets, and memorized lines. And while most students truly believe their outtakes are hilarious, Jubilee and Jen's actually are funny.

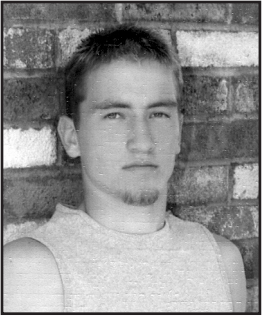
In college, prospective teachers are told that there is no such thing as a stupid student question. Please! The one I hear about 10 times each year is, "If I earn 100% on this assignment, will it improve my grade?" The question **Zach Mencke** asked one day during Film Study was actually a rhetorical one, but it counts. The kids were playing a game where they had to come up with names of real people for sets of initials. The last set of initials was Z.M. When Zach (Mencke) saw that set, he yelled, "Z.M. . . who has those initials?" He was serious.

Needless to say, in 23 years, I have come to know all kinds of students. Some are very open and chatty while others tend to keep their thoughts and feelings to themselves. Take Damond VanWeerdhuizen,



for example, a 1994 graduate. Although I had Damond in English all four years of high school, I never knew what that boy was thinking. Believe me when I tell you that this is not the case with **Jordan Gamboa**. For the past two years, Jordan has made his thoughts and feelings known to me, even when I did not invite him to do so. But I have come to understand Jordan's language quite clearly. And I know that when he calls me a cold, wretched woman, he's really saying, "I love you, Ms. Bryan."

Before I share my last story tonight, I want you to know that I received administrative approval to do so. And I have witnesses. One last area in which students have evolved little over time is that of misquoting the teacher. I have a little phrase I use occasionally to remind some of my less organized students that they need to become more organized.



I tell them to, “Aggregate their fecal matter.” This phrase also serves as something of a vocabulary lesson as students attempt to translate the phrase into words they can understand. Well, either I do not enunciate the phrase clearly or **Jason**

Shannon suffered a little

Freudian slip because one day in English Literature, he advised a classmate to “aggravate her fecal matter.”

In closing tonight, I’d like to share a few thoughts about my 20 years as the senior class advisor here at LCHS. When I first took on this job, the senior classes consisted of anywhere between 25 and 50 students. Dispensing information was easy. I’d stand in the hall between classes. All of the seniors would either pass by on their way to my room or to Mr. Owen’s room next door. . .all of them. I rarely had to go in search of a senior. And it was easy to tell a little story about each senior at graduation because I knew them all. Many I had had in class three and four years.

Times have changed. The Class of 2002 is 100 strong. With Running Start, the Skills Center, and early dismissal, a number of them never actually attended class in the building this year. In fact, I have to devise a database at the start of each year so that I can locate each senior when I need to. And because I teach only junior/senior English electives now, I have only one or two years to spend with kids, instead of three or four. The job is a little tougher now.

The times they are a changin’, but the kids really aren’t. I suspect that 20 years from now, if I were to stand up here, I’d be telling very similar stories about the teenagers of 2022. And I suspect that teaching will be every bit as fun in 20 years as it is now. As long as I don’t have to teach math.

The Class of 2003

Graduation: June 14, 2003

Six or seven years ago, a young man visited my classroom after school one day. As he walked in, he said, “Hey, Ms. Bryan. How ya doin’? I bet you never thought you’d see me again.” After we had chatted for a couple of minutes, I had to admit to myself that I had no idea who this guy was. None. So I employed a little trick I use with former students now that I’m over 40, and I said, “So, who have you seen lately?” Unfortunately, all of the students he mentioned had names like Jenny, Chris, Mike, and Steve, and he didn’t use any last names. So much for that trick. After a few minutes, he said to me, “You don’t know who I am, do you?” I had to fess up. Then he said, “I’m Henry Hiter.” “Oh!” I said, “Henry!” And we continued our conversation. Once Henry left, I breathed a sigh of relief because to tell you the truth, I had no memory whatsoever of a Henry Hiter. None. And I felt kind of bad because the kid clearly remembered me. After a bit of research in student records, I discovered that Henry Hiter had attended La Center High School during the second semester of his freshman year in 1986. That’s it! Ironically, although I can’t remember a thing about Henry Hiter from his brief La Center High School career, I will never forget his visit years later.

Most students, I’m happy to say, stick with me a bit more clearly than Henry did. Earlier this year, I received the following email. “Hello Ms. Bryan... Brandi (Jernagan) Hess here...perhaps you remember me? An issue has recently been brought to my attention...I’d like to discuss with you. As I was at the Little League field recently...a current student of yours named Emily and her dad Aaron approached me giggling. They went on to describe how Emily has a project in your class where she needs to make some kind of poster. You held up former students’ posters as some examples. You held up a poster as a perfect example of ‘what not to do!’ And she recalls the name of Jernagan at the bottom. As I’m assuring them that it must be my sister’s because

I am the ‘good student’...she says, ‘Oh yea, I think she mentioned this person was a 1986 graduate!’ First of all...why was I making a poster in English class? If this is really mine...maybe I thought it was a stupid assignment!! After almost 17 years...you haven’t found a better example of “what not to do”? The way I see it...you can do 1 of 2 things...you can either **destroy the poster immediately** or you can simply change the name on the poster to read... **Melissa Kolbe 1986 graduate!** How you handle this situation will determine if you continue to hold the title of ‘Brandi’s favorite teacher!’”

I thought you might like to see the poster in question. I know you can’t see it clearly from where you are, but believe me, it looks better from a distance. The point of this story is not to embarrass a former student. That’s just an added benefit. My point is that almost all students--for a variety of reasons--stick with us as teachers. With that in mind, I’d like to share my memories of 27 students in the Class of 2003. And just so you can get to know them ever so slightly, I’ll ask any students I discuss to please stand up.

In some cases, what I most remember is a personality quirk or a habit while in others it’s a particular incident involving the student.

So let me tell you about **Katy Gross**. Katy loves Pop Tarts, and she would often eat a Pop Tart during Film Study. But Katy doesn’t just munch down on a Pop Tart. First, she has to come up to the garbage can and methodically break off the entire edge of the Pop Tart.



Cale Rice and **Branden Shealy** share the same personality quirk. They are habitually tardy to class. Cale’s problem, I believe, is that he is not a morning person, yet he was in my first period class this year. Branden, on the other hand, was in my sixth period class. If I had to guess, I’d say that Branden’s problem was the result of a certain feminine influence. I’m happy to report, though, that Branden had a completely tardy-free

last week of school this year. And Cale showed real growth. He was only tardy four out of his last five days in Film Study.

I need **Jon Marlo**, **Robert Davis**, and **Andrew Johnson** to stand up, please. If Jon and Robert visit me here at school years from now, I am sure we will reminisce about a little prank they pulled on me last year. You see, Jon used to do the announcements live on TV from the conference room each morning with another young man, and late in the school year he learned from someone in my first period class that I would turn the TV off if the announcements went past 8:20. In fact, when Jon knew the announcements were running long, he'd say something like, "Hey, Ms. Bryan. Put that remote down. We're almost finished." On one particular morning when Jon's show was stretching past 8:20, he announced that tutoring that afternoon would be held in Mrs. Croskrey's room. And then he said, "Ms. Bryan, why don't you ever have tutoring in your room?" I guess I was feeling a little feisty because I spoke back to my television and said, "Because I'm not stupid." At this point, Jon--on the TV screen--said, "I never said you were stupid, Ms. Bryan." It was the only time that year that my first period class had seen me speechless.

After carefully and objectively analyzing the situation for about three seconds, I began to harass Andrew, who was laughing hysterically. I was sure Andrew must have had a cell phone that he was using to communicate with Jon. Andrew passionately pleaded his innocence and tried to implicate Robert in the plot. But I wouldn't believe him. Sweet, innocent Robert. He wouldn't do such a thing. As it turns out, though, Robert--and his walkie talkie--was the culprit. But in all honesty, I had to bow to the superior pranksters. And apologize to Andrew.

In two cases in the Class of 2003, what I will most remember about students is their hair. Take **Luke Parsons**, for example. Luke claims that he has not combed his hair since the seventh grade. He has, however, washed it. And the second kid who once

had memorable hair is **Nate Rinaker**. Late in his sophomore year, Nate decided that he wasn't going to cut his hair for a year, much to his mother's dismay. I don't think he quite made it a full year, but he came close, and his head of hair was impressive, if not downright scary.

These next two kids don't have a personality quirk so much as they communicate in an unusual way--telepathically. During second period English Lit this year, **Sarah Lambert** and **Sarah Maunu** sat on opposite sides of the classroom. The class would be in the middle of a discussion when I would suddenly notice that the Sarahs were not paying attention; however, they were not talking. They were just looking at each other. Suddenly, they'd burst out laughing for no apparent reason. The only way to break off their silent conversation was for **Sean Vinson** to position himself in their line of vision.

Matt and A.J. Creek have given birth to a new term here at La Center High School, "acting Creeky". Not C-R-E-A-K-Y but C-R-E-E-K-Y. And what does it



mean to "act Creeky"? It means that you often tell jokes which cause your listeners to groan loudly or possibly throw things at you. Or it could mean you have lapsed into acting out a particular scene in a movie that you have viewed hundreds of times and whose dialogue you can recite without hesitation. Strangely enough, when Matt and A.J. would launch into one of these movie dialogues, the only way we could stop them was to position **Sean Vinson** in their line of vision.

I will never forget **Ervin Isims**. . .for two reasons. First, despite the obstacles of his life so far, he possesses an unquenchable joy for life. And second, never have I seen a student get such a kick out of the films of Charlie Chaplin. Within a couple of weeks, Ervin had watched all of my Chaplin films and was devastated to learn that I had no more.

In some ways, **Kerkula Pehlke** reminds me of Ervin. He has a similar zest for life, but what I think I'll most remember about Kerkula is the talent portion of his performance in this year's Mr. La Center Contest, a contest which he won, by the way. It wasn't so much the way Kerkula told jokes, sang, counted to ten in several languages, or told stories. It was more the way he sort of puffed up and came to life with that microphone in his hand in front of that crowd. Frankly, I thought I was going to have to wrestle him for the mic.

If you know **Terra Rose** at all, you know that she is a diehard fan of the Seattle Mariners. I personally have learned a lot about the Mariner organization from Terra during the last two years. I know, for example, that there are indeed bad seats at Safeco Field. But what I will most remember about Terra was the pumpkin she brought to class last year for our Carved Pumpkin contest in American Literature. Carved into one side of Terra's jack-o-lantern was a remarkable likeness of Ichiro.



Over the years, as I have spoken at graduation, I have occasionally and unknowingly revealed secrets of my students to which their parents were not necessarily privy. One year, for example, I referred to a student's tattoo, not knowing that her father was in the dark about the tattoo. Another year, I described one student's little nocturnal adventure, and this was news to her parents. But this year, I'm going to try to avoid revealing any secrets. Okay, maybe just one. **Ryan Roler**, would you please stand up. Mr. and Mrs. Roler, you might ask Ryan about his recent adventure in the family car.

I have a snapshot of **Anne Pershall** etched into my memory. Anne was Mr. Johnson's aide this year during my prep period, and morning after morning, I'd encounter her in the teacher workroom scrubbing the overheads on which Mr. Johnson had scribbled the day before. Her hands and the countertop would be smeared with overhead pen ink and she'd be

surrounded by little mounds of pulpy paper towels. And I would think, "Poor Anne."

I am going to require the assistance of the entire senior class to illustrate my fondest memory of **Erika Anderson**. Erika has a huge heart. She cannot stand to see anyone in pain or feeling sad. Whenever she hears of pain, sadness, discomfort, or disappointment, she will make a particular noise, so on the count of three, seniors, please make that sound. One. . .two. . .three.

And speaking of pain, **Andrew Cooper** gave me the nicest gift a few weeks ago. He wrote me a little note which read, "To Ms. Bryan, this is for all the headaches I have caused you. Andrew Cooper." And enclosed with the note was this coupon for \$1.50 off of a bottle of Tylenol.

And speaking of discomfort, let me tell you about a paper that **Ashley Anderson** wrote last year about *The Catcher in the Rye*. It was our first paper of the year in American Lit, and when Ashley handed me her final draft, she said, "My dad read it. He thought it was pretty good." Normally, comments such as that one don't faze me, but Ashley's dad happens to be the guy that signs my paycheck. Fortunately, the paper was good, my red pen did not get a workout, and Chuck still signs my paychecks.

Nick Crandall has reached the end of his high school career deprived of sleep, and it's largely my fault. Midway through the year, Nick challenged himself to watch all 100 movies on the American Film Institute's List of the 100 Best American Films of All Time. Now we watch 18 of these films as part of the



class, so that left 82 movies for Nick to plow through in about five month's time. A few nights during the school week, he'd check out a couple of films to watch, and on weekends he'd take home four films. He'd wander in to class looking a little bleary-eyed most mornings, but last week he completed his task and he reordered the films according to his own taste. I'm

happy to report that his favorite film is *The Godfather* and that *Citizen Kane*, which is #1 on the AFI list, only made it to #50 on Nick's list.

I think what I will most remember about **Eric Stanley** is how tired he always seemed to look when he arrived to class. In fact, sometimes Eric arrived to class late and other times he did not arrive at all. On those days when he was tardy, I'd hassle him a little bit and he'd explain that he just woke up, which is why he was late. I realize that some students just aren't morning people, but Eric's class started at 12:50 in the afternoon. They say the apple

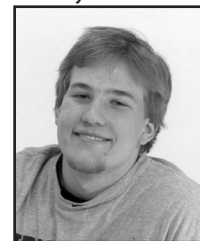


does not fall far from the tree, so I did a little research into the Stanley family tree, and it helped me to better understand Eric. The first time I spoke at graduation was 20 years ago, for the Class of 1983, and one of the students in that class was Dean Stanley, Eric's dad. Here's what I said 20 years ago about Dean: "Most students possess some degree of talent in forging signatures for absences and tardies. Not Dean Stanley, though. I lost count of how many times he came late to Reading Appreciation and handed me a tardy slip that read, "Please excuse Dean Stanley for being tardy" and was signed, Dean Stanley."

A couple of year's ago, a LCHS graduate from the Class of 2000 pulled me aside after the graduation ceremony and informed me that the single greatest worry of a certain young man in the Class of 2003 was that he would not do something silly or memorable enough to make it into my annual speech. At the time, I didn't even know who this kid was because he was just a sophomore, but I never forgot what the 2000 graduate told me. So at this time, I'd like **Josh Emerson, Ninya Beyer, and Lindsay Mendoza** to stand up. Josh, you are officially in the speech and here's why. Earlier this year, Josh decided to ask Ninya to the Prom, but he didn't want to do so in the standard, boring way. So before a soccer game, he wrote on the tee shirt that he wore under his uniform, "Ninya, will you go to Prom with me?"

At one point during the game, he turned toward the crowd and pulled up his jersey. The crowd loved his approach. Unfortunately, Ninya didn't see it. I'm guessing that she was too busy talking to Lindsay Mendoza. Actually, I don't know if Lindsay was at the game, but when I think of Ninya, I cannot picture her without Lindsay. And I cannot imagine the two of them NOT talking. When someone in the crowd finally explained to Ninya what had happened, she and her pals spelled out "Yes" with their bodies.

My last story tonight concerns **Andy Bolen**. I had a heck of a time deciding what to tell you about Andy because I have a wealth of material. But I have chosen. Just last week, a group of senior boys--and Brady Taylor--decided to camp out at school on the night before their last day of school. They pitched their tent on the front lawn, and settled down in their sleeping bags for an enjoyable evening. At some point, though, as you might guess, nature called. And, of course, the school was locked. I want to put this as delicately as possible, so let me just say that Andy, thank goodness, is paper-trained.



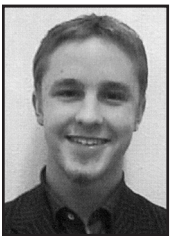
To the Class of 2003, I say that even though I may not have mentioned your name tonight, you have left your mark on La Center High School, some of you quite literally. None of us here are likely to forget you any time soon. However, I would remind you that Mrs. Heaton, Mr. Johnson, Mrs. Nesland, Mr. McCullough, Coach Lapp, and I are not getting any younger. . .especially Coach Lapp. So if you come back to visit us sometime down the road and if we chat for a while, and if we say to you, "So, who have you seen recently," please be sure to use full names.

The Class of 2004

Graduation: June 5, 2004

Rumor has it that for some of the seniors sitting before you, a moment of truth has arrived. Within the next 15 minutes or so, they will learn if their efforts of the last few years have paid off, if--to quote an anonymous senior--they have become noteworthy in my eyes. Apparently, some students are under the impression that if they do something clever, witty, shocking, embarrassing, or irritating enough in my presence, they will guarantee themselves a slot in my speech. If this is true, it would certainly explain Andy Illyn's behavior in my classroom for the past two years. By the same token, I'm feeling a bit of pressure because I would not want to hurt someone's feelings by not mentioning them tonight. That said, I want you to know that my goal here tonight is to paint a picture for you of teenagers in general and the LCHS Class of 2004 in particular. And seniors, if I do not mention you tonight, do not take it personally. I can assure you that at some point in our time together, you have all been clever, witty, shocking, embarrassing, or irritating.

I'd like to begin tonight by introducing you to **Johannes Ziemens**, our exchange student from Germany. While some exchange students take a while to adapt to life in an American school, Johannes



had no trouble at all. In fact, one day as I returned to my classroom after lunch, I encountered Johannes and his girlfriend in the hallway demonstrating to those around them how best to violate our rule against public displays of affection. I immediately called

Johannes over to me for a private chat, and I asked him if he would do such a thing in the hallway of his school in Germany. He replied, "No, Ms. Bryan. Back home I go to an all boys school."

Some of tonight's seniors began to stand out in the crowd before they even arrived here at the high

school. One day when Mrs. Nesland was still teaching in the middle school, it seems that **Devin Albert** and **Jake Weeks** decided to come to school dressed up as chickens. They wore yellow chicken outfits with yellow feathers and yellow tights, and according to Mrs. Nesland, they were darned cute. And no, it was not a dress-up day, at least not for anyone else.

Fourteen years ago, a student by the name of Shawn Taylor gave me a roll of blue toilet paper for Christmas. This past Christmas, Shawn's youngest brother, **Stephen Taylor**, handed me a big box wrapped largely with duct tape and he told me not to open it until Christmas. When I did, I found that it contained the largest roll of toilet paper that I had ever seen. What puzzles me, though, is why the Taylor family keeps giving me toilet paper. Perhaps they know something that I don't.

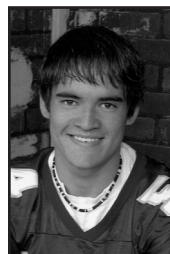
Oddly enough, another student in the Class of 2004 also gave me a roll of toilet paper this year,

Alessa Krause. Alessa even went so far as to

construct a toilet paper dispenser and then to mount it and the paper on the ceiling above my desk where it still remains. Alessa called this device the "Wiper-Outerer" and provided me instructions on how it could function as a discipline device. She wrote, "All you need to do for with new method is simply to unroll a piece of the toilet paper and hand it to the student. Due to the repulsive nature of this diminutive disciplinary device (alliteration?), any recipient of the sheet will immediately cower in self-loathing."

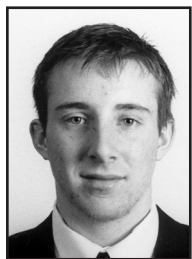


Some students are memorable because they are demonstrative, chatty, or, well, loud. Take **Casey Carroll**, for example. No matter what Casey may be feeling at any given time, I can promise you that it will be no secret. In fact, within moments of encountering Casey, you will not only know how he is feeling, but what caused him to feel this way, how he



intends to deal with this feeling, and how long he might feel as he does. Let me give you an example. At Prom a few weeks ago when Casey's girlfriend--**Sara Perrott**--was crowned Prom Queen, Casey cavorted about the room for some time chanting, "I'm dating the Prom Queen! I'm dating the Prom Queen!"

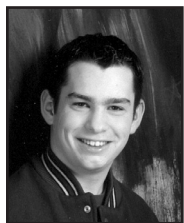
Other students are memorable because they try to blend into the crowd and don't make lots of noise.



One member of the Class of 2004 qualifies. Last year in World Lit, I was at the front of the classroom, having just started a discussion about a novel when suddenly I heard, well, an expulsion of gas. I was pretty sure I was not the source of the disruption, but it was coming from my general direction. Naturally, the kids started to giggle, but one group of boys was nearly in tears. My suspicions immediately focused on three of the four boys, so I was more than a little shocked to discover that the man at the controls of "the fart machine" was actually the fourth guy in the group, the quiet one, none other than. . . **Tom Scanlan**.

One of the ways I get to know my students is through their writing. Of course, a fine piece of writing begins with a well-chosen topic, and this is where some students struggle. Although **Dale Hammack** ended up writing a very good research paper on the impact of synthesizers on the music industry, his first choice of a topic had me worried: Cheese.

Kevin Kansanback is another student I have come to know better through his writing. Earlier this year, he described an incident in which he decided



he wanted to be a kid again by simply spinning in circles outside on a sunny Sunday. But first he had to overcome his hesitation. He wrote, "I will break through the iron wall of maturity and return to my youth." Sadly, Kevin's return to childhood ends with him in a heap on

the ground and the kid across the street laughing at him. About this he wrote, "I run through all the imaginative and creative ways I can punish this little one for his lack of respect for his elders. I decide to walk towards the child and I calmly say to him, 'At least I can drive.'"

Finally, I appreciate **Michelle Aday's** writing because she is so meticulous and so honest. When she recently completed a composition in Film Study in which she compared a novel to one of its film versions, she wrote, "*Great Expectations* was the longest six weeks of my high school career."



If you teach at a school long enough, inevitably you will have students whose parents you also taught. At first, second generation students made me feel kind of old, but actually having these students can be a lot of fun. Sometimes they will share with me how strict their parents are and how little they get away with at home. Naturally, at this point I can pipe up and say, "Let me tell you what your dad was like in high school." I figure they deserve a little ammunition. Three of tonight's graduates are second generation students for me--**Elizabeth O'Brien**, **Vicky Stanley**, and **Emily Neuberger**. I think you need to meet their parents, too, so Taby, Dean, Pam, Aaron, and Kris, why don't you stand up, too. I just want you to know that you have raised lovely daughters. They certainly made it to class more often than you did.

While I'm on the topic of making it to class, I must tell you about **Davina Nhem**. Davina does make it to class, just not always on time. The truth is that Davina is just not a morning person, and wouldn't you know that I had her first period. About a month ago, Davina was determined to conquer her tardy problem. Although I offered her a reward of some kind if she could improve, she said, "No, Ms. Bryan, I can do this on my own." She vowed that she would arrive to class on time every day for a week. And she did. But the effort took its toll and the following

week. . .five tardies.

After 25 years of watching teenagers in the hallway and in the classroom, I thought I had a pretty good handle on what teenage girls like about teenage boys, but I learned a new source of attraction last year from **Jennifer Dunford** and **Heather Richardson**, both students in Film Study. One of the projects in the class required students to select their favorite movie scene of all time, to write a paper about it, and to do a short presentation about the scene. Jennifer and Heather chose the same movie, *A Walk To Remember*. Since I had not seen the movie, they had to bring it in outside of class time and show me their scenes. These girls do not merely like this movie; they are nuts about it. As such, they felt it was important that I watch their scenes not once but about 20 times. And do you know what they find most attractive about actor Shane West? His jaw. “Look at that jaw, Ms. Bryan. Isn’t it magnificent?” Shane’s jaw did nothing for me.

Cell phones. How many of you have a cell phone on you right now? So do your children. Now sometimes a student forgets to turn off a cell phone and it rings in class. That’s okay. But last year when



I had **Bridgette Sexton** in class, her cell phone would ring at least once a week, and it was always the same caller, her sister Hollie. One day when Hollie called during class, Bridgette handed the phone over to me so Hollie and I could chat. I explained to Hollie that this was really not a good time to be calling Bridgette, but Hollie said it was the only time she could reach her. And do you know where Hollie was at the time? In one of her college classes in Montana.

Ringling cell phones are merely one of the distractions we encounter in the classroom. Sometimes we teachers also see things that shock and distract us. During fifth period Film Study early this year as I was wandering about the classroom, I happened to catch a glimpse of **Rani Tippy’s** notebook. In an attempt to remain low-key and avoid

disrupting the class--a very easy thing to do with that group--I quietly flipped the notebook over to conceal the potential disruption. . .only to discover an even more shocking image on that side of the notebook. So much for being low-key.

My favorite part of being a high school English teacher is the experience of reading a novel together with a class. I look forward every year to introducing my students to *Pride and Prejudice*, *The Count of Monte Cristo*, and, of course, *The Catcher in the Rye*. This shared experience can be so insightful, rewarding, and humorous. Every now and then, though, a particular group of students will not react positively to a particular novel. Take **Coree Reuter** and **Ashley Cilen**, for example. They’re still mad at me for making them read *Cry*, *the Beloved Country* and *Beloved*. Something about the world “beloved” in the title.

While I’m on the topic of novels, I have a little story about **Ryan McCulley**. When he was a student in Mrs. Grotte’s Ninth Grade English class, Ryan had been absent a few days while the class was reading *Of Mice and Men*. When Ryan returned, he had finished the novel and assumed the class had, too. But they hadn’t. So when Mrs. Grotte asked the kids what they thought of the latest reading assignment, Ryan revealed the end of the book. Now if you have read *Of Mice and Men*, you know how powerful the ending is. Poor Ryan. I think it took him a while to recover from the wrath of the class.

Jeremey Teel, I must confess that I know virtually nothing about contemporary rock and roll. The radio in my car will only tune in 97.1 or 107.7, so I am out of touch with the music my students listen to. And that’s fine with me. Nevertheless, I know a good song when I hear one, and I’m sure you will all agree that “Love Shack” by the B-52s is rock and roll at its finest, regardless of your age. However, when the DJ at Prom this year was playing this fine tune and I tried to convince Mr. Teel here to get out on the dance floor with his



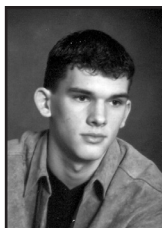
girlfriend, do you know what he said to me? “I don’t dance to old people music.”

Sitting next to Jeremy all year in Film Study was our exchange student from France, **Yannika**



Jarlov. At first, I don’t think these two quite knew what to make of each other. By second semester, though, Yannika had mastered a number of phrases in English so that she could easily put Jeremy in his place. Just a couple of days ago, Jeremy and some of the other young men in Film Study were getting a little crazy, so I asked Yannika what the boys in France were like. “Oh, they are exactly the same,” she told me. That’s refreshing.

I don’t think any student in the Class of 2004 has enlivened my classroom quite as much as **Andy Illyn** has. He is simply a funny guy. When one of his classmates made a somewhat off color remark in American Literature last year, Andy scolded him and said, “Where do you think you are? In a liquor lounge.” As a student, Andy really has only one weakness. He is poster-challenged. In fact, Andy insists that the reason girls produce better posters than boys is based in genetics. The more estrogen in the student, the better the poster. After Andy created a short story poster in class last year, he brought it to me and said, “Ms. Bryan, what can I do to improve my poster?” At that point, my student teacher volunteered to help Andy out. She did her best, but there might just be something to Andy’s theory.

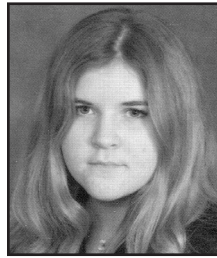


The members of this senior class have certainly been a source of entertainment and amusement during their years at La Center High School, but they have also been a source of inspiration. Although they are just 17 and 18 years old, some of these students have already faced some of the worst that life has to offer, from potentially fatal diseases to the death of loved ones. And yet these students who have endured pain and loss are the ones with the most

positive attitudes.

So I’d like to end tonight by sharing the words of one of these students, **Heather McLeod**, who wrote a beautiful paper earlier this year about what it means to live. “Catching a whiff of something obnoxious and being able to laugh about it, that is living. Living is walking home in the midst of a torrential downpour and somehow managing to splash through every puddle you come across. Knowing what summer smells like--the faint wafting scent of fresh peaches combined with a hint of sunscreen and clean sweat at dusk--that is living. Having survived heartache and realizing that it’s okay to stick your neck out occasionally is living. If you can sit back with a refreshed sigh after the most traumatizing event of all your years, and understand that it **will** get better, then you are alive. . . Life is being crushed between past and future, struggling to find a moment to collect your thoughts. The difference between those who simply exist, and those who truly live is what they do with the moments they find.”

As you head out into the world, Class of 2004, take Heather’s advice and do something with your moments. Thank you.



The Class of 2005

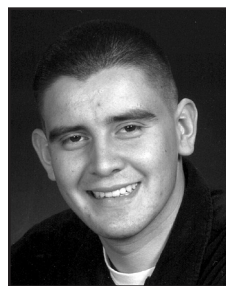
Graduation: June 18, 2005

In years past when I have spoken at graduation, I have rarely offered advice to the graduating class, but because of the events of my life during the past two and a half months, I am going to change my approach just a bit and posit one nugget to the Class of 2005: Count your blessings. Since I was transported from Longview to Portland via Life Flight on April 8, I have had a good deal of time to reflect on the blessings of my life, big and small. I am, of course, grateful for my wonderful family, good medical insurance, a big bank of sick leave, and helicopters that can fly from Longview to Portland in just 12 minutes. While I was in the hospital for a week and then a nursing home for another week, I discovered other things for which I am grateful, for example, sleep that is not interrupted by someone taking my temperature or sticking me with a needle. If I am never again confined to a bed and sharing a room with someone who loves re-runs of “MacGyver,” I’ll be a happy woman. I don’t wish to be indelicate or inappropriate here, but I have also learned to be grateful for regular bowel movements. If you have ever been bedridden, you know what I’m talking about.

Among the biggest blessings of my life of late have been my coworkers, who fed my family and provided them with gas money to come visit me, who called and visited me, who sent gifts, and who helped out when I returned to school. I am especially grateful to Bob Hill, Kathy Bounds, and Beth Marshall for visiting me in “the home” and providing me with intellectual reading material (*The Star*, *The National Enquirer*), to Shawn Link who was the first to visit me in ICU, to Pam Nesland, who also visited me in the home and who gave me one wild ride down the main hall here at school (who knew she could run that fast while pushing a wheelchair), and to Don Landes-McCullough, who visited me in ICU, decorated my room at the nursing home,

and made me laugh by writing one of the funniest monologues I have ever read. In fact, I’d like to share just one passage of this monologue with you. In the monologue, Don is debating whether he should visit me in the hospital and what he should talk about if he does. He wrote, “Keep smiling. Pretend that nothing is wrong. We always meet like this. Don’t scream if she coughs. Oh my god! Where is that one tube going? The indignities she must be suffering! They are so numerous I should write them down so I can properly report them to the faculty room in detail.” These people are not only my good friends, but they are also your children’s teachers. We are both lucky.

And this brings me to the final blessing I would like to chat about, The Class of 2005. Not only have these students been a blessing to me while I was away from school and since my return, but I have enjoyed them tremendously throughout all of our time together. Whether they were being silly, inspiring, challenging, entertaining, or perhaps even irritating, they have truly been a blessing, and I’d like to introduce you to some of them. And as I introduce these students, as always, I’d like them



to stand so that you may place a face with my story. Among the newest members of the Class of 2005, hailing from Los Angeles, California, is **Mr. John Paul Duarte**, who arrived at La Center High School last year. Being a staunch Southern Californian,

John had a bit of trouble adjusting to the climate of the Pacific Northwest. One frosty morning early last winter, John came to class and said, “Ms. Bryan, now I’ve seen it all. Frozen dirt!”

When it comes to eating habits, teenagers today frighten me, especially in their choice of breakfast food. One day last year during first period Film Study, for example, I witnessed **Jaci Cole** and **Amanda Linn** eating a tub of frosting for breakfast. They had nothing on **Jason Crump**, though. Almost every morning, Jason would arrive to Film Study armed with a couple of donuts, a selection of candy

bars, and a can of pop, all of which he would consume during class.

While I am on the subject of donuts, I should explain to you my attendance reward policy, an offer I make to all five of my classes on the first day of school. If an entire class of students can achieve perfect attendance during a single week (that means no tardies or absences of any kind), I will reward them with donuts the following week. I only had to make good on this offer twice this year, both times during the first month of school. But I'm feeling kind of guilty because last year during the final week of fifth period Film Study, the juniors who remained in class did indeed achieve perfect attendance. These juniors included **Chris West, Merle Bloyed, Jessica Smith, Kelsey Scanlan, Athena Miller, Amy Emerson, Joe Zerfing, Robyn Parker, Jason Gandy, Kelly Rispler, and Bryan Bosch.** Unfortunately, school ended that Friday, and there was no chance for me to reward them with a donut. Don't get me wrong. I still don't have any donuts, but I wanted you to know how guilty I was feeling.

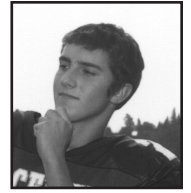
While **Kelsey Scanlan** is standing, I'd like to tell you a little more about her. As teachers, we see a wide variety of student attitudes toward their grades. Some students are quite conscientious, others seem unconcerned or disinterested, and still others worry



only near the end of a grading period. And then there is Kelsey. A couple of weeks ago, Kelsey expressed concern about her grade in English Literature because at the end of that week, she would be missing a day to attend the state softball tournament and

the following week she would be missing a couple of days to attend music events. Of course, Kelsey was worried that her grade would drop. I know I shouldn't have but as soon as she told me she was worried about her grade, I laughed. And not a small, petite laugh, but a big belly laugh. I know I shouldn't have, but at the time, you see, Kelsey was earning 100% of the possible points in the class.

Another one of my classroom policies is that no pencils are allowed. Most students adapt to this rule quite easily, but for others, it is a challenge to use only a pen. **Alex Calnan** comes to mind. Last year in American and World Literature, Alex kept using a pencil on our almost daily quizzes. To help him out, I put a sign on my classroom door that said no pencils allowed, but that still didn't help. Finally, the other students in the class taped another "no pencil" sign right to Alex's table. That finally did the trick, and I'm happy to report that this year, Alex slipped up and used a pencil just one time.



Unfortunately, it is no longer possible for me to have every senior in class by the time he graduates, but that should not exclude a student from this speech, so I asked my colleagues for a little input on the seniors I have not had the chance to teach. Ms. Holter shared a little story about **Seth Traffic**, whom I do not know, and **Ashley Thompson**, whom I definitely know. It seems that Seth is not a big fan of homework, so each time Ms. Holter would assign homework in English, Seth would debate whether or not to complete the work and ask Ms. Holter for an explanation as to why he should do the work. Ashley was Ms. Holter's aide during Seth's class period, and she did not beat around the bush with Seth. When he asked why he should do the work, Ashley would say, "Because if you don't, you're not going to graduate." Apparently this exchange went on all year. I'm guessing that Seth must have taken Ashley seriously.

Dustin Weddle is another student I have not had in class, but Mr. Landes-McCullough shared a bit of information about Dustin. In Drama, he is well known for his "take no prisoners" style of set building. In fact, if he has a hammer in his hand, you are advised to get out of his way.

The newest member of the senior class is **John Engerran**, who transferred to La Center from California this year. According to Mrs. Link, John is the most polite kid in school, and he actually thinks Mr. Lapp is cool. Another of Mrs. Link's students is

Sara Rivera, who apparently hated to get up in the morning for first period CWP; the only thing Sara hated more, though, was Mrs. Link's wake-up calls to her during class.

After Mr. Sahling sent me a bit of information about **Erik Compson**, I have to confess that I'm kind of glad I never had Erik in class. According to Mr. Sahling, Erik writes so small that he could write a 5-page paper on a 3X5 index card and still have room to spare. My eyes are way too old to put up with that.

Nobody in the Class of 2005 loves a good argument more than **Brad Bacon**. It doesn't matter what the topic is, Brad is willing to take a side and stir the pot. Last year in English Literature, the topic of dieting came up, more specifically Dr. Atkins, who had recently died after falling down and hitting his head. Brad doesn't have a lot of respect for the Atkins diet, and at one point in the debate he said of Dr. Atkins, "Eat right, exercise, fall down and die anyway. He should have been wearing better shoes."

There are a few things I shall never forget about **Alison Griffith**. First of all, her favorite book of all time is *Gidget*. When I was stuck at home in April, she even sent me an autographed copy of the book



to read, and I did. Alison also has a fascination with purses. Now I have carried the same purse for probably the last ten years, but Alison would bring a different purse to school every single day. I wonder where she stores all of these purses at

home. The last thing I shall never forget about Alison is a comment she made in World Literature one day concerning her attraction to Mr. Paul Newman. To tell you the truth, I did not actually hear the entire comment that Alison made, but it was enough to make Whitney Garner blush, and that is no easy task, let me tell you.

And speaking of **Whitney Garner**, I wish I had had a video camera during English Literature this year when Whitney and her group performed their

presentation based on *The Miller's Tale* by Chaucer. The setting for their presentation was a medieval English pub, and Whitney's performance as a bawdy, tipsy Englishman was simply hilarious and quite realistic.

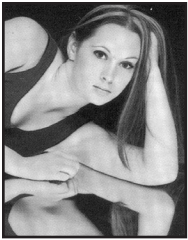
And speaking of hilarious, I am reminded of Homecoming Week last year. I cannot recall just what the dress-up day was that week, but I shall never forget **Forest Henderson** coming to school wearing a pink leotard and pink tights. As I told Forest at the time, "You've got guts, son."

Tyler Ecklund learned a valuable lesson earlier this school: Never lie to your English teacher. One morning I encountered Tyler in the office where he was explaining to the office ladies that he would be checking out during my class period that afternoon to go to a dental appointment. As I recall, I gave Tyler a little grief for leaving during my class. When he did not come to class the following day, I was worried that the dental appointment had not gone well, so I asked the kids in American Literature if they knew why Tyler wasn't in class that day. That's when I found out that Tyler had gone snowboarding the previous day and had had a close encounter with a tree. When Tyler returned to class a week later walking very slowly with a decided limp, I told him that he might want to think about changing dentists because his current dentist was clearly way too rough.



Although I am 30 years older than these seniors, every now and then I will discover that I share a hobby or interest with one of them. **Julie Bolen** and I most definitely share a passion. . .for the TV show "Survivor". Each Friday during the two "Survivor" series this year, we would compare notes on the previous night's episode and the most recent tribe member voted off the island. What bothers us both about "Survivor" is that all of the incredibly handsome young men are always voted off of the island way too early in the season. . .way too early.

One of tonight's graduates, **Sara Wattenbarger**, is a second-generation student for me, and together we agreed that I need to say a few words about Sara's dad tonight, Mr. Jimmy Wattenbarger. Jimmy, would you please stand up. Picture this. It was the last day of school in 1984, which means we were still down on the lower campus. I had been given the task of



patrolling the student parking lot as soon as school let out to encourage students to exit campus as quickly as possible. As soon as I stepped out the back door of the high school into the parking lot, Jimmy, who was no doubt expecting a classmate to walk

through that door, launched a water balloon from across the parking lot. The balloon hit me squarely in the middle of the chest. . .and did not break. When Jimmy realized what he had done, he ran up to me apologizing profusely; however, I was in no mood to hear an apology at the time, what with the pain coursing through my body, so I simply instructed Jimmy to get in his car and leave, which he did. The next year was Jimmy's senior year, and he avoided me for that entire year, but at graduation in 1985, I assured Jimmy that I had forgiven him and that we were okay. We're still okay, Jimmy.

As many of you know, we have a bit of a parking problem here at the high school. In fact, sophomores cannot even park in the lot at school because there just isn't room. For seniors who come to school later than first period, parking can be an especially difficult problem as the lot fills up quickly. This was certainly true for **Jessica Smith**, who was in my second period class this year, and who arrived to class a little late more than once because she could not find a parking space. Jessica may be a tiny young woman, but you do not want to get in her way when she has had a bad parking morning. Believe me, we learned to give her a wide berth in which to cool down on those mornings when she wasn't quite on time to Advanced Composition.



are **Jennie Dunnick** and **Jeremy Gelms**. Not only are Jennie and Jeremy the editors of the yearbook, but they also just complement each other perfectly, at least in terms of their temperaments. Jennie, for example, is nearly always calm, cool, and collected, no matter what the situation. Her feathers are not easily ruffled. Jeremy, on the other hand, is a passionate young man who wears his heart on his sleeve and who would be a lousy poker player. Jeremy's tendency to become worked up about things is so well known around school that it even inspired Mr. Johnson to play the role of Jeremy in this year's Homecoming assembly.

Sometimes, I remember a student not so much for something she has done or said but for some trait she possesses, and that, for me, is the case with **Bethany Gross**. Throughout my years of schooling, one of the things my teachers nearly always noted about me was my laugh, which they sometimes described as infectious. Bethany, too, has an infectious laugh. I can't tell you how many times I was walking down the hall, and I would hear Bethany's oh-so-distinctive laughter. Sometimes in the morning before class began as students were coming into my classroom, I would catch a bit of Bethany's laughter from the hallway as she was gabbing with her pals, and it would just bring a smile to my face. Truly an infectious laugh and one I shall always remember.



As always, I wish that I could share a story or a detail about all 92 graduating seniors, but time prohibits that. I'd like to end my speech tonight by thanking all of the seniors who have supported me during the past couple of months with cards, drawings, gifts, rides up and down the hall in my wheelchair, and even a homemade movie, a remake of "Troy," but not starring Brad Pitt. I count you among the many blessings of my life, and I hope that throughout the rest of your life, you will take a moment each day to count your blessings. May they be plentiful. Thank you.

Two students that I will always recall as a pair

The Class of 2006

Graduation: June 3, 2006

Good evening, everyone. You know, some elements of our lives are timeless and unchanging. For example, how many of you parents out there, during a typical evening at the dinner table, have turned to your child and said, “So, what’d you do at school today?” And how many of you parents got this answer? “Nothin’.” Naturally as parents, we probe further into the activities of the school day. “Didn’t you learn anything?” “No.”

While I cannot speak for all that the students have learned, I can assure you that your children have taught me a good deal. In fact, I’d like to share with you a few of the lessons that I have learned from and about students in 27 years at La Center High School. For example, you cannot watch “The O.C.” and read *Pride and Prejudice* at the same time and fully appreciate either. Secondly, a cell phone on vibrate is just about as loud as a cell phone on normal ring. Both will completely disrupt a test or a lecture. If you teach a first period class composed entirely of juniors and seniors at 8:15 in the morning, tardiness will be an issue.

Now let me illustrate some of the lessons I have learned using a few of these graduating seniors as examples. Graduates, if you hear your name, please stand up so all of these people can get a good look at you.

Lesson #1: Some things are just a bad idea. Last year on the very day that our new superintendent was in the library interviewing for the position, **Mandy Rogers** became involved in a little contest just down the hall in her science class, a competition involving dipping her hand into really cold water, -10 degrees Celsius. She managed to outlast the boys in the class and apparently survived the contest unscathed, that is until she stood up to return to her desk and passed out cold. On the way down, she hit her head, which

necessitated calling the paramedics who rushed past the library on their way to the science room. As you can see, though, Mandy is fine, and Mr. Mansell took the job despite the ruckus.

Lesson #2: Given a little freedom, students may easily lose their way. I’m speaking here of student trips to the restroom, of course. You might be surprised to learn that the student who most abused bathroom etiquette was **Alaina Sahling**. I’m sorry,



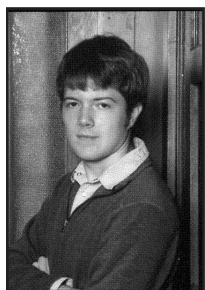
Jack and Linda, but you need to know the truth. Alaina was in my sixth period class this year, and sometimes when she would make the trek down the hall to the restroom, she would be gone for 15 minutes or more. Occasionally, I’d go out on reconnaissance to find her. Invariably, I would discover her chatting with a classmate, and when she’d spot me headed her way, the first words out of her mouth were always, “But Ms. Bryan, Kyle made me stop. . .” or something like that. Sometimes, in fact, she’d have been gone 10 minutes when I located her and she hadn’t even made it to the bathroom yet.

Lesson #3: Most students do not like to speak in public. On the first day of school this year in my Film Study classes, I explained what we’d be doing throughout the school year, including our projects, one of which might involve public speaking. After class, **Whitney Sap** came up to me and explained that she really wasn’t a big fan of giving speeches and would I please remember that when a project required a speech. As it turns out, we did not do any public speaking in Film Study, but at least I got Whitney to stand up tonight in front of everyone, as long as she doesn’t have to say anything.

Lesson #4: Some students are way too attached to their cell phones. Two members of the Class of 2006 fit this bill--**Danielle Azevedo** and **Nicole Aday**. Danielle is, quite frankly, addicted to her phone. She will end her latest call the moment she steps into my classroom (no cell phone use during class), and she will barely have stepped into the hall

after class before flipping it open and making another call. It's truly remarkable. Nicole, on the other hand, would arrive to first period 15-20 minutes before class began and carry on a conversation with her boyfriend while she worked on homework or on the computer. I overheard so many of their conversations that even though I just met Hassan two days ago, I feel I know him well.

Lesson #5: Even boys have bad hair days. Earlier this year, **Ben Marshall**, whose hair is usually fairly straight and brown, arrived to class sporting

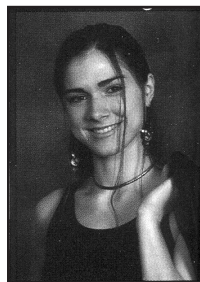


an impressive mass of curly locks. Not much later, the brown ringlets became exceedingly blonde. Now I can't be sure just what inspired this fairly dramatic change in Ben's tresses, but the change did come shortly after we had studied *The Canterbury Tales* and the medieval

view of men's hair. (Ask an English Literature student for an explanation.) Ben further surprised me and the class one day when he was glancing at his hair in the mirror in my classroom and then announced to us, "I just don't like my hair today."

Lesson #5: Some students are masterful at learning how to suck up to their teachers, a skill that will serve them well in life. Take **Jason Brommenschenkel**, for example. Unlike most of his classmates, Jason would enter Film Study each day--during first period, mind you--with a great big smile on his face, and he would cheerfully greet me by saying, "Good morning, Ms. Bryan." He did this without fail, even on the days when he was tardy. **Heidi Plumhoff** learned early on to laugh at my jokes, no matter how lame they were. I didn't even have Heidi in class this year, but she continued to laugh at my jokes in the hall or at senior class meetings. Needless to say, she is a most perceptive young woman. A third senior who has me figured out is **Dyal Doty**. For her creative *Macbeth* project a couple of weeks ago, Dyal made a cake, a chocolate cake. I immediately graded Dyal's project, and then I handed out forks.

Lesson #7: Whatever you do, even if it's wrong, do it with style. No one in the Class of 2006 embodies this lesson better, I think, than **Rebecca Zeff**. In both her actions and her words, Rebecca



is unique. For example, about a month ago, just before Prom, Rebecca posted signs around the school announcing that she would be holding auditions for her Prom date one afternoon. And earlier this year, I was reading Rebecca's rough draft of her composition

about *Jane Eyre* when suddenly a paragraph simply ended and I encountered a note in parentheses that read something like this: "This paragraph is going nowhere. It's crap. I must replace it with something brilliant before the final draft is due."

Lesson #8: Students do not always follow directions. **Tara Miller** fits this lesson to a T. Although most of us remain on the road when we drive, on her way to school one morning with her sister Amanda, Tara became distracted and drove into a pond. And on a recent exam in Film Study, Tara demonstrated that students do not always pay attention to directions when she answered a multiple-choice question not with an A, B, C, or D--which were her four options--but with a T. Just as an aside, I want you to know that Tara set a record in Film Study this year. I always show "Jaws" during our 1970s unit and when the film reaches the point where a dead guy suddenly appears in front of Richard Dreyfuss while he's underwater investigating a wrecked boat, I'm always watching the class, not the movie. Tara did not disappoint as she jumped a good two feet in the air and let out a fearsome, blood-curdling scream.



Lesson #9: Let your sense of humor shine through. Several of tonight's graduates would be fine examples of this lesson. **Chris Crismon**, for instance, possesses a dry sense of humor. In one of his compositions earlier this year, Chris lambasted

reality TV as being anything but real. Reality for Chris is something completely different. He wrote, "Let me explain a true reality TV show. A man climbs out of his car and walks into a square, uneventful building. He stands in line to push a button; when he pushes this button, the machine spits out a number. This paper reveals his fate. The man glances at the number in absolute disgust and sits down to await his destiny. He notices another unfortunate soul out of the corner of his eye and is abruptly awakened by a voice. He understands the robotic voice recording, but his time has not yet come. This is how real life is. The is life at he DMV."

Lesson #10: Make your decisions in a thoughtful, mature manner. No one in the senior class better demonstrated Lesson #10 than "Table Male" from fourth period AP English. Table Male consisted of **Michael Britschgi**, **Kyle Koch**, and **Andrew Monson**. I call them Table Male because they all sat together at the same table and they were the only men in the class. At any rate, whether they were deciding who would serve as spokesman for the group during a presentation, who would collect the new novel and hand it out to the other two, or who would turn in the day's assignment, Michael, Kyle, and Andrew always made their decision in the most mature and efficient way possible--rock, paper, scissors.

Of course, if there is a Table Male, it stands to reason there must be a Table Female. Actually, there were three Tables Female in AP English, but only one group demonstrated Lesson #11: If students spend enough time together, they take on each other's characteristics. This proved true for **Stacie Englund**, **Hannah Pershall**, and **Brittney Roggenkamp**, who sat together not just in AP English this year, but throughout Advanced Composition and English Literature last year. In fact, their handwriting became so similar that I could no longer distinguish one girl's writing from the other two, which was a problem if they forgot to put their name on their work. All three girls have also adopted a new phrase into their vocabularies--"It's a *Jane Eyre* kind of

day."

Lesson #12: Students drink weird stuff in the morning. Now, I can understand the various coffee drinks that students consume, but **Geneson Klaus** would often sip on a big can of Rockstar Energy Drink during first period Film Study. One morning, she left the empty can on her table when she exited my room, so I picked it up to toss it in the trash, and I read the following information on the can: "Rockstar is scientifically formulated to speed the recovery time of those who lead active and exhausting lifestyles--from athletes to rock stars." Active and exhausting lifestyles. . .hmm, I wonder what the means.

Lesson #13: If you must be late to class, have a good excuse and if at all possible, rope a teacher into supporting your excuse. It was just my luck to have **Christy Carlson** in American and World Literature during the last period of the day, right after she had

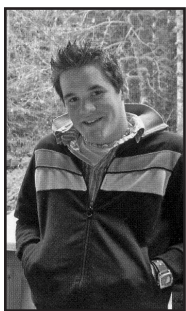


Psychology with Mrs. Link. As you may know, Mrs. Link has a great fondness for the ropes course out behind the school, and when the weather is nice, the kids in Psychology spend a fair amount of time out there engaged in all manner of activities that Mrs. Link will never convince me to do, even if she offers me large sums of cash. But realistically, how many times in one school year could Christy get stuck in a tree right at the end of fifth period? Apparently Christy is not alone in racking up a few tardies. Mrs. Karukes has informed me that **Jaime Levesque** actually wrote the book on 1001 excuses for being late to class.

Lesson #14: You can tell a lot about a student from her preferred mode of transportation. Take **Kristina Eilts**, for example. She absolutely loves quads. Now I'm assuming a quad is some kind of all-terrain vehicle that has 4 wheels and is exciting to ride. This fits Kristina perfectly as she enjoys excitement and danger, and she especially likes describing her adventures to me. **Elena Mahrt** is also a good example of this lesson. Elena loves

horses. She thrives on the discipline and precision of participating in equestrian events, and she is herself a disciplined young woman who expresses herself clearly and precisely. Kristina and Elena also happen to be best friends.

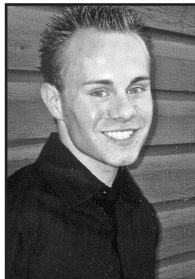
Lesson #15: Make good on your bets and never try to fool your senior class advisor. Stand up, **Biff**. Actually, this is **Jeff Taylor**, but for reasons unknown to me, we all call him Biff. From November



through May of this school year, I hounded Biff to order his graduation materials. I sent him notes, I harassed him in the hallway, I mailed ordering materials home, I even threatened him with not walking in tonight's ceremony. Nothing worked. Finally in the hall during 10-minute break on May 3, I bet him \$5.00 that he could

not submit his order by Friday, May 5. He took me on. As I saw it, it was a win/win bet for me. Either Biff would submit his order by the fifth, which would solve my problem, or I would be \$5.00 richer. At the senior class meeting on May 10, I reminded Biff of our bet and he assured me that the order had been placed. As it turns out, Jostens received the order on May 12, so I'm afraid, Biff, that you didn't quite make your deadline, which means that you still owe me \$5.00. And remember, these diploma covers are empty until **all** fees are paid.

Lesson #16: Each student has his own approach to schoolwork. At one extreme is the student who approaches his schoolwork and quickly veers away from it, and at the other end of the spectrum is **Michael Blankenship**. Now please understand that Michael is a dream student in every possible way, but early on in our student/teacher relationship, I determined that it might be healthy for Michael to . . . to lessen just slightly the intensity of his approach to schoolwork. However, I thought I had failed in my 2-year mission. . . until just recently when Michael admitted



to me that for the last composition in English Literature, he wrote only one rough draft. Ah, success!

Lesson #17: If something can go wrong on a family vacation, it probably will. **Jessie Mansell**, the daughter of our superintendent, learned this lesson during spring vacation this year. Even though Jessie hates camping, she agreed to accompany her mom and dad on a camping trip to the beach, falling victim to the "This will be our last chance to go on a family vacation" ploy. Jessie felt certain she could endure the vacation. After all, the RV has a DVD player and Jessie had plenty of movies. The first casualty of the trip was, of course, the DVD player, whose demise led Jessie to play card game after card game with her mom. Then on the way home--on a Sunday--the RV broke down in a small town,

and Mark, our superintendent, was forced to walk two miles to another town to retrieve the part they needed to repair the RV. Meanwhile, Jessie and her mom sat on the side of the road. Jessie's parting comment when she was describing the ordeal was simply, "I'm never going camping again!" I feel, Jessie, that you should know the whole truth about your spring break disaster. You see, your parents carefully orchestrated the entire debacle so that you would never again want to accompany them on a "family vacation".

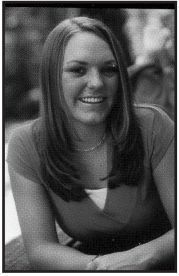
Lesson #18: Don't drive with **Monica Santos**. I have been told that Monica's father was so nervous about her learning to drive that he hired someone else to teach her. In addition, one time when Mr. Holmes was riding with Monica, she became so flustered that she actually drove down the wrong side of the street. And to top it off, Monica has twice been pulled over on the freeway for driving too slowly in the fast lane.



Lesson #19: Spelling does matter. Just ask **Ty Munger**. When he was a sophomore, Ty wrote a short story in Mrs. Grotte's English class. One day

Mrs. Grotte volunteered to read aloud any student's story, and Ty asked her to read his. After he handed her the story, she glanced at it, and then said, "Ty, I can't read this aloud." It seems that Ty had mistakenly added an extra T into one word in the title of the story, "Titey Whities".

And finally, Lesson #20: Think before you talk. During English Literature this year, we were studying "The Wife of Bath's Tale" from *The Canterbury Tales*.



Before the Wife of Bath even begins to tell her story, though, she rambles on for pages and pages in her prologue about her five husbands and to be honest, her comments are sometimes a bit off color. To save time, I told my students that I would simply summarize the information in her prologue and then we would read the tale itself, which is about half as long as the prologue. Apparently **Katie Rinaker** thought the prologue sounded more interesting than the tale itself, so she said to me, "But Ms. Bryan, I'd rather read nine pages of smut."

Art Linkletter once designed an entire TV show around the notion that "Kids say the darnedest things." As teachers, we know they also write and do the darnedest things, too. And thank goodness they do. Their antics make our job as teachers so much more interesting and fun; they liven up our classrooms, the hallways, and the commons; and they give me something to chat about at graduation year after year.

To the Class of 2006, on behalf of all the teachers of La Center High School, thanks for the memories. You make us proud.

The Class of 2007

Graduation: June 9, 2007

When I arrived at La Center High School in August of 1979, there were seven female teachers on staff, including Mrs. Heaton and me. All seven of us were under 30 years old, 5 of us were single, two of us were married, and none of us had children. The men on staff were old. At least that's what I thought at the ripe old age of 22. Fast forward 28 years.

On our first teacher workday this year back in August, the staff gathered in the upstairs lounge to begin a day of goal-setting and team building, but we started the meeting as we start all of our meetings, by saying something positive. After some preliminary comments about how well both Mrs. Croskrey and Mrs. Grotte were looking and feeling during their pregnancies and congratulations to Mr. Cooke on the birth of his son, the positive comments shifted to announcement after announcement after announcement of the birth of grandchildren.

Grandchildren! When did I become the same age as those old men on staff in 1979? Time marches on, but as my best friend since the fourth grade occasionally reminds me, "Sharon, it's better than the alternative." Most days I agree with her.

While the staff of La Center High School may have aged a bit, there is a constant in our lives. Every year, our students range in age from 14 to 18, and I suspect that even though these 81 students may look a little different from their counterparts of 50 years ago, they're truly not so different. Like the Class of '57 no doubt did to their teachers, they have entertained us, frustrated us, amazed us, occasionally irritated us, enlightened us, and ultimately made us proud. Let me introduce you to a few of them.

I would certainly place **Cara Blasen** and **Joselyn Dykgraaf** in the entertaining category. Cara and Joselyn were in my sixth period Film Study class

this year, and for their final project of the year, they produced a poster about director Robert Altman. The assignment required that they include six photos on their poster, but Cara and Joselyn chose to include only five and included this note with their poster:

Dear Ms. Bryan, We regret to inform you that our nearly perfect poster lacks the essential sixth picture. While fully aware that this may lower



our grade, we ask that you may please take into consideration the design of our poster. If you cannot visualize how a sixth picture will ruin it, we have provided said picture and recommend that you place it (with removable tape) anywhere you choose. We are sure that you will not find a place worthy of this picture. Therefore, we hope that you rejoice in the fact that we have supplied you with the most beautiful poster you have ever received. We are aware that posters of this caliber are hard to come by, so we feel that it would be an insult to this poster, and all that came before and will come after it, to deprive it of the grade it deserves over something as trivial as a five inch picture of a very creepy man."

Sincerely, Joselyn Dykgraaf and Cara Blasen

Equally entertaining this year was **Lindsey Wilen**. One November day in AP English, I glanced over at Lindsey and rather than sitting in her chair, she was kneeling on the floor in front of her table taking a quiz. Naturally I asked why she was kneeling instead of sitting and Lindsey explained that if she sat in her chair, the seat of her jeans would sag when she stood up, and that would ruin effect of, well, the view, I guess. Ever the slave to fashion, Lindsey entertained me yet another day when she was wearing a pair of hip-hugging jeans. She accidentally flipped her pen cap across the room and when she tried to stoop to retrieve it, she couldn't quite manage the maneuver without violating the dress code.

Phillip Horton has, at one time or another, entertained, amazed, irritated, and enlightened me, but I'll focus in on how he has frustrated me. Phillip loses practically everything--his books, his notebook, his backpack, his homework--but what is especially frustrating is how often he could lose his car key.



Rather than simply stow the key in his pocket, Phillip would set the key on the floor under his table and forget about it. Then at the end of the day, he would inevitably pop into my classroom and ask, "Ms. Bryan, did you find my car keys?"

Nicole Matzdorff amazed me this year. Now I had Nicole in Advanced Composition and English Literature last year, and I never struggled to read her handwriting. It's quite tidy, really. Suddenly this year in AP English, though, her writing began to shrink. I mean tiny, so tiny that my bifocals would no longer do the trick, and I'd have to remove my glasses and hold her paper right up to my face. My husband would pop into the den and catch me with Nicole's paper centimeters from my eyes and ask what the heck I was doing. What's really strange, though, is that the handwriting of two of Nicole's groupmates in AP English also began to shrink. You don't suppose it was a conspiracy?

If there is one student in the Class of 2007 that has entertained, frustrated, amazed, irritated, and enlightened me more than any other, it is probably **Jessica Hathaway**. I can always tell when Jessica has not gotten enough sleep because she becomes completely giddy. And in the past two years, she must have uttered one phrase to me at least 500 times: "Ms. Bryan, it's so cold in here." It is always 71 degrees in my classroom, and that's not cold. But Jessica just melted my heart when we watched the most recent film version of *Pride and Prejudice* because every time there was a touching moment between Elizabeth and Mr. Darcy, she would go, "Ohhhhhh."



One of the more amazing students in this senior class is **Kathi Brandt**. Kathi amazes me for two reasons. First, she owns more Sharpies than any person I have ever known. And she always seems to have them with her. During graduation practice yesterday, I saw them under her chair, and I would not be surprised to learn that she has them here tonight. Second, Kathi is a slender, healthy girl but she eats constantly. During class, she always has food on her table. It's so depressing.

Sitting next to Kathi is **Nick Collins**. First of all, I need to offer Nick a public apology because I insulted him this week, and I want him to know how bad I feel. When I dropped by Mr. Johnson's class two days ago and ran into Nick there, I told him that his green shirt was kind of ugly. Sorry Nick. (It was ugly) But I also want you to know how proud I am of Nick because this past winter, he served as the manager of La Center's first ever swim team, no easy job. These were uncharted waters (no pun intended) for La Center and for Nick, and he did a great job. Oh, did I mention that the swim team had just one member?



I like many things about **Adria Biasi**, but what we truly have in common is that we are both math-challenged. When Adria had to explain on a recent Calculus exam what she had learned about calculus, she wrote that she learned that she cannot do calculus even when she can use the calculus book. Oddly enough, though, during Homecoming Week this past fall, Adria located the spirit jug one day by doing a math problem. Mr. Holmes had offered up a complex set of clues as to where the jug could be found and he ended the clues with a math problem. Adria bypassed all of the complicated clues about longitude and latitude and simply solved the math problem, whose answer was 50. The only 50 she could think of was the 50-yard line and voila! There was the jug.

Jessica Myers and I also have something in

common. We have loud, distinctive laughs. Last year, Jessica was in first period Film Study, and her infectious laughter made film viewing, especially the comedies, so much fun.

Two more amazing members of this Class of 2007 are **Bryce Livesay** and **Brandon Padilla**. Since I never had these two gentlemen in class, they're probably wondering what I could possibly tell you about them. Plenty! First of all, apparently when these two were freshmen in Ms. Holter's Ninth English class, Bryce stabbed Brandon with a pencil, but Ms. Holter yelled at Brandon. Brandon claims the pencil lead is still in his hand. But what I find amazing about Bryce and Brandon is their skill in driving the challenge course golf cart. Last year, the gold cart had a little transmission problem and would only go in reverse, but that did not slow Bryce and Brandon down one bit.

Another entertaining challenge course story relates to **Amber Smith**, who apparently was not listening to Mrs. Link when she announced that the class would be spending the next day's class period on the course. The next day, Amber wore a skirt to class, so she ended up going down the zip line screaming, "Don't look! Don't look!" Naturally, everybody looked.

Britta Plumhoff is never irritating, but she herself was irritated this past winter break when she was out for a leisurely jog through the hills of La Center. While Britta was running along, a goat suddenly popped out of the woods and began to stalk her. She tried desperately to convince the goat to return home, but she had no luck. Britta was afraid that her mom might drive by and think she was stealing a goat or bringing home another pet.

I have two stories I'd like to share related to students selecting their colleges. I'll begin with **Madeline Alanko**. Maddie was actually torn among three different colleges, all of which had much to offer

her. While she was agonizing over this decision, we were in the midst of a big poetry unit in AP English, and I had offered the kids an extra credit opportunity, to write a villanelle, which is a very structured form of poetry. Maddie accepted the challenge and actually wrote her villanelle about her dilemma in selecting a college. By the way, she finally decided on the University of Portland, but rather than studying poetry, she'll be majoring in mechanical engineering.

The other college selection story involves **Peter Stanley**, who will be majoring in Fisheries Technology. A few weeks ago, Peter was flipping through his catalog from Peninsula College and reading about the kind of equipment he would need to bring to college in the fall. With a big grin on his face, Peter pointed out to me the #1 item on the list, a fishing pole.

One member of the Class of 2007 amazed me from the first day of this school year, **Helen Mitseim**, who has been a student in my first period Film Study class this year. For the first two weeks



of the semester, I had no idea that Helen was an exchange student from Norway; she sounded completely American to me. Helen and I have chatted a good deal throughout the school year and I asked her how they teach English so successfully in Norwegian schools. That's when she confessed to me that she did not become so proficient in English because of school. She speaks such excellent English because her favorite TV show is "Friends". And they say TV is bad!

Catherine Martinez always brings a smile to my face when I meet her. She is not only witty but also persistent. For example, on May 23rd of last year, a huge rainstorm hit La Center in the morning. Catherine tried to convince her mom that the deluge was a sign from God that she should not go to school that day. Her mother made her go anyway.

Katie Collins is unique among the many

students I have taught in my 28 years here at LCHS. She is the only student that I met for the first time



on the day of her birth, July 26, 1989 when, two days away from the birth of my son, I just happened to be at the hospital. Katie's mom Michelle and her dad Mark are former students of mine, so I guess Katie and I were simply fated to end up as student and teacher one day. Katie is an exceptional writer and when she writes about a subject she loves, she truly shines. Let me illustrate with a passage from a composition Katie wrote last year.

Opening the door to Robert's used Bookstore immediately offers many sensations. They include a sense of age, of deep love for literature, but first and most obvious is my favorite, and that is the smell of old books. The dear, rusted, warm scent that radiates from the endless shelves crowding the shop is simply intoxicating. There, within the many walls papered in old movie posters, stretch out endless rows of bookshelves after bookshelves. Old books, new books, bestsellers, classics, romance, adventure, poetry, mystery, books on how to plant a garden in the "how to" section, and that's not nearly all. There are sci-fi, biographies, children's books, arts and crafts books; the list is endless. And there I find myself, for hours on end, lost in some distant, dusty corner of an old book store, inhaling deeply the dear scent and greedily consuming words from book after book after glorious book. Only when my eyes are sore and my head aches something fierce do I finally retire and, almost always toting four or five books under my arm, pay Robert a visit.

Last year, for the first time ever, we offered a couple of Advanced Placement courses here at LCHS, AP Calculus and AP English Literature and Composition. **Katie Dunnick** has been a student

in both courses and just last week she confessed something to me about her survival in AP Calculus. "Ms. Bryan," Katie said to me, "have you noticed how sarcastic I've become?" I said I had but that I appreciate good sarcasm. Katie went on to explain, "I had to become sarcastic to keep up with Mr. Johnson."

Katie and **Autumn Borroz** were the only two juniors in AP English last year, and they continued in the course this year. If anyone has a thorough understanding of diction, syntax, and deconstructing the prompt (AP lingo), it is these two. And whenever



they glance out the window on a soggy, gray Pacific NW day, I suspect they'll think to themselves, "This is a *Jane Eyre* kind of day." But let me tell you what Autumn did that kind of shocked, and ultimately, pleased me. We both have October birthdays, and when mine rolled around this past year, and I informed the kids that I was now 50, Autumn became outraged. "No, Ms. Bryan, no. You can't be 50!" You gotta love that. And by the way, Autumn, 50 is okay. In fact, it's much better than 18. Trust me.

At the beginning of my speech, I said that the students in the Class of 2007 have entertained us, frustrated us, amazed us, sometimes irritated us, enlightened us, and in the end, made us proud. And now it is time for them to leave us and join a larger community. Since I am constantly nagging my students to quote text in their writing, I would be remiss if I did not do the same in my speech. So I'm going to quote only the best--and if you've taken Film Study, you'd better know this one. To the Class of 2007, "Here's looking at you, kid."

The Class of 2008

Graduation: June 7, 2008

Good Evening,

One day not too long ago, I was sitting alone in my classroom--trying to avoid grading papers--and I began to glance around the room. And then I began to wonder if there was anything at all in my classroom that had been with me since the beginning of my career here in 1979. Other than me, what had survived these 29 years? Here's what I came up with--my desk (it's a great desk), about a dozen tattered paperback copies of *To Kill A Mockingbird* (great book), and an exacto knife with its original blade from my yearbooking days. That's it! Everything else has changed over the years, and certainly that's to be expected. In the past 29 years, I've occupied four different classrooms in two different La Center High Schools. I've seen the population of the high school more than double. And the tools with which I teach have changed dramatically, from the manual Royal typewriter on which I pounded out quizzes and exams 29 years ago to the slick and efficient MacBook I use today. So much change in what, most days, feels like so little time.

However much the stuff in my classroom changes, though, one element of my career is a constant--teenagers. Oh, it's true that the kids of today look a bit different from the kids of 1979, and they all own numerous electronic devices that distract them from driving safely, but they're still teenagers. And their big worries are the same worries we all had--grades, job, parents, homework, college, the opposite sex. I'd like to introduce you to a few members of the Class of 2008, and you be the judge? Are they so different from us at the same age?

Danielle Bars is a lovely and intelligent young woman, but last year I discovered one thing of which she is incapable--sitting up straight. Now I'm a sloucher from way back, but Danielle goes beyond

mere slouching. She quite literally drapes herself over the table in my classroom, and I can't always tell if she's paying attention or if my lesson has lulled



her into a coma. Fortunately this year, I could usually count on the senior sitting across from Danielle in sixth period Film Study to keep her alert if the lesson wasn't stimulating enough. In fact, **Kassy Verhagen** was never at a loss to draw a reaction out of Danielle by stealing her snacks,

shoving her book onto the floor, scribbling on her arm or face, throwing things at her. . .you get the idea.

I have always been amazed at how the time of day can affect the behavior of students. For example, some kids are just not morning people and they do not reveal their true intellect at 8:15 a.m., but by noon, they're quite capable of writing an eloquent paragraph or at least a coherent sentence. In the Class of 2008, **Kyle McDonald** has that Dr. Jekyll/Mr. Hyde persona. Last year, nearly every morning I would encounter Kyle sitting calmly in the same spot in the hallway, and he would always greet me politely and continue to sit, looking very much at peace with the world. By the time he arrived to Film Study at 1:50 in the afternoon, though, he would be possessed of an incredible amount of energy, and sitting still was a dim memory. Of course, the six or seven candy bars he wolfed down each day in Film Study might have had something to do with his increased level of activity.

Any student who has ever taken Film Study with me knows that quite often during the first few weeks



of the school year and occasionally throughout the rest of the year as we watch a film, I utter a particular phrase. Okay, the truth is that I utter quite a number of phrases, but the most common one early on in our film viewing is, "Put your pen down." That's because many

students are in the habit of either tapping their pens

on the tabletop or endlessly retracting the tip during a film. Very irritating. This year's Master Clicker Award goes to **Robert Sharpe**, a newcomer to LCHS this year. About halfway through the year, Robert used to retract his pen now and then, just to see if I was paying attention. I'd glance his way, only to discover him looking at me with a sly grin on his face.

Giggling. Freshman girls do it. Seniors girls do it. Some senior boys do it. But in the Class of 2008, no one giggles more often or more contagiously than **Sarah Collins**. She cannot help herself. Last year in American Literature, sometimes I would actually have to move Sarah because she and the student she sat across from--who will remain nameless until later in my speech--would only have to make eye contact and the gigglefest was on. Once **Greta Stuhlsatz** returned from her year in Germany and joined Sarah and the nameless classmate in AP English, I knew no peace.

Since I just mentioned Germany, I need to tell you about one of our exchange students, **Birthe Wiese**. At the start of every school year, I always wonder what goes through the heads of our exchange students as they sit in class with their American counterparts. Are they amused, appalled, frightened,



confused? Birthe was in my fifth period section of Film Study, and on that first day of class back in August as I stood at the door to greet students, I was myself a little appalled and frightened. By the time the bell rang to begin class, I was faced with Birthe, one junior girl, and 26 boys, most of them juniors and all of them rambunctious. A typical day in fifth period was never boring, let me tell you, and there were times when my classroom was a little ripe, if you know what I mean. But through it all, Birthe never said a word. She would quietly sit at her desk with a bemused expression on her face. I wonder what she wrote home to her family.

Throughout history, teachers in training at

universities across the United States have been told a bald face lie: There is no such thing as a stupid question. Please! When I handed out *Pride and Prejudice* last year to the students in AP English, **Nick Engerran** asked, "Hey, is this that book with the Navy Seals?"

Just recently, **Sierra Lockwood** rivaled Nick in asking a dumb question. Sierra was up on the challenge course as some students were going down the zip line, and Sierra had volunteered to be the one who assists students when they have finished their trip down the line. This involves setting up a stepladder under the dangling student, climbing up to the student, and helping him detach from the line. The next step is to remove the ladder because, of course, it sits right in the path of the zipline where students fly by very quickly. Apparently Sierra had successfully assisted her first student, and then she climbed back up the ladder and waited, causing all of her classmates on the ground to stare at her in wonder. When someone asked her what she was doing, Sierra asked, "Don't I wait up here for the next person to come down the line?"



When I emailed teachers last week to ask for stories about tonight's seniors, I was tickled to read Miss Holter's contributions. She had **Jared Garner** and **Eric Weese** in Tenth Grade English and both boys were a bit on the immature side and occasionally caused her blood pressure to rise. On his squirmy days, for example, Jared would sit by the windows, lean back in his chair, and play with the cord to the mini blinds, wrapping it around his neck and then unwrapping it. Miss Holter was afraid he might hang himself. I had to laugh because I had Jared and Eric together as juniors in Film Study. I spent half my time sending Jared back to his assigned seat after he had snuck up to sit by Eric. And then one day, Jared came back to my desk and asked for a pair of scissors. When I asked why--frankly, I was a little afraid to give him a pair of scissors--he held out a finger around which he had snugly wrapped one of those zip ties.

Naturally, I wanted to ask why he had placed the zip tie on his finger in the first place, but the finger was turning rather blue by then, so I simply handed over the scissors. The good news is that Jared's finger is fine and, according to Ms. Holter, who had both young men in class again this year, Jared and Eric have matured beautifully and she will miss them greatly.

When it comes to being disorganized and losing things, **Naomi Johnson** takes the cake.

Her backpack, when she can find it, often looks as



though a bomb has gone off inside it. One morning last year during first period, Naomi was called to the office by her dad because he couldn't find his car keys and she had been the last one to have them. Naomi vigorously denied to her father that she had said keys and returned to

class. Moments later, she reached into her pocket for something, and we all heard a familiar jingling. Suddenly, Naomi got a stricken look on her face. Then, of course, she asked to return to the office.

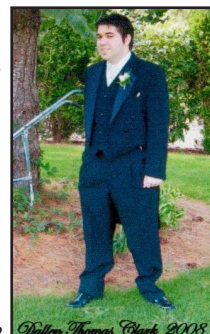
I need to take a moment here to issue a public apology to one of tonight's graduates, **Natashia Moore**. Back in March at the Senior Parent Auction, Natashia and I got into a bit of a bidding war over the movie basket, and in the end, I lost. And over the past couple of months, I haven't been a very gracious loser. So Natashia, I'm sorry. I just hope that in my bitter disappointment at losing that very cool popcorn container and the gigantic box of Junior Mints I didn't misspell your name on your diploma. I guess we'll know soon enough.

A.J. McGraw stands out in a crowd. He's tall, he has red hair, and he's a really friendly and social guy. But if you really want to see him attract attention, you missed your chance. Last year in May, A.J. had surgery on one of his feet, so for the last month of school, he traveled around school in a wheelchair. But trust me when I tell you that did not slow him down one bit. Not only did his foot sport a bright

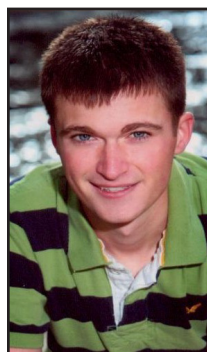
purple cast, but he was constantly popping wheelies in his wheelchair. According to A.J., he popped the wheelies to keep his foot elevated. Doctor's orders.

Unlike A.J., **Joel Uyesugi** is a pretty quiet guy who doesn't go out of his way to draw attention to himself. Nevertheless, Joel did become the center of interest during the practice AP English exam back in April. During break time, all of the kids were chowing down on bagels, bananas, and chocolate chip cookies when suddenly someone said, "Joel, what are you doing?" I glanced over to Joel and in front of him on the table was a pile of chocolate chips, each carefully removed from the cookies. There couldn't have been much cookie left after the chips were extracted, but Joel didn't seem to mind.

Like Joel, **Dallen Clark** is a man of few words. According to Miss Holter, in fact, Dallen can convey much without even speaking. Last year in Novel/Short Story, Dallen was able to silence the rowdier seniors with nothing more than a look. But when Dallen chooses to speak, he does so with power. In Dramatic Literature last year, Dallen not only played the role of Cyrano de Bergerac, but he threw himself into the role with gusto. In fact, for his big death scene, Dallen memorized his lines and used props. As Miss Holter wrote, "I know that every student from the class will fondly remember the day that Cyrano died."

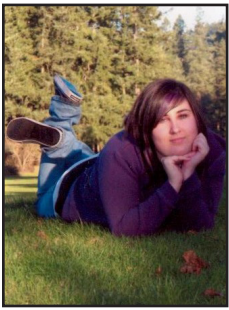


When **Tyler Calvi** was a sophomore in Ms. Grotte's English class, he said so many funny things that she began to label his utterings "Calvi-isms". I did not personally witness a Calvi-ism until Tyler became a student of mine in AP English last year and then again this year. For example, one day Tyler was complaining that he wasn't learning enough in his Human Anatomy class, and he said, "They leave the different parts off the pictures." And



when a classmate pointed out to him one day that a character he was referring to as a man was actually a woman, Tyler responded, “Same difference.” But my favorite Calvi incident doesn’t involve him saying anything. However, **Elizabeth Englund** certainly had something to say to Tyler. On June 15, 2007--the last day of school last year--Tyler was taking pictures of his classmates with his cell phone. When he photographed Elizabeth, she could see the image in his phone as he was aiming, and she shouted, “Hey, that’s not my face!”

The two funniest students I have encountered in my 29 years at La Center High School are Mr. Todd Norcott (Class of 1991) and **Bridget McNamee** (Class of 2008). Yesterday at graduation practice, Bridget showed up wearing a chicken suit. One day last year, for no particular reason, Bridget decided



to plan her funeral and asked me if I would like to attend. I said, “Bridget, I think it’s more likely that you’d attend my funeral than I would yours.” She quietly stared at me for a few minutes, and then said, ‘I’ll put you down as a maybe.’ If there’s one thing Bridget hates, it’s running. In PE this year, she

complained to Forbes about having to run the mile so often, claiming that she would only ever have to run a mile if she were being chased by a maniac with a chainsaw. Perhaps the funniest thing I have ever seen Bridget do, and I’ve seen her do this more than once, is to sing Happy Birthday to someone in the style of Marilyn Monroe singing Happy Birthday to President Kennedy. Is anyone here tonight having a birthday?

Well, there you have it. Do any of these students remind you of someone you know? Or perhaps yourself?

I always like to end my speech with some bit of advice for the graduates as they leave LCHS, so tonight I decided to turn that font of inspiration and wisdom, the American Film Institute’s list of the 100 most memorable movie quotes of all time. Quotes

that I considered but ultimately rejected include: “Show me the money!”, “Plastics.”, “There’s no crying in baseball!”, “Rosebud.”, and “You’re gonna need a bigger boat.” In the end, though, I found my gem in a line from *Dead Poets Society*: “Carpe diem. Seize the day, boys (and girls). Make your lives extraordinary.”

The Class of 2009

Graduation: June 6, 2009

I began my speech preparation this year with a quick Google search to find out what bits of sage advice really important commencement speakers were delivering to college graduates around the country this year. At Duke University, Oprah Winfrey told the graduates, “You really haven’t completed the circle of success unless you can help somebody else move forward.” Speaker of the House Nancy Pelosi informed the graduates of Johns Hopkins University to, “Know your power and follow your passion. The power and passion that spring from the beauty of your dreams, the depth of your imagination, and the strength of your values.” And former Secretary of State Colin Powell said this to the Class of 2009 at Franklin and Marshall College, “There’s nothing wrong with money or position. But at the end of the day, the source of true happiness and success is that you have that sense of personal satisfaction of knowing that you are doing something of value for the society that you are a part of.” Blah blah blah blah blah. Sure, this is all good advice, but it’s not very practical and it’s certainly not tailored to the specific personalities or needs of the graduates being addressed. I think tonight’s graduates could benefit from a few practical suggestions that speak to our specific concerns about them as they leave the comfort and security of La Center High School and venture out into the world.

I’ll begin with **Chelsea Linsday**. *Chelsea, before you drive your car anywhere, be sure you know how to operate all of its essential parts.* Earlier this year, our secretary Cathy Osborn called Chelsea into the office to let her know that she had left her lights on, but rather than head out to the parking lot to take care of the problem, Chelsea just stared at Cathy with

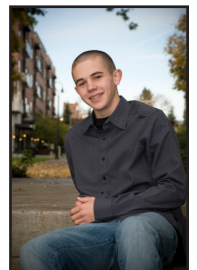


that “deer in the headlights” look, no pun intended. When Cathy asked Chelsea if she was going to turn off her lights, Chelsea admitted that she didn’t know how. Naturally, this begs the question, “How did the lights get turned on in the first place?” And when Cathy asked, Chelsea said, “My dad.”

To **Ashley Mae Castle**, I say, “*Keep track of your car keys at all times.*” When the Science Club took a trip to the Ape Caves, Ashley hiked all the way to the end of the caves and all the way back. When she resurfaced, though, Ashley discovered that somewhere along the trek, she had dropped her keys. Fortunately for Ashley, a group of Cub Scouts found her keys an hour later. . .at the end of the cave.

My advice to **Dillon Martin-Tully** is two-fold. *First of all, as you navigate the hallways of the world, slow down. Second, buy yourself a backpack for college life.* For the past four years, Dillon has traveled the halls of La Center High School with an enormous suitcase on wheels. And the speed and agility with which he has done so has amazed more than one teacher. Still, once he arrives to a classroom, he has to stow that humungous suitcase somewhere, which was a challenge. And, Dillon, I just have to know one thing. . .what in the world do you have in there?

To **Tyler Baker**, I say this: *Find a favorite movie that is actually good.* When I had Tyler in Film Study last year, nearly every day he would say to me, “Ms. Bryan, why don’t we watch ‘Red Dawn’ in here?” And even though I did not have Tyler in class this year, every time I’d pass him in the hall, he would shout, “Red Dawn!” The truth is, Tyler, we do not watch “Red Dawn” in Film Study because it is a lousy movie. One of your own peers wrote this on imdb.com: “Red Dawn makes no sense whatsoever for many reasons. . . High School students don’t just suddenly know how to fire RPG-7s and AK-47s or how to kill 4 brigades of soldiers and 8 attack helicopters.” This guy is right, Tyler. Give it up. If you must have a favorite movie, why not choose a good one, something like “Rear



Window” or “Citizen Kane”.

I actually have several bits of advice I’d like to give **Cleave Rengo**, but I’ll narrow it down to just one: *Never underestimate your own mother. Never.* One day this past winter, Cleave’s mom came down to school, unannounced, to enjoy lunch with her son. . .only to catch Cleave in the act of heaving tater tots across the commons. As a result, Cleave became the only student in the entire 88-year history of the school to be referred to the office for discipline. . .by his own mother.

Brad Padilla, *you might want to find a less dramatic way to enter a room, especially as you grow older.* I don’t recall how this tradition started, but sometime last year in Film Study, Brad began to enter my classroom by throwing open the door and doing a body roll into the room. . .every single day. To me, it looked painful (he always wore his backpack), and there were a few times when he just barely missed the table, but I always knew when Brad had arrived.

My advice to **Wyatt Williamson** is to consider a career as a teacher. Wyatt is probably horrified by my suggestion, but I think he has a knack for student discipline. Earlier this year when one of Wyatt’s classmates in WASL English had some trouble with his choice of words in class, Wyatt came up with a solution. One day, he showed up to class with a bar of soap.



He very carefully drilled a hole through the soap, attached a length of string to it, and then suspended the soap from the ceiling directly above the student who occasionally let slip a word of profanity. From then on, when Wyatt’s classmate would utter an inappropriate word, Wyatt would simply point at the soap, and the young man would crawl up on his chair and give it a lick. It’s been many weeks since this student has had to lick the soap. (The soap is still there...in 2016.)

To **Nick Barger** and **Robert Moehnke** I say, *“Don’t sweat the little things in life.”* Last year in Film

Study, Nick and Robert became outraged during our viewing of “Star Wars”. I am talking severe irritation on their part. Why, you ask? Because in one brief moment in the DVD version of the film, Luke Skywalker’s light saber is blue, instead of green.

Beware of unsigned love notes, **Ryan Casey**. Apparently earlier this year, Ryan, received an anonymous love note that read: “L is for your long golden locks, O is for your openness, V is for your very beautiful eyes, E is for you and me.” I don’t really get that E is for you and me part, but it is teenage poetry. Anyhow, although the note was not signed, Ryan, I can tell you now that its authors were **Rosa Traffie, Margarita Doty, Vamma Gore, and Kelly Wydronek**.

In college, our education professors taught us that there is no such thing as a dumb question, the theory being that if a student feels that we consider his question inane, we might somehow damage his self-esteem and stymie his desire to ask further questions. Please! I don’t want to hurt anybody’s feelings, but I beg to differ. And that’s why my advice to **Philip Pettit** and **Shay Cheeseman** is to *think before you actually utter that question.* Last year in Film Study, Philip sat right next to my desk, and each day before class began, Philip would turn to me and say, “Guess what, Ms. Bryan?” It got to be such a habit with Philip that I would actually make up guesses. “Guess what, Ms. Bryan?” “You got married over the weekend, Philip?” “Guess what, Ms. Bryan?” “You’re going to give me \$100, Philip?” Finally, I devised my stock reply to Philip’s daily queries: “Guess what, Ms. Bryan?” “I give up, Philip. What?”



Shay’s questions were a bit different. She does not much care for suspense in her reading, so Shay would pose questions to me such as, “Ms. Bryan, who dies next in the novel?” Or, “What happens at the end of the play?” I became so exasperated with Shay’s questions that I would begin to, well, lie. “Sadly, Shay, the next to person to die will be Jane Eyre

herself.”

My next piece of advice is for **Jenna Deans**.

Please do not consider a career as a psychic, Jenna. One morning last year before the school day began, Jenna rushed into my classroom, stood in the doorway, and just stared at me. Then she ran over and gave me a big hug. It’s not that I mind a hug, but that’s not usually how my work day begins, so when I asked Jenna what was up, she told me she’d had a dream about me the night before. Apparently, my classroom had caught fire and I had died. Well, I’m still here, so perhaps your dreams are not prophetic, Jenna.

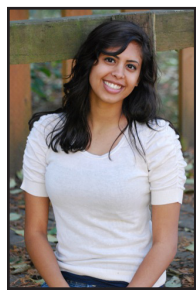


Kalli Zoltz, *please remember that things are not always what they appear to be.* Back in December, Kalli was driving Mrs. Link’s golf cart down the hill from the challenge course, accompanied by another student. When this other student hopped into the cart, he accidentally moved a box of equipment so that its corner was pressing down on the gas pedal. As you might guess, the golf cart began to move down the hill without Kalli actually stepping on the gas, much to Kalli’s dismay. She kept braking the cart to a halt, but when she’d take her foot off the brake, off it would go again. Kalli became convinced that the cart was possessed, and the last scream Mrs. Link could make out as Kalli lurched down the hill was, “Watch Link, it’s out to get me.” Kalli eventually learned the truth of the demon golf cart when **Laura Ross** took over, nudged the equipment box off the gas pedal, and parked the cart without further incident.

On the flip side, *I would advise Kate Summerhill that some things are exactly what they appear to be.* Kate came up to my desk one day early this year, totally frustrated by an essay I had assigned. She had the assignment sheet with her and she placed it on my desk, exclaiming something like, “I just don’t understand the assignment. It’s like there’s something missing here.” At that point, I picked up the assignment sheet, flipped it over, and said, “This

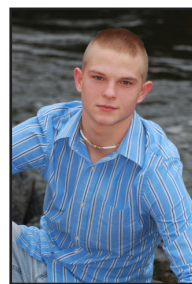
maybe?” Kate merely turned red, looked sheepish, and left.

I have very simple advice for **Ali Engerran**. *Pay attention!* During the past two years in AP English, the students have written a series of essays about specific poems; in fact, they have a poetry response due every two weeks. Even though the specific due dates were posted in a plastic frame on each table, I can’t tell you how often I glanced at Ali as I asked students to take out their poetry responses, only to witness a truly stricken look on Ali’s face. Inevitably, Ali would then turn to her pal **Harveen Sandhu** and whisper, “We have a poetry response due today?” My favorite example of Ali not quite tuning in, though, happened just two days ago when we were playing the



initials game. In the game, students are faced with 26 pairs of letters and they have to come up with the names of people who have these initials. It was the last chance for the seniors to try to defeat me in this game (futile), and one pair of initials was “N.E.”. It can be difficult to come up with a last name that begins with the letter “E”, and, unfortunately, Ali’s group was stumped. Had they come up with the same name for N.E. that I did, we ultimately would have tied. Oh, and the N.E. name I came up with. . .Nick Engerran, Ali’s brother.

I am indebted to Mrs. Bounds for my next bit of advice, which I offer to **Bubba Myers** and **Mike Dempsey**. *If you are mean to your teachers, it will come back to haunt you.* When they were sophomores, Bubba and Mike spent the year driving Mrs. Bounds crazy in U.S. History. As luck would have it, that next summer both boys ended up at the University of Oregon wrestling camp where Mrs. Bounds’s son,



Kyle, was working. On the first day of camp, the coach followed his usual grueling routine, which left the wrestlers exhausted

and panting. When the coach called it quits, Kyle announced, “Oh no. Not for these two. They need to run a little more. . .for Mrs. Bounds.” Kyle promptly fell in, running laps with Bubba and Mike, pushing them like a bad drill sergeant in a Hollywood nightmare. He barked at Mike, “How was my mom as a teacher?” Dempsey replied, “INSPIRATIONAL!” He then demanded of Bubba, “Who was president when the Gulf of Tonkin Resolution was passed?” Bubba shouted, “Nixon?” “Wrong! It was Johnson. You weren’t paying attention in class! Now drop and give me fifty!”

Never lose sight of your playfulness. This is my advice to a group of senior boys who, as freshmen, pilfered a mouse ball from one of the computers in the library and in its place, left a clue to the ball’s whereabouts for Mrs. Marshall. Unfortunately, the clue became dislodged and not only ruined their surprise, but nearly earned them a trip to the principal’s office during their first month as freshmen. Fortunately for **Dan Pershall, Jake Varju, Robert Moehnke, Dillon Davis, and Devin Dykes**, Mrs. Marshall is an understanding woman who loves a good riddle. As it turns out, this was just the beginning of many clues in the form of riddles the boys left for her all year long, although they were careful to leave the remaining clues in plain sight on her desk. Well, gentlemen, Mrs. Marshall has left a final riddle for you to solve, and you will find it taped to the bottom of your chair. It was a long time coming, but she has a good memory and this last riddle is from her to you.

My last piece of advice tonight is actually a reminder to myself to be open to reading suggestions from my students. Last year, **Kieslana Wing** introduced me to *The Thirteenth Tale* by Diane Setterfield, and it was a great read. Just a couple of weeks ago, on her birthday, Kieslana again influenced my reading tastes when I spied another new book on her table as I was handing out the day’s quiz over *The Count of Monte Cristo*.



This book was actually Kieslana’s birthday present from her good pal **Kelsey Dunkle**. While the kids took the quiz, I snapped up this book and began to read. Within seconds, though, I was disrupting the class with my laughter, so I had to return the book to Kieslana. But now I have my own copy: *The Truth About Chuck Norris: 400 Facts About the World’s Greatest Human* by Ian Spector, author of *Chuck Norris vs. Mr. T*. Here are three of my favorite truths: “Chuck Norris can slam a revolving door.” “Bill Gates lives in constant fear that Chuck Norris’ PC will crash.” And finally, “Superman owns a pair of Chuck Norris pajamas.”

Now, I’m not actually a fan of Chuck Norris, although this book is hilarious, but it leads me to my final observation tonight. What has served me best in my 30 years in the classroom at La Center High School is my sense of humor. Spend time in Room 118, and we will laugh together. And as you enter the next phase of your lives, Class of 2009, keep your sense of humor. Believe me. . .you’re going to need it. Thank you.

The Class of 2010

Graduation: June 12, 2010

My inspiration for tonight's speech is my little brother Kurt. For a number of years, Kurt has lived in Indiana with his wife and his now 14-year old son, but once each year, he and the family come home to Oregon and spend 10 days or so. During his most recent visit, which ended just two days ago, it occurred to me that pretty much everyone could learn a thing or two from Kurt's life, so let me tell you why.

For the past 17 years, my little brother has been a Professor of Mathematics at Rose-Hulman Institute of Technology in Terra Haute, Indiana. Before that, he worked at NASA for four years, after earning his Bachelor's Degree from Reed College and his Ph.D. from the University of Washington. This next year, he has been invited to be a Distinguished Visiting Professor at the U.S. Air Force Academy in Colorado Springs. He's published articles with titles like, "Precise Bounds for Finite Time Blow-up of Solutions to Very General One Space-Dimensional Nonlinear Neumann Problems" or "Impedance Imaging, Inverse Problems, and Harry Potter's Cloak". Last year, he published a textbook entitled: *Discrete Fourier Analysis and Wavelets: Applications to Signal and Image Processing*. It sells for \$86 on amazon.com. Fortunately, he **gave** me a copy. I have no idea what the title means, and a quick perusal of the book's interior clarified nothing. My point is that my little brother is smart. In fact, he relaxes by doing math problems.

But Kurt did not always show such signs of brilliance. Oh no. When we were growing up on Oakland Avenue in Milwaukie, Oregon back in the 1960s and 70s, Kurt had a unique approach to personal hygiene. When the front of his shirt would become dirty and my mother would demand that he change it, he would simply turn the shirt backwards and go on about his business. When the back--now front--became filthy, he'd then turn the shirt

inside out and get a couple more day's of wear out of it. One time when he was perhaps 11 years old, he spent quite a number of days building a model of the starship Enterprise from *Star Trek*. Not content to simply admire his handiwork, Kurt wanted to see if the Enterprise could actually fly, so he lit it on fire and launched it out of his bedroom window on the second floor of our house. It spiraled right into the neighbors' back yard, charring a patch of their meticulously kept lawn.

I think Kurt himself best summarized his lack of brilliance--and even common sense--as a child when he said to me just a week ago, "You know, it doesn't matter how many articles or books I publish or what university recruits me, to Mom I will always be that kid who forgot to bring shoes when we went on a 2-week camping trip."

This leads me to my theme for this evening: Just because some of the kids sitting here tonight have done a few dumb things in high school, it does not mean that they won't someday write a textbook that sells for \$86 on amazon.com. Take **Corbin Dekalb**, for example. Last year in Film Study, Corbin kept trying to sing along to the theme song of "Guess Who's Coming to Dinner". Now the song pops up often in the film and the lyrics **are** tricky. "That's the story of, that's the glory of love." How many times did Corbin correctly sing that tune? Not once.



Just the very nature of Film Study often inspires my students to express themselves or to demonstrate their various talents. Such was the case last year with **Kyle Wilson**, who, after watching *Rocky*, developed a pretty decent impersonation of Sylvester Stallone uttering that classic line, "Yo, Adrian." **Chris Brown** preferred *Star Wars* to *Rocky*, and though he did not impersonate any of the characters, he did develop a fondness for R2D2. In fact, after we had finished the film, he turned to his pal Ryan and said, "I wish I could speak Beep."

In second period Film Study this year, I had **Jhannae Buys** and **Chelsea Burpee**. The first thing I learned about these girls is that they love to chat through a film. They're very good at it. When it comes to eating during a film, however, they do not fare well. Jhannae managed to explode a can of pop one day in class, but Chelsea topped her by dumping a pint of cottage cheese all over the floor. Their area of the carpet is going to need a thorough cleaning this summer, let me tell you.

For **Alyssa Dykgraaf**, what Film Study allowed me to enjoy was her sense of humor and her lovely, clear writing voice. Although Alyssa did not speak out much in class, she would "chat" with me on her quizzes and exams. For example, one quiz question asked, "What shocking discovery does Taylor make in the final scene of the film"? (the film being *Planet of the Apes*) Alyssa's answer: "That the planet was earth." And in parentheses she added, "Which I totally called, by the way."



In response to an exam question that asked her to identify the biggest villain among the 1990s films we had watched, Alyssa wrote, "The obvious answer to this question would be that really mean cop with the sunglasses. And I'm going to go with that because I believe it's true. He tries so hard to catch and kill George Clooney and Co." And in parentheses she wrote, "Who on earth could kill George Clooney? Killing that beautiful man is a crime on its own..."

Despite my best efforts, occasionally I cannot convince a student that a particular film has merit, that it has stood the test of time for good reason. As a fan and teacher of the American cinema, such failures distress me.

Kurt Moreton, can you come up here, please? Although it is ranked #37 on the American Film Institute's List of the 100 Best American films of the past century and even though every other student who has taken Film Study



from me in the last 22 years has fallen madly in love with it, Kurt simply did not see the point of *The Best Years of Our Lives*. What possible relevance can a film that focuses on three men returning from war and adjusting to civilian life have, he asked. So to help Kurt to see the light, I am giving him my most treasured VHS copy of the film. I better not find that under your chair after the ceremony.

I want to say right off the bat that I love **Nyemah Skinner**. Last year in WASL English, though, Nyemah occasionally lost track of when assignments



were due, and then she would panic when she realized she had forgotten a due date. One morning, for instance, she ran up to me in a panic and urgently asked, "Is that thing due today?" I had no idea what she was referring to, so I said, "Yes, that thing is due today." Nyemah's response: "What thing?"

While I am on the subject of Nyemah, I have a few words to say about her brother, **Steven**, who was also in my WASL English class last year and in Film Study this year. Just the other day, Steven was trying to convince one of his classmates in Film Study that he is something of a gangster. His classmate, **Josh Janisch**, finally became exasperated with Steven's claim and said to him, "Steven, you're not a gangster. Your mom still drives you to school."

Every now and then, a student decides that he is smarter than his teacher. This was the case with **Tyler Scribner** and Mrs. Cheeseman. One day after Mrs. Cheeseman had given Tyler permission to go to the restroom, his good pal **Brennan Padilla** spotted him at the pop machine getting a soda. If I'm not mistaken, the pop machine he visited is in full view of Mrs. Cheeseman's classroom. At any rate, Brennan and Mrs. Cheeseman conspired to convince Tyler that he was in big trouble. In fact, Mrs. Cheeseman kicked Tyler out of class, and while he was shaking in his boots out in the hall, the kids in the classroom were having a good laugh.



Already I can see that **Elizabeth Sheldon** has the potential to write a textbook that will sell for \$86 on amazon.com. Not only is Elizabeth a Gleek (a huge fan of the TV show “Glee”), but she also possesses great savvy. For example, when she realized early this year that her absences were causing fifth period AP English to lose out on the perfect attendance donut reward and that her classmates were becoming peeved, she brought a box of donuts to class herself. By the way, fifth period AP English never managed to win the perfect attendance reward this year; third period, however, wracked up nine. . .count ‘em. . .nine weeks of perfect attendance and a whole lot of donuts!

My favorite story about **Om Yimumnuay**, who came to LCHS two years ago from Thailand, involves her student-led conference last year. Om’s Navigation teacher is Mr. Landes-McCullough, who somehow got the idea that Om’s career goal was to become a bartender. Throughout her conference, he kept asking her questions about why she wanted to be a bartender and what sort of schooling she would need. Poor Om, I’m afraid, was a little lost, as were her parents, because she aspires to become a flight attendant, not a bartender.

I’m not sure what **Ben Hansen’s** career goal is, but it had better not involve a job that requires him to rise early. Last year I had Ben in first period Film Study. In one week alone, he wracked up five tardies. Five. Needless to say, that class never won the Perfect Attendance Reward.

When it comes to being prepared for any situation, no one in the Class of 2010 tops **Megan Dunn**. After last week, she may never climb a tree again, but if “Let’s Make a Deal” ever makes a comeback and Megan shows up with her purse, she will clean up. She has everything you could ever want in that purse. I have seen students ask Megan for and receive a piece of gum, a cookie, a pen, a bottle

of water, a CWP assignment, a glue stick, and a deck of cards. If you have children one day, Megan, your purse will be invaluable.

I’d like to say a few words about handwriting. I’m tired of reading it. After 31 years of teaching English, I have waded through all manner of handwriting, but two members of the Class of 2010 have made their way into my Lousy Handwriting Hall of Fame—**Trevor “Whatever” Snook** and **Steven Price**. Trevor should be required to furnish a magnifying glass with every assignment he turns in, and Steven, well, I don’t know. But the really scary thing about Steven’s writing is that after two years, I can decipher nearly every word.

When **Becky Griffie** stopped by my room a couple of days ago to collect her cap and gown, she asked me if I was going to say anything about her tonight. I asked her what embarrassing story I could



possibly share at graduation, and she reminded me that when we read *The Importance of Being Earnest* last year in AP English, she kept missing all the sexual innuendo, and I’d have to stop and explain those parts to her. But I’m not going to mention that tonight, Becky. Instead, I would simply like all of you to know that

the two very best laughs in the Class of 2010 belong to Becky Griffie and **Hannah Trigg**. Hands down!

If there are two traits that I greatly appreciate in a student, it is a love of writing and a fear of the ropes course. Having had **Matt Blasen** in class last year, I knew that he was a very fine writer, but I just recently learned of his fear of the ropes course, thanks to Mrs. Grotte, who loaned me a sample of Matt’s writing from tenth grade. As an end-of-the-year activity, Mrs. Grotte sometimes takes her students up to the challenge course for a bit of fun, but Matt it seemed forgot to bring the permission slip allowing him to participate. Instead, he



wrote an essay about why he forgot the slip. Let me share a few passages. He began the essay with this statement, "There are many reasons not to suspend yourself at any elevation above the ground." He is so wise. Later in the essay, Matt wrote, "Apart from the potentially hazardous supervisor, I am quite afraid of heights and squirrels, both of which can be found on the ropes course." Matt ended his composition with this sentence: "I feel no motivation to put myself at risk to help out someone else, and I don't want to inadvertently become a Communist." My kind of guy.

Eight students in the Class of 2010 are second generation students for me, and I'd like to say a few words about two of them. **Cody Smith** is the spitting image of his father Marc, who graduated from La Center High School in 1989. In fact, if Cody had walked into my classroom without me knowing a thing about him, I think I could have pegged him for Marc's son. When it comes to his mom, though, I still find it hard to believe that Cody's mom is Julia Louise Pettit Smith, Class of 1980. While Cody is a quiet, soft spoken young man who does not draw attention to himself--and who is probably very unhappy with me right now for including him in this speech--Julia, who was a senior during my first year here, **never** hesitated to draw attention to herself. In fact, she and her pals Kim and Lynn ran the school and ran me ragged.

Twenty-five years ago, a young man by the name of Tony Collins graduated from La Center High School. Tonight, another young man by the name of **Tony Collins** graduates from La Center High School. He is the nephew of the young man from the Class of 1985 and is, in fact, named after him. I have been fortunate enough to teach and to know both Tonys. And although you never had the chance to know the uncle for whom you are named, Tony, I know he would be very proud of you.

I have just two more stories to share. Now I'm pretty darned sure that **Meagan Governor** could easily write an \$86 textbook one day; she is, after all, the valedictorian of the Class of 2010. However,

she does occasionally trip up and speak without thinking. On the first day of class back in August, we were sharing summer stories in third period AP English when Meagan piped up and in her typical exuberant way, she said, "Oh, Ms. Bryan, I thought of you this summer when I was on vacation in Canada and went into this antique store. . ." Apparently old things remind Meagan of me.



If you had happened into my classroom during the last two years, you'd have noticed something kind of odd. Suspended from the ceiling is a bar of soap, with a bite out of it. Last year in WASL English, **Derek Vansoest** had a bit of trouble keeping his vocabulary in check, if you know what I mean, so Wyatt Williamson came up with the idea of



hanging the bar of soap right above Derek's seat. Any time Derek would slip and utter an inappropriate word, Wyatt would point to the soap and Derek would climb on his chair and lick the bar of soap. I had Derek in Film Study this year, and I almost never had to point to the soap, which continues to dangle from the ceiling. In fact, just last week I was complimenting Derek on how rarely he ever uses inappropriate language. His pals in the class simply laughed at me and said, "Ms. Bryan. He still says the words. He's just learned how to say them more quietly."

As always, I have high hopes for each member of the graduating class of La Center High School, and I wish you well as you embark on the next stage of your life. I leave you with just two small bits of advice based on the experiences of my brother Kurt. If you ever do write a textbook that sells for \$86 on amazon.com, give it a title that might attract a buyer, and if you go on a 2-week camping trip, take shoes.

The Class of 2011

Graduation: June 11, 2011

It is not uncommon, when one has taught at least a few years, for one school year to begin to blend into another and another and another. When I noticed this happening to me, I decided to take stock of each school year in June and try to identify the defining moments of that year. What events and people have made a particular school year unique and memorable?

During the 2011 school year, one notable difference is that for just the second time in my 32 years at LCHS, I have a female principal, Ms. Carol Patton. I have thoroughly enjoyed working with Ms. Patton and not just because she has a jar of mini Mr. Goodbars on her desk. January 10th of this year was enormously exciting for me because my alma mater, the University of Oregon, played in the BCS national championship football game, losing to Auburn 22-19 in the final three seconds of the game. If you had told me back in 1978--when I graduated from the UO--that its football team would play for the national championship 31 years later, I would have laughed in your face. In those days, we affectionately referred to the annual football clash between the UO and Oregon State as "The Toilet Bowl."

Another event that sets this school year apart from all previous years, at least for me, happened on April 29 of this year when Prince William and Kate Middleton were married. Like two billion other people worldwide--including two of my AP English students--I watched the spectacle live on TV, even though I had to stay up all night to do so and come to school the following Friday morning and teach. By the way, my superintendent finds my interest in the British royal family a little odd; however, I should point out that he likes to run. . .for fun.

Perhaps the most significant change this year for me is that for the first time in 15 years, I am teaching Tenth Grade English. To be completely honest, I was

a bit apprehensive about teaching sophomores after a 15-year hiatus, during which I taught only juniors and seniors. And I had my head snapped back a few times early in the year by their occasionally offbeat, sometimes immature behavior; however, they grew on me and once again, I have come to enjoy their quirkiness and spontaneity. They wear me out, but they are such fun.

The event that most defines this school year for me, though, is also the most disturbing. I almost hesitate to share this, but I recently caught Mr. Johnson in an error. . .a computational error. To illustrate the magnitude of his mistake, I would describe it as being the mathematical equivalent of me--a fussy old English teacher--misusing the word "like", as so many of my students do. Mr. Johnson's date of infamy was May 20, the day before his birthday. Mrs. Link and I were chatting in the workroom that Friday morning when Mr. Johnson came in. Since I would not see him on the 21st, I wished him a Happy 55th Birthday. "56th," he said to me. What you have to understand is that Mr. Johnson, Mrs. Link, and I are the same age. We were all born in 1956 and we all graduated from high school in 1974. Now I'm no math whiz, but I do know how old I am and how old I will be on my next birthday, and it's not 56.

There is one other thing that always helps to define any given school year, and in 2011, it is the 96 students sitting in front of you right now. Let me share a few memorable details about a few of them. And if you hear your name, seniors, please stand. **Jordan Gilbert** hates to read. She informed me of this via email midway through last summer, after she had enrolled in AP English and I had assigned the summer reading. What to do? Give in and allow her to take an easier English path her senior year? Not on your life. Via email, we reached a compromise. Jordan agreed to remain in AP English and to maintain an open mind about reading, and I agreed to let her write all of her



work in pink ink. And let me tell you, I have read a lot of pink ink this year.

While I'm on the topic of Advanced Placement courses, Mrs. Bounds shared a little anecdote with me. As most of my students can tell you, I love irony, and the more ironic, the better. I believe Mrs. Bounds' story fits the bill. Typically, students who enroll in AP courses are bright, hard-working, and capable of grasping complex concepts. Typically. However, when Ms. Jeske came into Mrs. Bounds' AP Government class a few weeks back to have her students fill out the pre-test information, **Austin Dodds** did not know his own address. Irony.

Every now and then, a student will surprise me, not often but occasionally. **Bethany Jones** definitely amazed me one day in AP English this year. We had



a bit of free time one day, and Bethany asked if she could use her cell phone to call the mechanic who was supposed to be diagnosing what was wrong with her perpetually broken car. I said yes, so she called him while the rest of us listened. Holy cow! When she learned that he had gone ahead and made the repairs, to the tune of a lot of money, she read him the Riot Act. She made it clear that she had not given him permission to repair anything, that she would not be paying for the repairs, and that he was to undo what he had done by 3:00 that afternoon. It was so impressive that I would be willing to hire Bethany to make similar phone calls on my behalf.

I'm not sure you can fully appreciate this next example of surprising behavior, but it comes from **Kevin Uyesugi**. Kevin is one of those students who prefers to remain quiet in class and who does not easily contribute to discussions; however, on May 31 as I was attempting to begin an activity in AP English, it became necessary for me--for the very first time--to shush Kevin.

I am indebted to Mr. Landes-McCullough and Mrs. Stevens (aka Oz) for the following memorable

anecdotes. Apparently two of tonight's graduates have had "costume malfunctions" during their high school careers. I don't know if **Kiley Monson's**



basketball warm-up pants are just too big or she just plays with great zeal, but according to Mrs. Stevens, at least every other ball game during the past two years, when Kiley would go up for a lay-up during pre-game warm-ups, her pants would fall off. And her teammates described one particular incident where Kiley emerged from the lockerroom later than the rest of the team, and as she ran across the court to join the team, you guessed her, her pants fell down.

Similarly, during the drama class production of *Beauty and the Beast* last year, **Nick Doty** was unaware that his somewhat baggy suit pants had dropped to the floor, leaving him performing in his gym shorts.

I certainly don't wish to hurt anyone's feelings, but the truth is that sometimes teenagers can be annoying. They don't always mean to be, but it happens. **Trevor Devine**, for example, must have misspelled the word "definitely" eight or ten times in the rough draft of his *Hamlet* research paper this year. (For future reference, future students of mine, D-E-F-I-A-N-T-L-Y does not spell definitely.) At any rate, I read Trevor's rough draft and corrected all of these misspellings; however, when I graded his final draft, he had not corrected a single misspelling of the darned word.

And I could not speak of irritating teenagers



without mentioning **Maverick Davison**. Actually, I am very fond of Maverick, but last year in Film Study, he was quite taken with the film *O Brother, Where Art Thou?* In fact, every time I passed him in the hall--last spring and all of this year--he said to me, "Do not seek the treasure." Sometimes I will hear this phrase, and I won't even see Maverick.

For the most part, I did not know any of tonight's graduates when they were freshmen, so I rely on my colleagues to provide details about them. Ms. Holter tells me that when **Kelsey Morrison**, **Emily Wydronek**, and **Adrienne Wilen** were ninth graders, they were going through their moody stage, which entailed black (sometimes blue) hair, black clothing, and black fingernail polish. To help Kelsey, Emily, and Adrienne to be less shy and more outgoing, Ms. Holter asked them to imagine they were punching out zombies, and it worked. As Ms. Holter wrote to me, "They have all grown into lovely, accomplished, and strong young ladies."

Mrs. Grotte has also been helpful in providing amusing details about some of tonight's graduates. When **Hunter Rhodes** was in College Prep Tenth English, he wrote a sonnet that was so romantic, he made every single girl in the class sigh. And speaking of sonnets, in the same class, **Emily Vis** wrote a sonnet for **Peter Englund**. I believe Peter was less than thrilled when Emily read this sonnet aloud because according to Mrs. Grotte, he plugged his ears, rocked back and forth, and hummed all the way through her reading.

My first encounter with Emily Vis actually happened long before she became my student,



when she was perhaps four or five years old. Her brother Jon was a member of La Center's 2-time state championship basketball team, and Emily used to accompany her parents to the games. And for some reason, she always seemed to end up sitting directly behind me. I'm pretty sure she didn't really want to be there because she would spend most of the game kicking me in the back. I am happy to report, though, that during the past two years in AP English, she has not kicked me once, though I believe she probably wanted to during our reading of *Heart of Darkness*.

According to Miss Holter, **Natalia Harris** is

slow. She is the last one to arrive to dance practice, the last one to arrive to morning run-throughs before a competition, and the last one out of the room on the way to a performance. And she's forgetful. Before one performance two years ago, as the girls were doing their bag check--which involves the girls touching every item in the bag as Miss Holter reads the list of what they should have--Natalia discovered that she had forgotten her pom costume. Apparently these costumes were neon pink mechanics jumpsuits. As Miss Holter says, "How do you forget a neon pink jumpsuit?"

I have never had **Allison Gustafson** in class; nevertheless, I will never forget her. Actually, it



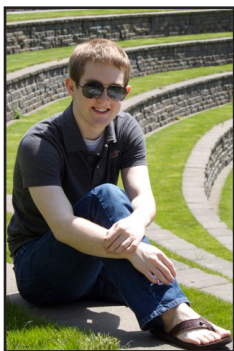
would be more accurate to say that I will never forget her voice. Throughout this school year, the ASB officers have taken turns reading the daily announcements at the start of each school day. It's not that the other officers read poorly, but Allison is unfailingly cheerful, so much so that on the days when she delivers the daily bulletin in her lovely, lilting voice, I feel certain that my first period sophomores find me to be a kinder, gentler teacher.

Another upbeat and happy senior is **Nikki Cossette**. She was simply hilarious as Glinda, the good witch, in the drama production of *The Wizard of Oz* this year. And Mr. McCullough assures me that she worked very, very hard to perfect her somewhat air-headed rendition of Glinda. I loved the wig and every one of her entrances.

By my count, nine members of the Class of 2011 are second generation students for me, about 10%. Sometimes when I learn that a student is a second generation student, I am not at all surprised. That whole "apple not falling far from the tree" notion pans out. But not always. Three of this year's seniors stand out to me because of how different they are from their parents. **Ashley Madsen**, **Kayla Buckbee**, and **Nikki Taylor** fit this bill. Let's get

their parents on their feet, too--Lynn (Buckbee) Madsen, Amy Ward, and Todd Buckbee. Ashley is the daughter of Lynn Buckbee, Class of 1980, my first group of seniors. For the past two years, Ashley has been a quiet and studious girl and has never challenged my classroom management skills. Thirty-one years ago, her mom (along with her pals Julia and Kim) chewed me up and spit me out every single day of that incredibly long school year.

Kayla Buckbee and **Nikki Taylor** have been model students in third period Film Study this year. They never give me grief and they are pretty darned mature. Nikki's mom, Amy, and Kayla's dad, Todd, both graduated from La Center High School in 1985. From the moment Amy burst (and I literally mean burst) into LCHS until the day she graduated, there were few quiet moments. And Todd, well, his favorite hobby, as I explained in this speech 26 years ago, was to harass his classmates while they delivered speeches in Ninth Grade English, that is until it was his turn to give a speech. Todd had a nervous tic when he spoke in front of the class; he would constantly clear his throat. One day after Todd had finished a speech, his classmates, in a completely spontaneous gesture, loudly cleared their throats at the same time. Payback.



Derick Lock and **Becci Westby** have sat side-by-side all year in AP English, and you would be hard-pressed to walk into my class fifth period on any day and NOT find them both eating. . . donuts, soup, crackers, carrot sticks, pizza. It is nonstop from the moment they sit down until the bell rings. They eat through quizzes, reading time, and, most annoyingly, discussions. Becci's food of choice is the most unusual; she eats Nutella, right out of the jar, sometimes with a spoon, sometimes with a finger. I

gotta hand it to both of them, though, because Becci and Derick are my only two students who stayed up

all night to watch the royal wedding in April. And they kept in touch throughout the festivities via Skype. That's dedication!

For probably every teacher sitting over there in the bleachers, one particular student has somehow provided the most defining moment of the school year. For me, that student is **Hannah Hendrickson**, not just because she has a wicked sense of humor or because she unplugged the sound system on me Thursday at Recognition Night. Almost every



time that Hannah puts a pen to paper, a defining moment occurs. For example, she began one of her many poetry responses in AP English this year with this paragraph: "I began this poetry response with the intention of "wowing" you but seeing as

my old nemesis, procrastination and Christmas cookies, came back to haunt me, you'll just have to be satisfied with a slightly below average response. If I hadn't been up all night making your Christmas present, believe me, you would be out of your mind with delight at the intricacy of my thoughts on this poem. However, since I am a caring person, I will respond to *Untitled* by Stephen Crane in the most shallow of thought processes, self-relation." Despite her warning to me, Hannah went on to compose a beautifully eloquent and painfully honest response to a very challenging poem.

I would like to thank the Class of 2011 for all of the touching, crazy, frustrating, hilarious, proud, unexpected defining moments they have created throughout their high school years and this year in particular. In the words of Carol Burnett, whose TV show I watched every Saturday night from 1967 to 1978, "I'm so glad we had this time together." Thank you.

The Class of 2012

Graduation: June 9, 2012

It is not easy to paint a picture of a senior class with words only. Nevertheless, I would like you to walk out of the gym tonight with some sense of what the Class of 2012 is like, of what we as teachers, secretaries, aides, and administrators have endured. . .I mean enjoyed over the past four years. To begin creating the photo, I gathered a few random facts about these 87 students.

- 1) 20 of the 87 graduates have gone to La Center Schools from kindergarten through twelfth grade.
- 2) While 16 of these students have been a member of the track or cross country teams, all 87 were, at some point during their high school careers, recruited by Mr. Holmes to be on the track or cross country teams.
- 3) 37 members of the Class of 2012 have been late to at least one class because they were delayed on the challenge course.
- 4) 14 graduates have spent time in the company of Sweaty Betty.
- 5) There are 2 students named Sierra/Ciara Rose graduating tonight.
- 6) One of these students vomited in Mrs. Grotte's classroom while 7 of them considered "messing" with Mrs. Grotte's desk, only to come to their senses before it was too late.
- 7) Mr. Lapp has repeatedly mispronounced the first and/or last name of no less than 83 of tonight's 87 graduates.
- 8) At some point during the last four years, 17 of these students have ridden the elevator. . .without permission.

- 9) One of these students--one who took Film Study with me--believes that *Gone With the Wind* is the best musical ever made.
- 10) Forty-two years ago, I babysat the father of one of tonight's graduates.
- 11) 6 of these 87 students have never stepped foot in the library and actually have no idea where it is.
- 12) 15 of these students are still afraid of Mr. Johnson, even though he is as big a teddy bear as Mr. Cooke is.

So, is the picture becoming clear? I doubt it. Besides, I made up a lot of that stuff. How 'bout I tell you a few stories instead, true stories. . .for the most part. And students, if you hear your name, please stand up. That goes for all students, not just those graduating tonight.

One of these students really did throw up in Mrs. Grotte's classroom, **Justin Vantol**. He was standing right in front of Mrs. Grotte when it happened. Fortunately, though, Justin turned his head when the excitement began. Fortunate for Mrs. Grotte but not so much for **Katie Bicknell**, who ended up in the line of fire.

Like poor Katie, **Gunnar Lowery** was the victim of an unfortunate incident last year. Mrs. Gozart, one of my colleagues in the English Department, is a very affectionate woman where her coworkers are concerned. One day when she and Mr. McCullough were exiting the staff room after lunch, she turned to give him a hug and a peck on the cheek when he suddenly turned his head, and she ended up smacking him full on the lips. . .just as Gunnar walked by. Just three days ago during lunch, Mrs. Gozart and Mr. McCullough recalled the stunned look on poor Gunnar's face.



Scott Barger is an intelligent young man, and he makes me laugh every single day, but he has no future as an ob/gyn. When we were studying *Macbeth* earlier this year, we reached the point in the



play where Macbeth's sworn enemy, Macduff, reveals to Macbeth that he was "from his mother's womb untimely ripp'd", meaning he was born by C-section. (This, by the way, is very bad news for Macbeth.) These powerful words almost always elicit horrified reactions from the females in the class. When the girls in sixth period AP English uttered exclamations of disgust, Scott looked surprised and said to them, "Well, they wouldn't really need drugs. After all, it's just a womb." Then Scott stopped and thought for a moment and amended his comment. "Well, maybe for the pain." Maybe.

I made up that detail about Mr. Lapp mispronouncing the names of nearly every member of the class, but there is an element of truth to it. Take **Carlee Marxmiller**, for instance. Now, Marxmiller is not a difficult name to pronounce, but Forbes cannot get it right, so he just calls her Maximillian. The ironic thing is that 15 years ago, he did not struggle at all to pronounce VanWeerdhuizen. Maybe if Carlee played basketball. . .

As I have done for the past few years, I put out a call to my colleagues for anecdotes about tonight's graduates, and they have, once again, come through. The office ladies, for example, say they will very much miss **Zach Vanderhoef** passing through the office doing his "wiggle walk", as he searched for snacks or collected the recycling.

Mr. Dell, our brand new music teacher, shared a little story with me about **Tanya Gentry**. Among the many, many, many, many pranks that occurred on the band and choir's recent excursion to San Francisco, Tanya, and her co-conspirator, a junior boy who will remain nameless, until next year, acquired fake tattoos, knowing full well that Mr. Dell had

expressly forbidden anyone getting a tattoo. When Tanya displayed her tattoo for Mr. Dell, she had him so convinced it was genuine that he quickly became enraged. When he was on the verge of having her call home to explain the tattoo to her folks, she confessed the truth.

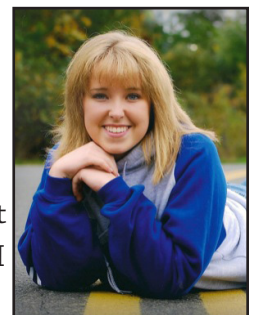
Mr. McCullough offered this story about **Derek Neiman** and one of the junior girls in Drama. Earlier this year, Derek landed the role of the Big Bad Wolf in



the Drama class's production of "Red Riding Hood". In one scene, Derek had to lick the blood off of this girl's finger in a threatening manner. Both students are fairly shy individuals, so perfecting this scene took lots of practice and led to many red faces. Of course, rehearsing this scene became less difficult once Derek and this young woman began dating.

About a month ago, we were short a substitute teacher one morning, so it became necessary for me to cover Mr. McCullough's second period art class. I remember two details from this experience, one lovely, one not so much. And two seniors were involved, **Robert Popi** and **Nicole Latham**. First, I had brought a set of essays with me to grade, but when I approached Mr. McCullough's desk, it quickly became apparent that I would not be able to work there. No one--save Mr. McCullough himself--could possibly work there. Suddenly, though, Robert Popi sprang into action. He cleared a pile of art supplies from one of the student tables, wiped down the area, pulled out a chair for me, and said, "You can work here, Ms. Bryan." So polite. Thanks again, Robert.

I had just settled into my clean work space to begin reading essays written by sophomores when suddenly, I heard this sound (tapping pencils) from at least 20 different students. Hmm. . .what are these kids doing, I wondered? I endured the cacophony for about two more minutes. Then I turned



to Nicole Latham, who was tapping away herself, and asked her what she was doing. She explained the students were creating art through pointillism, which, in short, involves tapping out a piece of artwork. 55 minutes of pointillism. When I glanced around the room and noticed Adam Thompson off-task, chatting with Katie Collins, also off-task, I let it go. Two less tappers was okay with me.

Connor Goglin, if you have the energy, would you please stand up. Connor is an amazing young man. Not only is he an excellent source of interesting trivia (Did you know that the word “cartoon” comes from the Egyptian city of Khartoum?), but Connor can fall asleep anywhere. English class, math class, Psychology, choir. According to Mr. Dell, Connor can actually nod off while he is both standing and singing. Remarkable.

One of our two exchange students this year is Ms. **Taylor Brousek**, who hails from Australia. To be completely honest, Taylor tried my patience a bit early in the school year. Why, one day I actually had to “bench” her for being exceptionally talkative, which means she had to leave my classroom and go sit on the bench in the hall. When I went out to explain to Taylor why I removed her, she pleaded with me. “Really,



Ms. Bryan, I’m not naughty.” How can you remain angry at a student who says, “naughty”? You should also know that Taylor fully intends to marry Prince Harry and raise a herd of redheaded children.

I wish I had been a witness to the following incident, which Joan, one of our office ladies, shared with me. During lunch one afternoon about midway through this year, **Corey Rose** noticed a new student had arrived at La Center High School, so he decided to welcome him, apparently in “the cowboy way”. Corey shouted, “Let’s welcome the new student!” Then he



jumped onto a table and began to do a cowboy dance, waving his cowboy hat over his head and swaying his hips. As Joan was ordering Corey off the table, it began to tip and Corey ended up on the floor on his rear. In the whole history of LCHS, he is the only student to be sent to the office for dancing on a table.

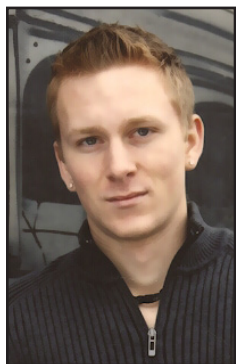
Whenever possible, I like to take the opportunity in this speech to poke a bit of fun at my former students who now have children graduating. Tonight presents a somewhat unique chance for me to do so. I have never had **Whitney Smith** or **Kevin Pettit** in class, but I wish I had. In fact, my only real contact with them has been as the Senior Class Advisor, but the contact has been most pleasant. They are clearly both accomplished, personable students. When I arrived at La Center High School in August of 1979, Whitney’s mom, Julia Louise Pettit, and Kevin’s dad, Dave Pettit, brother and sister, were seniors, very memorable seniors, both of whom I had in class. Julia and her pals, Kim and Lynn, ran the school and certainly gave me a run for my money. Julia was also memorable because of her fascination with our Italian exchange student that year, Marco di Pietro.

It would, I think, be fair to say that Dave and I did not hit it off in 1979. He was an 18-year old young man who very much wanted out of high school, and I was a 22-year old English teacher who had no real idea how to teach or, more importantly, manage a classroom. We butted heads a few times. I am happy to report, though, that we are now able to laugh about that year we spent together so very long ago.

Remember that student I mentioned earlier, the one who believes that *Gone With the Wind* is the best musical ever made? Let me tell you a little more about that. As an end-of-course project, I asked the students in Film Study to produce a poster on which they identified what they believed to be the most significant development, person, and film of each decade we studied, the 1910s through the 1990s. **Adam Thompson** selected *GWTW* as the most significant film of the 1930s because it was such a fine musical. (Just a little heads up for future Film

Study students, please know before you enter my classroom that *GWTW* is an epic Civil War picture, not a musical.) Now, Adam's poster was pretty bad. .but not the worst I have ever received.

Here's an odd little twist to this story. One of Adam's best friends is **Gage Hess**, and they were in Film Study together and sat next to each other all year. Gage's mom, Brandi Jernagan Hess, was my student back in the 80s, and weirdly enough, as a junior, she turned in what continues to hold the title of "The worst student-produced poster I have ever received." It was her creative project for *Macbeth*, and over the years, I have used this poster to demonstrate to students what NOT to do. About



10 years ago, I received the following email: "Hello Ms. Bryan. . .Brandi Hess here. . .perhaps you remember me? An issue has recently been brought to my attention. As I was at the Little League field recently, a current student of yours named Emily and her dad Aaron approached me giggling. They went on to describe

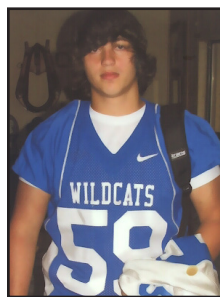
how Emily has a project in your class where she needs to make some kind of poster. You held up former students' posters as some examples. You held up a poster as a perfect example of 'what not to do!' And she recalls the name of Jernagan at the bottom. As I'm assuring them that it must be my sister's because I am the 'good student,' she says, 'Oh, yea, I think she mentioned this person was a 1986 graduate.' First of all, why was I making a poster in English class? If this is really mine, maybe I thought it was a stupid assignment! After almost 17 years, you haven't found a better example of 'what not to do'? The way I see it, you can do 1 of 2 things, you can either destroy the poster immediately (that was in bold print) or you can simply change the name on the poster to read Melissa Kolbe 1986 graduate! How you handle this situation will determine if you continue to hold the title of 'Brandi's favorite teacher!'" Hmmm. . .how to handle this. Gage, could you come up here,

please? First of all, Brandi, I still believe that Tony Hanson actually made this poster, but, despite all of those disgusting nursing stories you used to tell us in Yearbook right after lunch and all the times you felt the need to lick my glasses, after 27 years, I have decided the best course of action is for me to return the poster to you. No hard feelings.

Just three days ago, I learned something rather disturbing about **Karissa Walker**. She is addicted to chapstick, so much so that her addiction caused heartache for the dance team two years ago. During one of their routines when Karissa was a sophomore, the girls were wearing bathrobes as their costume, and their props included a table with a basket on it. Karissa kept her much-needed chapstick either in the pocket of her bathrobe or in the basket, and Ms. Holter was constantly worried that the chapstick would end up on the competition floor. That never happened, but Karissa's dependence on chapstick still proved harmful. In the middle of the routine, the girls did a tight formation in the middle of the floor, and Karissa was very visible in this formation. Unable to help herself, in the midst of the formation, Karissa, who had apparently gone without chapstick for too long, licked her lips. It was so obvious, Ms. Holter told me, that one of the judges mentioned it on her critique. Oh, Karissa, Ms. Holter wanted me to tell you that you have been one of her very best TAs ever and she will miss you terribly.



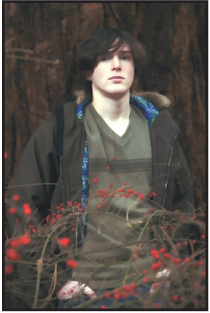
I debated whether or not to include the next



story, but I have already mentioned vomit tonight, so what the heck. On the wall outside of our library, there is a book-return slot students may use if they don't wish to enter the library to return a book or the library is closed. When he was a freshman, though, **Bobby Kupfer** found a second use for the book-return slot. Completely unaware that our librarian Mrs. Marshall

has a clear view into the hall from this slot, Bobby bent over, backed up to the slot, and broke wind, twice.

I'll wrap up my speech tonight by asking **Devon Casey** to join me up here on the stage. Earlier this



year, Devon brought me a lovely poster of James Dean, so I am a little loathe to pick on him tonight, but I can't help myself. One of Devon's biggest challenges this year has been getting to school on time. After enduring the nagging of the office ladies--Cathy, Joan, and Lynne--Devon bet them \$10 each

that he would not be late to school again, for the rest of the year. Devon paid the ladies the \$30 just last week; however, I have been authorized to return your money and to wish you a happy graduation.

By now, I hope the Class of 2012 has come into focus for you and that like us, the staff of La Center High School, you can appreciate their kindness, their foibles, their individuality, their shenanigans, and their wit. Of course, if the picture is still not clear, I could probably employ what I learned about pointillism this year and tap out a painting for you. Thank you.

The Class of 2013

Graduation: June 8, 2013

Good evening. I thought I should begin tonight by addressing the elephant in the room because it isn't every day that you attend a high school graduation and see a middle-aged bald woman delivering the commencement address. It's a first for me, too. This is the 30th time I have spoken at graduation, but I have always done so with hair on my head. Truth be told, it's a little cooler up here with no hair.

As many of you know, at the very beginning of the school year, I was diagnosed with early stage breast cancer. Fortunately, the worst of my treatment is over and I am feeling pretty darned good, but it has been a tough school year, primarily because of the chemotherapy I endured from December through April. While those drugs temporarily deprived me of a few things along the way--my sense of taste, my love of food, the hair in my nose (I never knew how important nose hair was), and the hair on my head--I was reminded of a few life lessons, I learned a few things about myself, and the chemo never took away--at least for very long--something vital to me, my sense of humor.

I'd like to share some of my insights as they apply to tonight's graduates. And I would ask any graduate who hears his or her name to please stand until I have finished with you.

LESSON #1: Sometimes in life, you must simply put up with feeling crummy. **Kimi Carter** has definitely learned this lesson. One day during Tenth Grade English, Kim forgot to use the restroom prior to a group presentation. Rather than plead with me to run down the hall, Kim persevered, gamely delivering her share of the presentation. Every now and then, though, she would stop briefly and sort of squat down and

grimace. But then she would carry on, until the next pause and pained expression.

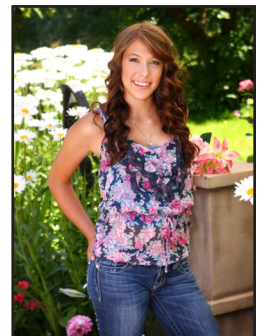
LESSON #2: When in doubt, push yourself just a little bit harder. Although I questioned my decision to go to school a few mornings in the last



six months, by the time the school day began, I found the distraction of work made me forget about my discomfort. Mr. Johnson provided me with a story about **Christian Jamieson** which clearly demonstrates that Christian has learned this lesson.

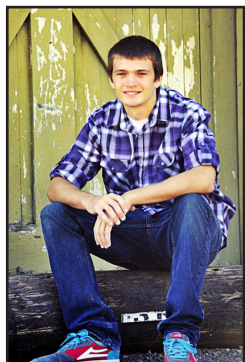
At a track meet in Stevenson when he was a sophomore, Christian was running in the 3200 meters. Though he had completed his eighth and final lap, so many runners were lapping others that Christian was unsure he had run far enough. So just for good measure, he ran an extra 400 meters. The good news is that Christian is the school record holder at 3600 meters. The bad news is that there is no such race.

LESSON #3: Though it may be painful, sometimes you have to know when to let something go. I had this epiphany early in January when I decided to shave my head. It was far less unpleasant to view my bald pate in the mirror than it was to have handfuls of my hair fall out every time I washed it. According to two of my colleagues, **Kersty Szekely** learned this lesson during her sophomore year. Without consulting each other, Mrs. Grotte and Mrs. Stevens submitted somewhat conflicting versions of this story, but the two stories pretty much end the same. In Mrs. Stevens' version, Kersty was hanging posters in the hall one day during Leadership, and when she lifted her leg to climb up high enough to hang a poster, she split her jeans right where you don't want to split your jeans. She managed to climb down and make her way to Mrs. Mosby's classroom, where Mrs. Mosby



repaired the seam. Later that year and sporting the same pair of jeans, Kersty was playing volleyball when, you guessed it, the seam once again gave way. Kersty has since retired those jeans.

LESSON #4: Aim high. Before I actually began my chemotherapy regimen, I set a goal. I was going to power my way through the treatment, at all costs I would avoid throwing up, and I would miss very little school. I am happy to report that I never threw up. While I was unable to realize my other two goals, I aimed high. During Homecoming Week this past fall, **Taylor Dreyer** also set an ambitious goal. During lunch one day, Taylor dropped to one knee, and he asked our secretary Joan to accompany him to the Homecoming dance. Then he informed her that she would have



to drive because he had neither a driver's license nor a car. Finally, she would have to pick up the dinner tab for Taylor and six of his friends. On the Monday following Homecoming, Joan asked Taylor where he had been Saturday night. She had waited and waited at the agreed upon restaurant but he and his pals never showed. According to Joan, the looks on Taylor and his pals' faces were priceless. Then she told him she had not really gone to the restaurant.

LESSON #5: People are not always what they appear to be. When I reported for my fourth round of chemo back in March, my primary nurse was Freida. Within 30 minutes of meeting Freida, in texts to my husband and son, I was referring to her as Nurse Ratchet. She was surly, abrupt, and forgetful, not traits I value in a nurse. But when I finished my last round of the nasty chemo, who do you think brought me balloons and gave me a huge hug? Freida. I must confess that I barely know **Andre Obot**, but when I asked my colleagues for stories about tonight's graduates, I heard two very different things about Andre. Mr. Cooke shared with me that when Andre was a freshman, one of the football coaches wanted to

demonstrate a drill and needed a player to run at him full bore, so he called on Andre. The plan was for the coach to show the kids how to do an open field block. The reality, though, was that Andre hit Coach Boyle so hard that Coach Boyle sustained a concussion and was out of commission for a few days. There is, however, a softer side of Andre, as I learned from Ms. Holter. Andre, you see, is a huge fan of Disney movies, and his favorite Disney movie is *Aladdin*. He has even been known, at times, to quote *Aladdin* when the situation calls for it. Unfortunately, Andre does not own a copy of *Aladdin* and would often plead with Ms. Holter to give him her copy. Plead no more, Andre. Ms. Holter?

LESSON #6: As Actress Jennifer Jones once said, "If you could choose one characteristic that would get you through life, choose a sense of humor." Believe me, if I did not have a sense of humor where hair is concerned, I would not be able to stand up here in front of you tonight. **Jared Huddleston** may have irritated the heck out of me at times and pushed my patience to the limit, but the boy does have a sense of humor. One day when Jared was a rambunctious, high maintenance sophomore, he said to me, "I hear you and Mrs. Grotte don't like each other. Why not?" I did not take Jared's bait; still, he kept approaching me with the same ploy, substituting other teachers for Mrs. Grotte. He was dogged in his attempts to draw me into his little scheme. Earlier this year, as a rambunctious, high maintenance senior, Jared asked me why Mrs. Heaton and I were fighting with each other. This time, I took a different tack, and I said, "Well, Jared, she said you were dumber than a bag of hammers, and I was defending your honor." Jared simply looked at me. . .and then slowly walked away.



LESSON #7: Never underestimate a woman. It probably won't surprise you to learn that I am not the only woman to whom Jared attempts to dish out

grief. **Ariel Marinetti**, who sat right next to Jared in Film Study this year, has put up with her share of Jared, too. However, I put a temporary halt to Jared's bugging of Ariel when I described to him an event that I witnessed in 1986 involving Ariel's mom, Beth, who was my student. One day as students crowded the door to exit the classroom, Beth became fed up with a classmate who had been irritating her, so she hauled off and punched **him** in the face, knocking **him** to the ground. After hearing that story, Jared left Ariel alone, briefly.

LESSON #8: Woody Allen once said that 80% of success is showing up. I would amend that to read, "80% of success is showing up **on time**."

Dylan Spinella has not yet learned this lesson; however, when Dylan was tardy to class, he was at least entertaining. He would, for example, slowly open the door to my classroom and discreetly peer around the edge of the door to see if I had noticed him. I always did. Other times, he would forcibly fling the door open and dive into the room.



More recently, he entered as silently as possible, dropped to the floor, and then belly crawled to his seat. But Dylan's tardiness finally had dire consequences just last week when he and a junior classmate, who shall remain nameless (Chow House), dashed any hopes of sixth period Film Study **finally** earning the perfect attendance brownies by showing up late on Friday.

LESSON #9: No matter who or what the enemy is--cancer, an opposing athlete, or even your own coach--you must look the enemy in the eye, resolve to defeat it, and do whatever is necessary to



achieve victory. According to Mr. Johnson, **Carly Mairose** has mastered this lesson. At a club volleyball tournament in Yakima, Carly's team, East Fork Volleyball, was pitted against a less talented team from La Grande, Oregon. Nevertheless,

La Grande was the enemy. In the first game of the match, Carly served the first point, and the second point, and the third point. . .you get the picture. When it was 15-0, her coach, Mr. Johnson, asked her to serve one into the net so the other team could get some action. Normally most respectful and compliant, Carly gave Mr. Johnson "the look". She knew her enemy; she knew her goal. Carly served out the game, and East Fork won 25-0. Carly, could you demonstrate that look for us here?

LESSON #10: Singing is good for the soul. Personally, I sing in my car where no one can hear me. It always makes me feel better. And when you don't have "a look" and not much height, a good strong voice comes in handy. And that brings me to my namesake, the very first student with the last name of Bryan ever to graduate from La Center High School, Ms. **Haley Bryan**. If you came to Mr. Landes-McCullough's last production, "Prairie Matinee", you heard Haley belt out a couple of tunes. When the entire cast sang at the end of the play, her voice rose above the rest. Mrs. Daugherty told me that it is such a pleasure to supervise the locker room when Haley has PE because she will enter the locker room singing all manner of songs, even show tunes. And the locker room acoustics only make Haley's voice better.



LESSON #11: Okay, there is no lesson attached to this story. It's just kinda cute. It consists of a conversation between one of our substitutes, Sara Bosch (LCHS Class of 1994) and **Kevin Buys** (LCHS Class of 2013). I had to change a couple of words, but I think you'll get the drift.

Kevin: "You are the best sub."

Sara: "I thought you said Mr. Martinez was."

Kevin: "I like you better already. He makes us do pushups in the classroom when we cuss."

Sara: "You guys cuss at school?"

Kevin: "Yea, and he makes us do pushups. Isn't that BLEEP?"

Sara: "Do 5 pushups."

Kevin: "BLEEP!"

Sara: "Make it 10."

LESSON 12: To improve your health or the quality of your writing will involve pain and discomfort. Never have I met a more thorough and meticulous peer editor than **Jenny Reynolds**. Last year in A.P. English, Jenny was peer editing one of **Josh McNeal's** essays. At one point, Josh leaned over her shoulder and exclaimed, "It's a peer editing, not an art project. You're writing more comments than there is essay."

LESSON #13: In the overall scheme of life, hair is pretty darned unimportant. Back in January when I relinquished my hair, three young men in the Class of 2013 did so, too, sort of. **Sam Creek**, literally the happiest person I have ever known in my entire life, not only shaved his head, but he convinced a couple of younger boys whom I do not even have in class, to do the same. And **Josh McNeal** not



only shaved his head, but he had the barber leave a bit of hair on the back of his head in the shape of the breast cancer ribbon. The third young man is **John Parsons**. When bald heads were popping up around the building last winter, John came to me one day and apologized for not shaving his head, explaining that his head is kind of a weird shape and looks horrible without hair. But then he said he would be happy to shave his legs in support.

LESSON #14: Sometimes in life, you must simply endure disappointment. Despite being the daughter of a math teacher, **K.C. Johnson** has



impeccable taste in movies. When she was perhaps 8 years old, K.C., whom I have known for most of her life, popped into my classroom to demonstrate her love of movies. In her tiny little 8-year old voice, she delivered a classic Lina Lamont line from "Singin' in the Rain". It was hilarious, and

I told K.C. that I hoped she would take Film Study during high school so that I could call on her to utter that line for her classmates when we watched "Singin' in the Rain," which we do every year. Fast forward 10 years. Yes, K.C. was in my sixth period Film Study class this year and on the very day that we were watching the scene from "Singin' in the Rain" where Lina Lamont delivers that wonderful line, K.C. was absent. Her dad, the math teacher, took her down to Ashland to visit Southern Oregon University that Friday. I waited 10 years to hear K.C. say that line in Film Study, John, and you robbed me. This is one disappointment, though, that I simply cannot endure. So K.C., come on up here.

Class of 2013, life has many lessons left to teach you, but our time to do so has come to an end. I hope that you have learned well and that your sense of humor will not often desert you throughout life. And I'd like to thank you for your support throughout this sometimes difficult year. Thanks for the notes, the emails, the donuts, the poems (Sam) the daily hugs (Josh), for having a grandma who has a friend in Woodland who knitted me 150 hats (Ariel), for wearing hats that day back in January to show your support for my newly shorn head, for gifts of movie memorabilia (Shelby and Austin), and for smiles in the hall each day, (Kimi). It made a world of difference.

The Class of 2014

Graduation: June 7, 2014

When I was in the third grade at Concord Elementary School in Milwaukie, Oregon 50 years ago, I always looked forward to library day. In preparation for our trip, Miss Kogel would line us up and then march us down to the library in a most orderly fashion. But once we entered the library, the other girls in the class and I would break into a dead sprint to get to the shelf housing the works of Laura Ingalls Wilder. There were probably 15 of us and only 8 books to be had, if that many, so the competition was stiff...and sometimes violent. And it didn't matter which book you got your hands on--*Little House in the Big Woods*, *On the Banks of Plum Creek*, *The Long Winter*--they were all wonderful, even if you had read them multiple times. I could simply lose myself in Laura's tales of her grandma dancing or finding Indian beads on the prairie or Mary getting Scarlet Fever and losing her sight or the invasion of locusts. Laura Ingalls Wilder appreciated the art of storytelling. I still love those books.

Actually, my love of storytelling began long before the third grade. Both of my grandpas were prolific, skilled storytellers, and it was because of them that I became a teller of tales myself and a person who appreciates a good story. In fact, a good portion of my school day often involves some form of storytelling, whether the students in A.P. English are reading *Life of Pi* or the kids in HSPE English are enthralled with *Touching Spirit Bear*, or the students in Film Study are discovering the sheer charm of *It Happened One Night*.

When I first began teaching at La Center High School in 1979, I did not have much of a repertoire of stories to share with my students. After 35 years, though, I've developed a collection. In fact, I may have shared a tale or two about some of you out there in the audience. For example, back on June 6, 1986, I described how **Dina** (then Fuller) now **Hiblar** took

five months in yearbook to write a 100-word block of copy. Five months. But Dina does not remember that. She just remembers that I booted her out of Yearbook one day because she would not stop talking. I guess that explains why it took her so long to write that darned story.

During the 1988-89 school year, I taught Film Study for the very first time, though it was called Media Now back then. One of my students in that class immediately wanted to know if we would be watching *Repo Man*. I said no. I guess he didn't believe me because he continued to ask me that same question, almost on a daily basis. **Andy Wooldridge**, where are you? Just in case you intend to ask me later tonight, the answer is no, in the past 25 years, I have never shown *Repo Man* to the students of Film Study.

And then there's **Baine Wilson Micheletti**. Frankly, Baine is the reason I am standing up here tonight because she and one of her classmates--Will/Bill Carter--conspired to have me speak at their graduation in 1983. At the time, telling a little story about each graduate sounded like a good idea. In that very first speech, I said of Baine, "I think I will never forget, no matter how hard I try, her hair on the mornings that she got up late, or her inability, despite two years as the Sports Editor of the *Procedo*, to draw a layout correctly and with a ruler."

Do you know what Dina, Andy, and Baine all have in common? Each has a child graduating tonight, so how 'bout I share a few stories about tonight's graduates. As always, grads, please stand--and remain standing--while I share a couple of tales, some of them mine, some of them provided by my colleagues.



Sometimes in my classes, we play a little game called Scattergories. Two years ago in Tenth Grade English, we were playing a round of this game and one of the categories was Countries of the World. Under the

letter R, **Chelsea Breault** listed Rome. Sometimes students are geographically challenged, and such errors happen, but then under the letter N in the same category--Countries of the World--, Chelsea wrote New England. I'm pretty sure Chelsea's team did not win that game.

I am indebted to Mrs. Heaton for the following tale about **Jordon Bigler**. One day during Jordon's sophomore year, he and a classmate were supposed to be working on a project in Spanish, but instead, for some reason, they decided to coat their cheeks with Icy Hot. Not only did they spend the next hour in pain with burning cheeks and red, watering eyes, but they were temporarily blinded, no one would sit next to them because of the odor, and they did not finish the project.

I believe the stories about Chelsea and Jordon demonstrate that sophomores in general have a lot to learn. **Hailey Jones**, who arrived at LCHS midway through her sophomore year, did nothing in Tenth Grade English to dispel this notion of mine. She made a valiant effort one day to repair her broken belt buckle...with scotch tape. It didn't work.

The next sophomore story involves **Samantha Zumstein**, who did not always proofread her writing



as carefully as she should have before turning it in. In one assignment, Samantha wrote, "Imagine standing in the long lunch line and your stomach is making noises you've never heard before and people can hear it. All you want is something good to

feel you up. You start wondering what's for lunch..." One misspelled word changes the whole meaning of the passage.

My final sophomore story is actually something of a confession. I think it would be fair to say that **Kyle DeGraaff** and I did not hit it off when we first met. I run a fairly tight ship, a deadline to me is a deadline, and if a student's work has room for

improvement, I do not hesitate to point that out. Kyle did not immediately care for my ship nor did he hide his feelings for life in Tenth Grade English. I have never shared this with Kyle, but about halfway



through the year, when he was still a pretty unhappy camper and mostly just grumbled at me, I decided to make him my project. By the end of the year, I would win him over, so much so that he might one day--after he had graduated--friend me on Facebook. So I quietly and unobtrusively began my

campaign. I'm fairly sure I succeeded because not only did Kyle enroll in Film Study as a junior--without a hint of grumbling--but when I lost all my hair last year during chemotherapy, Kyle was one of the six young men who showed up to school one day with newly shaved heads. Although I didn't have Kyle in class this year, we would greet each other in the hall nearly every afternoon as I went to lunch and he went to Physics.

At least one of tonight's graduates was, apparently, kind of clever as a ninth grader, and I thank Mrs. Grotte for this story. As a student in Mrs. Grotte's Ninth Grade English class, **Mason Parmentier** and Mrs. Grotte devised a plan that would, if successful, earn Mason some donuts from Oz (aka Mrs. Stevens). One of Oz's classroom rules is that if her cell phone rings during class, she owes the class donuts. To satisfy Mason's craving for donuts, Mrs. Grotte called Oz's cell phone during Mason's Global Studies class, Oz answered it, Mason got those donuts.

I do not always understand what my students say. For example, earlier this year, **Hayley Alexander** announced in A.P English, "I have been late to College Prep a ton of times, but I have never been absent and only have two tardies." What? Marian, you may want to keep close tabs



on Hayley when she heads off to college because apparently when she responded to a writing prompt that asked her to describe something she would like to do that scares her or makes her uncomfortable, she explained that she would like to streak a college campus.

While I am sort of on the topic of tardies, I have three more anecdotes. This one also comes from Mrs. Grotte. When **Kali Wooldridge** was a sophomore, she wracked up so many tardies that Mrs. Grotte, Kali's mom, and our associate principal Mrs. Landerholm put their heads together to devise a plan that would help Kali to arrive to school on time. It was Mrs. Landerholm who suggested that pulling weeds in front of the school might motivate Kali to stem the tide of her tardiness. As she endured her punishment, Kali was so angry that Mrs. Grotte was afraid she would never speak to her again. That did not happen, and the front of the school looks lovely. Mrs. Grotte never told me, though, if Kali's tardiness decreased.

The second tardy story involves **Connor "Chow" House**, who was a student last year in sixth period Film Study. I have a standing policy in my classroom. If an entire class--regardless of its size--can achieve



perfect attendance in any week--no tardies, no absences--regardless of the length of the week, I will bring homemade brownies for the entire class the following Monday. Sixth period Film Study was completely hapless when it came to achieving perfect attendance, until the second to the last week of school last year.

Because of Memorial Day, the week was just four days long, and the 17 students of sixth period Film Study had all made it to class on time from Tuesday through Thursday. At 1:49 p.m. on Friday, May 31, 2013, 15 of the 17 students in the class were in their seats, anxiously watching the clock, praying that their dream of homemade brownies was about to be realized. A few moments after the bell sounded

at 1:50, Connor and another student dove into the room, but it was too late. No brownies.

In first period Film Study this year, **Clay Woodrum** wracked up 21 tardies...21. I have to give Clay credit, though, for the valiant, yet ultimately unsuccessful effort he made to get school on time this past Wednesday, Tardy #21. When he entered class, it was evident that he had tried desperately to be on time. Not only was Clay wearing a tee shirt and shorts that looked as if he had actually slept in them, but he was barefoot, carrying his shoes with him.

Even though I have known **Morgan Micheletti** most of her life, my Morgan story happened just a few weeks ago when Morgan brought me her baby photo for tonight's slide show. It was an adorable shot of Morgan wearing a dress and a big smile. I took the photo home, scanned it, and thought nothing more of it. Until a few days later when I drove into the parking lot one morning, only to find Morgan's mom lying in wait for me. She climbed out of her car, handed me a baggie full of photos, and pleaded with me to convince Morgan to choose a different photo. When I reached my classroom, I spread the photos out on my desk to look them over. What you need to know about Morgan is that she is an outdoorsy, farm gal. She raises cows and chickens and goats. For the past couple of months she's been feeding her newborn calf with a baby bottle several times a day. She also has a dog the size of a pony. And Morgan loves to hunt. She's even been bear hunting. Why, I have it on good authority that Morgan has even been known to hunt, with her gun, from her bedroom window. So when I examined the baggie of photos Baine had given me, I immediately zeroed in on the photo you will see tonight. In it, Morgan is about 5 years old, she is wearing a baggy pair of sweat pants and big rubber boots, she is topless, and she is holding a chicken. It is perfect. Oh, and Morgan agreed to the switch.



Cody Fumich is proof that the 1980s live on. He sports one of the most impressive mullets I have ever seen, and I saw a good many mullets 30 years ago. In addition to his hair, I will always remember a little ritual Cody went through each morning in Film Study. Some students are in the habit of cracking their knuckles. Not Cody. He cracks his entire body. I cannot tell you how many times, in the midst of a quiet, possibly touching or romantic scene in a film, I was snapped--literally--back to reality by the sound of Cody cracking his various joints. When he would finally get around to cracking his back, which required two maneuvers, I could actually hear some of his classmates moaning in pain.



Mr. Dell shared a charming story with me about **Dallas Geil**. In Recording Technology, Dallas was working on his final project in which he had to mix and edit our school song on a computer in the production room. While Dallas was working away, Mr. Dell, in another room, used a program called Splashtop to connect wirelessly to Dallas's computer. In doing so, Mr. Dell was able to see and control Dallas's computer. Looking to have a little fun, Mr. Dell began to open and close programs and to type messages on Word. When Dallas would ask Mr. Dell to come into the production room to view the weird things happening on his computer, the weird things would, of course, stop. After a couple of rounds of Mr. Dell messing with his computer, Dallas told him he was sure the Williams brothers were behind the odd goings on.

And that brings me to the **Williams** brothers, **Sean** and **Ian**. I first came to know Sean when he was in my Tenth Grade English class. After a couple of days in class, I casually asked Sean, who clearly has superior reading and writing skills, why he was not in Mrs. Grotte's Honors Tenth English. He looked at me and without emotion said, "My brother is in there." As juniors, Sean and Ian ended up in the same section of Advanced Placement English, with me. They sat on opposite sides of the classroom, and while there were

few fireworks, their spirit of competition was quite evident. Sean and Ian love their computers, almost as much as I love paper, and any time a fellow student or I would pose a question to which none of us knew the answer, Ian and Sean's fingers would be flying over their keyboards, each one trying desperately to be the first to find a credible answer.

This year in A.P. English, I demanded that all of the students sit on the same side of the classroom, so Sean and Ian, while not next to each other, were within about five feet of each other. On November 6 of last year as I was getting class started and Ian was beginning to consume his lunch (he and Sean brought the most mouth-watering sandwiches), I asked Ian why he almost always seemed to eat lunch in my class rather than during lunch, which happened just before my class. In quite specific detail, Ian explained to me how busy he always is during lunch, what with his various duties around the building. Because of their chosen seats, when Ian spoke to me, he had his back to Sean. During this particular exchange, as Ian described his lunch activities, Sean, five feet behind him, was waving his arms in the air and making various gestures in response to Ian's descriptions. Finally, I stopped Ian and asked Sean just what the heck he was doing. His reply: "I am simply providing gesticulatory support."

And that brings me to the end of my storytelling tonight. As I was relaxing in front of my TV this morning, I saw that "The Secret Life of Bees" was on, so I stopped to watch for a bit. I teach this wonderful novel in A.P. English, and at one point, August Boatwright, one of the best characters in American literature, says to Lillie, "Stories have to be told or they die, and when they die, we can't remember who we are or why we're here." I may be stepping down as the Senior Class Advisor, but as long as I continue to teach English to teenagers down in Room 118, there will be stories to tell and to remind us who we are. Thanks for listening.

The Class of 2015

Graduation: June 6, 2015

If you ever have a little time on your hands or you are in need of material for an introduction to a graduation speech, I would suggest that you do a little experiment. Analyze your list of Facebook friends.

I have exactly 400 Facebook friends, as of Thursday. Of these, 25 are family members, 3 are pals from my earliest childhood, 7 are friends from elementary school, 10 are friends from high school, 13 are friends from college, 15 are parents of former students, 16 are (or were) fellow teachers, 8 are somehow connected to me but I'm not quite sure how or if I actually know them, and 303 (or 76%) are former La Center High School students from the past 35 years.

Hmmm...what conclusions can I reach from these numbers? To begin, I have friended 8 people whose identity I am not even sure of, at least 10 of my pals from elementary school are still willing to admit they know me, I have more friends these days than I do family members, and at least 303 of my former students use Facebook and desire to keep in touch.

When I broke down my Facebook friends by year of graduation, I learned a few more things. For example, 24% of the Class of 1984 have friended me. Of course, only 25 students graduated that year, so we're talking 6 friends. Of the 56 students that graduated in 1994, 38% of them--or 21 students--are my friends, and when I look back at the students that comprised that class, I am not at all surprised. I'm not quite sure what happened in 2007, but that is the only graduating class from which I have zero Facebook friends. Perhaps I was in a bad mood that year.

So what is the point of all this Facebook trivia? It's simple really. Here at La Center High School, staff and students come to know each other well, and

for many of us, the relationships do not end when students receive their diploma and leave these halls. And along the way, as we form our relationships, we gather stories about each other. And my job tonight is to share a few of those with you.

As always, seniors, please stand if you hear your name in the next several minutes.

Just a couple of weeks ago, Mr. Johnson, our esteemed Math Department chairman and guru of all things mathematical, celebrated his birthday. When his birthday was acknowledged over the intercom and **Gabriella Furnia** learned that he was 59 years old, she exclaimed, and I quote, "I had no idea Mr. Johnson was old!" Yes, Gabby, he is old.



I am indebted to Mrs. Grotte for this next story, and it concerns **Alex Firl**. In Tenth Grade English, Mrs. Grotte handed out an assignment and stressed to her students that it was quite important that they read and follow the directions. She told them, "Make sure to follow the directions to a T." Apparently, Alex is a fairly literal kind of guy because after a few moments, Mrs. Grotte noticed him look up with a most confused expression on his face. When she asked him what the problem was, Alex said, "I can't find the T."

When it comes to fashion, my vote for the Best Dressed Member of the Class of 2015 goes to **Cody Maitland**. Cody has a lovely and varied collection of hats, ties, and particularly vests. Every now and then when he sports his black vest and bowler hat, he channels Charlie Chaplin just a bit.



Another senior that comes to mind when I think fashion is **Blake Johnston**. Without question, Blake has the biggest collection of holiday sweaters of anyone under the age of 50, and he is not afraid to wear them. And some of them are frightening. Blake's sense of

humor carries over to his writing. In fact, Blake is one of those writers whose essays I always anticipate with pleasure. (I cannot say that of all my students.) Let me give you an example. Earlier this year, the students in A.P. English wrote an essay about *Hamlet*. Here is Blake's introduction:

"A rabbit is the master of spying and deception. The small, furry creature with a keen eye and bat-like ears can watch your every move and detect even the faintest of sounds while maintaining its seemingly clueless disposition. Just when you think you are about to sneak up on the cute little thing, it bolts off and leaves you utterly baffled as to where it could have gone. The spying and deception in Shakespeare's *Hamlet* is much like that of a rabbit only it serves an actual literary purpose and isn't a survival tactic. However, in that sense, the play would not be the same without it, and *Hamlet* has 'survived' for hundreds of years, just like the rabbit. Anyway, enough of that bunny business." I must share one more of Blake's sentences with you, one he wrote late this year, not long before the A.P. exam in May. I think he was developing Senioritis. Here goes: "As the old saying goes, Walt Whitman went out with style in 1892 when he died because otherwise I wouldn't be writing this paragraph."

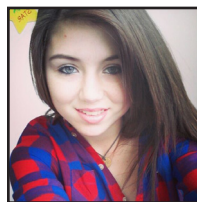
The next story came to me from Joan in the office. One of Joan's many duties used to be supervising the girls lockerroom. When these kids were freshmen, Joan was happily surprised to encounter two girls who seemed thrilled to be high school freshmen. Each day, they were full of energy and often they would tilt their heads at Joan and say in a sweet voice, "I love you, Joan." Of course, Joan had to maintain the proper decorum, so she would not respond by saying, "I love you, too." Instead, she had a particular gesture she would make. Tonight, though, as these girls graduate, Joan has a special message for them, so **Natasha Benitez** and **Ireland McGowen**, would you please stand and face Joan in the bleachers.

We have some very clever students here at La

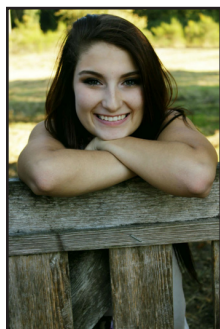
Center High School, especially when it comes to asking out a member of the opposite sex. My first example of this cleverness involves **Amanda Moudy** and **Max Hiller**. Mr. Johnson claims that Amanda and Max's relationship began in his classroom during their sophomore year when Amanda arranged for Mr. Johnson to add an extra question to Max's exam: Will you go with Amanda to TOLO? **Kurt Wohlers** is equally smooth when it comes to asking someone for a date as he proved this year when he had a tee shirt specially printed that read, "Will you go to prom with me, **Emily Muffett**?" While I am speaking of Mr. Johnson and Kurt in the same paragraph, when I asked my colleagues for stories about tonight's graduates, Mr. Johnson asked me if I had noticed that Kurt never puts his name on any of his assignments. Actually, John, no I have not. I find that Kurt is happy to take credit for the work he does in English. Perhaps it is the subject matter--math--that is the problem.

Kaye Mitkos-Goff, could you stand up, please. I think it is fair to say that Kaye is among the smallest members of the Class of 2015. Even I am taller than she is, and I am getting shorter each year. But the truly remarkable thing about Kaye is the sheer volume of food that she consumes each day. I had her in Film Study, and that comprised just one hour of her day, but during that time, she was constantly eating--chips, pop, sweets. There was always something edible on her table. And yet look at her. There is no justice in this world.

And speaking of sweets, Mrs. Gozart provided a story about **Sean Nolan**. When these students were freshmen in Mrs. Gozart's Pre-AP Ninth Grade English, they loved to have cake parties. Mrs. Gozart explained that the students could have as many cake parties as they desired, but they still had to learn on those days. Sean must be quite serious about cakes because he



created a Facebook page just to facilitate the online planning of semi-regular cake parties. As Mrs. Gozart said, “It was a sweet year.”



Tessa Gawley, will you please stand up. I cannot actually share the story about Tessa that leads me to make the following claim, so you will simply have to trust me when I tell you that Tessa is the woman you want nearby when a medical crisis occurs. She is calm, cool, collected, and just plain amazing.

I am pretty sure that **Daniel Reynolds** took Film Study last year for just one reason: The Movie Star Poster. This is a standard project that the students of Film Study have been creating for a couple of decades now, but Daniel is the first Film Study student I have ever had who chose a movie star for his poster because she and his mom share the same name: Debbie Reynolds.

Coach Lambert shared the following story about a couple of his football players. It happened at a Linfield team camp and involved a competition between **Robby Nilson** and **Robby Hoover**. It seems that every time Coach called out the name Robby, both boys would respond, so he decided to designate one of them Alpha-Robby. To determine Alpha-Robby, Coach put the Robbies through a few physical tests, and although it was a close competition, Robby Nilson was victorious. At the time, though, GPA was not part of the equation, but Coach warned the boys that at some point, it would be. When you read the names of the graduates tonight, Kurt, you might want to address Robby Hoover as Alpha-Robby Hoover.

I am always pleased when students choose to enroll in Advanced Placement English. It is definitely more challenging than my other English electives, and depending on the year, it will involve reading *Heart of Darkness*. On the first day of class this past fall, I was thrilled to see that **Mathew Sheldon** was a

member of the class, and when I asked him what had motivated him to enroll, he said, “The truth is, Ms. Bryan, I have no idea how I ended up in this class.”

Just to demonstrate how thoughtful, creative, and witty the young men of the Class of 2015 are, I have a second story from Joan. Another one of her duties used to be supervising the commons during lunch, and she would often give the various table groups a name. One group of boys, though, decided to create their own name, Phaltopia, named after **Phalon McDow**. The group included Phalon, **Jacob Latham**, **Max Hiller**, **Isaac Kulla**, **Brett Woods**, **Austin Reeder**, **Kurt Wohlers**, and **Wyatt Tetz**. The boys even created their own group symbol, which looked similar to Superman’s but with a P. And to top it off, they gave Joan a birthday card that included a coupon which read: “Free Coupon: Hugs from the members of Phaltopia”. She still has the coupon, boys, and I’m thinking she just may redeem it tonight.

Every movie that we watch and study in Film Study is preceded by a reading guide, and many of these students are familiar with the reading guide. On Reading Guide #21, Question #18, I ask, “Why did Irving Thalberg push for Spencer Tracy to be signed by MGM?” The correct answer is, “He thought Tracy would do well at a studio top-heavy with female stars.” Almost every year, though, at least one student—always male—mixes up the wording a bit and writes, “He thought Tracy would do well at a studio with top-heavy female stars.” Ironically, the culprit this year was **Spencer Kauffman**.



I am indebted to Mrs. Grotte once again for this final story. Earlier this year, Mrs. Grotte took the students of Womens Studies 2 to a retirement living facility to run a bingo game for the residents. Apparently, **Chase Davison** and **Will Rice** were particularly popular with the ladies. Two ladies winked at Chase no less than four times and let Will

know that if he ever opened his own bingo parlor, they'd be there like Jake the Bear. But the best comment came from an elderly woman who was becoming irritated that **her** bingo numbers were not being called. In her frustration, she yelled at Will, "Hey, shake up your balls!"

To close out my speech tonight, I'd like to revisit Facebook. I realize that some people see no value in Facebook, but I would have to disagree. Facebook can be a force for great good. For example, last December, we were late into the week before winter break began, and for some reason, we were experiencing a dearth of Christmas cookies in the staff room. It was depressing. On Thursday evening, I decided to try a little experiment. I posted a status to my Facebook page, bemoaning our cookie dilemma and the general lack of holiday cheer among staff. By lunchtime Friday, our gigantic table in the staff room was half covered in Christmas cookies delivered by various parents...who just happened at one time or another to be my students and are now my Facebook friends.

To gather material for my conclusion tonight, I once again turned to my LCHS alumni Facebook pals, and I asked them to provide words of wisdom for the Class of 2015. They were happy to share; in fact, I received 73 replies. Don't worry, though. I will not read all 73, but I will share five of their replies.

Coree Reuter, Class of 2005, offered these words: "One of the most important lessons I've learned in my travels is that sometimes the view behind you is the most beautiful of all. While the journey forward can be amazing, you shouldn't forget to stop, look back, and appreciate where you've been and how far you've come. I would not be who I am today without who I was yesterday."

From the Class of 1985, Kirk Mills shared an African proverb: "If you want to go fast, go alone. If you want to go far, go together."

Deana Cone graduated in 1981, and she shared these words: "Whatever you do with your life, follow your passion and what gives you joy."

Jenny Bevans from the Class of 1992 cut to the chase: "Talk to old people. They are full of life."

And finally, from the Class of 1994, Erin Dunbar offers this wisdom to you: "Leave the world better than you found it. See trash, pick it up. See a person in need, help them. Speak to strangers, share a smile. It's the little things that make a big difference."

To the Class of 2015, I challenge all of you now to go out into the world and make a big difference, just as you have done here.

The Class of 2016

Graduation: June 11, 2016

As I sat down to write this speech, I had an epiphany. I figured out why I am a high school English teacher. Obviously, I like teenagers, and I enjoy helping them to become better readers and writers and public speakers. And certainly, those are good reasons to be a high school English teacher. But there's more to it. And I think at this point in my teaching career--when I am just a few years shy of retirement--it's high time that I nail down exactly why I love being a high school English teacher. It's so very simple.

I love stories. I have always loved stories. I love reading stories. I love listening to stories. I love telling stories. I love watching stories unfold up on the big screen or on the stage, especially in Ashland. In *The Secret Life of Bees*, a character named August says to a young girl struggling to come to terms with her life, "Stories have to be told or they die, and when they die, we can't remember who we are or why we're here." I firmly believe that. Storytelling has always been prominent in my family. Both of my grandpas were skilled raconteurs, especially my Grandpa Alvord. My Grandma Alvord could weave a captivating tale, too; however, she only had one story, about the time the family went elk hunting, and she was the only person to bag an elk. She told that story for decades. When we would no longer listen, she would share the tale with complete strangers. Truth be told, I'd pay real money to hear her tell that story one more time.

But back to my epiphany. For a person who loves stories as much as I do, I have the perfect job. Each year, I get to share some of my favorite works of literature with my students, to introduce them to fascinating, memorable characters, like Scout and Atticus Finch, Boo Radley, Holden Caulfield, Ma Joad, our Mr. Stevens, Jane Eyre and Pi Patel, and to chat with them about the trials and tribulations these

characters face and what they learn throughout their journeys. Although the medium is different in Film Study, the bulk of the class is still very much focused on the telling of stories. To that end, my students experience the Little Tramp's struggle to survive in Alaska and find love in *The Gold Rush*, the difficulties faced by returning WWII veterans in *The Best Years of Our Lives*, the harshness of Hollywood toward the aging actress in *Sunset Blvd.*, one man's inability to focus on anyone but himself in *Hud*, and a ham-and-eggs boxer just looking to go the distance in *Rocky*. So much of my workdays are filled with stories.

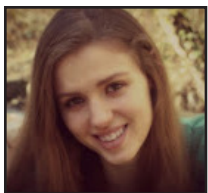
And, of course, stories are at the heart of why I first stood up here in 1983 and am standing up here again tonight. As always, seniors, if you hear me utter your name, please stand up so folks can put a face with **your** story.

One of my biggest pet peeves as a teacher is students being tardy to class or absent...a lot. **Michael Shufeldt**, please stand up...if you're here. Michael accumulated an impressive number of



tardies and absences in my class this year. Now, I had Michael in second period Film Study, and he did not even have a first period class, so he already arrived to school an hour later than almost every other student. Nevertheless, he still wracked up a lot of tardies and absences, especially on days when the weather was lovely. What I came to realize early on is that the nicer the weather in the morning, the better the fishing. And the better the fishing, the less I would see of Michael.

If you were to ask tonight's graduates what their favorite class has been in high school, very few, if any, would list Navigation. Nevertheless, a couple of my anecdotes were born in Navigation or as an outgrowth of Navigation. To make Navigation more palatable for my students during the past four years, I often fed them, and for one November Navigation meeting when these kids were sophomores, I made



them spice cupcakes. Now I had previously fed them a fairly steady diet of brownies, so when I opened up the container of spice cupcakes, they looked less than thrilled. Still, it was free food so they bellied up

to the table. Moments later I felt vindicated when, after taking a bite of her spice cupcake, **Shelby Vermeulen** closed her eyes, sighed, and said, “Tastes like Thanksgiving in my mouth, Ms. Bryan.”

Besides Shelby, I was also fortunate to have **Sophie Reyes** as a member of my Navigation group for four years. And like Shelby, Sophie has a unique and original way of expressing herself. For example, as a junior, she welcomed her mother and me to her student-led conference by throwing her arms out wide and announcing, “Welcome to the third annual celebration of Sophia Reyes!”

When I first spoke at graduation back in 1983, the senior class was comprised of 44 students, 42 of whom I had had in class, some of them for all four years of high school. When the Class of ‘83 asked me to speak at graduation, I came up with the idea to tell a little story about each one of them. I continued with that tradition for the next 10 years. But the classes just kept getting larger and larger. And then Running Start was born, and suddenly we had graduates that didn’t even attend class in the building during their junior and senior years. Needless to say, it became more and more difficult to tell a story about each graduate. By the time the Class of 1993 graduated, I surrendered to the inevitable and began to share stories about some of the graduates, the ones I knew best or whose antics in high school created the very best stories. And then at some point, I began to feel bad that the only seniors I was mentioning in this speech were those that I had had in class; that didn’t seem fair, so maybe 15 years ago, in the weeks preceding graduation, I began to send out an email to high school staff, soliciting stories about that year’s graduates, and I would incorporate some of those anecdotes into my speech. Now we arrive at the Class of 2016, all **116** of them. When I sent out my annual

email request for anecdotes and quirks, just three high school teachers responded. Clearly, I needed to widen my search, so a few weeks later, I emailed all teachers, K-12. A big thank you to the elementary and middle school teachers who responded to my plea.

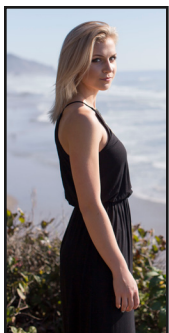
What I learned from first grade teacher Lois Englund is that **Lindsey Garner** was a most enthusiastic and chatty first grader. She had not changed much by the time I had her in Film Study last year. And **Zach Galster**, according to Mrs. Englund was all about football, football, football. Again, very little change there. I am disappointed that I never had **Calvin Tetzlaff** in class because Mrs. Englund tells me that he was respectful, had wonderful manners, and was a fabulous reader.

If I may be serious for a few moments, Mrs. Broten shared some of her memories of tonight’s



graduates with me, and I think you should hear them. When these students were eighth graders, Mrs. Broten went through a very difficult time. She wrote, “As all of this turmoil was going on in my life, all of my students showed more compassion than I knew was

possible. They were patient, respectful, kind and hardworking. They made me smile when all I wanted to do was cry.” Her memories of you that year include **Austin Casey** giving her permission to take a personal phone call during class, **Michael Shufeldt** bringing her a pink plastic microphone to assist her in singing and dancing about the classroom, and **Hunter Jackson** and **Jacob Granneman** creating a comedy club for the sole purpose of making people laugh. Mrs. Broten also wrote, “There are so many more stories about this class and their honesty, kindness, creativity, and just all around awesomeness. They all are a huge part of my heart.”



Mr. Ecklund also contributed a couple of stories. When these kids were in eighth grade, Mr. Ecklund taught a unit on evolution, and he began the unit by asking the students, “Has anyone heard the term Evolution before?” The only student to respond was **Grace Nelson**, who enthusiastically threw her hand into the air and then began to stare at her classmates in disgust. Excited at what Grace might have to say, Mr. Ecklund was surprised when she instead spoke to her classmates, “We have all heard of Evolution! Remember? In history class?” There was a pause as the other students appeared confused. And then Grace exclaimed, “Remember, the Evolutionary War? We talked about it last week in history class!”

Mr. Ecklund also shared the following story with me concerning **Dalton Morgan**. One day during Dalton’s freshman year, he told Mr. Ecklund that he would not be able to attend to an 8:00 a.m. basketball practice the following day. When Mr. Ecklund pressed him for a reason as to why he could not make an 8:00 a.m. practice, Dalton hesitated, clearly trying to hatch some sort of valid excuse but fooling Mr. Ecklund not one bit. When he finally responded, he said, “I have E.D.” “E.D.?” thought Mr. Ecklund. Naturally, he asked Dalton if he knew just what E.D. was, to which Dalton replied, “No. I saw it on a TV commercial.”

While I had **Autumn Dirksen** in class two periods a day last year, I had no idea that she is a poet. Mrs. Grotte tells me that as a sophomore, Autumn prepared a Valentine for **Bradley Hendrickson** that read, “Bradley you’re smart, Bradley you’re kind, Bradley will you be my Valentine?” And Mr. Johnson tells me that in times of stress, and that’s pretty much everyday in math class for Autumn, Autumn will text her mom to share her frustrations and tensions. Autumn, where is your phone right now, and Mr. Johnson wants to know how many times have you texted your mom since the ceremony began?

While all of tonight’s graduates are, of course, intelligent, hard-working individuals, some of them have a few gaps in their knowledge. For **Kyla Blankenship**, that gap is in the area of geography. Last year in AP English when we were playing a round of Scattergories, one of the categories was “Locations for English Murder Mysteries”. Under the letter H for “Locations for English Murder Mysteries”, Kyla listed Holland. According to her cross country coach Mr. Helm, **Alicen Smith** is a bit weak in American history. When asked what year the Declaration of Independence was signed, Alicen was stumped. In fact, even after being corrected multiple times throughout the year, she missed that question three more times. What I want to know is, what does the Declaration of Independence have to do with cross country? Alicen?

You know, in 37 years, I have never had a student named Boris. After watching **Colton Tetzlaff** perform in “Arsenic and Old Lace” during the Drama class’s fall production, I began to call him Boris, instead of Colton, because he sort of modeled his performance of Jonathan in the play after Boris Karloff, whom we had just watched in *Bride of Frankenstein* in Film Study. And I continued to call him Boris for the rest of the year. In fact, he began to write Boris Tetzlaff on all of his assignments. The change of his name to Boris was so complete that a few weeks ago, I could not remember his actual first name...for a few seconds anyway. Colton, you will always be Boris to me.



Besides soliciting stories from other teachers to flesh out this speech, I have another strategy I use. If I don’t have a story about a senior, perhaps I have a story about their mom or dad? By my count, of the 116 students graduating tonight, 17 are the child of a student I had in the past.

Would the following seniors please stand--
Austin Casey, Christian Elston, Jax Hess, Jessy

Marinetti, Marilyn Weaver, and Rylee Wilson.

And would the following LCHS graduates please stand--Shannon McNeal Ritter (Class of '91), Kim Schaer Myers (Class of '93), Brandi Jernagan Hess (Class of '86), Beth Wilson Courtney (Class of '89), Misti Smith Weaver (Class of '95), Scott Weaver (Class of '93) and Bryan Wilson (Class of '85).

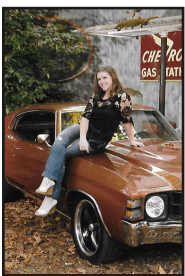
Christian, your mom Kim once requested that I ask Scott Weaver to stop breathing in class because the sound of his breathing was distracting her from reading. Jax, I suppose there is no point in revisiting that truly horrendous poster that your mom Brandi created when I had her in English Literature 30 years ago, but has she ever told you how she would occasionally lick my glasses or share fecal matter stories in class from her nursing home job? Austin, has your mom Shannon ever told you about the time she **mistook** the boys lockerroom for the girls lockerroom and walked in when the boys lockerroom was fully occupied? Yes, the lockerrooms in the old high school are on opposite ends of the gym, just like here. Marilyn, has your mom Misti ever told you about the time your grandpa tried to teach her to do a little car maintenance on her own? It did not go well because your mom could not figure out how to fit the oil funnel into the dipstick hole so it took her a very long time to add oil to her car. Jessy, I know you are aware of that memorable day when your mom had had her fill of teasing from one of her classmates, so she turned around and knocked **him** to the ground with a single punch. Rylie, here's what I said about your dad Bryan back in 1985: "I only had **Bryan Wilson** in class once, but that was enough." I also told the audience that your dad once compared how he drives to a roller coaster at Magic Mountain.

Based on the performance of the softball team a couple of weeks ago in winning their state title, I think it is safe to say that the Class of 2016 sports a good many tough females. Surprisingly, nowhere was this more apparent to me than in A.P English this past fall. One day, junior Erik Christensen and

senior **Erica Jacobson** were deadlocked over some issue that I cannot even recall; however, without giving it much thought, I told them to arm wrestle to determine the winner. They immediately engaged in combat and within a matter of seconds, Erica had soundly pinned Erik's arm to the table. Thank goodness Erik is secure in his manhood and has a sense of humor because nary a day has gone by since then that some member of the class has not alluded to his defeat, most often Erica herself.

In my 37 years of teaching here at La Center High School, I have seen teenagers do a lot of dumb things. They're not necessarily dumb people, but as teenagers, they do not always think carefully about their choices. You are their parents; this is not news to you. Not too long ago, for example, **Sawyer Bierscheid** began to come to class sporting a cap, which was a new thing for him. And this cap covered his head quite thoroughly. After a week or so, I had to find out what was going on under that cap, so I asked Sawyer about it. Before he could answer, of course, **Brody Seter**, who really should spell his last name with two Ts, chimed in and informed me that Sawyer had bleached his hair. Go ahead, Sawyer, take off your mortarboard and show the folks. But Sawyer's worst choice of the year happened just last week when he wrote a sentence in Mr. Johnson's Physics class about the physics of pitching a baseball. Sawyer's sentence, and I use the term loosely, is an excellent example of why you should always proofread what you have written before you turn it in, especially if you write it for a Physics teacher that will not hesitate to share it with your English teacher. About the physics of pitching a baseball, Sawyer wrote, "It is a game a failure and takes a lot of practice to be good at." What?

Hunter Jackson is such a pleasure to have in Film Study as he truly does love movies, and not just movies made in the last three years. His insightful and witty observations have livened up many a discussion, and his deep, resonant



laugh makes watching a comedy all the more enjoyable. But my favorite Hunter comment came just a few weeks ago after we had watched *American Graffiti*. Many of the kids expressed a desire to have lived in 1962, when life was just simpler and people were more trusting. I said something about how a young woman today would probably not hop into a car with a fella she had never met before just to cruise the strip. In *American Graffiti*, of course, Cindy Williams does just that with Harrison Ford, to which Hunter exclaimed, “Heck, I’d jump into a car with Harrison Ford.” So would I, Hunter. So would I.

Many of you know **Charlotte Royal** as a dedicated student and a member of La Center High School’s state champion softball team. Her name alone conjures images of decorum and stateliness. After all, the latest addition to the British **royal** family is a little girl named **Charlotte**. I, however, know a different Charlotte, a somewhat mischievous



Charlotte. The Charlotte Royal that visits my classroom each day once hid my cane from me. Another time, when I was not looking, she removed the batteries from my stereo remote and then got a kick out of watching me try to adjust the volume on the movie we were watching that day in Film Study. And I won’t even mention the time that she tripped me...accidentally. Though I had nothing to do with it, I enjoyed witnessing Charlotte experience a bit of mischief payback last month at Prom. Apparently, Charlotte was unsure of how to drive from La Center to the Lewis River Golf course, where Prom was held, so she relied on her GPS to navigate. Unfortunately, the GPS directed her to a maintenance shed on the golf course. From there, she drove her car across the green to the clubhouse, thereby giving poor Mr. Cooke fits as he tried to placate the folks that care for the golf course.

Frankly, I’m a little ticked off at **Kellan Sullivan**, and I need to get this off my chest. I figure graduation is the best place to do so. After all,

where can he go? At the end of Kellan’s student-led conference his freshman year, I looked him square in the eye and said, “Kellan, when you are a senior, you will be the ASB President.” Was I right? You bet your life I was. And you would think a student would just naturally gravitate to the classes taught by a teacher with such incredible insight into your future, wouldn’t you? You would be wrong. Despite Kellan’s assurances that he could not wait to take both A.P. English and Film Study with me, he spurned me, offering some ridiculous claim about needing to take Physics or Spanish or Women’s Studies or some other class. But it’s okay, Kellan. No hard feelings. Really.

And speaking of Women’s Studies, (You know, Kellan, that class you chose over A.P. English and Film Study) Mrs. Grotte shared a story with me about Kellan. Since his sophomore year, Kellan and Mrs. Grotte have engaged in a friendly rivalry over WSU and the UW. (Since Kellan took both Women’s Studies I and Women’s Studies II, they had a lot of time to banter.) As we all know, the Grottes are diehard Cougars, and apparently the Sullivans bleed Husky blood. Despite Mrs. Grotte’s suggestions to Kellan that he would love going to WSU, he would always laugh and assure her that was never going to happen. I’m sure you can see where this story is headed, so I’ll cut to the chase and invite Mrs. Grotte to come down to the floor and present a little gift to Kellan to help him begin to transition from his life as a La Center High School Wildcat to a Washington State University Cougar.



I have reached the end of my storytelling for another year. Graduates, you are about to embark on a journey during which you will create and collect many, many stories. I encourage you to write down some of those stories and to share them with others because as author Philip Pullman said, “After nourishment, shelter, and companionship, stories are the thing we need most in the world.” Thank you for inviting me to share a few stories. It has been an honor.

The Class of 2017

Graduation: June 10, 2017

I'd like to begin tonight by sharing an incident that happened a few weeks ago to one of our secretaries, Joan. One day the outside phone line rang, and as she always does, Joan answered, "La Center High School." Here is the rest of that conversation:

Caller in a quiet voice: I need toilet paper in the bathroom.

Joan: Pardon? I couldn't hear you.

Caller: I am in the bathroom and there is no toilet paper.

Joan: Oh.....Okay. Which bathroom are you in?

Caller: The boys room near the library.

Joan: Okay. I will get someone to bring you a roll.

Caller: Thank you.

Despite a lack of males in the office at that critical moment, Joan finally rounded up Mr. Rosenkranz to deliver a roll of TP to the young man in need. Now I have no idea if the caller was one of tonight's graduates, but this story illustrates the theme of my speech tonight, which deals with change. You see, 20 years ago, before cell phones became ubiquitous, this poor young man would have had to wait for someone to appear in the stall next to him so that he could ask him to spare a square, or he would have had to go without.

Yes, much has changed during my 38 years at La Center High School, and not just at the school. Why, when I arrived here in 1979, there was not even an Exit 16 off of I-5. Now we have a new and improved exit. . .with roundabouts. And we have an enormous

casino, where for just \$9, you can dine on French fries.

The first time I spoke at graduation, 34 years ago, the Senior Class of 1983 consisted of 44 students. Of those 44 seniors, I had had all but two of them in at least one English class, usually two or three, and the two I had never had in class I still knew because they actually attended class **in the building**. As I began to prepare for tonight's speech and I was perusing the list of 100 or so graduates, I counted the number of seniors that I have never had in class and, for the most part, do not know at all...44. For those of us teachers that have been at LCHS for 30 or more years, that is a remarkable change. I do not think I am alone in missing the days when there were no unfamiliar faces in the halls of La Center High School.

Oddly enough, though, no matter how much things change around here, I have found that there are some things about teenagers that have remained pretty consistent in the past 38 years, and tonight's seniors illustrate just how constant the American teenager truly is.

I cannot tell you how many stories I have heard in the past 38 years about teenage boys eating odd or disgusting things, sometimes for a price. Not teenage girls, just the boys. And because there are grandparents in the crowd tonight and I love my job, I shall not share the worst of these stories. Still, there are a few graduation-appropriate stories to share. Last June, for instance, just before he was about to take his Film Study final exam, I witnessed **Noah Westerberg** eating cold cooked spaghetti out of a baggie. No sauce. Just cold noodles.

Perhaps the most disgusting example of students eating weird things involves **Timothy Smith**. Just a few weeks ago, Tim accepted a lunchtime challenge to eat a stick of butter for \$10. About three-quarters of the way through the challenge, Tim realized the error of his ways, but lucky for him, his



compassionate pals still paid him the \$10. And just two days ago, **Connor Loewen's** friends, and I use the term loosely, offered him \$5 to consume seven packets of red pepper flakes. Like Tim, Connor soon concluded that this was a bad idea but not before he looked more than a little distressed. Oh, and Connor's buddies, who are also Tim's buddies, also paid up.

I know it will come as no surprise to my fellow teachers that another area of student life that has seen little change since 1979 is that of attendance. In other words, some students continue to struggle either to come to class on time or to come to class at all. When I had **Brett Judd** in Tenth Grade English, I learned early on that he is very regular, if you know what I mean. At least, every time he was tardy to class--and that was often--he informed me that he had had to have a bowel movement and you can't rush those things. **Isaac Johnson** is another student that struggled to arrive to class on time. I had Isaac in second period Film Study last year, and he wracked up an impressive number of tardies. However, once the seniors left and he could sit near the door, his tardies ceased. Of course, by then there was only a week left in the year.

As my students will tell you, every year I offer them an incentive to come to school on time, the Perfect Attendance Reward. If an entire class can come to school each day during any given school week--be it two days long or a full five days long--I will bake them brownies the following week. Last year when I had **Josie Elston** in HSPE English, she longed for nothing more than to win that Perfect Attendance Reward. Each day before class began, Josie would position herself at the door of my classroom and if she spotted a classmate trudging down the hall, she would urge them to speed up and get to class before the bell rang. Sadly, that class never achieved perfect attendance, but the saddest part of the story, for Josie, is that there were

only four students in the class.

As teachers, every year we encounter all levels of dedication and doggedness in our students, from the student that begs for extra credit when her grade drops below 99%, to the student that so rarely appears in class you're not even sure who he is after the first month of school. An example of the first student I described is **Jeremy Scott**. While Jeremy was away at the state track meet recently, a portion of his AP Calculus project was due.



You all know how demanding Mr. Johnson is, so Jeremy knew he had to get the job done, even though he was out of town. The project was due on Friday, and at 11:38 that night, Mr. Johnson received an email from Jeremy, announcing that he had figured out the very involved spreadsheet using the Sheets app on his phone, no less. The next day, Jeremy went on to place second in the 110 and 300-meter hurdles. Now that's dedication.

Although we live in the era of the computer, like the rest of the world, students must still do a certain amount of handwriting. While this can be challenging for some students, it can be especially trying for English teachers. Oddly enough, the student in the Class of 2017 with the best handwriting is a young man, **Ian Thacker**. I could read that boy's handwriting all day long. It's nearly a work of art. On the flip side, though, is the handwriting, and I use the term loosely, of **Hagen DeSean**. Sometimes when I was grading a particularly long reading guide in Film Study and I would arrive at Hagen's reading guide, I would quietly move it to the back of the stack as I just could not face it.

Art Linkletter, whom some of you are old enough to remember, once had a TV show called *House Party*, and the most popular segment on that show was entitled "Kids Say the Darndest Things". When I asked my fellow teachers for stories about tonight's graduates, Mrs. Cooper from the elementary school

was quick to respond and her notes prove that kids still say the darndest things. One morning, **Alissa Carder** informed Mrs. Cooper that she had eaten dinner at a restaurant the night before, and when Mrs. Cooper asked for the name of the restaurant, Alissa responded, “Backyard Stake Out.” Pretty sure she meant Outback Steakhouse. Early in the fall of his first grade year, **Dylan Turk** was asked by his mom if he had made any new friends at school, to which he replied, “No, Mrs. Cooper hasn’t told us to do that yet.” Finally, Mrs. Cooper was walking down the hall one afternoon with **Jeanette Doorenbos**



and noticed that Jeanette was awfully wiggly. When Mrs. Cooper asked her why she was wiggling so much, Jeanette said, “Because I didn’t get all of my funnies out at recess!” I haven’t seen Jeanette wiggle in the two years I have known her, so I’m guessing she has finally gotten all of her funnies out, whatever that means.

I am happy to report that even as high school students, kids continue to say the darndest things. Take **Ellie Johnson**, for example. Around Christmas time two years ago, the song “White Christmas” came up in a class discussion and I mentioned something about Bing Crosby’s singing of the song. Ellie’s response: “Bing Crosby? I thought Bill Cosby sang that.”

Poor **Jeffrey Mayolo**. Last year in A.P. English, we read *Life of Pi*, a novel about a 16-year-old boy that ends up trapped in a lifeboat for 227 days with a 450-pound Bengal tiger as his only company. At one point in the novel, Pi attempts to train the tiger, named Richard Parker, to obey various commands so that the tiger will see him as the master and not eat him. One of the tools that Pi uses to train Richard Parker is a whistle.

During a class discussion one day, Jeffrey raised his



hand and said, “Why does Pi keep yelling TREEEEEE! at the tiger?” TREEEEEE was the author’s way of conveying the sound of Pi’s whistle. Unfortunately, Jeffrey’s slight misstep in understanding that led to his classmates--in particular **Erik Christensen**, **Connor Loewen**, and **Cal Johnson**--shouting TREEEEEE at him on occasion throughout the remainder of the school year.

Another constant among teenagers throughout the years is that they can be counted on to do dumb albeit entertaining things. I am indebted to Mrs. Rideout for the following story. During a spirited and contentious round of Lip Sync for your Life in Drama class, **Lexi Darienzo** faced off against **Ben Eavenson**, performing “We Are Siamese, If You Please” from *Lady and the Tramp*. Dressed as a cat, Lexi climbed onto a table and as a cat would, she knocked a picture frame off the table. Unlike a cat, though, she kicked the picture frame with a good deal of force, thinking the dollar store frame would contain only cheap plexiglass. Lexi was proved wrong when glass shards rained down upon the audience.

Kaylie Faul is another teenager that knows how to make a mess, according to Mr. Helm. When Kaylie was a freshman in his math class, she was trying to extract hand sanitizer from a pump bottle on Mr. Helm’s desk. Since the bottle was nearly empty and she was having no luck, she went into a huge windup and slammed the pump with all her might. The result was hand sanitizer dousing the walls, the ceiling, the floor, Mr. Helm’s desk, Mr. Helm and Kaylie herself. After the incident, Mr. Helm moved the bottle 20 feet from his desk and forbade Kaylie from using it.

Peer pressure is alive and well at La Center High School, as it is in high schools across the nation. However, I am happy to report that as has been true throughout history, some students are happy to be a bit quirky or to march to their own drummer or to leave it all out there on the stage or the athletic field. **Rebekah Skinner** is a good example. Last year when I had Rebekah in Film Study, she would wish me Happy Birthday once a week or so. If you

have attended a play at La Center High School in the last few years, you may have been treated to a stellar performance by **Ben Eavenson**. As Felix Unger in last spring's production of *The Odd Couple*, Ben had to psyche himself out to play the overwrought Felix, and one night he was so tightly wound that he actually gave himself a bloody nose. According to Mrs. Rideout, blood was streaming down his face, so his scene partner ripped off a bit of his newspaper, which Ben then shoved up his nose so he could complete the scene. After all, the show must go on.

Be it 1979 or 2017, teenagers love a good party.



And no one in the Class of 2017 loves to plan a good party more than **Renee Hollopeter**. I suspect Renee's love of organizing social events involving food started early in life, but the earliest example I know of happened when she was in Pre-AP Tenth English with Mrs. Grotte. Following the class's study of *The Great Gatsby*, Renee organized a

1920s era Kentucky Derby luncheon, an event that not only involved food but hats, which as you know is a traditional element of Derby Day festivities at Churchill Downs. Renee's mom Kim showed up at the party to provide another Kentucky Derby staple, mint juleps. I assume, Kim, that they were bourbon-free. Continuing her party-planning proclivities, last year in AP English, Renee organized our first ever cheesecake eating contest, which was won by **Connor Loewen**. And this year in AP English, Renee got the year off to a rollicking start by organizing an Olive Garden feast. Who knew The Olive Garden would deliver to schools? Unfortunately, when we were preparing to serve our feast, we discovered that we had been shorted quite a number of bread sticks, the food item the kids were most looking forward to. Fortunately, **Chase Jamieson** took it upon himself to complain to The Olive Garden and the very next day, some poor fella delivered several dozen more

breadsticks. Needless to say, we all consumed a ridiculous amount of carbs that week. Following the success of the Olive Garden feast, Renee suggested to me that we should do a similar event each month of the school year. At this point, I reminded her that as this was AP English, we should probably shift our focus away from food and perhaps read a book or write an essay or something, which we did. However, just three days ago, Renee organized the final social event of her AP English career, a breakfast-themed gala. I am certain this is the only time that I will have four waffle irons in my classroom at one time. It was a lovely event that included only one glitch...it seems that no one signed up to bring syrup.

As has been the case for the past 20 years now, some of tonight's graduates are the children of moms and dads that were also once my students, and I promised a couple of them that I would share a story about mom or dad. So I'll begin with **Emily Haasl**, whose dad Michael graduated from LCHS 31 years ago. Emily, here is what I said about your dad when I spoke at graduation in 1986: "When Mike Haasl was a freshman, he was the nicest, most human ninth grade boy I had ever encountered. I even sent a letter to his parents that year, complimenting them on raising such a fine child. I don't mean to imply that Michael isn't still the same pleasant young man now, but I would pay real money to see him get his head shaved when he goes into the service." I think you should also know, Emily, that your dad is one of just two students that I have ever danced with in 38 years as a teacher here.



The youngest member of the **Huss** family, **Taylor**, is graduating tonight. Both of Taylor's parents graduated from LCHS, her mom Rhonda in 1994 and her dad Rich in 1992. When your dad was a freshman, Taylor, he was a student in the strangest Ninth Grade English class I have ever had. You see, the class was comprised of just five students...all

boys. And not just any five boys, but five boys that were not big fans of reading. It did not take long for me to conclude that I was going to have to completely revamp my Ninth Grade curriculum to meet the needs and interests of these fellas and that *Romeo and Juliet* was not going to do the trick.

And finally, I must say a few words about **Erik Christensen**, the senior. On one hand, Erik is a young man that demonstrates clearly how the graduate of 2017 is markedly different from the graduate of 1979. For example, he sports a man bun. In 1979, the man bun would have been problematic but it is perfectly acceptable in 2017, thank goodness. Erik is also much more global in his thinking than



many of the students I taught in 1979. If you run into him in the commons after the ceremony, please ask him to share his views on, say, France or Japan. But in one area, Erik is much like the students of decades ago. He is mischievous. This

year, I had Erik in both fourth and fifth periods, and sometimes when nature would call mid-afternoon, I would briefly leave my AP class fifth period. (Fourth period was Film Study, and I would not even turn my back on them, let alone exit the classroom.) Anyhow, one day during sixth period, I had need of my white board, which is almost always covered by my huge movie screen, so I raised the screen, only to discover some rather inappropriate writing on the white board. . .scrawled in Erik's most distinctive, gigantic handwriting. This happened a few more times, though I learned to check behind the movie screen before raising it to the inquiring eyes of my sixth period sophomores. In fact, the last couple of times I answered nature's call, I handed Erik the whiteboard marker on my way out of the room and reminded him to spell everything correctly.

While the students of 2017 may look a bit different from those of 1979 and their toys are far more sophisticated and expensive, their tendencies

to get into mischief, to do or say the occasional unwise thing, and to give their parents and teachers a headache every now and then remain remarkably constant. I suspect that if I stood up here 38 years from now--which I won't--I would reach the same conclusion. On behalf of the staff of La Center High School, I thank all of you, the Class of 2017, for keeping us entertained and sometimes exasperated but ultimately making us all proud. Good luck.

The Class of 2018

Graduation: June 16, 2018

I'd like to begin tonight by addressing next year's seniors, the Class of 2019. It is very likely that you and I will be wrapping up our careers here at La Center High School together as it is my intention to retire at the end of next year. Of course, my career here will have been 10 times longer than yours. So I would like to issue a challenge to you. I plan to savor as much of my final year here as I can, to find a bit of joy, contentment, and satisfaction in what I do each day, whether that is simply greeting you in the hall each morning, introducing my Film Study students to "It Happened One Night" for the last time, guiding my A.P. students through the 109 grueling pages of *Heart of Darkness*, sharing with my sophomores the wonder that is *To Kill a Mockingbird*, or enjoying a lively lunch with my colleagues each day. I will even strive to find something fun about a staff meeting or grading an essay, especially if it is the last essay I ever grade. My challenge to you is to do the same. You will be tempted to succumb to the attractions of senioritis or to focus on what is to come after high school rather than to enjoy your final year here. Fight that urge. Relish the company of your closest friends, whether you are in class together--even math class--, breaking bread together at lunch, or competing against some lowly athletic team from Woodland or Ridgefield. These times will never come again. Do not waste them.

But as the poet Robbie Burns once said, "The best laid plans of mice and men often go awry." With that in mind, I can foresee just three reasons why I might extend my tenure here at LCHS. 1) The stock market crashes and my retirement account is wiped out. 2) I receive a huge pay raise and cannot resist the temptation of all that money for another year or two. 3) Harrison Ford joins the English Department here at La Center High School. All three seem unlikely.

But what I'm really here to talk about tonight

is the Class of 2018. And in my remarks tonight, I return, at least partially, to the roots of this speech, which was born when the Class of 1983 invited me to speak at graduation. That year 44 students graduated, and I shared an anecdote about each one of them, a story of my own. It wasn't hard to do. I'd had all but a few in class and the rest I knew because they all attended class in the building all day. However, while all of the stories I share tonight will be my own for the first time in a few years, I assure you I will not be telling a story about each of the 128 graduates.

Seniors, please stand if you hear your name.

Let me begin with **Dayton Erickson**, whom I had in class for the first time this year. I was certainly well prepared for Dayton. After all, I had had his



dad Mark, his uncle Jerome, his stepmom Bosch, and his sister Molly in class before him. And do you know what Dayton has in common with all of his family members? An insatiable need to talk constantly, though I must admit at a much lower volume than some of his relatives. Dayton, as it turns out, is a big teddy bear of a guy who loves to play video games with his pals **Ty Morris** and **Jackson Leslie**, especially if they are sitting on either side of him in A.P. English. Unlike his uncle Jerome, though, Dayton was never duplicitous. I don't know if you are out there tonight, Jerome, but don't think I have forgotten about the brownies laced with Milk Bone dog treats that you claimed were walnuts.

Another one of my second generation seniors tonight is **Emma Lester**. I only had Emma in Tenth Grade English, but it became clear early on that Emma preferred her literature to be rather dark, so when I designed our short story unit, I took that as a bit of a challenge. Nothing we read, though, seemed to rise to the level of Emma's standard, not "A Rose for Emily" by William Faulkner or even Edgar Allan Poe's "The Tell-Tale Heart." However, she

finally conceded that I had come close with Flannery O'Connor's "Good Country People". (If you need more detail, you will have to read the story yourself.)

Colin Obot is another student that I had only in Tenth Grade English, but he certainly made an impression, especially for his charm and his humor. The class met during third period, which is right before lunch, and at least three times a week, Colin would somehow talk **Cody Ballard** out of several items from his lunch. And whenever Colin needed to turn in an assignment, he would make quite a production out of it, slowly ambling up to my desk, visiting with pals along the way, and charming other classmates out of the occasional snack.

If you teach long enough, some of your current students begin to remind you of students you have had in the past. It's actually kind of uncanny how similar students separated by 20 or 30 years can appear, both in looks and in behavior. This phenomenon is especially fun, though, when the students are related. For example, even before I knew who **Molly McAllister's** mom is, I could detect a likeness. Both Molly and her mom, Jenny Bosch (Class of '92), are lively, spontaneous, and hilarious women that were tremendously fun to have in class. And then there's **Mason Weaver**, who looks like his dad, who sounds like his dad, and yes, who sometimes acts like his dad, Scott Weaver (Class of '93). However, unlike Scott, I have never passed Mason driving on I-5 and scrunching down in his seat, trying to avoid my seeing him, only to learn the next day that he does not have a valid driver's license.

Years from now when I think of **Jacob O'Donnell** or **Hallie Nelson**, I will picture a student with some body part in a cast or a sling. I had both Jacob and Hallie in third period Film Study last year, and it seems as though they were always injuring themselves. And then early this year, I ran into both



of them in the hall, and once again, they had an arm or a foot in a cast. I gotta hand it to Jacob, though. Despite that cast last year being on his right arm, he still completed all of that written work in Film Study. It was only when his handwriting suddenly improved that even I noticed the cast was finally gone.

And speaking of bad handwriting, I must discuss **Evan Honore**. On his last Film Study reading guide a couple weeks ago, I wrote Evan a note, explaining that I would miss him but tremendously not his handwriting. You know, Jacob's handwriting when he was still sporting his cast was better than Evan's without any kind of injury to his hand. On a more personal note, Evan, where is that healthy yet tasty treat you promised me last week, the one that will showcase your culinary skills? I'm still waiting.

If you have ever tried to lead a group of teenagers in a class discussion, then you know that sometimes getting them to speak and offer up their observations is painful. Some students believe that if they simply avoid eye contact with the teacher, she will not call upon them. Others believe just the opposite, that if you boldly stare at the teacher, she will leave you alone. It is the lucky kid, though, that ends up in a class with a student that not only always has a thought to offer on any question posed by the teacher, but will be the first to raise his hand to do so. In my fifth period A.P. English class this year, that student, whose classmates silently thanked him for bailing them out, was **Tim Howard**. I gotta tell you, though, that Tim make a lot of insightful observations.

Jack Hiller is a great guy. All year long in Film



Study this year, he produced excellent work, he always had a cheery disposition, and he seemed to enjoy all the films we watched, even if they were silent, black and white, or both. But Jack finally hit the wall about a month ago, when he had simply had his fill of reading guides, the

worksheets that accompany each reading assignment for each film that we view. Since we only had time to watch one 1970s film before the seniors' departure two weeks ago, I let the seniors choose the film. Both Jack and his pal **Wyatt Siebert** didn't really care what film they watched; they only wanted to know which one had the shortest reading guide. (*Jaws*)

Jack is also a man with a good memory. Why, if it hadn't been for Jack, he and his Film Study classmates would have missed out on their pity brownies two weeks ago. You see, any time one of my classes achieves perfect attendance for an entire school week, I will bring them homemade brownies the following Monday. Since my Film Study classes are typically my largest classes, achieving perfect attendance is often merely a pipe dream. And because of that, I tell them that late in the school year if they have not yet earned perfect attendance brownies, I will take pity on them. Hence, pity brownies. Fortunately, although **I** had forgotten all about the pity brownies, Jack had not.

A few more words about **Wyatt Siebert**, who sat next to Jack throughout the year in Film Study. As you can see, Wyatt is a very tall young man with very long legs. One of the students in third period Film Study this year was accompanied to class by a service dog, a pretty large service dog. Every time Wyatt had to turn in an assignment, he had to step over this dog, and those long legs of his came in very handy. And I'd like to thank you, Wyatt, for taking after your Uncle Tony (Class of '85) only in terms of your great height. Unlike Uncle Tony, not once did you bore me to tears by writing an essay about the dangers of artificial Christmas trees.

One of my pet peeves as a teacher is students coming to class late. Truth be told, if a student is just a little tardy and comes in quietly, it isn't really all that annoying. But if I had to give an award for the most poorly timed late entry into class, I would give this prize to **Finn Wing**. Now Finn wracked up a lot of tardies in Film Study this year, but her most egregious came on May 16 when she threw open my

classroom door and strode in exactly halfway through the shower scene in *Psycho*.

I've been teaching Film Study now for 30 years, and as you can probably imagine, as the years have passed, my students have become less and less



familiar with classic films and the stars of the golden era of Hollywood. Quite honestly, the only movie stars known to almost all of my students for the past couple of years have been Marilyn Monroe and John Wayne. Some of them have heard of Charlie Chaplin. I suppose that is

to be expected. By the time they exit Film Study, though, I can assure you that they all know who Paul Newman is, that is if they passed the class. Every now and then, though, a true fan of film finds his way to my class. In the Class of 2018, that student is **Tobin Townsend**. Tobin enrolled in Film Study last year, and not only was he always excited to view the films, but this year he and his family ventured out to the theater to watch a Turner Classic Movies showing of Hitchcock's *Vertigo*. I am most excited, though, because next fall, Tobin will be majoring in Interdisciplinary Film and Cinematography at the University of New Mexico.

Now, I have only had about half of these seniors in class, but among those students, my vote for the most unique, most spontaneous, and most uninhibited student is **Robert Balduc**. From the moment I met Robert in Tenth Grade English, he so reminded me of a student that graduated in 1992, Todd Norcott. He even looks like Todd, and he certainly acts like him. If we were reading a play aloud in class, you could be sure that Robert was playing a key role. In Tenth English, when we read "Twelve Angry Men", while his classmates slogged through their lines with a lack of feeling and enthusiasm, Robert, in the role of the bigoted Juror Three, was pounding the table and shouting so loudly that the kids next door in Mr. Johnson's room could

hear him. If you have been to a drama performance during the last three years, then you have been treated to Robert's zest for performance. Another area of his life to which Robert brings enthusiasm is



sneezing. I cannot tell you how many times he has cut loose with a truly Herculean sneeze in class. And to bring to life for you Robert's spontaneity and his lack of fear simply to cut loose, I direct you to his senior picture in the yearbook, where he sports his iconic

fuzzy purple hat. Perhaps the best example I can offer you, though, of Robert's spontaneity happened earlier this year when I challenged my A.P. students, when they had a few moments of free time at the end of class, to put down those blasted cell phones and dance. Within moments, Robert had selected a playlist on his phone, leapt onto his table, and began to dance his way around the entire room, never touching the floor once. I took pictures.

During their last week in school, I asked a number of my seniors how they were feeling about the end of high school and taking the next step in their lives. Reactions were mixed, from students who were simply terrified, to those anxiously looking forward to a change but still a little hesitant, to those who could not contain their excitement to be graduating. Whatever your feelings, seniors, change is in the air, and many of the changes you will face will be quite unexpected. For example, never in 39 years did I picture myself entering graduation in a golf cart that had been bedazzled by three of my very imaginative colleagues. (Thank you Heather, Denelle, and Kate.) While no one knows just exactly where your lives will take you, I offer you some parting advice, and, since more than 50 of you took Film Study at some point, let me couch this advice in the wisdom of the American cinema. If you can name all seven films that I quote, I will give you 5 points of extra credit. That goes for everyone in the crowd.

Remember in life that "nobody's perfect" and "friend good." If you ever find yourself in need of "a bigger boat", for heaven's sake, go back to shore and get one, "Baby". "May the Force be with you" throughout your lives, and never, ever forget, "There's no place like home." "Here's looking at you, kids." Thank you.

The Class of 2019

Graduation: June 8, 2019

During the past eight months or so, ever since I shared with anyone who would listen that I would be retiring at the end of this school year, I have been asked one question many, many times. “What are your plans for the future?” To save us quite a lot of time after tonight’s ceremony, when we are milling around and chatting, let me explain my plans for the future now so you won’t have to ask me then. With just a few variations, I have taught five classes each day, 180 days each year, for 40 years. If you do the math, you will discover that I have written approximately 36,000 lesson plans during that time. What are my plans for the future? My plans are to have no plans.

That said, I am very much looking forward to the big retirement gala on the 17th. In August, I am spending a few days in Ashland with my pals Don and Rick to take in a selection of plays, including *Macbeth*. And I have to finish cleaning out my classroom, a task that is taking much longer than I anticipated. Those are my plans for the foreseeable future. Oh, and I will be doing lots and lots of guilt-free reading.

But I’m not really up here tonight to talk about the future so much as the past; however, I’d like to shake things up a bit. When the Class of 1983 asked me to speak at its graduation, it took me a while to hit upon an idea for the speech. All I knew, at first, was that I did not want to dispense with a lot of advice to the graduates. It seemed to me that most commencement addresses did just that. Instead, I decided to tell a little story about each graduate, and the idea caught on. Tonight, though, I am going to dispense some of that advice that has been building up for the past 40 years. I shall call them pearls of wisdom. After all, this is my last chance. But do not despair. I shall also tell a few stories about the graduates.

Pearl of Wisdom #1: Think before you act, and for heaven’s sake, be aware of what is going on around you. Doing so will save you a good deal of embarrassment in life and may just keep you from bodily harm. As evidence, I offer a story about **Adrian Bricker**, La Center High School Class of 1988. One morning during his senior year, Adrian was in the bathroom primping for the day. The 1980s, you may recall, was the era of the mullet, and Adrian had an impressive one. Unfortunately, as Adrian began to spritz his mullet with hairspray, he forgot that he had a lit cigarette in his mouth. Adrian was not actually hurt, but his mullet took a hit. Fast forward 30 years. I went on an Alaskan cruise last summer and I was able to visit Adrian up in Skagway, where he gave me and my companions a personalized tour of the area. I had not seen Adrian in 30 years, but it seemed utterly appropriate that he is now as bald as a billiard ball. In tonight’s graduating class, **Cameron Achziger** could benefit from this nugget of wisdom. A couple of years ago, we had a power outage one day during Tenth English. At some point during the period, Cameron wandered over to my computer desk, where I have a big power strip. As I watched, amused, Cameron plugged his phone charger into the power strip and then his phone into the charger. When he turned to walk back to his desk, I said, “Hey, Cameron. What are you doing?” “It’s too dark to read,” he said, “so I thought I’d charge my phone.”



Pearl of Wisdom #2: As soon as possible in life, figure out what you’re good at and what you love, and develop those skills. By the same token, become aware of where your skills are lacking and either work to improve those skills or avoid having to use them. Oddly enough, this next story also involves a cell phone and Tenth English. The kids were supposed to be reading in class one day, but as is often the case, a few of them were cleverly trying to shield their phones behind their copies of *To Kill a Mockingbird*,

thinking I would not notice. (Frankly, I probably did not notice hundreds of times.) **James Carmona**,



though, was not quite so clever. Instead, he had placed his copy of the novel on one knee and his phone on the other, and he was busily tapping away at his phone. The problem was that James sat directly across the room from my desk and there was nothing to obstruct my

view of him and his lap. Rather than call him on the carpet, I twice issued a general warning to the class to put their phones away. Finally, when James did not respond, I simply said, “James, I can see your phone,” to which he responded, “Ms. Bryan, I am so bad at this.”

Another member of the Class of 2019 that has a weakness is **Cyrus Zumstein**. Last year in Film Study, every time the theme music for a studio would begin to play at the start of a movie--be it Universal, 20th Century Fox, MGM...it didn't matter--Cyrus would try to hum along. Sadly, the boy can't carry a tune in a bag, but he never gave up trying.

Pearl of Wisdom #3: When necessary in life, throw caution to the wind and do what needs to be done, regardless of where you might be. One senior that clearly embraces this bit of advice is **Jodie Hendrickson**. As I was returning to my desk one day, I passed by Jodie, who had one arm completely up the opposite sleeve of her sweatshirt. When I asked her what she was doing, she extracted the arm and explained that she had forgotten to apply deodorant before she left home that day, so she was doing so then. And sure enough, in her hand was a container of deodorant, which she then slipped casually into her purse.



Pearl of Wisdom #4: If you are going to misspell a word, at least be funny about it. My

favorite misspelling in the Class of 2019 came from **Wyatt Elton** and appeared on one of the quizzes the kids took over the novel *Shoeless Joe*. The question read, “What unusual clause does Eddie Scissons add to his will.” The answer is that he wants to be buried in Ray's cornfield, only Wyatt spelled the word buried “B-E-R-R-Y-E-D”. That spelling just gives me a whole new vision of being buried in a cornfield. My very favorite misspelled word in 40 years of teaching English, though, was provided by **Josh Smith**, Class of 1990. “Jew dishes”...judicious.

Pearl of Wisdom #5: Organization matters, be it your bedroom, your locker, or, in the case of **Tyler Jennings**, your backpack. By being organized, you can save yourself a good deal of time and frustration. I had Tyler in class for a year and a half, and every time I would ask kids to take out a particular handout or a book or a pen, I would turn to Tyler to watch the search begin. Although Tyler had a 3-ring binder, I do not believe I ever saw him actually insert a piece of paper into the rings of the notebook. I even offered, on numerous occasions, to show him how those shiny silver rings worked, but he was hopeless. I have good news for you on that front, Tyler (and by extension, Gloria, his mom). One of the most brilliant students I ever taught--**Andrew Rivers**, Class of 1988--had a similar affliction where organization was concerned. In fact, his notebook almost always looked as though a bomb had gone off in it. Despite his disastrous notebook, though, Andrew went on to earn a Ph.D. in Physics and Astronomy and he has quite literally in the last 20 years discovered previously unknown galaxies. Guess that notebook didn't matter so much, huh?

Pearl of Wisdom #6: A small gesture of kindness can go a very long way, especially if that gesture involves homemade strawberry jam. One spring day during Tenth Grade English, **Ashlynn Evans** brought me a jar of her and her mom's homemade strawberry jam, which only sealed our friendship, which was already pretty strong. When I had Ashlynn in Film Study last year, she brought me another jar of this amazing jam. I love that girl,

and her mom **Jamie**, who was also my student. Sadly, I did not have Ashlynn in class this year, which made it more difficult for me to drop hints about that delicious jam. No need to worry. Early this last week, Ashlynn visited me in my classroom, and she carried with her a sizable bag whose weight was clearly exhausting her. In the bag were 12 jars of this ambrosia, and those 12...correction 11...jars ought to last me a long, long time.



Pearl of Wisdom #7: If you wear corrective lenses, have them checked occasionally to ensure they are strong enough. I know this sounds like an odd bit of advice, but just two weeks ago, we were doing our standard review contest in Film Study to prepare for our exam over the American cinema in the 1960s. As part of the test, the kids have to identify some of the better known actors of the decade, actors that appear in the films that we watched. When I flashed a photo of Charles Bronson from *The Dirty Dozen* on the screen for **Jacob Denley's** team to identify, they chatted about it briefly and then Jacob said, "Sharon Bryan?"



Pearl of Wisdom #8: There is nothing more important than family. I have rarely spoken about my own family at graduation, but I am going to break with that tradition and do so tonight because some of my family is here. Purely by chance, one of the musicians that entertained you before tonight's ceremony and then played "Pomp and Circumstance" as the seniors marched into the stadium is my cousin, David Bryan. Where musical talent is concerned, David's side of the family got it all. His lovely mother, my Aunt Marilyn, was also a gifted musician. In fact, my little brother Kurt, my little sister Maurine, and I all took piano lessons from her. Sadly, we never amounted to anything more than plodders. I doubt Maurine has even touched a piano in 45 years, and

the only song Kurt could ever play was "Born Free". And Kurt did not play the piano so much as he punished the piano. Even now, at age 57, if there is a piano around, he will treat us to a one-song concert. As for me, my repertoire consists of a halting rendition of "Moon River". Also here tonight is my fellow plodder on the piano, my sister Maurine and my brother-in-law Allen.

Pearl of Wisdom #9: When I was a young teacher--barely four years older than my seniors that first year--I used to wonder how I would be able to relate to my students in the years to come. After all, they would always be 15-18 years old, but I would just keep getting older and older and older. In 1980, for example, the music that my students listened to was, for the most part, the music that I listened to--The Rolling Stones, Bruce Springsteen, Duran Duran. Just last week, we were playing a game of Scattergories in AP English and one of the categories was Bands. For the letter M, one group wrote My Chemical Romance. My Chemical Romance? What is that? It would seem that I no longer listen to the music of my students. Heck, I haven't even heard of the bands. As it turns out, though, I did all that worrying for nothing because last year, **Loren Brown** walked into my classroom. Who knew a 17-year old young man who aspired to attend Harvard could have so much in common with a 61-year old English teacher who has never heard of My Chemical Romance. Loren is, first of all, a reader. For the past two years, we have chatted about so many books, and you know who one of his favorite authors is? Agatha Christie. A teenage boy that knows who Hercule Poirot is. I own and have read the complete works of Agatha Christie. And Loren is the only student I have ever had in AP English that actually looked forward to reading *Heart of Darkness*. I don't know if Loren is a fan of My Chemical Romance, but you know whose music he loves? John Denver. The 70s live! I think where we



had the most fun during the past two years, though, was in our daily rehashing of the previous night's episode of "Jeopardy". When Loren walked into my classroom this past Monday morning, we did not require words, just dejected body language, to convey our sadness that James Holzhauer's 32-day win streak had come to an end, just shy of Ken Jennings' record winnings. When it comes right down to it, age matters very little in friendships.

Pearl of Wisdom #10: A sense of humor will serve you well in life. To illustrate this last bit of advice, I turn once again to **James Carmona** and **Loren Brown**. Earlier this year in AP English when we read *The Secret Life of Bees*, I asked the students to locate pearls and nuggets of wisdom offered by one of the novel's protagonists, August Boatwright. The kids would then select one of these jewels and write about its importance in their life. Once I had finished my explanation, James turned to Loren and said, "You look for nuggets. I'll look for pearls."

Well, here comes the hard part. When I first stepped into Room 9 at La Center High School in August of 1979, my plan was to stay for two or three years, to learn a few things about teaching, and then to move on to a bigger high school. At that point, I could not imagine what a school of 230 students could possibly offer to entice me to stay for more than a couple of years. I was so stupid then. If I were in charge of education in the State of Washington, no high school would have more than 250 students. It makes such a difference. And even though we have more than doubled in size in the past 40 years, La Center High School continues to be a wonderful place to be a student or an employee or even a visitor.

But both my mind and my body are telling me that it is time for my teaching journey to end. And what a journey it has been. In the end, the journey is all about the people I have encountered during these 40 years. I may jokingly describe administration as "the dark side", but I have been lucky to work with many dedicated, supportive, and kind administrators. When he was my assistant superintendent, Dave

Holmes twice covered my sixth period class so that I could head off for a round of chemotherapy during what I simply refer to as "the cancer year". How many assistant superintendents do you suppose there are in the State of Washington that would do that?

Staff here is very much a family to me. We laugh together, sometimes we cry together, and every now and then we get a little fussy with each other, but ultimately, we look out for each other. Karen Gozart knows just when I am in need of a small bag of Cheetos to get me through the afternoon. For the past 26 years in this building, my next door neighbor John Johnson has tolerated those moments each spring when we watch *The Dirty Dozen* in Film Study and he must endure the explosions as the Dozen blows up that darned chateau at the end of the film. This year, I cranked the volume just a little bit louder, in honor of my last time to annoy John. And what would I have done on that horrible December evening four years ago if Beth Marshall had not taken me into her home at 3:00 in the morning after I had spent 12 straight hours in my car, trying desperately to get home to Kelso after that landslide north of Woodland and that landslide south of Rainier? Gozart, John, and Beth are just a sampling of the many lovely people I have been privileged to work with in the last 40 years, and I love them all.

And then there are the students that have graced my classroom. I don't know just how many, somewhere between 4000 and 5000. I had no idea when my journey began that some of these students would never actually leave me, that we would form a bond that would keep us connected throughout the years and in many cases, would grow stronger with time. That is, perhaps, the very best thing of all about being a teacher, especially a high school teacher. And despite the 45-year gap in our ages, I know that a handful of tonight's graduates and I have formed one of these bonds, and I so look forward to seeing where life takes them.

To the Class of 2019, congratulations on your graduation and thank you for being here at the end

of my journey at La Center High School. I wish you smooth sailing, happiness, and contentment in your journey, wherever it takes you.

Thank you.

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Doty, Margarita	125	2009	Fraijo, Jeff	22	1986	Harkleroad, Katrina	35	1989
Doty, Nick	133	2011	France, Becky	82	1999	Harkness, Brian	9	1983
Dreyer, Taylor	142	2013	France, Jake	69,70,71	1997	Harkness, Dan	8	1982
Duarte, John Paul	107	2005	Freeby, Beth	27	1987	Harris, Buck	57,58,64	1995
Dunbar, Erin	53,152	1994	Freeman, Clint	81	1999	Harris, Natalia	134	2011
Duncan, Dan	78	1998	Freeman, Cody	92	2001	Harris, Paula	10	1983

Harris, Robert.....	31,32	1989	Jacobson, Mike.....	9,12	1983	Kvavle, Josh.....	73	1998
Harrison, Jodie.....	47	1992	James, Harmonie.....	69,70	1997	Kysar, Bobby.....	37	1990
Hart, Rick.....	16	1985	Jamieson, Chase.....	161	2017	Lambert, Sarah.....	100	2003
Hart, Steve.....	9	1983	Jamieson, Christian.....	141	2013	Lambrecht, Matt.....	87	2000
Hartshorn, Elsa.....	75	1998	Janisch, Josh.....	129	2010	Lane-Silliman, Lori.....	37	1990
Hathaway, Jessica.....	117	2007	Jarlov, Yannika.....	106	2004	Larsen, Sara.....	53	1994
Haugen, Quent.....	28	1987	Jennings, Tyler.....	168	2019	Larson, Jessica.....	84	1999
Haugen, Shawn.....	34	1989	Jensen, James.....	74	1998	Larson, Lyn.....	27	1987
Hawkins, Samm.....	86	2000	Jernagan, Brandi.....	21,23,99,139	1986	Lassiter, Anna.....	61,63	1996
Hayden, Ben.....	73	1998	Jernagan, Misty.....	9	1983	Lassiter, Ben.....	46,47	1992
Hayden, Dez.....	64	1996	Johnson, Andrew.....	100	2003	Latham, Jacob.....	151	2015
Hayden, Molly.....	87	2000	Johnson, Cal.....	160	2017	Latham, Nicole.....	137	2012
Hayenga, Andrea.....	92,96	2002	Johnson, Dustin.....	81	1999	Lausche, Amanda.....	74	1998
Heidegger, Ben.....	9	1983	Johnson, Ellie.....	160	2017	Lawton, Josh.....	42	1991
Heidegger, Mona.....	40	1990	Johnson, Isaac.....	159	2017	Learned, Chris.....	38	1990
Heidegger, Trish.....	28	1987	Johnson, Johnny.....	37	1990	Learned, Pat.....	26	1987
Heidegger, Wes.....	17	1985	Johnson, K.C.....	144	2013	LeBouef, Evie.....	27	1987
Heintz, Marty.....	81	1999	Johnson, Naomi.....	122	2008	LeBouef, Gina.....	33	1989
Henderson, Bo.....	92,96	2002	Johnston, Blake.....	149	2015	Ledbetter, Carl.....	7	1981
Henderson, Forest.....	109	2005	Jones, Bethany.....	133	2011	Leifson, Nadene.....	26	1987
Hendrickson, Bradley.....	155	2016	Jones, Hailey.....	146	2014	Leslie, Jackson.....	163	2018
Hendrickson, Hannah.....	135	2011	Jones, Tanya.....	53	1994	Lester, Emma.....	163	2018
Hendrickson, Jodie.....	168	2019	Jones, Wes.....	17	1985	Lester, Rob.....	14	1984
Heniken, Katrina.....	17	1985	Jordan, Jennifer.....	14	1984	Levesque, Jaime.....	113	2006
Henley, Adam.....	20	1986	Judd, Brett.....	159	2017	Lien, Brandon.....	83	1999
Henley, Nick.....	68,72	1997	Kansanback, Kevin.....	104	2004	Linn, Amanda.....	107	2005
Hering, D'Dee.....	22	1986	Kansanback, Tara.....	92	2001	Linsday, Chelsea.....	124	2009
Hering, LeeAnn.....	23	1986	Kapezynski, Heather.....	86	2000	Liston, Joe.....	43	1991
Heroux, Jessica.....	89	2001	Kauffman, Spencer.....	151	2015	Liston, Lynne.....	7	1981
Hess, Gage.....	139	2012	Kays, Kelly.....	29	1988	Livesay, Bryce.....	118	2007
Hess, Jax.....	155	2016	Kertzman, Kevin.....	26	1987	Livingston, Brook.....	41	1990
Hidalgo, Dan.....	10	1983	Kestner, Andy.....	63	1996	Livingston, Drew.....	21	1986
Hiler, Katy.....	77	1998	Kestner, David.....	96	1988	Lock, Derick.....	135	2011
Hill, Robert.....	31	1989	Kestner, Holly.....	82	1999	Lockwood, Alice.....	75	1998
Hiller, Jack.....	164,165	2018	Kestner, Todd.....	39,44	1990	Lockwood, Bobbi.....	73	1998
Hiller, Max.....	150,151	2015	Khater, Jenny.....	82	1999	Lockwood, Sierra.....	121	2008
Hoeflein, Julie.....	73	1998	King, Karen.....	36	1990	Loewen, Connor.....	159,160,161	2017
Hollifield, Mike.....	67	1997	King, Robin.....	56	1995	Loewen, Trisha.....	12	1984
Hollopeter, Renee.....	161	2017	Kiphart, Janell.....	36	1990	Lofgren, Maria.....	7	1981
Holmes, Melanie.....	95	2002	Kiphart, Monique.....	20	1986	Lowery, Gunnar.....	136	2012
Honeycutt, Dan.....	95	2002	Kissinger, Carrie.....	73,74	1998	Lynch, Diane.....	14	1984
Honeywell, Jenny.....	82	1999	Kissinger, Rusty.....	61,63,65	1996	Machia, Jason.....	27	1987
Honore, Evan.....	164	2018	Klaus, Geneson.....	113	2006	Madsen, Ashley.....	134	2011
Hoover, Robby.....	151	2015	Klingbeil, Jerilyn.....	10	1983	Maesner, Nicole.....	33	1989
Hopkins, Seth.....	47	1992	Klingbeil, Jocelyn.....	26	1987	Maesner, Traci.....	21	1986
Hord, Joey.....	78	1998	Klinke, Brandon.....	63	1996	Mahrt, Elena.....	113	2006
Horton, Phillip.....	117	2007	Koch, Kyle.....	113	2006	Mairose, Carly.....	143	2013
House, Connor.....	147	2014	Koitzsch, Colleen.....	14	1984	Maitland, Cody.....	149	2015
Housholder, Julie.....	9	1983	Kolbe, Melissa.....	18,21,99,139	1986	Manning, Jeanna.....	69	1997
Howard, Tim.....	164	2018	Kolbe, Travis.....	45	1991	Mansell, Jessie.....	114	2006
Howe, Dave.....	25	1987	Kopkie, Kevin.....	38	1990	Manwiller, Kari.....	17	1985
Howe, Theo.....	13	1984	Koprek, Wendell.....	14	1984	Marcotte, Camille.....	37	1990
Huber, Jodi.....	23	1986	Kosak, Joe.....	86	2000	Marinetti, Ariel.....	143	2013
Huddleston, Jared.....	142	2013	Kosak, Kathleen.....	90	2001	Marinetti, Jessy.....	155	2016
Humphrey, Duane.....	38	1990	Krause, Alessa.....	103	2004	Marlo, Jon.....	100	2003
Humphrey, Heidi.....	17	1985	Krois, Dawn.....	43	1991	Marshall, Ben.....	112	2006
Humphrey, Michele.....	26	1987	Kroll, Chris.....	71	1997	Marshall, Eric.....	92,96	2001
Hunter, Judd.....	59	1995	Kroll, Dawn.....	82	1999	Marshall, Nick.....	89	2001
Huss, Brian.....	5	1980	Kruse, Denise.....	20	1986	Martin-Tully, Dillon.....	124	2009
Huss, Taylor.....	161	2017	Kruse, Herb.....	17	1985	Martinez, Catherine.....	118	2007
Illyn, Andy.....	106	2004	Kruse, Kelly.....	10	1983	Martinez, Zach.....	95	2002
Irie, Hisako.....	28	1987	Kruse, Vince.....	17	1985	Marxmiller, Carlee.....	137	2012
Isims, Ervin.....	100	2003	Kulla, Isaac.....	151	2015	Matre, Sigrid.....	10	1983
Jackson, Hunter.....	154,156	2016	Kuper, Kris.....	77	1998	Matt, Jennifer.....	26	1987
Jacobson, Erica.....	156	2016	Kupfer, Bobby.....	139	2012	Matzdorff, Nicole.....	117	2007

Maunu, Sarah	100	2003	Morton, Jamie	77	1998	Pearson, Jeramey	73	1998
Maxwell, Bryan	37	1990	Moss, Pete	5,95	1980	Peasley, Amy	22	1986
Maxwell, Christie	30	1988	Mottner, Kim	26	1987	Peasley, Chris	12	1984
Maxwell, John	12	1984	Mottner, Richard	20	1986	Peasley, Randy	21	1986
Maylone, Michelle	81	1999	Moudy, Amanda	150	2015	Pehlke, Kerkula	101	2003
Mayolo, Jeffrey	160	2017	Mouser, Nick	75	1998	Perrott, Sara	104	2004
Mazna, Frank	21	1986	Muffett, Emily	150	2015	Perry, Sandy	8	1982
McAllister, Molly	164	2018	Munger, Ty	114	2006	Pershall, Aaron	69	1997
McCann, Randy	9	1983	Murphy, Jon	8	1982	Pershall, Anne	101	2003
McCulley, Ryan	105	2004	Murphy, Scott	17,18	1985	Pershall, Dan	127	2009
McDonald, Kyle	120	2008	Murphy, Todd	5	1980	Pershall, Hannah	113	2006
McDow, Phalon	151	2015	Murray, Lori	1,4	1980	Peters, Jimmy	21	1986
McGillivray, Anthony	67	1997	Myers, Bubba	126	2009	Petersen, Kirsten	45	1991
McGowen, Ireland	150	2015	Myers, Jessica	117	2007	Petersen, Tim	17	1985
McGraw, A.J.	122	2008	Myers, Ron	21	1986	Peterson, Pam	10,104	1983
McHugh, Jon	93	2001	Neiman, Derek	137	2012	Pettit, Dave	4,5,6,7,138	1980
McKay, Garret	70	1997	Nelson, Grace	154	2016	Pettit, Julia	4,6,84,135,138	1980
McLean, Wayne	13	1984	Nelson, Hallie	164	2018	Pettit, Kevin	138	2012
McLeon, Heather	106	2004	Nemjo, Jason	64	1996	Pettit, Patty	18	1985
McNamee, Bridget	123	2008	Nemjo, Jennifer	95	2002	Pettit, Philip	125	2009
McNeal, Josh	144	2013	Neuberger, Emily	104	2004	Pettit, Tim	7	1981
McNeal, Shannon	44,156	1991	Nevels, Nikki	84	1999	Pfeifer, Jubilee	97	2002
McNeal, Tony	29	1988	Newman, Amanda	81	1999	Phillips, Doug	76	1998
McPherson, Carol	41	1990	Newman, Jared	62	1996	Phillips, Jeremy	68	1997
McPherson, Kathy	20	1986	Newman, Jon	81	1999	Phillips, Mark	7	1981
McPherson, Lee	34	1989	Newman, Peter	53	1994	Piele, Walter	42	1991
McPherson, Wayne	7	1981	Newman, Rachel	76	1998	Pierce, Lisa	21	1986
McRobert, Denise	45	1991	Ney, Randy	83	1999	Plumhoff, Britta	118	2007
McRobert, Mike	10	1983	Nhem, Davina	104	2004	Plumhoff, Heidi	112	2006
Melchor, Veronica	91	2001	Nienhuser, Melissa	25	1987	Plumlee, Holly	80	1999
Mencke, Ben	58	1995	Nikolic, Katarina	68	1997	Popi, Robert	137	2012
Mencke, Emily	38,47	1992	Nilson, Robby	151	2015	Portukalian, Joleen	14	1984
Mencke, Zach	97	2002	Nolan, Sean	150	2015	Prado, Gido	36	1990
Mendez, Lupe	64	1996	Norcott, Todd	45,123	1991	Price, Jennifer	77	1998
Mendoza, Lindsay	101	2003	Norden, Kristin	6,104	1980	Price, Steven	130	2010
Meredith, Tori	37	1990	Norman, Bethany	76	1998	Prince, Lisa	10	1983
Metro, Aaron	96	2002	Norman, Lorraine	17	1985	Pummell, Jeff	29	1988
Micheletti, Morgan	147	2014	Norman, Natalie	70	1997	Pummell, Shelley	37	1990
Miles, Kari	69,70	1997	Obot, Andre	142	2013	Rahoi, Lynne	57	1995
Miller, Athena	108	2005	Obot, Colin	164	2018	Ramsey, David	77	1998
Miller, Scotty	69	1997	O'Brien, Cymany	53	1994	Ransier, Danny	57	1995
Miller, Tara	112	2006	O'Brien, Elizabeth	104	2004	Rasmussen, Mandy	64	1996
Millison, Heather	43	1991	O'Brien, Taby	25	1987	Rasmussen, Peter	80	1999
Mills, Kirk	16,152	1985	O'Donnell, Jacob	164	2018	Raya, Summer	90	2001
Misner, Jason	57	1995	Oleson, Melani	36,37	1990	Reed, Allen	26	1987
Mitkos-Goff, Kaye	150	2015	Olson, Beth	59	1995	Reed, Andrew	35	1989
Mitseim, Helen	118	2007	Olson, Eric	68	1997	Reed, Kim	4,84,135,138	1980
Moehnke, Robert	125,127	2009	Olson, Leif	53	1994	Reeder, Austin	151	2015
Monfort, Larry	79	1999	Orozco, William	57	1995	Rehfeldt, Jeremy	57	1995
Monges, Todd	20	1986	Osborn, Stewart	77	1998	Reich, Matt	25,95	1987
Monson, Andrew	113	2006	Ostenson, Kari	64	1996	Reinard, Patrick	64	1996
Monson, Kiley	133	2011	Ostreim, Bryan	43	1991	Rengo, Cleave	125	2009
Montei, Kelli	34	1989	Owens, Brian	27	1987	Renner, Janel	53	1994
Moore, Natasha	122	2008	Padilla, Brad	125	2009	Renner, Michael	69,71	1997
Morales, Mark	10	1983	Padilla, Brandon	118	2007	Renner, Patty	43	1991
Moreton, Kurt	129	2010	Padilla, Brennan	129	2010	Renner, Tom	31	1989
Morgan, Dalton	155	2016	Page, Angie	13	1984	Reuter, Coree	105,152	2004
Morken, Jamie	92	2001	Page, Ted	22	1986	Reuter, Justin	73	1998
Morken, Renee	92	2001	Papke, Jeff	32,33	1989	Reyes, Sophia	154	2016
Morris, Marty	4,5	1980	Parker, Robyn	108	2005	Reynolds, Daniel	151	2015
Morris, Ray	8	1982	Parmentier, Mason	146	2014	Reynolds, Jenny	144	2013
Morris, Rhonda	8	1982	Parsons, John	144	2013	Rhodes, Hunter	134	2011
Morris, Theresa	16,17	1985	Parsons, Luke	100	2003	Rhoten, Becky	8	1982
Morris, Ty	163	2018	Passmore, Larry	26	1987	Rice, Cale	99	2003
Morrison, Kelsey	134	2011	Passmore, Troy	32	1989	Rice, Kjell	87	2000

Rice, Will	151	2015	Seebald, Tina	18	1985	Spengler, Colette	21	1986
Richardson, Brian	35	1989	Seter, Brody	156	2016	Spinella, Dylan	143	2013
Richardson, Heather	105	2004	Settles, Jodi	84	1999	Sprenger, David	36	1990
Richardson, Jennifer	38	1990	Sexton, Bridgette	105	2004	Sprenger, Debbie	10	1983
Rinaker, Katie	115	2006	Sexton, Hollie	86,105	2000	Stadler, Joe	27	1987
Rinaker, Nate	100	2003	Sexton, Ryan	76	1998	Stanley, Dean	9,102	1983
Rinaker, Tim	87	2000	Shaffer, Cole	73	1998	Stanley, Eric	101	2003
Rispler, Bobby	91	2001	Shaffer, Jana	31	1989	Stanley, Peter	118	2007
Rispler, Danny	96	2002	Shaffer, Robby	29	1988	Stanley, Vicky	104	2004
Rispler, Kelly	108	2005	Shaffer, Robby	97	2002	Starfas, Mike	30	1988
Ritola, Annette	42	1991	Shaffer, Tom	62	1996	Steen, Dianna	26	1987
Ritola, Dan	33	1992	Shambo, Tonia	34	1989	Steen, Justin	42	1991
Ritola, Melissa	29	1988	Shannon, Jason	98	2002	Stephens, Matt	75	1998
Ritola, Michelle	21	1986	Shannon, Shawn	95	2002	Stephens, Seth	62	1996
Ritola, Steve	74	1998	Sharpe, Robert	120	2008	Stevens, Chauntell	23	1986
Ritola, Wendy	33	1989	Shattuck, Vicky	9	1983	Stokke, Becky	44	1991
Rivera, Sara	109	2005	Shealy, Branden	99	2003	Stokke, Iver	47	1992
Rivers, Andrew	29	1988	Sheldon, Elizabeth	130	2010	Stolee, Nicole	38	1990
Rivers, Jason	44	1991	Sheldon, Eric	47	1992	Stradley, Trever	91	2001
Rivers, Wayne	21	1986	Sheldon, Mathew	151	2015	Straughan, Angie	12	1984
Roche, Tami	87	2000	Shufeldt, Michael	153,154	2016	Straughan, Todd	31	1989
Rogers, Mandy	111	2006	Shultz, Matt	44	1991	Strickland, Chris	81	1999
Roggenkamp, Brittney	113	2006	Shultz, Sheila	35	1989	Strickland, Matt	77	1998
Roler, Ryan	101	2003	Siebert, Wyatt	165	2018	Stuart, Grace	32	1989
Roller, Davey	50	1993	Sievila, Jenny	77	1998	Sugiyama, Harumi	34	1989
Roller, Sam	47	1992	Silliman, Mark	32	1989	Sullivan, Kellan	157	2016
Rose, Corey	138	2012	Singletary, Nephresha	80	1999	Summerhill, Kate	126	2009
Rose, Jason	53	1994	Skillings, Bobbi	10	1983	Sunrise, Vicki	45	1991
Rose, Terra	101	2003	Skillings, Gerald	13	1984	Svir, David	25	1987
Ross, Laura	126	2009	Skinner, Nyemah	129	2010	Szekely, Kersty	141	2013
Royal, Charlotte	156	2016	Skinner, Rebekah	160	2017	Tackett, Lea	21	1986
Ruppert, Vance	59	1995	Skinner, Steven	129	2010	Taggart, Tim	12	1984
Rusk, Jeni	47	1992	Slack, Laura	85	2000	Taylor, Bob	69,72	1997
Russell, Jason	42	1991	Slempa, Pete	36	1990	Taylor, Brent	90	2001
Russell, Jenny	44	1991	Smith, Adrian	32	1989	Taylor, Brian	79,80	1999
Russell, Jessica	53	1994	Smith, Alicen	155	2016	Taylor, Greg	20,21	1986
Sabo, Dana	32	1989	Smith, Amber	118	2007	Taylor, Jeff (Biff)	114	2006
Sabo, Troy	21	1986	Smith, Cody	131	2010	Taylor, Kevin	38	1990
Sahling, Alaina	111	2006	Smith, Jana	58	1995	Taylor, Nikki	134	2011
Samuelson, Kevin	64	1996	Smith, Jenny	47	1992	Taylor, Scott	90	2001
Sandhu, Harveen	126	2009	Smith, Jessica	108,110	2005	Taylor, Shawn	50,103	1993
Santos, Brooke	80	1999	Smith, Josh	37,40	1990	Taylor, Stephen	103	2004
Santos, Monica	114	2006	Smith, Lori	27	1987	Teel, Jeremy	105	2004
Sap, Whitney	111	2006	Smith, Marc	32,131	1989	Tetz, Wyatt	151	2015
Sawyer, Amiya	64	1996	Smith, Matt	73,77	1998	Tetzlaff, Calvin	154	2016
Scanlan, Kelsey	108	2005	Smith, Michelle	45	1991	Tetzlaff, Colton (Boris)	155	2016
Scanlan, Tom	104	2004	Smith, Misti	57,59,156	1995	Thacker, Ian	159	2017
Schader, Erica	47	1992	Smith, Olivia	84	1999	Thatcher, Jenny	26	1987
Schader, Troy	58	1995	Smith, Pete	37	1990	Thompson, Adam	138	2012
Schaer, Kim	50,156	1993	Smith, Timothy	158,159	2017	Thompson, Ashley	108	2005
Schlentz, Nick	73	1998	Smith, Whitney	138	2012	Thompson, Stephanie	95	2002
Schmitz, Brandon	83	1999	Snider, Misty	63	1996	Thornton, Andy	50	1993
Schmitz, Nate	96	2002	Snider, Suzette	29	1988	Thornton, Jeff	39,41	1990
Schmitz, Suzie Kestner	96	2002	Snider, Vince	31	1989	Thornton, Kim	26	1987
Schouten, Ryan	56,57	1995	Snook, Trevor	130	2010	Tillotson, Mike	26	1987
Schrader, Sue	14	1984	Snyder Ken	16	1985	Tippy, Rani	105	2004
Schultz, Tiffany	70	1997	Snyder, Gary	9	1983	Townsend, Tobin	165	2018
Schultz, Tosha	87	2000	Snyder, Heidi	42	1991	Towse, Heather	87	2000
Schutt, Shelley	26	1987	Snyder, Jamey	31	1989	Traffie, Jana	37	1990
Schutt, Sherry	6	1980	Snyder, Shannon	25	1987	Traffie, Karla	32	1989
Scott, Jeff	18	1985	Soehl, Bill	10	1983	Traffie, Rosa	125	2009
Scott, Jeremy	159	2017	Soma, Kevin	10	1983	Traffie, Seth	108	2005
Scott, Shelley	9	1983	Soule, Wendie	32	1989	Trigg, Hannah	130	2010
Scribner, Tyler	129	2010	Spaulding, Tina	23	1986	Trigg, Jesse	73	1998
Sebunia-Lahti, Monique	43	1991	Spencer, Beth	39	1990	Tronson, Amanda	74	1998

Tryon, Jeremy.....	36	1990	Weese, Cathy	44	1991	Zerfing, Joe	108	2005
Turk, Dylan	160	2017	Weese, Eric	121	2008	Ziemens, Johannes	103	2004
Turner, Brooks	90	2001	Wells, Ralph.....	62	1996	Zoltz, Kalli	126	2009
Turner, Nick	81	1999	West, Chris	108	2005	Zumstein, Cyrus	168	2019
Uskoski, Dan	20	1986	Westby, Becci.....	135	2011	Zumstein, Samantha	146	2014
Uskoski, Scott.....	27	1987	Westerberg, Noah	158	2017			
Uyesugi, Joel.....	122	2008	Wiese, Birthe.....	121	2008			
Uyesugi, Kevin	133	2011	Wilen, Adrienne	134	2011			
Van Tol, Jeff	50	1993	Wilen, Lindsey	116	2007			
Van Tol, Justin.....	136	2012	Wiley, Tracy.....	5	1980			
VanBreenen, Paul	50	1993	Williams, Alicia	77	1998			
Vanderhoef, Zach	137	2012	Williams, Erin	67,68,71	1997			
VanDinter, Teena.....	9	1983	Williams, Ian	148	2014			
VanDinter, Troy	18,19	1985	Williams, Kim	38	1990			
Vansoest, Derek	131	2010	Williams, Nathan.....	62	1996			
VanWeerdhuizen, Derek.....	68,69,70	1997	Williams, Sean	148	2014			
VanWeerdhuizen, Dustin	78	1998	Williams, Vanessa.....	92	2001			
Varju, Jake.....	127	2009	Williamson, Wyatt.....	125	2009			
Verdin, Julia.....	50	1993	Wilson, Baine	1,10,60,145	1983			
Verhagen, Kassy.....	120	2008	Wilson, Beth.....	33,143,156	1989			
Vermeulen, Shelby.....	154	2016	Wilson, Bryan	18,156	1985			
Vinson, Sean.....	100	2003	Wilson, Kyle	128	2010			
Vinson, Shanna.....	78	1998	Wilson, Rylee	155	2016			
Vis, Emily.....	134	2011	Winchell, Kristie	5,6	1980			
Vis, Liz.....	76	1998	Wing, Finn.....	165	2018			
Voshell, Glenn.....	9	1983	Wing, Kieslana	127	2009			
Voshell, Les.....	20	1986	Winn, Jenny.....	6,83	1999			
Wade, Mark	96	2002	Winn, Mark.....	7	1981			
Wagenman, Barb	18	1985	Winn, Tim	6,84	1980			
Wagenman, Ben.....	21	1986	Winston, Mark.....	68,70,71	1997			
Waite, Erik	28	1987	Winston, Wade.....	50	1993			
Waliezer, Gary.....	44	1991	Winters, Misti	44	1991			
Waliezer, Katie	89	2001	Wismeth, Brandi.....	43	1991			
Walker, Jeremy	92	2001	Wohlert, Kurt.....	150,151	2015			
Walker, Joe.....	92	2001	Wolverton, Jamey	36,40,97	1990			
Walker, Karissa.....	139	2012	Wolverton, Thomas	50	1993			
Walker, Tom	27	1987	Wong, Leo.....	37,38	1990			
Wallace, Renee	73,74	1998	Wood, Matt.....	58	1995			
Walstad, Angela	26	1987	Wood, Mike.....	77	1998			
Ward, Amy	16,135	1985	Wood, Pam	30	1988			
Ward, Donna.....	10	1983	Wood, Sara	50	1993			
Ward, Mary	34	1989	Woodrum, Clay	147	2014			
Ward, Michelle.....	15,119	1985	Woods, Brett.....	151	2015			
Warden, Roger	27	1987	Woodside, Erin	39	1990			
Warner, Cara	64	1996	Woodside, Jason	29	1988			
Warner, Jon.....	37	1990	Woodside, Lacey.....	83	1999			
Warner, Karen	20	1986	Woody, Renee	81,97	1999			
Warren, Chris.....	32	1989	Wooldridge, Andy	33,145	1989			
Warren, Jeff.....	17	1985	Wooldridge, Kali.....	147	2014			
Warren, Jerry.....	34	1989	Workman, Holly	95	2002			
Washburn, Carrie	9	1983	Workman, Treena.....	26	1987			
Washburn, Curtis	17	1985	Wozny, Sue	10	1983			
Watson, Dayna.....	70	1997	Wydronek, Emily.....	134	2011			
Watson, Jake	47	1992	Wydronek, Kelly	125	2009			
Wattenbarger, Jimmy.....	16,110	1985	Xavier, Rachel.....	78	1998			
Wattenbarger, Jina	9	1983	Yamashita, Alex	53	1994			
Wattenbarger, Sara.....	110	2005	Yamashita, Brianna.....	64	1996			
Weaver, Marilyn.....	155	2016	Yengin, Atahan.....	74	1998			
Weaver, Dennis.....	5	1981	Yimumnuay, Om	130	2010			
Weaver, Mason.....	164	2018	York, Brian.....	41	1990			
Weaver, Ray	13	1984	York, David.....	17	1985			
Weaver, Scott.....	50,156	1993	York, Pat.....	26	1987			
Webberley, Lynn	22	1986	York, Tom	32	1989			
Weddle, Dustin	108	2005	Young, Matt	87	2000			
Weeks, Jake	103	2004	Zeff, Rebecca	112	2006			