

# **Dartmouth College Commencement**

**Bobby Hobart**



## Some facts:

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- Dartmouth's first commencement was on the Green in 1771.
- Doesn't get cancelled for weather, gets cancelled for war
- Nowadays caps and gowns are made from recycled bottles!

## STUDIES OF AN ORATOR.

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ELOQUENCE has ever been honored. Men have admired and praised him who, by argument or persuasion, has been able to excite and guide the minds of great masses of people. The orator has stood side by side with the poet. Rhetoric, unfortunately, has held a more precarious position,—a position alternately of undeserved fame, and of unmerited neglect. At one period it embraced, within its dubious limits, all science, all literature, all that was necessary for the complete education of the scholar. At another, it paid, for a too ambitious empire, the heavy penalty of degradation and entire neglect. Some remnants of dishonor have clung to the art, even until the present time. Where criticism begins, eloquence has been thought to end. Rhetoric,—its opponents have said,—is adverse to the highest eloquence, or at least, not exactly congenial with it. It is a lifeless art; it does not teach us to contemplate beauty in a supple, living body, but, with scalpel and forceps, to examine the mechanism of the dead. In the midst of thrilling music and graceful motion, it tells us that the music and the motion were made by contracting or dilating the glottis, by swelling or expanding a muscle. The name is significant; and while elo-

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NOTE.—The substance of this Address was prepared, at our solicitation, as an article for the American Biblical Repository, and appeared in the No. of that work for April, 1841. A few hundred extra copies are printed in this form at the request of the Students of Dartmouth College.

EDITORS.



but not the best. The irrefragable Doctor, with his chains of inductions, his corollaries, dilemmas, and other cunning logical diagrams and apparatus, will cast you a beautiful horoscope, and speak you reasonable things; nevertheless, the stolen jewel, which you wanted him to find you, is not forthcoming. Often by some winged word—winged as the thunderbolt is—of a Luther, a Napoleon, a Goethe, shall we see the difficulty split asunder, and its secret laid bare; while the Irrefragable, with all his logical roots, hews at it, and hovers round it, and finds it on all sides too hard for him."

Poetry not only offers us the language of emotion, but produces emotion, and emotion elicits thought. It has been well remarked of the great English dramatist, that he has been true to nature, in placing the "greater number of his profoundest maxims and general truths, both political and moral, not in the mouths of men at ease, but of men under the influence of passion, when the mighty thoughts overmaster and become the tyrants of the mind which has brought them forth." Then the mind rushes, by intuition, upon the truth; scorns subtle and useless distinctions; disregards entirely the husk, seizes and appropriates the kernel. Emotion in the speaker produces emotion in the hearer. You must feel, you must sympathize with him. Your mind darts, with the speaker's, right through the textures which cover up the subject, and grasps the heart of it. How deadening are the words of some passionless men. Like a dull mass of inert matter, their lifeless thought stretches across the path of your spirit. Different, indeed, are the words of another, to whom has been given some spark of ethereal fire. His words become to you a law of life. They start your sluggish spirit from its dull equilibrium, and its living wheels shall thenceforth move whithersoever the spirit that is in them moves. Rarely has been found that combination of qualities necessary to the greatest orator,—dignity, enthusiasm, wit, the power of sarcasm, the power of soothing, philosophy which does not despise imagination, imagination which does not spurn the restraints of philosophy.

The great orator must be a great man,—a severe student in broad and deep studies. He must thoroughly know his materials, his models, the history of his race, and most of all, the heart within him. Then shall he have power to struggle in the noblest contest,—that of mind with mind, for the noblest object,—the well being of his race.

With much solicitude, Respected Guardians of the College, I have ventured to accept the appointment with which you have honored me. The labors of the office, though sufficiently arduous, will be alleviated by the sympathy of associates, and, I will believe, by the love of learning in those who shall resort hither for instruction. Its studies, I have just now to enter upon. They open a field large and pleasant enough for the best abilities and taste. It is gratifying to remember, that in other times, they have not been pursued in vain; that there have gone forth from these halls, men, who for eloquence in their several professions, have deserved well of their country. By a beautiful law of our nature, we know that they cannot gain a single new honor, without reflecting some additional lustre upon the institution which nurtured them. May the past be a prophecy for a still better future. In returning so unexpectedly to this place, I cannot but remember how others have toiled in this fair but difficult field. I cannot but remember that sad event which made another appointment in this department necessary. May the mantle of the Fathers rest upon their descendants. May those who shall follow in the same office, be, in every relation and duty, as faithful as he, who, since your last anniversary, so serenely went to his rest,—to his reward.

EXERCISES  
FOR  
COMMENCEMENT,

Dartmouth College,

JULY 29, 30, 31, 1856.



*Shupid Dartmouth.*

## "Don't Join the Book-Burners"

*Following is a transcript of President Eisenhower's informal remarks to the graduating class at Dartmouth's 187th Commencement. This is based primarily on the WDBS tape recording, with editorial choice exercised in a couple of instances where the President's words were not entirely clear.*

**P**RESIDENT DICKEY, Secretary Pearson, members of Dartmouth's family, and their friends:

Your president possesses a brash bravery approaching foolhardiness when he gives to me this platform in front of such an audience with no other admonition except to say, "speak informally" — and giving me no limits of any other kind.

He has forgotten, I think, that old soldiers love to reminisce, and that they are in addition notoriously garrulous. But I have certain limitations of my own, learned throughout these many years, and I think they will serve to keep me from offending too deeply.

But even if I do offend, I beg in advance the pardon of those families and friends and sweethearts that are waiting to greet these new graduates (with a chaste handshake of congratulation) and assure you that any overstaying of my time was unintentional, and just merely a product of my past upbringing.

First, I could not pass this occasion without the traditional congratulations to this class on the completion of four years of arduous work at a college of such standing as Dartmouth, and of which there is no higher.

Next, I think I may be pardoned if I congratulate you on the quality of the addresses you have heard today up to this moment. I think that your commencement address and the two valedictory addresses established a standard that could well be one to be emulated even here in the future.

**N**ow, with your permission, I want to talk about two points — two qualities — that are purely personal. I am not going to be an exhorter, as Secretary Pearson has said. I want to talk about these two things, and merely suggest to you certain ideas concerning them.

I am going to talk about fun — joy — happiness: just fun in life. And I am going to talk a little about courage.

Now, as to fun, to get myself straight at once, for fear that in my garrulous way I might stray from my point, I shall say this:

Unless each day can be looked back upon by an individual as one in which he has had some fun, some joy, some real satisfaction, that day is a loss. It is un-Christian and wicked, in my opinion, to allow such a thing to occur.

Now, there are many, many different things and thoughts

and ideas that will contribute — many acts of your own that will contribute — to the fun you have out of life. You go along a bank — a stream bank — in the tropics, and there is a crocodile lying in the sun. He looks the picture of contentment. They tell me that often they live to be a great age — a hundred years and more — still lying in the sun, and that is all they do.

Now, by going to Dartmouth, by coming this far along the road, you have achieved certain standards, and one of those standards is, it is no longer so easy for you to have fun. You can't be like a crocodile and sleep away your life and be satisfied. You must do something, and normally it must involve others — something you do for them. The satisfaction

— it's trite, but it's true — the satisfaction of a clear conscience, no matter what happens.

You get a lot of fun out of shooting a good game of golf. But you wouldn't have the slightest fun out of it if you knew to achieve that first 79 — you broke 80 today — if you did it by teeing up in the rough or taking the slightest advantage anywhere, and no one else in the world but you knew it. That game would never be a 79 to you. And so it wasn't worth while because you had no fun doing it.

Whatever you do — a little help to someone along the road, something you've achieved because you've worked hard for it, like your graduation diploma today — those things [that] have become worth while in your own estimation will contribute to your happiness. They will measure up to your standards, because your standards have become those that only you know. But they have become very high, and if you do those things they are the kind of things that will satisfy you, and make life something that is joyous, that will cause your face to spread out a little, instead of drawing up this way [indicating a long face] — and there's too much of that in the world anyway.

You are leaders. You are bound to be leaders; you have had advantages that will make you leaders to someone, whether you know it or not. There will be tough problems to solve. You've heard about them. You can't solve them with long faces. They don't solve problems — not when they deal with humans. Humans have to have confidence. You've got to help give it to them.

**T**HUS brings me to my second little topic, which is courage. I forget the author, but one many years ago, you know, uttered that famous saying, "The coward dies a thousand deaths but the brave man dies but once."

In other words, you can live happily if you have courage, because you are not fearing something that you can't help. You must have courage to look at all about you with honest



PRESIDENT EISENHOWER SPEAKING



## DON'T JOIN THE BOOK BURNERS

Don't think you're going to conceal faults by concealing evidence that they ever existed. Don't be afraid to go in your library and read every book, as long as any document does not offend our own ideas of decency. That should be the only censorship.

How will we defeat communism unless we know what it is, what it teaches, and why does it have such an appeal for men, why are so many people swearing allegiance to it? It's almost a religion, albeit one of the nether regions.

And we have got to fight it with something better, not try to conceal the thinking of our own people. They are part of America. And even if they think ideas that are contrary to ours, their right to say them, their right to record them, and their right to have them at places where they're accessible to others is unquestioned, or it's not America. DWIGHT DAVID EISENHOWER

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From the remarks of the President of the United States at the Dartmouth College Commencement on June 14th, 1953. Published by the Dartmouth College Library, Hanover, New Hampshire.

# 1962 An Astronaut's Words

*As an impromptu speaker near the close of the Commencement exercises, Commander Alan B. Shepard Jr. addressed the following remarks to the graduating class.*

PRESIDENT DICKEY, faculty, friends of Dartmouth, members of the canine corps, and fellow classmates. A few months ago I received a letter from Hanover that said: "Dear Commander Shepard: We would like to have you come to Hanover for a quiet weekend." Here I stand and I still have the letter in my pocket. President Dickey quietly referred to my origins in New Hampshire; he quietly referred to my father's class, 1913, and I suppose in deference to the Class of 1912, we should call the Class of '13 the forty-niners. It is for these two reasons, of course — coming from New Hampshire and having a Dartmouth graduate for a father — that I am particularly proud to be here today.

I'll only say a few words because I am anxious to get water skiing this afternoon and I'm sure you're anxious to get on to other pursuits. From the looks of some of the young ladies' faces here I understand that these pursuits will terminate abruptly in several chapels before too long.

I would like to say a few words about national strategy and national posture. My classmate, Mr. Dean, has very nicely defined national strategy. I would like to do so again very briefly. It is, of course, many-faceted. It comprises military strategy, political strategy, psychological, economic, and more recently technological. I have had the opportunity to experience both military strategy in my work and, of course, more recently to experience the effect of technological strategy.

I think quite possibly some of you — maybe unwillingly — will have the experience in the future of military strategy and I'm sure that there are many of you who have had very close touch with technological strategy.

As a matter of fact, in our space program the Space



Administration is opening a two-way street for the exchange of information between us and all the colleges and universities throughout the land. Of course I'm primarily interested in very objective technology. That's my business. On the other hand, there is a need for a great deal of research, and I hope that you gentlemen will endeavor to choose in part at least some of these fields.

Why do I feel so strongly about national strategy? Well, Mr. Dean just spoke about our present antagonist, the Russian ideology. I am quite firmly of the belief that we must have an antagonist in our society. In the theater, for example, without an antagonist the play is flimsy. I do not intend to speak specifically against the Communist challenge. Mr. Dean described that very nicely. I intend only to say that we must realize that for this society of ours to flourish — to exist — we must dove-tail all these facets of our national strategy into a posture that will enable us to exist.

Let me say this: That if you will promise to support our national strategy and our national posture, I will promise to continue to provide motivation.

Congratulations and thank you.



Dartmouth College News Service  
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## TEXT OF COMMENCEMENT ADDRESS

by Whitney North Seymour

President elect of the American Bar Association,  
at Dartmouth College, Hanover, New Hampshire,  
June 12, 1960

### THE DISINTERESTED CITIZEN AND THE MAINTENANCE OF FREEDOM

It is a great privilege to participate on this occasion. You can imagine with what pride a father first wears a golden tassel like that worn by the Dean.

To a lawyer, Dartmouth represents, among other things, an important milestone in the history of freedom. Daniel Webster, of the class of 1801, persuaded the Supreme Court in the famous Dartmouth College case, decided in 1819, that under the Constitution, private colleges were entitled to be free of state control contrary to their charters. This principle has been an important factor in insuring the vital freedom of

lawyer which is a main distinction between our system and the Communist

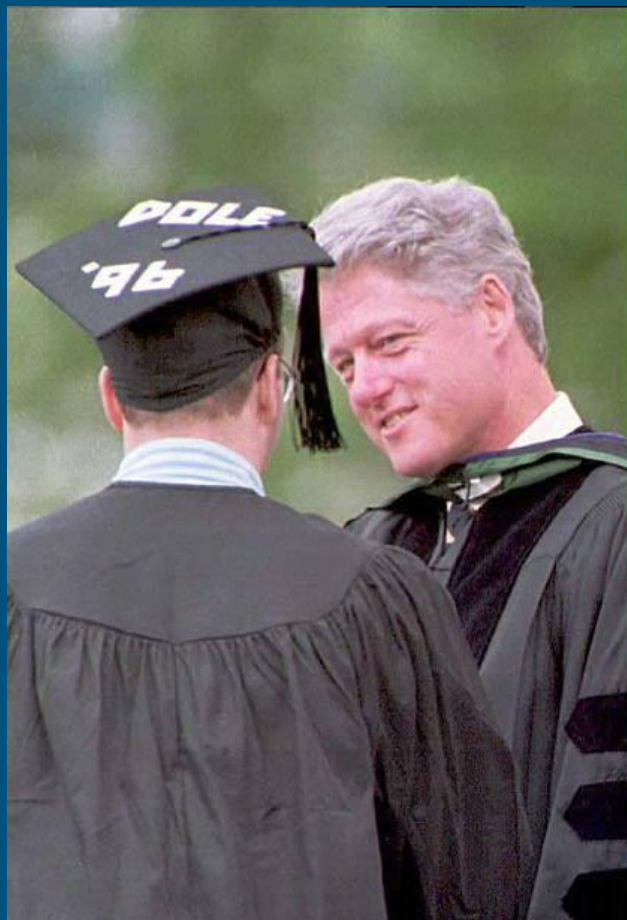
any Government agency, however benevolent. Other citizens should join with our lawyers in seeking to advance the rule of law in the world and to insure a system of peace with justice. In short, the ranks of the disinterested citizens constantly need recruits; they have plenty of problems which are urgent; they are the intellectual and civic militia of our system. If each of us does his part from day to day, long after

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Khrushchev and other tyrants who throw such long dark shadows today, have been forgotten, America will remain the beacon of freedom and justice to mankind, which it has been since the Republic was founded.

Then Webster and all the others who have loved this small college can feel that their heritage has been conserved and that the spirit of free inquiry will be handed on to those who follow us. Great issues, which you have freely explored here will then have been dealt with greatly, as they deserve.

May I close with a portion of an epitaph to a Charleston lawyer,





# Where to from here?

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- Focusing in on the Cold War
  - Ways that Cold War rhetoric shaped commencement speeches as demonstrated in Shepard and Seymour speeches
- Kennan speech

