

Address to the TH&VS Graduating Class

June 20, 2024

Ralph Carr, TH&VS graduate 1969

Good evening, everyone. It's an honor to be here tonight. I've been here many times - graduating myself in 1969 and watching five of my children and four of my grandchildren graduate from here as well. However, tonight is especially meaningful because I'm told it's the 100th year celebration of graduating students from Timmins High and Vocational School.

From 1914, this high school was located on the upper level of what was known as the Marshall Ecclestone Building at the southeast corner of Third and Pine, where the Sushi Shop is now. That was the high school in the beginning for a few years. So, Timmins High has certainly changed a lot over the years, with this being the third iteration of the Timmins High School building.

I want to especially congratulate all graduates. This night is special for many reasons, not just for the school, but also for each of you on a personal level. Timmins High has been a significant part of my life. I spent five years here in the 1960's and grew up during my time in high school. I loved high school, especially Grade 11 - so much that I spent two years in Grade 11! I had a 96% average in grade 11 - 46 % the first year, and the balance the second year. But I learned a lot, grew up a bit, and eventually pursued further schooling.

The challenges we faced back then are similar to the ones kids face today. We worked things out in the dressing rooms, arenas, football fields, and in the hallways of the old school, just as you do now.

I'd also like to congratulate not only the students but the moms, dads, grandparents, and teachers. You've all played a part in



bringing these young people to this point, and it doesn't stop here. We all continue to need support and encouragement throughout life. Maturity brings with it the satisfaction of offering encouragement to others, just as you've received it.

Tonight marks a real milestone for you, graduates. You're moving from one stage of life to another - it's a rite of passage. You've played on boys' and girls' teams, but as you move forward, you'll be playing on men's and women's teams. This isn't just a change in name; it reflects the new phase of life you're entering.

I think of the kids who graduated 100 years ago - maybe even on this very night, on the 20th or 21st of June, in the old high school. Just like you, they were laughing, hugging, and reminiscing, but also a little anxious about what lay ahead. Life isn't easy, and it's short, but tonight is a time to celebrate and look forward with excitement and determination.

In fact, that first year they graduated, they were between two wars, and I think the sense of gloom was as pervasive then as it is perhaps now. I live in an old house on Hemlock Street, built in 1914, and a few years ago, during renovations, I found a diary between the rafters, between the floors. It belonged to a young man named George. I won't share his last name, though there's no reason for anyone to feel embarrassed by it. I have the diary with me



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tonight - a little red book. George was a student at Timmins High School, as it wasn't known as TH&VS yet.

Back in those days, people didn't have as many of the things we have now, so high school students kept diaries. This one dates back to 1927. It's a boy's diary - you can see it on the front cover, with illustrations of a couple of boys boxing and other activities. I'd like to read a short entry to you.

This one is from Friday, February 18th, 1927.

George was likely 15 or 16 years old and attending Timmins High. He wrote:

"Friday - I was nearly late this morning. After school, I played football. Tonight, I was going to go out but didn't. Yesterday, I got my report card. I came eighth in a class of 34. I've completed 60% of the year so far. I like physiography" - I'm not quite sure what that is! He goes on to talk about hockey.

As I read through this diary, George talks about girls, parties, playing sports, and life in general. He didn't mention TikTok, (whatever that is,) but a lot of what he wrote about is not so different from your experiences today - and it was the same for me back in the 1960s.

It's remarkable to have this diary because it reminds me that, while times change, in some ways, they remain the same. The first takeaway from George's story is that life is short. His family has been gone from the earth for quite some time. George was probably born around 1912. Even if he had lived to be 100, he's been gone for a while now, and he didn't live that long. But he had a good life.

There's an old saying: "Life, at best, is very brief - it's like the falling of a leaf or the binding of a sheaf." Time passes quickly. King David, one of the great minds of antiquity, once said, "Teach us to number our days, that we may gain a heart of wisdom. Wisdom, unlike knowledge, is

the ability to apply what you know in a way that benefits others".

I wonder what your teachers have been saying in the staff room this week. Probably a lot of things, including looking forward to summer vacation, but when they thought about you, I'm sure one of them wondered, "What kind of class will this be? What kind of graduating class do we have this year?"

I've thought about some of the graduates from Timmins High and Vocational School in years past. I've attended three TH&VS reunions. The first one was in 1981, and 8,000 people came back. It was a huge event. The McIntyre Arena, the Archie Dillon Sportsplex, and the Curling Club were all packed, divided by age groups. I remember sitting there at the McIntyre Arena with my wife, watching a man on the floor. He was in his 50s, though back then I thought of him as old. People were hugging him and talking to him, and it was clear he was significant.

I later learned his name was Cec Linder. How many of you have heard of Cec Linder? He was a big-time Hollywood actor back then, and he, like many others from Timmins High, made his mark on the world.

In fact, he was in *Goldfinger*. He played the CIA guy who worked alongside James Bond. He was here in the 1930s - his father was the rabbi - and he returned for the reunion, clearly having a wonderful time reminiscing, with people delighted to see him. I also remember the next reunion in 2000, when Shania Twain came back. A hush fell over the crowd as people whispered, "She's here, she's here." She was at the height of her popularity then.

I've been thinking about some of the other well-known people who've come out of this school - NHL players like Hector Marini and Paul Harrison. Alan Stanley, a Hall of Famer, also



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attended Timmins High, though he may have left early to play junior hockey. Have you heard of William Aide? He was a great Canadian pianist, and after Glenn Gould, he was considered one of the finest. William Aide graduated from Timmins High. And there's Terry Hack, as well as two senators and several cabinet ministers, including the great Alan Pope.

You might be thinking, "Well, that's not me." And you know what? It's not me either. Those people are in a class of their own, and tonight, we'll talk a bit more about success and what it means to be successful. By many standards, they were successful, but it's also important to remember that not every "big" person ends up leading a truly successful life.

As I reflect on them, I also think of another group -the names on those big brown boards across from the office. Have you ever looked at those? Do you know whose names are listed there? They are the men and women who fought in World War II, and about 30 stars mark the names of those who never returned.

We may look up to the superstars who have achieved great things, but in my view, the real heroes are the ones who volunteered to protect our freedoms, knowing they might face death. These are the people we should hold in the highest regard. I hope you'll never have to fight in a war like that, but I do hope you'll embody that same sense of service, looking after those who come after you, just as they did. They were a great generation.

This brings to mind Constantine (Gus) D'Amato, Mike Tyson's trainer. He once said, "Heroes and cowards feel the same fear, but heroes respond differently." We all experience fear, but what matters is how we face it. In your lives, you will face challenges - difficult, even painful ones - but remember that you're not alone. We all go

through it. As Babe Ruth once said, "Don't let the fear of striking out keep you from stepping up to the plate."

So, what kind of class will you be? I started by saying that your teachers probably wonder what this 100th graduating class from Timmins High and Vocational School will be like. A month ago, I listened to an interview with Jim Harbaugh, the coach of the Michigan Wolverines. He won the NCAA national football championship this year. He was talking about his time as an assistant coach for Bo Schembechler at Michigan years before.

Harbaugh remembered a meeting before the season where someone asked, "Coach, what kind of team will we have this year?"

Harbaugh thought he'd answer by wondering how many players would make it to the NFL, how many would make All Pro or maybe even Hall of Famers. Instead, the coach said, "We won't know what kind of team we have for 20 years. We'll only know then what kind of men they've become." What kind of people they'll be - good dads, good husbands, good teammates at work. Will they be honorable, kind, considerate, compassionate, and virtuous? Will they be honest, hard-working people?

Harbaugh was right. If you want to be successful, it's not just about your achievements - it's about who you are as a person. When we look back and wonder what kind of class this will be, it will be measured by how you handle the challenges you face in life. Trust me, there will be tough times, times that bring tears to your eyes. But support each other, encourage one another, and strive to be people of virtue - honest, hard-working, principled people.

If you do that, you will be truly successful. God bless you all.



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What is the THAA?

The TH&VS Alumni Association (THAA) is a non-profit charitable organization established in 1999 by a group of alumni and former staff members. Currently there are 10 board members and the TH&VS principal who serves in an advisory role. The THAA:

- is responsible for the sustained growth and annual income disbursement of the funds it receives. In return, as a registered non-profit charity, it issues tax receipts for any donations.
- annually provides funds for scholarships with input from the staff and administration (\$21,500 in June 2024).
- publishes an annual alumni newsletter.
- maintains a website for TH&VS alumni (www.thvsalumni.ca).

Want to Donate or Create a TH&VS scholarship?

- While there are several options depending on the size of the investment, most scholarships are based on the interest generated annually by the investment of funds with the THAA.
- As a charitable organization registered with the Canada Revenue Agency, we will issue a tax receipt for the total donation. Contact us at info@thvsalumni.ca for more information. TH&VS Student Services is ready to assist the donor in establishing criteria for the award.



Check out **TH&VS Alumni Community** on Facebook for memories and news on the successful bursary initiative by TH&VS Alumni for new TH grads.

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/1234958369987624/> (1,937 members, Sep 2024)

Scholarships invested with the THAA and awarded at June 2024 graduation:

Brent Read Memorial Scholarship
Bruno Toffanello Memorial Scholarship
Craig Beda Memorial Scholarship
David Fong Photography Scholarship
Doug Howie Memorial Scholarship
Ed Collins Scholarship
Elise Moisan Haralovich Bursary
Eric Peterson Memorial Scholarship
Evelyn Rymer Memorial Scholarship
Frank Graf Scholarship
Frank Michaud Memorial Bursary
Hedy Baker-Graf Scholarship
Helen Evanoff Memorial Award
Helge Kleven Scholarship (2)
Lily Anderson Scholarship
Lori-Ann Teixeira Memorial Scholarship
Margaret Clausi Memorial Scholarship
May Family Scholarship
Polish White Eagle Society Bursary
Rigg Family Scholarship
Rita Seccombe Art Scholarship
Ryan Reid Bursary
Schumacher Alumni Scholarship
Sean Graf Scholarship
Shania Twain Scholarships (2)
Susan Hall Memorial Scholarship
TH&VS Staff Appreciation Bursary (2)

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