

Bret Logue
Speech to the Graduating Class of 2007
May 6, 2007

Faculty, staff, family, friends – thank you for joining us today in this celebration.
The Class of 2007 is graduating.
Our time here at Stanford Law is coming to a close.
But it must be said at the very beginning...
We've been a damn good class.

We began our time here three years ago in the Fall of 2004. It was a presidential election year, which for law students – many of whom have been obsessed with politics since grade school – was like the Summer Olympics and the World Cup rolled up into one. Needless to say – discussions were had.

Occasionally, tempers flared, but it is a testament to our class that despite diverse political perspectives and a particularly divisive election we remained a cohesive group.

One student recently told me that one of the best parts of Stanford Law was how well he got along with those he adamantly disagreed with – disagreed with on issues that he considered core to his understanding of himself and for which he thought there could be no compromise.

Perhaps this is an inevitable result of attending – in former Dean Sullivan's phrase – a world-class law school in paradise. Who could possibly stay mad at someone with weather this warm and skies this blue?

But it is not just the weather that makes Stanford Law great, but the people who chose to attend Stanford – those who come to California over Cambridge -- who choose the Bay Area over Manhattan – who pick Palo Alto over New Haven.

The students here at Stanford are not your typical lawyers-to-be.

For graduation, my parents considered getting me a framed copy of a lawyer cartoon – a robed judge and a caption – “Will council please approach the bench” -- Looking to the floor of the court room there are two fins visible moving toward the bench.

This is the classic view of the lawyer – a shark – seeking some advantage through manipulation and lying.

What surprised me about the students at Stanford Law was their humility, compassion, and considerateness. We have from the very beginning approached law school as though if it were a cooperative game.

The first time I missed class my 1L year, I received three unsolicited emails from my fellow classmates containing that day's notes. Such generosity – unheard of in the Paper Chase - set the tone for the next three years.

Our class didn't set the tone alone; Dean Kramer brought an enthusiasm and optimism to the School. He arrived at the Law School the same year as our class, and so he is, really, a 3L in his own right.

Throughout the past two years, as co-president of law association and also working on the public interest auction I have had a lot of opportunities to work with Dean Kramer on different issues.

He has always worked hard to come up with solutions for student problems and works furiously – including sending a message at 1:15am Thursday evening and 6:30 am the next day to let me know about donations he secured from alumni for the auction.

However it was his actions the first year as Dean that have continued to represent for me his selfless dedication to the school and its students. Against the recommendation of the development office, Dean Kramer taught first-year Constitutional Law when we ended up short one professor. Rather than having students attend a class with 120 students, when the expectation at Stanford was a classroom size of 60, Dean Kramer chose to sacrifice his time and probably a bit of his sanity for the benefit of the overall educational experience. I am not sure that we have ever adequately shown our appreciation for that, or for the vision he has for our school.

Dean Kramer, we are thrilled to have spent our time here with you. We truly thank you for making our experience a memorable one.

Another person who helped to make our experience a positive, memorable one, is Professor Tom Grey. Before coming to law school, I was introduced to Professor Grey through his book on the poetry of Wallace Stevens. In Professor Grey's view, Stevens' poetry could help practicing lawyers to get past the typical scenario of what he described as “absolutists and disappointed absolutists shouting past each other.”

When I had Professor Grey for Torts 1L year we always dealt first with the easy rules which covered, he said, “ninety percent of cases.” This is where the absolutist battles are fought. After reviewing these rules, we would quickly move to where the true learning begins, within the complex and intangible middle ground – that other 10% -- where the borders are not as clear. Here the law exists not as a simplistic battle between adversaries, but as an intellectual challenge of skillful compromise, where the simple pragmatism of having to live with the law everyday demands a resolution even in the face of immeasurable complexity.

Professors Grey's class on Modern American Legal Thought (MALT, as we called it) dealt with one hundred years of dealing with this complexity. However, fifty minutes, three times a week, was just not enough for six of us in the class. To compensate, we began to meet outside of class, in Crocker Garden or over margaritas at Palo Alto Sol, and tried to extend the magic of that class.

What drew us together was a sense that these theories were important to the practice of law, but also that engaging with these ideas was actually fun. So much fun that we continued to meet into the summer. By the end of that summer we had all declared that we wanted to be law professors, by which I think we meant that we all wanted to be Professor Grey.

You are retiring this year Professor Grey. I arrived on campus early enough to have spent four straight semesters taking classes with you. To have twice gone bird watching with you. To have spoken with you in your office, in the hallways, and over lunch at Spats. I would have missed you whether you were retiring or not, but Stanford as a whole will miss you now and no future student will ever be able to have quite the same experience as I have had.

It is not only our positive attitude, and willingness to take advantage of the opportunities and inspiring people around us that makes our class great. The brilliance of the students here also never ceases to amaze me.

Most public display of that brilliance this year was the Moot Court competition. The semi-finals featured eight students competing in a performance that bordered on pyrotechnic. Their command of the material was breathtaking and they handled the questions by the judges with poise and precision. They all understood the facts and law of the case on a level we could not have imagined in September of 2004.

During our time here, we have not merely worked on mock problems to refine our skills, but have been able to put those sharpened skills to use with real life impact.

For example, the Supreme Court clinic represented one of only three women to become a manager at a Goodyear tire plant in Gadsden, Alabama. At the end of her 20-year career she was being paid 20 percent less than the lowest-paid male manager with equivalent experience. Because of the work of the clinic, her case made it to the Supreme Court. Once there, the students wrote the main brief in the case. They also flew to Washington to watch the oral argument at the Supreme Court.

One of those students, Scott Reents tells me that his most memorable experience was meeting the client at oral arguments after many long months of working on the case, a meeting that he called “a poignant reminder of the personal dimension to every case.”

Not every case students work on are headed to the Supreme Court, and in fact students and faculty here work across the spectrum of lawyering.

John Polito told me about working on a case where a Stanford professor sued the estate of the writer James Joyce to allow publication of her academic work. John was most proud of a small portion of the case when he wrote a memo to determine whether or not the estate could be served process in a venue favorable to the plaintiff. When he determined that it could, process was served, the case moved forward and the defendant never challenged the move.

Hilary Ley worked to prevent the deportation of her client, a 29-year-old man who came to the United States from the Philippines over twenty years ago. The government sought to remove him from the United States based on minor criminal offenses that he had committed as a young man. Through diligent research and creative legal strategizing, Hilary and her partner discovered that their client was in fact a United States citizen, thus preventing his deportation.

By partnering with Bay Area Legal Aid, the Women of Stanford Law, under the leadership of our class, brought the Domestic Violence Pro Bono project to Stanford. With the help of Stanford volunteers, the clinic helps hundreds of survivors of domestic violence per year.

And too many other students to name, through externships, clinic work, volunteer activities, and research projects have used their time at Stanford not just to learn but to impact the world for the better while doing it.

The opportunities for tremendous achievement are boundless both while at Stanford Law and after.

Just yesterday I was talking with the owner of a local restaurant and he mentioned that the Stanford Law grads that he knew were no longer practicing law. He assured me that none of them were actually working at his restaurant, but instead were a CEO of a start-up company, a Disney executive, and the director of a local non-profit.

Our students and alums achieve great things, not only on their own merit but also on the basis of the work of all those who have come before us: Chief Justice William Rehnquist, Justice Sandra Day O'Connor, former Secretary of State Warren Christopher,

the head of the ACLU Anthony Romero, numerous general counsels of Fortune 1000 companies, law professors, activists, and hundreds of other graduates who have left Stanford to make a difference in the world.

We borrow a part of their effort to become great ourselves and we owe them and those who support us something in return.

Our class has already begun to repay the legacy that has made all of this possible.

Each year the graduating class raises money from the student body for a class gift. We set out at the beginning of the campaign with the goal of \$75,000 in donations. We have had an absolutely incredible participation rate of 97.5% -- only one person away from tying the all-time record of 98%. Two people away from beating it. And six people away from reaching 100%. In addition, our class has raised an astonishing \$77,000, which with matching alumni donations of over \$70,000 means that our class has brought in \$150,000.

Our performance has been so impressive that this year's alumni reunion classes are inspired to raise more money to try to match our generosity.

As I said -- we are a damn good class.

The Class of 2007 has set a number of other records during our time here. Some more distinguished than others.

We sent twice as many people to attend the Board of Visitors meeting -- 120 students in total -- than last year's class.

Almost 50% of people in the Musical were 3Ls -- and Advanced Degree students.

We were the largest group of students at Law Prom three years in a row. This year, we had more people there than the other two years combined.

We won more Supreme Court cases than any previous class -- I actually don't know if this is true.

We have worked hard and had fun together. In February, forty of us traveled together to Las Vegas. In March, another forty of us went to Tahoe for the weekend (surprisingly a different forty). Two days ago, one hundred and fifty of us took a three hour tour of the San Francisco Bay in a yacht. Instead of being stranded on a deserted island with Gilligan we ended up stranded on the side of Interstate 280 with a flat tire and one Officer Muzzy shouting that each minute we sat by the side of the road the chance we would die a fiery death increased exponentially.

Luckily for all of us, we survived it all, and are here to celebrate today.

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Because we have been such a damn good class it has been my privilege to serve as your co-president for the past two years. I want to thank you for that privilege. But part of that privilege has been serving along side your other co-president, Sarah Gilbert, who I also want to thank.

Before we were elected, I hardly knew Sarah, but over the course of the next two years, through daily coffee runs to Moonbeans sorting out what to do about the rabble-rousing class of 3Ls above us, through weekly meetings with Cathy and Chidel, and monthly meeting with the Dean, Sarah would become my closest friend.

Sarah's brilliance is subtle but overwhelming. Her sincerity, passion, sarcasm, cynicism, idealism are each inspirational in their own way. Sarah simply achieves in a way that makes all achievement seem easy. Sarah climbs rock walls to relax, she runs marathons in her spare time, she reads Russian novels to keep herself occupied -- in short

she makes Chuck Norris look like a wimp and a dumb one at that. Sarah is without a doubt the most amazing individual I have ever met. And I am so happy now to turn this ceremony over to her to introduce the winners of the staff and faculty awards. Thank you.