



Saying Thanks

This is my final President's View column. Thanks for reading these over the years. I thought it would be fitting to share here an abridged version of the remarks I made at this year's baccalaureate service. As I bid farewell to the Class of 2009, I am hopeful that the friendships I have made with many of them will continue long after we leave campus. The same, I hope, will be the case with so many of you. I've loved virtually every minute of my presidency and will forever be grateful for having had such a magnificent opportunity. I can think of no greater honor.

Well, we made it. After our time in the Purple Valley, we are about to enter the outside world. Most of you got through in four years; it took me 20. But then I've always been a little slow.

I trust that we are all well prepared to thrive in every way. Educators love to talk about critical thinking skills; the ability to write and to speak clearly and effectively; to be adept quantitatively; to be adaptable, creative and farsighted—all of these are hallmarks of a Williams education. You have met the challenges presented to you and taken advantage of the opportunities that have been available. So many of you took tutorials, wrote honors theses, worked in our science labs and prospered in our many small seminars. So many of you demonstrated leadership in College Council, Lehman, Gargoyle, the *Record*, the MCC, as JAs and tutors, and in more clubs and organizations than I could possibly mention. So many of you devoted considerable hours to athletic success. And in this world where the ability to embrace new cultures and experiences is so important, you've been educated at a campus where diversity has become a cornerstone of what defines us. It isn't easy to go outside your comfort zone, and you could have chosen a place that would have challenged you less, but you didn't, and I'm confident that will pay dividends throughout your life.

As I think about my own Williams education, I'm so grateful to the 1,351 students I have taught here over two decades. (I counted.) You have pushed me to be a better teacher: to listen more closely, to question my beliefs and to work continuously to keep up with advances in my discipline. But even more importantly, you have reminded me that humility, service and empathy are three of the most important qualities in life.

I trust that those attributes mean as much to you as they do to

me. It's humility that enables self-reflection; service that warrants the large investment that's been made in our development; empathy that gives life much of its value.

I have great confidence in the Class of 2009. At convocation last September I applauded all that you'd achieved during your time at Williams and pointed to what you could accomplish during your senior year. I have not been disappointed. You are great representatives of a magnificent new generation—one that doesn't just talk about such things as inclusion and environmental awareness but makes them fundamental to your lives.

That fall day I introduced you to six men and women we honored as representatives of an alumni group you will shortly join. You might remember them. What a remarkable group—representatives ranging from the Class of 1946 to the Class of 2000. These magnificent folks went into nonprofit agencies, business, government service, law and the arts. Each has made a mark on the world.

History suggests that a handful of you may one day be recognized on this stage for similar achievements. But that isn't the mark of a great class. The real question is how all of you do in the world. How many of you succeed in business, education, medicine, law—you name it. And by succeed, I'm not just talking about one day running your firm or agency, or even your college. I'm talking about living full and effective lives that include contributing to your local community; being a good friend, spouse, partner, parent or colleague; and inspiring others to do the right thing.

You have been fortunate to get to where you are today—on the cusp of graduating from one of the world's great educational institutions. Tomorrow, you'll have a chance to thank your teachers, your friends and most of all your family. Do it. Without the aid of so many, there is no way you would be here today.

But now I want to thank you. It's not easy to extricate myself from a place I love so much, my home for 20 of my 55 years, where all three of my children have been raised. But I am very proud to be "graduating" with the great Class of 2009. It's been a real privilege getting to know many of you personally and watching many more of you succeed so impressively. As we enter new worlds, I bet you share my apprehension but also my excitement at embracing new challenges, confident that this special place has prepared us well and left its indelible mark on us all. ■

—Morty Schapiro

LETTERS

Thanks to Peter Britton '56 for his eloquent opinion piece on mountaintop removal coal mining in West Virginia ("Houses Burn, People Die," March 2009). Readers who would like to help end this brutal practice should ask their congressional representatives to sign on as co-sponsors of the Clean Water Protection Act (HR 1310). The bill was re-introduced in the new Congress

moving mountains

on March 4, 2009, by U.S.

Reps. Frank Pallone Jr. (a N.J. Democrat), John Yarmuth (a Kentucky Democrat) and Dave Reichert (a Washington Republican), with 147 carryover co-sponsors (as of May 5). For more information, see www.ilovemountains.org/resources/#mtrcwpa.

—Hugh Rogers '65, Kerens, W.Va.

Thank you very much for printing Peter Britton's '56 opinion piece about mountaintop removal in the March 2009 issue. This is a grossly under-reported issue in which all of us who participate in U.S. economic life are implicated.

—Layne Garrett '98, Washington, D.C.

I read with interest the interview with Kathleen Merrigan '82 on organic foods ("Food for Thought," January 2009). We live on a small farm where we raise dairy goats, and my daughter

farm fresh

Brianna Casey Lyons '11 helped me research last

summer how we could set up a lane/roadside stand and sell some of our

garden veggies. I am an avid canner and have a suggestion for what to do with bitter melon (which Merrigan mentioned in the interview). My *Ball Blue Book of Preserving* has a recipe for "Spicy Melon Pickles" (yield: about seven half-pints):

- 3 cups vinegar
- 1 tsp. slivered whole nutmeg
- 2 cups water
- 13 cups 1-inch slices of melon
- 2 sticks cinnamon
- 4½ cups sugar
- 2 tsps. whole cloves
- 1 tsp. whole allspice

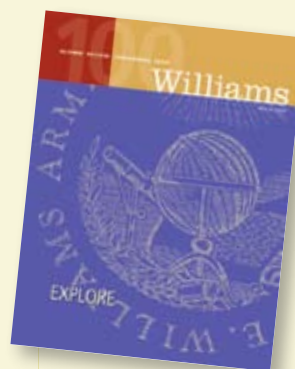
Combine vinegar and water in a large saucepan. Tie spices in a spice bag and add to vinegar mixture. Bring to a boil. Reduce heat and simmer 5 minutes. Remove from heat. Add melon, let stand 1½ to 2 hours. Add sugar. Bring to a boil, stirring until sugar dissolves. Reduce heat; simmer until melon becomes slightly transparent. Pack hot melon into hot jars, leaving ¼-inch headspace. Ladle hot pickling liquid over melon, leaving ¼-inch headspace. Remove air bubbles. Adjust two-piece caps. Process 10 minutes in a boiling water canner.

—Kathy Lyons, 2011 parent, Olney, Md.

I really enjoyed the article you ran about the family who had seven children and how they were managing ("Seven under Seven," March 2008).

seven resonates

I sometimes feel out of touch with Williams because my husband and I did not go into law, medicine or



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investment banking. We are not winning research grants or awards or on the boards of anything fancier than our children's pre-schools because we've been busy paying off student loan debt, raising children and going into fields such as teaching and nursing and small business. I'd like to read more stories about people who went into social work, public school teaching, stay-at-home parenting, the military and farming.

—Kirsten Hassing Howard '92, Charlottesville, Va.

The Meaning of Life

by Anthony Kronman '68

In the fall of 1965, I was a sophomore at Williams for the second time. The year before, I had left to work as an organizer for Students for a Democratic Society (SDS). It was an exciting time to be in college. Black students in the South were at the forefront of the civil rights movement. Their courage had set an example for the world to admire. In the North, the (mostly white) student leaders of SDS had begun a movement of their own for social and economic change. The Port Huron Statement of 1962 was their manifesto. It described with passionate clarity the gap between America's ideals and the realities of racism and poverty and summoned my generation of students—"bred in at least modest comfort, housed now in universities, looking uncomfortably to the world we inherit"—to close it. The war in Vietnam was on the horizon. The campuses of America's colleges and universities were beginning to stir with an energy they had not seen since the 1930s. By the time the decade was over, these stirrings would grow into the most powerful student movement the country has ever known.

With my parents' strained support I left Williams at Thanksgiving in 1964 and a month later was living with four other organizers in a small apartment in a poor white neighborhood on the north side of Chicago, hoping to help start what we called "an interracial movement of the poor."

The work in Chicago was hard—long days of ringing doorbells and handing out leaflets, followed by evening meetings to take stock and make plans. Our goal was the creation of a union of neighborhood residents mobilized to press their landlords and the city for cleaner buildings, safer streets and, ultimately, a greater voice in their economic and political fates. Most of the residents were former coal miners from Kentucky and West Virginia who had come to Chicago looking for work when the mines gave out. They understood the value of a union. They were polite but suspicious of the well-spoken kids who knocked on their doors and tried to persuade them that a union of neighbors is the same as a union of workers and that a rent strike is no different from shutting down a mine.

After seven months, with not much more to show for my efforts than one failed rent strike and a sidewalk protest at the office of our city councilman (where my fellow organizers and I outnumbered the other protesters), I had begun to doubt whether my next 30 years of organizing would produce results to justify a lifetime of labor.

My parents never said "Go back to school," but when I came home to Los Angeles that summer and told them I wanted to return to Williams, their relief was physical. I enrolled that fall in a seminar taught by Nathaniel Lawrence, who was then chair of the philosophy department. The seminar was titled "Existentialism." Most of the other students were juniors and seniors, and I felt a bit over my head. We met once a week in Professor Lawrence's home at the end of Main Street. Each session lasted three hours. We broke in the middle for tea, and there were always fresh cookies (courtesy of Mrs. Lawrence).

The discussions were animated, often passionate. It seemed to all of us that much was at stake. At the heart of the seminar was the question of how best to live, of what to care about and why, the question of the meaning of life. I made a discovery in that class that has been a central conviction of mine ever since: The meaning of life is a subject that can be studied in school.

There are many things to study in a college or university. The question of what constitutes a life of significance and value is only one of them. What I discovered in Professor Lawrence's seminar 40 years ago was that an institution of higher education is one of the places where the question of what living is for can be pursued in an organized way. I had left Williams looking for a place where the question has more reality than I thought it ever could in school. What I found when I returned was the place for which I had been searching. It has been my professional home ever since. ■

Anthony Kronman '68 is a professor at Yale Law School. This excerpt was taken from his 2008 book Education's End.