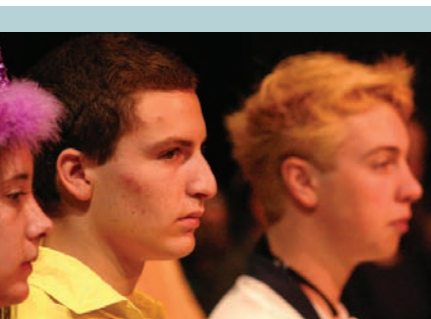




For only the second time in 11 years, graduation was driven inside by what has become known as the infamous New England rains of 2006. That's the bad news. The good news is we now have the 350-seat Calder Auditorium of the Michael S. Currier Center into which we were able to fit everybody who wished to attend, with overflow in the mezzanine and on the concrete apron under the eave outside the giant sliding doors. Faculty and the 60 graduating members of the Class of 2006 (plus two German ASSIST students, juniors who attend for just a year) sat on the stage. It was cozy, but





Graduation 2006

never stuffy. And everyone could hear, which was important because good things were said by our three speakers. More on that in a moment.

Before the awarding of the traditional hand-crafted diplomas (see them all at www.putneyschool.org/news/index.html), the assembled multitude was treated to our madrigals group's rendition of *They Are Falling All Around Me* by Bernice Johnson Reagon (see story on page 6) and the Graduation Chorus (directed by Tyler

Rasch '06) who sang *Akanamantla*, a song from South Africa.

The commencement address was delivered by James S. Merkel, sustainability coordinator at Dartmouth College and author of the book *Radical Simplicity*. The senior speakers, chosen yearly by the graduating class, were Anna K. Brinkman and Noah W. Tapper. All three had far more useful information to offer than the platitudes one might expect at a graduation ceremony, making Putney's annual graduation yet another must-attend event on the academic calendar. Here's what they had to say, in case you were unfortunate enough to miss the live version:

Commencement address

It's really fun to be here. I moved back to the East Coast from living 17 years out west. The reason I moved back was to be with my family. My dad was getting older and needing support. And I wanted to continue the work of sustainability on the East Coast. Immediately—within a week, I think—of being on the East Coast I heard about The Putney School. And then today I get the paper from the newsstand and here it is on the front page above the crease: "From French Fries to Fuel, Putney School Biodiesel Project"!

The Putney School is one of those rare places where a tragically and fatally flawed institution of modern society, namely factory industrial education, has been devolved and revolved into a vital organic effective community for educating change agents. Yes.

My friend's aunt graduated from The Putney School and, even in her 60s, I heard that you might find her out flyering cars about the abuses of fossil fuel and how we might extract ourselves from our cars surgically. So I heard that there's quite a history of activism here. And that's why it's a real honor to speak to this class. I've heard about your work and your dedication.

So for the last few years this class has been working consciously toward the highest civilization that they can envision: bread labor, work, sweat, intellect, arts, music, community, quest for beauty, insight, responsibility, curiosity, intense outdoor activity, self-reliance, milking the cow. Oh life-long enjoyments. Ahhh. This is from your mission



<above> **THE COMMENCEMENT ADDRESS WAS DELIVERED BY JAMES S. MERKEL.** <left> **STUDENTS HEAD FOR THE GRADUATION CEREMONY IN JUNE.**

**COLLEGE
ENROLLMENT LIST
AND LIFE AFTER
PUTNEY**

Antioch College (2)
Bard College (2)
Barnard College
Beloit College
Bryn Mawr College
College of the Atlantic
Columbia University
Concordia University (2)
Dickinson College
Earlham College
Emory University
**Eugene Lang College,
New School University**
Goucher College
Hampshire College
Humboldt State University
**Indiana University
at Bloomington**
Ithaca College
Johns Hopkins University
Lesley University
McGill University (2)
**Northern Michigan
University**
**Oberlin College,
Conservatory**
Occidental College
Pine Manor College
Reed College
**Rhode Island School
of Design**
**Rochester Institute
of Technology**
**Rutgers, Mason
Gross School of Art**
San Francisco Art Institute
**School of the Museum
of Fine Arts**
Spelman College
St. John's College
Tufts University
University of Chicago (2)
**University of Illinois
at Urbana-Champaign**
**University of
Massachusetts, Amherst**
**University of
New Hampshire**
University of Tulsa
University of Vermont (7)
University of Washington (2)
Warren Wilson College (3)
Wesleyan University

statement, much of this, right? So you all deserve a big hand.

When I graduated high school I felt like I was really getting out of prison. And over there having brunch this morning with [Director of Alumni Affairs] Harriet [Stupp Rogers '49], we were speaking with a few parents of students here and this one woman said, "You know, I would love to go to The Putney School." I'm 48. I have to be honest. I'd love to go too.

When I was 18 and graduating I was facing the hypocrisy of the adult world—their dishonesty, their lack of vision. And this dishonesty just really jaded me. I graduated with the feeling that it was really hopeless to create a peaceful, just world. I had no hope. However, at the age of 14, right after the first Earth Day in 1970, I wanted my life to be for the good of all. I really did. I had that vision and dream. And I remember doing a book report on tertiary treatment of waste water. Primary, secondary, tertiary, you know? And there was this budding engineer in me who said, "Tertiary drinking water from sewage. Now that should be a birthright. We should be doing that on every waste treatment facility on planet Earth." Yet I was living on Long Island and I would go on every holiday and see the mountains of garbage—see the barges going off to sea the dump that garbage in the ocean and dumping raw sewage into the Hudson River. And I was offended at 14. These darn adults! Wake them up somebody! Strangle them! Why are they destroying our world? I was angry. And at 17 when I heard the question, "What are you gonna do when you grow up?" I knew what they meant. "What are you gonna do to make money? What are you gonna do to make me proud of you when I'm at a swaggy party? What can I brag about you doing in the world?" I heard things like, "It's a dog-eat-dog world. The world's not there. Idealism is impractical. Nice guys finish last. If I don't take it, if you don't take it, somebody else will. The plane is going anyway, might as well get on it. I sold out." I didn't know one person with a vision of a life focused on making the world a better place where I lived in Riverhead, New York. The vision I had at 14, I'd lost.

I studied engineering. And this was part of what I'd like to think of as my adharma. In the Bhagavad-Gita they call it svadharma: your gift to the world. It's what you're gonna do—your life's calling. When you see someone who's living their svadharma they just look like poetry in motion. They're so happy, they're on fire. They're unstoppable. They can work day and night and not look tired. That's when you're doing your svadharma. When you're doing your adharma, that's what your parents wanted you to study. That's your adharma. Or you meet some famous person and you wanna emulate them. That's adharma. I studied electrical engineering, that was my adharma. The Bhagavad-Gita coaches us that life is about karma yoga. Arjuna asks Krishna about what's better: senyasa or karma yoga? And Krishna says karma yoga. To live a life of sitting on a pillow, you have to take for granted so many things. Someone's in a sweatshop somewhere, 14 years old, putting clothes on your back or making your food. Karma yoga is a life of action to make the world a better place. This is what this ancient epic poem is about.

And they coach us further, they say, "It is for us to take but the refuse of all we create." Now this to me puts tithing on its head: giving ten percent. How stingy! Say you work in the fields and grow grain. At the end of your week you have 30 sacks filled and a third of one sack that's left open. And then there's some spilt. You sweep up that spill and you take that third of a sack and that's what you bring home to your family. That's yours for your family. The other 30 sacks you give away for the good of all. So I'm suggesting maybe turning tithing on its head. Thoreau said it is not a hardship but a pastime on this earth if we would live but simply and wisely. And so the past 16 years has been my attempt at that and it's been quite a fun attempt. And I'll tell a little more about that.

Now, when I was 27 I took this job as a senior engineer. And there I was, as Brian mentioned, sitting in a top five-star hotel. I traveled first class, meeting with the Swedish military. And I'm selling a top secret cryptographic computer that I designed. It could work underwater by a skin diver. It had a full keyboard. This was in the '80s.

It could be dropped on the deck of a battleship. It could survive a nuclear blast and still work. And then I was marketing it to foreign militaries and I learned foreign military sales procedures: how to sell tanks and weapons and machine guns. And what I'd learned is we hold the financing. So if the country doesn't repay, well that's alright, there's no penalty. It's a welfare supermarket to foreign countries. We were arming 50 nations with weaponry and I was studying the military strategy of low intensity conflict. Basically, harming one side of the faction so heavily and that faction was one who was beholden to U.S. business interests. And I was a young Republican kid. This violated every bit of my ethics. My dad taught me that you stick up for the guy on the playground who's not gonna fight. That's what you do. So I had an ethical crisis. And the Valdez was the final nail in the coffin of my ethical crisis. And I locked myself in my bedroom a half a year after I returned from seeing the spill and I asked myself, "How much do I need?" instead of asking always, "How much can I get?" And I ran the numbers backwards and forwards. I had done multi-million dollar business deals for TRW. I realized if I took the car off the road, rented three of the four rooms in my house and planted a vegetable garden that I could live on \$5,000 a year. Sixteen years later I still haven't touched that capital. I still live on the same and I just have been living off the interest. And I wondered what had raised my courage to live inside of my own dream. And now, sixteen years after that, I was hired by Dartmouth to lead that institution to be a leader in higher education in sustainability, to imbed sustainability principles into the entire organization, including research, curricula, the new buildings—200 million dollars in building projects—how we transport ourselves, student life.

What were my credentials? Well, I had washed my clothes in a bucket for 13 years after seeing people in India do it. I figured that would put me in solidarity with two billion women who washed clothes by hand. Hallelujah! I have been car-less for 14 years. Those were some credentials. I cut the wood in my own backyard with

a handsaw and carried it on my shoulder and bucked it up with hand tools, burned fires with that and heated myself and carried the water. So I had all these credentials. There were 140 applicants and 40 interviews and I got hired. And people were quite shocked. And I was too. When I wrote this book *Radical Simplicity* I thought I had shot myself in the foot to ever get a job if I needed one. But it made me realize, no, I'm not out on the cutting edge. I'm in the middle of the mainstream, which is moving so fast towards sustainability. The ears at Dartmouth are growing, with the gas price at the pump, for sustainability. It's amazing. People are ready for it because they know status quo is suicide—mass suicide.

As an engineer designing this crypto box, it was the funnest thing. The harder the challenge the more exciting the project for the engineer. And so now to design my life to be such that six and a half billion people could also repeat my daily actions without hurting the Earth. That was exciting—to figure out how to do that—also to figure out how to share equitably with the other 25 million species we share

planet Earth with. What if we were to do that? I've asked 800 audiences, "How much of the Earth should we leave for the other species?"

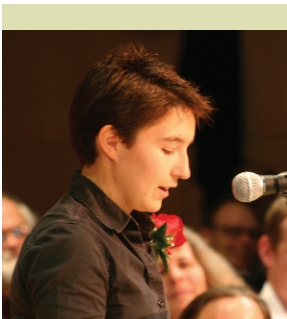
The average answer I get is, "Eighty percent should be left wild." What exists on the Earth is 4.6 acres per person. If we leave 80 percent wild we're left to live on one acre. Right now the average American lives on 24. We need to reduce by a factor of 24 to live equitably. And if we do that, if we're to have single child families on average for the next hundred years, have footprints not to exceed six acres, world population would return to one billion instead of go to nine billion. And we could have 80 percent of the planet's biosphere wild. That's what we could do in the next hundred years if we chose to as humanity. Sustainability is still on the horizon.

There are 60 seniors in the class of 2005. One student will attend a community college in California and transfer to the University of California system after two years. Two students decided to wait until next year to apply to college, one of them making this decision after having begun to apply. One more will apply again, and will form a less ambitious college list. Eleven students have arranged to defer matriculation for a year.



FACULTY MEMBERS LIES PASTERKAMP AND GLENN LITLEDALE '76 THOUGHTFUL DURING THE COMMENCEMENT ADDRESS.

<below> **SENIOR SPEAKER
ANNA K. BRINKMAN
DELIVERS HER ADDRESS TO
HER CLASSMATES. <bottom>
MADRIGALS GROUP SINGS
DURING THE CEREMONY.**



I'm like a doctor who takes the medicine first. I feel I have to figure out my own life first. And I've heard it said that it's terrible to hear a sermon but it's better to see a sermon. And so the more we can try our experiments in our own life I think it'll go a long way. And I feel today we're all called to task. The way we're treating the Earth today is that our human population is on an exponential growth curve. Our consumption is on an exponential growth curve. Warfare is out of control. The wealthiest billion live on 250 times the poorest billion. The gap, if you're in the poorest billion, you earn a hundred dollars a year. If you're in the poorest sixty percent of humanity you live on \$520 a year. Me living on \$5,000 a year? I'm living on ten times 60 percent of humanity. Ten times more than 60 percent of humanity and I have the nerve to call that radical? Sixty percent of humanity is a lot more radical than me by far. And, learning these things, how can we allow ourselves to be transformed by that and do something different?



Our education can be used to get us more privilege very easily. We can use all our intelligence to get more of the global pie. Or we could use that intelligence to learn how to live more simply and elegantly and beautifully and artfully and this is all what I've heard in the mission statement of The Putney School. And, wow, you have this grounding. And you may go off and do something crazy for money and try to get rich and prestige and all that. And it may make you happy,

I don't know. But for me I felt this big pit inside when I was going for just my own personal gratification, for my own wealth, my own prestige.

I feel like there are these sacred cows of society: "He or she who dies with the most toys wins. Be fruitful and multiply. Technology will save us." These are the sacred cows. But they're leading us in a direction that's not sustainable. To me there's a new challenge. I call it maybe the new American Idol. The winner is—can you guys do a drum roll for me? Get on your feet! Drum roll! Drum roll! The winner! The winner is the one who has the most awesome, musical, artful life. It's so wild, as in mimicking wild Earth processes. It's nurturing. It's compassionate. It cares about the others. It's inspiring. It's adventurous. It bags the peaks. It's this kind of lifestyle. Yet at the same time it's living like this in a way that is just taking a small portion from the biosphere. And it's working toward peace. It's working toward alleviating hunger. This, to me, could be the new *American Idol*.

I think the grandest experiment is to live inside our dreams. Get out a sheet of paper if you don't know what you wanna do with your life—even if you're 45 or 48 like me and are having a mid-life crisis. Write on a sheet of paper. Fill it with everything you love. Both sides, everything you love to do. Take another sheet out. Fill it with all the skills you have—everything you know how to do. Then take a third sheet, and with this sheet go to the mountains. Spend a month, 42 days, spend 80 days, 100, 200, a year, five years in the mountains on a peak questing, "What is your dream of the world? How beautiful could it be? What would the smells be if you walked around a sustainable planet? How would you feel inside? What would that feeling be? What would you be seeing around you? What would you be hearing?" Paint that picture so beautifully, so beautifully. Come down out of the mountains then and look: These are the things that I love to do. These are the skills I have and this is the world I want to create. This is the way to do it. Now, each of us, I think, has this unique gift. And I know all of you have a gift that's so beautiful to give to the world. And when you do it you'll probably come on fire. And I just keep questioning what will

motivate us? Not to just accept, but to refuse material privileges and the American dream. What can motivate us to do that? Is it guilt? Is it fear? Is it a sense of obligation? Somehow I hope it's none of those three. Somehow I hope it's love. Love is to me the largest motivator. Who here has ever fallen in love? Raise your hand, just even once. And even if for, say, an hour raise your hand. Raise them higher. There's some I didn't see their hands go up. You never fell in love? What's the mat..., no? No. Okay. Everyone? Did everyone fall in love? Okay. We've all fallen in love at least once. Now put yourself back into what it felt like that first month when you fell in love. Can you remember? Were you, like, silly or were you giddy, you know, or did you ever try something you thought, "Oh, I'll never try that," but now you're just, like, smiling and, yeah, I'll try that. Did you ever do that? Did you ever make these crazy heroic trips, like, all night long driving somewhere? Anyone ever do that? Raise your hand. Okay a few, yeah, yeah. Okay. And did any of this ever feel like sacrifice? No. No sacrifice, right? Your mind is so open. There are so many possibilities because you're in love. When you're in love it's just the world is your apple. You can do anything. I feel this is the power of how we can heal the world. When we fall in love with the Earth like we fall in love with each other, we will do everything for the Earth and feel no sacrifice. *Thank you so much.*

Senior speaker Anna K. Brinkman's address **The Caped Crusader**, also sometimes known as the Dark Knight, was once described as "a strange creature cowed like a monk—a man whose powers are uncanny, whose brain is the product of years of intense study in seclusion." If the Dark Knight ever retires from his life of crime fighting, I could see him ending up as a teacher at The Putney School. As a matter of fact, I can see many of the faculty that we have here now being ex-superheroes. Just picture Joe Holland skiing around some imagined eternally snowy city fighting for peace and justice with high tech ski poles and striking fear into his enemies with his fierce handlebar mustache. Every superhero needs an alter ego, or secret identity.

And what could be better than that of a mild-mannered math and physics teacher who enjoys running marathons?

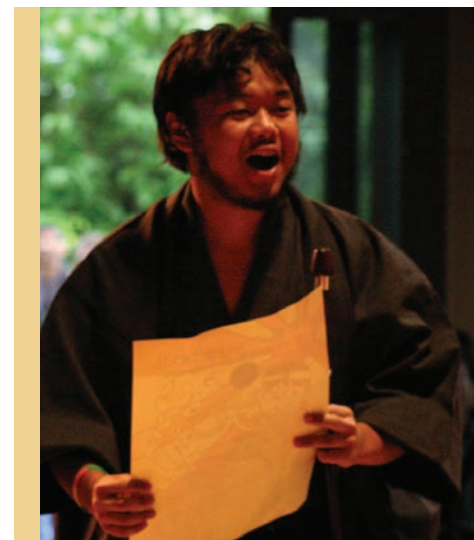
Or imagine [History Teacher] Blake [Zahn] circling the world with his magical African drum that calls all the animals to him and allows him to speak with them and fight crime with them.

This possibility of living among superheroes begs many questions, with the first and foremost being, "How would the student body behave differently toward the faculty?" For example, if your history teacher told you to go work in the library on your paper, you would think twice about sitting down in the magazine section to read *Sports Illustrated* if you knew that she had x-ray vision and could see you from Library Room Five. Or would you ever put the librarian's dog in the book drop again if you were aware of her ability to move the OED with sheer willpower and drop it on your head?

More importantly, though, is what would you learn differently from them? Superheroes are created by people who are unhappy with the world but can see no practical solution and, thus, turn to fantasy where it can all be solved by one erroneously moral and ethical being. What's interesting is that people who could use a dose of the superhero lifestyle are the people who don't read comics or watch cartoons on Saturday mornings, i.e., anyone who is in a position of power. The people reading them and who they are marketed toward are small children. This means that you have eight-year-olds running around aspiring to be the guy who helps those in need by fighting against the immoral thugs, like Robin Hood who feeds the poor. Or you have grown men in the real world filling the role of Prince John to a tee. Now ask yourself this: were you taking a class on the individual's treatment of other humans taught by Yoda the Jedi Master, how well would you be doing?

If you took a poll among six-year-olds today about who they want to be when they are older, they are more likely to say, "I want to be like

453 Secondary School Reports were mailed to 188 institutions by the college counseling office to support student applications; 102 of these applications were either not completed by students or were withdrawn after an early acceptance.



SENIOR YUTARO MAKI CELEBRATES THE RECEIPT OF HIS DIPLOMA.

A WISTFUL ABIJAH
REED BIDS THE CLASS
OF '06 FAREWELL.



Superman when I grow up,” than, “I want to be like the emperor from *Star Wars* when I grow up.” So what happens in the interim years? You begin to grow up and you realize that your parents do not know the answer to every question. And that when someone promises to do something, there’s not a magical force that will make them keep their promise even if they don’t want to. This is where it all begins to break down. You realize what horrible and mean creatures human beings can be and your expectations for the whole race goes down and thus, as is more often the case than not, your expectations for yourselves go down. Once this occurs any aspirations to be like a superhero go down the drain and we begin to make excuses for our behavior—blaming it on some inevitable fact of our age, upbringing or culture. Perhaps this occurs because, as a kid, it is easy to say that you will be like a superhero in life because you have not yet been tempted by it. Most small children have the ability to be brutally honest but one learns very quickly that by lying or finding a scapegoat it is very easy to get out of taking responsibility for your actions. Once this is done it is hard not to go back for more and the upstanding superhero notion begins to recede to the background only to be replaced by the how-can-I-get-out-of-this-to-save-my-skin-and-still-come-out-on-top villain? This is the bad guy that we hissed and jeered at in kindergarten, helped along by our comic books. Now that we are leaving high school it seems that we sometimes forget how to jeer at him. And since we do not have teachers who are superheroes, and they too are human, we have no outside way to jog our inner Spidermen, except for younger siblings. But we don’t tend to listen to them anyway.

This means that it is up to us to remember the comic books during difficult times and to realize that the most critical and satisfying time to be a superhero is when it is hardest. As a man who studied comics all of his life wrote to his sister on the eve of a battle, I have no fear of dying tomorrow because I have no actions to be ashamed of and no reparations left to be made.

If we can say the same about ourselves then we have achieved what the comic book writers never thought possible: a real life superhero. Ergo, next time you find yourself in a bit of a tight spot just think to yourself, “What would Batman do?” *Thank you.*

Senior speaker Noah Tapper’s address

Several months ago, at the end of a late night study session with a friend of mine who doesn’t attend this school anymore, I asked, “What should we do with all these bottles?” And he said, “We’re big boys now Noah. There’s a recycling center on the way to your school.” Now, he isn’t an especially environmentally conscious person. He’s not even a person who likes to tell other people what to do. He was simply observing that I had the power to make a more responsible choice and that the time had come in my life where I could and should start actually making it.

Bad news. This day is the official marker of that time for us. Today is the day that the choices we’re making are considered ours. There are no more excuses. Whether you spend the next ten years translating ancient Inca text, sipping coconut Slushies cross-legged listening to a 300 pound shaman comment on the works of Henry Miller or piloting a rocket straight into the heart of the sun—or you’re a social worker—it’s because that’s what you choose to do. You’re there because you choose to be and we all need to realize that.

A man who’s been making a lot of sense to me lately is Bruno Bettelheim. Bruno Bettelheim was a psychoanalyst who was captured by the Nazis in 1938 and spent over a year in the concentration camps Dachau and Buchenwald. Here’s something he wrote: “This was taught to me by a German political prisoner, a communist worker, who by then had been at Dachau for four years. This man, by then an older prisoner, decided that given my condition the chances of my surviving without help were slim. So when he noticed that I could not swallow food because of physical pain and psychological revulsion, he spoke to me out of his rich experience. “Listen you, make up your mind. Do you wanna live or do you wanna die? If you don’t care, don’t eat

the stuff. But if you wanna live, there's only one way. Make up your mind and eat whenever and whatever you can, never mind how disgusting. Whenever you have a minute don't blabber. Read by yourself or flop down and sleep."

The point is: In the end every choice you make is your own and only isn't yours if you give it away. Bettelheim realized that he could make every action, in effect, his own because every order he followed went along with his decision to stay alive. Even in the context of the crushing oppression of a concentration camp, Bettelheim learned to make sure he always had the ability to personally control as much of his life as possible. Personal choice isn't just a luxury. It's a necessity of life. Whether you decide to do something or do nothing, the fact that you have the choice is important. The world is run without this necessity in mind. No one's gonna make sure you make your own choices. Believe it or not some people might even disagree with it.

Personal responsibility is a way of accepting the world and a way to change the world, so I'm not gonna ask you to make bold mistakes. I'm not gonna ask you to save the environment. I'm not gonna ask you to create or destroy anything in particular. That's up to you. What I want is for everyone in this class to continue to develop themselves in a way they think is right, to refuse to let their setting make decisions for them and to appreciate every decision they get to make.

Graduating high school means power. It's not that any of us are changing significantly today, but diplomas are like dollar bills. They don't at first appear to be good for anything except starting fires. But after a while you realize they're still somehow worth something.

You've got power and it's up to you to use it how you see fit and not waste it. As progress marches on and time goes by you may notice that what is asked of you by society, your job, your lifestyle—the rules you're held accountable for—is based on keeping order and getting the job done. It's not about you being a person. It's about you meeting requirements and anything else is up to you to provide yourself with. But you can. To quote Bettelheim again, "I've stated

many times that the success or failure of any mass society depends on whether or not man solely shapes his personality. He can modify the society into one that's truly human."

Truly human. What does that mean? Accept that people are intrinsically evil and build a government without any morals designed only to punish the depraved populace when they act like an animal or an inanimate object? Abolish government altogether? Those are neat ideas but let's keep this small and direct. Live like a human. You aren't a machine and neither is anyone else. Respect the other humans you meet in an attempt to understand your lack of understanding. Worship the fallibility and unpredictability of your neighbor. Forgive your coworkers for their opinions. Delight in the naiveté of your younger counterparts. Pardon your elders for their sureness. Excuse your peers for their pride. Support impossible arguments. Cultivate craziness. Get used to confusion.

We've been spoiled thus far. Putney's a pretty good place in terms of being treated like a human. Many people really try here to go beyond contractual or institutional obligations in their relationships with each other. There's a genuine effort to understand fallibility, to obey the spirit (and not the letter) of the rules and still function as a legitimate community. It doesn't always work but there you go.

It's a hell of a lot better than what's outside. Though I'm looking forward to being able to miss a day of my job and only have to deal with one guy rather than with a strange, shadowy counsel or get an Arizona Iced Tea or a Cho-co Taco at the general store without putting it in writing first. Well, actually I'll still probably have to do something like that in my cubicle job, but the idea's really nice.

So there's not really anything I need to tell you guys though I did, a bunch, just now and will for a little bit longer. So, eat it up. Continue to be awesome. Remember you're not invincible. Avoid terrible things. But keep in mind time continues to pass all the time. Try and to figure out what you want. Make decisions. Use your power. Be human. Enjoy an Arizona Iced Tea which seriously is only a buck. That's amazing. And then recycle it.

In addition, 43 Secondary School Reports were mailed to 39 colleges on behalf of 16 members of the class of 2005, 11 mailed to 11 colleges on behalf of five members of the class of 2004, and four mailed to four colleges for two members of the class of 2003.



<top> **INTRODUCTION OF THE SENIOR CLASS BY DIRECTOR BRIAN MORGAN.**

<above> **NOAH TAPPER SPEAKS TO HIS FRIENDS AND FAMILY.**