

JOHN HARVARD'S JOURNAL COMMENCEMENT 2011



JIM HARRISON



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Commencement Witchcraft

How DOES the modern, rational research university assure clement conditions for graduation? Witchcraft.

Harvard's Commencement planners kept an increasingly wary eye on the forecasts during a 10-day mid-May siege of fog, rain, and drizzle. The gloom began to lift on Tuesday afternoon, around the time of the Baccalaureate exercises in Memorial Church; and

STU ROSNER



BROOKS CANADAY/HARVARD NEWS OFFICE

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Clockwise from far left: Graduate School of Arts and Sciences marshal Knatokie Marie Ford celebrates her Ph.D. in biological and biomedical sciences; “angels” Charles Jacob Buehler, M.T.S. (left), and John Hudspeth Davidson, M.Div., helped lead the Divinity School contingent; Presidents Ellen Johnson Sirleaf and Drew Faust with a gift from Liberia (see below); Sebastian Burduja, M.B.A. - M.P.P., wears the flag of his native Romania; Harvard Philippine Forum dancers (left to right) Will Simbol, Ed.M., new A.B.s Elizabeth (Lisa) Miranda, Edmund Soriano, and Brittney R. Lind, and Vincent Cheng, A.L.M.; new second lieutenant Christopher Higgins ’11 has his bars pinned on by his mother and sister.

Wednesday, with class days all over campus, was a stunner, made all the more appealing by the persistence of lilacs, dogwoods, and azaleas—a bonus of the cool, late spring—and the arrival of their usual successors (rhododendrons, irises). A good omen.

But the deal remained unsealed until Wednesday night. Then, in the toast offered on behalf of her fellow honorands at the annual celebratory dinner in Anenberg Hall, Liberian president Ellen Johnson Sirleaf told the guests that when she spoke at the Harvard Kennedy School (her alma mater) at its 2008 graduation, “It rained. It *really* rained.” And so, before setting out for Harvard to be the principal Commencement speaker, “I consulted our witch doctors and told them to be sure to send the African sun behind me.” “If it rains,” she said, “I’ll just have to dispense with the witch doctor society.” Their status is secure: May 26 was all of high spring packed into one cloudless day.

Sirleaf brought more tangible magic, too. At the end of her toast, forming a bond

“from one woman president to another woman president,” she presented Drew Faust with a hand-sewn quilt from the rural Liberian community of Arthington, complete with the VERITAS shield. An obviously delighted Faust had it hung directly behind her chair on the blue backdrop of the Memorial Church dais, for all to see, on Commencement day.

COMMENCEMENT, one is annually reminded, is about beginnings. Timothy J. Lambert ’11, as one of two Harvard Orators on senior class day, did the honors this year: “The word means *beginning*.” But as undergraduates above all know, it also means the sad *end* of four distinctive years.

Endings were pervasive and poignant during Harvard’s 360th Commencement. Speaking in Memorial Church, where the Reverend Peter J. Gomes long delivered spellbinding sermons, President Faust meditated on the meaning of his life in her first Baccalaureate service since his death on February 28 (see page 48). At the open-

ing of the Thursday morning exercises, the chaplain of the day, Bernard Steinberg of Hillel, prefaced his prayer by saying, “In memoriam: James DiPaola and Peter J. Gomes.” The former, the late sheriff of Middlesex County, who had ridden a horse through Harvard Yard and, “combining dignity and irony,” had opened and closed the morning exercises for a decade, committed suicide last November. “[M]y friend Peter,” who had read the Commencement benediction from his cap for four decades, was gone as well. Offering the benediction this year in Gomes’s place, his interim successor as acting Pusey minister, Wendel W. Meyer, echoed the remembrance, beginning simply, “Life is short....”

Leave-takings by the living were noted as well—people who had acted on the University’s behalf: former Senior Fellow James R. Houghton (see page 46); Steven E. Hyman, the departing provost (see pages 51 and 53); and Barbara Grosz, who is stepping down as Radcliffe Institute dean (see page 61).

IT WAS a mostly serious week—perhaps in part because with a head of state (Sirleaf) and a Supreme Court justice (Ruth Bader Ginsburg) as official guests, and an impromptu appearance by Vice President Joe Biden and others (see page 50), there were plenty of security officers on hand. Even actor Alec Baldwin, who might have riffed

humor, too. During the morning exercises, conducted with running-the-trains-on-time efficiency, Harvard Divinity School dean William A. Graham introduced his candidates for degrees with a knowing ad lib: “I have the honor to present to you these women and men, each of whom has devoted two, three, or more—sometimes

many more—years to theological and religious studies....” The provost, limning the honorands’ distinctions, identified a two-fer: *both* Dudley R. Herschbach and Plácido Domingo have played themselves on episodes of *The Simpsons*. And at his luncheon spread, U.S. Secretary of Education Arne Duncan ’86, elected chief

ly in her Baccalaureate address and in her brief remarks at the ROTC commissioning ceremony. There, invoking the 150th anniversary of the beginning of the Civil War (her scholarly field as historian), she summoned the memory of Charles Russell Lowell, valedictorian of the class of 1854, and Robert Gould Shaw, class of 1860, both of whom died in the war, and Oliver Wendell Holmes Jr., class of 1861, thrice wounded, and observed, “We are not the first to live in an era of peril and crisis. With our country involved in conflicts at three sites around the globe, you as military officers have chosen to face very difficult challenges and to assume grave responsibilities....I hope that your place in a long and newly invigorated Harvard tradition of military service and sacrifice supports and inspires you in the months and years to come.” Her afternoon-exercises remarks, the next day, focused on the role of and challenges to higher education.

Sirleaf spoke about hopeful signs that democracy was taking root in Africa, and that her war-ravaged country was progressing toward reconciliation and a climb from poverty, and drew upon her harrowing life experiences to share wisdom with the graduates (see page 52).

Some of the most



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Still bullish on books: School of Education graduates celebrate.

on the comic *30 Rock*, told the Law School’s class day crowd, “From the bottom of my heart, I envy you.” Revealing a lifelong interest in the law, he said, “I believe that I would trade what I have for what you’ll have tomorrow afternoon.”

But there were leavening moments of

marshal by his twenty-fifth reunion class, described his reaction to working with the “Happy Committee,” the alumni body that oversees Commencement. In Washington, Duncan noted, he worked on lots of committees—*none* of them happy.

Faust spoke most emotional-

Honoris Causa

Six men and three women received honorary degrees at Commencement. Provost Steven E. Hyman introduced the honorands, and President Drew Faust read the citations, concluding with the recipient’s name and degree—except in the case of Ruth Bader Ginsburg, for whom the previous honorand rose to sing a special tribute (view the video at harvardmag.com/placido-domingo). For fuller background on each, see harvardmag.com/2011-honorands.

Sir Timothy John Berners-Lee. The inventor of the World Wide Web, now 3Com Founders Professor at MIT. Doctor of Science: *Ingenious guru of a global village, to whom the W owes its ubiquity, he has woven from strands of complex code a web that encircles and enlivens our world.*



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Sir Timothy John Berners-Lee

James R. Houghton ’58, M.B.A. ’62. Fellow of the Harvard Corporation from 1995, and

Senior Fellow from 2002 until his retirement in 2010; former chairman and chief executive officer of Corning Incorporated. Doctor of Laws: *A fine fellow fiercely committed to his university’s care, he has helped guide its passage through change and through storm, with deep devotion to possibilities made real and with Harvard’s agenda ever his own.*

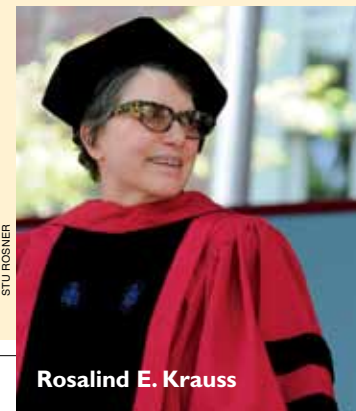


STU ROSNER

James R. Houghton

Rosalind E. Krauss, Ph.D. ’69. University Professor at Columbia, a pioneering historian, critic, and theorist of twentieth-century painting, sculpture, and photography. Doctor of Arts: *Deflating dogma with keen perspicacity, wrestling new mediums to the mat of specificity, a trenchant theorist of*

and assistant secretary of health, known for addressing head-on issues such as smoking, sexual behavior, AIDS, youth violence, and racial disparities in health care. Doctor of Science: *To make the greatest difference for those with greatest need, he confronts controversial health concerns with candor and compassion, the public good his primary care.*



STU ROSNER

Rosalind E. Krauss

the modern and postmodern who has recast the lens through which we see art.

David Satcher. Former director of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, Surgeon General of the United States,

morally forceful rhetoric came from others who, like Sirleaf, live or work in the developing world. Partners In Health co-founder Paul Farmer, named Kolokotronis University Professor during the year, said in his Kennedy School graduation speech that earthquake-ravaged Haiti, where he has labored for decades to deliver healthcare to the rural poor, had taught him to “beware the iron cage of rationality.” He confessed, “We all wanted to be saved by expertise, but we never were.” Instead, he said, making headway requires that we learn to “accompany someone”—“to go somewhere with him or her, to break bread together, to be present on a journey with a beginning and an end....Accompaniment is much more often about sticking with a task until it’s deemed completed by the person or person being accompanied, rather than by the *accompagnateur*.” Radcliffe Medalist Ela Bhatt,



Supreme singer: Tenor Plácido Domingo serenades fellow honorand Ruth Bader Ginsburg, an opera fan, to conclude the conferral of her degree.

founder of the Self Employed Women’s Association, in India, said of some of the world’s most marginalized people, “It is the margins that define the center.”

RHETORIC ASIDE, the graduates could learn much from the behavior modeled around them. In “What Really Matters,” a column in the Commencement issue of the *Crimson*, Rabb professor of anthropology and professor of psychiatry Ar-

thur R. Kleinman (see page 63), wrote that education is for self-cultivation but “ultimately also for our responsibilities for those we love, for those we teach, and for those we live amongst.”

To an unusual degree, the 2011 Commencement seemed to display families who have been blessed with long relationships, among themselves and with Harvard—from leading University figures such as honorand Dudley R. Herschbach (see page 51) to newly named Fellow of the Corporation Joseph J. O’Donnell (see page 49). At the Graduate School of Arts and Sciences diploma ceremony, newly minted A.M.s, S.M.s, and Ph.D.s were accompanied by spouses and children (see page 50). And the reunion parade, as always, was a multigenerational event, with the young, where needed, helping the old (see page 69). All present, participants and guests, were enjoying those relationships on a gift of a day.

Thank you, witch doctors. Please mark May 24, 2012, on your calendars.

Dudley R. Herschbach, Ph.D. ’58, JF ’59. Co-winner of the 1986 Nobel Prize in chemistry, former master of Currier House, and a teacher who combined the sciences with the humanities—making him, in the provost’s phrase, “Harvard’s own literate laureate.” Doctor of Science: *Imaginative master of molecular dynamics, whose zeal for discovery feeds his zest for teaching; a scientist*



David Satcher

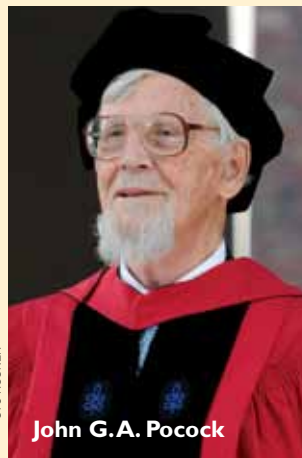
expounding civic humanism, subtly unfolding history’s history, an erudite scholar of political discourse expertly illumining how context colors text.

Plácido Domingo. The internationally acclaimed singer and conductor, general director of the Los Angeles and Washington National opera companies. Doctor of Music: *Incandescent presence on stages worldwide, opening hearts to opera’s grandeur; a tenor for the ages, whose magnificent melliflence tingles the spine and stirs the soul.*

law and, since 1993, an associate justice of the U.S. Supreme Court. Doctor of Laws: *An advocate extraordinaire who propelled the quest for equal justice under law; a judge supreme who lifts the bench with devotion to the dignity of each individual. As Faust concluded this citation, Domingo rose to serenade Ginsburg (a devotee of the art form): “Ruth Bader Ginsburg, Doctor of Laws, come to hear us at the opera, direct from the Supreme Court,” to the opening bars of Verdi’s “Celeste Aida.”*

John G.A. Pocock. A leading historian of political theory and discourse, known especially for explicating the emergence of the idea of republicanism and for analyzing the work of Edward Gibbon and his contemporaries. Doctor of Laws: *Sagely*

The Honorable Ruth Bader Ginsburg, L ’59. The fundamental figure in advancing gender equity in American constitutional



John G.A. Pocock

Her Excellency Ellen Johnson Sirleaf, M.P.A. ’71. President of Liberia, and Africa’s first female elected head of state. Doctor of Laws: *Her spirit indomitable, her story inspirational, she strives to heal the wounds of war; for a nation long beleaguered, an unblinking beacon of hope.*

Words to Live By

The graduates heard in multiple ways how they might lead their lives. Herewith, four samples. Full texts and audio and video recordings of these and other Commencement week speeches are available at harvardmag.com/commencement-2011.

“Finish Your Own Sentences”

In her Baccalaureate remarks to the graduating seniors on Tuesday afternoon in Memorial Church, where the late Peter J. Gomes had long held sway, President Drew Faust, who took office in 2007, reflected on the past four years, as “you and I began our journeys at Harvard together.” She drew on Gomes himself to fashion her talk.

THESE PAST FOUR YEARS...[y]ou discovered passions you could not have imagined. You realized in this diverse and distinctive class just how difficult it is to “peg” anyone, especially yourself.

You are what Reverend Peter Gomes might have called, and I quote him, “an illustration in search of a sermon.” As I thought about what I might say to you today, it occurred to me that this was an apt, and meaningful, description of Peter Gomes himself... [H]e remains at the center of what it means to be a part of Harvard, a moral tradition and force in the legacy of “veritas” that is not just a succession of truths, but a compass... In fact, universities once assumed that goodness and the search for truth were indivisible, and this assumption animated everything Peter Gomes did. Remain mindful of others, but decide for yourself. Be who you are, or at least be discovering who you are, and not what others think you should be...

As a man of multiple labels, Peter Gomes was ahead of his time. A Republican professor at Harvard, a gay Baptist preacher, a black Pilgrim Society president from Plymouth. He often described himself as “Afro-Saxon.”... [Y]ou could feel across campus the ripple of his singularity.

After coming out publicly, in 1992, he gave a commencement speech to an anxious audience at Princeton Theological Seminary, and, as a man of words, he let no one finish his sentences for him. He said, “I know that my being here today is the cause of no small consternation for some of you. After all, I am...black...and I am...Baptist...and I am...from Harvard!” Playful. Unapologetic. Unbound by others’ expectations...

And so, on Thursday, as you pass through the gates into the ancient company of edu-

cated men and women, you face an important question. Not, Will I get a job? Will I succeed? Will I satisfy everyone else’s expectations?—though these worries are real. But the real question is: How, within the possible narratives, can I most be myself? How will I finish my own sentence, when I say “I went to Harvard, and then I...”

...The world you face is daunting, and it is uncertain. Charting a course is hard. But you are well prepared—with the analytic spirit, the capacity for questioning and for judgment, and the habits of mind your education has given you these past four years.

Philosopher William James drew an important distinction at a Harvard Commencement dinner a century ago. He said there is an “outer Harvard,” a “more educated cleverness in the service of popular idols.” But, he continued to say, there is also an “inner spiritual Harvard,” carried by those who come not because the University is a club, but, as he put it, “because they have heard of her persistently atomistic constitution, of her tolerance of exceptionality and eccentricity, of her devotion to the principles of individual vocation and choice....You cannot,” he said, “make single, one-idea-ed regiments of her classes....” This is just as meaningful in 2011 as it was in 1903.

So go, and live syncopated lives....Be true to Harvard by being true to yourselves. Search for your own sermons. Finish your own sentences. And then rewrite them, again and again.

“The Courage to Not Make Plans”

At the College Class Day, on Wednesday, two seniors offer serious remarks—the Harvard Orations. Laura Jaramillo '10 ('11), a government concentrator and Pforzheimer House resident, spoke about her unusually fraught path to and through Harvard.

WORK HARD, we have been told since we were kids, and you will achieve your wildest dreams. And so we have worked the nights away, with a sense that if we fill all



President
Drew Faust

the check boxes the desired goal must follow....And yet, I have a terrible thing to say today...: sometimes, plans fall through....

When I was 13 years old I had my entire life planned out....I knew what I was going to study, where I was going to work, when I would get married, and exactly how many children I was going to have one day. But I also lived in Colombia in the early 2000s, and the violence that had for years been escalating in the countryside one day came knocking on my door. My family was being threatened by guerrillas, and within a month, we found ourselves at the Miami International Airport with everything we could fit in four suitcases.

I kicked and screamed and complained about the unfathomable unfairness of the world. But life has an implacable way of continuing without break, regardless of how we feel about our broken hearts or trampled dreams. Soon enough, I had to pick myself up, learn English, and get through school like everyone else. After a few more ups and downs, I somehow ended up at Harvard.

Laura Jaramillo



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Commencement Confetti

FROM PURITAN TO POLYGLOT

Phi Beta Kappa celebrated its 221st literary exercises on May 24, proudly tracing its roots to the eighteenth century. PBK's 2011 undergraduate marshals suggest the newly diverse demographics of twenty-first-century Harvard: Edith Yee-Heen Chan, Alexander Sarkis Karadjian, Iya Megre, and Pramod Thammaiah.

and 70 certificates this year. Harvard College conferred 1,540 bachelor of arts and 16 bachelor of science degrees. The Business School conferred 945 degrees, the Graduate School of Arts and Sciences 904 (including 494 doctorates), Law 790, Extension 739, Education 700.... The Divinity School bestowed 143 degrees, and the School of Dental Medicine presented 92 degrees and certificates.

MEDIA MEMORIAL

The pass issued to journalists covering Commencement featured an image of the late Reverend Peter J. Gomes. The idea came from media relations assistant Evan Whitney, who is in charge of graduation logistics for the University news office. This year, on the day itself, Whitney was a participant, not an observer: having taken government courses in the Extension School since 1997, he was awarded his master of liberal arts degree.

FAY PRIZE

The Radcliffe Institute awarded its Fay Prize—meant to recognize the most outstanding imaginative work or original research in any field by an undergraduate—to history and literature concentrator Matthew S. Miller. His thesis, chosen from among the Hoopes Prize winners for outstanding scholarship or research, focused on an exhibition of five South Af-

BIG DAYS. On May 25, the expanding Harvard Corporation elected Joseph J. O'Donnell '67, M.B.A. '71, a Fellow of the University's senior governing board (see page 55). The next morning, Commencement day, daughter Casey O'Donnell was awarded her A.B. (joining sister Kate, of the College class of 2009)—making for a memorable Crimson Commencement.

rican men in Boston and New York at the outset of the Civil War.

HARVARD: THE STUFF

Harvard Student Agencies' Harvard Shop opened its temporary booth in front of Boylston Hall at 6 A.M. Thursday. The gear ranged from class rings and insignia T-shirts to water bottles and diploma frames; the undergraduates on duty said that business was "really good."

HUMORIST, AT WORK

Alexandra Petri '10, one of the funniest people during the 359th Commencement week (she was an Ivy Orator; see "Laugh Lines," July-August 2010, page 56), now plies her trade at the *Washington Post*. Her May 20 ComPost entry (she "puts the 'pun' in punditry")—a mock graduation address titled "What the class of 2011 didn't learn"—gets to the heart of graduates' concerns: "Only 53 percent of 2006 to 2010 graduates are employed, and that

MARSHAL'S MEMORIAL. Sharon Ladd, director of the Harvard International Office, made a personal adjustment to her official outfit as a Commencement marshal's aide. To honor the memory of her late husband, Harold Bolitho, professor of Japanese history emeritus, who died October 23 after a long illness, Ladd wore his Yale doctoral hood with her gown. Their son, James Bolitho, of the College class of 2011, was suitably attired to receive his A.B. degree.



STU ROSNER



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FROM 1665 TO 2011. Tiffany Smalley '11, of Martha's Vineyard, became the first member of the Wampanoag tribe in more than three centuries to receive a Harvard degree. Her immediate predecessor was Caleb Cheeshahteumauk, A.B. 1665. At the afternoon exercises, Smalley accepted a diploma awarded posthumously to Cheeshahteumauk's classmate and fellow Wampanoag, Joel Iacoomes. Though he completed all degree requirements, Iacoomes perished just before graduation. Also present were Cheryl Andrews-Maltais, chair of the Wampanoag Tribe of Gay Head (Aquinnah); President Drew Faust; Cedric Cromwell, chair and president of the Mashpee Wampanoag Tribe; and Bernard Coombs of the Mashpee Tribe, a descendant of Iacoomes.

BEARDS ARE BACK

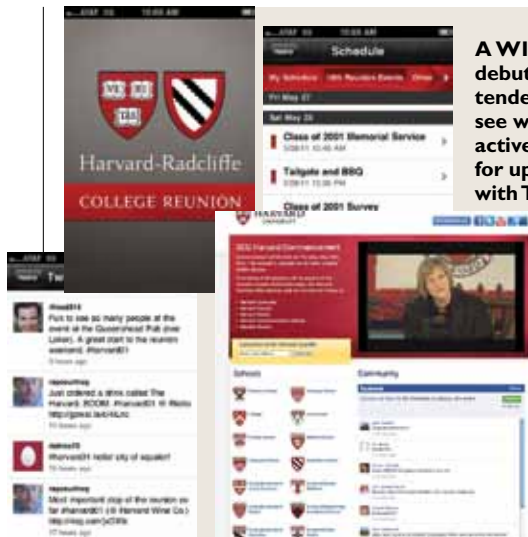
Fashion note: Commencement featured two female presidents, but male facial hair is emphatically in—not only for provost Steven E. Hyman and his successor (see page 53), but among honorary-degree recipients Plácido Domingo, John G. A. Pocock, and David Satcher (surely a diverse sample), and Law School speaker Alec Baldwin.

THE NUMBERS

The University awarded 7,147 degrees

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A WIRED WEEK. The Alumni Association debuted a “Harvard Reunion” iPhone app so attendees could log in to view the schedule of events, see who registered, and find locations on an interactive map. The app was integrated with Facebook for uploading and viewing photos and video; and with Twitter, where attendees could tweet their

locations and thoughts under the hashtags #harvard06, #harvard01, and so on for each class. The Commencement broadcast, streamed online, was integrated with Facebook, too—as Graduate English orator Adam Price (see page 51) delivered his remarks, for example, one could read real-time comments, some in Welsh: “*Da iawn, Adam! Hurry back to Wales.*”

and Alison Schumer received A.B.s, and former New Hampshire senator Judd Gregg, whose son, Joshua Gregg, earned an M.B.A.

GLOBAL DEANSHIP

With Nitin Nohria presenting candidates for degrees of master and doctor of business administration for the first time—he became dean of Harvard Business School last July 1, succeeding Jay O. Light—the University’s increasingly international decanal ranks were evident this Commencement. Nohria, from Rajasthan, India, joins the Graduate School of Design’s Mohsen Mostafavi, born in Iran, and Harvard School of Public Health’s Julio Frenk, from Mexico City.



ROSE LINCOLN/HARVARD NEWS OFFICE

WHAT THEY WAVED

Professional-school students often collaborate to strut their stuff during the morning exercises, rising as one when it comes time to have their degrees conferred and waving some suitable symbol of their skills or aspirations. Hence the Graduate School of Education grads’ tradition of children’s books (see page 46), or the Kennedy School’s inflated globes (see page 45). The lawyers-to-be have, in years past, shown up with inflatable



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NEW SHERIFF IN TOWN. The Harvard Kennedy School, entering its seventy-fifth anniversary year, had a strong showing on the Commencement platform: University marshal Jacqueline O’Neill, M.P.A. ’81; Graduate English orator Adam Price, about to be M.P.A. ’11; and of course Liberian president Ellen Johnson Sirleaf, M.P.A. ’71, an honorand. Making this trio a quartet was the new sheriff of Middlesex County, Peter J. Koutoujian, M.P.A. ’03, who spoke before Commencement about how important his Harvard education had been in preparing him to lead an office with a \$60-million budget and nearly 1,000 employees. At the morning exercises, adapting to his new role, he declaimed (as loudly as his predecessor, but with new phrasing), “The high sheriff of Middlesex County now declares that the meeting will be in ORRRDDEERRR!” As he finished, Middlesex County deputy David Ellison, stationed in front of Sever Hall, yelled, “Hell of a voice, Sheriff!”

sharks (now they carry gavels). The medically inclined have tended to favor rubber-glove or condom balloons. But this year’s prize for innovation goes to the School of Public Health contingent, who showed up with brightly colored apples, bananas, broccoli, and potatoes. Eat your (nonrubber) fruits and veggies, everyone!

STARTING ’EM YOUNG. Many Graduate School of Arts and Sciences students have worked for years to earn their advanced degrees—and have married and started families along the way. And the diploma ceremony in Sanders Theatre can seem long, too, especially for the young ones. That’s why, after relaxing in a separate green room, the degree and certificate recipients’ children can get their own graduation diplomas and certificates, as did Caleb, Grace, Sophie, and Peter Albrecht, whose dad, Dana, received an S.M. If they get advisers now, the junior scholars may be assured a head start toward earlier completion of their theses.

number might drop if my editor doesn’t like the joke I made in that last paragraph.” Commenting on recent reports about how little studying most students do, she observes, “Just wait until you’re in the workforce! Oh, I’m sorry. You won’t be.” Petri hasn’t lost her touch.

USING HIS HEAD

Vice President Joe Biden, in Boston for a luncheon promoting neuroscience research, then swung by campus on Wednesday afternoon to celebrate Class Day with niece Alana J. Biden ’11, a Dunster House resident and co-founder of Harvard’s Quid-ditch Team. Also on campus celebrating new graduates: Connecticut senator Richard Blumenthal ’67 and New York senator Charles Schumer ’71, J.D. ’74, whose children Michael Blumenthal



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Adam Price



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When I was a sophomore, my family's asylum case came to its final step in the court. Despite nearly a decade of building a new life, of working hard, and doing everything right...[o]ur asylum claim was denied, and once again we found ourselves packing what could fit in a suitcase. Three years ago I left Harvard not knowing when I would have the luxury of staying up all night at Lamont again, or complaining over my House open list about the lack of hot breakfast....

I missed the impassioned debates with my friends in the Pfoho dining hall. I missed the exhilarating feeling of walking into Annenberg and being reminded of the dream that it is to be a Harvard student....

I cannot step in front of this microphone...and presume to impart...some sort of wisdom that you haven't yet discovered on your own. All I can share is what I have learned from my uncanny ability to have my life plans completely fall through: make sure that you live life in such a way, that even if you don't get where you meant to go, it was well worth the trip.

Often people won't congratulate you on doing the things you love, they won't cite you and they won't pay you more. You won't be able to put them on your résumé (though most of us will probably find a way). The great privilege we have had access to comes with great responsibility. But don't forget the great responsibility you have to yourself. Have the courage, every once in a while, to *not* make plans, and discover the wonderful things that could happen. Find, in your busy lives, time to enjoy beauty, to let yourself be fascinated, to get carried away.

“The World Needs Less of the Same”

Graduate English orator Adam Price, M.P.A. '11, roused the morning exercises audience with his words, his delivery—he was a member of Parliament from the nationalist Plaid Cymru party—and the rich voice of his native Wales.

IN HARVARD YARD IN 1775 George Washington's army was housed here in Hollis Hall, wracked by exhaustion and fear, sustained only by coffee, canteen food, and the promise of future happiness—it sounds a bit like finals week.

Lined up on the opposite bank of the Charles River were hundreds of my Welsh ancestors, the Royal Welch Fusiliers fighting for the British Army against the American Revolution.

I guess I should apologize for it, really. You seem to have made a success of this independence thing. Well done, and thanks for leaving us Canada.

But the people I think about most today are those of my Welsh ancestors who were on *this side of the river*, fighting for the rev-

olution. Who showed an independence of mind whose spirit I want to invoke today.

Fourteen of the signers of the American Declaration of Independence were Welsh, who had found here in America, like I have at Harvard, a space to think and chart their own course. Who were inspired by the dream of freedom, first forged here, that is still troubling tyrants today from Tripoli to Damascus.

Center of Attention

Amid Harvard's vast Commencement spectacle, the formal center—on the dais constructed beside Memorial Church—is still the venue for small gestures that go to the heart of the University and its people. Herewith, a close reading of some 2011 events not prescribed by the “Form of Conferring Degrees” that guides the morning exercises and the people who conduct the business of graduation.

Between the awarding of student degrees and the bestowal of honorary ones, President Drew Faust interrupted the proceedings, saying, “Before we continue, let me take this opportunity to recognize the man standing at the microphone. Steve Hyman will step down this June after a decade of extraordinarily distinguished and devoted service as the provost of the University. All of us who care about Harvard owe him our gratitude. Please join me in applauding and thanking him.” Hyman received an especially vigorous ovation from the party on the stage: the deans, Fellows, and Overseers who have worked most closely with him. Faust then presumably returned to the formal script for the honorands, but injected a spontaneous phrase: “The provost—if he's able to speak—will introduce the candidates.” Hyman instantly picked up the baton: “Ah, now back to regular business.”

James R. Houghton, recognized for helping guide the University's passage “through change and through storm” (including the end of Lawrence H. Summers's presidency, the transition to Faust's, and the financial crisis) in his honorary citation—the valedictory for a lifelong engagement with Harvard—blew the president a kiss upon receiving his degree.

Harvard hands especially appreciated the provost's description of honorand Dudley R. Herschbach as “an engaged citizen of the University” and “no stranger to this ceremony” (for which he provided broadcast commentary for many years—an atypical role for a Nobel laureate). So it was particularly apt that his escort for the day was his wife, longtime Harvard administrator Georgene Herschbach (the couple together served as master and co-master, respectively, of Currier House in the 1980s), rather than the customary faculty member with expertise in the same field.

As the exercises ended and the entire assembly rose in song, Plácido Domingo, freshly anointed Doctor of Music, master of more than 130 different operatic roles, in more than 3,500 performances, scrutinized the program, trying to keep up with the Latin lyrics of the “Harvard Hymn.”



Harvard partners Dudley and Georgene Herschbach

JIM HARRISON

All hail the retiring provost, Steven E. Hyman.



Unlike the hidebound British who never broke ranks, the American revolutionaries knew the value of fighting for each other, yet thinking for themselves.

They struck out on their own, and built something new together.

Today...we live in a world of creeping homogenization....Are we all slowly beginning to speak, to see, to sound the same? And even think alike?

...At its best the university is an incubator of independent inquiry, a cacophony of voices, opinions, arguments, a living debate that reshapes us as we shape it.

But here's the irony: that to graduate we must first master the established theories. So though we are meant to stand here on the shoulders of giants, it can sometimes feel as if that body of accumulated learning, all the tried and tested frameworks and formulas, are weighing down upon us, crushing our creativity.

And threatening to sink us if we are not careful.

In a world where the deepest problems defy easy resolution, surely the greatest risk is not taking risks at all.

So will we have the courage to mount our own quiet revolution?

Generations ago, there was an army of



Ellen Johnson Sirleaf

people drawn here from many lands that rejected the status quo. That turned their world upside down.

So let's today salute them: the dissenters, the mavericks and heretics, pioneers and prime movers.

Who know that without our willing to be wrong, we can never be right.

That only by questioning what is, can we begin to imagine what might be....

The world needs less of the same. It needs us to work together *and* think for ourselves. It needs the commonwealth of us and the republic of you.

So together, let's make today our independence day, and in our liberty strive to serve the common good.

"If Your Dreams Do Not Scare You"

Her Excellency Ellen Johnson Sirleaf, the president of Liberia and guest speaker for the afternoon exercises, recounted her own Harvard education—when she conducted research in stacks, where books were stored—and outlined the hopeful signs of democracy in Africa and of economic recovery and civic revival in her war-torn country. She then drew upon her own life, before her triumphant election in 2005, as a source of some advice.

I URGE YOU, Harvard graduates, class of 2011, to be fearless about the future. Just because something has not been done as yet, doesn't mean it cannot be done. I was never deterred from running for president just because there had never been any other female elected as a head of state in Africa. Simply because political leadership in Liberia had

always been a "boys' club" didn't mean it was right, and so I remained undeterred....

As you approach your future, there will be ample opportunity to become jaded and cynical, but I urge you to resist cynicism—the world is still a beautiful place and change is possible. As I have noted...my path to the presidency was never straightforward or guaranteed. With prison, death threats, and exile, there were many opportunities to quit, to forget about the dream, yet we all persisted. I have always maintained the conviction that my country and people are so much better than our recent history indicates. I have come to appreciate these difficult moments, but I believe I'm a better leader, a better person, with a richer appreciation for the present because of my resilient past.

So graduates of 2011, the size of your dreams must always exceed your current capacity to achieve them. If your dreams do not scare you, they are not big enough. If you start off with a small dream, you may not have much left when it is fulfilled because along the way, life will task your dreams and make demands on you. I am, however, bullish about the future of our world because of everyone in this Yard, because of those who have graduated today. Fearlessness for the future, youthfulness of the heart, toughness for the distractions, creativeness for the complexities: these remain the indispensable ingredients of national and global transformation. Add to that envelope the elements of hope—robust hope and resilience—and there's no telling what can be accomplished. ♡



Phi Beta
Kappa poet
Henri Cole

JIM HARRISON

COMPLETE

COMMENCEMENT COVERAGE

Recordings and texts of the principal speeches, news reports on University and many school events, and expanded photo galleries are available at harvardmagazine.com/commencement-2011. Highlights include Amy Poehler at Senior Class Day, Alec Baldwin at the Law School, Kolo-kotrones University Professor Paul Farmer at the Kennedy School, the Phi Beta Kappa Literary Exercises, addresses by President Drew Faust and President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf—and Plácido Domingo serenading Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg.