

## Exeter Cum Laude Induction Speech

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Good afternoon everybody. Congretulations to all the Cum Laude students, their parents, grandparents, siblings, other relatives and friends.

In earning these Cum Laude honors, I hope you took time to have fun learning the subjects while struggling for the hard-to-get Exeter A's. The bad news is it will be harder to get A's at College.

It is my great honor to talk to you today. This is my first public speech, and I am very excited. I have been waiting this momet for all my life. I thank Ms. Farnham and Ms Cadwell to give me this honor, I thank my daughter Yuna for her hard work to be a Cum Laude, I thank my son, Yuri for giving me courage and helping me to give a public speech. Finally I thank my husband, Jim, for editing my talk. He is my editor in house.

The reason why Ms. Farnham asked me to give a talk is I am a "Mother", teacher and student. My role as a mother, teacher and student is very mixed up. At school, my students say I am like their mother. Sometimes in a good sense, and sometimes in not so a good sense. At home, my children complain that I am like their teacher not like a tender loving mother. They also complain that I am a very poor student of English and without any sympathy that they accuse me of having a chronic desease called ISE syndrome, Impossible Students of English. So, I will talk to you as a mother, as a

teacher, and as a student in a very thick accent. I hope you understand me. If not, ask Yuri to translate for you.

First of all let's give a big applause for the entire Exeter faculty who gave you an excellent education. Also my special thanks goes to all the teachers of Yuna. They had given me, indirectly, an education through Yuna. I learned so much by reading Yuna's reports, papers and her responses to the books she was reading for classes. For example, Yuna's History 333 paper focused on the showdown between General McArthur and President Truman during the Korean War. I was raised in Korea to believe that General McArthur was a perfect hero and that Truman was a perfect heel. After reading Yuna's History research paper, I realized that there were other points of view. It was so exciting to re-read *Demian and Hemlet*, and to be introduced to some modern novel, *Beloved* by Toni Morrison, for example. I feel so well re-educated that Exeter tuition is like "buy-one and get-one free". I have decided **not** to ask Yuna to pay us back the Exeter tuition when she becomes rich and famous. We hope Yuna will continue to teach us when she goes to College, and we are already very excited about all the things we are going to learn from her. If she teaches us as well as she did at Exeter, we will not charge her for her College tuition either.

Two years ago in his commencement speech, Mr. Tingley asked Exeter graduates to become teachers. As a parent, I urge you students to teach your parents all the things you learn at college through letters, e-mail, and conversation. There are many advantages to teaching your parents. First of all, teaching is the best way to learn, with all of your

experience with the Harkness method, I don't need to elaborate this point. Second of all, you get compensated to the tune of nearly \$35,000/year for teaching your parents. This may well be the highest paid job you have for a long, long time. Suppose you spend about an hour a week to write to your parents, and let's say you spend total of 40 hours per year, you are paid about \$900 per hour. That's a lot of money! Thirdly, your parents will respect you more, and it will be much easier to get your way. The example I choose is from the movie, "Dead Poet's Society". Have you seen that movie? If not, I strongly recommend to watch it. The video store has it. Last year at the Middlebury College convocation, both our President and a faculty speaker talked about this movie. It is the story about boarding school boys, teachers and parents. In the end, a boy who wanted to be an actor committed suicide because his father did not approve of acting and wanted his son to become a doctor. I am sure if the boy patiently taught his father the joy of literature and the theater, the father might have understood his son's true passion. So, in order to be a good teacher to your parents, explore as many interesting courses as possible at college, learn well, and teach your parents with patience.

When I asked Yuna what kind of speech she most enjoyed while at Exeter, she said she liked the inspiring speech. I think the best way to get inspiration is to get to know people who are knowledgeable, good and beautiful. Exeter's founder, Dr. John Phillips said: "Knowledge without goodness is dangerous, goodness without knowledge is feeble." I think this motto is really inspiring, but it is not complete. We have to add beauty, which is the motto of my high school in Korea. It says strive for truth, goodness and beauty. To me knowledge and goodness without beauty is boring. So what is

beauty? I remember the Exeter recruiting video that was sent to my daughter when she was applying for admission to Exeter four years ago. In this video students were discussing the definition of beauty around the Harkness table. I'm sorry now that I don't remember what was specifically said, but I was very impressed by the fact that they were discussing beauty. To me beauty is imagination and creativity, another form of human character. All human beings want to know, want to create, and want to be good. If you have a strong desire to know, you become a scholar. If you have strong desire to create or discover, you become an artist or a scientist. Whether you are a scholar, an artist or a scientist, the ultimate goal should be the improvement of humanity. There are many intelligent people who use their imagination and their spirit to uplift humanity.

The three most inspiring people to me are Beethoven, Chagall, and Marie Curie. At Middlebury, I gave a course about these people during one winter term. We read their biographies, listened to Beethoven's music, looked at the Chagall's paintings, and learned some basic principles of Marie Curie's scientific discoveries. I asked students to go to a concert, visit a museum, and visit our chemistry lab. Many students confessed that it was their first concert, first museum visit, and first chemistry lab visit. They all enjoyed the experiences tremendously. On the final day we took a walk on a trail located on a local landmark, Chipman Hill. Students were asked to write their final reflections about the course. I will read to you some of the excerpts:

“Today was the perfect closure to our course. Finishing the Marie Curie presentations and touring the laboratories almost made her come to life. Isn't she alive in

every lab, in every building where science is cherished? Following the lab touring, we walked on Chipman Hill-it was beautiful, absolutely beautiful. It was completely silent-the only sound the crunching of snow under my boots and a bird that sang an expression of love. I was thinking... thinking about Beethoven. His music goes far beyond mere patterns in sound. It bears witness to the destiny of man. Beethoven created joy himself to give to the world. Thinking about Chagall, his poetic paintings and musical murals. His pictures go far beyond mere forms, but filled with true love and humanism. And thinking about Marie Curie, a gentle woman with fire in her heart to discover and to care. Marie's poem written during her heroic student's year in Paris is lingering in my mind.

“Ah! How harsh the youth of the student passes,  
While all around her,  
with passions ever fresh,  
Other youths search eagerly for easy pleasures!  
And yet in solitude She lives, obscure and blessed,  
For in her cell she finds the ardor.  
That makes her heart immense.”

How do I relate to these people? How do I apply them to my life? In ten million ways. They have shaped the world in which I live, and consequently have shaped me, and these unbelievable, magnificent people are my friends.”

Another student wrote like this:

“There are a number of things that I admire about all three. Their love for nature and solitude. Their imaginations. But I think what I admire most, and what inspires me above all, was their love for humanity, and their passion to improve the world we live in. All three of these artists worked for the sake of others, at times with great personal sacrifice.”

Yes, all these people created joy themselves through their sufferings to give it to the world. I hope you will read their biographies and make them your life-long friends.

Another person whom I want to talk about is the father in the movie *Life is Beautiful*. In the movie an Italian Jewish father and his son are sent to a concentration camp during WWII. The father did not tell his young son the true story, but told him they were playing a game. All the hard work without much food and miserable life was a game to earn 1000 points to win a tank. Throughout the whole ordeal, the father never lost his sense of humor, and never lost his belief that "Life is Beautiful". I hope you will watch the movie and always remember that "Life is beautiful" if you have sense of humor and put other people's happiness before yours! I also hope you will agree that beautiful people are the people who have sense of humor and can smile to other humans to make world beautiful.

My newest role model is Lillian Pierce. She is this year's valedictorian at Princeton University. She was of course A student, but also a virtuoso violinist and a Rhode scholar. For three years at Princeton she hardly slept in order to study and to

practice violin. I will tell you how she has given me strength. About a week ago, I found out that a grant proposal that I submitted to the National Science Foundation was not going to be funded. This was my 4th try to get an NSF grant. I was so disappointed that I decided to give up. Then, I remembered Lillian Pierce's story. Lillian Pierce is a genius "genetically" (her brother was also a Princeton Valedictorian and Rhodes Scholar), and yet she had to work that hard to achieve what she wanted. I am not a genius, and yet I had not worked that hard for my grant proposal. I thought I worked hard, but compared to Lillian's effort, mine was very little. So, I've decided to give it another try. This time I will work really, really hard to the standard of Lillian Pierce and Marie Curie.

In summary, new Cum Laude students, this summer spend your time to enrich your mind and spirit. Don't work too many hours just to make money. Work the minimum hours, and spend most of your money on books, especially biographies of inspirational people. Then, you will not have money for shopping, and will not spend your time for shopping. You will have plenty of time to read books, to take a walk in the woods in solitude, and to listen to the Beethoven's symphonies from the beginning to the end without any interruption. Take your parents to museums and concerts. Read books with your parents and siblings. Make your family dinner table like the Harkness table. You are in charge to make your and the others lives beautiful! I cheer your life-long effort to become an exciting inspirational person with knowledge, goodness and beauty.

Thank you very much.