

Class of 2015 President Tyler Merkle Gives Response: “Unlucky?”

Good Morning, and welcome friends, family, faculty, administration, and our honored guests of the class of '15. Or the Class of 20-15 or the Class of 2015. I don't know what the proper way to say it would be. It seems like after 1999 we lost the ability to say the year in the new millennium. But regardless of how you say it, we are the Class of '15 and we are proud and ready to shed our reputation as the unluckiest class in Sayville history.

Unlucky? It has been said by many of us that we are one of the unluckiest classes that Sayville has ever seen. When I first heard this I believed it to be a ridiculous accusation. But after thinking it through, I have to admit there is some truth behind the statement.

We entered 6th grade right at the beginning of the 2008 recession. As a result, the school canceled our Medieval Times trip. Luckily, the school planned an alternative trip that entailed a movie at the Sayville Movie Theater. Gee! What fun it is to go to a place where your feet stick to the ground.

Our personal black cloud followed us to Frost Valley where it rained for 4 straight days. That didn't stop our hikes and activities. Unfortunately, it didn't stop the bed-bugs either.

Furthermore, we were lucky enough to see our elementary schools receive the additions and new libraries they deserved. But as our luck would have it, we were too long gone to have been able to make use of them. And now what's this I'm hearing about a turf field?

Our freshman homecoming? Rained out.

Our sophomore midterms: 'Hurricaned' out.

Our Junior float: Fell apart.

But I don't want us to leave here today, for the last time, without thinking about ways we have been truly blessed. The danger of having this “unlucky” reputation is that we overlook our good fortune. For instance, we have been privileged to have had two amazing women to help get us through these four years of high school. Despite her height, Mrs. Perlin was always there to tackle every issue, no matter how big. Mrs. Perlin was not alone. Mrs. VanDorn was not only our advisor, but kept us organized and headed in the right direction. Not many high school classes can say they had their prom in an Aquarium.

Despite the stress of being advisors to a class that was sometimes unorganized, unmotivated and just, well, unlucky, Mrs. VanDorn and Mrs. Perlin were always able to keep their cool and their school spirit. Without them, our high school experience would not have been as fun and exciting as it was, so on behalf of our entire class, thank you.

Although Mrs. Perlin and Mrs. VanDorn did a lot for our class, they were not the only faculty members who made our four years the best they could be. Mrs. Wittman or just Witt, despite having a tough as nails exterior that can be intimidating at times has an interior that is as soft as cotton candy. She has helped so much. Especially when it came to being there for us to help with any life struggle. I would like to say a special thanks to Mr. Nani. Although being a sass master, he has helped some of us build a strong love-hate relationship with learning a second language. However, taking a French or Spanish class was not the only class with which we had a love-hate relationship. I think all of us can agree math class, at times, felt a bit longer than 40 minutes. However, there was never a dull moment in Mrs. Murfitt's

class. She was always there for us 10th periods to give us the extra help we needed. Still, these are only some of the great faculty members that Sayville High School has. In a place where it feels like we're judged and valued solely on our grades, the staff here helped us realize that we are more than just a number, but unique human beings. Many of us took the opportunity to thank our teachers from the past 13 years by naming them "Teachers who Made a Difference." I would encourage all of us to realize the good fortune we have had at this school by taking a minute to acknowledge the teachers and staff members who got us here today. For some of us, their job was not so easy.

I would be remiss if I did not mention two classmates who are not here with us this morning. We are lucky to have the example of resilience and strength that we have in Phil Maehr, and we look forward to sharing high school stories with him at many, many future reunions.

We were all very lucky to know Joseph Visone. I think we can all agree that even though he is not physically here with us, his spirit will always be very much a part of the Class of '15.

So *you* have the honor of graduating from one of the best high schools on Long Island where a slice of cheese on a wrap is \$3.50. As a result of this luck, some of you will go off and do incredible things such as become CEO's, travel the world, or just move down the street from where you grew up and produce the future graduates of Sayville High School. You are probably sitting here right now wondering "where has the time gone?" I mean it seems like just yesterday we were sitting in planetarium class where we would have to superglue our eyes open just to stay awake.

But once we got to the high school, the superglue was no longer needed. Our eyes began to open to new perspectives and experiences. Though nothing can be more of an eye opener than seeing Bruce the security guard charging at you asking you for a pass. Although being subjected to new experiences was scary, the wonderful faculty here at Sayville High School made everything a lot easier for us.

But all jokes aside, we are lucky to have each other. We have been through a lot together and our share of bad luck has made us closer. Since we have experienced our share of life's struggles, there is no doubt in my mind that we can achieve what ever we put our minds to. Although we are known as the "unluckiest class", let's become the "most successful class" this district has ever seen! Our paths to success may be filled with challenges and "bad luck" but I know that as a class, we have learned that no amount of bad luck can stop us if we lean on each other. Before I finish my speech I would like to quote one of my favorite movies, Now and Then: "Things will happen in your life that you can't stop but that's no reason to shut out the world."

Dream big,

Make every second count,

And follow your heart.

Thank you for the best four years of my life! And congratulations Class of 2015, we did it!