

50th REUNION SPEECH

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Four score and seven years ago—whoops, wrong speech.

Seven score and 4 years ago—no, that's not it, either.

Ah..., two score and 10 years ago, we graduated from L.A. High.

While that occasion marked an important milestone for many of us, it doesn't really compare on a national level with the events that Pres. Lincoln talked about that day on the Gettysburg battlefield.

Yet, to each one of us, our days at L.A. High a mere 50 years ago are just as important, for they helped define us and mold our character for the years and events to come.

It's hard to believe that it's been 50 years since we graduated, diplomas in hand, ready to face the world at large. For some, that path involved college or a job, marriage and a family, or a combination of those pursuits. Still others followed a different path.

What's so fascinating is that each of us has a very different story to tell, and no two stories are alike. The variety of paths that we've followed to reach this moment in time is remarkable.

So, in all seriousness, what's new? Surely, it comes as no surprise that quite a bit is new, not only in our individual lives but in society at large. Who remembers, for example, those old Royal and Underwood manual typewriters that many of us learned to type on? Who remembers carbon paper? Mention those relics to today's youngsters and they don't have a clue what we're talking about. Today's generation learns to type on computers—with no carbon paper in sight—and to text and uses a whole host of electronic devices we never heard of or contemplated 50 years ago.

Remember those old vinyl records that some of us listened to—incessantly and to our parents' consternation? Now, we have CDs and MP3s. And, who knows what other means of recording and playing music lie just beyond the horizon?

And can you imagine the impact that television has had on all of us?

The point of these examples is simply to illustrate that some changes in technology have had a substantial impact on our daily lives.

What's also significant is that the impact of these changes has caused us to change as well, maybe even in ways that have not always been useful or productive.

My point is, every time some technological advance changes our lives in a significant way, we are demonstrating one of mankind's most important traits: the ability to adapt and survive.

There have also been changes on a more personal level. Who has not experienced the gamut of emotions at some point in our lives: love, happiness, joy, sorrow, loneliness and grief. Each such experience has helped mold us and make us stronger. And our ability to adapt to those changes is what marks us all as survivors.

Make no mistake about it, the fact that we are in each other's company tonight suggests that our ability to adapt to life's vicissitudes and our instinct to survive are both highly developed.

Along the way, there have been a few laughs, some tears, some growth and self-enlightenment, as well as some lessons learned. For survival entails each of those experiences.

So, what's my point? Times have changed, and so have we. For the past 50 years as adults, we've lived through changes in our personal lives, as well as changes in technology and in the fabric of society. Those changes have made us the survivors we are today. And that is worth celebrating.

Congratulations on reaching this point in your lives and this milestone. May you continue to thrive.

And, if we should be so lucky, may the next 50 years prove to be as fascinating to us as these past 50 years.

In fact, let's make it a point to schedule a return engagement in another 50 years. Be sure to mark your calendars, so you don't forget.

See you then.