

Garrett Hodges

Salutatorian

Class of 2021

### Constant Change

Good evening, and welcome to the Red Land High School Class of 2021 Commencement Ceremony. It really is great to see so many familiar faces, I almost forgot what they looked like. When Mrs. Dorsey approached me about a month ago with a folder full of commencement speeches dating back to the class of 1995—well before we were even born—I was surprised by some of the words that they used. As I got further and further back into the past, I noticed references to strange things like CD players, Gameboys, and even something called a magazine. After consulting with experts of recent history including my parents and brothers, I learned that these items were actually really groundbreaking in their times, and the fact that something so influential could be but a word to me made me realize just how quickly things can change.

For the past 13 or so years we have been surrounded by the same people everywhere we went, and now we are upon a time of monumental change. We are now preparing ourselves to transition away from the one thing in our lives that has stayed relatively constant, our peer-group. Whether we have chosen to further our education, enter the workforce, or enlist in the military, we are making the biggest decision and transition of our lives so far—and believe me, I know how scary it seems. We are about to spread out across the entire country and quite possibly the world when most of us have barely travelled any further than the distance from one end of space highway to the other. Again, it might be terrifying, but if I have learned anything from the speeches of those before me, I know that change happens quickly. While we are likely proud and excited to walk across this stage today, there is no doubt a hint of sadness in the air. These past four years of high school have been great, probably the four greatest years of our lives so far; but there is one key phrase in there—so far. We must not allow our future selves to look back on the memories of high school wistfully, but rather we should look back in fondness. As with the development of technology that I noticed in a few short years of speeches, not only does time bring change, but it also brings

advancement. As we head out into the real world, we are going to reach for and achieve our full potential.

Just as James Russell, the inventor of the CD player, did not know that we were on our way to streaming music over the internet, we have no idea what our future holds. We may know a general direction, but the specifics of our journey are waiting to be discovered, and Red Land High School has prepared us to take this next step in our lives. For that, I would like to thank the teachers, administrators, and support staff that have made such an education possible. Additionally, I would like to take the time to show gratitude to Mrs. Myers, the attendance secretary at Red Land, for handling the mess that was attendance this year. I know that she has had to handle many a missed Powerschool login by my peers—surely I would NEVER have missed my alarm on an asynchronous day.

Who would have thought that we would have to attempt to learn from home? This past year has been a time of such rapid change that it leaves me with no doubt that we can adapt to change in our futures, and this adaptability is what will allow us to succeed once we leave this stadium. If we really take a second to think about it, we have always had to be able to adapt at Red Land. After all, there was seemingly a different set of open bathrooms each day, and well you know how the bathrooms can be. That is true adaptability. Even the face of this school is changing next year. Mr. G, a teacher I liked so much I elected to have twice, is leaving and no one will hear about his obsession with Pascal's Triangle or statistical paradoxes. With the retirement of Mrs. Metcalf, who will fill the hallways with an accurate witch's laugh? But this change is inevitable.

Ultimately, nothing in life is set in stone. Whatever we choose to do with our lives RIGHT NOW is not necessarily what we will do forever-----because things change. In ten years who knows how we will be watching our favorite shows or reading the news, and that is fine. We will adjust and we will prosper, because that is just what we do.

Lastly, I would like to take the time to thank the Red Land High School Class of 2021. After all, it is you that has really made Red Land memorable for me. Despite our unavoidable departure, I can assure you that this family is eternal. Before we walk across this field as the Class of 2021, I want to echo what has been said many times

before. We are not just Patriots for the four years that we spend within the walls of Red Land High School, we are Patriots for Life. While we most definitely are moving onto a new chapter in our lives, that does not mean we have to forget this experience. Thank you, and congratulations.