

Bruce Honeyman's remarks to the class of '69 at the 50th high school class reunion, Sept, 14, 2019 in Topeka, KS. President of the Student Congress, 1968-69, Junior (1968) and Sophomore (1967) class president.

Well played, committee, this event landed on Friday the 13th and the Harvest Full Moon. Let's get crazy, maybe stay up until 10!! I hope you got in a good nap this afternoon, often now called the happy hour for our age group.

Here we are being seniors again—I thought we were done with that back in 1969. But all things are recycled, repurposed, re-used and we're no exception. And we're not even the 'old' old (thankfully!)—We are now part of the 'young' old, kind of like being sophomores again. Me? I intend to live forever and so far, so good.

And like graduating from high school many or most of us are graduating from our jobs or roles as parents and looking at creating new roles, facing new challenges. It's an exciting time, a time of earned freedom, hopefully for all of you. It's kind of like Butch Cassidy and the Sundance Kid jumping off a cliff into a raging river—you never know what's going to happen next or when the story ends.

It's been said There are 3 stages of life: youth, middle age, and YOU LOOK FABULOUS!. We've now hit that last stage of life.

Grey hair, health issues, aging, coming apart at the seams...I never thought this would happen to me! My friends and I have a name for a bunch of our senior friends getting together, it's called an "organ recital". Some of you look quite together—congrats. By definition those in attendance this weekend are doing pretty well—it's a self-selecting event. I'm just happy to be here, period. It is what it is.

We're becoming a truer version of ourselves and it's time to accept who we are. Hopefully the 'high school' need to compare, compete, hold grudges, be jealous and worry has lessened for everyone. If not, you can always go back to taking drugs—it's kind of legal now, at least one state over. Heck, my dad was the judge—that made it hard to get away with anything! Not impossible, just harder. But I was better off planting my wild oats off in Colorado for a few years.

On a more serious note, let's take a moment now and give our fellow classmates who couldn't be here tonight some respect, and bring them into our thoughts. Please think of someone now who couldn't be here with us this weekend, either because they've passed on—that's close to 100 now of our class of 635— who couldn't attend, or didn't want to attend, or some simply can't be found. What matters now is that we honor them, wish them well in their journey or to invite them back, if they can, for future reunions.

When I look out at all of you I'm reminded of a scene from a favorite movie of mine, Cinema Paradiso, an Italian film about growing up in a small rural village in Sicily in which the weekly cinema was the greatest community event of the week, providing an escape from the hard work and smallness of village life. The scene that I keep in mind is one like this in which the villagers are viewing yet another cinema together, though much later in life, like we are looking tonight at each other, seeing each other as we are today, remembering the lives we shared, how we learned to love, to work, to become the men and women we are today.

I want you to take a walk with me. Like after a rain, the clouds have parted and we're walking thru a wooded area, full of the tall trees this area is famous for.

It could be in a park playing frisbee or watching model planes flown at Gage or Big Shunga, it could be watching kids on their rope swings across a creek or from the roof of their house, it could be along the shores of Lake Shawnee or Perry, it could be your neighborhood park at Willow, Ripley, College Hill or Collins, it could be the land behind the old Menninger west campus also called SBA Hill, it could be the land behind Potwin where I 1st lived, along the railroad tracks, that run along the Kaw River, it could be where you put into the Kaw at Urish Rd with your inner tube getting ready for a float, it could be where you rode your bike under the shade trees hanging over the street, it could be fishing, crawdad or bullfrog hunting along one of our many creeks, lakes or rivers, it could be along a hedgeapple windbreak in some farmer's field, it could be on the playgrounds of your local schools, where children still climb and make crabapple whips from crabapple trees, it could be next to your schools and community rec. centers where you played knock hockey, four square, tetherball, then learned to square dance, then social dance and also lose your "chicken fat" doing calisthenics, it could be where you went to church while attending a scout meeting, youth choir or Sunday school, or it could be under your favorite climbing tree in your own backyard.

Now on this walk you have a good friend or family member with you and you find a good spot to sit down, on a log, or bench or even on the ground, leaning up against the tree's rough bark. You smell the damp earth, the leaves and foliage. You hear the sounds of the rustling leaves in the wind, the robins and sparrows flit and sing around you. The billowy cumulus clouds are moving overhead and the sun is going in and out of the clouds. You recall lying on your back as a child, looking up and imagining all kinds of shapes in the clouds. You feel at peace, alive. You breathe easily, evenly, deeply. Then you realize this whole place is alive—life is teeming all around you and you are a part of that.

It's been this way since the beginning of time. You capture in your mind the trees that grow so large from such small seeds—the helicopter maples, the beret-hatted acorns, the cottonwoods floating in the air. You see that some of the trees, or their branches, are falling, holding each other up. Some trees have fallen completely and are now the nurse logs that replenish the soil, and becoming the nursery for the next, new generation of trees, plants and animals.

There are so many different types of trees—deciduous, evergreen, young and old, sick and healthy, small and great. Above ground the shapes are obvious to see but below ground the forms are just as great and complex, even more so. For there the trees' roots are intertwined, supporting and feeding each other in ways we can only imagine. The earth too is alive with millions of living organisms—insects, fungi, bacteria—all working together and doing their unique job, part of a dynamic living system.

Further, you realize the whole forest, or park you're in, IS the nursery, alive and supporting all of life around it. And the the people's lives too are dependent on the trees—for its oxygen, its cool shade, its wood for fires that warm and cook, wood for homes, furniture, toys, tools, nourishment from its leaves, fruits, roots and seeds, and for providing the healing elements for our medicines. The trees are actually taking care of us as we take care of them. They were here long before us and will be here long after we're gone.

Friends, we are that forest—a diverse community of different sizes, shapes and colors—each adding value to the whole, each striving to fulfill one's destiny, each feeding, shaping, informing, protecting and being protected by the others. Each literally bound together from the roots to the boughs, to live together as one living system.

We grew up together, from the nurseries of Stormont Vail and St. Frances, from the nursery schools and kindergartens, supported and loved by our families, churches, schools, businesses and each other—to become this living community, the living forest system, which fills this room today.

Most of us in this room had eighteen years together before we spread like seeds to the four winds. No matter how far we travelled, it was enough to provide a secure base to be launched from, a great hot house start to life. Where seeds of love, core values, family and community were planted. And because of the ongoing nourishment of connection and growth from those seeds, we could and would return again and again to the forest that makes up this Kansas life. It's been said you can take the boy/girl out of Kansas but you can't take the Kansas out of the boy/girl.

All is interdependent. All is changing. All is impermanent. Within these universal truths there is also hope for the future as we continue to influence each other, growing still continuously, supporting each other as old trees sometimes do, to lean on each other, sometimes literally. We have become or are still becoming the best versions of ourselves, for we all bloom at different times, to live by the fruits, under the shade of the trees we have planted. We remain connected no matter what you see above ground, our roots are intertwined, to continue to feed, support and protect each other.

As the debatably profound Mr. Natural said, as drawn by underground cartoonist, R. Crumb, "twas ever thus" and so it is. Keep on truckin', class of '69.

And no matter what others think, **YOU LOOK FABULOUS!**

Thank you for taking this walk with me. I treasure and honor the opportunity to be here with you all.

Keep on Truckin'..



TWAS EVER THUS
says Mr. Natural



