

**Grandparents Day Speech**  
**By Jack Pierce, Class of 2013**  
**October 25, 2019**

Good morning everyone! My name is Jack Pierce and I'm honored to be up here speaking to you today. I graduated from Maine Coast Waldorf High School in the spring of 2013 as part of the fourth graduating class. I toured the new High School building this morning and wow have we made an upgrade. After walking through the building, I wandered through the second grade playground and stopped by the tree where my best friend Ben and I used to spend every recess. Our seats in the branches were still there; his up a little bit and further out, and mine closer to safety the trunk. From these spots we used to discuss, what else, but the daily news and politics. Why was Rachel so bothersome? What kind of mischief could we dream up for German class? Most importantly, did a tunnel system really exist underneath the school?

For the duration of second grade and for a good time onwards, it felt as if Ben and I were almost the same person. We enjoyed the same humor, the same schemes. We were in all the same classes, read all the same books. At school, we were inseparable. Over time however, and much to our surprise, it became clear that we were in fact two different people. This might seem obvious to you, but this came as a shocking revelation to us. We had started enjoying different classes and having separate interests outside of school. Our personalities grew distinct, and although we were still inseparable, we became Ben and Jack, as opposed to Ben and Jack. In spite of our growing differences, our news and politics conversations never ceased, and even became more interesting, with new and sometimes conflicting perspectives. This divergence was of course very natural, and has continued. The year after we received our diplomas on this very stage, we parted ways to attend different colleges. Ben chose to study at Philosophy, and I Computer Science, two arguably opposite subject areas. Ben is now working primarily with people, as a high-powered recruiter. He's in New York City, and enjoying everything that a big city has to offer. I'm in Boston, working primarily with computers as a software engineer, and retreat to the woods of New Hampshire and Maine as often as my schedule allows.

But everyone makes friends in school, and every school turns out different types of people who choose to walk different paths. The significant difference for Ben and I, and our other intrepid classmates was breadth. We found that this school nurtures individuals who can choose any path, but more importantly have a clear understanding of the choice itself. How do you know you want to be an artist if you've never sculpted? How can you know that your greatest satisfaction comes from working with your hands, if you've only ever held a pencil in them? From our community trail work day, to poetry recitation in High School, time and time again we were asked to use our minds and bodies in different and opposing ways.

For an entire week in 5th grade, our class teacher Mrs. Thurrell took us out to the woods behind her house to camp. This however, was no ordinary car camping experience. We were instructed to bring a sleeping bag, a sleeping pad, some warm clothes, and a rain jacket. Notice a key piece of outdoor gear is missing from that list: a tent. Now, you probably all know what a tent is; flimsy but effective fabric thing that protects you from the elements... by all accounts - except for Mrs. Thurrell's - a crucial piece of gear. This omission was not a by mistake however. We were going to make our own shelters. She took us to a clear patch of woods and showed us how we could make a primitive debris shelter using only materials found around us in the woods. First, she fashioned a ridge pole by lodging a long, dead branch into the notch of a shorter tree, then laid other dead sticks up against the pole to create a sort of triangular structure. She then insulated it with dead leaves, handfuls of pine needles, and some bark for water proofing. Or maybe just water resisting, as the latter half of the trip would prove. The week before we had been learning about fractions, and this week we were making debris shelters, and tea from pine needles.

Six years later, skipping over many other trips, we went on a week-long trip to an Island in Maine as part of a Biology class. This time with several other Waldorf high schools from the northeast, and thankfully, tents. We spent the days wading in tide pools, drawing and observing sea creatures, oohing and aahing at floating phosphorescent plankton, and rolling our sleeves up in the mud. We learned about mollusks in the classroom in the morning, then went out and actually held some mollusks in our hands in the afternoon.

This extraordinary breadth of curriculum is what cultivated in my classmates and me a balance of knowledge, and a diversity of experience that can allow two students who at one point thought they were the same person, to choose to live notably distinct lives with confidence. Ben, who anyone would have pegged as a computer scientist based on his bookshelf, became the philosopher. The nature nerd in me peacefully coexists alongside the software engineer.

When I pick up the phone to catch up with Ben (a text simply won't cut it), the specifics of our news and politics have changed since second grade. But we still have a lot to talk about, and we might as well be back in our branches in the tree.