

200
given to
John
Stenb

Notes for a Hamilton College commencement speech:

Once you graduate, you're a permanent part of the College. For the rest of your days, you wear a little sign that says, Hamilton College. You can't be fired, or flunk out; you can't drop out, quit, resign or be expelled, no matter how much you might want to. All the rest of us can leave Hamilton, even if many of us don't. But a Hamilton graduate is, for life, from Hamilton, for good or for ill.

We live here, and many of us give our lives to this college. When you look around at this beautiful spot, you are seeing the work of hundreds of women and men who care for this little plot of God's green earth. When you march out of here today, you will pass through lines of teachers who are here because they care for you, for your minds and for your lives. Many people are working right now to prepare the meals you will eat with your families today. Many people, employees and volunteers alike, give constantly to this college, to help make your lives better. But we, those of us who work here, are *here*, on top of a little hill, surrounded by little cornfields, in the middle of New York state. Realistically – realistically – almost no one has ever heard of us, or what we try to do here.

But you will go away, out into the world. If Hamilton College, little Hamilton College, is to have any meaning in the world, it must come through you; the rest of us are just here, on top of this hill. If Hamilton has a voice in the world, that voice must be yours. If we have a face to the world, it will be the face that you show. If we are to speak for truth, it comes when you speak for truth; for justice, when you stand for justice; for goodness to our fellow human beings, when you do good. And when, God willing, you find and embrace true joy in life, we will share in that joy. Our hopes and prayers – and fondest wishes – go with you.

Fare Well.