

Commencement Talk: To Finish is to  
-----Begin .

Topic: To Finish is to Begin.

Dates written: May 14-16, 1962.

Dates and places used:

5/16/62 - Riverside School  
8<sup>th</sup> grade graduation  
Montrose County, Colo.

5/24/63 - Menoken School 8<sup>th</sup> grade graduation  
(2 graduates - last class before  
consolidation), Montrose Co., Colo.

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Introduction:

1. A long funeral procession was slowly turning a corner. Uncle John, one of the older inhabitants of the little town, asked, "Who they burying today? I ain't heard of anyone being dead."

"Poor old Abner Brown," answered a bystander.

"You don't say," exclaimed Uncle John. "Is Ab dead?"

"You don't think they're rehearsing with him, do you?" snapped the bystander.

2. We're not rehearsing with you here tonight, either, even though this isn't your funeral. This commencement is the real thing. Some of you are finishing the eighth grade. This is your first commencement exercise.

3. I **have** been told that you have chosen as your class motto the words "To finish is to begin." That is a fitting motto to go with an exercise of this nature, for the word "commencement" ~~x~~ means "the beginning," of course. I sort of doubt that you are thinking of beginning again at the first grade, or that you want to

Introduction

I have been thinking a great deal lately about the nature of the human mind. It is a very complex and mysterious thing. I have often wondered how it is that we are able to do the things that we do. I have often wondered how it is that we are able to feel the things that we feel. I have often wondered how it is that we are able to think the things that we think. I have often wondered how it is that we are able to love the things that we love. I have often wondered how it is that we are able to hate the things that we hate. I have often wondered how it is that we are able to live the lives that we live. I have often wondered how it is that we are able to die the deaths that we die. I have often wondered how it is that we are able to be the people that we are.

"You are a very interesting person," I said to her one day. "I have never met anyone like you before." "I am not sure that I am as interesting as you think I am," she replied. "I have often wondered how it is that you are able to do the things that you do. I have often wondered how it is that you are able to feel the things that you feel. I have often wondered how it is that you are able to think the things that you think. I have often wondered how it is that you are able to love the things that you love. I have often wondered how it is that you are able to hate the things that you hate. I have often wondered how it is that you are able to live the lives that you live. I have often wondered how it is that you are able to die the deaths that you die. I have often wondered how it is that you are able to be the people that you are."

2. The first part of the book is devoted to a study of the human mind. It is a very complex and mysterious thing. I have often wondered how it is that we are able to do the things that we do. I have often wondered how it is that we are able to feel the things that we feel. I have often wondered how it is that we are able to think the things that we think. I have often wondered how it is that we are able to love the things that we love. I have often wondered how it is that we are able to hate the things that we hate. I have often wondered how it is that we are able to live the lives that we live. I have often wondered how it is that we are able to die the deaths that we die. I have often wondered how it is that we are able to be the people that we are.

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graduate from the 8th grade again. Your motto must be aimed toward some other sort of beginning. Let's spend a few minutes thinking about some possible meanings for you of these words, "to finish is to begin."

I. To quit, to stop, is to die.

1. I can remember once when I was in school sitting by a window and watching the adults outside going back and forth about their business. How I envied them. I thought that here were people who could spend their time as they wished, who had nobody telling them what to do. How mistaken I was! As I got out on my own I found out that there are mighty few people who are their own bosses, who don't depend on other people or take orders from others, or have to do things for others. When you refuse to work with and for other people, you'll die, literally, because just to eat these days demands cooperation with others.

2. Often there are older people who worked so hard all their lives at becoming successes that they never



developed hobbies, and never learned to relax. When they retired they didn't know what to do with themselves so they sat around uslessly until they just gave up to the first bad illness that came along and died.

3. This sort of thing happens frequently, not only with aged people but with youthful people too. During the Korean war many an American soldier being held by the enemy in a prison camp just got fed up with it all; so he would lie down, turn himself away from others, and be dead in a few days, even though there was really nothing wrong with his ~~and~~ body. To quit is to die.

4. Well, at the end of the 8th grade you don't expect to quit, but to begin.

II. To begin something new is the important thing.

1. New things are almost ~~na~~ always more attractive than are familiar old things, at least to young folks. There is ~~real~~ thrill and adventure in seeking answers to questions

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you've had a long time; to trying things you've thought and wondered about.

2. You never grow too old to find something new to learn and do. My parents since they have become over 70 have travelled more than in all the rest of their lives put together. Dad has travelled around the world, riding on freighter ships, buses, river boats, railways, airplanes, and even bicycles, and done it on not much more than \$200 a month including transportation, lodging, food, and all other expenses.

3. You are not quite that far along yet, however. If you made such a journey now you wouldn't have enough understanding to enable you to get the most enjoyment and information out of such travel. You still need something which can help you get the most out of life's happenings. That something, of course, is further education. However

III. In education you are never finished.

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2. You never know how old you are until you travel. You never know how old you are until you travel. You never know how old you are until you travel. You never know how old you are until you travel.

3. You are not old until you travel. You are not old until you travel. You are not old until you travel. You are not old until you travel.

4. You are not old until you travel. You are not old until you travel. You are not old until you travel. You are not old until you travel.

1. High School is the next logical step following junior high. In high school you can learn some skills, I suppose, which will enable you to support yourself and others as far as making a living. In high school you can take shop courses, agriculture course, home economics courses, and certainly be better prepared to begin making a living than you are now at the end of the eighth grade.

2. In High School you can also prepare for college. If you do this you'll probably take more general courses, such as English, math, languages, physical sciences and social sciences. These things are the background for more advanced studies in college.

3. However you take it, if you go on to High School, there you will still be preparing to begin.

4. College is the same story, only more so. You may come out of college 8 years from now as an engineer, a chemist, a teacher, a farmer. You may simply be prepared to begin still another school: medical school, a seminary for the ministry, law

1. High school is the next level  
step following junior high. In high  
school you can learn some skills,  
occupations, which will enable you to  
support yourself and others as far  
as making a living. In high school  
you can take shop courses, artistic-  
type courses, home economics courses,  
and certainly be better prepared to  
begin making a living when you are  
at the end of the school year.

2. In high school you can also  
prepare for college. If you do this  
you'll probably be a more competent  
citizen, and as a result, you'll be  
able to do more advanced studies  
in college.

3. However you react, if you go  
on to high school, there you will still  
be preparing to begin.

4. College is the next step  
only more so. It may come out of  
college 6 years from now as an adult,  
and a teacher, a lawyer,  
and many other professions to be in  
with other schools, and the school  
a university for the university.

school, graduate school for a master's or doctor's degree in a subject of special interest to you.

5. When all the required schooling is over and you are in the job or profession of your choice you'll find the education must still go on. New discoveries and inventions and improvements are being made so fast that a ~~lot~~ lot of a fellow's time must be spent just studying and keeping up, if he is to practice ~~an~~ trade or profession successfully. The doctor of today, for instance, in most cases uses far different medications and methods from what a doctor did when I was born some 42 years ago. Similarly, the farmer must keep up on the new fertilizers, seed strains, machinery, and marketing. Reading the professional and trade magazines isn't the only way to keep up, of course.

Ever so often I go to a conference or a school for a refresher course of a week, or three weeks, or even several months or more, to learn new things to help me be a better minister. People of most of the other professions do likewise.

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Conclusion:

You're so right: "To finish is to begin." You dare not stop where you are, or you're dead, mentally at least. You've got to keep going. You are to be congratulated that you've come this far. But this is a bare start on your way. Keep going. You've a lot ahead of you to do.

Conclusion:

"You're so right: 'The thing is  
 to be in.' You can't not show where  
 you are, or you're dead, and that's  
 the fact. You've got to keep going.  
 You can't be comfortable, that's not  
 the way to live. But this is a hard  
 start on your way. You can't  
 be a lot more alive to do.