Robert Orben's Graduation Funnies

A kid gets his first touch of reality at graduation time. There may be 500 students in the senior class -- but only one of them is Most Likely To Succeed.

This is the time of year when the people responsible for commencement programs are faced with two big questions: 1. Who tells the graduates the future is theirs?  And 2. Who tells the future? 

This is a very musical time of the year. It's when they play “The Wedding March” for the brides, “Pomp and Circumstance” for graduates, and “Brother, Can You Spare a Dime” for parents.

There is only one way to cope with the soaring cost of putting your kids through college: When they're very young, you start a special education fund for them and every year you add to it. Then, just when they're ready to enter college, you hold up a bank.

One thing about our education system disturbs me: “Shouldn't you be able to read a diploma to get one?”

One school is graduating so many functional illiterates, it's putting their diplomas on cassettes.

One kid was named Grammarian of the Senior Class and it really came as a surprise. He said, “I are?”

I know a school teacher whose goal in life is to be Snow White -- because then she'd only have to put up with one Dopey.

Giving an apple to a teacher is a good thing for three people. For the grocer, it's business. For the student, it's goodwill. And for the teacher, it's dinner.

It's fascinating the way modern education stresses positive reinforcement rather than negative correction. Kids today get a beep from a computer. We used to get a bop from a ruler.

Graduation -- or, as it could be called, the first day of the rest of your education.

Even though you are graduating today, there is still much to be learned in the outside world. For instance, for those of you who spent the last four years eating in the school cafeteria, the first thing you'll learn is that there are other recipes for meat beyond “Burn & Serve.”

And so, on behalf of your community, the nation, your elected representatives here and in Washington, and everyone associated with the Federal budget -- let me just say, “The future is yours. Just keep in touch so we'll know where to send the bills.”

The timing of commencement addresses is all wrong. Don't tell graduates in June that the future is theirs. Tell them in September, when they're no longer all that sure.

You can tell the universities are preparing their students for today's world. Not one graduation gown has pockets.

And to parents, graduation day has a special meaning Harry Truman would have loved: The bucks stop here.

When you're a college commencement speaker, you always have to make a basic decision concerning your audience: Whether to lie and have them eager to get into the real world. Or tell the truth and have them eager to get into graduate school.

The worst thing that can happen to June graduates and their parents is to leave the ceremonies filled with hope, enthusiasm and expectation -- and go home in a cab driven by a Ph.D.

The June graduate who has the least to worry about is the Valedictorian who knows Latin, Greek, French and Japanese, has mastered computer programming and financial planning, has a working knowledge of advanced genetics -- and isn't averse to heavy lifting.

Commencement day is a tribute to the willing suspension of disbelief. It's when millions of graduates are told “the future is yours” -- and they know that not even the caps and gowns are theirs.

There is no question that higher education is a broadening experience.

Part of it comes from the knowledge you get in the classroom -- and part of it comes from the starch you get in the cafeteria.

A commencement address is a speech frequently given by politicians who tell graduates how to cope with all the stresses and strains and tensions and dangers they wouldn't be facing if it weren't for politicians.

June is when graduates are thrilled just to get their sheepskin. July is when they realize there's no meat on it.

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*(Robert Orben’s: in Speaker's Handbook of Humor, p. 80)*