

Commencement Confetti

An omnium-gatherum of notes and statistics, vital and otherwise

EDUCATED MEN AND WOMEN

On Commencement day, Thursday, June 7, Harvard conferred 6,871 degrees and 138 certificates. The College granted 1,694 of these, 71 summa cum laude.

Mother Nature, the ultimate female scientist (as one participant called her), laid on forgiving weather—crisp—for the throng jammed into Tercentenary Theatre for the formal exercises in the morning and the multitude that returned that afternoon to hear the address of Microsoft chairman Bill Gates. (The day before, also fair, had drawn its

own huge crowd to listen to former U.S. president Bill Clinton

Harvard planted yellowwood trees in Tercentenary Theatre because they customarily bloom in these parts in early June,

at Commencement time. This year they flowered a full week ahead of schedule. They were practicing for the new academic calendar (see page 60), which will wrap up the academic year, including Commencement, in May, beginning in 2010.



speak at Class Day.)

Commencement caller Frederick Abernathy, McKay professor of mechanical engineering and Lawrence professor of engineering, told the celebrants milling in the Old Yard before the procession Thursday morning, “My responsibility is to engineer with dignity and good humor your orderly march into Tercentenary Theatre.” When his charges failed to form up smartly, he observed, “Good weather is not good for Commencement,” due to its relaxing effects. He appealed for discipline, declaring stentorically, “President Bok is here, anxiously looking forward to the end of this event!”

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WOOKIEES

The Latin Oration, which can always be counted on to raise a few laughs, is one of three traditional student “parts” delivered during the formal Commencement exercises. This year’s offering, by Charles J. McNamara ’07, of Lowell House and Grayling, Michigan, entitled “Iohannes Harvard, Eques Iediensis,” or “John Harvard, Jedi Knight,” had a *Star Wars* theme. Names such as “Chewbacca” jumped out of the Latin in a startling way—and, in that case, drew an answering Wookiee growl from members of the audience.

Royalty sighting: Her Majesty Ashi Dorji Wangmo Wangchuck, left, one of four queens of Bhutan, with her daughter, Her Royal Highness Princess Ashi Sonam Dechen Wangchuck, LL.M. '07, who plans to serve her country as a member of the Judiciary of Bhutan.



WARRIORS

Eleven seniors took oaths and received their first salutes at the ROTC commissioning ceremony on June 6. Lawrence H. Summers spoke at the event in each of his years as president, but President Derek Bok did not attend. The guest speaker was Stephen P. Rosen, Kaneb professor of national security and military affairs, director of the Olin Institute for Strategic Studies, Harvard College Professor, and master of Winthrop House. “Four years ago,” he said, “Harvard chose *you*, and four years ago, you chose...the life of a warrior. Harvard honors public service, but is uneasy with national military service, because

New officers, all College seniors, from left: 2nd Lt. Robert Huefner, of Peachtree City, Georgia; 2nd Lt. John W. Cancian, of Arlington, Virginia; Ens. Donald M. Coates, of Los Angeles; Ens. Erika E. Helbling, of San Antonio, Texas; Ens. Patrick Morrissey, of Virginia Beach, Virginia; Ens. Erik A. H. Sand, of Lake Elmo, Minnesota; Ens. Meredith E. Sandbert, of Salt Lake City; Ens. Jonathan T. Sieg, of Salem, Oregon; Ens. Danielle Thiriot, of Salt Lake City; Ens. Aaron T. Woodside, of Edmond, Oklahoma; and 2nd Lt. Lauren L. Brown, of Winter Park, Florida. A twelfth senior, 2nd Lt. Jukay Hsu, was commissioned in April.



JOHN HARVARD'S JOURNAL
 COMMENCEMENT 2007

Harvard is uneasy with war, and with warriors, and increasingly sees itself as an international university, not simply an American university.

"We all wish to avoid war, with all our hearts..." Rosen continued. "And we welcome students and faculty from around the world. But the United States is our country. Without the United States, there would be no Harvard, and we should never forget that. And our country is still at war, and so I salute your courage, your commitment to national service, and the...sacrifices you have made and will make."



STU ROSNER

FOUR MINUTES TO REMEMBER

An unprecedented approach to a reunion panel led to an especially engaging offering by the class of 1972, "My Favorite Four Minutes." Each of the five panelists chose a four-minute scene from a movie that came out during their years in college. These excerpts were shown to the audience, and after each one the classmate who chose it revealed why it stuck in memory. Thus, after revisiting "Hot Lips" Houlihan in the shower in *M*A*S*H*, panelist Timothy W.H. Peltason '72, of Wellesley, Massachusetts, discussed antiauthoritarianism and "mean-spirited misogyny."

PRIZEWINNERS

The Phi Beta Kappa scholars honored three members of the faculty with teaching prizes: David A. Evans, Lawrence professor of chemistry; Anne Harrington, professor of the history of science and Harvard College Professor; and poetry critic Helen Vendler, Porter University Professor. The senior class bestowed the two Ames Awards, for "selfless, heroic, and inspiring leadership," on classmates Rajan Sonik, of Adams House and Sacramento, California, and Rabia Mir, of Pforzheimer House and Karachi, Pakistan. The Radcliffe Institute gave two Fay Prizes, for outstanding scholarly work, to Rowan W. Dorin '07, of Adams



JIM HARRISON

Each summer the Crimson Summer Academy welcomes 30 ninth-graders from low-income families in Boston and Cambridge, who commit to the program for three years. They live on campus during the week in summer and take rigorous courses. The inaugural class graduated at this Commencement. Each member received a diploma and a \$3,000 scholarship check toward college. They marched at the tail of the afternoon alumni procession, being the youngest.

House and Edmonton, Alberta, for findings about the development of trade and trading networks in the medieval Adriatic Sea, and to Emily K. Vasiliuskas '07, of Lowell House and Penhook, Virginia, for her analyses of German poet Paul Celan's work.

TERM LIMITS?

Introducing President Derek Bok, who spoke on Commencement afternoon, Paul J. Finnegan '75, M.B.A. '82, of Evanston, Illinois, outgoing president of the Harvard Alumni Association, asserted that Bok's second tenure was "the shortest presidency on record, but it has

seen no shortage of accomplishments."

"Derek did well to respond by invoking Nathaniel Eaton, whose term lasted just one year, from August 1638 to August 1639," notes John T. Bethell '54, author of *Harvard Observed* and a contributing editor of this magazine. "So he has tied that record (though purists might note that Eaton held the title of master, not president). However, the shortest term as acting president would seem to have been that of Andrew Preston Peabody, who stepped in when Thomas Hill resigned in September 1868. Charles W. Eliot was elected president in May 1869, and even though he would have needed some time to wind up his responsibilities at MIT, he almost certainly would have been on the job before the 1869-70 academic year started. I think Peabody beats Bok by at least a few weeks."

Left: Bubble-blower Siri Trang Khalsa, M.P.A. '07, of Española, New Mexico, carries a globe, a Commencement prop favored by degree candidates from the Kennedy School and more worldly than the Dental School's tube of Crest. She is a Sikh, thus the turban. With her is Rostom Sarkissian, M.P.P. '07, of Glendale, California. The school granted 605 degrees to students from 67 countries.