

# Commencement Confetti

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

## HARVARD HUMOR

Self-deprecation was much in style this year. Dampening the spirits of already drenched seniors on Class Day, Ben S. Bernanke '75, Federal Reserve Board chairman, recalled, "Our speaker in 1975 was Dick Gregory, the social critic and comedian, who was inclined toward the sharp-edged and satiric. Central bankers don't do satire as a rule, so I am going to have to strive for 'kind of interesting.'" Honorand J.K. Rowling told the afternoon exercises audience, "Not only has Harvard given me an extraordinary honour, but the weeks of fear and nausea I have endured at the thought of giving this commencement address have made me lose weight. A win-win situation!" (In a comment for the Facebook generation, she also said about her college friends, "At our graduation we were bound by enormous affection...and, of course, by the knowledge that we held certain photographic evidence that would be exceptionally valuable if any of us ran for Prime Minister.")

## FUN PROHIBITED

The College class of 1983 reunion committee issued this advice to members planning to return to Cambridge: "While we understand that children are excited about the presence of J.K. Rowling on campus, we discourage strongly their attendance at the afternoon Annual Meeting of the Harvard Alumni Association. It will not be a child-oriented event and there will be no one-on-one time with the author of any kind. Most of us with children will be keeping



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## WARNING

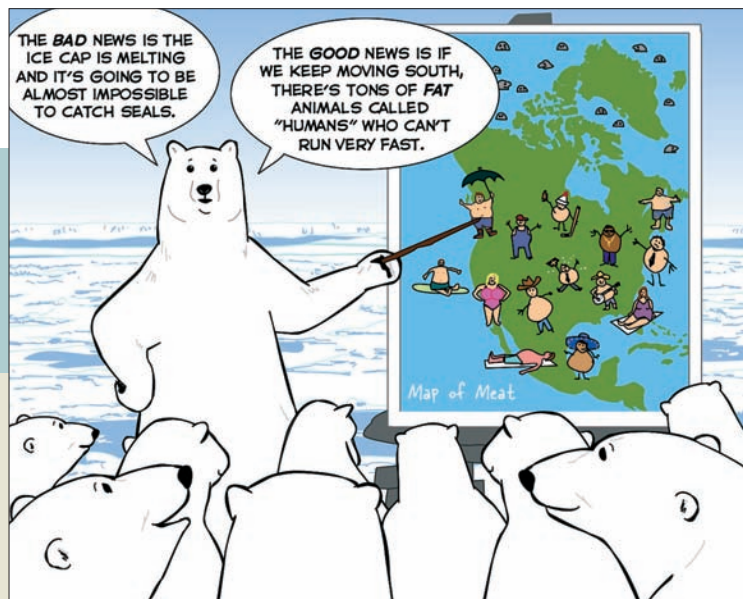
**WARNING:** At the fiftieth-reunion symposium on societal and climate change, professor of biological oceanography James J. McCarthy illustrated his remarks with this polar-bear perspective on what is in store.

our kids in the superb children's program during the afternoon...." In light of the "focus on reflections on adult life" at the evening talent show, children were discouraged from attending that, too.

## INSIDER ORATORY

Chairman Bernanke's was the first known Class Day address with references (including a paper from the *German Economic Review*) and footnotes; note 7 identified "Harvard's introductory course in principles of economics" for the uninitiated. In a Baccalaureate twofer, President Faust assumed knowledge on her audience's part, alluding to magic in its American aspect, and to a regular, raunchy undergraduate party: "Here I am in a pulpit, dressed like a Puritan minister—an apparition that would have horrified many of my distinguished forebears and perhaps rededicated some of them to the extirpation of witches. This moment would

**EVERY 343 YEARS:** Tobias Vanderhoop, M.P.A. '08, said he was the first Aquinnah Wampanoag man since Caleb Cheeshahteumuck, A.B. 1665, to earn a degree from Harvard (see page 80; the two men are related.) He's a member of the tribal council and is returning to Martha's Vineyard to work for the tribe.



NITROZAC AND SINAGY

have propelled Increase and Cotton into a true 'Mather Lather.'"

## METEOROLOGY REPORT, U.K. STYLE

A late spring left campus lawns lush, with flowering things (rhododendrons and kousa dogwoods, honey locust



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**WET WEAR:** Gathering on the Widener steps for their picture on June 4, members of the class of 1958 made good use of their reunion umbrellas—until they had to be furled so the photographer could capture the faces underneath.

trees and the yellowwoods specially planted in Tercentenary Theatre to blossom for Commencement) still abloom. The downside, of course, was late-spring weather: soaking rain on Wednesday, showers on Friday. Amid the gloom of Commencement day, as temperatures fell to 58 degrees, an observer remarked on the "English" mist, perhaps in honor of the principal speaker? A resident and a visiting

Briton promptly corrected that the weather was "Irish" or "Scottish."



JOHN HARVARD'S JOURNAL  
**COMMENCEMENT 2008**



**COVER BOY:** David C. Denison '75 and Gretchen Friesinger '75, then an associate editor of this magazine, lent their son to illustrate a wildly popular January-February 1991 article on college admissions. Now that Tom is A.B. 2008, he gets his own subscription.

**AN EXILE'S COMPLAINT**

Twenty-fifth reunioner Marie Bellantoni, of Baltimore, an endocrinologist, revealed a flaw in her

Harvard housing: "I was in Hurlbut my first year, and now they've stuck me in Greenough! I would have killed to be in the Yard. They better put me there for my fiftieth or I'll never give to Harvard again."

**"THE GREAT" ONES**

Members of the fiftieth reunion class wore white hats emblazoned with the words "The Great 58" in red. James R. Houghton '58, M.B.A. '62, Senior Fellow of Harvard College, wore his hat as he marched into Tercentenary Theatre with classmates in the afternoon parade. "It feels very good," he said, to be processing—instead of standing on the steps of

Widener with his fellow Corporation members, greeting the reunion ranks.

**SECULAR EXERCISES**

The Orator at the Phi Beta Kappa literary exercises, on June 3, was Steven Weinberg, Higgins profes-

sor of physics from 1973 to 1982, co-winner of the 1979 Nobel Prize, and now of the University of Texas. Given his title, "Without God," the exercises were conducted without benefit of clergy; the chaplain is expected to return next year. In a richly literary argument, Weinberg said that religious faith had weakened as science explained formerly "mysterious phe-

nomena," "cast increasing doubt on the special role of man, as an actor created by God," and sought authority not in an "infallible leader...or...a body of sacred writings" but in improvable expertise. He talked about "how it is possible to live without God," directing listeners to the beauties and pleasures of nature ("[W]hen bread and wine are no longer sacraments, they will still be bread and wine"), of art, and of humor.

**FEISTY FIRST BASEWOMAN**

From Radcliffe Institute dean Barbara J. Grosz's introduction of Donna E. Shalala, president of the University of Miami and this year's Radcliffe Institute Medalist, on June 6: "A 2005 article in *U.S. News & World Report*... recalls another episode from her youth. 'When, in the summer of 1951, the college student who was coaching the local Annie Oakleys softball team wouldn't let Donna play first base, she bugged him until he gave in. "What she lacked in size," recalls the coach, one George Steinbrenner, "she made up for in feistiness.'"

**TECH TALK:** As the Federal Reserve chairman delivered potentially market-moving remarks on inflation and interest rates during Class Day, they were immediately reported on the *Wall Street Journal* website (shown here) and other financial news sources. And in a bit of Web-address product placement, Harvard Graduate School of Education students, who in previous years waved children's books, this year flashed placards touting [www.EDin08.com](http://www.EDin08.com)—a school-improvement advocacy group backed by Rockefeller, Gates, and Broad philanthropies.



**THE OTHER FIFTIETH REUNION:** On May 31, more than 80 former residents, plus family, friends, and current residents attended the golden anniversary of the Dudley Co-op, the residence for undergraduates who seek a more informal living experience and prefer home cooking to House dining halls. Among those present was Adam Abroms '85, of San Luis Obispo, California—the first to paint above 3 Sacramento Street's entryway the designation "Center for High Energy Metaphysics."

**MISCELLANY**

Harvard conferred 6,966 degrees and 104 certificates, among them 1,564 degrees to undergraduates completing their work in the College, 907 M.B.A.s, 588 J.D.s, and 542 Ph.D.s.... President Faust got as well as gave degrees this graduation season: she received honorary doctorates from Penn, her alma mater, and Yale...With construction in Allston just begun (see page 61), Allston Development Group chief operating officer Christopher M. Gordon was already looking *beyond* the next half-century: he told a fiftieth-reunion panel that after an initial two-decade burst of accelerated building, Harvard would resume its normal rate of physical growth, using up the capacity to expand within 50 years.



Steven Weinberg

JIM HARRISON

on the Yahoo! search to receive a companywide severance plan. (Icahn's letter) 3:35 p.m.

- Complete Coverage: The Battle for Yahoo!
- Deal Journal: Hating Microsoft Is, Like, So Yesterday

**Bernanke Sees No Repeat of 1970s**  
 Bernanke said that while he sees some echoes of the 1970s in "sharply" higher commodity and food prices mixed with subpar growth, a repeat of that decade is unlikely. (Remarks) 3:59 p.m.

- Video: WSJ's Ip on Bernanke's dollar comments
- Econ Blog: Bernanke's 'Kind of Interesting' Speech
- OECD Again Cuts U.S. Outlook

**Calif. Court Won't Stay Gay Marriage**  
 California's highest court refused to



STU ROSNER