

Graduation part 1

Okay, thanks to today this will be a two-part post. See my next post for the reason. ☐ Yesterday I had the privilege of attending my nephew's high school graduation. He actually attended two of the same schools as I did growing up. One of those schools I have subbed at several times. The other one was the high school.

We arrived at my brother's house shortly before 11AM. We then waited for the other invited guests to arrive, Alex's grandparents (mother's side) and half-brother. It's a sad thing to mention that Alex's mother died when he was just six. His mother's other son was rejected by his father (not my brother) and so was raised by his grandfather instead. There were other issues at the time, but it would be inappropriate for me to mention them here as they are private family issues that have since been resolved. So, there were seven of us in total not including Alex. These days, at most graduations it is unusual to get more than four tickets. I suppose since they used an auditorium in addition to the gym there was more room for guests.

So, at about 11:20 or so we were off, with a short stop at my home to put some ribs in the oven because my brother's oven took just this time to stop working. Ours is electric and so was pretty safe to use unoccupied for a couple of hours. When we arrived the entire front parking lot was filled of course, as by now it was 11:45, just 15 minutes until commencement began. There were people parking across the street and down one of the connecting streets. Fortunately for us not everyone knew about the lot *behind* the school, where the faculty parks (the front lot is student parking and, if they still use it, a practice "field" for the marching band in the fall). We found a few spots still open and we were set. We got out of the car and headed in. Nine minutes to go. We headed right into the gym, the three women (my mother, Alex's

grandmother, and his Aunt) heading for the auditorium instead. Actually, my mother had been dropped off and headed immediately in. The other two unfortunately had to wait since the graduates were now lined up in the hall. We just made it. They were about to close the gym doors. We went in, then waited by the entrance for the procession. At noon they started coming in- some teachers in black gowns first, followed by a few students in yellow gowns I later found out were not part of the graduating class, just there to take charge of getting the rows of students standing up and lining up in turn. They were probably juniors. Behind them were the graduates in purple gowns. They headed up the aisle, passing between the teachers who had positioned themselves every few rows on either side. They took their places starting in the front and working their way back, 24 chairs at a time, 21 rows. Well over 400 students (many seats were taken by the teachers or yellow-gowns). Behind all of them were several rows of chairs for older guests. To the sides- bleachers. Once my nephew passed, we started to work our way to the bleachers, where we found some seats about 10 rows up. It was pretty tight. Unfortunately, throughout the time I kneed the one in front of me a few times...

Once the graduates were seated, the speeches started. One teacher tried to entertain us with his speech, starting with, "This entire speech is plagiarized...". The principal had a speech about how he started with the current class four years ago, and then some standard words of inspiration for the young adults. The valedictorian's speech was a pretty normal well-prepared speech, and then another student, a cancer survivor (one of two in the graduating class ☐) performed a song he wrote on the piano/singing. He received a standing ovation. Finally, it was time for the long, drawn out process of the students coming forward to receive their diplomas. As their names were called off one by one, they showed a picture (of most) on the overhead screen. There were a couple of slipups, and I think there was a slide accidentally left in of a

student who was not there for whatever reason. At first, people applauded after hearing their young one's (or sibling's) name, but that turned into just a single clap. I think the graduates got us started on that, I'm not sure. Several shouted out or whistled. One (only one thankfully) had an air horn. My nephew had his turn, as did a former neighbor I remember- I had forgotten their youngest was Alex's age. As they got to "P" I noticed there were seven Patels, a very common last name for Indian families. They were probably all unrelated too. I'm sure it means something, but I'm too lazy to look it up.

A final congratulation when they were all finished, and then we were done. We were supposed to wait until all the now-former students recessed before getting up, but that didn't quite work out. Once half had left, the bleachers started emptying. We met up with Alex and the three women outside, a few (more) pictures were taken, and then we left. Alex's brother hopped into the car with him, and the rest of us got in our vehicles in back. When we got to the front of the building, we were just in time to see Alex peeling out in front of the school by a police officer. Nice. The car had no plates either... Should have meant problems for him, but the police were too busy with the traffic. Lucky him.

Well, we finally got back, my brother fed us ribs (which we had picked up, now done cooking), pheasant, venison, corn, and some sides. We talked a little, the relatives left, then I left. Day over. I should have gotten to this blog yesterday but somehow never got around to it. Now, you will have to wait until tomorrow for part two which should have come today..