

As You Stand in the Line

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One of my favorite moments on this campus is graduation time, and one of the scenes I most love to observe is the graduates assembling on the lawn in front of the Smoot Administration Building. Decked out in their caps and gowns, they greet classmates and professors for perhaps the last time.

The graduates are formed into lines, and then they march up the circular ramps behind the American and university flags. The administration, General Authorities, faculty, and other dignitaries who have led the procession then pause as the graduates file by.

For me there has always been a special spirit that engulfs the campus at commencement time. It seems that the Spirit of the Lord rests in even greater measure on this hallowed ground. One might say the Spirit of the Y is in greater abundance during these final moments that you graduates are here on campus.

Of all the many, many lines you have stood in while at BYU, the line you formed to come into the Marriott Center today has to be one of the most meaningful lines in which you have stood thus far in your life. Your line now leads you away from your alma mater as you leave this phase of your education behind.

When you move away from this hilltop campus, you will stand in a vanguard of

370,000 living alumni of BYU. You go forth not only to apply your new knowledge but also to serve humankind across the world—both in your labors for a living and in your callings in the Church.

Each of you will take with you a storehouse filled with precious memories and spiritual insights. Hopefully you have received your own heavenly manifestations that there was indeed a Restoration of the gospel of Jesus Christ and of the attendant authority to bind on earth and in heaven. Sacred ordinances and heaven-sent covenants have been offered to you because God—who indeed loves you and provided your spiritual birth—wants to guide your earthly experience. All is meant to bring you back with honor and eternal possibilities to your celestial home for continued growth and development.

During the BYU centennial celebration in 1975, I worked in the administration of the university. One of my responsibilities was to organize and manage a march from the old lower campus (now the Provo City Library) to a centennial convocation to be held in

Bruce L. Olsen was president of the BYU Alumni Association when this commencement address was given on 24 April 2008.

this building. President Spencer W. Kimball and his wife, Camilla, led the parade. We organized the march because, in the early days of this institution, Karl G. Maeser took the students on Founders Day to old buildings where classes had once been held and then marched behind class banners to the newer location where the academy's classes were then being taught.

The reenactment of Maeser's march was a people parade. We left the lower campus, came across 800 North, and then marched up Temple Hill. I maneuvered among the vehicles and participants so that when we got to the Maeser Building, I could watch the parade as it rounded the hill and headed north.

While standing there watching President Kimball and President Dallin H. Oaks and alumni from the various years go by, I felt the presence of the past presidents of BYU. I had the distinct feeling that Karl G. Maeser and other presidents and notables who pioneered BYU's progress all seemed to be present there on the lawn between the Maeser Building and what was then the President's Home. I did not see them, but I keenly felt their presence. It seemed to me that they were being allowed to view the celebration of the very existence of the university they had individually done so much to shape. Their efforts, sacrifices, and achievements were indeed being recognized as the university reached its 100-year mark.

The line of distinguished presidents who have served here, from Karl G. Maeser to Cecil O. Samuelson, have each played important roles—brick by brick, student by student, achievement by achievement—moving Zion's university forward. So have each of you graduates contributed—class by class, friendship by friendship, course by course—to this forward march.

You new alumni join the lines that have gone before you to carry with you the light of knowledge and the Spirit of the Lord that has grown within you here. We refer to this unique

blend of light and testimony as the Spirit of the Y. It is a gift of great value. As you look back and as time itself brings you even greater perspective, you will see how the Lord has blessed your life. I believe you will clearly see that—as with the parade of students who have passed through these same portals—your most cherished experiences at BYU came because the Spirit of the Lord was undergirding and surrounding your experiences. The Spirit was manifest in dedicated classrooms and on acres of consecrated soil, and it was witnessed to you by leaders with testimonies of the truth.

These sacred events in your life may have occurred as you studied your chosen profession. They may have occurred during devotional assemblies or in conversations with a group of returned missionaries with whom you served. You may have felt something in a quiet moment in the Provo Temple or strolling across the campus and hearing the carillon bells. But all privileged to study here have had the added opportunity of receiving a personal witness of the Holy Ghost and experiencing the thrill of the “evensong” of the Spirit of the Y.

It is your turn now to add luster to the name of Brigham Young University. You and those standing alongside you in your line will forever be examples to the world of what the gospel does for women and men who “seek learning even by study and also by faith” (D&C 109:7).

As you are called to step forward to serve in the Church, to make a difference in your profession, to hone your talents, and to bless your families with your gospel-rich educations, may you, too, remember your alma mater and the sacred days that you have spent here. May you long recall that your testimony was rekindled each day through supplication of the Spirit and application of the gospel. Indeed, you are in that long line of men and women who have experienced the Spirit of the Y. May you ever say “yes” as you are called to serve and to contribute.

As president of the Brigham Young University Alumni Association Board of Directors, I hereby confer on each of you lifetime membership in the Brigham Young University Alumni Association. Some 370,000 alumni worldwide join me in offering our congratulations and welcome. You will have many opportunities to combine with your fellow

alumni in meaningful activities associated with this great school.

God bless you and your line as you march from this convocation. The world needs you, and the Lord will use your talents to bless His children in the Church and in the world. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.