

## Class of 2010

At this time of year, seniors at various university campuses participate in that wonderful rite of passage called college graduation. Students, buoyed by the support of their families, set their sights on this event four years ago with the hopes and promises it held. For most parents, this is a time of pride even as they face the financial investment they made to support their son or daughter's achievement. The fear of "letting-go," when they dropped off their teenagers at the campus four years ago, is replaced by the sense of pride they see in their now mature and independent graduates.

My feelings about the Class of 2010 are colored by the absence of my son Danny who should be among those graduating. When Danny started college at the University of California at Santa Barbara in September of 2006, the month of June 2010 represented a hope for not only graduation, but for life, as he had been diagnosed with brain cancer in 2004. While Danny will not line up among the young men and women receiving diplomas from UCSB this year, he will always be a member of the Class of 2010 because he gave his all to be a vibrant part of it, even biking to class just twenty days before he died on October 31, 2007. Despite on-going chemotherapy and another brain surgery during his freshman year, Danny completed the year on the Dean's List. In September of 2007, Danny started his sophomore year, even though he had a third surgery in August and a dire prognosis. He returned to UCSB to be with his friends and experience all that goes with college life. He wanted to live off-campus in the apartment he and his friends had lined-up before summer break. Danny chose to live in the midst of the challenges that a college environment brings. Most of all, like other young people, he wanted to prepare for the future by living the demands of the present: classes, assignments, deadlines, all-nighters, parties, etc. Danny's future was his present. In his application essay for the UC system, he wrote: "Whatever time I may lose out on in the future, I am sure to make up for by living now." For Danny, that meant being an active member of the Class of 2010, as long as he could.

As prominent commencement speakers inspire the members of the Class of 2010 to live their dreams and be leaders of tomorrow, perhaps the most challenging words are those of their classmate:

**"Live a life that is hard working  
and true to yourself.  
Seek that which you desire;  
Offer that which life inspires.  
Recognize the beauty of life  
and repay this gift, through  
the care you take in living well.  
Then, life will repay you  
for the services you've granted it."**

**--Danny Riley (1987-2007)**

*Frank Riley // June, 2010*