



Graduation 2005 *Graduation speaker Tim Weiner*

'73 hitchhiked and bummed around the country for a year after his own graduation. He went to college and graduated from Columbia in 1978 with a B.A. in history. Tim worked as a cub reporter in New York City for a variety of publications until he landed a job at the Kansas City Times where he shared a 1982 Pulitzer Prize for local reporting. From 1982–1992 he worked for the Philadelphia Inquirer where, in 1988, he won a Pulitzer Prize for national reporting. Tim has been at The New York Times ever since and was based in Mexico from 2000–2004. He's written two books: Blank Check, about the Pentagon's black budget; and Betrayal, about a turncoat CIA officer who spied for Moscow. He's currently on leave writing a third book on the history of the CIA. Past foreign assignments include Afghanistan (six trips), Pakistan, Sudan, Liberia, Kenya, Philippines, Haiti, Cuba,

Mexico and Central America. Tim's observations on Afghanistan and Liberia have appeared in the Putney Post. He's married to Kate Doyle, a foreign policy analyst for the National Security Archive, a private non-profit. Their two daughters are Emma (8) and Ruby (5). We feel fortunate to have been able to wave him in for a pit stop at Putney's 70th graduation ceremonies this past June. Here's what he had to share with us that day:



Tim Weiner '73

To the beautiful, radiant, and remarkably well-dressed Class of 2005—we salute you.

Henry James once said that “summer afternoon” were the two most beautiful words in the English language. It’s not quite noon yet, not quite summer, so let’s say “graduation day” will be the two most beautiful words for this moment.

I want to talk about our country today. After the American Revolution was fought and won and the American Constitution and Bill of Rights were conceived and their struggle to be born was completed, Benjamin Franklin defined what the framers had wrought: “A republic, if you can keep it.” The republic is in trouble today. And we are bound as citizens to fight in our own ways to keep it. The United States is now well into its third century, and no republic in the history of civilization has ever lasted longer than three hundred years—not one. Ours will—if we can keep it.

Let’s remember why our revolution was fought and what we fought against. In the Old World, government was secret. Its secrecy was sacrosanct. The king’s mandate came from heaven. His power and his command were as holy as the church’s rites. No one could question his authority. His word was law. “No one shall presume henceforth to meddle with anything concerning our government or deep matters of state.” So said King James I, King of England, to the speaker of the House of Commons. Francis Bacon, one of King James’ subjects, wrote in 1605, “Concerning government: It is a part of knowledge deemed secret. We see all governments as obscure and invisible.”

That was the government—the invisible government—that the American Revolution overthrew. The Framers wanted their government to be visible. They had the elegant, revolutionary idea that the people had a right to know what their government was doing. They created within the Constitution a social compact, a machine that would run of itself. The people’s money would power this machine of government. The government would pay it back by empowering people with information. Money was power, information was power and these powers would be exchanged. President James Madison said, “A popular government without popular information, or the means of acquiring it, is but a prologue to a farce, or a tragedy, or perhaps both. Knowledge will forever govern ignorance, and a people who mean to be their own governors must arm themselves with the power which knowledge gives.”

In the first decades of the 19th Century, all over the United States, people who meant to be their own governors set up some of the most radical experiments in democracy ever established on the face of the earth. Right here in Putney, down the hill, John Humphrey Noyes in the 1830s established a community of free thinkers who believed in common ownership of property, a common humanity, a human community. They believed that they were married to one another in spirit and that sex held mysteries and power beyond the procreation of the human race. Well, they were run out of town on a rail for that last belief. But, they reestablished themselves over in New York and set up the Oneida colony, which survives to this day as a fine silversmithing community.

Nowhere was democracy more deeply rooted in the 19th Century than in Vermont, a state that was from the start just a little suspicious of those 13 to the south. What took root here and everywhere in Vermont was the town meeting, which remains one of the purest forms of democracy ever seen on this planet. And it's one of the reasons that Vermont is, to this day, a place where people mean to be their own governors. Where government is, as the framers intended, still to some extent of the people, by the people and for the people.

Putney's founding mother, Carmelita Hinton, a classic American dreamer—one of those visionaries with her own ideas and ideals of building a human community—and her students built this school from the ground up. She had in mind a place of disciplined free spirits who channeled their enormous teenage energy into creativity and renewed that energy by living close to the land and by knowing these woods around us where, to this day, there are still shelters that harbored runaway slaves—people seeking freedom. And the houses were built true and are still standing from two hundred and more years ago, and the fields cleared of stone, by hand, among the old orchards and lovely green curvaceous hills.

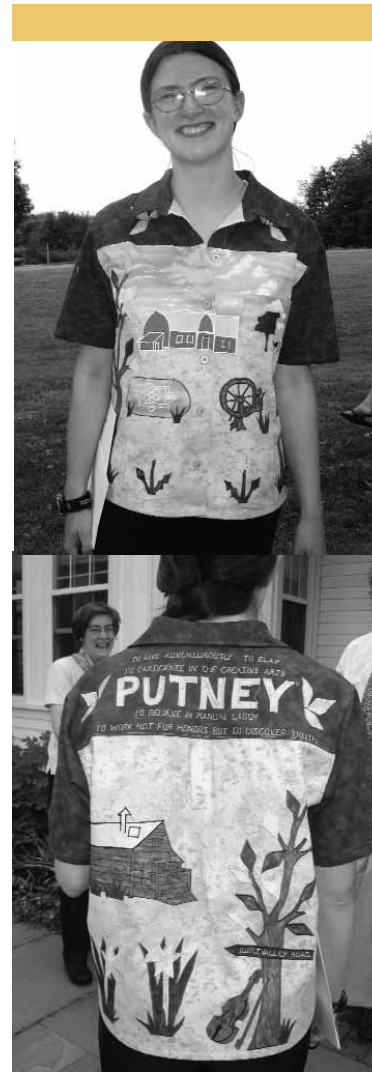
There are people here in this audience who came out of The Putney School in 1940, thereabouts, and who fought for freedom in World War II. Steve Tanner is somewhere out here. Third-generation Putney, father and grandfather.

But American freedoms and American civil liberties were under attack in the 1950s and the 1960s when I was growing up and never more so than the years I spent here in the early '70s. During the decades of the Cold War, secret government was on the rise in the United States—and it had been building ever since WWII. The secrecy of the Soviet state meant that America was ignorant of what went on in Moscow. Knowing nothing we feared the worst. We saw our enemy as if in a fun house mirror—a distorted image of our own fears. And secrecy, ignorance and fear fed each other in a chain reaction. The result was our own secret state: a shadow government spying on Americans, tapping their telephones, opening their mail, and sending them to die of shot and shell in an undeclared war.

The great event of the day was Watergate, which is miraculously back in the news. And let's remember what that was all about: a secret White House team of burglars who broke into the offices of the Democratic National Committee at the Watergate Hotel on orders from the president. They were known as "The Plumbers." What were they plumbing? The president of the United States created the plumbers to stop leaks to the press. First and foremost, the leak of the Pentagon Papers—the secret history of the Vietnam War which had been given to *The New York Times*.

The president of the United States took *The New York Times* to court to stop the publication of the Pentagon Papers. And for a while the editors and reporters of the *Times* thought they were going to jail. At issue, of course, was that lovely old idea: the right to know. In the end the Supreme Court ruled for the paper, not the president. Justice Hugo Black said, "The guarding of military and diplomatic secrets at the expense of informed representative government provides no real security for our republic." Justice Potter Stewart said, "The only effective restraint on executive power in the areas of national security may lie in an enlightened citizenry—an informed and critical public opinion which alone can protect the values of democratic government."

Those words were written back in 1971. They were in the mainstream of American political thought. But back then, that same year, Richard Nixon's attorney general, John Mitchell, who later went to prison for obstruction of justice, famously predicted: "This country is going so far to the right you won't recognize it." He was right. The mainstream has flowed in that direction. If the same case arose today, let's say the publication of a secret White House history of the run-up



Graduating senior Annie Carter models the shirt her mom crafted for commencement.



The Class of 2005.
Will their desires propel
their destinies?

to the war in Iraq, would *The New York Times* have the courage to publish it? I hope so. If the president stopped to block the publication on the grounds of national security and went to the Supreme Court would the court rule the same way? I don't know. I doubt it.

The fact is the press has lost a little bit of its swagger since the Pentagon Papers case. The ownership of the media has become dangerously concentrated in a few hands. Some of these media moguls would reduce reporters to robots serving as stenographers to power. They see the power of the press as a license to print money and not as a public trust. Millions of Americans live in a state of vincible ignorance—choosing not to

know what they know they should know. And increasingly they shut themselves off from freely available sources of impartial information—just like they shut themselves off from the natural world—watching fake news, eating fake food, working at fake companies, but living in real fear as they watch a real war mounted on the basis of fake intelligence and falsehoods.

The White House continues to spout its moral certitudes, to mouth political platitudes that give the appearance of solidity to pure wind, to wield secrecy and fear as a sword and a shield to protect their power. Now what are we, a free people, a people who would be our own governors, supposed to do about it?

I think you know. But I have some free advice.

Read. I'm talking to you people here in the first three rows. Read, for God's sake. Read as if your life depended on it. [applause] Read the foreign news. Read the national news. Read the business news. You need to know your business, people. You need to know who owns whom. You need to know when you pop one of those curiously strong mints in your mouth that you're propping up the stock of the company formerly known as Philip Morris.

Know how things are connected. Don't just read the news. Read the immortals. Read Flaubert, Dickens, Tolstoy, Willa Cather, Virginia Wolfe, Walt Whitman, William Blake, Auden and Yeats. Put some poetry in your soul.

Write. Write every day. Write a diary, write a letter, write a love song. There's always plenty of work in a real democracy for smart people who can write a simple declarative sentence. Our beautiful mother tongue is being eroded, corroded, mangled—crushed by advertisers, publicists, propagandists and politicians. Save it. Use it. Sharpen your tongue. Wield your pen.

Work. Work hard. Find out what you love to do and figure out how to do it for a living. All I knew when I was 16 was that I wanted to see the world. I had this vague notion that I wanted to write for a living. I hadn't the foggiest idea how to do that. So I stuck out my thumb. I hitchhiked around for a while. People picked you up. Not so much out of the milk of human kindness, but because they wanted someone to talk to. And they wanted to talk about the most truly fascinating, awesome, miraculous, mysterious thing in the world—which is? [audience: "Themselves!"] Exactly. But they're tongue-tied. You have to draw them out.

I did not know what I was doing. Can I emphasize that one more time? I didn't know what I was doing. But I knew what I wanted to be. And my desire propelled my destiny.

Read, write, work. Love one another. Communities thrive in the unlikeliest soil if you can tend them. Help form a human community wherever you live. On a most elemental level—I don't have to tell you this—think about what you're putting in your mouth. Form food co-ops, fight industrial agriculture, support the family farm. Bust out of your dormitories at your colleges. Form a family of like-minded souls. There are communities even in the bleakest cities. Form them.

Check your politics. If you're apathetic and you're not angry, check your pulse. Channel that anger into creativity. You want to change the political system in this country? Fine. Understand how it works, then take it apart. Work the streets, wear out some shoe leather, ring doorbells, raise money, send somebody to Congress with some common sense.

Last piece of free advice: The only thing in the middle of the road is white lines and road kill. Do not, repeat, do not float merrily, merrily down the mainstream. Swim against the current. Fight the rising tide of conformity. You'll be in the best of company. That's what Ben Franklin did. That's what Thomas Jefferson did. That's what Carmelita Hinton did. That's your birthright.

Remember, above all, what the framers gave us. You are endowed with certain inalienable rights. Certain inalienable rights. And among these are life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness.

Senior Speakers

Matthew Malinowski '05

This is it guys.

In the year 2005 individuals are more important on a global scale than they ever have been. Freedom of information allows every single person in the world to be able to take advantage of an ever-increasing amount of humanity's knowledge, accessible instantly over the Internet. Freedom of information and communication has empowered the individual like never before and given him a greater capacity to create change. It is imperative that we, as a senior class and as global citizens, use these opportunities to save our traditions and our cultures—not only because it is a right and good thing to do, but because, as the leaders of this generation, we have a social and environmental responsibility to ourselves and our children.

We are from America, South Korea, Japan, Rwanda and Antigua. At Putney we have all expressed our individual cultures and histories to each other.

Now we have to expand that to the outside world. We, the senior class, are the people who are going to make sure that our histories are remembered. From Sacramento, to Seoul, to New York, to Tokyo, to Kigali, to Bangor, this is our responsibility. Also Mill Valley. We are all in danger of losing our senses of local community in this constant assault by homogenized global culture. In this flood we need to know what to resist. Industrial agriculture may be the only way to feed people in places where food cannot grow, but this is not one of those places. The Connecticut River Valley is one of the most fertile areas in the entire American northeast. So do not support industrial agriculture. Support the Walker Farm, support the Harlows', support West West Farm because food is essential to life. And food is also essential to a successful sustainable community. A community needs to be involved in and knowledgeable about the production of its food. Whether it is here at The Putney School, where we have been involved with the production of some of our food and aware about the production of the rest of it, or in Brooklyn, where people come together

College Enrollment List and Life After Putney for the Class of 2005

Agnes Scott College
Bard College (3)
Barnard College
Bates College (2)
Bowdoin College
California Institute
of the Arts
Columbia University (2)
Dartmouth College (2)
Earlham College
Emerson College
Guilford College
Hamilton College
Hampshire College (2)
Johns Hopkins University
Lewis and Clark
Mills College
Mount Holyoke College
New York University (2)
Northeastern University
Northwestern University
Oberlin College (2)
Parsons School of Design,
New School University
Purdue University
Reed College
Rhode Island
School of Design
Sarah Lawrence College (2)
School of the Museum
of Fine Arts
School of Visual Arts (2)
Scripps College
SEA: Semester at Sea
Seattle Central
Community College
Smith College
St. Lawrence University
Swarthmore College
The Aegean Center
for the Fine Arts
The Art Institute
of Chicago
The Evergreen
State College
(continued on page 18)



(continued)

University of Chicago (2)

University of Dundee

University of Vermont (4)

University of Wisconsin,
Madison

Virginia Polytechnic
Institute and
State University

Warren Wilson College

Wheaton College

Whitman College

Wilkes University

There are 64 seniors in the class of 2005. One student is applying to university in Japan, and those results will not be known until late summer. Two students decided to wait until next year to apply to college, and three more will apply again for various reasons—because they will have more time to investigate their options, or because a serious illness this past year impeded their acceptability, or because they have an opportunity to apprentice next year. Two of those students will participate in a college semester program next fall. Six students have arranged to defer matriculation for a year.

The college counseling office mailed 393 Secondary School Reports to 176 institutions to support student applications: 72 of these applications were either not completed by students or were withdrawn after an early acceptance.

In addition, 49 Secondary School Reports were mailed to 43 colleges on behalf of 14 members of the Class of 2004, 14 mailed to 14 colleges on behalf of 8 members of the Class of 2003, and 11 mailed to 11 colleges for 8 members of the Class of 2002.

Saturday mornings to purchase produce at a farmer's market. These communities have come together around one of the short lists of humanity's requirements for survival and succeeded.

We have to fix everything that our parent's generation has left unfixed for us. Although we love them *very much* they have left us quite a mess to clean up. Today's system of corporate capitalism is broken irreparably. The individual is more agile, more creative and more numerous than the corporations and their boards that have so ruined our culture and environment in the quest for short-term gain. They do not have proper perspective on the issues. We, the Class of 2005 are long term. We have to be. We have a lot of work to do. The Putney School has prepared us for that workload in some ways. But Putney has instilled in us something that is hard to find at Philips Exeter or at Holderness or at BUHS or MAU. Here we have gained a much more important feeling. The understanding of, and the love for, a central community. Our passion, whether we realize it or not, for this community, the people in it, everything that is wrong and that is right, will serve us well as we continue our lives beyond Putney.

I'm experiencing such profound senses of loss and gain leaving this place. We have created for ourselves one of the most tightly knit groups of people anywhere in the world. Putney alumni, Putney students, Putney faculty and staff. We are the only ones who know what Putney is. We are the ones with the stories. We are the ones with the memories. We have to use what we gained here to fix things.

This love for community has to come with us because we are the people most dedicated to its survival. If we don't do it no one else will. Dinner Crew and A.M. Barn have at least taught us that much. Vermont town meetings can be exported. Local democracies are waiting to spread like wildfire throughout the overgrown ruins of strip malls and suburbs. Why? Because people are missing something in their lives. We have that something and we will always have that something. Putney is now part of all of us—part of our identity. Here we were close to the land, close to each other, close to our educations that went so far beyond the classroom. This community allows its members to see first-hand the consequences of their actions. Communities focused around the production of their food are the ones with the most potential for positive change, and we have been a part of one at the forefront. Industrial agriculture has stripped our land of its resources to produce massive amounts of low-quality food for unwitting consumers.

We are no longer unwitting consumers. We have taken gardening with Margie, worked barn with Pete, woods crew with Adam or Lorne or Frank, we took Agro, Farm Semester and read *Changes in the Land*. We did it. And we are it. This responsibility is a privilege and something that brings us joy here and will continue to bring us joy in life. We know how to deal with this responsibility because Putney has trained us to learn and to think. Jane Baker and Ruben, Nancy, Wendy, Kathy have given us information. Elizabeth St. John, Sydney Snyder, Libby Holmes and absolutely everyone else has taught us diversity and respect. Eric, Lorne, Chidozie, Judith, Carol, Karen have taught us how to learn. Joe, Kim, Abijah, Paul, Ian have taught us how to organize. And we have all taught each other everything. When we go out to buy lettuce at a farm stand we know how it got there. But not nearly enough other people know what we know. It is our duty to help people know what we know and, at the very least, consistently express the values we learned at Putney from our teachers, from our friends, from ourselves, in our everyday lives by buying local and being aware of issues. We need to show the public that when they buy lettuce at that farm stand from someone they have known for ten years, they can see where the lettuce is growing, how labor conditions are, who was growing the lettuce, how they are and what is it doing to the environment. All of that is important to our personal survival and the survival of our communities. We cannot allow people to escape their responsibilities because, no matter what you think, you never did here.



We as a people have become disconnected from who we are in the outside world. There's a mass of people constantly shifting about trying to determine who they are and what they need to do. We know who we are. Or at least we're on our way. In the quest for identity, people attempt to define themselves and express themselves through their purchases. We define ourselves through our work, through our art, our words, our songs, our paint. We are closer to the land and ourselves and we need to stay that way. Every dollar we spend is a vote for whatever we are purchasing. And this is as close to American democracy as we will ever get in every day life. Here, you cast your ballot for Starbucks or for Mocha Joe's, for Walker Farm or for Cascadian Farm, for your friends and neighbors or for Seattle and Houston and Beijing. Most people approach their everyday purchases completely divorced from the responsibility that accompanies their Visa cards. We graduate from this place with an understanding of what our money means. These farmers are the people you see in the general store buying things with money that you gave to them for potatoes. Buying local closes the loop and restricts the flow of money out of our communities. We, of all people, understand interdependency.

The social and environmental problems that we face require a kind of creativity and resourcefulness that is no longer common in America today. Putney does not produce a commodity. It produces leaders with unique solutions to problems. And this is what America and the world needs.

We are currently facing an expanding world of mediocrity. It is our responsibility to resist the urge to ignore outside information. Consider this a wakeup call for the Nintendo generation. Globalization cannot be stopped nor should it be. But we as a community and as a senior class have been given the experiences we need to understand just that. Our education has taught us that access to as much information as possible and the possession of the skills to process it is a central tenet of a productive member of today's society. But our community here has taught us to value local culture—a bond between individuals and responsibility of the individual to the entire community. Putney has given us a safe place to be—much safer than the outside world it seems enclosed from. But it is time for a change because change keeps us on our toes. And if Putney has taught us anything, it is that there is little time to relax because there's too much to do.



Hallie Wells '05

We are furious at Putney. I am one of the luckier ones, because I have two or three concrete losses to be angry about, but so many of us are angry and don't know why. It doesn't seem to make sense: we love this place. And here we are, about to leave it forever, and all we can manage is to be upset at the school that gave us so much, because the grapefruit isn't cut right at breakfast or the faucets in the Currier Center bathroom don't turn off when you want them to, or because somebody put apple juice in the lemonade dispenser, *again*.

Putney has been the saving grace for more than half this class, has been a safe bubble for those of us battling the demons of disillusionment, despair, or apathy. But Putney has also lied to us. It told us we could be who we wanted to be and still have friends, that if we worked hard enough we could achieve anything. Now we know that that is not true once you leave this hill. In the outside world, you don't get ice cream for going to your job every day, and if you wear

knee socks with sandals you will be shunned, not applauded. But the hardest thing is that we finally feel comfortable here, finally know where we fit in, and now we're forced to leave. We're full of Putney now, but it's like chocolate: it's hard to know when enough's enough. We know we have to leave if we want to keep growing, but we don't want to be kicked out like this with nothing more than a graduation ceremony as evidence that we were here and we made a difference.



Facing page: One by one, they walk to the podium seniors, then walk away graduates

Above: "Freedom. Freedom is coming. Oh yes I know!"

What we have to remember is that what we've left behind is substantial. I mean that in both ways: our legacy, what we've brought to this school, is enormous. Our class is full of artists, musicians, mathematicians, writers, scientists, dancers, and athletes. We have put so much energy into everything we do here that it's impossible to imagine this place without us. But also, what we are taking away is greater than any of us can conceive at this point. Maybe that's another reason we're so upset: we can't possibly soak up everything we want to absorb before leaving. There's too much, and more importantly, there's not enough time (as always at Putney.) What we need is a ritual so that seniors feel like they have time to deal with their departure on their own terms. Until that time is set apart for them, they will create their own traditions, and my guess is that most of those won't involve going to Friendly's.



Jean-Yves Ngabonzizi '05
of Kigali, Rwanda, ponders
life beyond Putney

Getting in trouble was quite possibly the greatest gift that Putney gave me, although I can only speak for myself. I don't regret what I did, trying to find a way of saying goodbye without saying the words, but I do regret lying to my friends. But by getting in trouble, I gained two things: the chance to prove that I am not, in fact, perfect, that although I turned my Project Week forms in on time and wrote two drafts for every math homework assignment, like anyone else I am not always responsible. The second thing I gained was the opportunity to be confronted with my own morality, and although I have made the wrong choices sometimes and have lied to people I love, at least I'm talking. At least I'm communicating something. Before I came here, I was never able to do that. Losing my cabin, though painful and traumatizing beyond words, is perhaps a small sacrifice for the relief Putney has afforded me. Silence is more devastating than we can know, and trying to meet the impossibly high expectations people have of you when you're even the least bit responsible is a burden that can be paralyzing.

So I thank Putney for that relief, but I curse it too, for trying to be something it's not and for gradually slipping into the decline much of the outer world is falling into: institutionalism and bureaucracy. It's happening all over the world, but I didn't expect to find it to be so pervasive here. Putney is not exempt from those evils but I have noticed them getting stronger in the past two years. I guess what I expected was a school where any sharp turn in the direction of institutionalism would be recognized and quickly righted. I hope that the students and faculty who make Putney what it is will continue to stand up for the ideals of the school as they see them. Putney has a long-standing tradition of balancing community with individuality and independence. We get together every week to sing, and at the same time encourage students to take on independent courses, exhibitions, and project weeks. We talk about giving back to the community but also warn against following the herd and being too mainstream. It's a fine tightrope act to pull off and it's in everyone's best interest to keep Putney on that tightrope. So to those who are staying, please never stop wearing skirts over pants or giving each other random back massages or fighting the administration, the faculty, God, or whoever to make sure your voice is heard. Go to Student Life meetings. Stage protests. Speak up when you feel someone is losing sight of what Putney is and should be. But also go to Sing, go to assembly, and please for God's sake take your dishes back to the KDU. To those who are leaving, take all of this with you. You came here because of it, and it is one of the most beautiful gifts we have given to and been given by this school.

Emily Dickinson once asked, in a letter to her friend Mrs. Tuckerman, "Is it that words are suddenly small or that we are suddenly large, that they cease to suffice us, to thank a friend?" That is actually the real reason why we're angry and terrified and mournful and elated: Putney, you taught us to speak, but we have yet to learn the words with which to thank you. 