

My Last Speech: BACKWARDS
Mortar Board ceremony, Iowa State University
Laura Bestler-Wilcox
2002

“Backwards”

Taking a look at the end and moving back from it...

Walking backwards...

Driving in reverse....

Taking a look at where I want to be...

Take a look at where you want to be...

How will you get there?

How will you know you have left your legacy... something your great great grandchildren will know about you... something your neighborhood will know about you... something your company will know about you... something your loved ones will know about you... something your friends will know about you...

What is that one thing?

What are those many things that you can pass on?

What do I want to be remembered by?

What will my legacy be?

Backwards

How will it look? Is it a perfect painting? Is it a play I was in? Is it a family of children who will remember me? Is it some spectacular spectacle? Is it the things I did in High School? College? My jobs? Or is it with my family?

Backwards

What legacy will I leave...?

IF I could paint the perfect picture... and be internationally renowned for it – this is what it would be... it would be of a million people all different shapes and sizes, all different ways to pray, all different ways to love, all different ways to care, all different ways to move, all different ways to learn, all different ways to care... it would have music playing from it... there would be animals... all sorts of animals... being cared for... there would be trees – sprouting up from the earth... there would be a beautiful song... it would have the sweet smell of flowers billowing from it... (the sort of flowers that don't make people sneeze)... that would be my perfect painting...

Backwards

A blank canvas... that is what we are starting with... now how will you start that perfect painting...? Mixing colors... playing music... while you paint... or will you leave your painting blank?

Backwards

The stage... with a whole cast of people on it... my friends, my neighbors, and husband all on the stage... the cashier at Target... Melissa who does the Target film developing... my mother telling me it will all work out... my first grade teacher Mrs. Hummel... the students I work with... the students I learn from... the scenery of

white snow and changing into beautiful green grass and Iowa fields... that is how I have the stage set now...

Backwards

What will my final bow be? How will my scene end.... What will the audience watching be able to talk about while drinking coffee and eating pie afterwards at Perkins say about me?

What do you want people to say about you...

Backwards...

Once I have lived my life... What would I want to teach you all?

- Live life to the fullest
- Do not miss any chance you have to do something new... and that you wouldn't regret doing
- Do not forget to say thank you to anyone you are in contact with for helping you
- Do not forget to ask for help... I only wish that I had done it more... maybe those days when I was stressed out I would have been able to relax a bit more and enjoy the ride...
- Do not forget to say you love someone... it is important for you to do... whether it is your mother, father, grandmother, grandfather, or even some movie star... someone out there that is special to you – that you love them for what they have done or what they do for you...
- Have a plan – but remember to stray away from it sometimes... It isn't bad to be spontaneous...
- Adapt... sometimes life is complicated... and you may need to take a step back before you can go forward again...
- SMILE. The single most important thing in the world is to not forget to smile... no matter who it is that you smile at – chances are they will smile back... smiles are contagious...

Reverse Living

Life is tough.

It takes up a lot of time, all your weekends,

And what do you get at the end of it?

... Death, a great reward.

I think the life cycle is backwards.

You should die first, get it out of the way.

Then you should live twenty years in an old-age home.

You get kicked out when you're too young,

You get a gold watch, you go to work.

You work for forty years until you're

Young enough to enjoy retirement.

You go to college, you party until you're ready for high school,

You become a little kid, you play, and you have no responsibilities,

You become a little boy or girl; you go back into the womb,

You spend your last nine months floating.

And you finish off as a gleam in someone's eye.

~anonymous

- Live life backwards... remember to always have a kind heart – and live life as a child would... remembering to be creative – and look at things differently than anyone else...