

Hello, it's Romano. I'm really happy to be here. I'm proud that I was chosen to talk to you on this special day.

A little less than three years ago I took my first jump out of Mexico, and I don't mean jumping fences. I was 16 and I was going to school in Lake Placid...New York. I was scared, but I leaped. I didn't know what I was going to do when I arrived at Northwood School. I didn't know anybody. I didn't have any friends. I was a lost puppy.

First day, I stood with a lot of strangers in the registration line. And then a nice lady with long blond hair asked me for my name. I said, "I'm Romano Meza Leal." Mrs. Edwards took my hand and gave me a folder with a bunch of papers. Then some dad who was behind me in line with his daughter said, "Oh wow, your name is Romano?" "Um yeah." "Well, That's Kailey's name!" and he pointed at his daughter, Kailey Romano. Two Romanos. Became friends in my first ten minutes in this big building.

At least that's what I like to remember.

Then, Mr. Weaver introduced me to Dan Paolilo. Who led me to room 242. Up on 2nd east. My mom and I dragged my suitcase, my guitar, and I hung my Jimi Hendrix poster on the wall.

I admit, a lot of that first day was a blur. I followed Dan down some green corridor into the tennis courts. Kids were throwing shoes at each other and playing Tag. This was the famous "BrodyPallooza" I would find out. For you moms, dads, who don't know, "BrodyPallooza" is a welcome party hosted by a short bald guy who can really dance, where

people get to know each other, they say what their favorite color is, what their favorite animal is, their favorite food, and they play duck-duck goose.

Some time that night, Danny introduced me to his posse, “Hey, this is Romano. He’s from Mexico, and he snowboards.” This kid with a baggy green shirt and skateboard shoes said, “Oh, wait, you snowboard? I snowboard too!” “And he plays guitar, bass, and drums!” said Danny. The snowboarder said, “Word? I play saxophone, Dan plays drums, Mitch here plays soprano saxophone and we call him Kenny G for it, Nick plays guitar, and Brett sings!”

And then... a short, tan guy with a “rico suave” look was with them. He had earrings and a piercing in his eyebrow. He said, “You’re Mexican? I’m Cuban, B!”

That was my first Brodypalooza.

I’m sure all of you remember your first Brodypalooza.

C’mon... not even a bad hit to the head can take that away from you.

That began three great years in this place. No, wait...that’s not it. This is more than just a “place.”

I admit it; ... this is **home**.

I remember the first time I heard my friend call this home. Jesse Stillerman and I were snowboarding on a weekend. We were getting really tired, and really hungry. He said, “When are we going home? — PAUSE! — Wow... wow, wow-wow. I-I just called Northwood home... That’s fucked up.”

But It came out so natural.

Northwood was our home, a home that has kept us busy, kept us sane, kept us safe.

You know it too.

Every one is part of this Northwood School. Great humans. Maybe angels. You are sitting in rows, on stage, standing up, and some of you couldn't make the drive.

I've never had more respect for life and living than I have right now.

I'm here... you're here; ... we're together in the same room probably for the last time.

We're leaving.

But... Where we going?

Well, ... where do you wanna' go?

Where do **YOU** want to go?

Tupac Shakur said it best, "There's no place that I won't go. And I feel as though, if you got love and you're putting out real work, you can do that, If you're kicking it from your heart, you can go wherever your heart wants you to go."

Find that Heart.

Follow your dreams and turn them into reality. Attack what you lovewith passion, determination, persistence with Respect, Compassion, Responsibility, Integrity, and Courage. But don't

forget REALISM. We have learned a lot these past years in this home.
There are dreams and there are GOALS.
Focus on what you want to do.

Figure out where you are.
And figure out where you want to be.
Then figure out the distance in-between.
The distance...

Work towards leaping that distance. And like the cow in hey-diddle
diddle, with the cat and the fiddle, you can make it to the Moon.

We jump to get somewhere, to find something... but sometimes we
don't even know what that something is.

I remember the movie, The Bucket List, a story about two friends,
played by Jack Nicholson and Morgan Freeman, doing everything that
they've wanted to do in their lives. Eventually, they travel to Egypt to
witness something majestic.

After a long day of hiking and as they sit next to each other on top of the
pyramid, Morgan Freeman tells Jack Nicholson that to get accepted to
Heaven, the Gods would ask the Egyptians two questions:

“Have you found joy in life?” and
“Have you brought joy to others?”

Last month I watched this movie called Dedication. An old man in the
hospital, named Rudy, asks this young man named Henry, “You know
what life is?”

Henry says, “Life is a horrible little giggle in the midst of a forced death march towards hell.” Rudy goes, “No it isn’t.” And Henry, says ok, “An interminable wail of grief...” Rudy yells, No! ... Life is a single skip for joy...

“Life is a single skip for joy.”

“A single skip for joy.”

I was confused when I heard this. A single... only one?

One Skip... A skip is a light jump, right? Natural. Or maybe a skip refers to something like a prance. So, Life is one dance of Joy. Is that it? But, what is joy? It’s that “something” that we hope for in life, is it not? **Joy**... So we have to find **joy** in life, and like the Egyptians told us, bring **joy** to others.

Some people might define it as happiness, or pleasure? I think it is more than that. Happiness is temporary. And pleasure is a reaction.

Joy,

I think it is more than a feeling; it’s a state of being.

Joy is a jump; a happy jump, a beautiful leap. Then jump and experience the time in the air. Don’t dwell to see the end to something; don’t wait for it.

It is happy; it is not a tiptoe down the plank. Leap in the air. **Enjoy** the jump, and bring **joy** to others.

Northwood is a “single skip for joy.” It is a skip, because it is possible. Northwood is a skip. You jumped when you left your hockey team from your hometown to come to Northwood. You leapt in every downhill

ski-race, in every Nordic competition. In every slope-style competition... you jumped, and you made it look easy.
You, Mr. Corbelle and You Mr. Smith, are leaping to Grad School.
Mrs. Farrell, you're leaping into a new family, Wow.
And Gilly you're jumping into becoming a College Head Coach!
SCARED?

Like a kitten up a tree?

OF COURSE!

We're scared, and inside we wonder, "Who's gonna catch me?"... But what's our choice?
Not to jump?!"
Yes, ... It's dangerous. But you **jump!**

And sometimes it hurts... and sometimes the kitten falls out of the tree and gets airlifted to Burlington Hospital, and he scares his mom, but he wakes up with friends.

We're just like stones, leaping and bounding on a lake.
We skip and we find fear, heartbreak, and sadness...
But, Do Not confuse those for misery. We wiggle in the air and fall hard...
Maybe on the water, like when you fall off a boat in a crew race ...but you swim back.

We skip for **Joy**. We skip with beauty, with grace and meaning.
Stones bounce miraculously off water and with every skip and you can
watch the ripples spread out in circles, like memories.
Glide, ... as far as you can... before you splash into the water and
become sand.

Beautiful...

That's Northwood,
Like RENO showed us in Slaughter-House 5:

“Everything was beautiful and nothing hurt.”

EVERYTHING WAS BEAUTIFUL AND NOTHING HURT.

Well...

Except my mother's bank account thank you mom.

THANKS EVERYONE,
I LOVE YOU ALL,
ENJOY THE JUMP.