

REMARKS BY PRESIDENT G. WAYNE CLOUGH  
**GEORGIA TECH COMMENCEMENT CEREMONY, MARCH 1999**

As someone who has “gotten out” but never gotten over my love of Georgia Tech, it always gives me great pleasure to preside over Commencement and to welcome another class of Georgia Tech alumni.

Today, you join the thousands of Georgia Tech alumni who have gone before you. Like those who have gone before, you carry with you vivid memories of the Institute and its traditions. Memories of pulling all-nighters studying for exams, enjoying the Ramblin’ Wreck Parade, and cheering the Jackets on cool, crisp fall nights in Bobby Dodd Stadium. Like those who graduated before you, you will always know that “the Hill” has nothing to do with our nation’s Capitol, and that the Rose Bowl Field is not located in California, but in Georgia. And, finally, like the rest of Georgia Tech’s alumni, you have learned not only calculus, physics, management, computing and engineering, but you have also learned to appreciate the culinary delights of a Varsity chili dog and Junior’s specialty, a great hamburger and an order of fries.

In your years at Georgia Tech, you’ve learned and experienced much, but you have not done it alone. With you every step of the way – at least in spirit – were your parents, who saved and scrimped and scraped to get you here. They, too, share in the joy and excitement of this day.

As a parent myself, I know what each and every parent will be thinking as your son or daughter crosses this stage to receive a Georgia Tech diploma. With a thrill in your heart, each one of you will be thinking that your son or daughter has come this far because of traits that come from your side of the family! Undoubtedly each of you will be right.

The faculty and staff of Georgia Tech and your children would like to thank you for your support. Parents, please stand so that we may recognize you.

(APPLAUSE)

Additional support came from the Georgia Tech faculty. I know at times many of you thought they might have been trying to prevent you from reaching this day. But you are without doubt a more learned individual because of their interaction with you. Like you, they too, worked long hours to prepare you for this day.

Will the Georgia Tech faculty please stand so that we may thank you for your support and guidance.

(APPLAUSE)

Of course, those who deserve the most recognition on this momentous day are the graduates, who entered this room as students and who will leave as Georgia Tech alumni. Would all of you please stand so that we may recognize you and your achievement?

(APPLAUSE)

Our speaker for this two hundred and second commencement has much in common with you. He is a “ramblin’ wreck from Georgia Tech” – a management graduate from the class of 1971 who never even applied to any other college or university.

Bill Todd’s roots go deep into the soil of the campus and this community. He is a fourth-generation Atlantan whose father was set to come to Georgia Tech on a baseball scholarship when World War II intervened, and he went off to defend his country instead.

As a high school student, Bill earned money selling cokes in the stands at Grant Field. As a Georgia Tech student, he earned money working for the State Highway Department, which in those days had a building on campus where the IBB building is now going up. He molded cylinders from concrete, then smashed them to test their strength.

I know that, because I was there. I was a Georgia Tech graduate student at the time, and I also worked for the Highway Department, upstairs in the same building.

Applying the skills he learned in his Highway Department job, Bill broke the mold after graduation. He believed he could use his industrial management skills a non-traditional way. And he pursued a career in non-profit health care administration in the hospitals, clinics and school of medicine at Emory University. Before taking the helm of the Georgia Research Alliance, he was assistant vice president for medical administration at the Robert W. Woodruff Health Sciences Center.

As founding president of the Research Alliance, Bill Todd is responsible for administering Georgia’s effort to become a hotbed of cutting-edge science and technology. His outstanding skills and connections have made the Research Alliance a dramatic success story in a national landscape that is littered with the corpses of other states’ failed high-tech initiatives.

Bill Todd is one of the rare individuals who moves with grace and aplomb among the egos and prima donnas of the industrial world, the academic world and the political world. He is equally at home and effective in all three of these cultures, leading *Georgia Trend* magazine to designate him as one of the “100 most powerful and influential people in Georgia” for the past four years in a row.

Georgia Tech is one of the six universities in the Research Alliance, and we have benefited from its success. Bill Todd has helped to bring state funds for endowed chairs, research buildings and labs to this campus, and helped to broker the matching federal and private funds. The National Science Foundation recently chose Georgia Tech for the nation’s only Tissue Engineering Research Center, largely based on Bill’s assurance that the Research Alliance would match the money they invested in it.

But we are a double beneficiary of Bill Todd’s abilities and connections, because he has also put them to work directly for Georgia Tech as an alumnus. He is an active participant in our ongoing Capital Campaign. He has provided entrance to corporate boardrooms and helped to attract a number of major gifts that would not have come our way were it not for his involvement.

So I cannot welcome Bill Todd back to Georgia Tech – he’s been here all along. I can only express our deep appreciation for the many ways in which he contributes to this Institute, including his willingness to be our distinguished guest speaker this morning.

#### CONCLUDING REMARKS AFTER AWARDING DEGREES:

Near the close of the 1800s, a young man sent a sheaf of poems to the foremost American writer of the day to be critiqued. Ralph Waldo Emerson read the manuscript, which was entitled “Leaves of Grass” and was destined to become one of America’s best loved volumes of poetry. And he wrote back to the young Walt Whitman: “I greet you at the beginning of a great career.”

And as I look out over this sea of newly minted young Georgia Tech alumni, I echo his words. I greet you at the beginning of a great career. There has never been a better time to have earned a Georgia Tech degree.

Every year across this nation colleges and universities hand out a million undergraduate degrees. But you stand out from among that million. You stand out by virtue of the name of the Institute on your diploma. Georgia Tech ranks in the top tier of those thousands of colleges and universities by any measure, and 22 of Georgia Tech’s schools, colleges and programs are ranked in the top 20 in the nation in their respective categories.

You stand out by virtue of the subjects you studied. Talent is the key to the success of today’s technology-based businesses. As that great American philosopher Casey Stengel once said, “90 percent of this game is two-thirds mental.”

Take information technology for example – right now more than 300,000 high-paying jobs in this field are going begging, because there are simply not enough skilled employees to fill them. Georgia leads the nation in creating knowledge-based jobs, and you are ready to step into them. You are truly at the beginning of a great career.

But you also stand out by virtue of the real meaning of the education you have received here. Someone once said that your true education is what is left after you have forgotten everything you learned in the classroom. Beyond engineering and economics, beyond calculus and computing, you leave Georgia Tech having learned how to rise to a challenge... how to be creative in solving a problem... how not only to adapt to change, but to anticipate it and even provoke it. These abilities are your true education and will stand you in good stead your whole life long.

But what I hope most of all, is that you have learned to seek and find that critical balance where, in the words of Lyndon Johnson, “the meaning of our lives matches the marvelous products of our labor.”

Technology, for all its wonders, is a double-edged sword. It has given us automobiles, airplanes, television and computers, and we now face traffic jams, flight delays, air pollution and mindless,

debasing entertainment. It has given us tranquilizers, anti-depressants and sedatives, which allow us in turn to increase our stress levels to the point of needing Valium to make it through the day and sleeping pills to make it through the night.

Of course, life without technology would be even more wretched. The challenge for you and your generation is to go beyond merely multiplying the number of things that people can use, and leverage the benefits of technology for the good of all... to help us “be more” rather than simply “have more.”

Many of you have been part of TEAM Buzz and Circle K. You have tutored children, stocked the shelves of the Atlanta Food Bank, and pounded nails into the siding of Habitat for Humanity houses. As you leave Georgia Tech, I encourage you to continue your efforts to be connected to the community where you live and to use your intellect and ability to serve others.

The young Winston Churchill once asked Mark Twain to autograph one of his books with a bit of wisdom. With his usual wit, Twain obliged, writing, “To do good is noble. To teach others to do good is nobler, and less trouble.”

As you move forward into the next phase of your lives, I urge you to take his advice... both to do good and to teach others to do good... because from now on, you are no longer merely students. You are the technological leaders of tomorrow... and the role models and teachers of future generations.