

Good Morning. My name is Dan Kavanaugh and over this past year I've had the honor of serving as the Class of 2016 Stetson Law Student Bar Association President.

Before I ever stepped foot on this campus I knew that out of all the law schools in the country, Stetson Law has consistently been ranked as one of the top 5 schools for Legal Writing. I've also known for quite a while that Stetson Law is ranked #1 in the country for Trial Advocacy. But I didn't realize until I got up here and looked out over this crowd that, and I don't know if this is a metric that U.S. News and World Reports tracks, but if they did, I am convinced that Stetson Law would be ranked #1 in the country for graduating class good looks. This looks more like a graduation from the Barbizon School of Advanced Modeling. You people are beautiful!

Before I get to much further into my set I want to recognize the most important people here today. I'd like to take a moment and ask my fellow classmates to join me in giving a round of applause to the family and friends who have lifted us on their shoulders so we could reach this stage today. They are, of course, too gracious to say it, but I'm certain law school was harder on some of our loved ones than it was on us. So I want to say thank you especially to my wife Courtney, and to all of our loved ones out there for being so good at making us almost feel as though we could have done this by ourselves.

Class of 2016, WE MADE IT! We've had a great run over the past three years and we have had the opportunity to get to know and learn from one another in ways that money can't buy. I am so impressed by the achievements my classmates attained both before and during law school, and I cannot express how excited I am to see how the class of 2016 changes the world.

I was a soldier once, and young. And over the years my dad and I developed a ritual we'd practice before each of my deployments overseas. My family typically gathered before I deployed each time so we could enjoy each other's company before I headed out. Kavanaughs are loud people, so when he sensed the time was right my dad would pull me aside so we could talk privately. And so on the evening before each of my deployments my dad would make me promise two things, he'd say "Dannyboy wherever you go, when you can- make a difference / and no matter how far you travel find a way to make it home." My dad had some health issues and so I promised him I would make a difference and make it home, as long as he promised to be home waiting for me when I got there. I'm here and so you know I was able to keep my promises, and my dad kept his promise too, every time I left—until I left for law school. My dad passed during our first semester here at Stetson. I wish I could say I'm the only graduate who lost a loved one during law school, but I know that I am not. But it doesn't seem right to say those loved ones couldn't be here with us today, because I know that they are. And so class of 2016 I have a favor to ask, I need your help to make a difference because I can't do it on my own. Help me keep the promise I made to my father because, although I feel I've still got a lot of miles to cover, my journey will someday end. I know my dad will keep his promise one last time and that, when I am finally called home, he will be waiting for me when I get there.

There's an African proverb that says if you want to go fast, go alone-but if you want to go far, go together. As I look out at the class of 2016, I can't tell you how honored I am to be counted among your number because I know that together- there is no height we cannot reach. And I'm not only talking about the graduates walking across the

stage today. Stetson Law is the oldest law school in Florida, and there are Stetson Law graduates scattered around the globe. We Are Stetson and I know that even if you wind up in a far of place full of unfamiliar faces, another Stetson Lawyer won't be hard to find.

You can recognize a Stetson Lawyer as soon as they open a door, and that's because we're taught how to look, act, and be professional on every level. You can recognize a Stetson Lawyer as soon as they open their mouth, because we learn to advocate with both intellect and integrity. And even if you were to miss the first two clues, you can Always recognize a Stetson Lawyer as soon as they open their heart, because we've learned that the power and privilege of our law degree are accompanied by a responsibility to use our voices to speak for those who would otherwise be left hurting and unheard.

Its been said that the practice of law is one of the most noble professions, and its probably a lawyer that said it. But it was Hemingway who said that "There is nothing noble about being superior to your fellow man; true nobility is being superior to your former self." I have no doubt that the Stetson University College of Law has brought us all closer to true nobility, because every day we spent here was a day we woke up better than we were the day before. The only day I'm not sure about is the day I woke up after taking Professor Wilson's Real Property exam. I still have nightmares about blackacre, and I don't even know where blackacre is. Yes Dr. Lecter, the lambs are still screaming.

11 years ago, almost to the day, I gave the class presidents speech at my graduation from the law enforcement academy. And while many things have changed in the intervening years, many have remained the same, so I would like to close my remarks this morning by sharing the same words I shared then with my brothers and sisters in arms with you now, my brothers and sisters "in-law"? These are words of wisdom I've gathered throughout the course of my life...while watching superhero movies:

Choose LOYALTY above all else, except HONOR.

Remember that JUSTICE should always be metered with COMPASSION.

When you can, COMPROMISE. And if you find that you cannot compromise, DON'T.

Good luck. God bless. Go Hatters.