

The famous final scene at school

May 29, 1984
 Monday I watched friends graduate from college.

They were only a year behind me, and I remembered how graduation seems to be for everyone but the graduates.

The last few weeks before my graduation had been hectic, and, although many of us planned to remain in the same area, no one wanted to say good-bye to the friends that were going far away.

Senior papers, projects, and seminars were due, there was packing to do, and invitations to send out.

The last week of school came and went, and graduation weekend was upon us.

For the first time since the beginning of the year I thought I'd have some free time. I figured I'd spend my last weekend as a college student saying good-bye to the special friends I'd made over the past four years.

By Friday evening, college alumni, parents, and brothers and sisters had congregated on campus.

Everyone spent the weekend entertaining long-distance friends and relatives. Our college life was already over.

Graduation was held at 10:30 Monday morning.

We rolled out of bed, hastily showered, pressed our polyester robes, painstakingly pinned the caps to our heads, finished the little bit of packing left, and rushed out to line up for the processional.

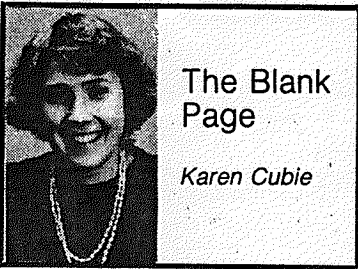
The ceremony began, and I sat on the wobbly folding chair during former Watergate figure Chuck Colson's commencement address with the hot sun beating down on me. I thought the heavy black gown would melt into gooey polyester pools.

I remember struggling with the borrowed bobby pins to keep my cap in place, and feeling it slip farther and farther back during the ceremony until it sat precariously on the peak of my skull, yanking my front pieces of hair back with it.

When I walked to the podium to receive my diploma, I was nervous. I was afraid I'd trip and fall while the hundreds of people attending graduation looked on.

The rest of the ceremony passed quickly, and I wore off the skin on my hands applauding for fellow graduates.

We shifted our tassels, the ceremony ended, and we were immediately mobbed by parents, grandparents, and other relatives.



The Blank Page
 Karen Cubie

I wanted to say good-bye to friends I wouldn't see for a long time, if ever, but I didn't have much chance. My parents had planned a graduation party for me, and we had to get home before people started arriving.

I tried to say good-bye to Lisa, who would fly home to California that night, and Joanna, who planned to move to Chicago as soon as she returned from a tour of Europe. They were also struggling to entertain relatives and say good-bye to friends at the same time. All we had time to do was shout promises to write, and wave over the sea of heads.

After graduation, I didn't know what to expect.

College had been something I'd looked forward to all my life.

Graduating was something I hadn't thought about. That was an adult thing to do — like getting married, or having children.

I couldn't imagine a year not broken up by semesters or school vacations, spending the rest of my life in an office, or cooking for myself.

But the year went by, and the adjustment was easier than I thought.

I called Lisa once — we talked for 30 minutes; and Joanna recently came East for a visit.

Plenty of friends have stayed around. My social life did not die with graduation.

This year has been one of the best and most exciting years of my life.

I have a car, my own apartment, and evenings free from homework.

I've been able to read what I want to read, eat when I want to eat, come and go as I please, and do things I never had time to do before.

I get to spend more time with my friends because I don't have term paper deadlines, reading assignments, or presentations hanging over my head.

Until Monday, I'd forgotten about graduation, saying good-bye, and my fear of incompetence in the career of my choice.

But as I watched Seiko and Laurie step up to the podium, off the platform, and onto the other side of college, it all came back to me.

I could understand Laurie's nervousness about finding a job and an apartment, and moving out on her own.

I wanted to tell her to relax about it. Don't try to do everything at once. Fritter away a few years if you want, because in the end it won't really matter.

And I felt the pain of saying good-bye all over again when I squeezed through the crowd after the ceremony to hug Seiko. She'll be returning home to Japan soon, and I may never see her again.

My friendships with Seiko, Lisa, and Joanna will never be the same. We'll go our own ways, find our own lives, and we probably won't have the same daily contact again.

The good-byes I said Monday won't be the last ones I'll ever say, but they seem to be the most final.



Revolution in classroom teaching

WASHINGTON — Whatever its faults, the report of the Carnegie Forum on Education cannot be

commission had been even bolder. I wish it had embraced the idea of voluntary national service in the



proposed budget cutbacks. Education is the best investment