



Hail to thee our Alma Mater

75 graduate on Sunday from Norton High School

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The Norton Community High School choir sang Seasons of Love from the musical, "Rent."

Senior Class President Ashton Lofgreen gave her speech. "The bigger ride."

Miss Lofgreen asked the class to remember that time when they were just a little too big for the kiddie rides at the county fair. Still since they were used to riding on them that is what they tried.

"You sit down in your seat, and you're thinkin', huh, this thing doesn't have as much leg room as it used to," she said. "And you have your elbows tucked in close to your sides but your arms are still pressed up against the side of the car and your knees are sorta up around your ears and you're feeling a little tight, a little uncomfortable, just a little too confined. And that's when you think, maybe this is the summer that I'm ready to ride on those bigger rides."

"Maybe I'm ready to graduate from the little cars to the Ferris Wheel, or the Scrambler or the Tilt-a-Whirl, or maybe even, the Octopus."

Their high school careers have been a ride, she said. But, now they have outgrown the safe and comfortable confines of Norton Community High and are ready for the challenges of the world.

"I think... we're feeling a little enclosed, just a little confined."

"And it's not because the school is getting smaller — its simply because we, as individuals, are growing. We're ready for the bigger ride."

She went on to praise the school, especially the fine arts program, which sets it above most others in the area.

"Whether it's academics, organizations, athletics or the fine arts," she said. "It's not difficult for individuals to get involved and to be an active part of their education."

Every person in the class has different talents she said, noting many of the students' favorite activities or scholastic achievements.

"Although our characters, our talents and our interest vary, each of us has so much to offer the world," she said.

After the band played "Of a Distant Star," senior C.J. Thiele gave his speech called, "Direction of Life."

Mr. Thiele congratulated the class and quoted from Oliver Wendell Holmes, who said, "I find the great thing in this world is not

so much where we stand, as in what direction we are moving. To reach the port of heaven, we must sail sometimes with the wind and sometimes against it, but we must sail and not drift or lie at anchor."



A. Lofgreen



C.J. Thiele

so far, Mr. Thiele said, the class has been heading in the right direction. He challenged the class to continue in the right direction.

Superintendent Lary Stull said that two words come to mind, apprehension and appreciation.

Parents are apprehensive about their children leaving home and teachers worry that they haven't done enough, he said.

However, he said, he views the class with appreciation. It has been an outstanding class with many accomplishments.

He went on to name the many accomplishments of the class including academic, athletic and artistic.

He introduced Peggy Stull, the long-time high school art teacher, who is retiring at the end of this year. Mrs. Stull received a standing ovation from the students and crowd.

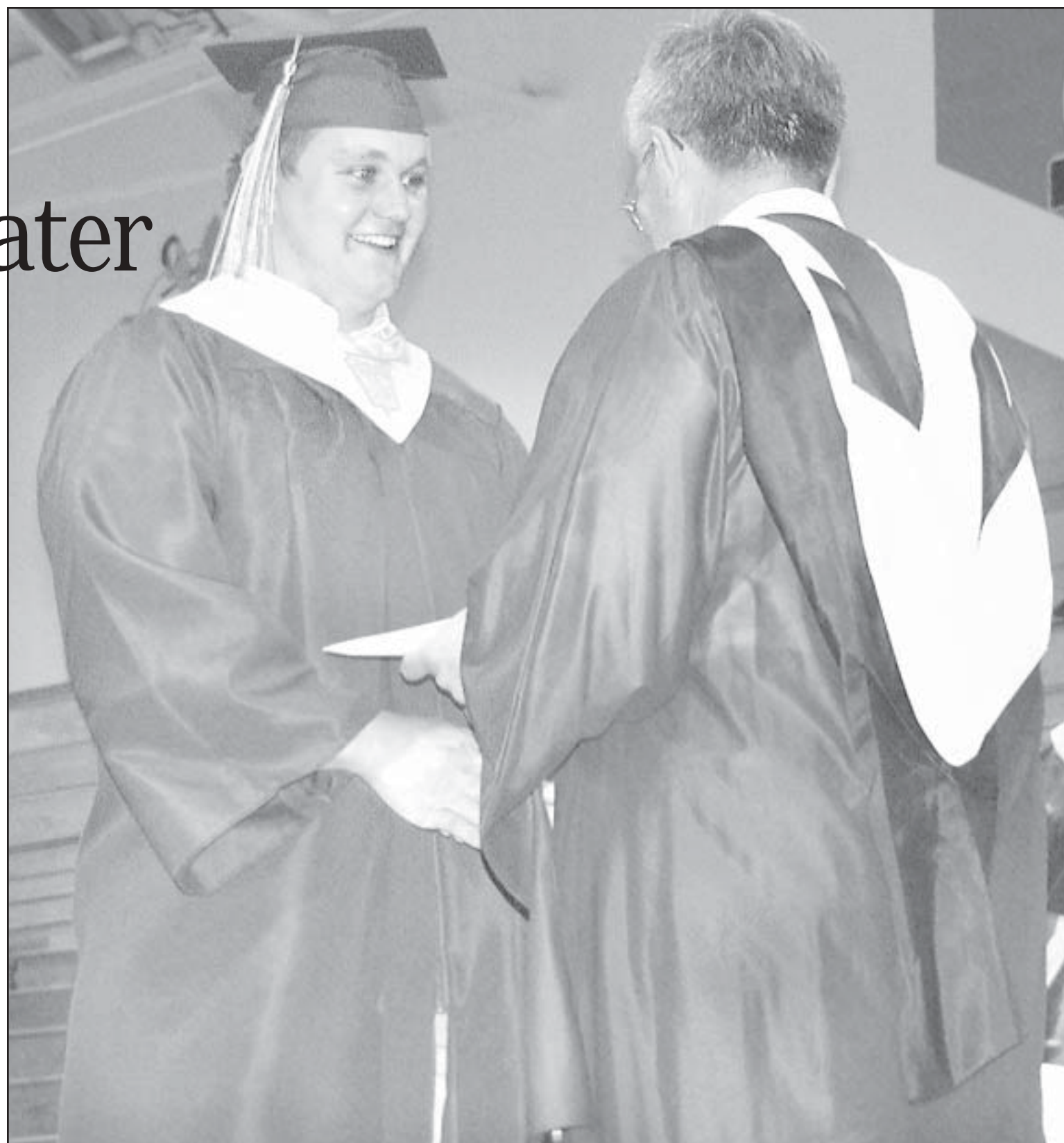
Then the students filed past the superintendent as he called their names and each handed over some object stolen from the school over the past year—a sombrero from the Spanish department, an antique football helmet, tennis balls, erasers, a stapler, a box of tissues, cups, pictures, plaques.

"A little bit of everything," Mr. Stull said later.

After each student had his or her diploma they turned their tassels and all stood to sing the Alma Mater.

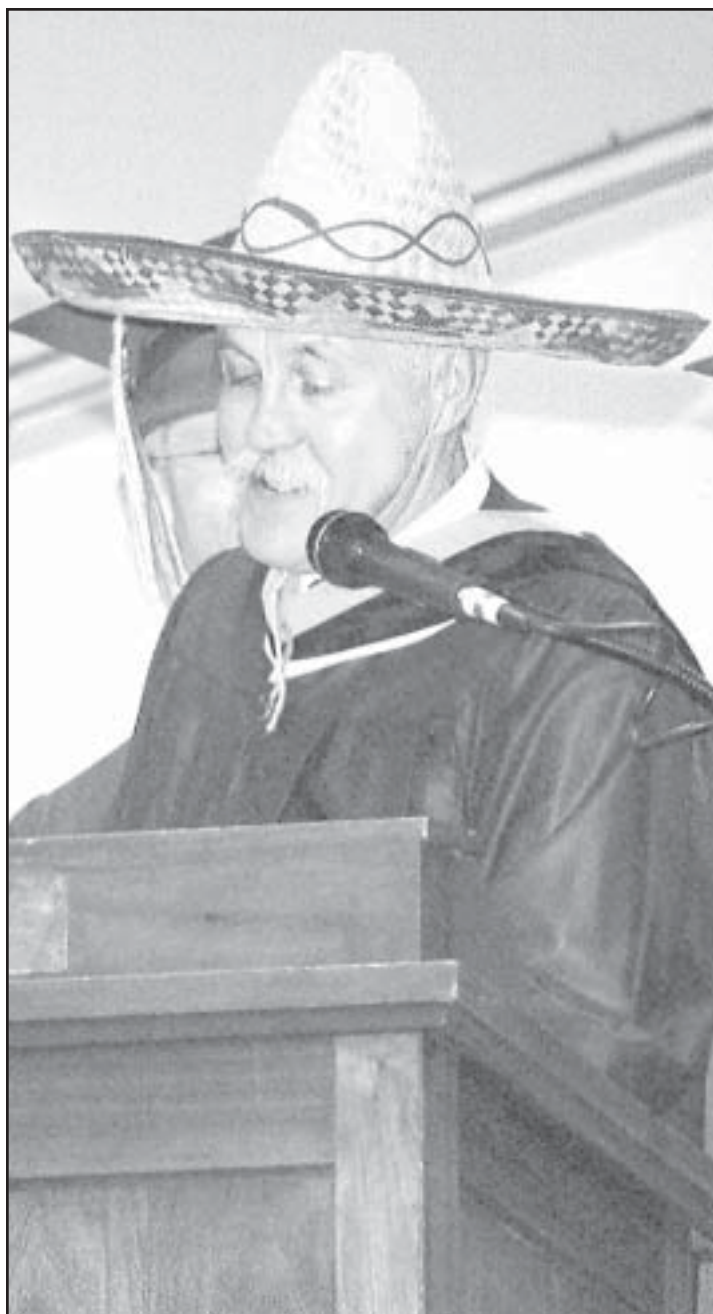
Then all heck broke lose on the stage as the graduates showered each other with confetti, sparkles and silly string until they looked like a giant moving wedding cake.

The class of 2004 had graduated with pomp, ceremony and a bang.



Joel Griffiths (above) received his diploma and a handshake from Norton High Superintendent Greg Mann on Sunday. The students, 75 strong, (top) sat on bleachers above the stage during the ceremonies until it was their turn to walk across the stage.

— Telegram photos by Cynthia Haynes



"We did it, we did it," the Swisher twins, Jeana and Kesha, (above) screamed as they hugged each other and danced around the stage after receiving their diplomas. High School Principal Lary Stull (left) sported a sombrero returned to him by a not-very-contrite student.