

He Knows About Finishing What He Started



Newsday Photo by Paul Bereswill

Some of the 815 Oceanside High School students who graduated yesterday might have gotten the idea that the keynote speaker really knew what he was talking about when he made his remarks about thefts of answers to State Regents exams.

"I told them how unfortunate it is that people resort to something as petty as that," the speaker said during a break between the district's two ceremonies. "They should have enough confidence in themselves to know that they can successfully complete something." The speaker was Kenneth Kunken, 23, of Oceanside, who had enough confidence to graduate this spring from Cornell University even though he is paralyzed from the neck down due to an injury suffered nearly four years ago in a lightweight college football game. (He is shown at left, delivering the address from his wheelchair.) Now studying for a master's degree in counseling and student personnel administration at Cornell, Kunken returned to his old high school to tell the graduates about himself, how he thought they could change the world and to thank the community for the help it gave him.

"It was certainly a change being on the other side," he said of the speech.