

Mr. Director

Dear Teachers and students

Distinguished audience

My dear, wonderful classmates:

I remember another night like this one, it doesn't seem too long ago, when I was standing in this same auditorium, during our graduation, delivering the required speech in English. It was the year 1962, when Mr. Carlos Carrasco was our Principal, and we were 16 and 17 year olds full of life, hope and anticipation. At that point we had completed the requirements for graduation after several years of studies in this dear place, where we were molded very carefully by our teachers, our parents and our peers.

My friends, that night we were far from thinking that 50 years later we would be reunited here again to celebrate the Golden Anniversary of our high School graduation, and that 20 of our classmates would no longer be with us. We are here to celebrate our common history, knowing that in the last 50 years, our decisions, beliefs, talents and personalities were shaped, colored and impacted by the values we learned and by our experiences and interactions with teachers and friends. These influences are part of what we are today, and those of you who decided to attend this reunion are here to honor and acknowledge the importance those school years have had in our lives.

Many of us, the lucky ones I might add, had been studying here since kindergarten and this was the only place we knew. The school was our second home: a comfortable space where we could be ourselves in the company of others like us and absorb like sponges all the information that directly or indirectly was coming our way. Others like me for example, had enrolled in later years, but for all of us, that night was the culmination of the first stage of our lives and represented an important step into adulthood.

We received a great comprehensive education in the basics, the Christian faith, the sciences, humanities and the arts. Our exposure to Music and Arts was present since the early years. So much so, that when I entered the school in the 5th grade and the other class presented the play: "El Rey Cuervo", I thought some of the main characters were child actors that had been brought from somewhere else!! How naïve I was!! I was shocked when somebody told me all the actors were 5th graders from the other class. Our music and arts teacher, Mrs Hilda Cordano, mother of our own classmate Rosilda, was the main motor in the many beautiful artistic presentations that the Class of 1962 performed over the years.

Like her, there were several other legendary teachers, like Mrs. Silva, the first teacher I had when I entered the school in the 5th grade and who always had to wear several different hats: she was teacher, mother, friend, counselor, and disciplinarian, according to the situation.

How can we forget the influence that teachers like Miss Isabel Figueroa, Miss Matilde Tong, Mr. Soriano, Dr. Galarza, Mr. Paul Aschenbrenner, Mrs Davila, Miss Emilia Maurtua and Miss Miller, to name a few, had in our lives?

50 years may have gone by, but we can still re-live the reverence of Chapel and the silence of the final exams, we can still hear the noise and laughter of children in recess, we can almost see the hustle and bustle of the start, the end and change of classes, we can hear the voice of our teachers prompting us to listen, and we can still picture the classrooms, patios and halls that were silent witnesses to our growth and transformation from year to year.

The school Motto: "Culture, Honor and Service" (CHS) was emphasized in everything we did,

and our teachers and mentors were living examples of the knowledge, respect and dedication to that motto. In a way, they were also missionaries, just like our American teachers, serving the honorable goal of educating children. We are grateful in a very special way to our American teachers like Miss Miller, Mr. Russel, Mr. Ashenbrenner, Mr Bower and others, who left their country, family and friends to come and teach us the English language and Literature like nobody else could.

Our academic, spiritual, artistic and emotional needs were met with the different subject matters and activities, and the time we spent here left us very well prepared for the next step of our education and of our lives.

I need to mention that even though we were so focused on studying, that didn't mean that we did not have fun. Children and teenagers are always rambunctious, mischievous, risk takers and accident prone, and we had a good share of all of the above. The trips to the principal's office were frequent and repetitive for several of us but I guess that was also part of the learning experience.

50 years later, I recall my first day of class in the 5th grade, when the school and all the people around me were new, I was feeling a little scared and intimidated and all of a sudden, I turn my head and noticed the smiling face of Zonia, looking at me with curiosity, probably wondering how to make me feel better. The rest is history. Since that day we were and continue to be best friends.

As a class, we had many funny, awkward and memorable moments, too many to mention, but I am sure that whenever you think and reflect upon them it brings a smile to your face and warmth to your heart.

My friends, in 1962 we walked these halls, patios and classrooms as students for the last time, and said good bye to each other, our teachers, mentors and to our sheltered life. We graduated and went on to work in different fields, trades and professions, which included various types of business, business administration, Economy and Insurance. We became doctors, teachers, dentists and psychologists. We worked for the Transportation Security Administration, airports and all parts of air, ground and naval transportation. We have professionals in Oceanography, in the Fishing industry, and an expert in English philology, We also have a recently internationally recognized artistic performer. We had a Bank President and a caterer that was very involved in the many activities of our group and hosted a good number of reunions. We have a retired Rear Admiral and a retired Vice Admiral who was also Chief of Staff of the Peruvian Navy. The school was also well known for the caliber of the Executive Secretaries that it graduated, many of whom went to meet the high demand for these jobs in the business world. Yes, ladies and gentlemen, the Class of 1962 has been around and has left its mark in the world.

We formed our families, many of us are grandparents now , and somehow, somewhere between kindergarten and our Senior year, something beautiful happened to us, and, we didn't realized much at the time, but in those early years we were creating a very strong and most precious bond called FRIENDSHIP: A relationship so special that it doesn't matter how many years or decades passed without seeing each other, because the moment we establish contact or reunite, is almost like being in school all over again and the joy and camaraderie are always there. There are many good lifelong friends within our group and this friendship is a source of happiness, good times, companionship, empathy, consolation and advice.

But what exactly is the meaning of FRIENDSHIP? This term is so difficult to define that I have picked up a few quotes from famous people in order to try to understand it a little better.

1.- Somebody named Elbert Hubbard once said that “a friend is somebody that knows everything about you and likes you anyway”

So, friendship is UNCONDITIONAL.

2.- In the famous cartoon series “Winnie the Pooh”, written by A.A. Milne, there was a conversation between Pooh and Piglet, who were good friends.

Piglet whispered: “Pooh?”

Pooh answered: “Yes, Piglet?”

Taking Pooh’s hand, Piglet said: “Nothing, I just wanted to be Sure of you!”

So, friendship IS ALWAYS THERE FOR YOU.

3.- Henry Nouwen wrote: “When we honestly ask ourselves which person in our lives mean the most to us, we often find that the friend who can be silent with us in a moment of despair , who can stay with us in an hour of grief , who can tolerate not knowing, not curing, not healing and face with us the reality of our powerlessness, that is a friend who cares.”

So friendship is COMPASSIONATE AND UNDERSTANDING.

4.- The great Martin Luther King said: “In the end, you will not hear the words of your enemies, but the silence of your friends”

So, friendship is PRUDENT, DOESN’T HURT OTHERS AND IT’S BASED IN THE TRUTH, NOT IN DAMAGING GOSSIP

5.- Abraham Lincoln said: “Am I not destroying my enemies when I make friends of them?”

So, friendship can be A VERY SMART HABIT, BECAUSE IT VANISHES ANIMOSITIES AND ENEMIES.

6.-Alexander Mac Call Smith wrote: “You can go through life and make new friends every year, but there was never any substitute for those friendships of childhood that survive into adult years. Those are the ones in which we are bound to one another with hoops of steel!”

So, there is NOTHING LIKE AN OLD FRIEND, AND THAT’S WHAT WE HAVE HERE IN THIS GROUP OF OLD FRIENDS:

We are bound to one another with hoops of steel!

According to all these quotes, friendship means different things to different people, but it always fills your heart with pleasure and make us feel connected, and after 50 years, we are all able to feel each other’s joys and sorrows.

We are like a big beautiful tree full of leaves and life that germinated out of the seed of Destiny, who put us together in the same class, and that grew nourished over many years by the time we spent together, by our common experiences and by the love that unquestionably exists within our group. Every one of us is a leaf that contributes to the beauty and life of this tree, which by now is solid and indestructible. Even though some of the leaves have already fallen, these fallen leaves continue to fertilize the soil in which this tree grows and stands tall, and is a testimony to the union of the Class of 1962.

My dear friends, 50 years ago we danced together, we played together and we celebrated our coming of age and our graduation together. Today we are still dancing, playing and celebrating together. Let’s continue to do this and rejoice in each other’s company, let’s keep feeding, grooming and protecting the friendship that was born inside the classroom more than 50 years ago, and especially, let’s keep being ambassadors of the values and principles we learned in this Institution. Although many of us are enjoying or approaching Retirement, “Culture, Honor and Service” are timeless values that we can incorporate in our daily lives.

There is still a lot to be done here in our country and in the world. Even though we cannot solve all of the world problems, CHANGE always starts with an individual. Now that I am a grandmother, I have learned the potential that children have to become great people, so, let me

tell you briefly the story of a child I admire very much. His name was Xolani Nkosi, and he was a South African child born to a mother infected with HIV/AIDS. He was born with AIDS. His mother died when he was very young and he was adopted by a compassionate woman. Nkosi was discriminated upon in a school that refused to accept him because of his AIDS, and he also realized that treatment for the disease was not available to everybody. So he took it upon himself to make speeches around his country with the purpose of raising the awareness towards AIDS, and to encourage the appropriate treatment for all infected people. Nkosi died of AIDS when he was 12 years old, but some of his favorite words were: "DO ALL YOU CAN, WITH WHAT YOU HAVE, IN THE TIME YOU HAVE, IN THE PLACE YOU ARE." If one sick child can make so much difference, imagine how much we can still do to help our families, our communities, our cities and our country.

My friends, we have had the privilege of living in an unprecedented time: We saw the beginning of the television era, we have witnessed the landing on the Moon and the first steps in the exploration of Space, we were here when the Pill became available with the sexual and social revolution it produced: all of a sudden women were able to plan their families and their lives and they flocked to the universities and the workplace, emphasizing their demand for equal rights and equal pay. We have seen it in our own lives: My grandmother's life was very different than the life my daughter is able to have. We have seen unbelievable advances in Medicine and Science, and lately we are living and enjoying the Technological Era with the Internet and the whole revolution of the social Media and electronic communications that have made the miles disappear with the touch of a button.

We are sort of the link between how things were in the past and how they are now, and this puts us in a unique position to be able to share with the younger generations, our life experiences, the knowledge, and the wisdom that we have accumulated during these 50 years, so that it will not be lost. We are not supposed to die with our music still inside us, because our words, our advice and our knowledge may be just what somebody needs to keep going, to get a breakthrough or just to feel human! Remember the words of Ralph Waldo Emerson: "To leave the world a bit better whether by a healthy child, a garden patch or a redeemed social condition, to know that even one life has breathed easier because you have lived: This is to have succeeded!"

So, my dear friends, while we still have the current of life flowing through us, let's rise to the challenge presented to us by the times we are living, and just like little Nkosi : DO ALL YOU CAN, WITH WHAT YOU HAVE, IN THE TIME YOU HAVE, IN THE PLACE YOU ARE.

THANK YOU VERY MUCH FOR THE PRIVILEGE OF SPEAKING TO YOU TONIGHT.

Bertha Ponce de Morales