

MEMORIAL SERVICE
ROLLINS CHAPEL
35TH REUNION of the DARTMOUTH CLASS OF 1980
June 20, 2015

Wade Herring, '80

Good Morning.

Dartmouth people are people of energy. We are people of athleticism and the out-of-doors. We are planners, and doers, and over-achievers. We work hard, and we play hard. We are people of superlatives: awesome, unbelievable, fantastic.

It is not, necessarily, that we are unrealistic. We know life can be hard. After all, we have granite in our muscles, and even in our brains. We are people of the North. We have known that winter is coming, long before *Game of Thrones* made that phrase part of popular culture. As an aside, let me be the first to acknowledge that the words, "We are people of the North," coming out of my mouth sounds discordant, but I am a loyal son of Dartmouth, and the statement is nevertheless still true. But even in winter, what do Dartmouth people do? We host a carnival.

Quiet introspection does not come easily to us. Feeling nostalgic whenever you hear Bob Seeger sing *Night Moves* does not count. Yet, here we are, in this chapel, on this Saturday morning of our 35th Reunion, gathered together, but also each alone in thought: to stop. . . . and to remember. . . . and to grieve. . . for our dead. That is hard. No carnival can erase our hurt; our pain; our loss.

Our classmates have died in accidents, natural and man-made. They have died after long battles with cancer, and in a sudden instance. They have died of AIDS. Two died on 9/11, one in a plane, and one in a tower. Their deaths are part of the American story.

But they are so much more than part of history. They were our friends. They were with us on this Connecticut River plain, and now they are gone. No longer with us in body, or in time. And there is no closure for this loss, there is no getting over it. They are gone, and we are forever changed, always living with the loss of them.

These losses remind us of every other loss, both in the past, and yet to come. Parents, mentors, siblings, other friends. Lost opportunities. Lost relationships. Lost youth.

At age 57, we are past an honest claim to middle-age. The undergraduates with us this morning know this better than we do. They will tell their friends about the Class of 1980, and how old we are.

We confront our own deaths. The reunion will come when the names in the program are too numerous to read aloud. When the names on the list outnumber the names of the living. The time will come, and all too soon, when there will be no more

reunion for us in Hanover, when the names on the list will align with each and every name in our Freshman Book, published 39 years ago.

Dumbed down and numbed by time and age.
Your dreams that catch the world the cage.
The highway sets the traveler's stage.
All exits look the same.

So what are we to do with all this? What do we take away? Sorrow is a hard teacher, but what lessons are to be learned?

First, our friends are with us still. They remain part of us. We acknowledge the finite, their temporal and corporeal absence, but whatever our respective faiths and belief systems, we also recognize that which yet endures.

Laurie Von Buskirk's love of the out-of-doors is still part of us. Susan Marshall's sunny smile is with us still. Katherine Campbell's childlike enthusiasm and laughter endures. Jay Hodgdon's kindness remains. Kevin Crotty's intensity and sense of purpose. Brian Dale's thoughtfulness. Jim Foote's effortless ability and positive spirit. Josh Katz's quirky humor. Doug Bang's laugh. John Brennan's quiet grace. Dan Norton's contrarian courage. Jay Tyson's optimism. Tony Piggee's debating skills. Nancy Rockwell's big and bold and outspoken spirit. Doug Romatzick—always calm and cool. Rich Turner's impeccable manners. Kitsos Washburn's love of Greece. Ken Wheatley's steadfast friendship, and his ability to juggle simultaneously an apple, a basketball, and a stuffed hassock.

The words of the *Alma Mater* have it wrong. They are not made part of the granite of New Hampshire *until* death. They are part of the granite of New Hampshire *in* death. The impact and meaning of their lives endures in us and endures in this place, part of a long Green line going back to Eleazar Wheelock and 1769, layers and layers of memories and meaning forever embedded both in the bedrock of this College and out in the Wide, Wide World.

Sorrow teaches gratitude. How grateful we are for Craig Thorn's love of language and music, his energy. For Laura Woodberry Jessiman, the very example of a lady, an athlete, a citizen of the world. For Parker Small's gifts with photography and his cheerful forbearance. For Stephen Murphy's devotion to Cabin & Trail. For Brooks Shumway's quiet, kind bravery. For Lennie Pickard's uncompromising advocacy. For Rick Zogby, and his example of what it means to be a true man for others. For Mike McClintock's embracing, gregarious optimism. For Judith Recke's wry humor. For Pam Merriwether's sweet kindness. How much richer we are for their gifts and for their *lasting* examples. Thankfulness can be the only proper response.

Sorrow teaches vulnerability. We can be sad and scared. We can ask for help, and allow others to help us. We can lean on friends. And then do the same for them.

Sorrow teaches what is important. Our time here is so short, so precious, and we waste it on so much. Stuff is not important. It's not important whether you squeeze the

tube from the top or the bottom. Whether you are Republican or Democrat is not important, although I do have some opinions about that. Tomorrow, and tomorrow, and tomorrow is not important.

This day is important. Trees of green, red roses too. Skies of blue, and clouds of white. The bright blessed day. The dark sacred night. What a wonderful world. This day is a gift. Let us rejoice and be glad in it.

This moment is important. Being present, in this moment. My presence for you, and yours for me, in the right here, the right now.

Sorrow teaches the value of three words, "I, and love, and you." What a powerful gift to say, out loud, to one another, "I love you." What grace to accept the gift, and then to multiply it in return.

I love you, I love this College *because* of you, and I am so grateful and privileged to be part of you this day, in this time and space.

Sorrow teaches us to find the good, praise the good, and do good, because what moves our hearts will remain long after we are gone, and then turn up in the most unexpected places. That is what our friends have taught us.

We leave this service with our friends in our hearts and in our minds, with renewed gratitude for this precious day, with love for each other, with the courage to say out loud, "I love you," with renewed energy to do all the good we can, to all the people we can, as long as ever we can.

So resolved, let us go fight the good fight. Let us go finish the race. Amen.