

## **Commencement Remarks**

**May 26, 2023**

**Fay Lampert Shutzer '65**

Welcome parents, friends, and family, faculty and staff, CA students, and a very special welcome to our seniors, the class of 2023! I am Fay Shutzer, and on behalf of the Concord Academy Board of trustees, I want you to know we are so proud of you and excited to be with you today! As a member of the class of 1965 myself, I look forward to welcoming you as fellow alums of CA.

Over the past few years, I have prepared for remarks at commencement by looking at the group dynamics of each graduating class. As a psychologist, I have always been especially interested in group process. The roots of my interest in psychology began here at CA in a course about Community Service that had a reading list that introduced concepts in developmental psychology and personality theory. I was fascinated by the readings so when a term paper was required in chemistry class, I took a risk and chose to research the chemical basis of schizophrenia. I was even taken to the Harvard Medical School's library for the research. My passion, like so many other CA students', was no problem for our faculty, who have always and still encourage students to pursue areas of our own interests.

Coming back to the present and thinking about your class, 2023, it is worth naming that you did not have a typical four years together when you would have had the opportunity to develop as a group. You started out together in 9<sup>th</sup> grade in 2019, until March 2020 when a global pandemic changed everything. During the next two and a half years, you were at first physically distanced, then some returned to campus, but not everyone could be here. Those who were here could only show their eyes, not their smiles. It is clear is that no CA class before you or since has had exactly your experience: starting together, being separated, and adapting to many changes, such as 3 HOS, 3 academic schedules, and then finally in your Senior year, having the experience at CA that you were meant to have had four times over.

I wonder: how has that impacted you, Class of 2023?

So back to my research for this morning. I did not go to a medical library or actually, any library. I did not read a book...not even an advance copy of your yearbook...although that probably would have been a good idea. Instead, I conducted some interviews with experts. You might be wondering which experts? Where could I find any experts on adolescent theory and development around here? And where could I find experts on you, in particular? Well, my experts are with us today and include a sample of parents, faculty, administrators, members of your class, and even one Head of School.

What was most remarkable about my findings was that the data was very consistent. The words that came up most often were “resilient, optimistic, authentic leaders, patient, energetic, and full of joy.” Others mentioned that “CA is stronger because of this class” referring to the way that you understood the CA traditions in your first six months on campus in 9<sup>th</sup> grade and managed to share them with the rest of the school, preserving the culture of the school that was interrupted by the Covid pandemic.

Your chapels were especially powerful and dealt with a wide range of themes that touched the whole community. You reached out in new ways, trying to bring about change, speaking with raw honesty and authenticity. Your diversity is an incredible source of strength. Ultimately you talk a lot about hope and strike the adults around you as optimistic to your core.

Everyone I spoke to commented on how, despite headwinds and a shorter time on campus, you navigated difficulty and emerged as leaders of the school after the Junior Leadership retreat. One parent said, “This class represents the best of CA. CA is stronger because they are rebuilders of themselves and of the community.” A faculty member commented “It’s a class that is very good to each other, which is generally a CA characteristic, but a particular feature this year.”

I am wondering, is there any balance? Apparently, you can be bold, even silly, and are not afraid to push the envelope at times. Of course, you got up to a little mischief and there were comments about the Senior coffee house, apparently with some unforgettable dancing. Your class even received a complaint or two. You apparently kicked the head of school out of the gym and even barricaded him from his office on Senior Prank Day. Oh yes, did you really dunk him too? On a chilly, early May day when he was only coming out to cheer on his colleagues? Were you even just a little bit worried that you might not get your diplomas today?

But seriously, back to the comments: my experts all were profuse in their praise and indicated that this class is a “special group of thoughtful young people who are going to make a difference in the world.” It is clear that you have already done that at Concord Academy!

Congratulations, class of 2023! Come back soon!