

Good morning and congratulations to the Spartanburg Day School class of 2019! Years of hard work and dedication have led you to this moment. The faculty, your family and friends have all gathered to celebrate this life moment with you.

I remember well my graduation day....1981. None of you in the Class of 2019 remember 1981! Maybe you studied that year in a history class. It is hard to believe that thirty-eight years have passed since I received my diploma from SDS. This courtyard where we gather today is virtually unchanged since then and that may be the only part of the campus that hasn't grown and evolved. How symbolic. Tradition amidst growth and progress. I was at the Day School for 12 years and I remember sitting in your chairs thinking, "What will it feel like to say goodbye to all that is so familiar and launch out into the world that is so foreign?" Part of me wanted time to stand still. I wanted to stay in my comfort zone, my home, my school, my friends. And yet part of me was excited for the adventure of going to college.

That summer as I packed up my belongings for college my mother gave me critically important advice that I want to share with you. She said and I quote, "Always have a passport and a tuxedo so you don't turn down a good invitation. And remember your manners." That advice served me well over the years and it somewhat contradicted the parting advice given to me by Michael Johnson who was the Headmaster of SDS at that time. "Mr. Young", he said. "You have been a bit too social to take full advantage of your education thus far. I hope you will buckle down in your college years because there's more to life than being good at a cocktail party." There it was. Even as I was departing this campus there was that demonstration of caring from the Headmaster. He could have let me walk away but instead challenged me one last time to be my very best.

My Dad saved every report card, in chronological order, for all five of his children. At some point in later years, I read through mine and it was a study of ADHD before Ritalin existed. "Berkeley is very bright if he could just sit still", "he just can't focus", "he does not pay attention", "he does not complete his assignments". I'm so thankful for the Spartanburg Day School because the teachers never gave up on me. Over my years here I remember Ann Dobbs crying when my English paper was particularly, exceptionally bad. She said, "I don't know what I am going to do with you? This is not even up to your usual low standard." Jo Woodyard, the toughest history teacher from whom I learned the most, pulled me into her office one day and said, "You have a clever mind and need to use your humor to build others up not put them down." Life changing advice for me. That is the Day School experience. Faculty and parents coming together in community for the betterment of the students. Everyone here knows us so well they work to make us all better. Over the next few months, many people will give you lots of advice. Listen. Take it to heart. They only offer advice because they care about you. Your diploma signifies that you are forever a part of a caring community.

Since leaving SDS I graduated from college in Virginia, worked in Washington, DC; South Carolina and North Carolina. With absolutely no planning or foresight I landed as a research and strategic planning consultant for travel destinations. That's right, through no plan I became a planning consultant. There's that ADHD again. My work, and some fun, okay a lot of fun, has taken me to all 50 states and I have had the thrill of visiting 45 countries. That's not even one-fourth of the 195 countries on our planet. And I want to visit as many as possible. I definitely want to visit every island in the Caribbean. Want to go? My advice to you...have goals in life.

By the way, I was twenty-six years old and in a bar in Greenville, SC when a colleague came up to me and said, "I'm leading a Rotary International business exchange group to Denmark for one month. It's an all-expense paid month long trip throughout Denmark. We leave tomorrow and one of our group dropped out today. We have to have one more business person on our five-person delegation. Want to go? If so, you will need a passport and a tuxedo." My advice to you...listen to your parents.

Mark Twain once said, "Travel is fatal to prejudice, bigotry, and narrow-mindedness, and many of our people need it sorely on these accounts. Broad, wholesome, charitable views of men and things cannot be acquired by vegetating in one little corner of the earth all one's lifetime." My work keeps me on the road. I travel about 65% of the year. It's how I continue my education and I challenge you to travel and expand your horizons. In my work, I have yet to find a place that I could not find something of interest. In fact, I am often stunned by the fascinating aspects of even the smallest, remotest town. And some of my best experiences came when a flight was canceled or a trip was rerouted. When other travelers are screaming at gate agents I'm on my phone making a new plan. Who knows what adventure awaits. A new and unexpected direction can lead to great experiences. Life is like that, it often goes off course. My advice to you...be determined to achieve your goals and adapt when the path before you shifts.

Okay, so one time my brother Ken called. He's an attorney and was on the Board of the American Bar Association at the time. He had an upcoming convention in London and his wife Cindy was unable to go due to a conflict with their daughter's cheerleading competition in Florida. Did I want to go to London with him for a lawyer's convention? He forgot to mention that one of the events was a formal

garden party at Buckingham Palace hosted by Her Britannic Majesty Queen Elizabeth II with most members of the royal family and diplomatic corps in attendance. WOW! Count me in. And then he said the magic words, "make sure your passport is up-to-date and there are lots of formal events so bring your tuxedo."

So where are we, travel a lot, constant learning, take advice from others, listen to your parents, mind your manners and always have formal wear and a passport. I want to leave you with one last story. When I graduated one of my gifts was a card with a message on it. That message summed up all that I learned here at the Day School and it put in perspective what Spartanburg means to me. I moved away after graduation and haven't lived in Spartanburg since, but it is home. I return to Spartanburg often and pick right up with the friends that I made here. Social media makes it easier to stay in touch. Some of my classmates are here today and we are going to lunch to catch up. It's as if the years melt away and we are here again in the Senior Courtyard.

That card that I mentioned was given to me by DR. and Mrs. Lyles. Dr. Lyles was a Spartanburg institution. He was our pediatrician who always went beyond medical care and took great interest in each of his patient's lives. He often gave advice far beyond the medicines needed to overcome influenza. That card was printed with a passage from the Book of Luke.

**"Much is required of those to whom much is given.**

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The Lyles gave that card to many people and through the years it has always been where I can see it daily. It is my reminder that much is required of me because I have

been given so much. I don't see the success that comes from hard work as an opportunity to just reward myself. Success should be paid forward. And the greatest success and satisfaction you will ever experience will come when you make a difference in just one person's life. And for that reason alone your parents and grandparents are particularly proud of you today.

With your graduation today you are part of a great legacy that comes from this caring, educational community. Many have gone before you and many more will follow. Wherever you go in life Spartanburg and the Day School will be with you. Spartanburg will always be home. I am paying the Lyle's gift forward by giving you all that card. I hope it will guide and ground you in life as it has guided me.

Speaking to you today has been a homecoming for me and the greatest honor of my life. I salute you Spartanburg Day School Class of 2019. Finis Coronat Opus. The end crowns the work. Job well done, now go forth and do great things. Godspeed in the journey that lies ahead!