

2003 Commencement

*Abstracts from the Commencement Speech, presented on June 6, 2003
in Parker Hall by Mrs. Veena Mehta Kapur, Class of 1949*



A PLACE OF SELF-DISCOVERY

As I walked up the aisle today, my thoughts went back to years ago when I graduated in Parker Hall. I never dreamt that so many years later I would be addressing a graduating class. I am indeed honoured and delighted to be here on this very important occasion – one which I am sure is filled with many emotions: Joy at having successfully completed one phase of your life, excitement and apprehension for what the future holds, and even sadness as you leave your school and friends.

So far you have had a protected life – living and learning in beautiful surroundings. From my personal experience, I can add that you are very fortunate to have studied in this unique school with its wonderful traditions – a school which has not only given you a good all-round education, but has also instilled in you many good values and principles which equip you very well for your future life.

The system of studies followed here is one which encourages you to think for yourself. This is achieved by learning through research and project work. My daughter, Devika, who is at the moment doing a Masters in Education in the States, remarked only the other day how grateful she was to Woodstock, which gave her the opportunity to explore and develop in a safe and tranquil environment. In her words, “Woodstock is a place where you can discover yourself – your goals and abilities.” This is what self-development is all about, I know from my personal experience that going through life, I have been able to face many situations with equanimity, having acquired the ability to think things through.

WHAT YOU HAVE GAINED

The school encourages hiking, trekking, nature studies and other outdoor activities, thus providing the opportunity to appreciate nature and the environment. In order to promote our social obligations, programs were introduced to uplift village communities around the school. Visits to leprosy and other charitable institutions were also organized. These underline the need for humanitarian work, which is very much in line with the Christian ethos of the school. This will also temper your entry into an increasingly materialistic world. Hopefully, each one of you will contribute by making our world a better place.

You have been living in an international community with students and teachers from all corners of the world, varied walks of life, and different religions. This interaction has provided you a global perspective and a better understanding of people and communities around the world. Globalisation has become a part of our lives. You have had the opportunity to experience this at first hand and consequently will be at ease in any part of the world and in any career you choose.

A HOME TO RETURN TO

Woodstock has a large family scattered all over the world and enjoys strong bonding with the school. Whenever you come back here, you will feel welcome and old associations will be revived. This bonding has been encouraged in the school which has a very active alumni office. We are also fortunate to have strong alumni associations in many parts of the world, particularly in America, where the majority of our alumni live. In recent years the alumni body in India is fast growing and becoming an effective association which I hope will have your active support. It is for each of you to bond with this family and feel confident that you are an integral part of it and can turn to it for help or support.

Alumni in their turn are very supportive of this movement by helping to upgrade school facilities and supporting the 150 year celebrations. You will be proud to know that those who have passed through the portals of Woodstock have responded generously, proof of which is evident as you walk around the school. I am very happy that my class, the

class of 1949, has contributed very generously in a number of areas, for example, the Hansen Field project, upgrading the Senior Staff lounge, and most recently the beautiful Health Center.

COMMENDATION AND BENEDICTION

You have been in Woodstock during a very eventful and exciting period in the history of the school when a lot of very positive changes have taken place under the dynamic leadership of your principal, Mr. Jeffery. I would also like to congratulate Dr. Prakash Masih (President of the Board) and the members of the Board of Directors for their hard work and broad vision for taking the school forward. As you go out into the world – go out with confidence that you are well prepared to meet challenges of today’s world and can make a positive contribution to humanity.

May you always boldly face the problems of life and know that any clouds will eventually give way to sunlight.

May you hold on to your dreams and keep them safe in your heart.

May you be blessed with the knowledge that you have the ability to make every day special.

May you never forget that the real treasures of life are your loved ones and friends.

May you know that you hold tomorrow in your hands.

God bless you.

Veena Mehta Kapur graduated from Woodstock in the Class of '49, having spent five years at the school. Her Intermediate Level education was at Isabella Thoburn College, Lucknow. She went on to study at Miranda House, Delhi University, where she obtained a B.A (Hons) in English Literature. Veena Mehta Kapur now runs a successful international garments and accessories company, Sonali, which trades under the famous "Monsoon" brand name. She has received numerous entrepreneurship awards including Woman Entrepreneur of the Year 2001 (Punjab-Haryana Chamber of Commerce) and - on several occasions - the Special Award for Outstanding Performance as Woman Entrepreneur of the Year (Delhi State). Her two children both attended Woodstock: Devika, Class of 1989 and Arjun, Class of 1994.

Baccalaureate

At Woodstock School's Baccalaureate Service on June 5th, the Class of 2003 listened to the words of Rev. Thsespal Zhiwa Kundan. Rev. Kundan is a well-known individual both in and around Woodstock. He and his wife, Susa, have had long associations with the school as parents, friends of the school, and supporters of the local community. Their son, Shalomel Kundan, joined Woodstock's Grade Three in 1993 and graduated as a proud member of the Class of 2003. Their daughter Charisma is also a current Woodstock student.

Rev. Kundan was born in Kashmir and brought up in Ladakh. He completed his ICS at Wynberg Allen, Mussorie, and he traveled to the United Kingdom to finish his schooling at Christ College, Cambridge. His studies continued at Cambridge Univeristy, and he completed his post graduate certificate in Education in 1978. After further study in Theology at the Moravian Theological Seminary in the United States, Rev. Kundan became an ordained minister. In recent years, he has served at the Moravian Church and the Institute in Dehra Dun both as Vice Principal and Principal.

Rev. Kundan is a well-known and respected member of Dehra Dun Administration's Task Force on Environment and Sanitation. He is the Vice President of the Council Schools Association in Dehra Dun and also serves as the President of the Christian Solidarity Society in Dehra Dun.

Basing his thoughts on the story of the Rich Young Ruler in Mark's gospel, Rev. Kundan urged graduating students to search for true riches.

A 'LETTER' FROM MRS. SUSAN DOWNS, CLASS OF 1978

Dear class of 2003,

Wow! I cannot believe I am now speaking to you in Parker Hall for you Baccalaureate Service. I feel honored and very nervous at the same time. I have chosen to speak to you in the form of this letter. On stage I have always felt more comfortable when I had something to read. This paranoia probably comes from those times I thoroughly messed up my end of the semester piano evaluations here as a student. I would feel confident about my piece and walk in without my music score and then get so nervous in the middle of playing that I would forget the piece. Of course, on reflection, I know I would have messed up anyway, with or without my sheet music, as I wasn't a very serious music student. When teaching in the classroom, as many of you have experienced and heard about, I never needed something to read to my students. In fact, many of you had to live through a variety of on the moment "lectures" on a variety of topics. Have no fear – I will not take this occasion to offer you my last lecture.

As you leave Woodstock and reflect on your time here, immediately or in years to come, I am confident that you will realize what an incredible community you have been a part of. Yes, there have been annoying administrators, teachers, dorm parents, classmates and other schoolmates. You have even *hated* some of these administrators and your teachers, dorm parents, classmates and schoolmates. Hate, of course, is a strong word – and even very close to love. Both involve very intense emotions. These same emotions exist wherever you go. But what you will come to realize, and what you will miss when you leave this place, is that sense that people really care about what you have to say and how you are doing. I remember when I first left Woodstock and went to college and learned quickly that people really didn't want to know how you were doing when they politely asked, "How are you doing?" It took time before I found there were people who cared.

As you leave Mussoorie, I encourage you to keep in touch with your classmates and other Woodstock alumni. They will always be there for you. At WOSA Tea the other day, you heard Sakshi's father, Vinay, in his role as Co-Chairperson of WOSA-India offer you to accept an open invitation. Woodstock alumni are like family, just a phone call away. Sometimes that phone call is made just to hear a familiar voice and know that they will listen.

I am so happy that I made the decision to not only come for your graduation but also spend the last month with you. Thank you for generously sharing some of your time with me. I am very proud of each and every one of you. I wish you all the best and God's blessings as you leave this place. Wherever in the world I am in the years to come, please consider my home as yours, as well. And perhaps as the years go by you will see me more as a friend and less as a teacher.

With lots of love,

Ms. Downs

YAHOO! Groups

The alumni web forum, initiated in early 2003 by Jane Downs Wallbrown '52, networks over 200 alumni across generations and geographical barriers. Its main purpose is to connect recent graduates with other alumni and to help them in any way possible. We invite alumni of all ages to join the site. If you are interested in joining, please contact wsalumni@yahoo.com

Graduating Class of 2003



Back row Mr. John Paulraj; Sumir Ganguly; Karan Madhok; Dhondup Dorji Roder; Tenzing Gaphela Shrestha; Saurabh Niraula; Pradeep de Noronha; Rahul Agarwal; Shalomel Yoseb Thsetan Kundan; Tenzin Jigme Sadutshang; Le Duc Pham; Mr. Dale Seefeldt **Fourth row** Jason Coleman; Oswin Joseph; Mark Vincent Thyle; Vivek Vig; Bibek Gurung; Jang Bae Moon; Tsering Lama; Kshitij Chawla; Mr. Ajay Mark; Sherry Masih; Ashwini Kumar Todi; Sonjoy Kumar Singhi; Mr. John Montgomery **Third row** Charles George Marwa Waitara; Adhish Rajkarnikar; Imlisanen Aier; Jigme Tshering; Reuben Chimed Gergan; B. Arun Marcus Daniel; Manasi Bhatte; Bonnie Rachel Lutz; Kyong Joo Shin; Karina Echols; Mrs. Noeline Mangalwadi; Mrs. Dot Wildman; Shivika Sinha **Second row** Chan Young Choi; Palden Dorjee; Maya John; Tenzin Namdol Chophel; Sheena Uppal; Ayesha Angeline Paul; Rongsentula Pongen; Akiko Morimoto; Natasha Kapur; Moajungla Longkumer; Kavita B. Mandaliya; Beth McAleer; Ja Eun Lee; Reeti Khare; Donna Pinto; Ms. Shonila Chander **First row** Ms. Kathy Hoffmann; Pauravi Patel; Tshering Choden; Florence L. Joute; Melody Lalengmawii; Keunzang Doma; Choni Tenzin; Sakshi Mehra; Helen Provotorova; Ishita Kaul; Ayla Olivia Pariyar; Imlimerenla Imkong; Shefali Saldanha; Lara Kanga; Yun Kyuong Ryu; Jae Hee Shim; Na Rae Kim; Surabhi Pudasaini; Ji Hye Choi **Not pictured** Daniela W. Bhutia; Eun Bee Cho; Sonam Chungyalpa; Shihoko Kanemoto; Tsokye Tsomo Karchung; Thangjemgun Kipgen; Rachel Siedzeleu Lungalang; Onchu Namgyal; Priyanka Patel; Talina Jennifer Alais Rush; Michael Dorje Schick; Ernest Tandon; Nanako Yamamuro; Sonam Yangki; Hyun Woo Yun

Valedictory Speech

By Manasi Bhate – Class of 2003

So, this is the end...or is it? Twelve long, challenging years of study, twelve fruitful, care-free years of friendship, twelve of the most memorable years end in a split second.

I remember standing in front of the lyre tree near the health center and watching the sun set through the maze of its branches. The deep, red ball slowly sank into the mountains. It was a breathtaking sight. A gentle breeze swayed the leaves and a tiny pinecone fell into my hands.

We resemble these pinecones. Renegades...Class of 2003...the fruits of a long-standing tradition called Woodstock. Nurtured in its rich and vibrant culture, sheltered by the branches of its love and care –

these branches of love and friendship are deeply entwined. Conditioned by shared moments of happiness and sorrow, conflict and harmony, bound by years of togetherness, the relationships we have here are forever. So that even though the tree sways in the wind, the wind can never break it.

On these strong branches hang the fruits. Nourished and protected by the leaves till they are ripe. To all our teachers, who have touched our lives and enriched them with invaluable knowledge and experience – thank you for your time and effort. Woodstock wouldn't be the same without you.

And finally, the gardeners – our parents who, in spite of everything, have loved and

supported us. Who have sacrificed so much for us and have given us this opportunity to be at Woodstock. Though we don't say it often enough, thank you.

The fruit is ripe now. The tree has seen it through its years as a bud blooming into a flower and finally into a fruit. The time has come for it to break off the tree and disperse. To spread its seeds all around the world. To give back to this world all that it has absorbed from it. To make a difference.

We are Renegades...we are different...we are talented...we can make a difference. The sun may seem to set behind the lyre tree, but it will rise tomorrow. This is not the end. Renegades, I'll see you when you get there.

Salutatory Speech

By Reeti Khare – Class of 2003

Good morning, and on behalf of the Class of 2003, I would like to say welcome to you all. I can see so many proud mums and dads just beaming with happiness. I can see mine right over there, too.

I'm sure you parents remember the first time you sat in the audience to watch your cute little kid as a Munchkin in the school play. And I'm sure you also remember how your little sweetheart suddenly saw you in the audience, picked up her skirts for the entire world to see, and yelled, "Hi, Mommy! Look at me!"

If you really think about it, today is really not so different from back then. Your cute little kid is still sitting up on stage saying, "Look everybody! Look how I've made it!"

Time has passed, but the little kid in us hasn't changed too much. I mean – come

on, you guys, you know Shalomel Kundan still sleeps with his teddy bear.

Yet something in us *has* changed. For example, picture yourself in middle school having "FOBO" pants instead of "FUBU" ones. Or imagine the teasing you would get if you were caught having a Reebok bag with a Nike logo. Nowadays, we still want to fit in, but things like brand names just don't seem to matter anymore.

Changes such as these are inevitable – they will happen in any school. Woodstock, however, has given us something extra. Of course, we have our favorite Woodstock family, and here all of the students learn to fight their own battles and find their own niche. Take Kong Joo Shin, for example. She came to Woodstock as an ESL student, and two days ago she won a writing pin.

There are a thousand other examples, but today I can only give you glimpses of our precious Woodstock moments, because the entire experience is a privilege that only the eighty of us have had. No matter where we go, we will carry Woodstock with us. We will think of Saturday afternoons spent in the bazaar or on the Edgehill basketball court – which is now low enough for any of us to make a slam dunk. Or maybe we will think of the "Wild Ones" in Middle School and how even Ms. Downs had to run through an obstacle course to join. Or even of how Rachel Lungalag can see a cloth mouse and *still* scream.

So many wonderful memories make it hard to leave this place. But, hey - there is one upside! As we return to Woodstock in future years to visit the school as adults and alumni, we'll now have the privilege of calling all of our former teachers by their first names. Just try to imagine – Mr. Jeffery will become *Dave!*



Woodstock on the Web

<http://www.woodstock.ac.in>

For more information or comments contact development@woodstock.ac.in