

Ashish Patel, The Heritage School, Class of 2009 Salutatorian

Author Marianne Williamson once said, “Our deepest fear is not that we are inadequate. Our deepest fear is that we are powerful beyond measure. It is our light, not our darkness, that most frightens us. We ask ourselves, who am I to be brilliant, gorgeous, talented, fabulous? Actually, who are you not to be? Your playing small does not serve the world. There is nothing enlightened about shrinking so that other people won't feel insecure around you. We are all meant to shine, as children do. It is not just in some of us; it is in everyone. And, as we let our own light shine, we unconsciously give other people permission to do the same. As we are liberated from our own fear, our presence automatically liberates others.”

These words could not better suit a group of individuals than the Heritage School's Class of 2009. While some of us have spent our entire academic careers at Heritage, others have recently joined us. Whether your Heritage experience has been long or short, each one of our graduating seniors has contributed something special to this year's class. Class of 2009, we are a truly unique group of individuals. We are a class of musicians, athletes, intellectuals, artists, leaders, hunters, dreamers, doers, and so much more. In the immortal words of Thomas Edison, "If we do the things we are capable of, we will astound ourselves."

There is an inscription in the tomb of the great Egyptian Pharaoh Tutankhamen. It reads, “I have seen yesterday. I know tomorrow.” It is therefore fitting that I take this opportunity to delve into the past and recall some of the class of 2009's most memorable

moments.

As much fun as we have all had on past interim trips, our fun always seemed to go hand in hand with disaster. I remember the time, in sixth grade, when Edward Loughlin stepped on a sacred Native American stone at Kanuga and became convinced that he had cursed us all to die. Or, the following year, at Pigeon Mountain, when everyone came packed for sunny weather, only to face the wrath of Mother Nature—rain, hail, sleet, and even snow. Thankfully, Ms. Gail Jones made the difficult decision to leave Godforsaken Pigeon Mountain early. However, her decision did not go over well with Trey Jones. To protest, Trey went into a cave and refused to leave, claiming he wanted to be one with nature. We survived that trip and are here today preparing to graduate.

As a class, we have had many shining moments. Class of 2009, we are not only defined by our camaraderie, but also by our competitiveness. The word ‘competitive’ has always been closely associated with our class. I remember when we were in lower school, and recess consisted entirely of our arguing over the teams rather than playing the actual games. And then there was the all-important ‘mile run’ during P.E., which reigned supreme when it came to your bragging rights. I remember one time when Hanson Powell, the king of the mile, was absent, and Elizabeth Ginn came out of nowhere to win the race. To this day she still reminds us of her victory. Perhaps she should have become a runner.

And so I conclude my remarks by saying to my fellow graduates, when you leave this place and start preparing for the next stage in your lives, remember all that you have learned from your teachers, family, and friends over the years and strive for greatness. The late Jim Valvano said it best when he said, “Don’t give up. Don’t ever give up.”

Class of 2009, your moment will come. When it does, seize it! Go forth from this time and place to find a cause worthy of your special gifts and leave this world a better place than you found it because, in the final analysis, your future is what you make of it. Thank you.