

Class President Speech – May 20, 2023

By Kathy Hughes standing in for Jerri Barrett

The Class of '83 arrived in 1979 for Orientation and our first convocation with President Elizabeth Kennan, class of 1960, welcoming us with eloquent words and a graceful turn of phrase, alternately inspiring pride in attending the same school, and the urge to run to a dictionary. We were referred to then as Uncommon Women, and exhorted to meet the Challenge to Excel.

As the “Tween” Generation bridging the Boomers and Gen X, we were embracing old traditions and developing new traditions: elfing, Junior Big Sisters, Senior Hazing, voting on co-ed bathrooms, the bell desk, M&Cs, waitressed dinner in the dorms, Gracious Dining (occasionally), High Tea; Mountain Day, Founders’ Day and Deacon Porter’s Hat; Winter Term, self-scheduled exams. We celebrated everything with ice cream. We studied in Smokers, had Primal Screams, and resurrected Pangynaskeia.

South Hadley enriched our life off-campus as well with Chanticleer, the C.I., Woodbridges, and The Odyssey (only one of which remains).

The 5-College bus was our lifeline to Northampton and Amherst as we explored our lives off-campus.

We weren't insulated from the influences of pop-culture and the world around us: Animal House and Rocky Horror transformed our parties, Disco and Punk Rock gave way to the New Wave, all changed by MTV and music videos. We followed Luke and Laura on General Hospital, wondered who shot JR, and saw the finale of MASH. We watched Lady Diana marry Prince Charles, we followed the election returns when Regan was elected, and were later shocked when he was shot; and we mourned the untimely and tragic death of John Lennon.