

## **Suzanne Corbet Thomas '62**

Remarks

Skidmore College's 101<sup>st</sup> Commencement

May 19, 2012

President Glotzbach, distinguished guests, fellow Trustees, faculty, families, friends, and, most of all, members of the Class of 2012,

I am so honored to be speaking to you on this the day of your graduation, and also, the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of my own graduating class!

Commencement day is always a glorious day in Saratoga Springs. The air is filled with many emotions. There is most certainly a sense of accomplishment. But generous portions of love, affection, thankfulness, and maybe even some relief, are also in great abundance.

The presence of family, siblings and friends serves to magnify the excitement and happiness of this very special day.....perhaps best captured by the overall feeling of pride that is everywhere. Do enjoy every single moment of this very special day.

As I reflect on my Skidmore experience and the impact it has had on the 50 ensuing years of my life, I vividly recall my first days on campus.

I had no plan scoped out. I actually had never even been on the campus. I had no confidence that college would work out well.

But without question, as my four years unfolded, I increasingly sensed the value of the education I was receiving. Importantly, I also gained increasing self confidence that with that education I was going to do just fine after graduation.

Some things I learned at Skidmore seemed insignificant at the time, but proved more so later, and other things I recognized immediately as highly significant.

Our professors were very wise. Early on, perhaps in one of my first classes, we were told that when we went to Dartmouth for the weekend we should be sure to pack a jar of peanut butter.

That same professor four years later, as we were about to graduate, advised "if there is ever an euthanasia committee, make sure you get on it". Who knows where I would be today without those pearls of wisdom.

More seriously, the liberal arts education that you have received--always with the very special "Skidmore Brand" sprinkled over everything you have experienced here--has given you, as it did me, the tools to create and celebrate your uniqueness.

Importantly, it has given you the self confidence to pause and listen to your own voice. With that self confidence guided by that inner voice, you can "unleash" who you are.

Listen to that “unique” voice. That’s where your strength lies. Follow it and make a life that matters.

Your Skidmore education makes you special and different from the person next to you. Embrace that difference with confidence.

Be confident your Skidmore liberal arts education will serve you well. It will help you face the inevitable challenges ahead.

You will think in broader terms.

You will work well in groups.

You will contemplate issues from all points of view.

You will learn from history

and you will face the realities of life on a rational and ethical basis.

With that Skidmore self confidence you have gained, you can “think big” and, in the words of Steve Jobs, “make a dent in the universe.”

You will feel comfortable with change and welcome its consequences.

I remember so well the words of advice of Eleanor Roosevelt who visited the campus in my senior year. Skidmore would arrange for well known speakers to come to campus and not only address the entire student body but also engage the students in smaller lively group discussions in the evening.

During one such discussion in which I was privileged to participate. Mrs. Roosevelt said – and I paraphrase: “We live in perplexing and troubling times. You have your entire life ahead of you. With your education you have the tools to make a difference. Be confident you can make a difference and go do it.”

Well, not much has changed. We, indeed still live in perplexing and troubling times. What was true then, is true now. That Skidmore education has given you the capability to make a difference and the self confidence to go do it.

Congratulations to you as well as your families and friends who have supported you throughout this very important part of your life.

I wish each of you happiness and satisfaction.

May your affection for Skidmore, like mine, be with you forever.