

Lasallian Commencement Address

May 1993

Presented by: Allison Beltramini

Brother James, Board of Trustees, distinguished guests, faculty, staff, parents and my fellow graduates. It is on this day of jubilation that we celebrate the next step to our futures-graduation. We have spent many long hours preparing for this moment- whether working toward a bachelor's or master's degree. At last, the time has arrived. Be honored and feel proud!

There is an old inspirational saying that says, "Children need two things... roots and wings." First we need roots, a solid base so that we may grow to our fullest extent. Parents have played a vital role in the development of our roots from which we have been able to grow over the course of our lives. Long ago and even during our time at Lewis, our parents have worked to give us "good" roots. They raised us to know right from wrong, to take chances, and not to be afraid. With their help, we have been able to establish the roots we will need to survive. Through love and support, they have watched the roots they nurtured grow. So, to all parents who have sacrificed and invested in our growth, especially my own, thank you.

Lewis has also helped to develop our roots. Being at a school founded on the principles of St. John Baptist De La Salle makes us among the fortunate few. St. De La Salle's teaching of faith, service and community and also his commitment to education are easily seen in daily life at Lewis.

The University's commitment to faith is apparent with the presence of University Ministry through the various events and services they offer, including the Kiononia retreat program which I have been privileged to be a part of. I firmly believe that the retreat was the one thing that brought me out of my shell when I first transferred to Lewis two years ago. Participating in the retreat and then being chosen as the director of the retreat were both very positive experiences in which I was I was able to explore my faith and develop friendships that will always be priceless to me. Faith can be found around every corner at Lewis – and it is found most often where one would least expect it. Take for instance, and I think that each of us at

some point have experienced this, finding faith and religion right before a test we weren't quite ready for, or praying to the IBM God when the computer screen suddenly went blank, clearing a twenty page term paper due within the hour. In order to reach this moment in our lives, I think we have all seen faith work in mysterious ways.

Some of my most memorable and rewarding experiences have been doing service through Lewis. The best experience was a trip to Mexico in which I worked in a poverty stricken mission area. That opportunity changed my life in more ways than one. Not only did I meet my fiancée on that trip, but I also had the opportunity to work with people in teaching religion, taking a census, and worshipping with them. I would not have been afforded such a magnificent opportunity if I was not at a Christian Brothers' School. I know other students have had equally positive experiences serving the needy at the AIDS ministry of Illinois, the Daybreak homeless shelter, and in fact 8 students just left day to do community service in Appalachia.

The Lewis Community, as a whole, is a diverse one. And it is through this diversity that we are able to grow stronger. There are many smaller communities that contribute to student life here. The theater and fine arts department provide a sense of community in their various productions. With all their long hours spent working on play and recitals, how could they not grow together as a community?

The various athletic teams also are individual communities in which people work and compete together, and due to a freak blizzard in Florida over Spring Break, got to spend extra time bonding.

There are other aspects that contribute to community here at Lewis that we might take for granted. Think of how our time at Lewis would have been different if we could have had a different group of friends, a different set of faculty, staff and administrators. I cannot imagine being a resident assistant without the friendship of Rodney, Vivian, Evette, Tyrone, and Toni, the members of my staff. They have made some of the tough times that college life can bring a little easier. Thanks guys!

The quality of education at Lewis can be more fully appreciated now that we all have gone through the trying and challenging experiences of working toward our own personal degree built on desire, determination and the will to succeed. I'm sure there were times that each of us felt as if our efforts would be in vain. Yet, we are here today. We were all able to persevere and make it happen.

Thus, with the roots our parents have established, Lewis has strengthened us with and awareness of faith, service and community through quality education. In having the aviation program here at Lewis, it makes sense that this institution would also give us our wings. Just witness the Harold White Aviation Center under construction. This is just one example of how Lewis has helped to give us the wings we will need to soar through the rest of our lives. And, indeed, we all have developed wings - literally for aviations majors and figuratively for the rest of us. All of us, as graduates of Lewis, are ready to try our wings – in the careers for which we have prepared and as citizens who have learned to think critically and make an impact in our society. And so, to my fellow graduates, I wish each of you good luck as you test your wings on the course you will navigate to the rest of your lives. Thank you.