

Jim Malone
Convocation Address
September 5, 2021

Good afternoon. I'd like to speak to all current members of the student body here at Mercersburg. Parents, colleagues, and alums, you can listen in. I'm going to talk about former Mercersburg students and what they are currently doing or have done since graduating. My hope is that this information may give you some idea of what wonderful and amazing things you may accomplish after your time here. The people I mention were all once sitting out there in the seats that you occupy now. If I get a few specific details wrong, I hope the folks involved will forgive me. So, here goes:

John Henry, who I had the pleasure of working with in both football and Physics about 30 years ago, went on to become an all-conference defensive back at Bucknell, then got his MBA, and then went on to become a highly successful entrepreneur in the world of finance. He found, however, that although he had lots of money and material goods, he was not satisfied and that there had to be ways to give back to help others who were less fortunate than him. He came to appreciate that there were many communities in the U.S. where people did not have anywhere near enough Internet access. He gave up his career in finance and formed an organization that brings quality Internet access to underserved communities. He found a way to help others.

Tonya Rutherford helped to found our Black Student Union 30 years ago. After graduating from Johns Hopkins in the mid '90s, she went on to become a highly successful lawyer with Verizon. She leads a legal team that helps Verizon to negotiate contracts with big players such as Disney and Fox.

Taylor Philips, my former advisee who was in TREK, our whitewater canoeing and rock climbing program, founded his own eco-tour business in Jackson, WY. He takes clients on trips around Grand Teton and Yellowstone National Parks to see the fantastic wildlife in those areas. He also takes clients to Patagonia. He once hiked the Appalachian Trail.

Jessica Boyatt and **Julia MacInnis**, who both graduated from Mercersburg in the '80s, went on to great careers at Brown and Indiana University of Pennsylvania, respectively. They both became highly successful commercial photographers, after learning about photography while here at Mercersburg. When they got into their 40s, they began to realize that although commercial photography was fun and lucrative, they both felt that there was more out there and that there had to be ways to reach out and help those less fortunate than themselves. Jessica went back to school and got a PhD in counseling. She is now a counselor in the Boston area, helping those with mental health issues. Julia went back to school to become a nurse, and she now does nursing in northern Virginia.

Madi McConnell Reynolds was a student in my Hawk and Owl Biology class back in 2006. She was also a 12-varsity letter winner as an athlete. She went to Cornell and majored in Ornithology, I believe. Since leaving there in 2011, she has spent her whole career trapping,

marking, and studying wild animals in the field. She is currently a research diver for the state of Alaska, studying fish, shellfish, and other animal and plant populations.

Nikki Hyrkas Moyle, who I got to know when she was in my precalculus class about 10 years ago, is a Navy helicopter pilot. She flies a MH-60 Romeo, the Navy version of a Blackhawk Helicopter. She and her crew specialize in anti-submarine and anti-surface craft work.

Clay Tettlebach, who I got to know through coaching football here 42 years ago, went on to a long and successful career as a Navy fighter pilot. He came back to give a brown bag lunch talk a few years back about his experiences as a pilot. When he and I talked, it was just like old times. As I listened to him talk to the students, I realized that it was students like Clay who were so friendly, so welcoming, and made me feel so comfortable and accepted here right away that I couldn't help but fall in love with this place when I started working here 42 years ago.

Christian Jetter, my physics student last year, wants to become a military pilot someday. Having taught many students who went on to become military pilots, I have no doubt that Christian will succeed in that endeavor.

Benji Cantera just completed Marine Corps Officer Candidate School at Quantico, Virginia. He is starting his senior year at Babson College.

Larissa and Brechyn Chace are professional musicians.

Paul Rutherford and **Lauren Dobish** are professional photographers in Boston.

Charlie Bell gave up a lucrative career on Wall Street to take two years off and run around the perimeter of the U.S.

So, when I am asked what makes Mercersburg so special, I always respond by saying that it is the relationships that students develop with other students and with the adults in our community while they are here. We do this really well as a community. You can't measure this or quantify it with a number in a spreadsheet. In fact, I would propose that the things that we do best as an institution can't be measured with numbers. They are about the quality and depth of relationships between people, about developing a passion for learning and for understanding the world, and about acquiring a desire to make the world a better place.

I believe **Ryan Southworth** became an Army Ranger after leaving Mercersburg. His specialty as a Ranger was rock climbing, a skill that he learned here as a member of our outdoor program. How'd you like to serve your country and get paid to go rock climbing every day? That was not a bad gig! He is now an aviation electronics technician for the U.S. Marine Corps.

Mark Herring is a dentist. When he was here, he developed a love of the Spanish language. He now uses his Spanish-speaking ability to provide critical dental service to underserved

Spanish-speaking members of the migrant-farmer community in North Carolina. What an impressive way to combine two different passions.

John Russell owns his own restaurant in Bellingham, WA.

Russ Spinney teaches history in Ojai, CA.

Tom Donley teaches science at Sidwell Friends School in D.C. He has also served as science department head.

Jessica Peterson teaches middle school science in Florida, I believe.

Katie Miller is an administrative assistant at an elementary school in Vermont. She is going back to school at NYU this fall because she wants to become a school counselor.

Dean Patterson, who graduated in the early 70s, spent his career as associate dean for student affairs at Case Western Reserve University.

Beth Gore is a radiation oncologist, specializing in the treatment of lung cancers. She lives in Wisconsin, working at both a private hospital and with the Wisconsin Veterans' Administration.

Jeremy McGarvey is a pediatric heart surgeon in Philadelphia.

Mike Best is a doctor in the Air Force.

Paige Harry runs marathons, a hobby she picked up from my wife, not from me. She is also an EMT. She graduated from medical school about a year ago and is currently a resident physician at a hospital on the strip in Las Vegas. Oh, and she is also a captain in the Air Force. That's pretty impressive!

Alyson McKee Humphreys is a physician's assistant who does orthopedic surgery near Winchester, VA.

Steve Bannerot is a diving coach and personal trainer in the state of Washington.

Jenn Hendrickson does emergency preparedness work for the Mass General hospital system.

Rachael Hendrickson works in computer software marketing.

So, when I came for an interview here in June of 1979—the last day that I shaved, by the way—I was interviewed by Head of School Walter Burgin and math department chair Dave Tyson. Many people are struck by the beauty of the campus when they first come here. I was struck, however, by how friendly and accepting the people were. I went to a very good public high school in Swarthmore, PA, outside of Philadelphia, so I had no idea about boarding

schools and how they work. I just assumed they were for millionaires' kids or juvenile delinquents, or some combination of the two. I immediately found that Mercersburg students are really nice, accepting, normal, unpretentious high school kids. They go on to do amazing things. Walter Burgin told me that day forty-two years ago that he could pay me \$7,000 a year and that I could live in the dorm and eat in the dining hall. I thought "Holy Cow! I've hit the jackpot! That's twice as much money as I'm making working at a restaurant in Philly. Where do I sign up?"

Shawn Meyers is a district judge right here in Franklin County, PA.

Missy Ryan is a reporter for *The Washington Post*.

Pattie Rennert is a production line manager at the Porsche factory in Weissach, Germany.

Rich Pastorius is a steel worker in Colorado Springs. He uses the skills he learned in Outdoor Programs here in his courageous volunteer work with the Colorado Springs Search and Rescue team. Rich has also done two tours of duty in Iraq and is about to begin another.

Tim Hitchens was a community organizer in Philadelphia.

Jennifer Nelson is a professional dancer in NYC.

Katie Vickers is a professional dancer in Belgium.

Kevin Harris is a basketball coach in Washington, DC.

Will Scott is a risk-assessment specialist for a commodities brokerage firm.

Folake Okunsanya, my student from last year, wants to study economics and film. I am fully confident that she will be successful at whatever she does. Perhaps she'll get to work with Will Scott someday.

Jessica Malone is a hydrogeologist. She works with underground water flow and she helps to clean up toxic worksites all over the US and around the world. Jessica has also run numerous marathons, and even a 50-mile race in Leadville, CO. I wonder who she got that from, me or my wife?

Molly Malone is an anthropologist who works with First Nations Tribes in Canada. She helps them to negotiate the intricacies of dealing with the Canadian government, oil companies, and other utilities over hunting, fishing, trapping, and water rights. She also helps them to document their tribal history and to maintain their traditional lifestyle in a modern and rapidly changing world.

Ian McClintick is a mining engineer in Utah.

Chris McClintick is director of communications for US Squash.

Brendan McClintick has been teaching squash and doing academic work with inner-city youth in Hartford, CT. He is about to become assistant squash coach for both the womens' and the mens' teams at Bowdoin College in Maine.

Greg Larson is a civil engineer in Australia.

Ben Larson is an assistant football coach at the University of Central Florida.

Wynn Stephens-Holzwarth is a financial planner at Prudential in Baltimore.

Zach Stephens-Holzwarth is chief of operations at an agricultural firm in California.

Cam Rogers works in a food design lab.

Anika Kempe is assistant director of marketing for the UVA student health center.

Stefan Kempe is a YouTube content writer for the app Runescape.

Antonia Kempe is majoring in environmental studies and leadership at the University of Richmond.

Michael Betkowski is studying economics and classics.

Maggie Betkowski hopes to become a doctor. When Maggie was a student here she realized there were people living close by that don't have anywhere near as much as we all do here at the Academy. She started a fundraiser on her own and raised \$11,000 in one week. The money was split equally between three local homeless shelters and a food pantry. Not bad, Maggie!

So, what do I wish for all of you as students? My main wish is that all of you all find some intellectual topic, anything, that fascinates you so much that you want to study it and learn about it for the rest of your lives. For me those areas have been Evolutionary Biology and Modern Physics. Trapping and banding migrating hawks and owls is one of my hobbies. What a great way to engage in my passion for both Evolutionary Biology and Physics. Some of you will develop those interests while you are here, but that is not necessary for you to have a rich intellectual life. You may find your passion in college, or afterwards, but it is my sincere hope that you all get to experience the intellectual pleasure, the intellectual buzz, that comes from engaging deeply with a truly interesting and sophisticated idea.

Dean Hosgood is very busy these days in his important work as an epidemiologist.

Mary DiLalla, who graduated a few years ago, is studying to be a marine biologist at the University of Tampa in Florida.

John Lawrence spent his career as an astrophysicist, studying our sun, at Cal State Northridge. One of our Physics labs is named in his honor.

Johnny Mancini is an engineer in Boston.

Tes Myrie is working on his PhD in Forestry.

Benicio Del Toro, my old point guard, is an Oscar-winning movie actor. He's also one of the nicest people I have ever known.

Rebecca Lowe is an international soccer analyst for NBC Sports. She also worked recently as a host for NBC at the Tokyo Olympics.

Michael Davies is one of the hosts of "Men In Blazers," a well-known TV show and podcast about international soccer.

Kathryn Clark Furtado is a federal prosecutor for the Department of Justice. She specializes in the criminal prosecution of child and adult sex abuse crimes and human trafficking. Wow, is that important work!

Laken Lynch is an attorney specializing in family law and child protection cases.

Chris Balaban was one of the funniest, and perhaps the most argumentative students that I ever taught or coached. He is now a lawyer in Baltimore.

Jenny Bell did an internship in Communications with Megan Mallory, who works in our Communications Department.

Emily Bell is majoring in Creative Writing and East Asian Studies.

Kip Hawbaker does finance work for a bank.

Kyle Hawbaker works in a brewery.

So, while you are currently a Mercersburg student, what should you do to make the most of your precious time here? Get involved in as many things as you can. Dance, Music, Theatre, Athletics, Rock Climbing, Paddling, hiking, backpacking, Newspaper, Yearbook; the options are almost endless. I encourage you to approach your academic work with enthusiasm and passion. Learn to understand your own learning style. Develop good intellectual habits. Become a life-long learner. Become an informed and respectful skeptic. Learn to not let your mistakes bother you or to slow you down. You, the students, ARE after all, Mercersburg Academy. Use your time here wisely. Oh, yes! And one more thing: Have fun!!

Will Hamilton runs a winery in Oregon. Will was my advisee and I can assure you that that's an occupation that suits his personality perfectly.

My old advisee **Bob Snyder** is the West Coast PR representative and event coordinator for Red Bull Inc.

Ann Sontheimer is the lead whitewater kayaking instructor at the Nantahala Outdoor Center in NC, one of the best paddling schools in the country.

Matt Jackson does commercial real estate in NYC. He also builds and drives his own race cars. Sometimes he even lets me help him.

Annaliese Cantera is starting at the College of Charleston this fall. She hopes to study business and commercial real estate. Perhaps she'll get to work with Matt Jackson someday.

Katie Keller does finance work for Morgan Stanley in Baltimore.

John Huang is working on a Ph.D. in chemistry at Yale.

Matthew Tavarez, my Honors Physics student last year, is leaning towards nuclear physics as a field of study.

Emma Maurer is studying dance.

Will Maurer is studying to be a mechanical engineer.

Dean Patterson is a second lieutenant in the Army.

Kat Patterson is studying public policy and public health. She may end up working for the NAACP.

Mia Patterson works at a child care center in Lancaster. She is developing her own blog.

Shayna Rice does human resources work in Virginia.

Madison Nordyke works in both human resources and tech recruitment.

I was **Julie Stojak Maurer's** precalculus teacher when she was an 11th grader here. She was also in the outdoor program with me. As associate head of school for school life, she is now one of my bosses.

Jen Miller Smith was also in TREK, our outdoor program when she was in 11th grade here. As her instructor I got to teach her a bit of whitewater canoeing and lots of rock climbing. As dean of academics here she is now one of my bosses.

Stacie Rice Lissette was a student of mine back in the mid 80's. As president of the Board of Regents, she is now one of my bosses.

In case you've lost count, that is three female former students of mine who are now my bosses. That shows you how much progress I have made in my career here. I am justifiably proud of all three of them, but I also try to remember that any of them could fire me if I annoy them enough.

Phoebe Moore Miller, a former student of mine from the Class of 2013, just started working in our Admissions Office. I don't think Phoebe can fire me yet, but give her some time.

Bryan Morgan is one of our awesome music teachers. I worked with him in both Physics and Football when he was a PG here. Sorry, Bryan. You didn't make the list above because you're not female and you can't fire me. Yet.

So, I have had the good fortune to spend my whole life as a part of three great academic institutions. My parents moved to Swarthmore, PA, in 1954 because they knew how good the public schools were there. My experience in Swarthmore, from nursery school to senior year of high school, was absolutely fantastic. I wouldn't trade it for any school in the world. I went on to the University of Michigan, where I once again had a wonderful and amazing experience. I have been working at Mercersburg for 42 years, an amazing and life-changing experience in every way. I am fully aware of how fortunate I have been and how much it has enriched my life to be a part of those three great institutions. You all have the good fortune to be part of this great academic community. I hope that you can come to fully appreciate that fact.

Drew Trostle, who was in my physics class last year, wants to become either a mechanical or an agricultural engineer.

Donovan Dowling will be studying Physics at Drew University.

Felix Alonso-Valenteen has a Ph.D. in Biological Sciences. He is doing postdoctoral research in LA.

Sean Sweeney is a chef in Massachusetts.

Megan Sweeney works in marketing and communications at Peddie School.

Shelby Hoffman works for an organization that helps people to earn their doctorates online.

Dane Hoffman is a supervisor in the restaurant industry.

Eric Rahouser is a sales manager for an employment placement firm.

Tim Rahouser is a medical implement and supply salesman.

Laura Rahouser is a creative director for a graphic design firm.

Kiersten Bell is a school psychologist.

John-Eric Bell is a contract manager.

Alex Schroer is a recruiter for Disney World in Florida.

Lexi Richards is a personal trainer in Washington, D.C.

Colby Walker is studying international business.

Elissa Thorne Shashai teaches English in Albania.

Julia Thorne is getting a masters in computer science.

Elliot Hicks is working on a Ph.D. in organic chemistry at Caltech.

Vincent Rey had a long successful NFL career.

Michael Collins works as a manager in the restaurant business. He is about to earn his MBA.

Clint Lawler, who is **Greta's** dad, and also went to school here, was the lead salvage engineer for the whole U.S. Navy! He got to lift shipwrecks to the surface, pull grounded ships off of rocks, and find plane recs on the bottom of the ocean. Isn't that cool and important!!

Scott Davenport gave up a lucrative career in the business world, working for Subaru, to go back to school to become an elementary school teacher. Now that is inspirational!

So, what will you do after you leave here? Will you become a lawyer, an engineer, a scientist, a doctor, a teacher, a coach, a military officer, a pilot, a nurse, a counselor, an actor, a dancer, a law enforcement officer, an entrepreneur, a judge? You don't have to decide right now. You have plenty of time. After all, current brain research shows that your frontal cortex won't be fully developed until you are about 30. Whatever you end up doing, please come back and tell us all about it as often as you can. One of the best parts of our jobs is staying in touch with alums and seeing what they end up doing. Hopefully, the examples I have mentioned today give you an appreciation for how rewarding my experience here has been. The kids who were seniors my first year here are now 60 years old! I have 42 years of graduating classes under my belt, and keeping up with them is a full-time job. I love that aspect of my work here.

Mercersburg has been really, really good to me. I was introduced to my wife, Sue, on a blind date set up by a Mercersburg student. The blind date happened in my apartment in Fowle Hall on Friday night of Long Winter Weekend in February of 1981. You can rest assured

because we were carefully chaperoned by two Mercersburg senior girls, **Lynn Bannerot** and **Leslie Fedon**. As I said, Mercersburg has been really, really good to me. I am betting that it's going to be really, really good to you, too.

Thank you for your time. I look forward to getting to know all of you out there!