

OPENING CONVOCATION REMARKS

COLLEAGUES, PARENTS, FAMILY MEMBERS, CURRENT HARTWICK STUDENTS AND, OF COURSE, HARTWICK'S NEWEST STUDENTS.

IT'S AN HONOR TO BE WITH YOU TODAY. A DAY I'VE BEEN LOOKING FORWARD TO SINCE THE MOMENT I WAS SELECTED TO BECOME THE 11TH PRESIDENT OF HARTWICK COLLEGE.

AS I SAID TO ALL OF OUR NEW STUDENTS DURING THE MATRICULATION CEREMONIES, WE ARE STARTING OUR JOURNEYS TOGETHER. AND, FOR EACH OF US, INCLUDING ME, THAT IS BOTH SUPER EXCITING AND SUPER SCARY. WHILE THERE ARE GOING TO BE MANY AMAZING TIMES, IT WILL BE HARD.

SO, WHILE I PROMISE TO BE BRIEF, I THOUGHT I'D OFFER A PERSONAL STORY TO REINFORCE AN ATTRIBUTE I THINK WE ALL SHOULD STRIVE TO DEMONSTRATE – AND THAT IS PERSISTENCE.

MY PERSONAL STORY OF PERSISTENCE RELATES TO THIS RING I WEAR

ON MY RIGHT HAND.

IT WAS MY DAD'S RING. HIS FATHER – MY GRANDFATHER – WAS AN IMMIGRANT FROM UKRAINE AND CAME TO BROOKLYN WITH MY DAD'S MOTHER, HAVING NO MONEY AND NO FORMAL EDUCATION. THEY HAD THREE CHILDREN, MY DAD BEING THE YOUNGEST BY FAR. MY DAD'S TWO OLDER SIBLINGS DID NOT GO TO COLLEGE. MY DAD, THOUGH, SHOWED ACADEMIC PROMISE AND SO MY GRANDFATHER, WHO WAS A RELIGIOUS MAN, ENROLLED HIM AT A FREE YESHIVA OR JEWISH SCHOOL IN BROOKLYN WHICH WAS KNOWN TO BE QUITE GOOD.

PROBLEM WAS, MY DAD DIDN'T WANT TO GO TO A JEWISH SCHOOL. HE WANTED TO BE IN SCHOOL WITH THE KIDS IN THE NEIGHBORHOOD. SO, IN 9TH GRADE, HE KICKED HIS FEET UP ON THE DESK, OFFERED HIS TEACHER SOME CHOICE WORDS, AND GOT HIMSELF EXPELLED. WELL, THAT DIDN'T SIT WELL WITH MY GRANDFATHER WHO CUT HIM OFF ENTIRELY – REFUSING TO TALK TO HIM FOR WHAT, AS YOU'LL SEE,

TURNED OUT TO BE 7 YEARS.

THE THING IS, MY DAD DID WANT TO LEARN, HE DID WANT TO
BECOME ECONOMICALLY MOBILE, HE DID WANT TO MAKE AN IMPACT
– SO, WITH NO SUPPORT AT HOME – HE WORKED ODD JOBS, HE
SOUGHT OUT HIGH SCHOOL TEACHERS WHO COULD OFFER HIM
GUIDANCE, FOUND HIS WAY TO HUNTER COLLEGE -- A FREE COLLEGE
IN THE BRONX. DESPITE HIS AMBITION, HE WAS WORRIED. HIS FATHER
STILL WASN'T TALKING TO HIM, OR GIVING HIM ANY OF THE LITTLE
MONEY HE HAD, HE HAD NO OTHER RELATIVES WHO WENT TO
COLLEGE TO GIVE HIM GUIDANCE, AND MOST OF HIS FRIENDS FROM
THE NEIGHBORHOOD WERE NOT GOING TO COLLEGE. BUT HE
PERSISTED – AND EVERY STEP OF THE WAY HE FACED OBSTACLES.
MONEY FOR THE LONG SUBWAY RIDES FROM BROOKLYN TO THE
BRONX AND BACK, MONEY FOR FOOD, NOT HAVING A CLEAR SENSE OF
WHAT PATH TO PURSUE, FEELING LIKE HE DIDN'T BELONG.

AGAIN, THOUGH, HE PERSISTED. IN FOUR YEARS, HE MADE IT TO GRADUATION DAY. AND, ON THAT DAY, HIS FATHER SHOWED UP, WITH THIS RING WHICH HE WORE FROM THAT DAY FORWARD.

UNTIL, A FEW MONTHS AGO WHEN MY DAD WAS IN THE HOSPITAL AND WE DIDN'T KNOW WHETHER HE WOULD MAKE IT. HE ASKED ME IF THERE IS ANYTHING OF HIS THAT I WOULD WANT – A DIFFICULT QUESTION FOR A SON TO HEAR. I SAID THE ONLY THING I WANTED WAS THAT RING AND THE POWER OF PERSISTENCE IT REPRESENTED.

NOW, LIKE MY DAD, AND LIKE ME, AND LIKE FACULTY, STAFF AND RETURNING STUDENTS HERE TODAY, YOU ARE GOING TO HAVE MOMENTS, DAYS, MAYBE WEEKS WHERE YOU ARE GOING TO QUESTION WHETHER YOU MADE THE RIGHT DECISION IN COMING TO COLLEGE, IN COMING TO HARTWICK. YOU'LL FACE THE OBSTACLES MY DAD FACED, AND NEW TYPES OF OBSTACLES HE COULDN'T HAVE IMAGINED.

BUT KNOW ...THREE THINGS ... :

1. **THIS JOURNEY ON WHICH YOUR EMBARKING IS WORTH**

MAKING. YOUR PROFESSORS, THE STAFF, YOUR CLASSMATES, YOUR TEAMMATES, YOUR CLUB COLLEAGUES -- WILL CHALLENGE YOU TO THINK CRITICALLY AND THINK DIFFERENTLY. YOU'LL BE GIVEN THE OPPORTUNITY TO CONDUCT RESEARCH, TRAVEL THE WORLD, EXPLORE CAREERS, ALL OF WHICH WILL PREPARE YOU TO SUCCEED IN A RAPIDLY EVOLVING AND COMPLEX WORLD.

2. **YOU DESERVE TO BE HERE**. YOU BELONG, AND YOU HAVE WITHIN

YOU WHAT IT TAKES TO MAKE IT THROUGH THE CHALLENGES THAT YOU WILL CERTAINLY CONFRONT ALONG THE WAY.

3. **THE COLLECTIVE "WE" AT HARTWICK ARE HERE FOR YOU**. TO

ENSURE YOU ESTABLISH AND PERSIST ON YOUR INDIVIDUALIZED FLIGHTPATH. WE WILL BE THERE WHEN YOU FALL AND WE WILL HELP YOU RIGHT BACK UP SO YOU KEEP WALKING THAT PATH.

AND, IF YOU SEE ME ON CAMPUS AND FEEL LIKE YOU NEED A JOLT OF
ENERGY IN THAT MOMENT TO HELP YOU PERSIST, JUST SAY:

PRESIDENT REISBERG, I NEED THE POWER OF THE RING. I'M JUST A FIST
BUMP AWAY.

CONCLUSION OF CEREMONY:

SO, THE NEXT TIME I SEE YOU ALL TOGETHER, WILL BE SUNDAY NIGHT, AT OUR FIRST WALK. ANOTHER SPECIAL TRADITION. ANOTHER LEG IN THE JOURNEY TOWARDS YOU ALL HEARING THAT BELL RING AT THE TOP OF OYARON HILL ON GRADUATION DAY. ANOTHER MOMENT FOR WHICH I CAN HARDLY WAIT.

AS WE CONCLUDE OUR OPENING CONVOCATION, WE WILL SING OUR ALMA MATER.

AFTER THE ALMA MATER, THE PLATFORM PARTY WILL LEAD THE RECESSIONAL, FOLLOWED BY THE FACULTY AND THEN THE STUDENTS.

WILL YOU PLEASE STAND FOR THE SINGING OF THE ALMA MATER. LED BY STUDENT **KARRA KOCH, CLASS OF 2023**, AND ACCOMPANIED BY **THE HARTWICK FACULTY BRASS**.

THANK YOU FOR JOINING US TODAY.