

COMMENCING THE NEXT CHAPTER

(Rivier's 74th Commencement, May 16, 2009)

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Rivier College President William Farrell awarded degrees to 637 graduates at the College's 74th Commencement ceremony on Saturday, May 16, 2009. The ceremony was held at the Tsongas Arena in Lowell, Massachusetts for the first time this year, allowing graduates to have more family members and friends attend the celebration.



(PHOTOS BY JODIE ANDRUSKEVICH)

Dr. Ralph Wolf, who served as the College's physician for the last 10 years, received an honorary degree recognizing his contributions of skill and kindness to Rivier, the local community, and patients in Ethiopia. Fritz Wetherbee, reporter for WMUR TV's "New Hampshire Chronicle" also received an honorary degree and delivered the Commencement address, focusing on Rivier's 75-year history.

Wetherbee told the graduates, "The degree you receive is very special... it charges you with more responsibility than degrees from other schools." Wetherbee cited portions of the College's mission, which implores members of the community to respect all people, to strive for academic excellence, and to take responsibility for ourselves and for others with special concern for the poor and powerless. He praised the Sisters of the Presentation of Mary, who established the College during the height of the Great Depression

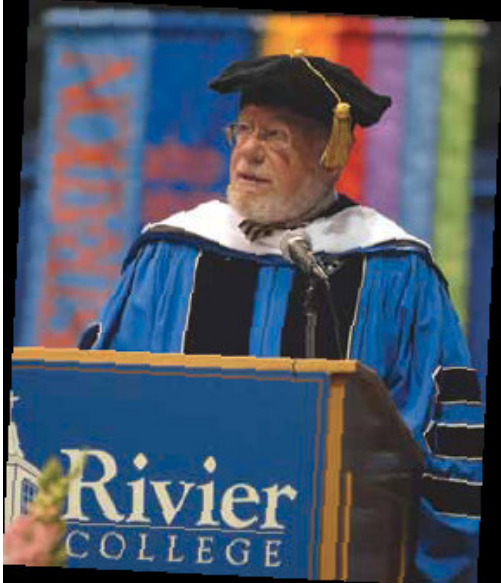
for their determination, telling the graduates, "a group of women in Hudson knew all it took to overcome adversity: hard work and prayer."

Wetherbee told the audience that Sisters from all different orders were willing to serve in places where many men were afraid to go; through their ambition and courage, they got things done. "The Sisters of the Presentation of Mary established a college of scholarship and rigor equal to any other school," he said. In the early years, the Sisters did everything at Rivier—they handled fundraising, cooking and mowing lawns in addition to teaching. Through their efforts, the school grew: originally serving millworkers' daughters from Nashua and Lowell, today the College welcomes students from around the world.

Wetherbee concluded his address by reassuring the graduates that despite the difficult economic climate, he was confident that they would be ok. "The world will be a better place because of you," he said.

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— Fritz Wetherbee, reporter for WMUR TV’s “New Hampshire Chronicle”



The Commencement address by Fritz Wetherbee



President William Farrell congratulated each graduate as he awarded their degrees.



The student speakers praised their classmates’ dedication and encouraged them to make a difference in their communities and to continue to challenge themselves as they begin the next part of their lives.

Sarah Leona Francis, speaker for undergraduate day programs, focused her speech on dedication. “It’s important to remember that Rivier has offered each of us a chance to push ourselves and has prepared us fully for the next step in our journey,” she said. “You sit here ready to get your degrees...what will you dedicate yourself to next?” she asked.

Emily F. Rapley, speaker for undergraduate evening programs, reminded the graduates that they had realized a huge accomplishment, regardless of how long it had taken many of them to reach their goal. She spoke of some of the challenges many evening students face in balancing full-time jobs, family, and schoolwork. “Expect great things of us—this accomplishment is only the beginning,” she said. “I leave Rivier confident, ready to have an impact in my field and my community.”

Crystal Marie Mohrmann, speaker for graduate programs, shared the words of John Quincy Adams: “If your actions inspire others to dream more, learn more, do more and become more, you are a leader.” She added that what we dream, learn, do and become was not Adams’ concern—his hope was that we inspire these things in others.

After the student speakers had addressed the audience, Assistant Vice President for Academic Affairs Regina Shearer announced each graduate’s name and President Farrell presented each graduate’s diploma. Agnes Grace ’59, Chair of the Rivier College Alumni Council, welcomed the new graduates into the Alumni Association and invited them to become active members.

Shearer continued a Commencement tradition when she performed a special song for the Class of 2009, sung to the tune of Josh Groban’s “You Raised Me Up.” “So now go out and change the world around you, you’re Rivier alum—you can transform hearts and minds.... You’re Rivier alum. Go transform hearts and minds,” she sang.

Sr. Sue Bourret offered the closing prayer, asking God to bless the graduates of the Class of 2009. “Empower them with courage and moral stamina—may the gift of compassion inspire them to see you in others,” she prayed. The ceremony concluded with the College song, then the graduates continued their personal celebrations with families and friends who helped them achieve their goals.



Above: Student stand outside Tsongas Arena waiting for the ceremony to start.



With her diploma, cell phone, and smile, this graduate is equipped to handle whatever comes next.

* **JENNIFER LISKOW** is Rivier’s Assistant Director of Marketing and Communications and teaches in the College’s Professional Communications program. Jennifer earned her bachelor’s in English and communications from Notre Dame College in Manchester, N.H. in 1996. In 2002, she completed her master’s in writing and literature at Rivier. She began writing in junior high school; since then, she has had poems, short stories, features and essays published. She serves on the Board of Directors for NH Roller Derby, the state’s first competitive flat-track roller derby league.