

Class of '03: Remember your transformative years

April Schexnayder

Columnist

I wanted to take the time to leave some final words to the class of 2003. Four years ago, we all arrived here at Elon and received an acorn. I have mentioned the acorn, because it represents who we were when we began our lives at Elon College.

Just like the acorns scattered around campus, we have scattered ourselves throughout the town of Elon leaving a piece of us everywhere we have gone. All of us came from many different places and after Saturday will once again disperse. But for the past four years, we have come together and formed the Class of 2003.

What makes Elon such a wonderful place are the people that are the foundation of the school.

Every single one of us has been successful in some way through academics, sports, organizations and volunteering. But this cannot be accomplished alone. If it weren't for our fellow classmates and professors, we would not be preparing for graduation. The love and support that exists throughout campus is abundant and incredible.

Over the past four years, we have seen numerous changes take place. When we arrived in 1999, we were attending Elon College, but now we will graduate from Elon University. At one time, the old library was empty; however, Belk is constantly packed as people work on assignments at all hours. Our mascot changed from the Fighting Christians to the Phoenix. Then there was the addition of the football stadium, the new health center, the communications building and a track.

We have successfully completed our college careers. It is now time for all of us to leave our comfortable home at Elon and begin a new journey in our lives. Some of us will go to graduate school, others will move back home to begin their careers, while others will start a new life in another city. On Saturday we will receive our diplomas and end our chapter at Elon. Before you pack up and depart, walk across campus one last time and smile to a stranger, eat in a dining hall, sit by the fountain, go talk to a professor, walk through the dorms and sit under an oak tree.

For it is the small things that you will look back on and miss. The time has come to end this journey, so let us scatter our acorns and watch them take root. As you get into your car and drive away from the town of Elon, look back and smile knowing that you in some way touched someone else's life.

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Elon: Thank you for making me what I will become

Jennifer Guarino

Editor Emeritus

I hated signing yearbooks in high school. You were put on the spot to remember everything special you shared with another person and formalize it into words. You were expected to be brilliant, to leave them with parting words that would touch their hearts and rekindle memories years later.

I feel like it's time to sign yearbooks again. Our time at Elon is quickly coming to a close and I want to leave my friends something to hold onto.

I want to put into words what I've learned and how very thankful I am for the experiences I've had.

If we signed yearbooks like we did in high school, this would be my message.

Soon, everything changes again. It seems like just yesterday we met. In the last four years we've made such wonderful memories. I have the football ticket stubs and programs from the concerts we went to, but I wish I could bottle the conversations we shared and take them with me. Holding onto the notes you've sent is easy, but what about the laughter we shared?

I am so thankful for the ways you have blessed my life.

You knew to ask how things were going, just when I needed an impartial ear to listen. You let me cry as I struggled through feelings of being overwhelmed.

You knew when I needed a hug. You cried when I cried. You

called.

You've taught me so much more than I thought I was capable of learning. From afternoons sitting in your office bouncing ideas off one another to discussions about my future over lunch, you taught me that I was capable of more than I thought I was. You opened doors for me.

You were there when I needed a friend. Our lives are so busy that we rarely spend time together, but I know I can always call. You told me my mistakes weren't as bad as I thought.

You believed in my vision enough to join me. You made my dreams come true. You asked me if there was anything you

could do and you meant it. You thanked me. You covered for me. You made me laugh.

You listened to me babble about my research and shared my excitement when I discovered something new.

You were the best friend I dreamed of as a child. A glance and a smile communicates thoughts no one else understands. Every moment with you is a treasure.

You became my family. Between the nine of you, there was always a listening ear, an encouraging remark and a good laugh. Opening the door to your office will always feel like coming home.

You questioned my decisions and caused me to analyze my thought process. You made me better.

You were my sounding board.

You listened first and offered advice second. You taught me to be more assertive. You saw something in my crazy ideas. You had faith in me when I had little in myself.

You were a good roommate. You made my bed. You fed my fish. You taught me how to live with someone else.

You challenged me. You made me devote more energy than I thought I had to your class. You listened to my concerns about your class at the beginning of the semester and you proudly awarded an "A" at the end.

You will take my place. You will carry on my dreams, but mix them with your own. You will be successful because you have a sense of commitment.

You stopped to shake my hand. The friendship you offered, simply because we were members of the same community, taught me that life was a series of relationships.

Friend, stay true to who you are. The part of you that you shared with me has touched my life.

Simply by living, you have made my world a better place. Continue to be passionate about what you do. Be a visionary. Commit yourself to the things that are important. Know which battles are worth fighting and those that are not.

Write letters and call often. Be patient. Leave things better than you found them.

Know things happen for a reason, the good and the bad. I know I met you for a reason.

There is one high school yearbook signing I remember clearly. A friend wrote, "I hope we work together again in the future." Fate had it that we did.

Maybe I should leave it the same way with you. I hope to see you again.



Jennifer Guarino

*There are two ways to get to the top of an oak tree:
 One is to sit on an acorn and wait and the other is to climb.*

- Kemmon Wilson, founder of Holiday Inn

