

# OPINION

## A Petition Against Changing Graduation Traditions

Carolyn Byrd

Ever since Meredith's campus moved from its downtown location in January of 1926, its students have graduated on campus, weather permitting. From 1926 to 1948, graduation was held in a temporary auditorium once located on the site of the volleyball court outside of Brewer. With the completion of Jones Auditorium in 1949, Jones offered graduates an indoor venue until 1967. In 1964, the once swampy area located on the lower part of campus was dredged to create a pond and McIver Amphitheater. For 46 years, Meredith Angels have flipped their onyxes and accepted their diplomas in McIver Amphitheater. Understanding this history you can only imagine how heartbroken I was to learn that I would not be graduating in our beautiful open air amphitheater. So, why not be happy about graduating in Dorton Arena on the Saturday before Mother's Day?

First, graduating on campus is a tradition that has been upheld for 46 years. The amphitheater is a place that is held near and dear to our hearts. It is the place where, as freshmen, we experienced our first tradition; the honor code ceremony. During Cornhuskin', the amphitheater is hallowed ground. On Class Day it is a place where sisters shed tears of joy, and during graduation it is the place where we are reminded of our college's past while embracing the future.

Second, Dorton Arena is not a proper venue for a Meredith College commencement. Dorton Arena is outdated and has no affiliation to Meredith. Dorton, is a venue for washed up musicians, deep fried state fairs, flea markets, roller derbies, boat shows, and gun and knife expos. Why settle for an outdated venue that smells of hay and cost \$2,200 per day when we have a free, beautiful, open air venue

that is steeped in tradition?

Third, graduating on the Saturday before Mother's Day is a miscalculation. NCSU, William Peace, Shaw, and Meredith are all graduating on the same day. Although, many of the area colleges are graduating earlier in the day, out-of-towners look forward to helping your parents find hotels, because our commencement doesn't start until 7pm. And forget dinner plans! While your parents are hoping for dinner, we'll be scrambling to take photos in our beloved amphitheater, re-curling our hair, and nervously waiting for Obviously, Dorton offers more seating, which to some is more important than preserving what is "uniquely Meredith." But, according to the McIver Amphitheater's 1964 dedication the amphitheater can comfortably hold up to 1,500 spectators not to mention ample seating on surrounding hillside. During Cornhuskin' we manage to seat

all four classes and guest quite comfortably. Why is this not enough? But, if the issue of seating still cannot be solved, why would a prestigious college, such as Meredith, settle for J. S. Dorton Arena? Why not Memorial Auditorium? What is good enough for President Jo Allen should be good enough for us right? If you agree with me visit "Save the Tradition: Stop Graduation at Dorton Arena" on Facebook or visit [https://www.change.org/petitions/meredith-college-students-alumni-concerned-parents-stop-graduation-in-dorton-arena-2?utm\\_source=share\\_petition&utm\\_medium=url\\_share&utm\\_campaign=url\\_share\\_after\\_sign](https://www.change.org/petitions/meredith-college-students-alumni-concerned-parents-stop-graduation-in-dorton-arena-2?utm_source=share_petition&utm_medium=url_share&utm_campaign=url_share_after_sign) to sign the petition and view other worthy comments. Voice your opinion and let Meredith College know that its decisions affect you.

## The Herald also heard from many other students concerning the changes:

### Mary Rawls:

Yes, it's disappointing that graduation is not in the amphitheater; however, that doesn't mean that the spirit of the amphitheater and Meredith College can't be with us when we graduate. There are too many good things about the move that make it so much more accommodating and practical that it outweighs tradition. Traditions are important but sometimes we must carry on the character of the tradition to make way for a new one. This doesn't mean you won't be following a long line of Meredith women because you aren't graduating in the amphitheater, but rather you are more connected to them as you are blazing a new path for more women to follow. We will be carrying the spirit of the past with the hope of the future in graduation. Traditions are meant to be changed and have evolved over time. To be a college of progress and one that values the education we give our students, we must not be blinded by tradition for tradition's sake. We must instead carry on the tradition of grace and class that Meredith women have ALWAYS carried and pass that on as our legacy.

### Shanna Alley:

Everyone is debating this issue with graduation all over Facebook. Our 2013 class has students who are doing the dual degree program at NC State so that's one reason why administration said we can't have our graduation in the morning. I would be mad if I had to have to pick and choose which one of my graduations to participate in, especially since you work hard at both schools. My sister is graduating at Peace the same day as ours and I would be crushed knowing I had to

miss her graduation or that she would have to miss mine. I've graduated from college before, but only my mom was able to make it since my family had recently moved to New Zealand awaiting my arrival post graduation. We, as students and members of the Class of 2013, should be thankful for the opportunity to graduate and have the chance for all of our family members to attend graduation rather than most not being able to attend because there is a lack of seating.

### Tiffany Smith:

Like the rest of you, I received the email about the graduation location change. However, unlike most of you, I have not attended Meredith since freshman year. I did not live in the dorms, actually, I have never stepped foot inside a residential building on campus. I have not attended cornhuskin' nor do I really even know what it is, to be honest, I have not taken part in any Meredith tradition. However, I will be receiving a B.A. in Mass Communications in May.

Personally, I could not care less where I graduate but today in ALL of my classes, people were talking. Many of them are very upset about the change and I understand why. We should have received more notice, or (gasp) a choice in the matter. There could have been action taken so that the 2013 graduating class was not surprised three months before walking across that... wait, where are we graduating again?

On the other hand, I would not like being limited on the number of invites I get (like almost every other college in the world). In addition, I have a grandparent that requires handicapped accessible, well, everything and from

what I hear Dorton has the accessibility for handicapped attendees. I agree with senior Amanda Williamson, she explained, "I could graduate in this room (Harris 204) for all I care, I'm just ready to graduate!"

### Mary Royall Hight:

My mother was a 1980 graduate of Meredith College. She walked across the center of the McIver Amphitheater on Mother's Day, May 11th. I'm graduating on the same day my mother did. While I was very upset to know that I will not be walking across the Amphitheater on this same date, I realized that the needs for having commencement in Dorton Arena are much bigger than any individual's need for tradition, or in my case, the close and sentimental connection to my mother. Having a twilight commencement in Dorton Arena will allow for more safety, more space for loved ones, and more accessibility to those with any type of disability. I have confidence our commencement will be special no matter the location.

### Bani Tanque:

I think people do not clearly think about what the issue is. Many are ready to jump down the throat of the school administration but I don't think they realize that if graduation was at the Amphitheater then we would have a RESTRICTED number of guests. How horrible would that be? I have family flying from India, and extended family flying from all over the states, and I would much rather them be able to see me walk to get my diploma. I don't care if I graduate in a barn. I also think as Meredith Students we get to intense about the whole traditions thing. During Cornhuskin,

etc., many let it take precedence over everything else, and you are ostracized if you show any inclination that you don't care.

The way many students have handled this (especially on facebook) shows that we use the excuse of "tradition" to hold onto and try to justify what we want. We are still resistant to change and hesitant to try new things.

## Meredith students and staff weigh in on who they think will win Super Bowl XLVII

"I'm leaning towards the Ravens, that's my gut instinct." -Erin, Library Staff

"I'm a Patriots fan, and they beat the Pats, so I am going to have to go with the Ravens." - Whitney c/o 2013

Ravens because Kaepernick is practically a rookie who doesn't have a chance against our defense." -Maitlyn c/o 2015

"The Ravens because my boyfriend is obsessed. Like screaming at the television and cursing, he's that intense." -Annahitta c/o 2013

Ravens. I'm from Baltimore so it has to be the Ravens." -Jessica, c/o 2015

collected by Brianna Karmi