OUR SILVER YARDSTICK

I KNOW that I express the feelings of all these other "dear old alumnae grand-mamas" as well as of this one when I tell you how happy we are to be with you—and renew our youth—and sit on Alma Mater's lap once more.

Mr. Duke asked me to make a speech, when he knew perfectly well that I never could do anything but chatter. My old associates know this, and the rest of you will find it out immediately.

Of course, I guessed the real reason for this rash act of President Duke—and I'm going to tell on him.

He put me on this program because I have trotted about the campus for so many years that I'm a sort of familiar sight to all the alumnae generations, an old landmark like the smokestack or the lamp posts—though not nearly so serviceable. I feel it a great privilege to be here as one of the little "spots that their infancy knew."

Remembering all the happy years at Harrisonburg, there were so many things I wanted to say, that I was afraid my speech would blow up like a bomb, and fly off in every direction. So I jotted down a few stirring sentiments as a sort of anchor—which I'll hoist if I get around to it.

Coming back to Blue Stone Hill, receiving such a gracious welcome—and seeing old friends, we feel like happy old veterans about to burst into the Rebel yell.

We old warriors are prone to live in the past and are apt to start telling you stirring tales of the days when we marched up the heights under the banner of Marse Julian A. Burruss or the Duke of Harrisonburg.

It is amazing to those of us who rode up from the station in one-hoss shays in 1909 to realize that Alma Mater is approaching her twenty-fifth birthday.

These years have been a splendid forward march for our school, and we battle-scared old alumnae warriors all over the country have rejoiced in every bit of good news of triumphs on Blue Stone Hill.

And while our joints may be a bit creaky, we still love to feel that we are marching with you.

Today—and always—there are invisible threads of interest centering on Harrisonburg from the hundreds of former students out there, who appreciate more and more as they bump into life the examples of courage, enthusiasm, service, and sacrifice lived on this campus.

Some have achieved fame in various professions; others are complacently married, while the rest of us are just plodding along, but all of us use Harrisonburg's gifts to us—every day.

If there are any little old-fashioned girls here today, they may recall the story of the Silver Yardstick—used so charmingly in the Little Colonel books of Annie Fellows Johnston. This silver yardstick was a gift which enabled its possessor to measure life and people and situations accurately and fairly. It seems to me that the greatest gift of Blue Stone Hill to us has been such a silver yardstick for each student.

Methods of teaching may change, psychology may turn somersaults, new days, new ways may follow, but this gift of knowledge never wavers in usefulness and accuracy. Our experience on this campus never fails in helping us to measure and appreciate everything from sunsets to honesty, from good music to good sportsmanship, from wholesome fun to hard work. And the greatest benefit of Alma Mater's silver yardstick comes to those who use it to measure themselves.

Out in the world, on the pedagogical battlefield, or the broom and dish-mop battlefield, in the contract-bridge arena, or among the shovel-and-hoe brigades, we find all sorts of surprising people and situations. Some are fine examples, and some are difficult problems. When we are out there following or leading, we need more than ever
to get a firm grip on Alma Mater's apron
string with one fist—and to hold tight to
that silver yardstick with the other fist.

We can look back with gratitude on the
years we spent here and realize more and
more as we get some wound stripes on our
sleeves, that we had the privilege here of
following the very finest leadership in work,
in play, in appreciation, in generosity—
and in all the best methods of living life
soundly.

I imagine that some of you little girls out
there get a sort of collegiate spanking now
and then. We did in the good old days,
and we didn't enjoy it any more than you
do, but after you leave here you'll find that
spanking has miraculously turned into the
most valuable part of your silver yard-
stick—and you will probably pass it on!

Harrisonburg is the sort of sensible far-
seeing mother who doesn't believe that
spoiling her children will prepare them for
happiness or usefulness. She was quite
firm, even in the old days, about having us
eat spinach, when some of us felt so super-
ior to such things, and preferred chocolate
pie all the time.

Of course, in this sensible era of green
vegetables and good complexions, you are
probably not troubled with many of those
painfully superior, delicately spoiled young
ladies—who just couldn't eat a thing on the
table.

We had them occasionally long ago. If
you happened to be a hearty specimen with
a boyish appetite, these orchid-like creatures
looked on with a pained expression while
you devoured your cabbage with gusto.
But they didn't last long at that. Blue Stone
Hill had a delightful way of curing curious
creatures. Mrs. Johnston or Miss Hudson
hustled us firmly about the gym; Miss King
marched us over the hills to hunt bugs and
birds; and Miss Cleveland umpired us
through some spirited bouts with participles,
or took us on delightful adventures through
the Forest of Arden. Then we joined Dr.
Wayland in Jackson's Valley Campaign or a
stirring engagement on Bunker Hill—and
we sang lustily in his classroom about "On
to Vic-to-ree."

By the time other members of the fac-
ulty had contributed to our rejuvenation,
and the peppy climate, good water, 10:30
bedtime, and other benefits had joined
forces, Blue Stone Hill had lined up more
loyal, happy daughters with a renovated
zest for living.

I have always had a suspicion that the
fountain of youth is located somewhere
around here. Nobody grows old here, and
nobody ever seems to run down.

Today some of us are passing these
wholesome Harrisonburg doctrines on to
our own daughters and to the daughters of
others. We hope they are planning to urge
these daughters "on to Harrisonburg."

That is the best possible way to pay
interest on all that our school has invested
in us—the finest sort of life insurance for
any girl in whose welfare we are interested
is this—send her to Harrisonburg.

Most of us are very busy Alumnae Grann-
ies—up to our ears in household duties,
or curriculum mazes, or perhaps busily
patching last year's hats, by way of living on
salaries pruned down with 10% cuts—and
it may not occur to us that we can still be
really useful to our school. Few of us have
any hoarded gold to pour into the treasury
of Blue Stone Hill, but we have hoarded
appreciation and love, which we might put
into better circulation.

Our school has been sending us out for
over 20 years. We are everywhere. But
many of us are not making our interest in
Harrisonburg pay as we should. In these
days of trembly finances, when budgets are
being snipped and trimmed, we must steam
up and whistle long and loud for our
school's welfare.

Those of us who have wept commence-
ment tears and have stepped out into the
world need not become a host of pale mem-
ories. We can be a tremendous influence when Harrisonburg needs us.

For all her gifts to us and her untiring investment in us we owe our Alma Mater a debt we can never repay, but all her "daughters loyal one in heart and one in will" like to feel that we can pay interest pressed down and running over.

Frances M. Mackey

THE NEED FOR LIBRARIES IN THE SOUTH

One of the fields in which the South has long been behind the rest of the country is that of library development. The facilities for providing library service for the people of Dixie, where such facilities exist at all, are greatly inferior to those in the North and West. In a large percentage of the former Confederacy they are non-existent. Consequently there is a great opportunity for some person or some group to take hold of the situation and by aggressive and sustained effort, to raise the standing of the South in this field to something like a reasonable level.

While it may appear that the present is perhaps not a particularly auspicious time for the discussion of this subject, such a view is hardly justified by the facts. Federal, state and local governments are retrenching in every possible way, and all types of governmental activity which are not regarded as absolutely essential are being curtailed or eliminated. Since our public men do not always realize the importance of libraries, they are sometimes prone to curtail appropriations to these agencies to an unwarranted degree.

Therefore it behooves all friends of library development to unite with a view to preventing disproportionate cuts at this time. And since there is reason to believe that the bottom has been reached and that we are shortly to begin the climb back to prosperity, formation of citizens' committees in the various Southern States to create sentiment for improved library facilities would appear to be in order. Then when economic normalcy returns, those States will be in a position to develop their libraries in the way that they should be developed.

Four Southern states already have inaugurated these citizens' movements, but it is only in North Carolina that tangible progress has been made. In the Tar Heel State, library service has been initiated or expanded in four counties, two new library buildings have been erected, and funds have been raised for a book truck for the State Library Commission, all as a result of this effort. The other states in which beginnings have been made are South Carolina, Louisiana, and Texas.

It would not have been reasonable, of course, for the libraries to have attempted to escape all cuts during the period of retrenchment through which we have been passing. They have accepted slashes in their appropriations along with all other governmental agencies. What they have resisted and what they expect to resist in the future is any wholly unwarranted and excessive cut which would have a ruinous effect on their efficiency and their opportunity for usefulness to the communities which they serve.

Fortunately there is a central agency in the South through which the advocates of better libraries may operate. This is the Southeastern Library Association of Atlanta, an agency of the American Library Association. Miss Tommie Dora Barker, regional field agent for the South, has general charge, and is doing an excellent work in arousing this section to a realization of its need for better library facilities.

The association will hold a conference of leaders in library work at the University of North Carolina on April 7-8, at which time an effort will be made to formulate a long time program for the development of li-