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Not Four Years But Forever

I had the distinct pleasure to attend this year's Commencement Week-end, May 15-17, as the incoming president of the Alumni Association. I have been back to campus numerous times over the years, but never for Commencement. What a thrill to see the graduating seniors shepherding their family and friends all over campus; showing them all their favorite "spots" — the Sunken Garden and the Wren Building, Swem Library, DoG Street, the Cheese Shop and Paul's Deli. Everywhere I went, their energy and enthusiasm was contagious; not even letting the almost constant rain dampen their spirits.

I know that most of the graduates viewed Commencement as crossing the finish line. "I did it! Give me my diploma and get me outta here!" And it is a tremendous accomplishment. But what I wanted to say to each of them is that Commencement is not the end, but really just the beginning of your relationship with William and Mary — it's not just four years, but forever. Whether we realize it or not, we carry William and Mary with us wherever we go. This is true for all of us as alumni, whether we graduated this year or 50 years ago.

We often talk about Tribe Pride; but what does this mean beyond support for all our athletic teams? Tribe Pride is multifaceted. It is found in recognizing what an extraordinary place William and Mary is; what remarkable students and leaders William and Mary produces; and not hesitating to talk about it, dare I say brag. As an old friend used to say, "It's not bragging if it's fact." It comes in appreciating that we were given a remarkable gift of an exceptional educational experience — one that was provided for us by all of those who went before. It is the understanding that we are members of an elite Tribe that gave birth to and helped shape this great nation. We as William and Mary alums have the privilege and obligation to carry William



and Mary far beyond the boundaries of Williamsburg.

So, how do we live Tribe Pride? We can start by modeling the William and Mary experience by being curious, honorable, and always looking for ways to be of service — in your community and to the College. Join your local alumni chapter and strengthen the bonds that link each of us across the generations to this wonderful place. Wear your Tribe gear with pride and cheer hard for the team as often as you can. Come back to campus and see what has and hasn't changed, while you also make new memories. Most importantly, never, ever fail to help a fellow member of the Tribe and to look for ways to advance those who follow you. Hire them, recommend them, mentor them, support them.

When I graduated 25 years ago, I would never have believed that I would become the president of the Alumni Association. I was one of those grads thinking, "Get me outta here." However, the older I get, the more I appreciate the education I received, the friendships I made, and the opportunities that William and Mary provided. Through my continued involvement with William and Mary, I now have friends that span the generations and fond memories long past my graduation. I urge and challenge each of you to embrace your own Tribe Pride. And you never know, your best days and memories of William and Mary may still be ahead.

JANET ROLLINS ATWATER '84

President

William and Mary Alumni Association