

**Address Delivered by Dr. Edna Saffy at the Fiftieth
Reunion of the
Graduating Class of Robert E. Lee High School,
April 12, 2003**

I would not be here in this room tonight and neither would any of us were it not for Shirley Fussell. We all owe her our thanks and our gratitude.

When I spoke with Shirley last week I asked her if she remembered two names. Two names that have haunted my memory... I thought I was the only one from that long ago graduating class of 1953 who would remember.

But no, I was not alone. Shirley knew. Shirley knows everything. These two that I remembered were not with us when we had our prom at Jacksonville Junior College for they were not there to graduate.

And yet ironically they who were not with us that night will always be a part of some of us. Their names were Leloni McCoy and Sam Galliard.

In those bright golden days of our youth, the deaths of Lelani Mc Coy and Sam Galliard brought to us our first glimpse of reality.

For until Leloni was killed in an automobile accident on McDuff Avenue—so close to Lee High— and later when Sam was killed in the aftermath of the hurricane, we each had believed we would be young all our lives and we would live forever.

Age is something we never imagined would happen to us. As Trotsky has said, “old age is one of the most unexpected things to happen to each of us.”

And tonight no longer 1953, but now 2003, no longer are we 18 we are almost three score and 10 years.

No one is more surprised by that number than I.

Had we been born earlier, the world would have looked upon a person of our age as being old, yet with all the advances in medicine and in research, we boldly and with vigor stride through our seventh decade.

For in our heart of hearts we know we are still 18 years old--forever young , forever strong Yet we still remember that kid who many long years ago stood on the playing field behind our school, cheering the Lee Generals on to victory and knowing he or she could change the world.

And we did. We changed this world, yet in the process the world changed us.

Just as we had as children begun to question the tooth fairy and Santa Claus, so too did we begin to question the world around us.

In Cohen Brothers, the signs: “whites only” “colored only” ... Other signs: “the back of the bus” “the front of the bus”

Segregation!! We changed that.

Other signs, perhaps unwritten ones, at membership meetings of the Seminole Club and later at the River Club: “no women allowed”.

Sexism!! We changed that.

Another unwritten sign at the membership meetings of the San Jose Country Club: “no Jews allowed”.

Anti Semitism!! We changed that.

We changed that world.

And the larger world...

The Korean War, The Vietnam War, the Peace
Keeping...

The class of 1953 changed that world. We were kept
safe. America was kept free.

Some of those military men and women who fought
for us who changed the world are here tonight. We
salute you:

Christen Eck
Bill Holloway
Jay Pumphrey
Charles Randall
Forest Wood
Lewis Nowell
And all others..

**WILL YOU AND THE OTHER MILITARY MEN
AND WOMEN IN THIS ROOM STAND AND
ACCEPT OUR APPLAUSE AND OUR
GRATITUDE.**

AND WILL THOSE WOMEN AND MEN WHO
BID FAREWELL AS THEIR LOVED ONES, THEIR
FRIENDS, THEIR CHILDREN BOARDED THE
TRAIN, THE PLANE, OR THE SHIP TO KEEP OUR
NATION SAFE... WILL THOSE WOMEN AND
MEN WHO STOOD STRONG AT HOME UNTIL
WARS ENDED AND PEACE RETURNED PLEASE
STAND AND ACCEPT OUR APPLAUSE AND
GRATITUDE.

I have mentioned only a small part of how this world
is different because of us. Yet you know in your hearts
what you have done to create the world of today.

I began tonight, speaking of those who could not come
along on our journey--Leloni McCoy and Sam
Galliard.

For it is a glorious journey.

There is a saying that the joy is NOT in our destination, but in our journey.

I am going to close very simply with a thank you for fifty years--plus three of cherished memories.

A thank you for our reunions from the Robert Meyer Hotel to the Ponce de Leon...

For this weekend and the memories that those fifty years have brought with them...

And finally, a thank you for today, April 12, 2003, our fiftieth year...

**FOR TODAY AND THIS WEEKEND WILL
BECOME THE YESTERDAY WE WILL DREAM
ABOUT TOMORROW.**

Thank you for these moments.