

Lake-Lehman gives the Class of 2003 a warm goodbye

By ANNA DUNLAP
Special to The Dallas Post

On Friday, June 13, Lake-Lehman High School said goodbye to the class of 2003. Faculty, friends and school board members welcomed the graduates with applause, tears in their eyes, and — let's not forget — an incredibly warm gymnasium. Due to the threat of rain, the ceremony was moved inside, and all guests were invited to the first event to take place in the newly completed gym.

After the procession, Principal Michael A. Gokay welcomed everyone, and introduced Angelo Georgetti, the president of the senior class. Angelo's speech touched many in the crowd, as he discussed the 13 years that were spent together. Many classmates could not help but laugh as he recalled amusing stories that had taken place during their high school careers. He brought his speech to a close by saying, "Life as we know it will never be the same ... That little piece of heaven called Lehman is gone."

Following Angelo, remarks were made by the President of the Student Council, Jenna Fine. Jenna discussed how her classmates and high school days would be missed, but never forgotten.

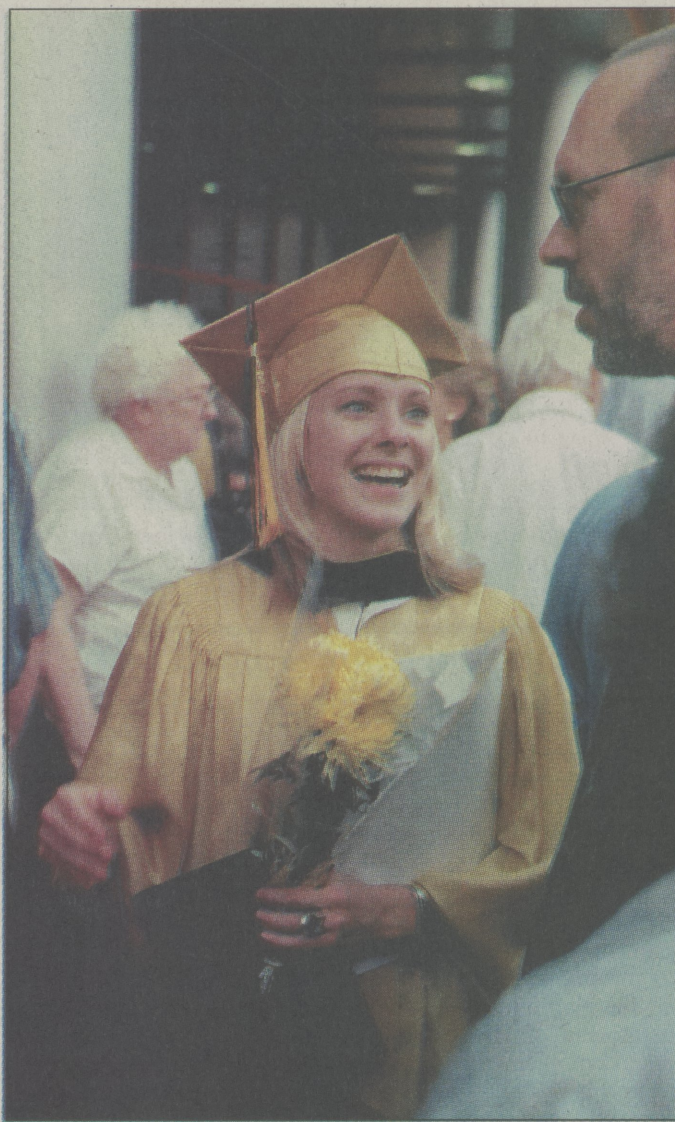
This year the Commencement Address was given by Robert L. Walsh, the Chief of Regulatory Affairs at the National Institute on Drug Abuse and the National Institutes of Health. Walsh was a member of the Lake-Lehman Class of 1977. He spoke to the graduates of a bright future that they would create. He discussed how technology and science are beginning to take great leaps and bounds, and even though we are gaining more power and knowledge every day, we still need to practice self discipline.

He was able to relate to the teens by using a line from the movie Spiderman; "With great power comes great responsibility," Walsh said. "With great advancement, comes great ethical responsibility." He finished by again congratulating the class and wishing them well.

The Valedictorian, Jared Janiczek, was the next to speak, and brought attention to all of the accomplishments of this class. These students were incredibly hard-working and competitive, both academically and athletically. This year's seniors achieved great things, such as winning National History Day state competitions, National Merit candidates, putting on two memorable plays, and becoming field hockey state champions.

The Salutatorian and Class Treasurer, Justin Boyer, was the last of the student body to give a speech. Justin, widely known as the "businessman" of the senior class, gave everyone a chuckle as he compared life to an investment. Boyer said the years and experiences they had shared together had become "compounding interest," and that it all had been necessary to get them where they were today.

Awards were presented by Tracey L. Halowich, Lehman's new Administrative Assistant. The Citizenship Awards were given to Kimberly Jones and John Yamrick. The Leadership Awards were received by Jenna Fine and Angelo Georgetti,



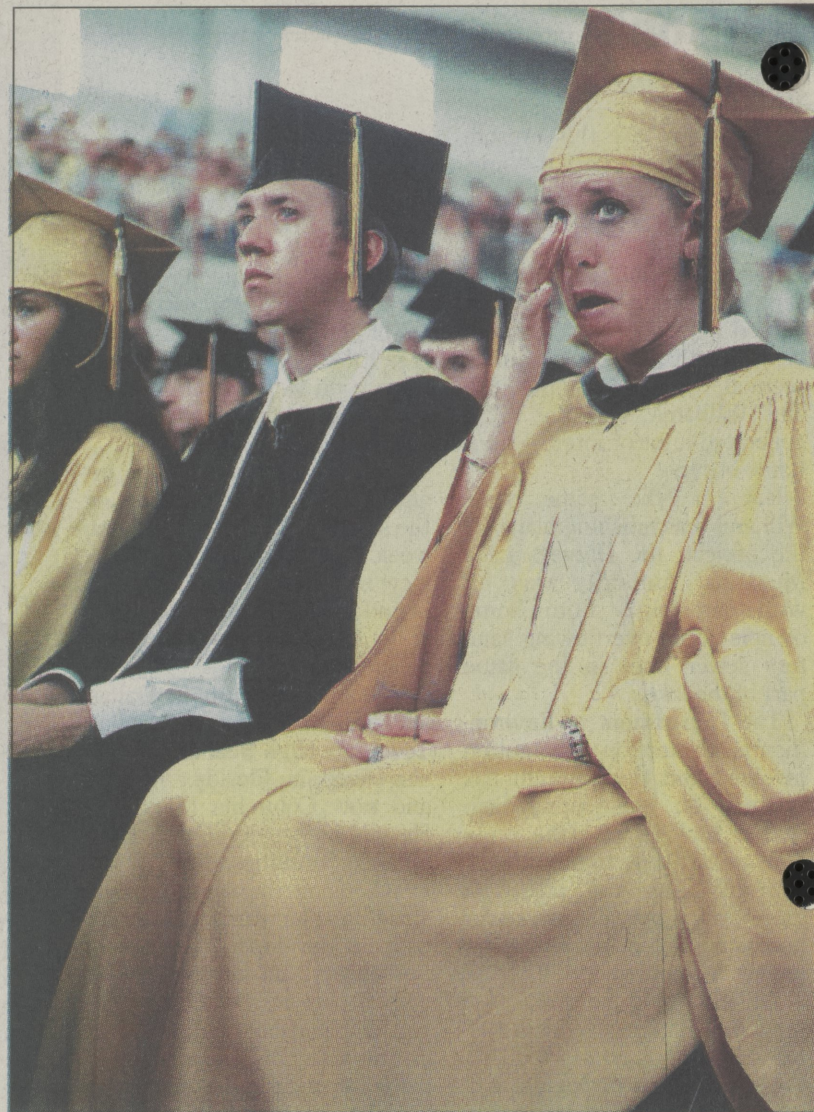
POST PHOTO/JIM PHILLIPS

Clockwise from above: Meredith Edwards was all smiles and delighted with flowers; Nicole Sudal wiped away a tear during graduation ceremonies; Sheryl Fishel was clearly delighted to get her hands on the diploma.

and a Scholarship was offered to Christina Lumbis.

Immediately following the awards, Robert O. Roberts, Superintendent of the school district, spoke briefly about the graduates. He congratulated the class on their ability to persevere despite a hard year filled with construction, the threat of a strike, and new policies. His words were emotional and meaningful as he said goodbye to one of the last classes he got to know personally while he was the principal of the Middle Level Education Building. He told the crowd that, "Collectively this is one of the best classes to have graced the halls of Lake-Lehman."

It was a memorable graduation for all who attended, as well as for the students. A huge void will be left by these departing students. Not only physically, as they were one of the largest classes ever to pass through Lake-Lehman, but also academically. The ambition of this class has raised the bar and challenged future classes to meet the excellent standards they have set. Good luck to the Class of 2003. You are bound to succeed.



Sisters of Service.

By Cokie Roberts and Steven V. Roberts

Dallas, Pa. — Two Sisters of Mercy, Rita Mary Olszewski and Karen Donahue, were arrested in Detroit last month for protesting the war in Iraq. The nuns were sentenced to eight hours of community service, which shows that the judge either had a great sense of humor, or wasn't paying attention.

Sentencing Sisters of Mercy to perform community service is like sentencing Barry Bonds to hit home runs, or Jerry Seinfeld to tell jokes. It's what they do best.

You don't have to agree with the Sisters' politics—nuns have been called the last radicals left in America—to admire their enduring dedication to the welfare of others, a principle that has inspired the order since its founding in Ireland 172 years ago.

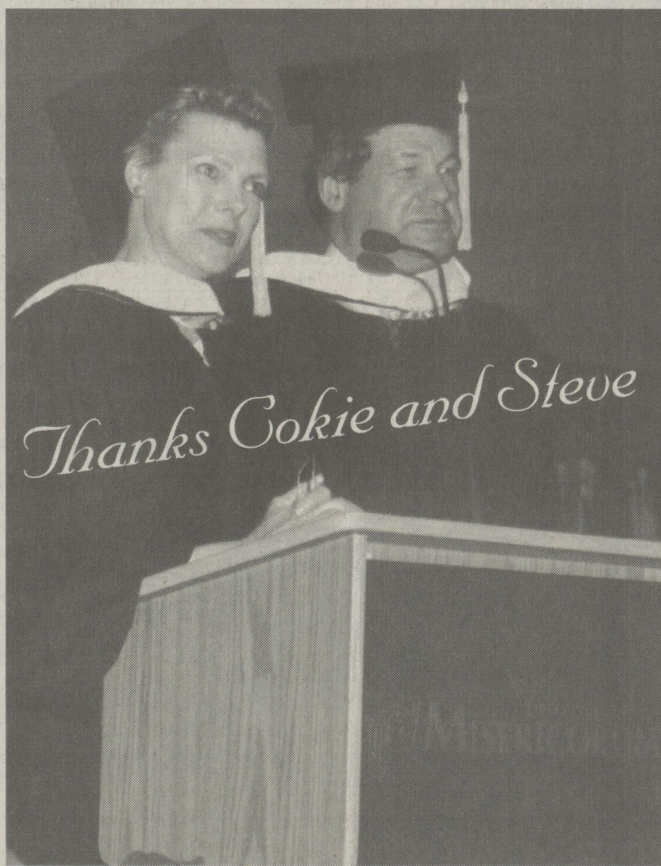
A major mission for the Sisters of Mercy is education—they sponsor 19 institutions of higher learning across the country—and we were privileged to appear at one of them here last weekend, College Misericordia, and address the graduating class.

Journalists are skeptical by nature and training, often with good reason. But if you want your faith renewed in the simple, special goodness of America, come to a place like College Misericordia, and spend some time with the nuns and their students. It will do your heart good.

The sisters first came to the Wyoming Valley to minister to the immigrants who worked the coal mines in nearby Scranton and Wilkes-Barre, and the names of the students who walked across the stage to receive their diplomas still reflect their ancestors' origins in Eastern and Southern Europe. Many were the first in their families to finish college, and many had to struggle to reach this moment.

When one woman grad was greeted by a particularly high-pitched shriek, she explained to us that her two children, ages 13 and 15, were in the audience, leading the cheers for their mom.

Most of the students come from within 100 miles of the campus and many will stay in this community, improving the lives of friends and neighbors as nurses and teachers, social workers and occupational therapists. The unemployment rate might be 6 percent, and the job market might be the worst in 20 years, but Misericordia grads seem to be learning useful skills that can actually lead to real paychecks.



They also display an endearing modesty. This is not the Ivy League, where student speakers sometimes announce their candidacies for the Senate. The valedictorian, Danelle Leuenberger, candidly admitted she was scared to death and wanted to finish her speech as quickly as possible.

Along with their skills, the students here learn values, and one is ecumenicism. While the valley and the college remain heavily Catholic, there has always been a significant Jewish community in the area, and two major awards are endowed by Jewish families with long ties to Misericordia, the Friedmans and the Rosens.

One of the benefactors, Pauly Friedman, told us that her friend, Sister Siena Finley, comes to their synagogue so often that she is regularly asked to speak by the rabbi.

Another core value here is "service learning," a program under which students combine courses like nursing and psychology with practical work in neighboring communities.

During vacations and holidays, and then after graduation, many students work with the Mercy Volunteer Corps, a sort of private Peace Corps that ministers to the poor in many different settings, from the streets of New York City to an orphanage in Guyana.

We have always believed strongly that young people will live up to expectations adults have of them, that if they are offered the chance to be generous and charitable, their best instincts will show through. Here at Misericordia, that happens every day.

This is not a convent, and athletics are a large part of college life. But at a time when some big-time coaches are making millions (and spending their excessive salaries in strip clubs), it's refreshing to see sports played purely for fun.

The baseball diamond is smack in the middle of campus and parkers are warned to watch for foul balls during home games. More than 100 undergrads (out of 1,330 full-time students) have been recognized as "scholar-athletes", winning a varsity letter and keeping up a 3.0 average. One reason: Tina MacDowell, the wife of the college president, bakes her famous oatmeal and raisin cookies for every team.

In the spirit of the Sisters, and their lovely little college, we spoke to the graduates about the virtues of service, public and private. But then, they already knew that.

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