

ADELE GRIFFIN M. SANDS

MR. GALBRAITH: This is a memorial for Adele Griffin M. Sands. The original plan was that Priscilla would be here today and read this, and earlier this week I received an e-mail from her expressing her angst about the fact that it was not going to be possible for her to be here, and instead, she asked that I read less than the entire memorial, and this is why. "My mother loved, really loved, NAPSG. She also hated to fly, and every year she would get on the plane with Ann Lenox, have two drinks to calm her fears, and fall fast asleep. She would then wake up and realize that she had missed all the wonderful food back when first class really was, and for a year bemoan the loss of the roast beef and chocolate cake, only to repeat the same routine year after year.

"When Mom died this fall, her service was as private as she was, with only her family, Penny Moss, and Blair Stambaugh permitted to attend, and she wanted no one to speak. And she wanted no memorial service either. She would hate me standing up here talking about her.

"When I became a head, she told me that I should immediately join NAPSG and never hesitate to have a good time. She told me to go early, as I would need and deserve the time away from school. I thought it was great advice and wanted to pass it on.

"Mom would like nothing better than to know that everyone here was having as wonderful a time as she did."

Adele Griffin Sands, or as I knew her, Mom, died of heart failure on September 30th. She was 89. She grew up in a large home in Wawa, Pennsylvania, where my grandfather had moved his family from Swarthmore in order to avoid the scourge of polio. Both of my grandparents grew up with little money but were passionate about education, and were able to provide independent schooling for their four children.

Mom graduated from Agnes Irwin in 1937 and in her yearbook she is already stylish, beautiful, a school leader, and general all-around bossy kid, leading clubs and teams. She earned her BA from Vassar in 1941, and in 1942 married her high school love, William MacCoy. In 1943, two months before my sister, Marguerite, was born, Lt. MacCoy was killed in a flight training exercise while serving in the Army Air Corps.

In 1947 she married James Sands, with whom she had three more daughters and three sons. In 1963, after the birth of her youngest, she returned to her alma mater as head of the Middle School or, as her daughters would have been quick to tell you, as an uninvited spy. In spite of our requests that she find another job in another school, preferably in another state, she persevered and in 1965 became the associate headmistress, and thus began a partnership and friendship with Anne Lenox that would last until Anne's death. Although I made my peace with her presence, I did have to drop my boyfriend's ring in my book bag every time I saw her coming down the hall because, well, ladies don't wear boys' rings.

During her years at Irwin's, Mom also taught and developed the hugely popular course, Women in Literature. A former student remembers that on an exchange day with The Haverford School, a group of senior boys came into class and one young man said, "Mrs. Sands, I can't imagine that there is enough material written by women to teach an entire course."

Sitting on the edge of her desk, quietly tapping her bright red nails, she fixed him with her famous steely gaze and said, "Sit down, young man, and perhaps you will leave here better informed and somewhat enlightened."

In 1977, when Mom received the school's highest alumnae recognition, the Willing Award, Anne Lenox said, "This woman personifies those attributes Miss Irwin felt were so important: Intellect, dignity, and charm." At the time of her award, we children had all been smuggled into Pennsylvania and the school, so that as she

stood to receive the accolades, she looked into the audience and saw the seven of us. All she could say was, "I don't know what to feed them all!"

In 1981, upon Anne Lenox's retirement, Mom was appointed headmistress and probably one of her proudest achievements was the building of a computer center, telling a faculty member, "I don't know where the money will come from, but I will find it."

In 1985 the school dedicated its Sands Technology Center in her honor. She was a true visionary who knew, even then, that technology would become a disruptive and powerful force in education, and until the day she died, she never learned how to type or turn on the computer.

In 1986 she retired from Agnes Irwin and packed Dad and her Havanese puppy into the car and moved to Cleveland, becoming the interim head of Hathaway Brown. We were all happy to see her protégé, Bill Christ, become the permanent head of HB, as we were all convinced that he was her favorite son. In fact, until she died, she loved poring over the HB Bulletins and pointing out to me all of Bill's successes. After retirement, she kept busy serving on school boards and working as the Head Mistresses of the East executive director.

When I asked her a few years ago what she missed most about school, she said without hesitation, "The girls. Always the girls."

She was beloved by students. Upon her death, the many Facebook pages blazed with tributes. Some remembered that the yearbook had been dedicated to her an unprecedented six times! One class noted, "She provided us with a master role model: Mother, administrator, advisor, and friend."

While I am so proud of her accomplishments, the one I cherish most in my heavy heart simply is having been my mom.

Would you please stand for a moment of silence in honor of these memorial resolutions? Thank you.