



THE INSTALLATION OF PRESIDENT *Bartley P. Griffith Jr. '93*

October 10, 2019

Bart Griffith's Acceptance Remarks

Jon, I am humbled by the trust that you, the search committee, and board have placed in me and remain grateful for the deep commitment all of the trustees make to Shady Side. I can think of no higher honor than to come home to Pittsburgh to steer the school I love into its promising future. So I accept the charge with a full heart, and I pledge to advance the important mission of our school. We will challenge ourselves to think big, act with concern for others, and leave our communities better than we found them.

Has there been a time in the life of our school, in the life of our city and world, when our mission has been more relevant? More compelling? More essential for young people and the remarkable future they will inherit? I am all in, Shady Side. You can count on it.

Thank you, Tom, Sue, Henry, and Bill for joining us on stage and inspiring the entire SSA community this evening. I appreciate the critical and influential role each of you has played in my development as a person, educator and leader.

Thank you also to my predecessors, the prior Headmasters and Presidents of Shady Side, for all they have done to sustain the Academy's legacy of excellence through each generation. As Jon acknowledged earlier, we are so honored to have Emerson Johnson and Peter Kountz here with us tonight.

I also want to recognize Amy Nixon, who, in her recent term as Interim President became the first woman to lead Shady Side. Thank you, Amy, for your important service to the school and all your help throughout the transition.

I am especially grateful to the Academy administration, faculty, and staff. They embody the very heart of the school, an extraordinary collection of men and women called to this work, dedicating their lives to children and changing the world one connection at a time. A special nod to our facilities crew and all of the work that has gone into making the campus look so stunning this evening.

And thanks to Shady Side's talented, diverse students for their warm, sincere reception these past few weeks, not counting the two plus hours the Junior Schoolers recently held me hostage in a dunk tank.

I would also like to offer my appreciation for the local civic leaders with us this evening: fellow Pittsburgh independent school heads, elected officials, and those who oversee our city's foundations and charitable organizations. As Pittsburgh continues to diversify and build on its creative economy, all of us have an opportunity to come together and help shape Pittsburgh's continued transformation.

And most importantly, I want to thank my family, both for being here tonight and for all they do to love, support, and inspire me. My parents, Bart and Deni, are remarkable people — Dad pursues a life of service to the sick as a world-class surgeon, educator, scientist, innovator, and entrepreneur — and Mom, in the face of extraordinary personal challenge, continues to inspire courage in us all. And, fittingly, my parents' own story as a couple begins right here at Shady Side — they had their very first date at an SSA dance.

An important recognition to the FLOSSA [First Lady of SSA] — my wife, Danica— who twice in the past five years has agreed to move her entire personal and professional life in support of my ambitions. It has been a remarkable series of sacrifices on her part, founded in true love, and I am forever grateful. And she hasn't complained about it even once...at least not since I began giving this speech.

And to my beautiful children, Cannon and Colette, thanks for being such good sports about our relocation to Pittsburgh. You left behind schools and friends you adored in Baltimore—all to help Daddy make his dreams come true.

Dr. John Richmond, pastor of Shadyside Presbyterian Church in the early 1880s, once recalled the events that led to our school's founding, citing a discussion after Sunday service during which concerns were expressed regarding the significant number of local boys preparing for college far away at New England boarding schools.

"I believe the boys would benefit from more home care and influence," said one father. "What if we had preparatory school right here in Pittsburgh?"

What if indeed.

A question that changed the course of education in our city. A question that now brings me back home.

Shady Side Academy has continued to ask such bold questions throughout its history: *What if* we build a glorious new campus out in the country? *What if* we admit girls? *What if* we extend our reach to China?

As your President, I promise we will continue asking big, audacious questions together. I promise we will lead in a world that desperately needs leadership. And, most importantly, I promise we will take good care of one another, loving both our school and its people with all our might.

Thank you, good night, and Godspeed to us all on the journey ahead. Glory to Shady Side!