

Remarks by Chancellor Kent Syverud

Delivered on Thursday, October 18, 2018

Location: Chancellor’s Residence

Remarks: 50th and 60th Reunion Reception

Welcome to this very special event. Ruth and I are so happy to welcome you to our home and that you are here for Orange Central. This evening gives us the opportunity to recognize the classes of 1958 at your 60-year reunion and the class of 1958 at your 50-year reunion.

I want to thank the staff of alumni engagement, the wonderful staff here at the Chancellor’s house and everyone who has made this evening possible. In particular, let me recognize the Class of 1958 and 1968 reunion committee, whose hard work and valuable input – beginning back in February – have come together to make a great reunion weekend.

I also want to extend a warm welcome to Senator John A. DeFranscisco (’68) who, with his wife Linda, is here to celebrate with his class.

How have things changed since your graduation years? A great deal. For both of your classes, William Pearson Tolley (’22) was your Chancellor.

The Class of 1958 had just entered the workforce when President Dwight D. Eisenhower created NASA – six months after the U.S. launched the Explorer 1 Satellite as an answer to the USSR’s Sputnik. On campus, Syracuse University acquired the Regent Theatre and opened Day Hall Dormitory for Women and Graham Dining Center – both of which were state-of-the-art in their design. Sir Leslie Knox Munro, United Nations President, spoke at your commencement ceremony and one of the honorary degree recipients was William Bayard Heroy, for whom the Heroy Geology Laboratory is named.

In the broader culture, Legos were patented – much to the delight of kids and despair of parents who have stepped on them for the last 60 years, Velcro was trademarked, the microchip was invented and the comic strip “BC” was first published. Top Billboard Hits featured the Everly Brothers, Elvis Presley and Perry Como with David Seville’s “Witch Doctor” and Sheb Wooley’s “Purple People Eater” thrown in for good measure!

The Class of 1968 graduated right after President Lyndon Johnson signed the 1968 Civil Rights Act and just before Congress repealed the gold standard. The new buildings on campus were the Brewster/Boland/Brockway complex of residence halls and 621 Skytop Road that was leased to the Syracuse Research Corporation. Your commencement speaker was CBS Anchor Walter Cronkite, who was also granted an honorary Doctor of Laws at a time when he had recently delivered an editorial critiquing the U.S. ability to win the Vietnam War. You were seniors when Charles Hicks was elected the first black president of the Syracuse University Student Government. You saw the heart of the anti-Vietnam protests, including those by LeMoyne College’s Father Daniel Berrigan, and the assassination of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. and Robert Kennedy.

In popular culture the first Big Mac was served by a McDonald’s franchise in Pittsburgh, “60 minutes” debuted on CBS, Aretha Franklin released “Lady Soul”, the Beatles released their “Magical Mystery Tour” album, and “Sgt Pepper’s Lonely Hearts Club Band” won the grammy for album of the year.

Syracuse University has changed as well, although I think if you ask our students you will find the common experience of trudging through ice and snow and climbing “The Mount”, navigating the hills on campus will be something you have in common.

We have physically transformed the campus. In addition to new buildings, our students today enjoy a pedestrian walkway where University Place used to be – the Einhorn family walk. We are currently planning renovations for the Schine Student Center and are planning an addition for student services at the College of Engineering and Computer Science thanks to the generosity of Bill and Penny Allyn. We are building the Barnes Center at the Arch to be a hub for health and wellness for our students and renovating the Dome to install a permanent roof, make the building more accessible and upgrade the fan experience. And, as a visible sign of our commitment to veterans and military-connected students, the National Veterans Resource Center is rising from the ground.

We are implementing an Academic Strategic Plan and are upgrading the student experience from classroom and physical improvements to a common first-year course and opportunities for students to gain practical experience while they are also learning.

Last year, we announced the launch of our $100 million Invest Syracuse initiative to fund the academic strategic plan.

As part of that initiative, we are raising $40 million over two years to fund scholarships so that talented students can find a place to thrive, right here, regardless of financial means. Many alumni have stepped forward in recent days and weeks to pledge new support – we are more than halfway to that goal with $24 million raised. My friends, I invite you to join them.

Your very presence here for reunion events speaks to how much you care for the University and the time you spent here.

Ruth and I hope that this reunion weekend is a time when you can recall old memories and create new ones, reconnect with your classmates and with Syracuse University, and enjoy your time on campus. Thank you and Go Orange!

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