

**Alumnae Achievement Awards
September 2010**

Suzanne Savedge Wescoat '64

Katherine Brown '76



President Klein congratulates the 2010 Alumnae Achievement Award recipients, Kathy Brown '76 (left) and Suzanne Savedge Wescoat '64 (right.)

Invocation given by Muriel Zimmerman Casey

I warned the leaders tonight that I might do something a bit irregular and not jump right into the Invocation. When you're given an opportunity to have a pulpit, you use it, right? I wanted to reflect on one of the occasions in my life here at Randolph-Macon in thirty years—oh, there were many; I came during the Korean War (students, when you need to do a research paper, you can ask me questions)—but certainly one day that stands out in my memory, and I don't know how it has been acknowledged in the College today, I haven't been able to catch up, but one thing that does occur to me is what happened on September 11th, 2001.

We came together that morning to go to classes, to go to our offices, and suddenly we were inundated with radios and a major television screen in Main Hall that alerted us to what had happened at the Twin Towers in New York, then was happening at the Pentagon, and then in the fields on Pennsylvania. I have never seen the campus come together in such an orderly fashion. Immediately, there were faculty members, students, counselors, all trying to be healers for those who might have suffered—we really didn't know the consequences of that moment. And by noon, the chapel was filled with an interdenominational service, commemorating already those who had lost their lives. And of course, we know that since that time, we know so many other members of our families have lost their lives in either Iraq, or Afghanistan, or other parts of the world in protecting our freedom and alerting us to what terrorism can do.

On that day we lost one alumna in the Twin Towers, and we lost the husband of one alumna at the Pentagon—we didn't know about it for a couple of days—but that was pretty tough, even for the campus. Well, I hope that next year, you will ring bells at the appropriate hour for the tenth anniversary. I would love to come down to another service in the chapel in another year. So with that in mind, let's have a moment of silent prayer for the men and women who continue to fight for our freedoms and for those who have gone before them.

(moment of silence)

And now to get on to my assignment, which is the invocation for the dinner. Let us pray. Accept, oh Lord, our thanks and praise, we are thankful for the opportunity to be in this place tonight, to recognize and to celebrate the accomplishments of Suzanne Wescott and Kathy Brown. The past two days have served to remind alumni, faculty, and students that Randolph-Macon Woman's College was, and Randolph College continues to be, a lively center for sound learning, new discovery, and the pursuit of wisdom. We are grateful that our College is a center for learning where peace may prevail with righteousness, justice with order, and where men and women from different cultures and different talents may find with one another the fulfillment of humanity. We give thanks for the community that recognizes the originality of each individual. Now, as we break bread together, we give thanks for the food that has been prepared for our enjoyment and sustenance, and oh Lord, as we conclude this blessing, let us never forget to be mindful of the needs of others. Amen.

President John E. Klein's opening remarks

Tonight we gather to honor two distinguished women with our Alumnae Achievement Awards.

It is my privilege to introduce—Suzanne Savedge Wescoat, class of 1964, and Katherine Brown, class of 1976.

Welcome Suzanne and Kathy, your family and guests, and alumnae, faculty, staff, and students who have assembled here on this occasion.

The Alumnae Achievement Award, which has been presented by the College for 30 years, recognizes remarkable alumnae. It is conferred upon selected alumnae who personify the value of a liberal arts education and have brought distinction to themselves and to the College. Nominations for the awards come from alumnae, and the recipients are selected by an awards committee.

The past Alumnae Achievement Award recipients are listed on a plaque in the Anne Jeter Ribble Alumnae Lounge in Smith Hall. You may view past recipients and their accomplishments by browsing the binder of photos and remarks. Three of our past recipients, Mary Martin Davis Bowen '57, Judith Evans Brown'63, and Julie Block Milstien'64 are attending this celebration tonight.

The 2010 recipients, Suzanne Savedge Wescoat and Kathy Brown, join this list of accomplished alumnae which includes judges, senators, pilots, medical professionals, educators, journalists, and civil and human rights advocates.

###

An English major and theatre arts minor, Suzanne was employed after graduation by the Rockefeller Foundation as an editor. She was married two years later and moved back to her hometown on the Eastern Shore of Virginia. Suzanne has always enjoyed its beauty—the open land, the wildlife, and the undisturbed shorelines. In her modest way, she would tell you that she worked her family farm land, raised her family, and is still active in her local garden club.

However, those who know her will tell you Suzanne has dedicated her life to preserving and protecting the Eastern Shore's natural resources, fragile ecosystem, and strong, local economy.

In the late 1980s commercial developers became interested in purchasing waterfront farms to develop into resorts, vacation homes, and condominiums. Suzanne began talking with other residents to learn more about the pros and cons of commercial development of the area.

After learning the facts and finding allies in the fishing and business community, Suzanne took action. In 1988, she co-founded the non-profit organization, Citizens for a Better Eastern Shore, and launched a cohesive group effort to promote balanced growth while preserving the natural resources. After 22 years, the organization is 800 members strong and represents not just her county, but the entire Eastern Shore.

Her leadership continued with her election to the Northampton County Board of Supervisors—the first woman ever elected. She served three 4-year terms and once as the Chair of the Board. During her tenure the Board adopted a comprehensive long-range plan to preserve farms and forests while sustaining the tax base. She was instrumental in establishing a land trust in 2003 to include 12,000 acres of land and 70 miles of shoreline. She promoted the creation of conservation easements, including all of her own family property. Suzanne is an advocate for responsible residential and commercial development which is designed to protect and preserve the wildlife habitats and the fragile shoreline from future development.

Suzanne has received a variety of awards and recognitions. In 1996 the Nature Conservancy selected her to receive its highest national honor—the Oak Leaf Award. The Garden Club of Virginia honored Suzanne with the De Lacy Gray Award for her vision of celebrating the beauty of the land, conserving gifts of nature, and challenging future generations to build on this heritage. And the National Audubon Society presented her family with its Important Bird Area Conservation Award in 2009.

As I learned last night, while attending her 35th class reunion in 1999 Suzanne and a number of classmates decided to go on a strenuous hike in the south of France led by Julie Milstein. Suzanne thought it would be like *The Sound of Music*, and signed up to join the group. In her words, she was transformed by the bonding experience as each was responsible for the person hiking behind her. Three of the Class of 1964 hikers, Polly Cummings Hussain, Harriette Moskowitz Will, and Agnes Fitts Marshall, sang songs from their college days in Latin while hiking to set the pace and keep the group organized. In the subsequent years, this group has hiked again in France and in Wales, kayaked together on the San Juan River, and gathered in Mobile, Alabama. Suzanne has hosted the group at her beautiful farm on the Eastern Shore and they continue to be emotional anchors for one another. Many members of the hiking group and her class are here tonight to celebrate with Suzanne.

Suzanne, thank you for inspiring us with your desire to serve, your tenacity, and your dedication to the cause of conservation. Randolph College applauds you and your accomplishments.

###

Remarks by Suzanne Savedge Wescoat '64

I am truly grateful for this generous recognition and I thank my dear friends who expended great energy to propose me. As I look around the room, I believe that there are many others here who are equally worthy. I am not certain what qualified me for a leadership award, but I would say that this award is really in recognition of a philosophy, a philosophy shared with me many years ago by a fellow R-MWC alumnae and that philosophy was to “Bloom where you are planted.”

I planted myself in a very small place, the Eastern Shore of Virginia, two Virginia counties situated at the Southern tip of the Delmarva Peninsula, with the Chesapeake Bay on the West and the Atlantic Ocean on the East. My husband and I grew up there and returned to our roots – to live close to family and long-term friends.

Page 4 of 11

*Introductions written by Beth Knabel, Assistant Alumnae Director for Communications.
Remarks compiled by Beth Knabel, November 18, 2010.*

I started out on a very traditional path for my generation of women. I worked for a couple of years after college, married my childhood sweetheart, had two children, and spent my days focused on my home, garden and family, while doing lots of volunteer work. Then when my children were in high school I began to think that I wanted to do something more tangible.

My love for the land and all things growing... and my fondness for wine, led me to establish a commercial wine grape vineyard. Fortunately, I already lived on a farm, had an old tractor, and an elderly gardener. The local banks I approached never even looked at the business plan over which I had labored. They advised me to send my husband to see them. Affronted and somewhat humiliated, I borrowed enough money from my parents to get started and then grew grapes successfully for 25 years, eventually expanding to 20 acres.

At about the same time that I planted the vineyard, the primary industries of Eastern Shore, seafood and agriculture, were in a serious economic downturn. But we were being “discovered” by several big off- the- Shore developers. They were buying up large parcels of land, promising golf courses, many other amenities and most importantly – JOBS.

We certainly needed the jobs, as we were worried one of the poorest counties in the state, but many of us were doubtful of the job quality and very worried about our ground water, which is only recharged by rain and about the burden on our infrastructure. Five people, including myself, were concerned enough to gather a few more people to discuss how we might address these problems. These few people established a group we called Citizens for a Better Eastern Shore, now known by its acronym, CBES. When I agreed to be president of CBES, my traditional path through life became a lot less traditional.

We knew that if we had any hope of influencing county government to take a closer look at the pros and cons of these developments, we absolutely had to reach out to all socio-economic and racial components of our community.

In the 20 plus years since the first lunch counter sit-ins in Lynchburg which occurred while I was at Randolph-Macon, the country had come a long way in racial relationships. But in 1986 in Northampton County there was still almost no social interaction between the Caucasian and African-American populations. Our population was divided almost equally between the two races. Nevertheless, we managed to persuade the president of the NAACP and a local African American doctor to join our effort. They reached out to other members of their community, who then sat down with environmentalists, working watermen, and “traditional community leaders.” Our first interactions were painfully awkward and certainly eye openers for each of us.

I recount these events because taking this initiative changed my life. I was forced to see people in a new light. I will never forget making a comment at an early board meeting about something that I thought was universally accepted, and hearing a virtual growl from the other end of the table – “sounds like something the landed gentry would say.” I realized then how tenuous the ties

were in this fledgling organization and how carefully we would have to respect each other's very different perspectives. Despite these difficulties, the diverse members of CBES did coalesce into a strong group and became an important influence in both Accomac and Northampton counties.

During my 8th year as president of CBES I was diagnosed with breast cancer and had to resign. After months of chemo and several surgeries, I again took stock of my life, which I now realized might very well be shorter than I had anticipated.

By now, CBES had grown to 800 members and was functioning very well without me, but county government was still failing to address our myriad of problems. I decided to run for the Northampton County Board of Supervisors. After going door to door throughout my district I was elected. Once again I was way out of my comfort zone, but trying to bloom despite the weeds. The "weeds" being some of the other board members, irate citizens and the developers who seemed to want growth at almost any cost. They believed the pipe dreams fed to them by people who had come to the Shore only to make money.

Seeing so clearly that politics would always determine the direction of land use, I gathered a few people together to talk about creating a land preservation trust. That small group went on to establish the Virginia Eastern Shore Land Trust which now has almost 15,000 acres under easement and has protected 75 miles of shoreline.

Happily, I served my final four-year term with a very competent board and the future of the Shore will now hopefully be based on our careful planning. We adopted a new Comprehensive Plan which has led to a very sophisticated zoning ordinance. I stepped down from the Board of Supervisors after 12 years. Jobs and economic growth continue to be major issues, but I have great faith in my successor and the plans that have been made.

After my tenure on the Board of Supervisors I began to focus my energies on land conservation. My family has now put conservation easements on all of our land – these easements are held by the same Virginia Eastern Shore Land Trust on whose board I now serve.

Where does R-MWC fit into this story? I believe that the college planted the seeds which have allowed me to grow and to "bloom."

I think that R-MWC instilled in me a kind of confidence which enabled me to step out of my comfort zone; to go into areas where I had no expertise and to not be afraid of failure.

When we were discussing this award, my husband pointed out to me the significant civic and business accomplishments of so many of our R-MWC alumnae friends. He wryly commented that they are all "very strong women." When I look at my own small Eastern Shore Alumnae Association I see women who have and still are making a difference in education, churches, business, politics, and conservation. I am not sure what caused these women to growth in

strength, but I believe that deciding that you are going to make the best you can of your situation is the very first step to blooming where you are planted.

R-MWC also had another wonderful, but totally unexpected impact. I attended my 34th Reunion and during a late night group chat someone asked Julie Block Milstien to organize a hike in the Alps. I signed up, expecting to be strolling through Alpine meadows, somewhat akin to the “Sound of Music.” The hike proved to be very different, but as we fumbled in our backpacks and struggled forward under Julie’s vigilant eye, we found new depths in ourselves and in each other. We have continued to nurture those bonds and we still plan adventures together, although our hikes are now a little less arduous.

My efforts to reach out, beginning with the vineyard, continuing with CBES and then finally with the Board of Supervisors taught me that your locality is truly where you can change your world. I learned it is never too late to identify a problem, draw a small group of people together who really want to address that problem and start the process of developing solutions. I learned that it is essential to include as diverse a group of people as possible, as wide a spectrum of interests as possible, to focus on dialogue, to have empathy and to control one’s tongue.

I have also learned from my 16-year battle with breast cancer. I have learned to appreciate today and to spend my time in ways that are worthwhile and meaningful. I have learned to always look for the glass that is half-full.

I thank Randolph-Macon for providing me with the seeds to lead a thoughtful and productive life. I also thank Randolph-Macon for the wonderful, wonderful friends I have found.

I am very appreciative of this honor and of this college.

I now look forward to watching all the new seeds that Randolph College is cultivating. May they prosper and bloom.

###

Introduction of Katherine Brown '76 by President Klein:

Music and performing have always been a vital part of Kathy Brown’s life.

As a music major with a French minor, Kathy participated in student recitals. Recently the College began archiving old performances, and we discovered one of Kathy’s recitals and it is now part of the Lipscomb Library’s archives. For the current students in the room who are music majors or considering becoming a music major, you will be able to share Kathy’s story when asked, “What will you do with a liberal arts degree in music?”

We asked two of her special guests how they would describe Kathy. Her classmate and college roommate Susan Jones Randolph described Kathy as deliberate about her studies, intense and focused, but also socially poised. Professor Dan Raessler commented that he has never forgotten

her warmth and sense of humor. It's no surprise that Kathy's discipline, balanced personality, and interests in all the arts led her to the world of non-profit arts arrangement.

After R-MWC, Kathy worked for the National Endowment for the Arts in Washington, D.C. For a decade, she was involved in national arts policy and awarding federal funding for arts organizations and activities throughout the country. When she wasn't working, she continued her personal interest in music performance as a member of a number of chorus ensembles in the Washington D.C. area.

Aspiring to work in New York, Kathy had earned the opportunity to join the staff of the New York City Ballet, the first time, 22 years ago, as a development officer.

Kathy also spent 10 years at Jazz at Lincoln Center, first as vice president for development, spearheading the organization's \$131 million capital campaign to build its home—a theatre complex at Lincoln Center which included performance halls, studios and education spaces, and a year-round jazz club and restaurant--the first such complex in the world built specifically for jazz. Seven years of fundraising were followed by 2 years of construction. Kathy says the job called upon her creative and entrepreneurial skills, as this scope of project had never been attempted. Her efforts were rewarded when Kathy was named the executive director of the Lincoln Center in 2005 and charged with all aspects of operations, managing a budget of \$38 million, and overseeing a staff of nearly 300 employees.

Kathy's talents were then tapped by WNYC radio, America's flagship national public radio group in New York City. As their Chief Operating Officer, she helped the organization build new state-of-the-art studios and offices, launch a new performance space and a live performance series, and expand cultural programming. It was an aggressive period of growth for the enterprise, and Kathy was lauded for her ability to bring the creative and business sides together.

But when the New York City Ballet needed a leader to fulfill their long-range vision amid a changing cultural landscape and uncertain economic times, it called on Kathy to fill the newly-created position of Executive Director. She returned to the top position at the New York City Ballet last December. She now oversees fund raising, finances, marketing, publicity, and educational programs.

Focus, a conscientious work ethic, and kindness are her hallmarks. She graciously hosted two networking receptions in her Manhattan apartment for New York area alumnae and the Randolph College students participating in the Model UN in the spring of 2009 and 2010.

Kathy jokes that she is a reluctant runner—she pounds the pavement to relieve the stress of her hectic schedule, which includes traveling nationally and internationally with the company. An important creative outlet for her is performing as a member of a church ensemble in Manhattan.

We can learn much from the way Kathy has applied her liberal arts education to the wider world of non-profit management—and her exciting climb to a senior management position in a field she loves.

###

Remarks by Katherine Brown '76

Thank you, John. I am in awe of everything you have accomplished here. Earlier today I had the chance to tour the campus, and see the beautiful new athletic field, the exciting library renovations and hear plans of so much more. Let me add my voice to the chorus of thanks for what you and Susan are doing for the college. I know I speak for everyone when I say how grateful and proud we are that you are leading this distinguished institution that means so much to all of us.

And I cannot thank you and your colleagues enough for the warm welcome to Nat and me.

I am truly humbled to accept this very unexpected and wonderful award. It is such an honor especially coming from a place and people who are so important in my life. And I'm particularly pleased to be sharing the evening with the wonderfully accomplished Suzanne Savedge Wescoat.

As you just heard, I work in performing arts management and am used to being way backstage. But in this case I am happy to have the chance to talk publicly about this wonderful school and the impact it has had on my life. As I have been thinking over the past several weeks about what I would say tonight, I've had a great time reflecting on my time at Randolph-Macon, and being reminded of how much I have drawn from my experience here over the years. And for me Randolph-Macon has been a family affair, as my sister, Peggy Lipps, who is here tonight, graduated in the class of 1980.

From a very early age I could not imagine music and the arts not being a focus of my life. Music was always a big part of my family -- parents, siblings, uncles, aunts and cousins all sing and/or play an instrument, and many family get-togethers ended with everyone gathered around the piano. My father particularly enjoyed these sessions, and to my sister and my deep chagrin loved extending them into the more public arenas. Somehow she and I survived playing Nancy Sinatra to my father's Frank Sinatra in countless command performances in many restaurants and other public venues of the incomparable composition "Something Stupid." Despite that, music remained a passion.

I had grown up in a big metropolitan area and attended a large public high school, all of which I loved, but I was interested in another kind of experience in college. When I learned about Randolph-Macon, its small and close community of students, its excellent academics and its strong music program I was intrigued. When I visited, I was hooked.

The first few weeks of Freshman year, among the strange-seeming traditions of odds and evens, pumpkin parades, secret societies, I literally felt I'd been dropped into a foreign land. But it wasn't long before the college's unique ways became charming, and they bound us all in a very special way.

My Randolph Macon experience exceeded my expectations in so many ways.

I expected great professors and stimulating courses, but the small classes afforded the kind of attention and mentoring that most college students never know. And it means so much to me that with us tonight is Elaine St. Vincent, who guided me through so much of my music studies. I'm also delighted to see Dan Raessler, another of my wonderful music professors, who endured with patience and good humor my feeble efforts at the piano for so many semesters.

I expected to make friends, but the relationships that developed within this tight-knit community are uniquely rewarding and long-lasting. I'm so happy that my classmates Kathy Ulman and Susan Randolph were able to be here. Susan's mom, Joan Jones, who lives here in Lynchburg, is also here, and with her late husband JB became my adopted parents during my college years. Joan is someone who has been a true role model for me as a professional woman. Among her many accomplishments is having been the first woman elected to the Virginia House of Delegates, serving 8 successful years.

I expected a variety of courses, but in the best tradition of a liberal arts education it was the presence of other disciplines on the campus that truly broadened my horizons in a formative way. I decided to enroll in dance classes, not so much for the artistry, but because I needed some way to work off all that dirt pudding. I did not know then that the Randolph-Macon dance department was renowned, at the time run by Helen McGehee Umana '42, a former dancer with the Martha Graham Company. She brought in guest teachers who were some of the most prominent dance artists of the time. It was my first real exposure to professional dance, well before I had any idea I'd one day be working in that field. My interest in dance in all its forms began here, and I've taken the knowledge and exposure garnered on this campus with me to the National Endowment for the Arts, New York City Ballet and elsewhere.

Like many students at the college today, in addition to all of my academic studies I was a work-study student all four years, first working at the Lipscomb Library, then in the music department preparing concert programs and cataloging scores. It was only later in life that I realized that this had been an introduction into the realm of arts administration and management that I ended up pursuing professionally.

As you can see, my experience here led me to unexpected directions and changes of course. But some things don't change. The underpinning of everything here and the assumptions upon which it all rests was and is the honor system, which encourages and emphasizes integrity and strength of character.

Today I'm in a position of meeting many young college graduates looking for that first job out of school. In some of them I sense a commitment not only to strong performance but strong character. They are the ones I'm most interested in working with. Particularly in today's world, the professional community at large is increasingly grateful for the kind of alums Randolph-Macon and now Randolph College have sent out into the world.

I really wanted to end my remarks with a song, to attempt to demonstrate to my wonderful music professors present tonight that their time wasn't wasted. But no matter how hard I practiced, I'm simply not hip enough for Minnie the Moocher, so Dr. Quillian's rendition will have to stand unchallenged for now.

Instead I will just say thank you, and *Vita Abundantior*.

#

Closing remarks by President Klein:

Thank you, Kathy, for sharing your journey and the inspirations and triumphs that you've enjoyed. You are a fine example of what can be achieved by aligning a liberal arts degree with enthusiasm, talents, and hard work.

It is a pleasure to honor both of you, Suzanne and Kathy. Congratulations and thank you again for the distinction you have brought to our College.

This is the conclusion of our program this evening. Thank you for joining us.