

Founders Week Speech
September 16th, 2022
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Class of 2023

In 1917, the first class of 7 students graduated from SAS. There was a great deal of personal pride felt by the School Executive Mr. Caldwell who presided over the event. Certainly he expressed the feelings of the 240 Americans present when he said:

“The Shanghai American School is the fruition of a dream of faith, hope, and love. It is not strange, therefore, that the school should stand for high ideals and lofty ambitions.”

With his words in mind

I thought about what 110 means to me
The divine combination of a decade and a century
I thought about what SAS means to me
The ideal balance of collectivity and individuality

Founders are remembered
not because they were never lost
but because they were always actively looking
that's the only difference between things in the bin of lost and found

how much effort you put into it finding it

but as teenagers, even adults, we like to wipe out our sweat
emphasizing not on hard work, but on effortless
believing that bandaids for blood and bruises
is a burden to our name

creating the illusion that not caring is the cooler thing to do

but that's not true
we are blessed to be united at this time of day
at this time of year
because someone cared

someone cared enough
to open the first campus of Shanghai American School
to 38 students on September 17, 1912

someone cared enough
to expand sports facilities to accommodate for 550 students
when war destroyed the area near SAS's first location in 1932

someone like Mr. Cheney cared enough
To rent rooms to teach the children who wanted to learn during WWII
After our campus was forced to shut down in 1941

someone cared enough
to take one more chance on us in 1980
after we've been in a coma
for over 30 years

To us, dates like these feel distant
Nothing more than numbers in a history textbook
But through the small cracks on this stage
the squishy sound your chair makes

The walls and some of their peeling paint
These numbers are alive
and they have been
since 1912

So challenge yourself
To find value in the creaks and the cracks
for they are not flaws
but traces

that someone has been here before
someone in your seat
with the same ambition, same dreams
same rhythm and same beats

You'd be foolish to think that we're just a school

Because even in times of darkness and distress
Days of unease and upset

We witnessed the growth of a home
That even as we crumbled, we continued
That even as we feared, we fought
That even as we lost, we loved

So we let our scars be our tattoos of wisdom
Let our hearts be the tool we use to listen

That we live with our heads high
Not to be hypnotized by pride,
but to look up and be humbled
By the greatness that came before

To look back and know that
the reason why we're here today
is because
someone had the courage to care

Today, 110 is a celebration of youth
SAS, today is a celebration for you