



50th Anniversary of The Philadelphia School.

CAROLINE SIMON 5/5/23

I want to thank you for being here tonight to celebrate the birth of my third child, The Philadelphia School. My first two children, Jenny and Tony Laden and my granddaughter Isadora Laden, are proud TPS alums. Tony was among the first group of students to attend TPS in 1972. We honor the memory of the other four original Founders, Lynne and Peter Berman , Richard Laden and Rudi Lea who died recently just shy of his 100th birthday. Many members of the Berman family are here to remember and represent my friend of 80 years, Lynne. And everyone is delighted to honor Sandy Dean.

In recent weeks I have tried to remember what could have inspired two thirty-year-old friends from birth, working mothers of five young children to devote themselves and their families to starting a school. Perhaps, Lynne and I were inspired by our own teachers, professors and mentors, the values of our parents, grandparents and siblings, or the educational and political ferment and exploding urban rebirth of Philadelphia in the late 1960's .

Perhaps, we did it out of a need to make a positive difference in our community in a time of war and political and racial conflict.

Possibly we did it on a whim after hearing about Rudi's work in developing the John F. Kennedy school in Berlin and watching too many Judy Garland-Andy Rooney musicals. Whatever prompted us to embark on this adventure we made new friends, learned new skills and found new ways to exhaust each other and all around us. TPS sparked in us a dream of a community of happy and curious learners and families who would strive to make our city and country a joyous and noble place to be.

Tonight, we are delighted to have with us some of the people who helped launch this project two score and a dozen years ago. Thanks to mathematicians Carter Fussell, our first head teacher, and Jonathan Dushoff, our first graduate I know that formula equals 52 years. Thank you for being here just across the street from Rodeph Shalom where the first group of five year olds climbed three flights of stairs to start their first day of school in rented space in 1972.

Along the way we have been joined by first tens and then thousands of others who have contributed their time, talents and fortunes to making a shared dream come true.



In the spirit of The Philadelphia School and my favorite philosopher, Winnie the Pooh, I would like to tell you a story.

One sunny day in the Hundred Acre Wood, Winnie the Pooh and his friends were gathered together in a clearing, with balloons and streamers all around. They were having a party, and everyone was very excited.

"What's the occasion?" asked Piglet, her little nose twitching with curiosity.

"It's a celebration!" exclaimed Pooh, and I love a good party. "We're celebrating the 50th anniversary of the start of The Philadelphia School ."

"Oh, bother," sighed Eeyore who looked remarkably like Peter, "I'm sure nobody will remember me because I tried to talk you out of such a crazy idea. I thought it would never work."

"But you did so much to help us despite your doubts because we were all friends "said Pooh, patting Eeyore's back. "You were part of the team."

As they all sat down to enjoy some cake and tea, Pooh began to tell the story of how they came up with the idea for the school.

"It all started with an acorn of an idea," he said, "and we worked hard with our friends to make it grow into a beautiful tree with sturdy roots and values to sustain it. We built a trunk of wise and caring teachers, staff and board members to make it strong enough to withstand the winds of change. The teachers sent out branches to explore every aspect of learning and caring, nourishing children from all over the city and the woods. And now, after 50 years, 1000 students and one pandemic, it is flourishing. and exploring all that a school can be."

"Indeed," added Owl, "I remember when we first began discussing the idea. We were all gathered around the Bermans' dining room table, brainstorming ideas and putting together a plan." "And drinking lemonade and eating brownies." said Pooh.

"Rabbit and Phil and Alan were in charge of building the school," said Tigger, bouncing around excitedly. "And Betty and I were in charge of entertainment and Jack was in charge of money! "

"And Carter, Maggie, Ellen, Sandy and I were in charge of the curriculum," said parent Kanga proudly. "We wanted to make sure Roo and the other children were learning everything they needed to know to become everything they wanted to be."

"And we were in charge of the farm," said Christopher Donner and Madge, smiling. "We wanted to create a beautiful outdoor space for children to explore and learn about the natural world."

As they all reminisced about the early days of the school, they were interrupted by a happy group of the school's former students singing together dressed in bright red t-shirts, all grown up and

successful in their careers and pursuits, responsible citizens with children of their own.

"We just wanted to come to the party and say thank you," they said. "Without this school, we wouldn't be what we are today. You ,the founders and funders, the teachers and staff, the sustainers and supporters all truly made a difference in our lives."

Pooh and friends were overjoyed to hear this, and they all hugged the students and each other tightly with tears in their eyes and joy in their hearts.

As the party came to an end and they all said their goodbyes, Pooh reflected on the importance of working with friends to make a difference in the world.

"We may have started with just an acorn of an idea," Pooh said, "but with hard work and dedication, working together, we were able to create something good and wonderful. And who knows what other seeds of ideas and jars of honey we might find and share in the future?"

"It is all so delicious."

Thank you.