

**GRADUATION
EDITION**

The Sou'wester

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RHODES AT MEMPHIS - May 16, 2015

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Above: *The Lynx in its graduation best.*

CLASS OF 2015, REMEMBER WHEN...

BY PHOEBE DRISCOLL '15
STAFF WRITER

...the Memphis Grizzlies made it to the Western Conference finals?

...we had to wake up for PA events as freshman?

...a Rat employee accidentally published their personal tweet to the public Refectory Twitter account?

...when Smashing Pumpkins came to Beale Street Music Festival?

...the Flying V's opened for Dr. Dog?

...Search and Life were things?

...Mayor A.C. Wharton shared a picture of

...Elvis was at President Troutt's?

...Juicy J gave a 901 shoutout during Rites of Spring?

...we all lived through The Great Ship Mutiny of Senior Week 2015?

PARTING WORDS

IT WOULD BE STRANGE TO TITLE THIS ANYTHING OTHER THAN “PICKLES”

BY PHOEBE DRISCOLL '15
STAFF WRITER

A few months ago, I wrote my senior seminar paper on Philip Roth's *American Pastoral*. I'll admit, though the paper took on a life of its own, I didn't initially choose Roth's work for his political commentary or historical value. I chose Roth because his protagonist is much like me: a slave to nostalgia's grip. Wistful to a fault.

You know, the weepy-English-major type. I chose Roth because, buried beneath layers of obstinacy, he doesn't hide from the brutal force of loneliness that can bury anyone—a force that comes to mind often, especially in today's ruthless, fast-paced world.

On the eve of his 45th high school reunion, Roth's narrator Nathan Zuckerman is thinking about pickles. He's thinking about pickles because pickles characterized his entire youth, in a way. Prone to longing, Zuckerman remembers the smell of the pickle barrels in small-town New Jersey where he grew up.

It is visceral to him, the connection between the pickles and way the world felt raw and full, as if every dream was his for the taking. He is overcome with the importance of retrospection: “The detail, the immensity of the detail, the force of the detail, the weight of the detail—the rich endlessness of details surrounding you in your young life like the six feet of dirt that'll be packed on your grave when you're dead.”

Our setting is different. The sentiment remains, though—the same powerful and sweeping awareness of nostalgia that is overwhelming me currently, typing at my computer in a studio apartment, moments away from graduating with the class of 2015.

I'm thinking about pickles. I'm thinking about the minute details of college life that took hold inside my heart. I'm thinking about what no SAT prep book or high school counselor could have possibly prepared me for: the profound importance of the connections I have made at Rhodes and in Memphis. The memories are all intertwined, somehow. A brief and pointed conversation with an English professor that made me reevaluate my defensiveness.

A night during the winter of my sophomore year that still catches in my throat, during which I realized I was wildly in love with my best friend. The haze of smoke-filled Alex's Tavern watching my beloved Grizzlies beat the Golden State Warriors in Game 3 of the NBA playoffs. All those goddamn pickles—all the ways in which Rhodes and Memphis shaped me into who I am today.

But I'm also thinking about, say, those wooden barrels that hold the pickles. The weighty stuff of history books that happens to contain all my individual setbacks and private triumphs. The intense undercurrent of social and political change



Above: Phoebe Driscoll repping the Griz at Baccalaureate.

that seemed to gain force as the year barreled on. Perhaps I'm biased as a senior, but this past school year at Rhodes, especially, has elicited remarkable change. Students took it upon themselves to expose the nasty undercurrents of racism that still pervade our culture. The administration finally started talking about sexual assault.

People started acting. And though much still needs to be done to create an open and nurturing campus climate, I was thrilled to see my peers speak up. It's no small thing to find your voice.

Zuckerman finds his voice only after his high school reunion. Comforted by the anonymity of nightfall, reminiscing on the speech he wished he'd given his classmates—a speech to himself “masked as a speech to them”—Zuckerman is overcome by his innate vulnerability.

He is awed by the progression of time: “That the results are in for the class of January 1950—the unanswerable questions answered, the future revealed—is that not astonishing? To have lived—and in this country, and in our time, and as who we were. Astonishing.”

We are not Roth's fictional class of 1950, of course. Our history is our own. It is propelled by a changing political climate, by the Baltimore riots, by a drought-stricken California. It is propelled by the city of Memphis that surrounds us, poised for change and doggedly persistent, but still victim to destitution.

And the only reason the driving forces of time are bearable—the unspeakable police brutality of recent months, the poverty that bleeds bright red just beyond our gated collegiate paradise—is through the goodness of humanity that must prevail.

In *American Pastoral*, Zuckerman deems it wild, “that everything so immediately visible in our lives as classmates we still remember so precisely.” And isn't it? Isn't it remarkable to think of the people we were at eighteen or nineteen years old? Scouring the Rat dining hall for our freshmen year roommate? Trembling in a twin-size bed next to a formal date who was just as lost?

What a trip – to take the same lurching bus ride to President Trout's house for Wednesday's dinner four years later, only this time a little more confident. A little less alone.

To confirm that I have learned lessons during my time at Rhodes is a gross understatement. I learned to question values in an academic setting until my brain hurt. I learned to stop wasting my Lynx bucks on mediocre coffee. I learned that love and devotion can often be confused, because both are blind in the face of a poisonous relationship.

I learned that Memphis will give as much as you are willing to put in. And above all, I think, I will graduate from Rhodes with an astounding piece of knowledge that is absolutely priceless: the weight of the world is less heavy when you let people in.

The loneliness is tolerable when you let yourself be a page in someone else's story. It sounds so simple, doesn't it? It has taken me twenty-three years to learn, and I have the city of Memphis and the community of Rhodes to thank for that.

PARTING WORDS

A LETTER FROM A FRIEND



BY CHRISTIAN ZOELLER '15
STAFF WRITER

Dear Rhodes College Class of 2015,

It is with the deepest compassion that I now address you. I've never had such an opportunity and I want you to know that I don't take it lightly. I'll start with a quote from the wayward Kentuckian, Hunter S. Thompson, from when he was exactly our age. It comes from a letter he wrote to a friend who'd asked for life advice, and reads:

"To presume to point a man to the right and ultimate goal—to point with a trembling finger in the RIGHT direction is something only a fool would take upon himself."

Well, my beautiful friends, I am a fool for you. I can't say that what I think is right, but every opinion is worth something in its own way, and I have strong opinions about us. I feel that in my time at Rhodes College, I have accumulated at least a drop of wisdom, and a bucket full of passion by comparison. I can say these things now, I think, because I know you feel them too.

Maybe you don't realize it yet, but something is stirring inside of us—and I don't just mean our class. I mean our entire generation. We are waking up to our nearly limitless potential. Here is the only fact that I will include in this short address, because I assume it is one that will surprise you, as it did me: our generation is more populous than the Baby Boomers. Okay, so that was a lot of hype for something so seemingly trivial. So

what? You might say. Well, here's where I pour my feelings out on the page like never before—hang tight.

Our planet is suffering. And not just the impoverished peoples of the so-called "Developing" world. I mean our entire ecosystem, the predatory global economy, this network of life that supports our human throne, is bound for withering desolation. Soon we will be in a position to take up the mantle of true adulthood and responsibility, and the challenges we face are endless. Don't worry though, it's not hopeless—trust me here and we can trudge out of this mire together.

Throughout my academic career at Rhodes, I have been taught one very specific skill: question everything. Now, some of you may know me well, and want to say, "Oh, Christian's a conspiracy nut, he's just saying that." But then you'll think back to a class you may have had, a class where you learned some devastating truth about the way our "civilized" society operates, and you'll think twice about blowing off my exhortation.

It calls to mind for me our reputation for producing service-minded individuals, our involvement in the community outside of our gates. It would be easy enough for us to leave here and forget our true duty to the place and the people outside of our bubble. Truly, many of the obstacles we will face are horrendous and menacing, but I never said it was going to be easy to do what we have to do. We have to question everything that we take for granted for one important reason.

Can you guess it? I bet not...

The answer is love. Love of our

neighbors, love of our planet, and most importantly, love of our selves. Only once we learn to give of ourselves in earnest will we have the solution to all of our problems. I've had to struggle with this idea for a long time. As an aspiring writer, I am drawn towards the promise of fame and influence like a moth to a flame, but what would I truly have to show for writing along the status quo? Money? Perhaps. Fame? Unlikely. Deep, abiding fulfillment? Most certainly not.

It is a perilous sort of thing, being at this crossroads in life and history. Now more than ever humanity needs leaders, and we graduates have the capacity to do almost anything. The independence that we have finally earned is frightening, and the pressure to "succeed" is palpable, but we must remind ourselves of the values of Rhodes College as we step forward to build the future. It staggers me to think of the change that about five hundred Rhodes graduates can make in the world—so this is why I am writing to you. Consider it a reminder to just breathe. You were meant for this life.

Be confident, but critical. Be kind, but relentless. Be opinionated, but open-minded. And as you take your first fledgling steps into the wide, wide world, don't run from the adversity you find there—run towards it. Rhodes has equipped us with the tools we need to root out the inequality, the stains on our country's soul that we have often felt so deeply here at school and out in the city of Memphis. Better yet, Rhodes has supplied us with the most powerful

resource we could have ever asked for: each other. Working individually we can accomplish great things, many of which may withstand the test of time. But together we can change the world. We can save it, for, truly, there is no better way to put it.

But this all seems to be big talk, coming from someone whose life experience is modest by comparison with many. Where do we start? You might ask. How do we know when we are in the right place, so to speak? To that I have no concrete answer, other than that I am deeply confident in us. And of course, no one is perfect.

We will stumble. We will fall and we will lose many battles, but nothing worth fighting for was ever easy to win. If you sit in a quiet place, and listen to your heart for long enough, your feet will eventually take you where you need to be. I can promise you that.

So, without dragging this out into any more gushing sentimentality (I am, after all, a helpless romantic) I'll leave you with my senior quote from high school, because I feel its weight now like I never thought I would. It's from a Dave Matthews song, and goes like this:

"To change the world, it takes one step. However small, the first step is hardest of all. But once you get your gait, you'll be walking tall."

Best of luck my fellow graduates.

Love,
Christian A. Zoeller
Rhodes College '15

PARTING WORDS

WHAT WE BRINGS WITH US, WHAT WE LEAVE BEHIND

BY AUBREY FLOWERS '15
STAFF WRITER

Writing in the Morehouse newspaper, the Maroon Tiger, back in 1947, an 18-yr-old Martin Luther King, Jr. expounded passionately on the moral side of learning. He cautioned that when considering the purpose of schooling, “We must remember that intelligence is not enough. Intelligence plus character—that is the goal of true education.” Though I’m now four years older than King was when he wrote those words, I cannot speak with even a small degree of his insight and eloquence. In fact, I have little authority from which to offer my opinion, but when I look back on my experience at Rhodes, the weight of King’s words compel me to do so anyway. My real education here has been transformative not in its effects on my intellect, though those have been considerable, but in its contributions to my character.

Character is forged through interactions with others, through experiences that stretch who you are by helping you see things from others’ perspectives. But it is more than the development of understanding; it is also acting on this empathy to support others. This can certainly occur in the classroom, where we commiserate with peers and gain different viewpoints through textual analysis and conversation. But it is more likely to happen outside of the classroom, in those moments of shared understanding that draw us outside of our self-centeredness, help us to become more caring people, and give us the space to walk beside others in their journeys.

Rhodes actively encourages this community engagement. It prides itself (often rather ostentatiously at times) on its recent recognition as the “Most Service-Oriented” college in the country, and though this aspect of the school’s mission is undoubtedly problematic in some respects, raising questions about who (server or served) is truly benefitting from the relationship, my experiences have reinforced its value as a way to promote strong ties to the surrounding community and a subsequent commitment to the struggle (and triumphs) this community embodies.

For several semesters, I had the opportunity to intern at a local nonprofit organization that provides quality, affordable health services to the working uninsured. It’s a remarkable place, offering a variety of comprehensive health services from clinics to exercise equipment to nutritional programming, and there I’ve had the privilege of listening to and documenting the stories of some members of the facility. Those stories have drawn me, irrevocably, into the lives and issues of the Memphis community, and into the ongoing efforts to help treat the sores of racism, heterosexism, classism, ethnocentrism, and sexism, among others, that have so plagued our school, city, and global community.

Developing these relationships means committing to contribute to these huge problems, no matter how self-conscious we may be in our bumbling efforts to do so. I know my contributions are imperfect and limited, but I have tried nonetheless, and in my mind, that’s what service or activism is—realizing that however foolish and flawed our labors may be, it is our human privilege and purpose to join our hands with others and walk beside them in their pain and joy. It’s realizing that the overwhelming complexity, scope, and ambiguity of the world’s problems do not give us an excuse to avoid them but rather mandate that we work all the harder to alleviate them.

Our class has tremendous potential; many of us will become successful professionals—future leaders in finance, law, healthcare, academia, politics, and countless other fields. But if we’re honest with ourselves, so too will classes graduating from similarly competitive institutions across the country; they are also talented, intelligent, and hard-working. They have also been armed with the necessary skills and connections to be successful in the modern workplace. And yet our college experience has been different. From the Bonner Program,

to Kinney, from GlobeMed to Tri-Hop, even if we’ve been eating the pancakes instead of handing them out, service has been vital to our time at Rhodes.

As we leave this place we have to make choices about what to bring with us and what to leave behind. We’re young, hungry, and ready to use all the advantages we’ve accrued over the past four years to better our own prospects. But if we stop there, then we’ve missed the point. If we are to take advantage of what Rhodes has given us, then we should also take seriously what this institution has asked of us. We must choose, repeatedly, to center the culture of service in our postgraduate lives. If we accept our responsibilities rather than relish our privileges, then when we look back at the Rhodes College class of 2015 we will be able to honestly and proudly claim our difference.

King, ten years after the publication of his article in the Maroon Tiger and ten years before he was assassinated just miles from where we have attended class inside Rhodes’ wrought-iron gates, stated: “Life’s most persistent and urgent question is: what are you doing for others?” King gave his life in answer to this question; what will we do?



Above: Aubrey Flowers embracing a grizzly bear.

SENIOR WEEK

BLOOD, SWEAT AND TEARS

BY MARK LAINOFF '15
STAFF WRITER

It's our last week at Rhodes College: the grand finale, closing time, Senior Week. For some of us, this week will be remembered as the last time we enjoyed the company of our closest friends. For others, it will be remembered as the first time we met new ones.

It's an intensely emotional time, from fear to optimism, anger to joy, longing, lust and love – the circumstances are individual, but the tsunami-style flood of feelings is universal. And with them comes a week unparalleled by any other at Rhodes.

It's wild, it's crazy, it's characterized by an unprecedented confidence to say and do what one wants. Kiss me, take a shot with me, go to lunch with me, take a picture with me, have my number, meet my friends, meet your friends, tell me about your favorite class, tell me about your favorite Memphis moment, tell me your name. The “how did we never meet?”s, the “save me, I am too hung-over to eat”s, the “let's get naked and ride the lynx.”

For the first time in the senior class's college career, we experience these sentiments together. Many of us met freshman year. Maybe we shared an Open Rhodes or PA group or a Life class. Regardless of where we started, in these finite remainder of days we are once again reunited on an adventurous common ground.

Previously held judgments, poor decisions, negative opinions, falsified rumors and all of the imperfections of humanity that may have separated our

class throughout college are thrown to the wayside.

It's a utopian week of college perfection, where all doubts are abandoned and the love we have maintained for our class, our school and our city is the only dictator of our behaviors (no matter how drunken or outlandish they might be).

Surely, not everyone's experience at Rhodes was the same. Some of us that started here might not have even made it this far to enjoy the week at all. But if

you are going to take away anything from this week, know that we as a class will always have the blood of aggressive pool party and golf cart injuries, the sweat of Rec Room gaming, and the tears of graduation to remember.

From learning about the fluidity of gender, to guzzling gallons of alcohol, to secreting bodily fluids, flow on, Class of 2015.



Above: Mark Lainoff cheering at the Rhodes Class of 2015.

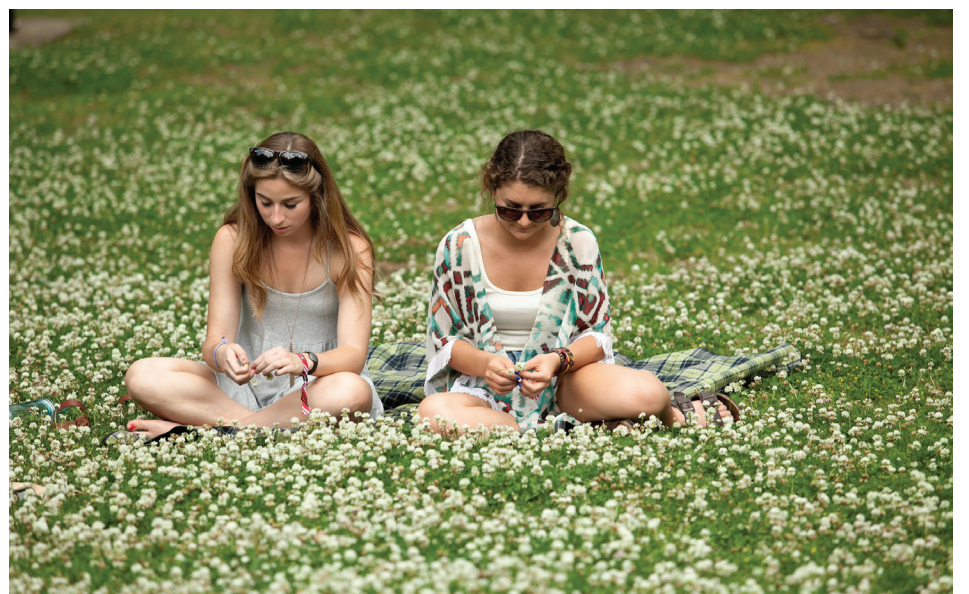
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SENIOR WEEK: PHOTO OPS



SENIOR WEEK: PHOTO OPS



FAREWELL CLASS OF 2015

GETTING ENGAGED

By HENRY MORRIS '15
STAFF WRITER

I spent my first semester at Rhodes acting like a total jerk to almost everyone I met. There were some contributing factors: I had a long-distance girlfriend, which I used as an excuse for not putting effort into a social life; I was away from my parents for the first time, which made me homesick; and I was scared of joining a fraternity (the most tangible remedy to my social struggles), so I masked my self-consciousness about not being popular by acting self-righteous about the system in general. I wasn't involved in any on-campus activities, I was coasting through my classes, and I had a handful of extremely gracious friends but no motivation to hang out with them on the weekends. I was miserable.

Fast-forward to May 13th, three days until Graduation. Currently, I am sitting in my bed, wearing the same clothes that I wore during yesterday's Senior Week activities, and I could not be more satisfied with my college experience. What changed? I can point to two things that helped make the difference.

First, I decided to actually do something on campus. I picked Mock Trial, which, aside from introducing me to a totally new group of (smart, interesting, and kind) friends, turned out to be an extremely rewarding way to spend my time and competitive energy. I could write about Mock



Above: Henry Morris classing up the Class of 2015.

Trial forever, but I won't, for that very reason. Just know that it gave me a "thing."

By "thing," I mean some activity, cause, social group, etc. to both self-identify with and to use as a social marker on campus. Most Rhodes students have multiple things, and some students juggle three or four. I only wanted one, and with Mock Trial, I had it.

This might sound a little strange, but the other thing that turned my college experience around was meet-

ing a group of eight, soon-to-be-graduated girls, all of whom have been best friends since our freshman year. Their names are Elizabeth, Katie, Hannah, Perri, Lucy, Sadie, Shelby, and Tea Rose, and I consider them among the luckiest people I know.

Six of them were randomly assigned to live in Glassell Hall as freshmen, they all met and became friends at some point during that initial semester, and all eight are compatible people that enjoy each other's company and care for and treat one another like

sisters (in the good ways and the bad).

They also call themselves "the Assholes," which—considering that they are some of the nicest people I have ever met—is pretty hilarious.

I am extraordinarily proud to be friends with this group of ladies. But more than that, I can look back and see that they inspired me to try and find the people at Rhodes that I was compatible with. During my freshman year, I did a great job of distancing myself from people I didn't like, but I spent practically no time trying to find people that I did want to hang out with.

For me, the Assholes are an example of eight people who might have lucked out in terms of meeting one another, but who were smart enough to make the effort to stay together once they realized how naturally their values and priorities coincided. I have taken their efforts as motivation to do the same with my close friends, and I feel that I am better for it.

Who would have thought that what you get out of college turns out to be directly proportional to what you put in? Maybe there's a life lesson to be had here. "Get engaged?" Yikes. Maybe not...

Anyway, Mock Trial and the Assholes saved my college experience, and both those things wouldn't even exist without Rhodes. So, thanks Rhodes, for giving an already privileged person the tools to recognize how good he actually had it.

Staff of The Sou'Wester

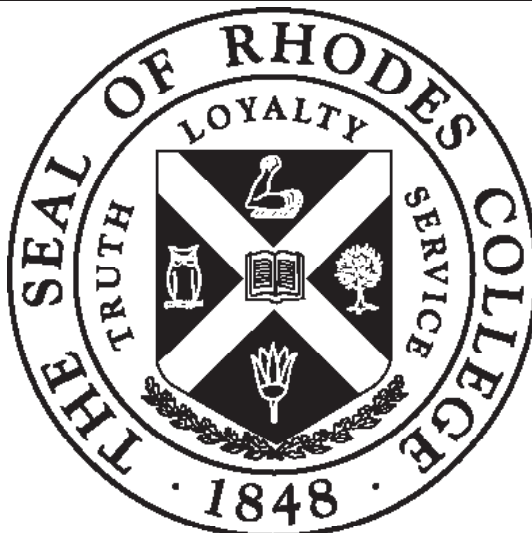
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