



# Michael Fairfax

## 2020

In preparation for writing this speech, Michael, I thought it would be prudent to ask various members of the Salisbury community to help me articulate the numerous qualities and attributes that have contributed to your remarkable successes here on the Hilltop. The accolades and commendations are too numerous to recount here, but one comment from a particular roommate did stand out. In this young man's estimation, your success can be directly ascribed to the fact that he has "carried you" these past three years. Whether that be true or not, I do not agree with his assessment. While this cherished Sarum brother may well have "carried you," he is erroneous in thinking that his determined efforts and endeavors vaulted you to such towering heights. Everyone knows it was clearly another example of good old-fashioned, world-class advising!

In all seriousness, Michael, since the day you arrived from Toms River, New Jersey, you have been the author and architect of your own success. Truth be told, in my twelve years at Salisbury, I am extremely hard-pressed to think of a fellow Crimson Knight who has exemplified and demonstrated the range of admirable qualities, in and out of the classroom, the way you have. It is remarkable to think that your journey here on the Hilltop is coming to an end, but I have thoroughly enjoyed watching you thrive, excel, and grow these past three years. Michael, it is my privilege and great honor to speak on your behalf this evening as you are inducted into the Salisbury Chapter of the Cum Laude Society.

As you demonstrated repeatedly over the course of the time you have spent here as a Knight, you are a young man of tremendous character, humility, kindness, and talent. You are also someone who possesses tremendous determination, keen intellect, and deep curiosity. I have witnessed this first-hand on countless occasions, as have the numerous teachers who have been fortunate enough to work closely with you over the years. As your current AP Calculus AB instructor, Adam Mayer, remarked, "The epitome of a Salisbury Gentleman, [you are] a talented and committed student, athlete, and leader. In no uncertain terms, you made [the AB] classroom – and school – better." Further, your College Advisor, Jade Colling, wrote, "Michael is mature, responsible, genuine, curious, goal-oriented, thoughtful, and has a tremendous concern for others. In my seven years as an educator, Michael is among the most impressive young men I have encountered." High praise indeed, and I concur wholeheartedly!

As a scholar, you have continued to push yourself with a rigorous course-load spending equal time, and finding equally lofty achievement, on both sides of the Quad. Your three-year academic record here on the Hilltop, which includes four APs and six Honors-level courses, boasts of High Honors distinction in every trimester, along with a single, solitary grade below an A. In recognition of your efforts and abilities, you were awarded the "Writer's Journey" Prize in your sophomore year, as well as the "Civil Rights & Vietnam" Prize as a junior. Furthermore, as a fifth former, you received a major school award when you were presented with The Harvard Prize. This Salisbury book prize is presented annually to the outstanding student in last year's Fifth Form who "displays excellence in scholarship and high character, combined with achievement in other fields." I believe your AP Statistics teacher, Dixon Hargrove, best captured the essence of how and why you have been so

successful in the classroom here at Salisbury when he wrote of you, "He is accountable and takes ownership of the learning process, he asks questions when he needs clarification, and he takes note of his errors to make sure he learns from his mistakes."

Our appreciation and recognition of your outstanding contributions extend far beyond the walls of Centennial and Wachtmeister-Bates. For three extraordinary winters you have graced the ice of Rudd Rink as an invaluable member of the Varsity Hockey Team reaching the Championship Game in each of those seasons. The third time proved to be the charm as you and your teammates summited the mountain as New England Champs, with you as one of the captains and an instrumental leader of the team. Earlier in the season, you were recognized as the Most Valuable Player of the prestigious Flood-Marr Tournament, where you helped guide the Knights to victory in the Championship Game against our neighbors from Lakeville – I couldn't resist!

Next season, you will be taking your talents to Bonnyville, where you will spend the season playing junior hockey for the Pontiacs in pursuit of your goal of playing Division I hockey. As the reigning champ of Canadian Trivia, you are one of only four people on campus who actually know where Bonnyville is. Bonnyville, Alberta, will be lucky to have you! They are getting a phenomenal player and an even better young man.

Away from the spotlight of the Flood Athletic Center, you have been a servant leader here on the Hilltop. In your role as a Prefect, you have helped shepherd and guide your dorm-mates in Payson with a calm, quiet and attentive demeanor. Countless boys and families have made the decision that the next school they want to call home is Salisbury on account of spending an hour walking around campus with you as a member of the Key Society. Meanwhile, your generosity and compassion for others have extended beyond the Main Gate as you and your friends volunteered your time to aid and support a local cancer patient in need. As Kim McDowell, your former Math teacher, wrote, "Michael is humble and compassionate despite his physical talents and academic power." Your kindness, humility, and care for others will be sorely missed.

No speech dedicated to honor and recognize a son of New Jersey would be complete without a quote from one of the state's foremost poets. No, I'm not speaking about Mr. Wynne but, rather, Mr. Bruce Springsteen. Truth be told, I am more of a Neil Young or Gordon Lightfoot kind of guy, but I do think the Boss may well have been thinking of you when he wrote in his autobiography, Born to Run, "All you need to do is risk being your true self." From the moment you arrived on the Hilltop, Michael, we all knew and appreciated that you were willing to take that risk. For three years, we have benefited from your being your true, authentic self. Michael, you are a remarkable scholar, athlete, and citizen, and I am extremely pleased, and I am truly honored, in recognition of your academic excellence and achievement, to welcome you to the Cum Laude Society.

Andrew Will  
20 May, 2020