

**Gordon Sewall's Remarks at The Fessenden School
Bench Dedication in Elizabeth's Memory**
May 28, 2013

Thank you Dave.

Most couples find a moment to talk about the adventures they encountered during any given day and Elizabeth and I were no exception. What was different was that our conversation was often about the same subject area but with different people filling the lead roles depending on which orbit we wandered into and they often overlapped. Scott and Duncan would, from time to time, admonish us to stop talking about work so we would stop for a while, but we often came back to the stories and challenges of the day.

Full disclosure: we were often talking about many of you here today, people with a share in the responsibility for Fessenden's welfare and who took that responsibility seriously. This group included colleagues, headmasters, faculty, trustees, alumni, facilities staff and a universe of moms and dads, and, of course, the boys. Well this is no special news by itself but what is special is how much she cared for you. She wanted to get things right, highly aspirational, but right above all else, such was the depth of respect she had for the sacrifices you, her fellow stake holders, made each day for Fessenden.

She was an instant match for Fessenden, expert in her field and possessing a personal laboratory for developing boys right there in our home. She loved raising Scott and Duncan, scratching her female head from time to time but, ultimately, understanding what made boys tick, and with abiding love for them as precious individuals. She studied boyhood hard and came to understand the basics of helping boys grow into men of merit with fully developed feelings and affections there for the world to see and admire. She so wanted that for her own sons and for the Fessenden boys as well.

I was pretty much a finely tuned, finished product when we met 22 years ago...well truth is she did her best work with me, helping me find the pathways to happiness and contentment. Supplanting worry energy with work energy in the most supportive and encouraging way – a partner for the ages.

She took care of each one of us in such an efficient manner we often didn't know we were being taken care of, that was the magic of it all. She brought out the best in people by knowing their best selves instantly upon meeting them. That's why the most common phrase in all the beautiful tributes we received after she died was along these lines:

“When I walked in the room, I was sure I was the only one who didn't know anybody and there was Elizabeth reaching out and securing a connection that felt like a life-line in those awkward moments. I'll never forget how good she made me feel.”

This bench is such a meaningful tribute to her. With all the high energy coursing through her each day, she most valued her moments of quiet and reflection. This is a place where all of us will come to sit from time to time and when we do, we will feel the loving intersection between Fessenden and Elizabeth, the chance to settle down and reflect on what matters most in our lives. And when you do come here to sit, you will learn what true love is all about, people taking care of people on into the future, forever. Now that's aspirational.

Thank you for this honor. I know she is aware of the love enshrined in this thoughtful gesture and I know she will find a way to say her own thank you to each one of you. Be on the lookout for it.