Dear Classmates,

Every time I sit down to write this letter, I hear a Holy Cross professor telling me my grammatical errors are leaving the effect of semi-literacy. So let me just start by saying: I still like to break the rules!

Seriously, though, around the corner from our 25th Reunion, I had an apropos conversation with a law school classmate about the significance of alma mater car stickers. When I reminded her that I’d grown up with Holy Cross stickers on all of our cars, she so aptly replied: “But Kate, that is different. Holy Cross is a way of life.”

I laughed. She is right. Holy Cross is a way of life.

Like Lynne McDonald Harding, I too hail from a Holy Cross family, including my father Hugh ’49, brother Jack ’75, brother Hugh ’86 and sister Mary Ellen ’86. I still remember being dropped off at Wheeler the first day, my father warning what was going to happen if any Curran fights broke out there (my brother and then-nemesis Hugh lived on Wheeler 1 and I was assigned to Wheeler 2)!!

What I remember most about Holy Cross is the fun and the friendship! The toga parties, boxer short parties, rugby parties, hockey parties, Caro Street parties, Cambridge Street parties – you name it! Impromptu nights at Breen’s, Guertin’s, The Red Baron, even The Loft. Road trips to football games, road trips to hockey games, road trips to Cape Cod. Ohhh, Cape Cod (O.K., there are a few memories I’d like to erase ....).

So much fun with so many great friends, including but not limited to (yes, I am a lawyer) Dee Dee Brennan, Mary McLean, Karen Sweeney, Tracey Loft, Mimi Hoemoke-Rau, Tricia Amend, Marie Kenny, Kathy McNiff, Chris Elgo, Janey McBride, Stacy Rubin, Kathy Corkery, Kika
Giner (Kika: where are you??), Mary Pomer, Kelly Donahue, Jo Kosewski, Cristal Munson, Jane Golden, Linda Dorsey, Maureen Waterbury, Ginny Valade, Alex England and so many more!

I so wish I could remember more about the academics! Professor Lawlor wrote my law school recommendations – but I think he knew me more from lifeguarding at the pool than from class! It is funny (you’ll see why in a moment), but the two classes I think of the most now are Comparative Politics (one which really got my attention) and Theology of Liberation in Latin America (to which I was strangely drawn, but didn't dare take with it's thrice-weekly paper requirement). Well, I must have mastered learning by osmosis because I cannot believe how much I learned at Holy Cross! What I would give today to go back, read all those books and attend all those classes I missed!

Between the Jesuits and my father, a life-long public servant, though, I did hear that call to service and social justice and started my career in the non-profit sector. After six years, I started law school with the intention of starting a non-profit advocating for juvenile rights.

*Somehow* ... I ended up as Head of External Affairs (Americas) for G.E.’s consumer finance division. I spent most of my time shuttling between New York and Washington, D.C., developing external strategies around issues like privacy, identity theft, credit card and mortgage practices, etc. Hmmmmmmmm.

But a series of personal losses eventually produced profound change.

Over about 20 months in 2005-2006, we lost my brother Jack ’75, my father Hugh ’49 and my mother. My brother’s loss was a real blow, and a painful reminder of how short life can be. My father’s death produced overwhelming evidence of the value of the public servant’s life, and my mother’s death produced overwhelming evidence of the value of a generous life.

And, as if all of this wasn’t enough, my mother’s last words to us were (before the Hail Mary of course!): “I’ve had a *great* life.” Not a good life, or a really good life, but a *great* life.

I think of those words as her last gift to me, really, because they caused deep reflection around the recipe of a *great* life and eventually put me on a new path.
I resigned from my position at G.E. and, still too shell-shocked to make any decisions, began to travel. I roamed around Patagonia, the Andes and the barrios of Argentina, wandered through the museums of Paris and the history of Normandy, volunteer taught in semi-rural Tanzania, drove across ancestral Ireland, and studied Spanish in Spain. It was a year of heaven on earth, and a wonderful course in gratitude, the majesty of the world, and the common values shared by even the most diverse of people.

At the end of my sabbatical last May, I founded The Giving Project (with Jo Kosewski as my Board Chair). We're focusing on tangible infrastructure projects – projects we can all understand, visualize and trust. Schools that educate children, footbridges that keep them safe from crocodiles on their way to school, and water recycling systems that keep them well-nourished. It has been a great year.

Like any entrepreneurial venture, there have been lots of ups and downs. I often spend long, lonely days at my laptop in the dining room. I now aspire to a recent college grad level income. I’m a long, long way from the days of corporate travel - taking 20-hour bus rides across Central America, “bathing” in an outhouse in Mukasanga, Zambia and getting excited about diet coke. Yet, I so often find myself wondering: How did I get so lucky!

I spent much of last week talking to 7th graders about the Zambian kids who cross through crocodile-infested waters to get to school. This week I reunited with my G.E. Washington friends to plan a fundraiser in the G.E. offices there. And Sunday it’s on to Central America (with my copy of Gutierrez’ Theology of Liberation treatise for plane reading). We’ll be celebrating our first anniversary with the inauguration of our first water recycling project at a Honduran orphanage, our first middle school in the Mayan village of Chuguexa, Guatemala and our first elementary school in the Mayan village of Rio Mactzul, Guatemala.

If you visit our website – www.thegivingproject.net -- you’ll see we have a dual mission of creating lasting infrastructure and inspiring global citizenship. So if the opportunity to immediately impact the lives of some of the poorest kids in the world stirs you, shoot me an email at mkatecurran@thegivingproject.net or look for me at Reunion!
Speaking of Holy Cross, even with my new lifestyle, I am happy to be writing my check to The Holy Cross Annual Fund! It feels so right to be returning to campus this year.

Fondly,

Kate Curran