

Dr. Gulley, Dr Freer, Guest, Relatives  
Students, Faculty, Alumni, Class of 1965  
Ladies and Gentlemen

Whoever? Thank you for your introduction...

When I asked to be the 2025 Speaker for Founder's Day and the 125th Celebration since the school's beginning, I wanted to share my pride in the History of my heritage and what four generations of my Family have contributed to the success of what is now Woodward Academy. I am going to tell you about the first three Presidents of Georgia Military Academy and their wives: my Great grandparents John Charles and Lucile Woodward, my Grandparents, William Roe and Mildred Brewster Sr., and my parents, William Roe (Bill) and Kathryn (Kitty) Brewster Jr., and their contributions that built the Foundations for what is now Woodward Academy

Founder's Day was begun eighty-five years ago in 1940, after the death of Georgia Military Academy's First President and Founder Col John Charles Woodward in 1939. The day honored the memory and the accomplishments of Col Woodward and his wife Lucile in establishing this school for higher learning.

NOW, I want you to close your eyes, and we are going back on a journey in time.

With at your visual imagery, imagine Georgia 160 years ago when the Civil War Between the States ended in 1865, leaving a path of destruction from General Sherman's Army March through Georgia. Atlanta had been burned. The area around a small farming community called Jenkinsburg in Butts County, Georgia was devastated. John Charles Woodward was born the following year on July 26, 1866, on his parents' farm. He was their youngest child. The South was going through a period known as "Reconstruction." He and his family endured many hardships which existed in Georgia that were caused by that terrible war. His Father had a small store that allowed his family to eke out enough income to help and

the farm provided food for their survival. When he was old enough, he worked on the farm, in their store, or a local carriage shop to help his family survive.

Now, imagine a time when there was No electricity (candlelight or lanterns provided light), No automobiles (Horse and carriages provided transportation), Railroads were having to be rebuilt, food was what you were able to raise or trade for, health conditions were limiting, and schools that existed lacked books. Life was hard and challenging for John Charles, but he had a thirst for knowledge. He read whatever books he could find.

You can open your eyes now:

With determination John Charles earned an education which qualified him to teach at two different schools and to become an administrator for two separate Military institutions. He earned an outstanding reputation in these positions as an exceptional administrator and teacher and served as the Superintendent of Schools in Newnan, Georgia.

Because of his outstanding reputation, he was contacted in the spring of 1900 by a group of prominent citizens from College Park, Georgia. College Park had been given its name because two educational institutions had been built there on opposite sides of the West Point Railroad tracks which ran through the length of the town. Cox College was a school for girls. Southern Military Academy was the school for boys which failed and closed in 1887 and remained abandoned. These citizens of College Park needed someone to start another school on that property. They knew John Charles's reputation and requested him to come from Newnan by train. They proposed that he be given a \$1,500 loan to help him buy the three-story dilapidated building (Founder's Hall) and 16 acres of neglected land where the failed Southern Military Academy had operated. The building had no electricity, no running water, no up-to-date sanitation facilities, broken windows, a leaky roof, and crumbling mortar, all which needed repairs plus the land was overgrown with weeds and briars. He accepted their offer.

John Charles was a DREAMER, and this loan would give him the opportunity to create his dream of a military school that offered a strong

academic curriculum, and where could teach his philosophies of discipline, respect, physical fitness as well as high standards of moral and spiritual character to young men and boys.

John Charles, his wife Lucile, and their three young children quickly moved to College Park to do the necessary repairs to make the three-story Founder's Hall livable. He, Lucile, and one additional teacher opened the doors to Georgia Military Academy for 30 young male students in the Fall of 1900.

Founder's Hall provided the residences for the Woodward family with their three small children as well as the boarding students. The classrooms, a kitchen, a dining room, and an infirmary all existed inside this one building. Additional repairs would have to be completed as the funds became available.

The first three years were difficult with hardships and sacrifices, but The Woodwards were determined to keep their promise to establish a junior and a secondary Military school. Founder's Hall had been renovated and the 16 acres groomed.

As the enrollment increased, additional buildings were constructed to house students and faculty. In 1902 an additional loan was secured to construct Rugby Hall. GMA's GROWTH HAD BEGUN. In 1903 Col Woodward was able to pay back the initial \$1,500 loan. By 1910 more dormitory and faculty apartments were needed to house NOW 150 students, and 14 teachers. Rugby Annex was built in 1904. A home for Col Woodward's family known as "The Retreat" in 1905, including a barn for the horses, and a carriage house. Three additional dorms were built in 1910, YMCA, Old Gym, and Sentinel Hall.

By 1918 GMA was well established and STOCK in the school was sold to 30 investors. This money gave Col Woodward the ability for future growth of the school.

During his 39 years as President of GMA the enrollment climbed to 400 students and 32 acres of property. Several new buildings were constructed: 1918 Memorial Hall dormitory, faculty apartments, kitchen, and dining hall

1918 Founder's Hall Annex additional classrooms, offices, barber shop

1920 Three south cottages for staff

1924 New Gym for sports

1929 Memorial Gate Entrance 1935 Fagle on top of gate

1936 Swimming Pool

1936 William Randolph Hearst Rifle range

1939 Football stadium

1939 "the Oaks" Home of William Roe and Mildred Brewster

Col Woodward's DREAMS of educational institutions continued with the opening of a second school, the Carolina Military and Naval Academy in Hendersonville North Carolina in 1919. This school operated under the direction of his second son, C.D. Woodward. It closed after operating five years. DREAMING of a year-round school, Col Woodward then purchased 305 acres of land near Hendersonville, North Carolina and opened Camp Highland Lake. This would enable him to provide a year-round academic program in College Park during nine months: September through May and move to North Carolina where it was cooler from June through August. The boarding students, the faculty, and Col Woodward's family all moved up to the camp during the summer months. This camp for boys operated for 10 years. It was then purchased by his son C.D. Woodward who independently ran it and eventually sold it. Mildred, his oldest daughter operated a girl's camp across Highland Lake during the summer months called Camp Rosemont.

Col Woodward never stopped DREAMING of ways to educate young men. He envisioned an international Academy called Pan American University in Miami which would admit boys from Cuba and South America. Cuban cadets were admitted to GMA after 1926. They paid the full tuition costs, which helped to fund the school through tough economic times. The International Havatlanta Games were played in December of 1927 between GMA basketball and football athletes and Cuban athletes in Havana. The following year the Havaltanta Games were played in College Park, which

was its last year of competition. Many Cuban and South American students enrolled in GMA after their exposure to the school during those games. Unfortunately, politics prevented the formation of the Pan American University in Miami.

Col Woodward was able to guide Georgia Military Academy through rough times: WWI, the Stock Market Crash in 1929, and the Great Depression in the 1930's which were challenging for him. Those events caused financial troubles for GMA. Thankfully, Robert W. Woodruff class of '08 was a loyal GMA alumnus and head of Coca Cola. Mr. Woodruff saved his alma mater and ensured the school's existence by giving Col Woodward a loan which enabled the school's survival. Mr. Woodruff received this school's first Distinguished Alumnus Award: however, he is considered our "Most Distinguished Alumnus" as he continued to support GMA in many ways. Mr. Woodruff said that GMA was "the only School from which he ever received a diploma." He was an anonymous benefactor for many buildings including: The Gresham Chapel, which was named for his roommate while at GMA, Richard Gresham, The Richardson Art Center, named for his Sunday school teacher Mrs. Alonzo Richardson, and continued to contribute to many other constructions that still exist.

ON April 23, 1931, Col Woodward's wife Lucile died. After bearing seven children (one died), she successfully raised 6 children; two boys, Douglas, C.D., and four girls: Mildred, Marjorie, Ruth, and Grace. Lucile served as the official hostess of GMA planning all the social activities. Lucile had been an integral part of the success of GMA as an advisor to John Charles in the early years. She was a teacher, the meal director, and an away- from- home Mother and nurse to the boarding students. She helped foster and advance John Charles's DREAMS and was an invaluable influence and aid to him. Her failing health caused her to spend her winters in Miami for the last years of her life. Her death made John Charles realize his own mortality. He made a decision that ensured the survival of GMA known as "THE GREAT GESTURE." In 1932, he bought back all the stock and created a new charter for Georgia Military Academy. He GAVE their life's work away. GMA became a non-profit boy's preparatory school. Col Woodward deeded

the school to be governed by a self-perpetuating Board of Governors consisting of alumni and his children.

John Charles continued as the President of GMA until his death at the age of 73 on August 27, 1939. On that sweltering summer day, with the aid of his walking stick, he took prospective parents and their son on tour of the campus for an hour dressed in his hat, coat, and tie. He suffered a heart attack that day and died with his BOOTS ON as he always wished in his bedroom at "The Oaks," the home of Mildred, his daughter, and William Roe Brewster Sr. He had a life of DREAMS as well as the determination and courage to succeed. He has a strong belief in God and held weekly Chapel services for his cadets. I was often told by my Grandmother and my Father that he was kind, understanding, and a loving husband, father, and grandfather. He lived a LIFE of SERVICE to all the cadets who were the true beneficiaries of his life.

GMA was in financial debt at the time of his death, John Charles carried a life insurance policy. GMA was the beneficiary of that policy. All debts were paid when he died which assured the school would continue debt free.

This school has ties with the U S Service Academies as many of our graduates have earned appointments to West Point, Annapolis, and others. Both of Col Woodward's sons, Douglas and C.D., and my Father, Bill Brewster earned appointments to Annapolis. I compare the founding and growth of Georgia Military Academy to a large ship. John Charles and Lucile were the Architects and Builders of this school. The Board of Governors, consisting of loyal alumni, are the Navigators that plot and decide the school's course. The President is the Captain, who guides and steers the school on its course. The teachers and staff are the Crew who make it run. And YOU, the students are the Passengers that gain all the benefits of this well constructed school that has stood against the storms of the last 125 years.

Four Generations of my family, the first three presidents and their wives plus my sister Kathy and I who taught here for a combined 70 years have given our Lives of Service to this school. I am speaking for my ancestors when I say, "Thank you for putting your trust in our school."

I also have two requests for each student here. Go home and thank your parents for caring about and loving you enough and making their sacrifices so that you can attend Woodward Academy.

Before you leave Woodward, think of someone here at Woodward who you feel has made a difference in your life. It might be a teacher, a Coach, an administrator, a bus driver, or another Woodward staff employee. Let them know that they are special to you and thank them.