

Hollins' unexpected magic

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McKelvey, of Callaway, is a 2006 graduate of Hollins University. She majored in psychology and is a registered nurse at Carilion Franklin Memorial Hospital.

The excitement was like the first day of college. My car was packed to the ceiling with clothes, lots of shoes, towels, sheets, an air mattress and a box fan. Driving into Hollins University, my worries of everyday life disappeared like the students on graduation day.

I recently celebrated my five-year class reunion at Hollins, Roanoke's best-kept secret. Successful women from all over the world were reuniting for their second through 60th reunions.

I had forgotten what a special place this was, but it didn't take long for me to feel at home when I entered campus and saw the infamous rock painted with "Welcome Home." Tinker Mountain was smiling down at me and Carvins Creek whispered, "Nice to see you again."

I wasn't the type who

imagined spending four years at an all-girls school. For whatever reason I ended up there, I am ever so grateful.

Our name tags with our class year, along with the local wine, were the weekend's conversation starters. Everybody you met had a smile on their face as if they

traditions.

We spent the night in un-air-conditioned dorms. I realized that the younger you were, the hotter your room was. The two-year, five-year and 10-year reunion classes were on the top floor. Fortunately, the beautiful trees on front quad are a natural climate control for this eco-

with clapping and cheers, I started to cry uncontrollably. For the first time, I realized that even though Hollins feels like a magical place, we don't live forever. I imagined being that first class in the parade and missing my girlfriends, who are not just girlfriends, but sisters. I thought about how they might feel as 60 years of memories have passed.

A week later, as my friends email one another and "like" pictures on social networks, I wonder if the class of 1951 is handwriting one another exciting letters about the past weekend of fun.

I also wonder if other schools give you the same experience as a small private women's college does. You can't really explain in words what a school like Hollins does for a young woman; she just has to live it.

As I enjoyed time with the classes of 1951 through 2009, hearing of their amazing adventures and accomplishments, I was reminded of where my life path started and how lucky I am to share the experience of Hollins with such great women.

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were expecting to see you. Everybody was happy.

My best girlfriends and I skipped around campus like we were 20 again, reminiscing about the best four years of our life at this magical place. I noticed immediately that I wasn't the only one who left her husband out that weekend. Some people just wouldn't understand Hollins girls and our tacky

friendly campus.

On Saturday morning, the traditional parade of classes touched my heart. Each class carried a class banner, as the other classes cheered. When the class of 1951 marched, there were only four women present. They had white hair and a few wrinkles, to be kind, but their spirit was young.

As the front quad roared