

Good evening, and thank you. I am honored and humbled to receive this award. Tonight is one of life's indescribable moments.

For days I mulled over what to say that would convey my passion and my excitement for all that is Cornell. And then, as I was grading the first assignment from my Sloan students, it hit me. An F really describes my Cornell volunteer life. (BTW – none of my students received one.)

Usually receiving an F means failure. But for me, as a Cornell volunteer, an F means just the opposite. **It is a symbol of success.**

F is for family. My mother might also have listed “full time volunteer” on her resume. She’s always been my sounding board for everything from reunion themes to how to manage volunteers (you know, you can’t fire a volunteer, right?). She set the example that one didn’t have to be financially

rewarded if you were doing something about which you were passionate.

I sometimes feel like a split personality: my Cornell persona versus the rest of my world. You will notice that the program calls me Martha J. Sherman, but I am introduced as Marty. That is because the only people who call me Marty are my Cornell family. Everyone else in my life calls me Martha. It used to be a joke in our house – my son would answer the phone, and if the caller asked for Marty, he would yell: Mom, it's Cornell! There are only 2 Cornellians who call me Martha: cousin Bob Bitz...and my stepfather, Fred Fuess. My husband is not a Cornellian (and he calls me Martha), but he has supported my Cornell activities and passions despite not quite understanding what the fuss is all about.

Another F is for Friends, many of whom are here tonight. I often tell young class officers that the best Cornell friends are those encountered along

the way, not necessarily those known while undergrads.. I met Karen Broten Sieburgh the first day of classes, as fellow female Hotelies, creating bond which has seen us through 47 years. And I met Jules, her husband, not long after that. Ron Skalko was a fellow Hotelie...but I didn't meet his wife Lorraine (another classmate) until our 20th reunion –the same time I met Rick Saltz. Rick's wife Lynn, was added to our circle several years later. Paul Cashman and Susan Murphy are classmates, but we didn't meet until after we had been out of Cornell for years. But it's not just classmates who I count as friends. I met John Foote in Philadelphia and Kris Rupert as a fellow DG, Jim Hanchett and Nancy Butler through CACO and Ruth Bleyler and Paul Hayre in the CCoB. I've made friends through class work, CRC, regional clubs, CACO, the Hotel Society, the Sloan Association. Fellow Cornellians, fellow friends, and fellow volunteers.

Then there are the staff friendships I have made: Tina Gourley, Terri Jackson, Carole Quealey, Jim Mazza, Rick Banks....the list goes on. Recently I

have added another layer of Cornell friends: the professors and staff in the Sloan program who have welcomed me to their ranks: Julie Carmalt, Brooke Hollis, Tony Germain, Jessica MacDonald, and Shannon Lupo. It's amazing how the friends list keeps growing and growing.

The 3rd F stands for FUN. None of us would volunteer if we weren't having FUN! I think that creating Ezra's Amazing Race for the incoming graduate students has been one of the most rewarding things I've done. But whatever any of us do for Cornell, it is because we have fun doing it.

The final F in my volunteer career is FULFILLMENT. Every hour spent working on a Cornell project, with Cornell friends, gives a sense of fulfillment. It feeds my soul and spirit. At times my Cornell involvement may have seemed to take over my world (just ask my husband) ...but I would not trade a minute. There are those who just don't understand why we all give so much of ourselves for

our beloved Cornell....but those of us in this room have no doubt as to why. Volunteering for Cornell is filled with friends, family and fun....and leaves us feeling fulfilled. And that is a FABULOUS feeling. So I'll take my F's, and consider them a gift.

Again, thank you for this honor.