

# ... AND THEY'RE OFF!

As the Patriot Band began its rendition of the traditional graduation march "Pomp and Circumstance," the 47 graduating seniors lined up behind the flag bearers and lead marshalls to march onto the football field. As the graduates peered into the stands, they saw a multitude of parents and friends who had come to give them their support and wish them luck.

After the third honor graduate and class president, Teresa Stokes, recited the pledge of allegiance, everyone remained standing and the National Anthem was played. Fourth honor graduate and student body president, Faith Lingard, bid everyone a warm welcome to the ceremony. Next came a selection from the RHS Chorus and then the presentation of the salutatorian medallion by principal, Quenie Crawford.

James Arnold delivered a strong message in his salutatory address. He stressed the importance of family and friends as well as parents and teachers. Reiterating the class theme, "Reaching for the Stars Amidst the Odds," he manifested many of the obstacles that the class of 1996 had overcome to get to where they were.

Seeing it as a pleasure, Ms. Crawford stood to pronounce the valedictorian and present Patricia Floretta Josette Carroll with the valedictorian medallion. As her classmates roared, Josette accepted the insignia with pride. Welling in tears, she addressed the parents, teachers, friends and family members present. She thanked them for their undying support and love. She, too, focused on the theme and gave incidents of the many obstacles that the seniors had to face.

After the presentation of the class of 1996, they stood and waltzed majestically to shake the hands of those who awarded them their diplomas or certificates. When all of the seniors were seated, Ms. Crawford congratulated them and awarded Teresa Stokes with a citizenship award for her outstanding efforts as a senior and her dedication to the school. Fifth honor graduate, Scottie Fryar, gave the closing remarks and the assemblage stood to sing the alma mater. The ceremony was officially ended by the recessional, but the tears and emotions of the graduates could still be heard.

This was the night that the class of 1996 had waited for. After tonight they had only the memories to cherish. Although they were leaving behind the football games, proms, schoolbooks, homework, and old friends, they were about to embark upon a new adventure — the real world. For many it would be a challenge, but for others it would be a breeze. The class of 1996 was about to take the world by its harness and run.

— Nichole Proveaux

