

CIVIL WORDS FOR TROUBLED TIMES

THE WRITINGS OF JOHN A. PIDGEON, 1990-1999



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THE WRITINGS OF JOHN A. PIDGEON, 1990-1999

Edited by Madelyn Gray



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Foreword

By Marshall M. Goldberg '64

In my younger and more vulnerable years my headmaster gave me some advice that I've been turning over in my mind ever since. "The only things that matter in life," he told me, "are character and decency." Although I'm longer in the tooth these days, that same advice still applies, but it tends to get clouded along with my other thoughts. Fortunately, Jack Pidgeon has provided helpful reminders in the enclosed speeches and articles. Jack obviously has much to say to those grappling with a world that exalts shallowness and favoritism over depth and merit. For forty years he has drummed into thousands of boys the virtues of character and decency, no matter what the outside world holds out as a reward. There's no need for anecdotes; Kiski boys know what I'm talking about. Still, like box scores and The Commandments, it's helpful to have these things set out in black and white.

These writings do more than teach; they also reveal a great deal about Jack Pidgeon the person. We see the fire in the belly of a man who took a broken down prep school and made it into a first-rate institution that turns out scholars, leaders, and Navy SEALS. We see the anguish of a citizen trying to come to terms with human shortcomings in people who should know better. And we see the zeal of a teacher who has gleaned lessons from a half-century of experience and wants nothing more than to impart them to his students.

It is unfair to single out any of the writings, but two pieces are especially memorable, and if you read nothing else, please, read the Gatsby lecture and the Turley eulogy. The Gatsby lecture shows Jack's prowess as a scholar, as he notes that the novel "manages to do two things. First, it poetically evokes a sense of the goodness of the dream. Second, it offers a damning indictment of it." Eventually, however, you realize that Jack really loves *The Great Gatsby* because it takes on the issues most dear to him: dreams vs. reality, surface vs. substance, money vs. the soul. Jack Pidgeon has devoted an entire

lifetime to making sure Kiski boys don't turn into Gatsbys. There is a passion in that lecture, the passion of a warrior describing an enemy he despises with all his heart. No freedom fighter in any war ever summoned up more loathing than Jack Pidgeon has for Daisy and Tom and their Godless world. And no parent ever showed more sadness for a child gone astray than Jack shows for Jay Gatsby. That is a side of him I never fully appreciated before. He hopes with all his heart you don't succumb to the dark forces out there, but if you do, he won't write you off forever. He'll still welcome you back.

The other piece I particularly commend is the Turley eulogy. Jack clearly admired Bill, deeply, and it is touching to watch a man pay tribute to a dear friend twenty years his junior. There is an ageless quality in the eulogy; Jack wonders the same way we all wonder, struggles the way we all struggle. It takes a humble man to admire, and while humility is not the first quality that usually comes to mind when I think of Jack Pidgeon, that's more my fault than his, because in the presence of things he holds dear, such as a world-class schoolmaster, he is very humble indeed.

Reading through the pieces, I was struck at how much Jack chooses to teach by example rather than pronouncements, the way a good teacher should. Even in his writings the lessons are shrewd and compelling. He's always teaching; the man can't help himself. And thankfully, as we row against the ceaseless current, we are better off for it.



Marshall M. Goldberg '64 with Mr. Pidgeon.

Preface

I came to Kiski as an experienced teacher, having spent fifteen years teaching and administering in public schools. There was so much I didn't know when Jack Pidgeon became my mentor as well as my colleague and friend. He taught me what it meant to truly love a school, to have the courage to devote yourself fully and without qualification to your students, and to remember always the nobility of the teaching profession.

His addresses to the Kiski community during the decade we spent there often ostensibly were written for Kiski boys, but I was foolish enough to think that the Headmaster was really talking directly to me, saying precisely what I needed to hear. Later I found that many others in the audience felt as I did. Often the Headmaster merely reminded us of an essential "truth" that we had already learned, but had somehow forgotten. Because of the profound effect of the Headmaster's words on me and others, I chose to preserve his early speeches in the volume *I Know Who You Are*.

Now, ten years later and after more than forty years as Headmaster of The Kiski School, Jack offers us a new collection of his writings. In these pages, the reader will find a common thread as Jack Pidgeon expresses his belief that despite the increased brutality we have been observing in schools, young people are still capable of honorable behavior, civility, grace and compassion. He tells us, in essence, what we can do, and, of course, finds himself greatly disappointed with the adult antics that our young people have had to observe in the last decade.

Let it be said here that there is no replacement for hearing the Headmaster speak in person. In going over these pages, I have been keenly reminded of his unmistakable vocal rhythms, his elegant and insistent gestures, his broad Massachusetts accent, and his penetrating blue eyes above the lectern. His passionate words and uncompromising judgment cut through a nasty contemporary tangle of confessionalism, sensationalism, consensus building and herd-like behavior, insisting that in education as in life there is a need in our society for sturdy, intelligent, idealistic, yet pragmatic leadership.

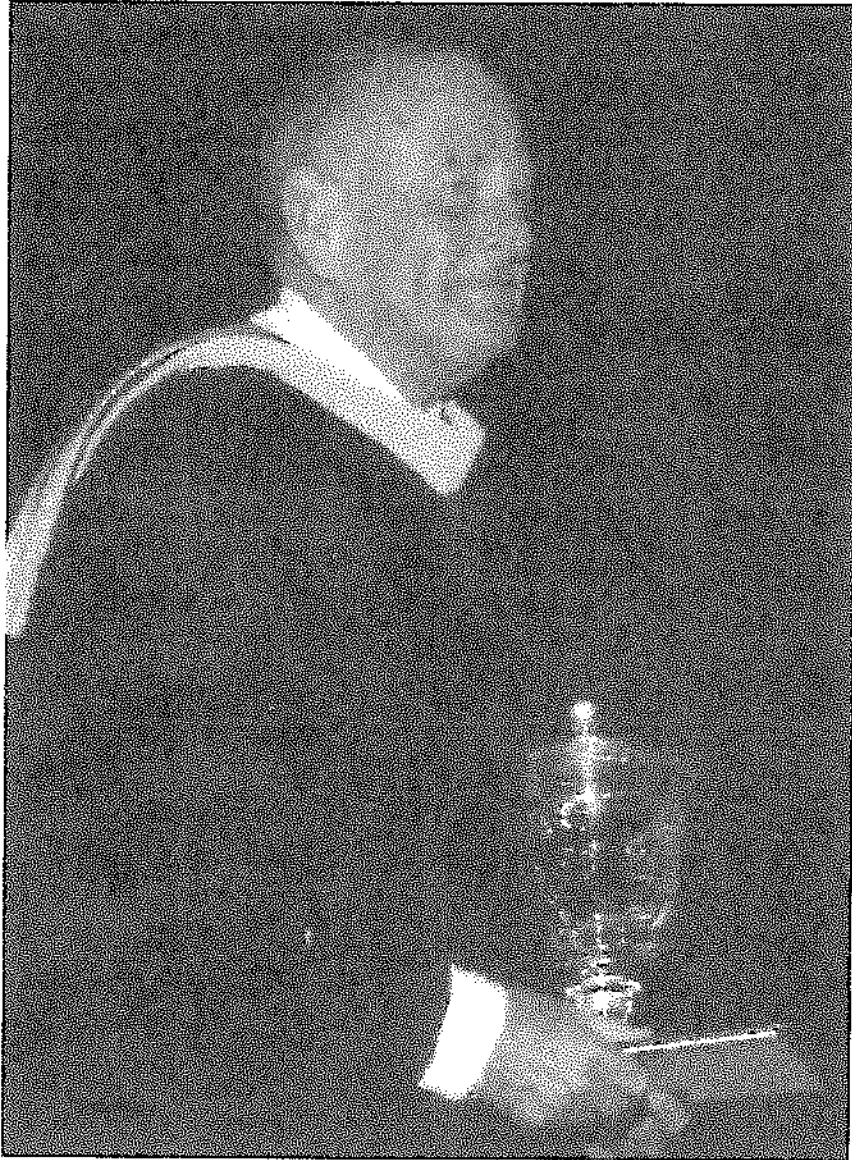
Looking over a collection of letters from the graduating class of 1964, I found a statement written by Bill Turley, a son of Kiski and renowned teacher, who loved Jack Pidgeon as much as he did The Kiski School, where he is now buried. In a letter to his classmates he described Jack Pidgeon as "magnificent as you ever dreamed but far more human." I agree. Bill added that simply by sitting behind his desk the Headmaster could "reduce an office full of teenage boys to jelly." I have personally witnessed this and would only add that I have seen Mr. Pidgeon affect adults similarly. Bill Turley properly places the Headmaster among those "few great souls [who] occasionally create worlds that touch the lives and hearts of hundreds or thousands." How wonderful that a Kiski boy who has himself affected the lives of so many should see that power writ ever larger in the man who was his mentor and his best, most admired friend.

In the hallway on the second floor of my house hangs a color photograph of the Kiski School campus on a snowy afternoon in the 1980's. It looks to have been taken on a very cold day, but the boy walking down the path is wearing only his classroom coat and tie and his shoulders are hunched, much in the manner of the Headmaster on a cold day. It's just as I remember the place during the decade that my husband and I taught at Kiski and our two sons attended. Since the photograph hangs just outside the entrance to my bedroom, I have cause to look at the picture every day, and every day I am pleased anew that my life has been bound to that school and to Jack Pidgeon's world and words. Although I left the campus nine years ago, I took so much away with me and surely left a piece of myself on that splendid stretch of fields and woods.

For the thousands of us who want to remember the intelligence, honesty, and the powerful presence of our unforgettable Headmaster, I offer these speeches, all of them written since 1990. Included in this volume are Jack Pidgeon's earlier, now classic classroom lectures on Fitzgerald and Hemingway, to show how he addresses the issue of "The American Dream" with his English students.

As before in my first volume of his addresses, I'm honored to help place these words in the remarkable record of a superb educational leader and admired friend, John A. Pidgeon.

Madelyn Gray



Mr. Pidgeon receives his Kiski Honorary Diploma on his 40th anniversary.

Single-Sex Education 1991

Last week while reading a column in the *Washington Post* by one of my favorite political writers, William Raspberry, I began to ruminate on a trend in American education that has been of great concern to me, the virtual disappearance of single-sex schools. Clearly, one of the reasons that I'm so aware of this trend is that for the past thirty-five years I've been Headmaster of a school which is one of a very small number of all-male schools left in the United States: there is an even smaller number of boarding schools in this category and The Kiski School is one of those.

The thrust of Mr. Raspberry's column was that the Detroit Public School authorities decided (quite correctly, I believe) that black boys would benefit from going to all-male schools. This decision, however, was thwarted by Judge George Woods who apparently bowed to pressure against the idea from the American Civil Liberties Union and the National Organization of Women's Legal Defense Fund. These two organizations argued that to allow boys to attend all-male schools would be illegal, since girls would be, by definition, excluded.

There is no question that both the ACLU and NOW are probably correct as the law now stands; that is not what interests me. The point that must be underlined is that someone has rediscovered the fact that boys benefit from an all-male school environment. Mr. Raspberry writes that in an all-male environment boys can develop a concept of manhood that does not eschew academic achievement in

favor of brute force. They can develop a sense of self-worth and personal discipline that enables them to go on to become contributing citizens to their communities. I would add to Mr. Raspberry's remarks by saying that boys in an all-male environment are much more inclined to develop a sense of personal identity and to learn more deeply who they really are than in a co-educational environment. In the absence of a female audience, they are more apt to give up posturing and role playing and deal instead with the central issue of life which is to learn one's strengths and weaknesses and to develop the strengths while shoring up the weaknesses.

American education, however, has for the past two and a half decades been in a headlong sprint away from single-sex education. This has been particularly true of private education where most single-sex schools have existed. Once, for instance, the number of boys' boarding schools numbered in the hundreds; this number has now diminished to the point where the leaders of these schools could have a yearly meeting in the bed of a medium sized pickup truck! We should be asking ourselves why this has happened, and to do so we need to address those who are most responsible for the change.

The first group is made up of well intentioned leaders who honestly believe that co-education is superior to single-sex education and have changed the dynamic of their schools to be consistent with this belief. One should have no argument with these educators and must agree that there should always be a place for co-education in this country. The second group is not quite so honest, however. They consist of the leaders of schools that have suffered from a shortage of applicants and have turned to co-education to survive. One would not have an argument with these educators *if* they were honest. They should simply have admitted that the change was expedient, instead of proclaiming a sudden philosophical shift toward co-education.

Making a pragmatic decision is perfectly acceptable and no one can blame anyone for that. What I do object to is being told that educators have suddenly "seen the light" in their abandonment of single-sex education because co-education is pedagogically superior. Many headmasters in this category privately admit that the only benefit their schools have derived from the change to co-education has been increased enrollment.

Finally, a third group I find particularly objectionable. They represent one of the educational profession's greatest weaknesses. This group has changed single-sex institutions into co-educational institutions for no other reason than to keep up with what they consider the latest trend or fad. I find this more than troublesome. There are headmasters and boards of trustees who took perfectly marvelous single-sex institutions that were flourishing and making enormous contributions to their students and to society and made them co-educational because they wanted to keep up with the schools "down the road" and their colleagues who ran them. This is an age old problem where educational trends or fads have such power. And, those of us who have been around for a while can begin to see that our profession, it seems, is doomed to reinvent the wheel every few generations. When I think of the energy, time and money that goes into this process, I can't help but be saddened.

In the early sixties panic struck our schools. "The New Math" appeared and consternation reigned. Mathematics departments were reshuffled and experienced mathematics teachers went into "training." New teachers, adept in this new teaching fad were sought to replace many of those who were not willing to go along with the latest whim of the "educationists." In some cases, perfectly marvelous teachers and fine mathematicians were paid by school systems to attend graduate school in order to develop new understandings and

teaching techniques. After a number of years and a remarkable outlay of money in training and purchasing books, the storm abated. "The New Math" drifted off into that limbo that God seems to have created for temporary educational fads.

When I first assumed my duties as Headmaster in 1957, the educational theorists were screaming that the decline in verbal skills was due to the teaching of phonics. A great hue and cry arose and the "Neanderthal" method of teaching reading was abandoned. Phonics were relegated to the aforementioned limbo. Last week, it was most amusing to hear a radio commercial advocating that the teaching of phonics is the cure-all for the decline in verbal skills. I guess I should have expected this.

But perhaps the worst surrender to faddism came at the end of the 1950's when the first satellite, "Sputnik," was launched. In order to "catch up to the Russians" huge high schools were built. The attempt was to get the biggest "bang for a buck"; larger schools meant less duplication of efforts and greater economy. Of course, with increased anonymity, schools have been racked by violence and chaos. However unsatisfactory state public schools may have been in 1957, when compared to today's madness they remind one of Athens of the Golden Age. Of late, there have been noises about dividing these huge monstrosities of school jointures into small units, each with its own principal, faculty, etc. One is reminded of the proverbial saying, "The more things change, the more they remain the same."

Someone once said that the decline in American education began when student's chairs were unscrewed from the floor. I remember vividly when it happened in the public school I attended. Screwed down chairs were replaced by movable ones and students were clustered into cozy, little groups. The teacher became less the focus of attention. What I have observed since then is that confusion

has slowly grown into anarchy. The result for me, at least, is that my memories of my own education are divided into "before" and "after" that change took place. Once my classmates and I started sitting in little groups, I have a distinct impression that life became more confused and therefore, unpleasant.

But the change that I find most disconcerting is the one that I started this essay with, and that is the destruction of ninety percent of the single-sex schools in this country. This fad started in the sixties and reached a fever pitch in the eighties. If this is not reversed soon, it could be the most destructive of all the changes that have taken place in the last number of decades.

Perhaps there is a small ray of hope in the fact that at least the Detroit School Board tried to bring back some form of single-sex education. What the Board should have said is that if single-sex education is good for black youngsters, it is also good for white children and for the young people of every other race and nationality. It may be that the Detroit School Board planted an important seed. I certainly applaud their efforts and encourage them to continue discussing this. My hope, of course, is that the ACLU and the NOW Legal Defense Fund will take a wider view of Detroit's suggestion and instead of fighting it, will augment it with the demands that this form of education once more be made available to as many children of both sexes and families of all races as may choose it.

The Headmaster Talks to His Board 1993

This morning I'll leave the mundane matters of buildings and grounds or financial issues to committee reports. Rather than addressing those matters, I would like instead to speak to you about more important issues. The first that concerns me is what has become known in this country as "cultural diversity." You all know what the term means, I'm sure, and are aware of the special power it has taken on, particularly at colleges across the United States.

Many people believe that academic institutions must do more to meet the needs of minority students, such as teaching about their cultures in history classes and promoting the existence of clubs and organizations, created specifically for minorities by minorities. We have brushed up against this issue while preparing for our ten year evaluation which will take place next fall. For the first time, part of the evaluation process has been to ask us what provisions we are making with regard to creating or supporting special activities and/or organizations for minority students. I want you to know that I have written as part of this evaluation the following statement:

"Kiski School firmly believes that the solution to the nation's racial problems lies in integration. Its aim always has been and always will be to work towards this end and it has no intention of engaging in behavior that will lead to divisions along racial or religious lines."

I am reading this aloud to you and am including this in the report because I know that this subject is going to resurface again and

again within the next few years and I thought it would be a good idea for us to take a stand now, rather than wait until later.

Second, I would like to take a few minutes to outline for you the general philosophy and policies of Kiski. I know that you're very familiar with them, but so much has changed in the world of education that you might assume that Kiski has changed as well. Let me assure you that Kiski is today basically the same school that it was thirty-five years ago, and I can honestly say that there is probably no other independent school in the country that can make that statement. There have been so many tumultuous events in this nation since 1960 that most schools have changed radically. One of the great changes that I've seen is that schools have almost totally given up any obligation to act *in loco parentis*. Some still go through the motions of doing so, but none follows through as we do. In fact we follow through to the point that the Headmaster of this institution is considered so outmoded and strange that many refer to him as a weirdo, wacko or mad reactionary.

Despite the arrows hurled at me, Kiski School still believes that having boys develop personal qualities is at least equal in importance to having them develop academic skills. It still believes that such abstract and idealistic concepts as honor, integrity, honesty and consideration for others can and should be taught to boys, and even be forced upon them if necessary. For example, let us examine a problem that exists in all American schools, the drug problem. Kiski, first of all, admits that it has a drug problem. That is not the point; the point is what we do about it, and our policy is instant dismissal if a youngster is found with drugs in his possession. During the current year, for example, we have dismissed five boys for the use of drugs, and one because he bragged openly, if falsely, that he was a drug user. I have carefully questioned other independent schools, mainly in the

eastern United States to inquire about their policies in relation to student use of illegal drugs. Some mentioned referral to a drug rehabilitation program as a result of the first offense. Many rely on this for a second offense as well, and some even for a third offense.

Kiski School states openly and unequivocally what our policy is. Let me assure that one derives no pleasure from dismissing a boy for violating the drug rule, but not to do so, to give a second chance, is to invite every other student to take his turn, and this eventually leads to disastrous consequences. Certainly, it is not fair to the other students or to their families. This year we have, as I said, dismissed several boys for violating our rule regarding drug use. We have seniors at Kiski who simply will not tolerate the use of drugs even by one of their classmates. As one of them said to me, "This may be the last clean place that I know of and I want to keep it that way for my younger brother." Our policy with regard to drinking has been the same as it always has been.

Kiski school makes a total effort each day to influence a boy's life from his deportment in the dormitory to his deportment at the dining room table. We still bend every effort to see that he dresses properly and in good taste to match the occasion. These issues may not seem particularly pertinent to you, but let me assure you that in today's climate our position is practically revolutionary. We stress individual behavior, but at the same time that we do, we point out that individualism is an expression of who you are and what you do and is not achieved by wearing a bizarre costume or behaving in a bizarre manner. We still place more emphasis on academic effort than we do on academic achievement. It is rare, for example, that a boy is forced to remain on campus for poor grades. But it is a regular and well-known event for a boy to be denied permission to leave campus for poor effort.

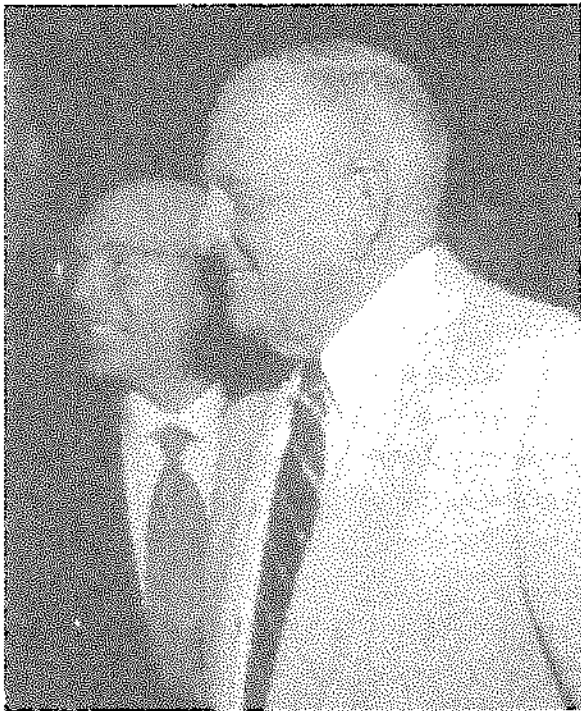
Over the years, Kiski has by choice and necessity attracted to its student body a wide variety of young men. Some are outstanding students who rank with the best in the country from the point of view of academic ability and college admissions. Some are far less academically talented but are very hard workers. All compete. Some are outstanding athletes and some probably would have trouble riding a bicycle, but all compete. Some of our students are very wealthy, and some are very poor, so poor that we sometimes have to buy clothes or finance their travel expenses to and from school. Nevertheless, all compete. These are extremes of our student body, but we have representatives from all strata between these extremes. It is this, I think, that has made Kiski work as well as it has. The abrasive experience of boys of different types and backgrounds being thrown together each day has created a dynamic force, a humility and tolerance, all of which combine to create what we think of as a Kiski boy. I used to think, sometimes, that this "Kiski boy" concept was something I had dreamed up to comfort myself, but I've come to realize over the years that it is a real concept that many people, including people at this table, accept as fact.

Once I heard a public school administrator refer to independent schools as being undemocratic, I took great satisfaction in pointing out that no public school in America can be as democratic as we are. A public school of necessity must reflect the community which surrounds it. A poverty-stricken community will be reflected by a student body that lives in poverty. A wealthy community will be reflected in a wealthy student body. We are fortunate that we can attract all kinds of boys and put them to work at developing each other with our guidance.

In my opinion, the fault of many independent schools today is that they have lost their way and no longer know who they are or

what their missions are. The one remark I've heard both from critics of our school and admirers is that more than any other school, we know what we are and what our purpose is.

I hope that you'll forgive repetition of what you already know. In a sense I'm preaching to the choir, but as I said earlier, the social climate of this country has so radically changed that I thought it well to define again who we are and what we stand for as a school. At the same time I want to state that it has been the insight and inspiration of so many of you at this table that have convinced me that crazy as some people may think us to be, we are still doing what is necessary to develop the best young men for this nation.



Trustee Allen R. Glick '60 with Mr. Pidgeon.

Library Dedication 1993

I want to thank you all for being here tonight, but I also want to thank a larger group, some of whom may not be present. I want to thank Kiski boys. The term "Kiski boys" has been with me almost all of my life. Of course, I have had my family, and it has functioned as most families have, with ups and downs and tears and laughter. But my family has also been different in a way from most others. It also has had Kiski boys included, referred to in our home as "the boys." And "the boys" have always accompanied us through life, whether in actuality or in our psyches. It seems that each day what the boys felt, what they did and how they seemed, permeated our minds and our home.

In retrospect, it almost seems that when the boys were happy, we were, and when the boys were down, so were we. In my mind's eye a line of boys stretching back through the eighties and seventies and sixties and even the fifties. It is a long line of blue-blazered young men wearing striped Kiski graduation ties, a seeming endless line of boys walking across the stage to shake my hand and say, "Thank you, Mr. Pidgeon." Sometimes I see that they're smiling and sometimes I can detect tears in their eyes; sometimes they are cold and distant, because they are less than happy with me. Yes, that happens more often than I'd like, but not more than it should. Most Kiski boys overcome this anger in a short time, but some never do. I take some solace in that because I've always felt that the worst goal a schoolmaster should strive for is to be loved. My sense is that if you are loved by *all* the students, you have done some boys a terrible dis-

service, for you must have been dishonest in communicating to them your assessment of their behavior.

The building that we are dedicating tonight bears my name. I want you to know, however, that it is really a monument to all of the boys who have been part of the Kiski experience as well. It is a monument to all of the dark, gloomy February mornings when going to class with them made the day seem a magically sun-lit one in May, because I could watch them grasp an idea or take a step toward expanding their minds. It is a monument to the thousands of bus rides we've taken together to one athletic contest or another. It is a monument to all the victories they have allowed me to share with them and all of the defeats as well, when they've allowed me in my heavy-handed way to comfort them. The building that we are dedicating tonight, this beautiful library, is a monument to all of those times I've seen them as freshmen, coming in to receive their monthly grades from me with a look on their faces bordering on sheer terror. It is a monument to all of those boys, now grown to be seniors, coming in to get their grades with the confident look of the veteran who almost winks to say, "I know I didn't work as hard as I should have, but we both know that it's okay this time."

Dr. Gerry Yukevich once wrote a poem that I keep in my office. It describes the Kiski he used to see when he came out of swimming practice in a cold, January's, late afternoon gloom. He said that Kiski was at those times, "a dark, cold, happy place." I have experienced it precisely the same way.

I know that Kiski boys are honoring me today with the creation of this library. But I want them to know that in reality they owe me nothing. They have already given me so much.

My hope is that this library will be a tribute and guiding light for all of those boys in blue blazers and striped neckties, who for

years have crossed the stage each June and done me the honor of shaking hands before they went on to serve their families, their communities and their country. And so, to all Kiski boys, to those of you who are here tonight and those who are not, to those who have contributed to this building and those who have not, let me say again what I've said in the past, "just in case I haven't made it clear to you: I love you."

Responsibility 1994

Recently, I've been thinking about when, if ever, we are going to get rid of the generation that came of age in the sixties. For a long time I comforted myself with the thought that these "baby boomers" would pass through our system much like indigestible food passing through our bodies, leaving us healthy, if somewhat queasy. But I was wrong. I overlooked the fact that these "boomers" have propagated and become parents. As parents they have passed on their values to their children. It's natural, of course, that these standards become even stronger in these children because they are now reinforced by the prestige of parental authority. The result has been what some people call "generation X."

The other day I was talking to a senior about an underclassman being considered for a post of some responsibility. When I asked his opinion, he said that this young man was a nice guy but that he lacked "a sense of responsibility for his actions. He's just a typical member of 'generation X,'" he said. This caused me to consider this term which comes from the title of a book that has attempted to define the generation between the ages of seventeen and thirty today. Frankly, I find this generation of young people listless and unresponsive. They demand instant gratification and are not at all inclined to assume responsibility for their lives, particularly their failures. Worst of all they seem to have little respect either for themselves or their peers. This generation is honestly mystified when told that the law of cause and effect applies just as much to them as to the rest of the world.

These are not inherently bad youngsters, certainly, and are not by nature irresponsible people. But they are victims of their parents, the infamous "baby boomers." Thirty years ago these boomers flaunted authority for the sake of it and like their children now, demanded instant gratification. Adults then rationalized that these youngsters were protesting against a war about which many people were justifiably ambivalent. Some of us could see even then that much of their outrageous behavior was not a manifestation of their disillusionment with the Viet Nam War. Rather, these youngsters had clearly found a way to indulge in approved hedonism. Now they are adults, and if you ask educators about how these people are behaving as parents, you will find almost universal agreement. This group is the most irresponsible, difficult generation of parents with which we have had to deal. One of the most alarming manifestations of this irresponsibility is the fascination with that recent discovery, Attention Deficit Disorder. Word of this "learning disability" has spread like wildfire as parents desperately search for an acceptable explanation of their children's poor behavior. They have rushed to doctors willing to cooperate with them in rationalizing academic underachievement or social misbehavior, by saying that the culprit is A.D.D. After being diagnosed, their children are medicated, usually with Ritalin, a controlled substance not unlike amphetamine in its effect on people. My point is simply that rationalization for poor performance is characteristic of this generation. Accepting responsibility for one's conscious choices seems too demanding for this group to consider seriously.

Americans, as we know, have always tried to define generations. We group people together and then give them a name, knowing perfectly well that not all members of the generation fit into any general description. People just seem to like to define themselves and

those that came before in a generic way, as members of a definable group. In the nineteen twenties we had the so-called "lost generation," supposedly composed of young people caught up in the idealism of World War I with its horrors of trench warfare and the absurdity of the Treaty of Versailles. Then there was the "depression generation," which so many have heard about. There is no question that those who grew up during the depression defined themselves by it. My own generation, to some extent a product of the depression as well as World War II, was called the "war generation." As a matter of fact, when I return to prep school reunions, some member of the class always begins his speech with the words, "We were the war class."

I graduated on a Sunday and entered the United States Navy on Monday. Three months later I was at sea, and three months after that I was in command of thirty-five enlisted men in combat. President George Bush, a member of my generation, became at the age of nineteen the youngest fighter pilot in the Navy; he was shot down eight months before his twentieth birthday. World War II defined us and developed in us many of the attitudes that we hold today. Now, I don't want to give you the impression that we all participated willingly and with patriotic fervor in that war. Certainly I didn't. We participated because if we hadn't we would have suffered terrible consequences, including long jail sentences. I guess that's one of the big differences in America today, isn't it? In those days if you dodged the draft, you went to jail; these days you go to the White House.

The "post-war generation" was defined by the great optimism that followed World War II. Their children were the "baby boomers" that I referred to earlier. The "baby boomers," spawned the "yuppies," most of whom are now in their mid-forties. And they were subdivided into the "beat generation" and "the sixties generation." And so it goes. Today, as that Kiski senior pointed out to me in the

discussion of one of his classmates, we now have "generation X."

Returning to a consideration of this generation, one could say that its most salient characteristic is its lack of maturity. Many of the younger members of this generation seem to be blaming everybody but themselves for their actions. The older members of this generation, those in their mid-to-late twenties blame society for the fact that all the good jobs and great opportunities in America seem to have been taken. Immaturity at that age should not be difficult to understand if one really stops to think about it. After all, life has been lengthened greatly by medical science and since life is longer than it used to be, it makes sense that adolescence is also longer. In fact, adolescence now seems to stretch into the mid or late twenties. But if immaturity is the salient characteristic of this generation, it explains why so many people, teachers, headmasters, and others are worried about our country's future.

It is my opinion that the failure to assume responsibility for one's actions is not merely a matter of immaturity but an issue of immorality as well. At a recent meeting of my English class a student asked me to define what I meant by "morality." I thought for a while and finally answered that morality was probably the willingness to take responsibility for one's actions and to be responsible as well for the important events that our behavior engenders. As I consider this issue, I fear that there are many barriers to a young man's developing the characteristic of personal responsibility in our world today, and there are many reasons why this is true.

The first is that we have developed a whole new vocabulary to absolve students of responsibility for what they do. Years ago, if a young man at this school misbehaved he was reproached and, when necessary, punished in proportion to the error of his ways. Today, when a similar event occurs, there is too often a call from a parent

offering explanations which are usually excuses, for a youngster's actions. This habitual process of excuse-making partially explains the existence of "generation X." In fact, we have been rather creative in developing a whole set of rationalizations for unreasonable behavior. One often comes upon phrases like "children of poverty" or "children of emotional abuse" or, commonly, "children of sexual abuse." In fact, it's beginning to concern me that you can't be successful on television anymore without being able to say that at some point you were sexually abused. Of course, there are more phrases we can point to that are woven into the fabric used to cover a multitude of misbehaviors. They include familiar ones such as, "students in a permissive society" or "personality conflicts with teachers." But the lollapalooza of all of them is, "Attention Deficit Disorder" that I briefly referred to earlier. Let me just point out the ridiculous extremes to which excuses can go when one is desperate to avoid responsibility.

In the past few years attention deficit disorder has been used to explain away more sins than all those committed by the Nazis in the twenty years of their existence. The American, Michael Fay, has been said to be less responsible for his actions in Singapore because he is disabled by A.D.D. Now, I'm not at all sure that Michael Fay committed the vandalism of which he is accused, but I am sure of one thing. If he is guilty, it certainly had nothing to do with an Attention Deficit Disorder. What he did was a conscious decision for which he should be held responsible. Recently, a parent told me that the reason her son was found twice smoking cigarettes in his dormitory room and thereby endangering the lives of thirty other people was that he has been suffering from A.D.D. According to her, therefore, he should not be held responsible for what he did. In my encounter with this parent I had to point out that lighting a cigarette in a dormitory

is not a result of a lack of attention, but rather a conscious decision for which her son has to be held responsible. In doing so, I made sure that I would not be nominated for the "teacher of the year" by this mother. But this woman was attempting to absolve her son from responsibility; she saw clearly that if one is not responsible, one cannot be punished, and she did not want her son punished.

Every year I hear about a few Kiski graduates who fail to do the two very simple things necessary to be successful in college. They fail to go to class everyday and fail to do their daily assignments. Now, I can guarantee you that any Kiski boy who wants to get through college can do so simply by going to class and doing an hour or two of homework everyday. But some boys choose not to do this and come back to my office sadder but wiser, wondering what to do next. They find me and Kiski most understanding and always willing to help. They are, after all, members of the Kiski family. But none of this will do them any good at all unless they assume responsibility for their actions and the situation in which they find themselves. If they say the fault is Kiski's because we restricted them and forced them to work so that they couldn't "handle freedom" then they will hear from me. If a young man is so immature that he can't handle the work and freedom at the age of nineteen or twenty, he certainly wasn't able to do it at the age of fifteen or sixteen. What got him into the college that he managed to flunk out of was exactly the regimen imposed upon him by this school.

Failing to go to class or do your homework cannot be blamed on school, parents, or an imaginary "personality conflict" with a professor. It cannot be blamed on the fact that a college was too urban, too rural, too permissive or too anything. It is the student's responsibility to attend class and complete assignments, and if he fails to do this, it is the student's failure only; placing calls to parents will not change that fact.

Finally, I'm glad that a student asked me the question about my definition of morality, because the question forced me to articulate what I know about the connection between morality and personal responsibility for one's actions. My sense is that if we really are unwilling to take the responsibility for a particular action we must not take the action in the first place. Maybe that's what it means to lead a moral life and maybe that's what the "baby boomers" and "generation X" still have to learn.

Modern Myths in Education 1995

There is in modern education the growing assumption that the purpose of education is to build self-esteem in a youngster. A recent study of international thirteen year old students shows Koreans coming in first in a particular mathematics test while American youngsters came in last. One of the questions asked of all the students after the examination was whether or not they were good in mathematics. Of the Koreans, only twenty-three percent said that they were, while sixty-six percent of the Americans said that they were. It seems to me that we have won the battle of self-esteem, although we may not be teaching our students mathematics or humility.

Recently, I read an article by a reporter. Ben Stein, who was observing graduation at a suburban, middle class Los Angeles high school. He asked a young man, purported to be the smartest boy in his class what he knew about the Viet Nam War. The boy answered that he thought it had something to do with Korea and he thought that President Eisenhower had ended the war by dropping an atom bomb. Stein asked him if it would bother him to know that the things he thought he knew were wrong. He said that it would not, because what he had learned from Miss Silva (his teacher) was that the students could express themselves and adults would listen to them, even if they were wrong. He suggested that this is why Miss Silva would always be his favorite teacher. She made students feel that they mattered and were important. Well, good for Miss Silva! Although we may have won the battle for self-esteem, we have lost it for knowledge.

There are indications in other arenas that are not particularly promising either. Executives of Fortune Five Hundred companies have said that at least fifty-eight percent of the graduates they hire have inadequate skills to do their jobs well. The New York Life Insurance Company is conducting an air-lift of its claims to Ireland to be worked on and then flown back to the United States, because American workers make so many mistakes. The point that I'm making is obvious. Since people have taken up the idea that the purpose of education is to develop self-esteem, there has been an alarming inflation in grades. In 1966 high schools in the United States gave out twice as many C's as A's. The A's overtook the C's by 1978, and they are now pulling well ahead. The same thing is true at the college level. At Dartmouth the average grade point average in 1958 was 2.2. Thirty years later, it was 3.2. At Stanford University, believe it or not, there has not been a failing grade in the last twenty years, because failing grades are not recorded at Stanford.

This remarkable drive to create self-esteem is obviously detracting from the real purpose of education in America. I remember when I was in school studying German, and was terrified by my teacher. He was a very large Teutonic individual with a neck like a side of beef, and he actually had a dueling scar on one cheek. Each day for three years I entered that classroom trembling in much the same way that I did a few years later off Normandy Beach. When I made my usual errors, he would bellow at me and shout imprecations that left me utterly intimidated and embarrassed. "Idiot" was one of his kinder terms. Despite all of this, or perhaps because of it, I certainly learned German. Today in a public school that very teacher who taught me so much would be charged with child abuse. You could say that he didn't do much to help me develop self-esteem, but you could also say that he did. You see, I was learning the language

and becoming fluent in it; this very fact made me feel very good about myself. My point is that self-esteem cannot be given away to another and certainly not by a teacher to a student.

As I look back, my mother (who, frankly, wasn't given much to worrying about my self-esteem, anyway) could have told me that I was wonderful, despite what that nasty German teacher had said, but she really wouldn't have convinced me. Self-esteem must be earned, often by failing and trying and finally perhaps succeeding. This is how boys learn a sense of responsibility for their actions and learn not to rely on excuses. If, because of that responsible behavior, they actually do something with which they can be pleased, their self-esteem will grow.

I have said that in some ways these years have been the most difficult of my career. The reason is simply that faculty members don't get the cooperation from parents that we used to get. Parents today are so concerned with their sons' level of self-esteem, and are so avidly trying to protect them from failure, that they misinterpret honest criticism of their sons as a personal attack upon them. Often educators feel alone in attempting to help these boys assume responsibility for themselves. Up until ten years ago boys would go to any extreme to keep their parents from knowing that they'd been criticized or chastised by a teacher; their parents would have immediately chastised them even more. Now, however, there is a mad rush for the telephone in the hope that mom or dad will interfere on their behalf. Interestingly, I don't get too many parental calls, but I understand that other members of the faculty do, and that it makes teaching extremely difficult.

As we all know, being responsible means that you must not make excuses for poor behavior. More than three decades ago, in 1960, a mother brought her son to me and asked if I would accept

him to Kiski despite the fact that he was dyslexic. I talked with her son and was impressed with him. In our conversation, I suggested to him that if he were physically disabled he might have to learn to walk with only one leg. In that regard, I suggested that since he was dyslexic, he'd probably have to work harder than the other boys and there was no getting around that fact. He said that he would do that; I'm pleased to say that today he is a very successful member of the clergy. Now, however, things have changed. If a student doesn't behave properly, we are told that he has an Attention Deficit Disorder and cannot be required to behave with civility. Youngsters are often trained by their parents and physicians to make excuses for poor behavior, and I think that's a terrible shame for the boys and for the families and communities who will have to live with them. We are so afraid of criticizing youngsters for fear that they will lose self-esteem, that we are willing to do them a disservice; we will let them grow up without assuming a sense of responsibility for their actions.

Of course, there are other problematic issues in education aside from an attempt to manufacture or inflate self-esteem. An enormous amount of time in many schools goes into programs for students that are designed to produce politically correct attitudes about sexuality or morality or racial relationships. These are ignored by some of us because most of them are pretty foolish. But they certainly detract from the time that could be spent on academic pursuits.

Every year we hear from people who want advice on sending their children to college. The most frantic are those who are trying desperately to have their children admitted to so-called prestigious institutions. Their reason often stated is that if their children graduate from big-name institutions, they will have higher incomes than those who graduate from others. Well, I attended a prestigious prep school; in fact, Andover may be the richest school in America. And I

suppose the salary of a graduate from that school is higher than the average salary of those graduating from high school in Joplin, Missouri. But my class included two Rockefellers, a Vanderbilt, George Bush, the son of a very wealthy family, Jack Lemmon, the movie star, who was also the son of a very wealthy family and at least sixty other boys who were the sons of movie producers, cattle and oil barons. Now, you must admit that they had a somewhat advantaged start in life and that today they certainly bring up the average income of graduates. On the other hand, when I return for reunions, I find that most of my classmates are right beside me in the middle-class. The same thing can be said of those who graduate from prestigious colleges.

If you look at various measures of achievement, the graduates of many small, less well-known schools can hold their own against those from more prestigious name brands. As an example, little Cornell College in Iowa has a high percentage of alumni who go on to be in *Who's Who in America* than does the prestigious Cornell University in Ithaca, New York. As another example, the alumni of Davidson College in North Carolina have a higher percentage of their alumni in *Who's Who in America* than the alumni of Duke or Johns Hopkins and most of the other so-called prestigious universities at which we find youngsters lining up to beg for admission.

If you examine those who take medical school entrance examinations, you find that students graduating from Franklin and Marshall College get higher scores than students from Duke, Dartmouth, Northwestern, Berkeley, Yale and other well-known universities. Of course, some say the name of the institution makes the difference when it comes to being accepted at medical and law schools. Well, even that is questionable. Some years ago, the *U.S. News and World Report* interviewed the deans of graduate schools of

engineering and law who ranked graduates of Davidson College over those of most schools in the Ivy League. The deans of engineering ranked the graduates of Harvey Mudd College and Rose-Hulman Institute over the engineering students from Duke, U.C.L.A., Penn, Wisconsin and most Ivy League Schools. Apparently, big names didn't impress them.

Why does this matter? I mention all of this because I want to give you a context for Kiski School's philosophy and goals. We want to guide your son into becoming whatever God intended him to be. Recently, someone asked if at the age of twenty-nine when I came to Kiski, I expected this impressive physical plant to come into being. I honestly answered that I never thought about it. The only thing I ever wanted to do when I was thirty or forty or fifty was to play a part in the development of boys. I've had an awfully good time doing that, but as I suggested earlier, it has been somewhat difficult recently. So I am especially grateful to those of you who are willing to understand and trust this school. I hope you believe me when I say that there is never a day in the lives of Kiski schoolteachers that we are not grateful for and impressed by the fact that you have had enough faith in us to send us your sons. We try always to be worthy of that faith.

Heroism 1995

Last Christmas, those of you who stayed awake during Vespers Service might remember what I discussed. If, perchance, you were suffering from insomnia, you might recall that I spoke about heroes and heroism and about the definition of these terms. I had decided to discuss this because of the extraordinary publicity that the O.J. Simpson trial was receiving, and I had read a number of articles which in one way or another referred to O.J. Simpson as "a fallen American hero" or as an "ex-hero." All of us have observed the film of O.J. Simpson speeding down the Los Angeles freeway. You all know that after that event the entire country became consumed with the whole sordid Simpson affair. Try as I might I couldn't avoid it, and neither could anybody else. My point was that O.J. Simpson may or may not be a hero and he may or may not be guilty of the crime with which he is charged. But I can tell you that nobody in this country has any right to be referring to him as a hero merely because he can carry a football, perhaps better than anyone in history.

In fact, athletic prowess, intellectual prowess, acting ability, good looks, none of these has anything to do with heroism. These are gifts that God has given some people and not others, and we hope that those who receive them will use them in constructive ways; but I repeat these attributes have nothing whatsoever to do with heroism. No one has ever become a hero by being a great athlete.

One has only to look at the last baseball strike to see how erroneous this kind of thinking is. The media welcomed the end of the baseball season with references to the return of the "baseball heroes." Referring to these people as heroes is erroneous. They are being called heroes because they're good at playing the game of baseball. My own sense is that this does not make them heroes; it makes them glandular freaks! One has simply been born with the ability to hit a baseball or throw a curve ball that breaks three feet. Now, some of these athletes may be and undoubtedly are heroes, but if they are it has nothing whatsoever to do with their physical prowess. Heroism has to do with character, and character is generally displayed in common, unsensational events.

It is my contention that we have lost our way when it comes to choosing our heroes. Not long ago our country had what can almost be referred to as a national day of mourning because of the death of Kurt Cobain. This is sheer madness! That man was no hero, at least not for the reason that most of his hysterical mourners cited. I have seen far more heroism displayed by people in this room, people who probably will never be termed heroes.

The people I am speaking of are students who had the moral courage to stand against the prevailing opinions of their classmates when they believed something was wrong, despite the fact that the "in group" or "cool group" was saying that it wasn't. They can withstand the pressure from their peers and classmates who abandon moral principles. These are the people who will not only walk away from drugs, but will be courageous enough to say that using them is wrong. They are the people who have the courage to express their disgust when they hear their peers mouthing racial hatred or racial bigotry, those who have the courage to say to bigots, "No, you are wrong." These are the people who have the moral courage to speak

out when they see some lonely individual being bullied or harassed by schoolmates. There are heroes all about you and they are not heroes because they can make a head-on tackle on a football field or withstand a tough cross-country race, despite the fact that their legs and lungs are burning. A hero is not necessarily the man who has the capacity to stand on the pitcher's mound and throw a curve when the bases are loaded and there's a two and three count on the batter; these are learned physical responses and may have a degree of courage in them, but they are not about heroism.

Some of your teachers are heroes. I am speaking of teachers who have the inner strength and moral conviction to reprimand or fail you when they know you are doing something that is not in your best interest, or when you have failed to do your assignments. Those teachers care more about you than they do about whether or not you like them or bestow garlands of popularity around their necks. These are acts of heroism because they reflect character, but you won't find them discussed in newspapers or on television and certainly not in the sports pages of our newspapers. There are heroes all around us, but we fail to see them, because we are using the wrong standards of measurement.

My mother was a hero. She worked as a domestic and held several other jobs in order to hold her family together. She then came home at night and prepared a meal and often went back out again to another job. Never did I hear her complain or even be irritable, and I certainly never saw her fall into the trap of self-pity. Many of you have heroes like my mother in your own homes. Maybe they are sitting beside you tonight. These are parents who have sacrificed for you and have sometimes worked in jobs that they hated so that you could have advantages that they didn't have. But neither they nor my mother will probably ever show up in the headlines or receive adula-

tion or be called heroes. Rather, we will see hyperthyroid jocks who happen to be able to hit a baseball four hundred feet, receive praise from their society. I often wonder why it is that we keep looking at the wrong people and the wrong qualities to admire.

The world is full of problems and hence full of opportunities for you all to become heroes. But when you act as heroes, that is, take moral stands, you won't be the subject of headlines or television interviews; you won't become stars. But you will be heroes, not burdened by timidity. One of the greatest problems this world and this nation has is that its citizens are so often timid. They may be impressive, talented football players or aggressive wrestlers, but they're timid people in the sense that they lack the courage to take a moral stand for what they know to be right.

I remember several years ago a young man coming into my office and saying, "Mr. Pidgeon, I wish you would call my roommate in and give him a real chewing out. He needs it." I asked him why he wanted me to do this to his roommate, and he explained that the night before his roommate had returned from the weekend with a bottle of whiskey. This young man had taken it and emptied it out and threw the bottle over the cliff. I asked him what he thought I could do and he said that I couldn't throw him out because he hadn't drunk any of it and was not in possession of alcohol, but that he was afraid that his roommate would do this again and they were both supposed to graduate in a couple of months.

Well, I did call the roommate in and I did give him the kind of chewing out that I was expected to give. Some of you know what that is. Needless to say, the roommate was furious. He felt that he had been betrayed and he told his classmates all about what had happened. Of course, his peers rose up in righteous indignation against the poor fellow who had come to see me. This young man withstood all kinds of

abuse for about twenty-four hours, but in time this abuse changed to grudging respect and then to real respect. The boys began to realize that this boy had thought more of his roommate than he did of his own comfort. He had dared to incur the wrath of his roommate and of his classmates by doing something for that roommate, which was probably saving him from being dismissed from school. That's heroism, the ability to stand up against pressure in a situation like that.

This school has been trying to help you acquire character during the time that you have spent here. But character is built over a long time and requires constant attention. It is built by consistent self-discipline and self-control. It is built by learning to meet challenges, by confronting failure, and by coming back again and again without being terrified. Perhaps it was Winston Churchill who said "Character is not built in a crisis, but merely displayed then." If it wasn't he who said that, it should have been.

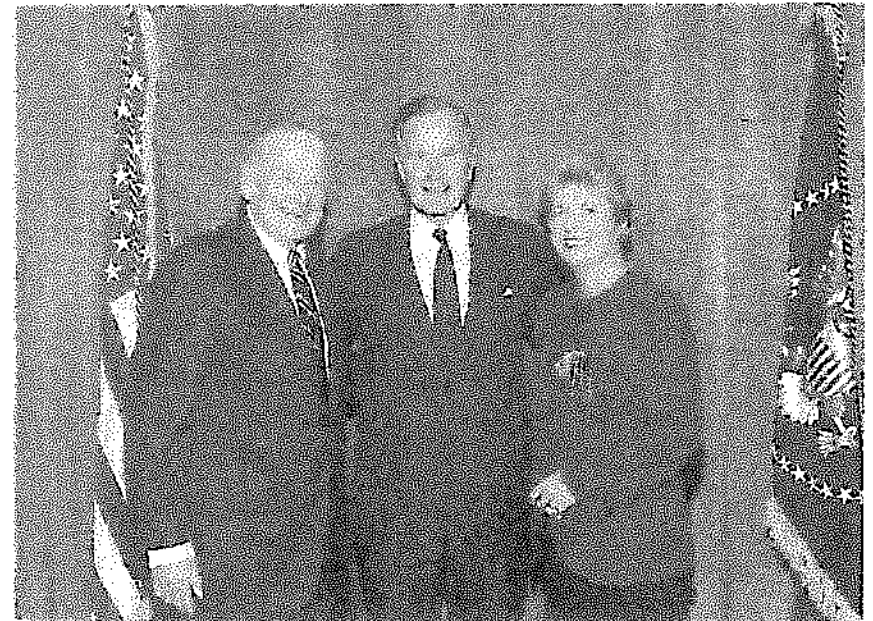
In any case, this is what Kiski has been trying to teach you. Life is not a constant crisis, thank goodness. Rather, it is made up of long periods of seemingly unimportant situations that appear boring and relatively uneventful. During these periods we are often tempted to cut corners, to neglect doing what seems to be unimportant things like telling the truth or following a task all the way through. Sometimes we have been tempted to steal a little here or there, all the time thinking that because these are unimportant times we need not care; we think that when the really important things in life come along, we'll behave properly. I'm afraid that it doesn't work that way.

I've been an athletic coach too long not to know that you play on Saturday the way you practice on Monday. That is, if you go through the motions on Monday and Tuesday you simply can't pull off something wonderful on Saturday when it counts. For instance, if you are a catcher in a baseball game and there is a man on first, you

have to practice over and over and over again to react if that man breaks for second base. In the real contest you won't have to think about what you're going to do. You'll just do it beautifully. You see, the athletic contests of Saturday are analogous to the crises of life. In preparation for that contest you can't cut corners, you can't cheat here a little and there a little, and you can't break your word and expect that you're going to act differently in a real crisis. You won't. You'll play and react precisely the way you have practiced.

Recently I had occasion to reprimand a student who had been involved in an incident of importance, but not of major importance. When I asked him if he was involved, he said, "No." A few hours later he came back and admitted to me that he had lied. I told him that I admired his coming back and admitting the truth, for he had displayed a lack of character when his initial reaction was to lie. He told me that he had lied because he was afraid, and I told him that fear was a silly excuse. A lie is a lie and a cheat is a cheat and no rationalization is going to change that fact. During your time here you have been exposed to long periods of apparent unimportance. During these periods you have quietly been developing the character that will enable you consistently to react properly in the crises that will inevitably come your way. Someday your wife will be ill, or you're going to lose your job, or you'll find that your children are on drugs, or something horrendous is going to happen. Whether or not you are a man of character will make all the difference in the way these events turn out. And that character will have been developed during those periods of seeming unimportance here at Kiski and elsewhere. If you have learned this here, and I know that many of you have, your life will turn out very well, indeed. If you haven't, I suggest that you give some thought to those words about character not being "built in crisis, but merely displayed."

The next time you hear the word "hero" or when you use it yourself, be sure that you don't mislead by using the term to describe people who are merely sensational in the sports arena or on stage. They may be heroes and they may not be, but unless you know them personally, you will not be able to judge. Remember, too, that in your lives you will be encountering heroes almost every day. Look in the right direction and apply the appropriate standards and you will be able to see who the real heroes are. I know for a fact that there are many in this class, boys who engaged in unacceptable behavior and admitted it or boys who stood up for what was right when it was not popular to do so. These young men have been heroes and for me always will be. I honor your courage.



Mr. Pidgeon with President George Bush
and Pennsylvania State Treasurer Barbara H. Hafer Pidgeon.

Commitment 1996

I believe that one of the most important qualities anyone can have is the capacity for commitment. It is commitment that lies at the root of every achievement created by man throughout history. To live well, it is clear that one must have the ability to commit oneself to something of value. It is precisely this that The Kiski School has tried to nurture in you. We start out in little ways by asking that you make a commitment to a sport or a subject or an extra-curricular activity. From there we urge you to make a commitment to your school. Finally, we hope that this process will lead you to make a commitment to excellence itself.

Of course, we can't always succeed. I'm sure that many of you remember someone who would not or could not make a commitment to Kiski or anything else for that matter and decided to leave our campus or was, in some cases, urged to depart. You also know classmates who have been unable to make a commitment to a team and who substitute for that by acting the role of cool, detached observers, pretending that they don't care. And then there are those who seem incapable of making a commitment to learning a subject, again, seeming to be unengaged and without regret. There are some among you here tonight who haven't yet realized the value of making a commitment and are going to have to learn this later, if you want your lives to have any meaning or depth or value.

On the other hand, many of you have made very serious commitments and find you are being rewarded for them now. There is no question that you will continue to reap rewards, for the quality of

your commitment is powerful and will endure for the rest of your days. In my position I have been able to see many of you mature and acquire the capacity for a commitment that will surely lead to success, and by success I do not mean the acquisition of wealth or material goods. I've seen boys of only average ability who I know will contribute to society because they've learned how to commit themselves to something, whether it be a sport, an activity or their academic work. In some cases it is all three. I've seen boys of great ability who also have made a strong commitment; I predict great things ahead for them also. Sadly, I have seen boys of average ability who are not willing to commit themselves to anything; I fear that they are in for a bad time in the future. Most unfortunate of all are those young people of tremendous natural, God-given talent, who have failed to make a commitment to anything larger than themselves. Their lives will be haunted by those saddest of all phrases, "It might have been . . ."

And what is it that keeps people from making commitments? The first and most common is fear, fear of appearing awkward while struggling, or fear of failing and hence losing that facade of self-assurance that many of us hide behind. And then there are those who will not commit themselves to anything because of selfishness or self-centeredness. They can only address the immediate, seeking gratification in the next few minutes. They only want what feels good now and fail to take the long-range view that commitment entails. These people drift all of their lives, lurching from one moment to the other, never accomplishing anything, never contributing anything. They leave nothing of themselves behind, and thereby fail to gain the only kind of immortality possible for us on this earth, that which comes from leaving something of ourselves behind to affect the lives of those who come after us.

Some people will not commit themselves to anything worthwhile, because they are blinded by a desire for material things. Now, I am not a purist; I see nothing wrong with pursuing material gain if that is what you choose and if you have a reason for it over and above the mere acquisition of things. But there are people who make this process of acquisition an end in itself, rather than a means to an end. Unquestionably, despite what I say here, some of you will pursue material gain, and that's just fine. Goodness knows, this school can always use a few more wealthy alumni. But if you do this, be sure that you think the work itself is of primary importance to you, and remember to keep your real goals in mind. Material acquisition is only a means to an end, not an end in itself. When I was a young man just out of college, I blindly walked into a job that seemed the answer to a young man's prayer. It paid handsomely and led to the making of valuable contacts. It also required a minimum of effort on my part. For a few months I reveled in it, but one morning I woke up, realizing that I was embarking on a long and empty path.

Through some miraculous act, perhaps of God, I decided to accept a position as an apprentice teacher, getting paid a small fraction of what I had been earning. I suggest that it was divine intervention that caused me to take that job, because I know perfectly well that I wasn't smart enough to have made the right decision myself. Nevertheless, it happened and I've had a wonderful time ever since. That experience taught me something that I've tried to pass on to graduates of this school ever since, so I'm going to repeat it once more: never let salary or material rewards be the deciding factor in whether or not to take a job. Consider, instead, how this new position fits your talents and points in the direction of what you want to achieve during the rest of your life. If you do that, you'll automatically make the commitment that is necessary for living a full and valuable life.

If you do otherwise, I fear you will become an unhappy and unfulfilled person. Some of the saddest conversations I've had have been with middle-aged men who tell me that they've always hated their jobs, but have continued in them because they can't find a way out. Often I've had conversations with men in their forties and fifties and sixties who have said to me in effect that they've made enough money now and would like to have a job like mine. They ask how I got it. Generally I laugh and tell them that my job demands a commitment very early in life and isn't like a pair of shoes that you can try on in later years. It is a life-long commitment. I don't make many friends when I say that, but making many friends has never been a more compelling goal for me than being frank.

Let me close by saying to the parents here this evening, as I've said often before, thank you for the honor that you pay me and the faculty of this school by entrusting us with your sons, your prize possessions. To the seniors, I'll just say farewell to you tomorrow. That's a task that I prefer to put off as long as possible.

Signing on to Civility 1997

Recently the University of Pittsburgh unveiled their "Commitment to Civility," a fourteen line pledge that incoming freshmen will be asked to take. The document acknowledges that learning and service to society are "best accomplished in an atmosphere of mutual respect and civility, self-restraint, concern for others, and academic integrity." We know that the University of Pittsburgh is following the lead of several large colleges and universities in New York, Ohio and South Carolina that have adopted similar values statements. In most cases, the urge to have students sign this document is a reaction to reports of increased conflict in classrooms and dorms. A recent *Bloomberg News* poll found that most Americans believe that as a nation we have become less respectful of each other. This comes as no surprise to me and probably not to any citizen aware of what is going on in America.

All one has to do is tune into any of the dozens of television talk shows and see what passes for entertainment. Most of these shows are clearly directed at teenagers, the very people we now expect to sign commitments to civility. While I applaud the university for its effort, I am skeptical of its chances for success. Look at the media models created for our college students!

Secondary schools as well as colleges have become environments in which less than honorable behavior and bad manners are accepted and, in some cases, even condoned. Too many of our teachers put their personal desire to be popular with students ahead of their

adult responsibility to teach students right from wrong. As a teacher of fifty years and Headmaster at The Kiski School for forty of those years, I firmly believe that it is not enough simply to teach our children academic subjects. We must also teach them to be considerate and respectful toward others. Cultivating personal qualities like integrity and respect is just as important as learning how to navigate the information superhighway.

Good manners matter. They are, after all, simply the outward expression of man's respect for his fellow man. Clausewitz, the theorist of war, once wrote that war is merely an extension of politics. He might just as accurately have written that war is merely an extension of bad manners. Good manners are a code of conduct, a standard of behavior, allowing us to interact peacefully and productively. As Edmund Burke wrote, "Manners are more important than laws, because upon them to a large extent do the laws depend." But good manners are not inherited and one can't clone courtesy. And, as we know, good manners are not the province of the privileged; civility doesn't necessarily accompany wealth and social status. Good manners are taught by parents and occasionally by peers, but rarely, I fear, are they taught by schools. Schools teach academics, but ignore academic honesty. They promote self-actualization, but ignore self-restraint.

Building character is fundamental to the educational process. A student's success will be measured by far more than his standardized scores. The world will judge him not by his grade point average but by the quality of his character. Of course, academics are important. Kiski is a college preparatory school and has a curriculum which meets or exceeds the standards set by the nation's finest colleges and universities. Our campus is wired for the information age; technology is as much a part of our classrooms as textbooks, and we

use the Internet as an important teaching tool. However, while I strongly value a superior education, it does not guarantee success. In my experience, the essential difference between those who achieve and those who do not is character.

A man of good character has the self-discipline to establish goals, choose a course of action and stick with it. This is true whether we are speaking of the world of business, athletics or scholarship. A man of good character has the integrity to do what is right, not what is expedient. He doesn't follow fashion, but forges his own path. He has a clear sense of who he is and where he's going. As Robert Penn Warren wrote, "The aim of a man is knowledge, and the mark of a mature man is self-knowledge."

If, as educators, we don't teach the elements of good character in our primary and secondary schools, if we don't make civility and good manners the rule and the expectation in personal conduct, then there is little hope that we'll see such qualities on our college campuses, no matter what we ask students to sign!



Mr. Pidgeon at the opening of the John D. Andreini Field.

Four Decades Later 1997

As some of you know, I haven't been particularly pleased by the prospect of this evening. It isn't modesty that makes me feel this way, to be sure. You all know I'm an egomaniac and there's no sense in my trying to deny it. No, it's just that I couldn't find any appropriate reason for anyone to honor a guy whose sole accomplishment for the past forty years is his failure to get promoted!

Of course, I've also thought of the many people that I should thank this evening, but I came to the conclusion that if I engaged in that process we'd be here all night; I owe so much to so many. There are, however, a few people that I simply must mention. First of all there is my family, Barbara and my children, Sandy, Regan, Kelly and Beth. I've mentioned in the past that one of the great worries I could have had concern my children. A headmaster is in a very awkward situation with his family. His own children see him paying constant attention to the children of other parents, and unless they're particularly generous, they become jealous or feel put upon. This can be a serious burden on a headmaster. I'm grateful that my own children have lifted that particular burden from me. I have not had to carry such a weight. So, thank you.

And aside from my family, there are three others that I simply must address, even though there are so many more who made these forty years possible. The first is Russ Swank, who has served on Kiski's Board of Trustees almost since my arrival and has never let me down. The second is Mike Yukevich, the Chairman of our Board. Few people know that I taught Mike Latin II when I first came to Kiski, but even fewer know the contributions he has made to our

school. Quietly and selflessly, he has served. Always in the background, never seeking recognition, his efforts, leadership and presence have been vital to the preservation of this school. And the third that I must thank is Alan Andreini. I coached Alan when he was a boy, and it's well-known that he developed into one of the world's great runners. He has served on the Board of this school for the past decade, and I would be remiss if I didn't say publicly that if it were not for his financial genius and wisdom in overseeing the fiscal development and growth of Kiski, there would be no Kiski tonight.

This is a unique institution, let me assure you. It is a very good school to be sure, and that means, by definition that it has a fine academic program. As a school, however, Kiski may be almost alone in standing firmly for decency, honor, responsibility, courtesy, accountability and civility. It is this sense of decency and fairness that I associate with the term "Kiski boys." There are many who scoff at us and intimate that we're stuffy and not keeping up with the times. My sense is that perhaps there are times that ought not to be "kept up to." Someone laughingly said to me that it's easier to get thrown out of Kiski for having bad manners than it is for failing Algebra. Failing Algebra can be readily addressed, but bad manners are like a plague that spreads in a community and is much more difficult to correct. The battle to ensure civility is ours; we battle daily and will continue to do so as long as there is life left in us.

We are bound together by a sense of ethics but also by a myriad of memories and unforgotten scenes. I remember you sliding down the ice-covered sidewalks outside of this building on winter nights or gathered in groups, barefoot, in cut-off jeans, consuming huge numbers of popsicles on the lawns in the spring. Then there are the visions I have of you plowing through the leaves that cover this campus each October. I remember your going out of your way to avoid me when you knew you had done something to arouse my wrath, or going out of your way at other times to say, "Thank you, Sir" for

something I had done that you thought was worthy of your gratitude. I have so many memories of watching you grow in confidence in a debate or glee club concert or dramatic club performance. I remember countless winter evenings coming in from athletic practices in the dark. I can see you dressing up and putting on a show when outsiders were visiting our campus, because this was your school and you could know that we weren't perfect, but you sure weren't going to let any outsider know it!

It is by these memories that we are bound together, memories that go back over seasons and decades. All the years that have passed and all the years that are yet to come in our lives and our sons' lives, these are what Mr. Lincoln called "the mystic chords of memory." They bind us inextricably together for eternity.

Kiski is more than a group of buildings on a hill. Its immortality lies in the total of all the joys and sorrows and successes, all of the failures and efforts that generations of Kiski boys have left behind on this hill. The common memory of this, the thing that we share, will prevail long after the bricks and concrete walks have turned to dust. Kiski will prevail, because it is us.

Let it be known that this is the last time I shall talk to a group of this kind. I did it after twenty years of being Headmaster and later, after twenty-five years, but this is surely the last. This is so, not because I am leaving; I still have much to do. It is because the next time I would do something like this, it would be to say good-by to you. And despite all that life has done for me and to me, despite all the gifts and strengths that life has bestowed upon me through experience, it has never given me the kind of courage it would take for me to say good-by to you. So, thanks. Let's get on with the next forty years ... and just in case I haven't made it clear, I love you.

Sportsmanship 1998

"The Flying Fish of Fujiama" was at one time the greatest swimmer in the world. About fifty years ago, during his tour of the United States, we competed against each other; in the process Hironshinon Forahashi (his real name) and I became good friends. I never even came close to defeating him, of course, but some of my fondest memories are of hugging each other at the end of one of the seemingly unlimited number of races in which he defeated me. Last year at about this time, I received a letter from Hironshinon Forahashi. We reminisced about how he had gone on to set Olympic records while I was relegated to the oblivion that awaits all less-than-great athletes.

I remembered that he enjoyed teasing me about being beaten by someone almost six inches shorter than I was, but I reminded him that at least I didn't have to stand on my toes at meals to reach the food as we passed through the cafeteria line. It may seem rather extraordinary that the two of us, boys of entirely different cultures, whose countries had just completed a vicious and hate-filled war, became dear friends. Our friendship didn't stem from my awe at Hironshinon's talents or from his need for my adulation. It emerged instead from athletic competition that was embedded in our mutual respect for each other as well as the shared, intense experience of the race.

Things have changed a good deal since then. I find myself distressed to see athletes receive huge bonuses for winning and view with alarm the victory "dances" by athletes who have just run for a

touchdown or scored a hat trick. The exaltation in our society of the winner and the pity or criticism addressed to the loser have certainly distorted the meaning of "sportsmanship" as I once knew it.

The Olympic Games were not intended to be competitions between nations; they were to be competitions between individuals and groups of individuals representing their countries. Athletes were supposed to represent, as well their countries, the ideals of chivalry, sportsmanship, self-discipline, and respect for one's opponent. The contests were to provide an opportunity for young athletes from all nations of the globe to compete against each other, to come to know each other as individuals and to develop mutual respect for each other. The hope was that these experiences would foster good will and understanding in the world.

I recall the winter of 1951 when I was sitting in the grandstands at a track meet in Boston Garden. A noted Olympic champion suddenly took the microphone and harangued the spectators about the importance of the United States *winning* the next Olympic games. I turned to my companion and we both shook our heads. The entire tone of his comments was clearly a foreshadowing of what was to come, and we were disturbed by the rudeness of it.

The current focus on winning probably stems from the Cold War when our economic and military competition with the Soviet Union spilled onto the athletic field. The sense of urgency and anxiety surrounding this battle dealt a serious injury to Olympic ideals. Since then, the rise of the free market system and the glorification of the individual entrepreneur has added to the trend of placing the individual ahead of the team. The "bottom line," which is winning, is clearly more important to many than the aesthetic quality of the product, the beauty of the game. Add the focus on winning to the glorification of individual success; then combine those with a compulsive

fixation on what I will call "creature comforts" (designer clothes, luxury cars and exotic vacations) and you have created a trio of implacable forces that have enshrined individualism and consumerism and destroyed sportsmanship.

One of the most embarrassing moments of my life came when I read the comments of Charles Barkley, who after running down and almost destroying a player from a small country, Barkley stated in an interview, "I didn't come here to make friends." Now *that* is a statement by a man either too arrogant to adhere to the Olympic code or too ignorant to know what it means. I have even read admiring accounts of one of America's leading women swimmers who "burns with such a fierce competitive spirit" that she spits in the lane of her opponents. Precisely the spirit that one hopes sportsmanship can foster! We can observe this kind of behavior in all sports. We see hockey teams sending goon squads onto the ice hoping to maim their opponents; we see idiots on the football field dancing in the end zones, taunting their opponents; we see egomaniacs hitting home runs and taking a half-hour to trot around the bases in the hopes of humiliating their opponents; and we see morons in the grandstands cheering on this kind of behavior, waxing rhapsodically when opponents are hurt, pouting and booing when their "hero" loses. The scene is ugly.

I wish these folks could spend every afternoon, as I have since 1939, going to athletic practices. I recently realized that I had coached over ninety varsity teams as a head coach; and before I participated in athletics as a coach, I practiced every afternoon as an athlete. You cannot imagine how important athletics are to me. They're important because as a schoolteacher I see athletics as a tool that complements teaching in the classroom. Athletics are an invaluable asset to the teaching of ethics which I deem to be just as important as

the teaching of languages, mathematics or sciences. In particular, participation in athletics should teach respect for another's talents and differences. It should teach the value of teamwork and what it means to subordinate your efforts to that of a team striving to reach a particular goal. It should teach how to win with dignity and, even more important, how to be gracious in defeat.

Amidst the sensationalism of today's athletic scene, it is good to recall the quiet great heroes of the past and present, who embody the ideals of sportsmanship as I know them. There's Jesse Owens, one of the finest gentlemen who ever lived. There's Bob Mathias, a graduate of my beloved Kiski School, who always represented the model of the humble, generous and at the same time, excellent athlete. There's Steve Blass, my friend and the star of the 1971 World Series, a man who played baseball with the abandon of an innocent boy, never really knowing how good he was and, therefore, behaving with unfailing modesty throughout his career. There's Curtis Enis, another Kiski boy, who, even in the pressure of a big time football game, refused the temptation to humiliate his opponents with cheap gestures because he had defeated them. And there's Joan Benoit-Samuelson, a wondrously determined and self-contained competitor who never veered from the pathway of civility and sportsmanship. And, of course in the background there's Joe Paterno, who has created a Camelot out of the hell that college football has become. That is why I've always admired him and have been proud to call him my friend. If "Paternoism" disappears from college athletics, then I think it's time to close down all the stadiums and all the gymnasiums and go back to doing calisthenics.

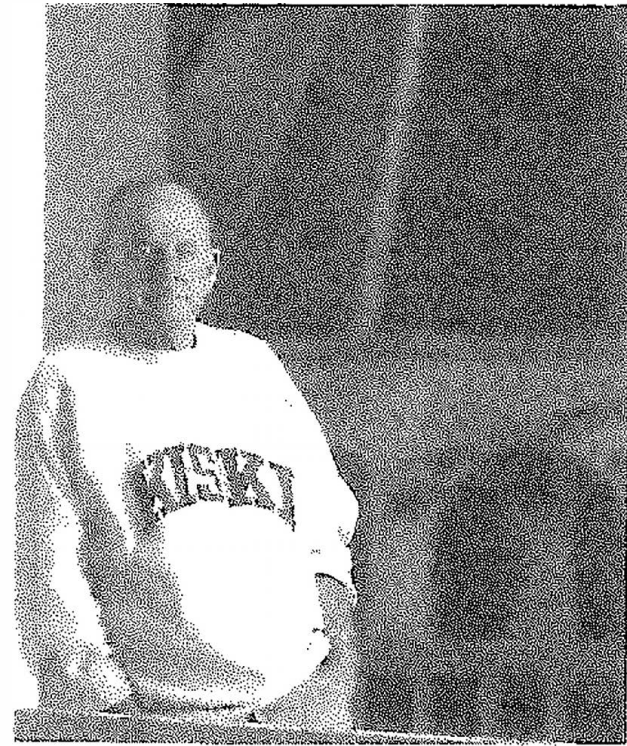
Sports can and should teach young men to come to terms with themselves, to learn who they are, to learn the value of competition, but most of all, sports should teach the value of honor and chivalry.

And these qualities of character are not going to be taught if gutless school administrators try to solve problems by skirting the requirements of civility. Some time ago, athletes were told that they could not shake hands and mingle with opposing teams after a contest, because administrators were afraid that fights would break out. If this kind of decision-making becomes common practice, then there is no doubt in my mind that inter-scholastic competitions should be done away with; in fact, I would personally lead a fight to see that they're dropped. Sadly, the number of exemplary sportsmen and women, I fear, is fast diminishing. If they disappear entirely, we will have lost their examples of physical grace, humility and respect for others.

I have personally coached at least a thousand athletes at this school and have watched another thousand compete. I've only seen about two hundred who would ever have been able to compete at the lowest level of college athletics, Division III. And I've only seen a handful who could compete at the Division I level. I've only seen one who could compete professionally. Obviously, we do not spend the time and money that we do to prepare young men to be athletes at a higher level. We spend this time and money to teach values. I know that this term has been bandied about by everyone and used to cover a multitude of sins. You and I have also heard from some of the biggest hypocrites in America, college coaches, giving lip service to teaching values when actually they were teaching young people a set of ethics suitable only for thieves, murderers and rapists.

Despite what is going on in the rest of the world, I know that on our campus we will maintain honorable goals in our student athletes. As I coach Kiski boys, I am anxious to push them to their limits and beyond to a higher level of excellence. I do so with the wonderful memory of the sportsmanship that shaped my world as a young athlete and fostered my friendship with a Japanese boy that I

will never forget. I want my Kiski boys to experience what I did with Hironshinon Forahashi, and if they can't have that, then I want them to experience something resembling it. Oscar Wilde once said of cynics that, "They know the price of everything, but the value of nothing." It seems to me that America has paid a high price for big time athletics both in terms of money and also in terms of spirit lost. Had we realized the value of real sportsmanship, we could surely have spent more wisely on building a more respectful global community.



Honest Rewards 1998 Christmas Vespers

Often I think that those of us who call ourselves Christians are misunderstood as being exclusionary when we celebrate this season. That is not the impression that I want to give at all. The Christmas season is that time of year when Christians celebrate the birth of the man whom we believe to be the Son of God. There are many in this room tonight who do not see Jesus Christ in this way. Some accept him as a prophet and others know him to have been a great teacher. Some of you have not really thought about him at all. I am fully aware of that fact and the remarkably diverse group of people occupying this room today.

Those of us who do celebrate this holiday buy one another presents and usually say "Merry Christmas" to those we meet. This is merely a way of marking our celebration; most of us intend to include people of all faiths when we use this phrase to mark our greetings or farewells during this time of year. Whatever those in this room think of Jesus Christ, I think that people of all faiths who have studied a bit of history can have a sense that there was something special about him. His life, as we know it, exemplified a dignity, an integrity and a sense of goodness from which people of all faiths can benefit, whether or not they adhere to the tenets of the Christian religion. And it is those very qualities that I would like to address tonight. Perhaps the best way of going about this is to tell a little story about something that happened to me when I was a college student, just a little older than you are now.

I was somewhat proud to be a member of the varsity swim team; it was a very good team, and I was pleased to contribute to it. In those days, eastern colleges dominated swimming and even a relatively small college as my own was nationally ranked. It was toward the end of the season, and we were going to swim against Williams, another small college powerhouse. This meet would determine the national small college championship. It was going to be a close competition, and we studied the other team very carefully. We realized that I had to beat a swimmer from Williams in the one hundred yard free style in order for us to win. I had never beaten this athlete before, and felt enormous tension during the week before that meet.

In those days, the rules surrounding swimming competitions were somewhat different from what they are today. When a swimmer made a turn, he had to touch the end of the pool with his hand and there was always an official looking down to see that he did. Naturally, it was often very difficult for him to see, because he splashed as his hand went to hit the wall and he might miss. Well, that's exactly what happened to me. The other swimmer and I were swimming stroke for stroke and we went into the third turn. I somersaulted and realized that I hadn't touched the wall with my hand. Rather than stopping, I pushed off and swam the final lap, just barely winning the race. We had won the meet and therefore the Championship. As I climbed out of the pool, you can imagine the excitement that I encountered.

I found a mob scene of people slapping me on the back and congratulating me. There were teammates hugging me and celebrating our newfound victory. I made my way to our bench and sat down beside my coach, a wonderful man for whom I had and still have enormous respect. Sitting on the other side of me was a teammate with whom I was very friendly. This young man was congratulating me and I turned to him and said, "You know, I haven't touched that

third turn yet." My coach overheard me and asked, "Did you say you didn't touch that turn?" I told him that this was true. He got up and walked to the referee. They conferred for a few minutes while I tried to figure out what the conversation was about. Finally, my coach beckoned me to come up and insisted that I tell the official precisely what I had just told him. I proceeded to tell the official that I hadn't touched the third turn, but that the judge had obviously missed seeing this. It was at this point that my coach did something extraordinary that I will never forget. He called across the pool to the other coach and between them and the referee they decided that our team would forfeit the event. That meant that we had lost the meet and therefore the championship. I cannot describe to you how disconsolate my team was.

The next day was Sunday and a few of us walked to the coach's house on the edge of the campus. I asked him bluntly, "Bob, why did you do that? After all, we worked all year to win a championship, and the official blew the call; why do we have to pay for it?" He looked at me and responded, "Jack, we didn't win the meet. We could say we did, but we would always know that we didn't. That's the worst thing in the world." I thought enough of this man to accept what he said. Clearly, I didn't understand his decision at first, but as the years have gone on, the truth of his words have rung in my ears. I now understand him perfectly.

Needless to say, I learned a great deal from this experience. The first thing I learned was that outward things such as rewards, prizes and honors don't mean anything unless we have really earned them. If we had not told the truth, our so called "victory" would have turned to ashes as we celebrated. When we accept unearned accolades, we are diminished by the experience. We become guilt ridden people who eventually overcompensate or posture in an attempt to make up for what we know to be our own dishonesty. In truth, I have

known a great many men who have gone through life with false credentials, trying to be all things to all people, never even admitting to themselves that they are not what they seem. These men encourage others to believe that they have accomplished things for which they are not truly responsible. They are men who have no core, and they seldom, if ever, accomplish much. Because they are so engaged in playing roles, they have no energy or thought or courage left to stand for something real. They don't dare admit, even to themselves, that they are not what they have allowed people to think they are. These people have always seemed rather pitiful to me, bearing a burden of dishonesty and guilt that grows heavier all the time. If you are sly enough, you can mislead everybody in the world, but at some point, even in your attempt to avoid it, you will have to come to terms with the truth about yourself.

I really think that the reason why I am here speaking with you now is that I learned this lesson from my coach when I was still a very young man. I look back on the event with love and gratitude, for I know that a man cared enough for me to teach me something so important that it affected my entire life. He gave me a very special gift, as you can see.

I began this talk tonight by referring to the gift giving that Christmas often involves for Christians. In that light, I want to give you each a present. Unfortunately, I can't afford to buy each of you something, but I *can* give you a present of my hope for you. I hope that you all find what Mr. Abraham Lincoln referred to as "the better angels of your nature." Each of you is unquestionably capable of exhibiting integrity and a pride in being who you are. As my coach so long ago helped me find those qualities in myself, I hope that you will find them in yourselves, and conduct yourself with honest dignity in having found them. In giving you this gift, I wish to each of you a merry Christmas.

Peer Pressure and Civility: The Boarding School Solution 1998

Many intelligent people have offered suggestions in response to the lack of civility so blatant in our society. Some administrators of schools and universities have introduced behavior codes punishing those students who behave rudely, and a certain segment of the public has called for educational institutions, pre-college schools particularly, to offer actual courses in proper decorum. As much as I applaud the motivation behind such steps, I must say, reluctantly, that I sincerely doubt their efficacy. I do, however, believe that there is a workable solution to our national problem, and it lies within the American boarding school tradition of this country.

Introducing codes of behavior into school environment will not, in my opinion, solve the problem we face. Establishing a long list of rules is unhelpful, for there is no one capable of promulgating enough laws or rules to cover all possible breeches of civility. As we all know, whenever a law or rule does not address or prohibit a particular behavior, people will take it for granted that such a behavior is perfectly acceptable. When this happens, of course, we have to add more laws and rules to our list that were not present in the first place. And so it goes without an end in sight. My sense is that as long as we try to legislate civility in this manner, we run the risk of abandoning the society that we had a generation ago, in which there were not rules concerning civility because none were needed. We risk becoming the worst possible society in which attention and value are placed on nothing but the existence of and adherence to rules.

In his essay, "Politics," Ralph Waldo Emerson states, "Our society is a currency on which we stamp our portrait." Emerson is pointing to his belief that it is our character and our very nature that is reflected in the laws and rules we develop and in the rigidity and severity of those rules. If this is true, and I believe it is, then schools and colleges and the student bodies of those institutions should take little pride in the fact that they have been forced to create rules governing the very basic expectations of civil behavior. The fact that these rules exist indicates that those very groups of students are guilty of unacceptable behavior. After reading Emerson's essay, one can readily see that all laws or rules are merely elaborations on "the Golden Rule," which as you know states simply, "Do unto others as you would have them do unto you."

Several generations ago this was sufficient for the general population and students learned civility by adhering to this simple, idealistic, and yet practical guide for human interaction. But the erosion of adherence to this basic call to compassion, caused by a myriad of events during the past thirty years, has finally caused a collapse of standards of behavior on the part of students. As for the attempts that some schools are making to teach civility to students, there are two reasons that give them little hope for success. First, youngsters are notoriously resistant to adults preaching at them, whatever the content of the "sermon." They will listen to adult instructors in Algebra or History or English or even to adults speaking about the fundamentals of a sport, but historically, they have turned a deaf ear to adults preaching about personal behavior. The second reason that I'm dubious of schools' abilities to teach civility to students is that students today have little in the way of examples of civil behavior from those in public life. (All you have to do is look at the behavior of our political leaders in the House of Representatives during the impeachment hearings to see what I mean.)

Civility almost always requires a voluntary suppression of feelings and behavior to avoid hurting or offending others. How can we join together this kind of concern for others with the contemporary over-emphasis on the right and need of free expression? In emphasizing this aspect of our political "rights" at the expense of others, we may be permitting and, in fact, endorsing, horrible, offensive, hurtful behavior in the name of the proper exercising of "rights." We see people today rudely offending others and justifying this behavior without ever addressing the obvious need for personal and social responsibility to be linked to the exercise of any freedom. One must behave responsibly enough to be sure that others are not needlessly hurt or offended by our behavior.

I believe that the best venue for students to learn the link between responsibility and freedom is on the independent school campus, particularly the independent boarding school campus. I could be accused of being self-serving, of course, because I am the headmaster of an independent boarding school, but perhaps I am the headmaster of such a school *because* I believe in its importance in the first place.

Many people reject the idea of a boarding school because they feel that to send their children to one is to abdicate their responsibilities to bring up their children. Furthermore, they believe that the faculty and administrators of boarding schools are smug in suggesting that they can do that job better than parents can. We are not saying that. In fact, parents have, by far, the strongest influence on children. A strong family background is essential to the developing goodness and wholesomeness in young people. However, the closer that children come to adolescence, the less influence adults, even the most concerned parents, have on them.

By the time youngsters actually enter their "teen years" they fall prey to a powerful social force. . . . that of peer pressure. And even the best and most determined parents can find themselves unable to offset the deleterious effects of an adolescent peer group. We have all seen parents driven to distraction by the fact that despite all their efforts, their youngster has fallen in with a "bad crowd" or has been led into less than satisfactory behavior by one or two "friends." The truth is that parents cannot entirely control their child's social environment. They cannot banish this "bad crowd" or a few unsatisfactory youngsters from their neighborhood. They can't force local schools to "get rid" of the troublemakers. What they find themselves doing is standing by as their children choose a course of action that can permanently and negatively influence their future lives.

The boarding school possesses the power to control the peer group. It has the power to remove negative influences. It can nurture the youngster who wishes to pursue a positive course in life. I know this because I head one of these schools, and I know that our primary concern is to see that each youngster is subject to the best possible influence on the part of the peer group. When negative influences in that peer group surface, they are eliminated, not to punish the weaker character, but to assure the other students and their parents of the most wholesome environment possible. And since our students are with us twenty-four hours a day, except for vacations and limited weekends, we know we can monitor the influences on them. No other kind of school can do this.

It goes without saying that the academic education provided by these schools is unsurpassed; we not only employ superb teachers, but can allow these teachers real academic freedom. Public schools cannot, without enormous legal difficulties, rid themselves of negative influences, and independent day schools have little control over

what their students are subjected to during non-school hours. Naturally, all parents want the best possible situation for their children. They want both a sound academic education and a community of wholesome values. They want their children to be physically and socially safe from the ever-increasing dangers that life, especially urban life, threatens them with today. The boarding school environment, more than any other, offers a solution to all of these needs and should get the kind of attention that such a positive force in our society truly deserves.

Keeping Ethics Alive Graduation Dinner 1997

I'm sure that many of you have asked yourselves why we go to such extremes in imposing certain standards of behavior on Kiski boys. Why maintain a dress code when the year after you graduate most of you will look as though you were clad by the Salvation Army? Why put such an emphasis on good manners when you're entering a society in which most college students behave like boorish Russian Cossacks? Finally, why insist on a code of ethics when you'll all be living in a society whose moral and ethical choices resemble those of Captain Kidd's pirate crew? Well, there are several reasons.

Despite what you have learned at Kiski, I know that some of you are going to sacrifice your individuality, wallowing in the conformity of slovenliness and boorish, unattractive behavior that characterizes college students; when those days are over, you will want something to come back to and I'll see to it that you have that place. I know that some of you will cave into peer pressure and adopt standards of behavior that tolerate cheating, stealing and lying; when those days are over, you will want something to come back to and I'll see to it that you have that place. Now, I certainly hope that none of you is going to fall into one of these traps. You know how to avoid them, but my knowledge of human nature and especially of boys your age leads me to believe that some of you will not use what you know. At Kiski you have been taught to make other choices, and they are, in their own way, ideal choices. Let me assure you that this is an extremely difficult time in America to impart ideals, and I can only

hope that they have been truly understood and internalized by you all.

So much of the tone and tenor of our nation is anything but idealistic. On many occasions, our country has been torn apart by racial tensions primarily due to a lack of civility and respectful treatment of one another. Racial problems in America, I fear, will not be solved by civil rights laws, although they help. They will not be solved by affirmative action programs, although they help also. They will only be solved when civility replaces acrimony. Years ago, before any of you were born, the student body at Columbia University rioted, protesting the Viet Nam War. At that time students occupied buildings and were threatening to burn down the library at the University, one of the very great libraries in the world.

During that crisis, I called a Kiski graduate who was a student at Columbia University to ask what was going on from his point of view. Greatly distressed, he exploded in frustration on the telephone. One of the great universities in the world was being held hostage and the very existence of one of the world's greatest libraries was being threatened. Here he was in the midst of some of the world's great minds, Mark Van Doren, Gilbert Highet, Jacques Barzun, some of the greatest scholars of the twentieth century, and they offered little direction. He had gone around and sought out many of these men to ask what should be done. Apparently, not one of them could give him an answer. They told him what Plato said or what Lord Melbourne said, but not one of them could tell him what they would do to solve this awful crisis.

Well, that crisis was not unlike many of the crises that we have today, and none of them can be solved until civility and good manners are in place. Incidentally, as an aside, the one man in the entire situation who *did* bring about a certain meeting of the minds was, of all people, the basketball coach of Columbia University. Somehow

he had the ability to promote civility and mutual respect among the conflicting parties, and eventually sanity won out. Now, I don't wish this commentary to be interpreted as anti-intellectual, because it is not. What I do want to point out is that like the racial problems of today and all the other problems that we face, there will be no solution achieved by passing laws or quoting history. Those problems will be solved when civility returns to dialogue and people actually address each other as gentlemen.

At this school we have tried to teach you civility. We have attempted to show you and tell you the difference between good manners and brutishness. We have tried to hold you to standards of respect and concern for others. I realize that you have wondered why we place so much stress on the way you dress and the way you interact with your peers or your teachers. We feel that these apparently minor issues must be addressed if you are going to be a positive, contributing member of our society. These may appear unimportant, but they are really little sacramentals, outer signs of inner grace. We must all be sensitive to the gestures that we make to show respect for others. For instance, I belong to an organization that is made up of men with whom I served and fought in World War II. Every couple of years, we have a reunion and we always dress formally for those events. Now some people might think that this is a bit stuffy and might believe that we would be able to see each other just as well if we wore t-shirts and cut-off blue jeans. But the fact of the matter is that we dress as we do to honor each other. In the same way, you have been expected to honor this place and what you have learned here.

Aside from those models you have seen at The Kiski School, I sometimes wonder what other places are available where young people can find expectations of civil, mutually respectful behavior. We see athletes acting horribly, selfishly, egotistically and seldom, if

ever, displaying the kind of chivalry and honor that young people deserve to see. It is amusing to hear those who wonder aloud about why there is so much violence and lack of concern for others in society today. Have any of those folks looked at a professional hockey game recently? That's not hockey they're playing; those players are indulging in mayhem. Interestingly, the National Hockey League did try to cut down on the amount of gratuitous violence in the game, but gave up because the television ratings fell. Americans wanted to see the violence more than they wanted to see a good match. How does this differ from the Romans justifying their throwing of Christians to the lions, because the onlookers in the Coliseum enjoyed watching the events? It doesn't really differ in any significant way, and clearly the National Hockey League has chosen to make a decision based on financial rather than ethical issues.

Recently, an entire segment of CBS's *60 Minutes* was devoted to smoking in the movies. In the broadcast it was suggested that the increase of smoking on the part of film characters was influencing youngsters in a destructive way; they were being encouraged to smoke, it was said. At the very same time, people who decry smoking in the movies have no difficulty with the fact that these same films depict the worst kind of violent, bestial, sexual behavior by people using language that I didn't even hear in combat in World War II. How do CBS and other so-called purveyors of art justify saying that smoking movie actors influence youngsters to smoke, but that cursing, violent, lewd movie actors do not also influence youngsters to emulate their behavior? They can't, of course.

I don't want merely to point my finger at athletes and the media as carriers of the primary responsibility for what this society has become. There are other destructive influences. Political leaders of both parties, for example, behave in ways that are so reprehensible

that our whole society discusses their behavior in much the same tone used years ago in locker rooms inhabited by athletes of the lowest moral and intellectual levels. As we observe the tasteless, even criminal and possible treasonous behavior of some of these politicians, we also hear it rationalized with the statement, "Everybody does it." Indeed, last Sunday, I heard a well-known writer say that he believes that there must be a button in Washington that lights up the country saying "Everybody does it" and this is supposed to make any behavior acceptable no matter how dishonorable it is.

Well, I don't think that morality is relative. Morality is morality and ethical behavior is self-evident. We all know it when we see it. But there are not many who think as I do about this issue, and that's why teaching ideals is particularly difficult today. So, in answer to that question, "Why should we try to teach ethical behavior and ideals when 'the real' world scoffs at them?" My answer is that we teach them because they are right, not necessarily common or popular, for they are not. Others say to me that we shouldn't teach ideals at Kiski because they aren't attainable. After all, if they aren't evident in our leaders, they don't exist. My answer to this is that if we keep ideals alive, they will lead us to a better life. Actually, I recently read a line written by Carl Schulz that pertains specifically to this discussion. He said, "Ideals are like stars—you will not succeed in touching them with your hands. But like the seafaring man you choose them as your guides and following them you will reach your destiny."

This school believes that this is true: *your* school believes that this is true. I would like to make a pledge to you. I guarantee that your school will never rationalize less than satisfactory behavior or a less than satisfactory standard of consideration for others by saying, "It's okay; everybody does it."

As you go your varied ways, I know perfectly well that you will be tempted to join the throngs of ill-mannered, dishonest louts whom you are going to encounter. If you give into temptation, you will eventually realize and remember fondly the truths you have been taught on this campus. And I predict that you will return to them, not because they represent "the Kiski way," but because they are the right way.

Big Schools: A Deadly Design 1998

Recently there has been much speculation about the causes of the terrible tragedy that occurred in Jonesboro, Arkansas when two children, one barely a teenager and the other even younger, coldly and methodically planned and carried out a mass killing of their schoolmates and a teacher. The horror is, of course, compounded by the sheer calculation displayed by these children. How could these boys, barely out of infancy, display characteristics previously observed only in murderous adults? The answers that have been given in response to this question range from blaming violence on television and in movies to lack of gun control and parent neglect. While all of these may be contributing causes, my sense is that they are not the primary cause. That, I submit, is the increased size of schools and communities and the lack of personal attachment or loyalty to those institutions which have grown among us.

On October 4th, 1958, America was rocked as the Soviet Union announced that it had launched a satellite called "Sputnik." Our country's mood rose to a level of hysteria unsurpassed in my lifetime, except by that which followed the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor. The rallying cry was "Catch up to the Russians!" Fingers were pointed and accusations were made at this nation's educational system, vilified for its alleged failure to keep American youngsters abreast of their peers in the Soviet Union. Our educational system had failed us. Books entitled, "Why Johnny Can't Read" or "Why Ivan Surpasses Johnny" and others flooded our bookshelves. American education was under a microscope.

Of course, this examination could have been beneficial and could have led to a productive reconstruction of our educational system. We could have decided finally to place teachers, well-grounded in their subjects, in charge of their classrooms. We could have turned our schools into places where students were taught academic subjects in an environment that offered concurrently a sense of identity with the institution and community responsibility. None of this, of course, did happen. Instead, after much labor, the government commission studying American education decided on a plan that has probably done more harm to American children than the combined effects of marijuana, cocaine and heroin. They said, "Let's build huge schools. Large groups of students can be gathered together in one place and rather than wasting our money on duplicated efforts, we can pour all of our dollars and talent into a small number of large schools."

As you might suspect, some educators opposed the plan from the start. We argued that putting large numbers of students together in huge high schools would result in a riotous and chaotic state, where students were anonymous and disconnected from any institution. Teaching, no matter how expert, would be impossible. I believe that we were right. The present lack of a sense of community in our children has led to the madness that characterizes today's schools. We now have guards in corridors, gangs roaming school buildings, drugs distributed and used openly and teachers harassed by hordes of teenage hoodlums, all in the name of educational reform.

Anyone who has spent any time in education knows that adolescents are wonderful. They're vivacious, creative, solicitous, curious and wonderfully stimulating to be around. But we also know that adolescents in large groups lose most of these qualities. Individual characteristics are replaced by a kind of mob instinct. Kids are great, but kids in large enough numbers can be bad news. And this

is what we have rediscovered after thirty-five years of creating larger and larger high schools. We've pushed thousands of formerly wonderful adolescents into gangs.

When one usually speaks of a gang, one conjures up images of a formal group of delinquents in inner-city schools. I hasten to point out that this is not the working definition I'm using. Rather, I am referring to a way of being in which adolescents lose their admirable qualities as individuals and take on instead the impersonal, detached characteristics of a mob. Gangs, whether or not they wear colors or are formally organized, exist in all of these huge schools, and some of the worst and most dangerous can be found in those high schools which cater primarily to upper or upper middle class families.

Now, no one is going to argue that this state of affairs defines all public schools. There are still some wonderful schools doing wonderful jobs, but too many communities have fallen into the trap of using bigness as a solution to their financial problems, not realizing the dangers that inevitably they will encounter. As Ralph Waldo Emerson once wrote, "Mankind has not progressed: what it gains on the one hand it loses on the other." Each time we think we are taking a step forward in improving society, we may very well be taking a step backward as well.

As the small high school that helped youngsters grow and develop a feeling of identity vanishes, so does the small town or neighborhood that served the same function. We have become a country of shopping malls. The huge mall has replaced the local drug store or park or the local YMCA or church as a gathering place for adolescents. Whereas youngsters once gathered in small, local places, and each was known by the adults in the community, now they roam through impersonal caverns of huge shopping malls to which they feel no allegiance or sense of responsibility and with which they cannot possibly identify.

This national phenomenon is the root cause of the recent tragedies in Mississippi, Alabama and other southern states. Some people have tried to place the blame on "southern culture" but this is ridiculous. The South certainly has its problems, but also has wonderful social qualities not found elsewhere in this country. In fact, if this violence had happened in a large, urban area, we wouldn't have been nearly as shocked. Others blame adolescent violence on television and movies. Surely, the media contribute to the atmosphere in which "anything goes," but let's not forget that American youth has always been subjected to gratuitous violence from the frontier child, who actually saw people killed in cold blood, to the children of later years who engaged in simulated violence. At the age of five, I, like many other youngsters, carried a play gun and daily "killed" hundreds of evil-doers. Each Saturday I paid my dime to spend a morning watching the Lone Ranger or Tom Mix or Buck Jones or Flash Gordon eliminate what seemed to be half the population of the universe. But no generation before the present one ever developed the cold, clinical detachment from others that we see in adolescents today.

Some blame present day violence on lack of gun control. There are surely too many guns in America, and they lead to too many violent deaths. But the horror of Jonesboro lies even more in the calculated planning of the children, the result of an attitude and way of thinking more than a plethora of weapons. Some people think that parental neglect is the cause of the most recent wave of adolescent murders. While it is true that this generation of parents leaves more to be desired than any generation that I've known, the fact is that all of us have seen youngsters grow up with the worst possible parents and manage to develop into warm, caring adults. Factors like gun control, violence in the media and parent neglect can be considered variables in the crime equation, but I insist that the real cause of these brutal

crimes is the bigness of their schools and communities and the anonymity that such environments create. What we are observing is that rural, southern children are simply being beset by the same social virus that earlier attacked their more urban, northern counterparts.

Americans have always thought that "bigger is better." We love our huge cities with their towering skyscrapers, as well as our giant factories, which have brought mass-production and prosperity to a large part of the world. Our love of big cars is universally known. And, of course, we live in a very big country. But let us not forget that tragedy is often caused by a flaw that is also the finest quality of a hero. And it is this flaw that leads to his downfall. In our love affair with bigness, we must be careful. We may have created a world in which we are depriving children of one of the things they need most: community identity and responsibility that has traditionally made Americans connected to each other, law-abiding and rightfully proud.

Mea Culpa? 1998

As did most of my countrymen, I watched President Clinton deliver what we had been led to believe was going to be a "mea culpa" address. Frankly, I was disappointed by the speech. But toward the end, he said something that not merely disappointed me; it enraged me. He said that what had occurred in the White House was a matter between him and his family, implying strongly that his affair with Ms. Lewinsky was none of our business. I was similarly enraged last week when reading in the *New Yorker* an article by Hendrik Hertzberg; it expressed a similar sentiment. Editor Hertzberg said that the president's liaison with Ms. Lewinsky should not be considered any of our business. I am convinced that both Mr. Hertzberg and Mr. Clinton are wrong. The President's affair with Ms. Lewinsky should be the business of every American who cares about the youth of this country.

Mr. Clinton refers "ad nauseam" to the children of America and would like to appear to be the ombudsman of all American children. I am willing to grant him this role, but having granted it, I insist that he accept the responsibilities that such a position requires of him.

In the last half-century that I've been teaching, I have tried to impress upon the students that have been entrusted to my care the importance of honesty, taking responsibility for one's actions and fulfilling the commitments they've made to others. I'm sure that countless other educators throughout the country have spent their time in a similar fashion. On their behalf, I ask now how do we address our

students with regard to the presidency and the potential of that office to shape our destiny as a people and as a nation? After all, Monica Lewinsky was in a situation comparable to that of young people of the armed forces. She was a twenty-one year old girl, an intern at the White House, when her relationship with the President began. The President, the most powerful man in the world and twice her age, was essentially responsible for her. We now know that he betrayed the responsibilities of this role and not only disregarded the welfare of the girl but actually preyed upon her.

I have a son of whom I'm proud. He's an officer in the United States Navy SEALs. As a patriot, he will place his life in danger and even sacrifice it for his country if ordered to do so. This order, of course, would issue from the President of the United States, his Commander in Chief. As the father of that young patriot, I want only to know that his Commander in Chief would have valid reasons for giving this order. If he does, then as much as I love my son, I am at peace; if he doesn't care about the welfare of my son and would use him as a pawn to fulfill personal desires, then I'm outraged and betrayed. It is, therefore, imperative for me to know just how much genuine care and concern he has for my son and for all the sons and daughters who are subject to his orders.

Some of the President's defenders agree with him that this is a matter of consensual sex between two adults, but I insist that this is simply untrue! It is, instead, a matter of whether a man, entrusted with the welfare of America's youth, will accept the responsibility to truly watch over them or whether he will callously ignore their welfare and even subject them to whatever particular whim interests him at the time. Perhaps it is debatable that Mr. Clinton's having consensual sex with a woman is none of our business. But that is not the point being raised here. That point is whether or not Mr. Clinton has

the honesty and sense of responsibility to care for the young people for whom he has been expressing so much concern over the past six years. My own sense is that his "mea culpa" not only lacked evidence of these qualities, but was devoid of any apparent willingness to take responsibility for his betrayal of this young woman and potentially of all other young Americans who are, after all, this nation's most valuable resource.

Being a Headmaster

*Article in the National Association of Independent Schools Bulletin
Fall, 1998*

Now that I've completed forty-one years as Headmaster, I'm often asked how I did it; I usually reply that my tenure is hardly a wondrous accomplishment; it merely implies that in forty-one years I couldn't seem to get promoted.

But there is something that I want to say about my position. You see, I've always divided headmasters into two categories, distinguishable by the way they pronounce their title. Some put emphasis on the first part of the word *Headmaster*, and some put emphasis on the second part of the word *Headmaster*. I proudly consider myself to be a member of the latter group. I am first and foremost a schoolmaster who happens to head a school. And a schoolmaster to me is primarily a teacher, a coach, a guide and a mentor. When he is at his best he is totally immersed in the welfare of young people (in my case, boys). Even my ego won't allow me to say that I'm the best teacher here, but I've tried hard to be; and it won't allow me to say that I've been the best mentor, but I've tried to be; nor can I say that I've set the best example for boys, but I've always tried to do so. In a sense, it is precisely this effort that gives the title, *Headmaster*, meaning.

With great frustration I've seen many people come into headmastering who really should have gone into business or some other profession. They simply want to *run* something; they want to be in *charge*. These are not the headmasters that I respect, and I think that this goal explains precisely the alarmingly low average tenure of headmasters in the United States today. People either leave this profession after a few years or they go on to another headmaster's job at another school and from there they go on to another school. Commitment is never established. I don't think any headmaster can have an effect on a school until he has been there at least ten years, and the result of this constant turnover of headmasters is that schools have lost their identity, if they ever had one to begin with. Such schools drift along trying to be all things to all people.

A school is a living institution; like a person it must have and project a set of core values from which it does not waver. I have known many people who lack this set of values, and they bounce about the world standing for one thing one day and another thing another day, becoming feckless and ineffective people who do not command the respect of their peers and are unable to make any lasting impression on anything or anyone. The same can be said of schools. A school may be very conservative, and this is fine, but it should remain conservative and should stand for the same set of core values in all situations because it believes that such a stance is appropriate and right. A school may be very liberal, and that is fine, but it should remain liberal and maintain its core values in varied situations. Each of these schools can flourish and make a mark in the educational world. But many schools today are trying to cater to all points of view, happy to adopt each new educational fad that comes along. My fear is that such schools are not effective and do not turn out students who know who they are or what they think.

I've often been asked about Frank Boyden (founder and Headmaster of Deerfield Academy in Massachusetts) since I seem to be his last disciple still in office. I learned a great deal from him and the most valuable lesson I learned can be explained in a little story. There was a time when I was one of his "bright young men." Mr. Boyden was always surrounded by a group of ambitious young fellows in their twenties. When I was twenty-nine and at Deerfield, some representatives of a small school in Pennsylvania came to me and suggested that I might become the headmaster of their institution. I looked into it carefully and found that the institution was teetering on the edge of extinction. It had no money, no plant and little, if any, alumni support. All in all it looked as though the school had about six months to live if that much. With the school's balance sheet in hand, along with other information about the school, I went to Mr. Boyden and asked what he thought about my taking this position. He said, "Jack, you can stay at Deerfield and you should, in a few years, qualify to become head of a well-established school here in New England. On the other hand, you might do what I did." I asked what that was. He answered, "I don't think a young man should go to head a school unless it needs him more than he needs it. This school certainly looks as though it needs you."

I have never forgotten his advice. I took it, and like Robert Frost, chose "the road less traveled by, and that has made all the difference." The truth is that the thrill of being a headmaster comes from being totally involved working with youngsters, and often up to one's neck in problems. It doesn't come from being a tycoon or a meeting attender or a fund raiser or a "front" man, no matter how attractive that may appear to be when you're in your late twenties or early thirties.

Boards of trustees, responsible for the welfare of schools, have changed greatly during my life as an educator. There was a time when boards considered themselves governing bodies overseeing the general welfare and progress of the school but remained aloof from the school's daily operations. Recently, however, there's been a tendency for boards of trustees to abandon this role in favor of a more active one in the day-to-day activities of the school. Indeed, some trustees almost seem to consider these schools to be their own private clubs and have driven some headmasters to near distraction by interfering in matters in which they have no business interfering because a neighbor or a golfing partner, who is a parent, has called to complain about something. Such trustees tend to hire school heads like themselves and this tends to limit the number of *headmasters* leading schools today.

I've been asked by the N.A.I.S. to comment in this article about my "style" as an educator. I'm not entirely sure I know what this means or if I have one. Whatever style I do have can be summed up by saying what I said earlier: I am a schoolmaster who happens to run a school in his spare time. Saying that reminds me of an important little story.

When I first came to The Kiski School, it was really insolvent as I've suggested, so I paid a visit to a foundation in Pittsburgh intending to follow up with visits to other foundations. Fortunately for me, the first man I met gave me advice that really helped to direct my efforts. He said, "Young man, you can come into this city and wear your shoe leather out walking from one foundation to another, and not much is going to happen. From what I hear about you, you're a good school master and you know how to handle boys. There's an old expression and it says, 'Shoemaker, stick to your last'; you ought to do what you do best." I took this advice to mean that I should go

back and run my school using whatever talents God had given me. Since these were largely talents that had to do with teaching, coaching and guiding young men, that's what I did. I certainly didn't seem to be aware of any great talents in the area of fund raising, but I don't think the results of "sticking to my last" have been too shoddy. We're now a school with an endowment of 30 million dollars and a plant that is valued at 40 million. I believe that this money has come to us because we have run a good school and people trust us and respect us for it. Any headmaster must learn to delegate to others tasks that he doesn't do well while focusing on maximizing his strengths. At least, that's what I've done, and it seems to have worked fairly well.

I teach every day and coach every day and rarely, if ever, miss an appointment having to do with these activities. I believe in giving teachers complete autonomy in the classroom and on the campus. I do not believe in addressing personality conflicts between students and teachers. On the surface I always resolve these in favor of the teacher. To be sure, there are times when a teacher might be wrong, and I choose to address this privately. But I will never allow students or parents or trustees to harass or influence members of my faculty. One of my primary responsibilities is to create and preserve an atmosphere where teachers can teach while being entirely secure in the belief that their headmaster will support them fully.

In closing, I might simply remark that I consider myself to have been very lucky. I say this because during my time as headmaster of the same school for forty-one years I've had so much fun. In fact, although this may be hard to believe, it's *still* a lot of fun, so I'm looking forward to the next forty years!

Morality by Referendum 1998

It shocks me to see the little value Americans place on character. Before the last election when asked if Senator Dole was a man of good character, more than seventy percent of the electorate answered that he was. When asked if President Clinton was a man of good character only twenty-nine percent said that he was. But when asked for whom they would vote, Clinton came out on top. This lack of concern for personal virtue flies directly in the face of all that we have learned from American history. No one would argue that it was not strength of character that allowed Washington, Lincoln, Teddy Roosevelt and F.D.R. as well as others to shape and preserve this nation in some of its darkest moments. We can also observe throughout our history that the most important instrument a president has at his command in leading this nation and in influencing its citizens is what Teddy Roosevelt called the "bully pulpit." A president can have, through his comments and behavior, the power to create a moral atmosphere by setting an example and guiding the citizens of this country.

Americans seem to be concerned that Clinton did not serve in the armed forces. The fact that he didn't serve seems to me to be irrelevant. F.D.R. didn't, and he led this country to victory in the greatest war in history. Abraham Lincoln didn't serve either except for a few days in the Black Hawk War, and he led the greatest army that the world had ever seen up until that time. No, the fact that William Clinton did not wear the uniform is not important. What is

important, however, is that he lied, cheated and dissembled to avoid service. That is immoral and the worst kind of example for a national leader to set. Each of us, except perhaps those who deliberately choose a military career, is the victim of chance when it comes to military service. Some of us may be called; some of us may not be. Some of us may be required to serve in the most dangerous of duties and some of us may be assigned to perfectly safe havens, far from danger. Some of us may be judged physically or emotionally unfit for service. But each of us has a duty to allow this nation, to which we owe so much, to decide how or whether or not we serve.

As a teacher, I am in need of help. I've taught boys Latin, German and English since 1949. For forty-eight of those years I've been head swimming coach, for twelve head football coach, for seventeen a track coach, and for ten a tennis coach. In all of those years as a classroom teacher and athletic coach I've made it my first priority to address the moral and ethical development of those boys entrusted to my care. I've taught directly and indirectly that honesty is essential in human interaction, that one must adhere not only to the letter of the law but to its spirit, and that one must take full responsibility for one's actions and must not make excuses or blame others for one's failures. I have also taught that one must remain loyal to allies and friends.

In the past, society has supported my endeavors. Through its structure and leaders it has demonstrated that when all is said and done, the principles I've taught are shared by other respected adults. Now, however, I am feeling frustrated and angry, and these feelings were dramatically focused by an incident that occurred a few evenings ago. I was standing in the library of the school where I am employed about to take a magazine from the rack when a sixteen year old student appeared beside me returning a copy of *Time* to the same

rack. On the cover was a picture of the President of the United States with a girl, who allegedly had been sexually involved with him. The student, ordinarily friendly and outgoing, looked upset and glancing at me, muttered darkly, "Don't read this; it's disgusting!" My first reaction was one of relief, because this one adolescent had the decency to recognize the sordidness of the situation. After a few minutes, however, feelings of anger, frustration and defeat began to overwhelm me. Despite the fact that all my life I had been taught never to quit, I felt tempted to throw in the towel and walk away from my task, wondering if my work for the last number of decades had been worthwhile.

Now, I'm sure that what I'm about to say will brand me as a member of that right-wing conspiracy out to ruin William Clinton: I plead not guilty to the charge. I must admit that I didn't vote for William Clinton, but I also didn't vote for Dwight Eisenhower, Richard Nixon or Jimmy Carter. However, at no time in the past did I ever feel that their presence in office was undermining the basic principles I was trying to teach. And to your possible surprise I'm not going to say that about William Clinton either. What I do think is that the majority of the American people who are influenced by the news media are the real culprits. I've become convinced that the American public no longer cares about the very moral and ethical standards that lie at the very core of our Constitution and Bill of Rights.

William Clinton has publicly lied, and even his most ardent supporters have acknowledged this. The American public's reaction has been one of forgiveness and understanding. Some citizens have even gone to the Machiavellian extreme of stating that he *had* to be dishonest to stay in office so that he could protect Americans from his political enemies.

Years ago, when William Clinton resorted to that adolescent game of "gotcha" by saying that he had experimented with marijuana but hadn't inhaled, I felt certain that Americans would shout in unison. "Oh, come on now, get off it!" But they didn't. For me, it was one of the more illuminating insights into the character of William Clinton. In fact, I would have called it a "defining moment." It was like a flash of lightning that illuminates the horizon on a dark and impenetrable night. His first reaction to the question was to lie. He probably could have spoken the truth with no political fallout. After all, at least eighty percent of his generation must have at least experimented with marijuana during their college years.

But it seems that no one was interested in the fact that he was clearly not telling the truth. And even if they did notice that he was obviously not speaking truthfully, most didn't care. In fact, most Americans followed William Clinton right down the path he led and stated that since he didn't actually use marijuana in the continental United States and didn't inhale, he didn't violate the law and was, therefore, worthy of their support. The same kind of technicalities protected Clinton in his involvement with Gennifer Flowers. After all, since the questioner had inadvertently used the wrong number in referring to the number of years during which their affair took place, William Clinton was judged by Americans to be still worthy of their support. Now, Mr. Clinton is using the same "gotcha" game in his definition of sexual activities, defining one as adultery and one as not. Again, the American people seem quite satisfied to play this adolescent game. What has happened to the expectation that ethically one must follow the spirit as well as the letter of the law?

When William Clinton publicly justified his own blurring of the line between hard and soft money in fund-raising efforts because his opponents were being successful, I expected that people would be

morally outraged. The reason he and his advisors gave for their behavior was that should Mr. Clinton's opponents continue to be successful, they would undoubtedly deprive the American people of their social benefits. When I heard this kind of reasoning presented to our citizenry, my shaken, but still existent, faith in the American public assured me that *this* time Americans would rise up in righteous indignation. But again I was wrong; they didn't. In fact, the next day, according to the polls, William Clinton's popularity rose.

I recently heard a news report that Dick Morris (a man famous for being President Clinton's bulwark of strength in times of crisis) held a press conference. In it he said that the President's sexual problems might be due to a less than satisfactory relationship with his wife, hinting that it was highly possible that Mrs. Clinton was a lesbian. I was sure that any man who would allow another to excuse his own less than honorable behavior by blaming his wife would suffer the opprobrium of the American public. Wrong again! Clinton's popularity continued to rise.

Now, clearly Dick Morris did not necessarily speak for the President. In fact, Clinton supporters will point out that the President fired him the next day, thus separating himself from this attempt to use Mrs. Clinton as a scapegoat for his peccadilloes. But this is not the first time the President has fired Mr. Morris in order to separate himself from him publicly. It is well known that Mr. Morris and the President are so close, especially in times of crisis, that it is highly unlikely that Mr. Morris would have spoken without, at least, the President's tacit agreement. Now, as reprehensible as this event seems to me, it doesn't disappoint me nearly as much as the awareness that Americans seem simply not to care and actually seek to justify the President's behavior.

But it is not the behavior of our President that most disturbs me. The real problem is that the American public finds honesty and loyalty no longer important in their leaders. Rather, shallow "competency" and "moral relevance" (whatever that means) seem to be more essential. I have always believed that living in a society that excuses cheating because "everybody cheats" and endorses the process of absolving oneself of responsibility by blaming others is living in anarchy. We have become a country of citizens that no longer judges leaders by standards of morality, but by the power of the popularity polls. It is a kind of morality by referendum, if you will.

And how has this affected our country? The truth is that our schools are in shambles and must be policed to control gangs of teenage hoodlums that prowl their corridors. Many of our citizens live behind barricaded doors and gates and walk their streets with trepidation. Looting and stealing are commonplace. Now, I'm not foolish enough to blame the moral decline of our society on President Clinton. He has not created this situation. It lies instead in the fact that he has rendered himself impotent in being able to address it from a position of moral leadership. A president who lies openly and shamelessly is providing a very poor example of responsible leadership. As for me and others like me who care (and there are many), we need to resist moral relativism. Those of us who can still recognize what is right and just must speak out clearly and forcefully now more than ever. Although the process of teaching right from wrong may seem futile at the moment, there has been a segment of our citizenry whose approbation has encouraged teachers like me and others to continue spending our lives teaching young people that character counts.

Gatsby: a classroom lecture

Much of America was settled by people who brought with them the doctrines of John Calvin. The Calvinist belief with which we are most concerned today is the "Doctrine of the Elect" which essentially proposes that mankind is doomed to eternal damnation, for it is burdened with original sin. Calvin held out no hope that man could be saved; as a matter of fact, he thought it impossible except for those few whom God had predetermined would be spared. This group, whose identity was known only to God, was called "The Elect." Calvin suggested that a member of The Elect could be "dropped" by God if he failed to live a proper life of hard work and atonement, hoping that if he should be one of The Elect, he would not lose this station.

When the Puritans settled in America, they brought with them these beliefs, and as time passed became more and more obsessed with learning who "the Elect" really were, despite the fact that they had been taught that this was impossible. In looking for a sign, they came to believe that the possession of material things might be an indication, since it was likely that one who had such objects must have worked and prayed hard and long. Of course, it is often true that those who do work hard frequently amass a considerable number of material things. Since hard work was associated with God, and since hard work often resulted in wealth, it was not long before these two things became associated. Wealth came to be a sign of goodness, since it indicated membership in "the Elect."

From this, it is easy to see where snobbery in American life derived. A person who was not well-to-do and who did not belong to the right club or attend the right school was considered not only poor, but sinful. The pursuit of wealth came to have a meaning which transcended the mere desire to be more comfortable. It served in an attempt to erase original sin and earn eternal salvation. Striving for wealth has become a way for Americans to ease their consciences, while one's morality is often measured by the ability to acquire material possessions.

In America, however, several other factors have been at work. They combine with the Puritan ethic to create what we can call "The American Dream." This dream is founded upon the philosophical fundamentals on which our nation was built, summed up in Thomas Jefferson's expression that "all men are created equal and are endowed by their Creator with certain inalienable rights to liberty, life and the pursuit of happiness." In other words, America was to be a place where men were politically free to pursue whatever goal they wished.

The second factor incorporated into The American Dream resulted from the legacy of the Transcendental Revolt which took place from about 1830 to 1860, a revolt which attempted to free man from the burden of the old Puritan conscience, by imparting the idea that man and God were not separate entities, but one. Therefore it was essential that each of us behave as an individual in order to faithfully represent the elements of God within him. The Puritan wealth/goodness concept gave Americans a goal to pursue; our political philosophy freed us to pursue this goal, and transcendentalism showed men that they, as individuals, were to lead the way.

Out of the combination of puritanism, democracy and transcendentalism has emerged the term "rugged individualism" which describes an inner directed, individualistic approach to the acquisi-

tion of material possessions, an approach which every man is free to take. And out of this comes the idea of the American Dream, the idea that one can, if one wishes, make his fortune, rise to great heights and achieve. However, always in the background is the belief that the only truly worthy achievement is that leading to material gain. Perhaps the most famous literary example of this is the Horatio Alger stories which in their time were perhaps the most widely read literary endeavors in America. These stories all follow the same pattern: a poor boy perseveres through hard work and goes from rags to riches. He climbs the ladder of success and earns not only wealth, but also acceptance from the "better people," the wealthy in our society.

There is a general understanding by readers of *The Great Gatsby* that it is a commentary on the American Dream and not simply a documentary on the Jazz Age. It is a criticism of American experience—not only of our manners, but of our basic historic attitude toward life. The theme of *Gatsby* is the withering of the American Dream. The dream is essentially anti-puritanical (to go from rags to riches and therefore from rejection to acceptance). In the book lies the tension between faith and reality. The reality is the distrust of mankind as expressed by the puritanical obsession with determinism arising from a belief in original sin. The tension between faith and reality is symbolized by two of our nation's great political leaders: Jefferson trusted the American people and Hamilton did not. Jefferson advocated a pure democracy and Hamilton preferred a republic. Hamilton won out. This tension between faith and reality and idealism and practicality are at the heart of American art and American politics, and Jay Gatsby personifies this conflict.

Gatsby is an idealist. He has the faith that one can "recapture the past." He evokes from Nick a memory which "remind[s] ... [him] of something, an elusive rhythm, a fragment of lost words that ... [he

has] heard long ago." Gatsby, as a boy, had faith. His copy book in his own handwriting says, "study electricity, study needed inventions," characterizing the faith that the perfection of the individual is possible in America.

The reality, however, is grounded in Gatsby's experience with the Buchanans and others. It lies in the tragedy of his never knowing that Daisy, the "green light," the green money, the "voice full of money" that Gatsby pursues is not the ideal that he imagines. In reality Daisy is a bitch. She and Tom are "careless people" who hide behind their wealth and come out to mix with others only long enough to hurt them. When the going gets rough, they retreat back into their world of money and security. They leave others to clean up the messes they make and pick up the broken pieces from their destructive behavior.

Gatsby never succeeds in seeing through the sham of this world. It is the essence of his romantic American vision that it lacks the seasoned powers of discrimination and he dies faithful to the end. The novel, of course, is of the tragedy of that vision. Fitzgerald perfectly understood the inadequacy of Gatsby's romanticism. The scene in which Gatsby shows his pile of shirts to Daisy is not vulgar but pathetic. These are the tangible evidence of his salvation; they are the sacramentals. Sacramentals as those of you brought up in the Catholic church know, are outward signs of inner grace, and I submit to you that Gatsby is throwing these shirts at Daisy to show her that he has been "cured" of poverty. He is not showing them out of vanity or pride, but in humility and reverence, much the same as that which must have exemplified those who were miraculously healed by Christ.

The literary critic, Lionel Trilling, said that America's archetype of the young hero has come from European culture. This hero generally comes from obscure or humble beginnings, and there is a

mystery about his birth (i.e. perhaps he is a foundling prince). A product of poverty, pride and intelligence, along with a sense of his own destiny, he passes through a series of adventures. His purpose is to enter life by subduing the world which considers him an outsider. Gatsby is an American version of this archetype in the tradition of Natty Bumppo, Huckleberry Finn, even in the character of "The Virginian," or the hero of *High Noon*, or Matt Dillon or that western hero which Gary Cooper played so well. Indeed, it is even in Gatsby's fly leaf of his copy of *Hopalong Cassidy* that he has written the schedule that his father shows Nick. This list, of course, is the one in which "study needed inventions" is located. Gatsby does not seek to master or understand society. He does not pass from innocence through experience to sophistication, but retains innocence throughout his life.

According to Nick there is, "something gorgeous about him." Gatsby wears this gorgeousness with the same elegance that Gary Cooper, alone and unafraid in the movie *High Noon* wears it, saving townspeople, who have shown by their cowardice that they are not worthy of him. Fitzgerald has created Gatsby with a sense of his own election. He bears himself with the dignity of this. His speech and his dress touch the imagination. In his "white flannel suit, a silver shirt and a gold tie" there really is something Olympian in him. This Olympian stature shows in his attitude toward all of his guests. He remains aloof while providing them with the base material things he instinctively knows they want. Fitzgerald makes it clear that Gatsby does not enjoy these things for himself. They are merely being used to realize his dream ... the acquisition of Daisy.

The masterful passage wherein Fitzgerald chronicles those who accepted Gatsby's hospitality emphasizes the gulf between Gatsby and his guests. It is a list written by Nick on the back of the

timetable, ironically dated July 5th, the day after the festival of America's birth date, the birth date of the American Dream. The writing is splendid as Fitzgerald manages to create an impression of this society without actually describing it. The list creates an atmosphere of vulgar American fortunes and vulgar American destinies. Fitzgerald describes Gatsby saying farewell, and writes, "A wafer of a moon was shining over Gatsby's house surviving the laughter and sound. A sudden emptiness seemed to flow from the windows and great doors, endowing with complete isolation the figure of the host who stood on the porch, his hand up in a gesture of farewell."

Mythic characters are by definition impersonal and in this sense Gatsby is mythic. He has no private life, no meaning or significance that depends on his fulfilling his private destiny. Daisy's love for Tom was "only personal" Gatsby says to Nick and believes that what he and Daisy shared was outside the realm of real life. But Gatsby experiences a personal relationship with Daisy throughout their affair, which would have been actually rather sordid had he not turned it into a romantic crusade in which he was the hero.

Daisy exists on two levels, as Gatsby's idealized vision and as the reality that Fitzgerald delineates to the reader. Fitzgerald knows that at its most depraved level, the American Dream merges with the American debutante's dream, and it is a thing of deathly hollowness. At a party, Gatsby points out a movie star and her director. The scene is highly civilized as the director bends over her. Then our attention is directed to other scenes at the party. A few pages later we are suddenly returned to this couple and Fitzgerald achieves a curious impression of static or arrested action, an emptiness as though this were merely a scene in a movie and not evidence of any real emotion.

Daisy can't stand emotions. After all, sophistication is merely an emphasis on ritual without emotion. In fact, it leaves no room for

emotion because emotions are dangerous; they are demanding and cannot always be controlled. Sophisticated people are “cool” people, and real emotions are a threat to them. Daisy is a gesture divorced from life and she assumes that Gatsby is like her. She is attracted to Gatsby when he appears to her to be a sophisticated, empty man; at no time does she face the fact that he truly is in love with her. (Nick has described Gatsby’s personality, after all, as an unbroken series of successful gestures.) As the novel unfolds, Fitzgerald illustrates the emptiness of Daisy’s character as it turns into the viciousness of monstrous moral indifference.

Gatsby’s attraction to Daisy lies in the fact that she is the green light that signals him into the heart of his vision. Fitzgerald maintains the mythic quality of Gatsby by avoiding details of the romance; he leads us at once to recognize that Daisy is not in reality what Gatsby dreams she is. The reader sees Daisy as a sophisticated, heartless, cold bitch, while Gatsby’s vision of her is of the beautiful princess. Her failure is symbolic of the whole decadent society that she represents. And so as Gatsby errs in attributing glamour and wealth to goodness, so he errs in attributing goodness to Daisy, because he sees her as an embodiment of glamour and wealth. “Her voice is full of money” he says to Nick. Gatsby sees Daisy but as a blinded idealist who has a dream. When the dream clashes with reality, he follows it anyway, because to face reality is to face the fact that all his years of dreaming and striving were for nothing.

In Gatsby’s home after the meeting at tea, Fitzgerald writes that the “significance of the green light” is gone and Gatsby’s “count of enchanted objects ... [has] been diminished by one.” After that afternoon, which obviously is not as innocent as Fitzgerald paints it, Gatsby is beginning to realize that Daisy is not what he has dreamed. Disillusionment begins. If Daisy doesn’t quite measure up to what he

has dreamed, he’ll just have the piano player play songs to keep him in the world of faith rather than risk slipping into the disenchantment of the real world.

In the end, Gatsby’s insistence on maintaining the dream kills him. It is obvious that Gatsby is aware that Wilson will come to kill him. He can run away, but he chooses to stay because he really prefers to die rather than face up to the fact that his dream was not worthy of him. Fitzgerald tells us Gatsby’s last moments of disillusionment: “He must have looked up at the unfamiliar sky and shivered at what a grotesque thing a rose is and how the sunlight is—a new world where ghosts breathing dreams drifted fortuitously about.”

When the dream disintegrates, Gatsby is face to face with reality. Tom and Daisy and millions of other small-minded, ruthless Americans believe only in the value of material things, with no room for faith and vision. As the novel closes, the experience of Gatsby becomes the focus of Fitzgerald’s disillusionment. In one of the most beautiful passages in American literature, Nick, after Gatsby’s death, goes to bid the last farewell to Gatsby’s abandoned mansion and says,

For a transitory enchanted moment man must have held his breath in the presence of this continent, compelled into an aesthetic contemplation he neither understood nor desired, face to face for the last time in history with something commensurate to his capacity for wonder.

And as I sat there brooding on the old, unknown world, I thought of Gatsby’s wonder when he first picked out the green light at the end of Daisy’s dock. He had come a long way to this blue lawn, and his dream must have seemed so close that he could hardly fail to grasp it. He did not know that it was already behind him, somewhere back in that vast obscurity beyond the city where the dark fields of the republic roll on under the night.

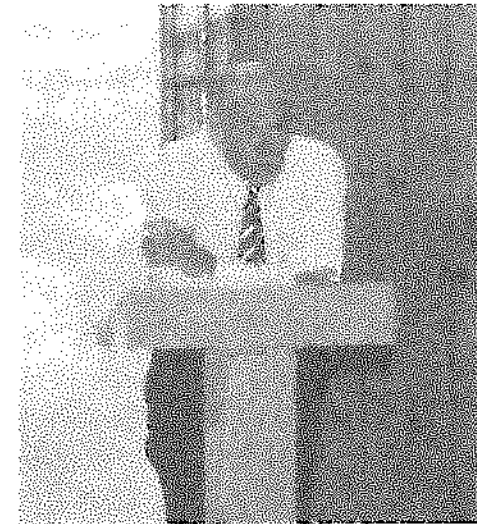
Gatsby believed in the green light, the orgiastic future that year by year recedes before us. It eluded us then, but that's no matter—tomorrow we will run faster, stretch out our arms farther ... and one fine morning—And so we beat on, boats against the current, borne back ceaselessly into the past.

It is in this passage that Fitzgerald sums up the entire tragedy of *Gatsby*. He really is the American boy pursuing the American dream, never knowing that the dream which his idealism has created is not worthy of him. He never realizes that what Nick says is true, Gatsby was "better than the whole rotten bunch."

To sum up then, the great achievement of the novel is that it manages to do two things. First, it poetically evokes a sense of the goodness of the early "dream." Second, it offers a damning indictment of it. Jay Gatsby is the embodiment of The American Dream. He is shown to us in all his immature romanticism, which includes an insecure grasp of social and human values, a lack of cultural intelligence and self-knowledge, a blindness to or unconcern for the pitfalls that surround him. All of these things are results of his compulsive optimism and idealism (the compulsive optimism of America) and they are masterfully drawn. Gatsby is, after all, merely the typical American small town boy. He is unsophisticated, believing and idealistic and cannot choose to see through the sham of what the American Dream has become.

Although these are practical deficiencies, they are also the basis of Gatsby's goodness and faith in life. He has a compelling desire to realize all the possibilities of life and believes that we can have an earthly paradise populated even by the Buchanans. Fitzgerald has effectively suggested that these deficiencies are not so much the personal deficiencies of Gatsby, but are deficiencies of the American vision. Although admirable, they are defenseless before

the other side of American life, the materialistic, pragmatic world of Daisy and Tom. And so Gatsby really does become a tragic figure almost in the classic sense. His flaw is his "faith" in mankind and in America, which has blinded his intelligence and judgment. Hence, it is a tragedy of an America traditionally torn between the two forces of optimism and pessimism, of idealism and practicality, of faith and reality, and of romanticism and realism. It is the same clash of ideals which differentiated Jefferson's democracy from Hamilton's federalism. It is a schism that exists in America and has always existed since its inception.



Mr. Pidgeon at the head of his class.

Hemingway: a classroom lecture

More than anyone else, perhaps, Ernest Hemingway is the most famous representative of the so-called "lost generation," that group of young writers who contributed to one of the greatest outpourings of literature in our history. They were, for the most part, young men who were either directly or indirectly involved in World War I. A young generation went to fight in that war, having been brought up on a very romantic and idealistic diet of Jeffersonianism and Transcendentalism. They emerged from the experience disillusioned and bitter, and this more than anything else served as the stimulus for a remarkably vast literary production and the philosophical stance on life represented in that literature.

In our discussion of "The American Dream" we found that we could detect the thrust of three very essential influences: the Puritan "wealth-goodness concept," Jeffersonian democracy and the residue of the transcendental movement in America. In *The Great Gatsby*, F. Scott Fitzgerald addresses the "wealth-goodness concept" and its effect on American life, clearly attacking any notion of a positive correlation between the possession of wealth and the possession of good character. Clearly, for him, the rich people were not the best people.

Hemingway, in his work, rejects the transcendentalists' notion that man was free to do what he wished; human beings created their own destinies; nothing was pre-ordained and man was in complete control of his own life. Fate was an expression of nature, nature was one with God and God resided in man. Hence, fate was no threat to man.

For Hemingway, however, man is a helpless victim of a malevolent environment, an environment which inflicts violence and pain. Hemingway believes that life wounds all of us unreasonably; it wounds each of us in a way that is most hurtful. If we love something, then we will lose it, because life will rob us of it. In his very fine book, *After the Lost Generation*, John Aldridge suggests that Hemingway's characters behave according to a "code" which is necessary if one is to survive as a human being in this very dangerous world. It is a code of the hero who suffers from an "unreasonable wound"; the hero is inwardly tough and outwardly reticent. We must live by self-restraint and perhaps even self-hypnosis, showing no emotions and forming no emotional attachments. We must face life pragmatically and simply without resorting to abstraction or complex thought. This stance, this code of conduct is clearly defensive. Hemingway turns it into a kind of religion that ensures safe conduct through life.

Hemingway believes that emotions will "tip off" those who are out to "get" us. If we show emotions and find ourselves openly expressing love for someone, then that person will be taken away from us; we have tipped our hand by showing our emotions. If we become involved in someone else or some cause, then that person or that cause will be destroyed; we have shown a weak spot. In Hemingway's code love is dangerous and therefore inadmissible, for to love is to render oneself vulnerable to fate. What you love you lose and this law lies beyond the will of man. We cannot affect it, although we would like to think that we can.

In *Farewell to Arms*, Frederick Henry is living a good, safe life as an ambulance driver on the Italian front in World War I. He is uncommitted and is not involved in the war except for the physical activity of driving an ambulance; he has no commitment to the war

or to a cause. Things go well for him until he falls in love with a nurse, and after that all hell breaks loose. Katherine is taken away and from then on his life is chaotic; it is ruined. Toward the end of *A Farewell to Arms*, Frederick Henry, the protagonist, awaiting the death of his wife, says in a monologue, "They didn't tell you the rules; they threw you in the game and the first time they caught you off base they killed you. Or they killed you gratuitously, or they gave you the syphilis, like Rinaldi. They kill the good and the bad impartially. Stick around long enough and they will kill you, too."

In order to avoid vulnerability, life must be performed as a ritual, and the ritual of the bullfight is Hemingway's emblem of man's appropriate stance in life. In fact, the bullfight becomes an obsession for Hemingway with the matador acting as the representative of the individual in Hemingway's lexicon. The matador faces the bull, the extreme danger, without fear and almost with an indifference as to whether or not he survives. This is not because he doesn't care to survive, but because he cares a great deal, and he is showing or attempting to show through his indifference that he doesn't care. In so doing, the malevolent fate that he knows is out to get him will leave him alone for a while, because it doesn't know that he really wants to live.

Life for Hemingway is unreasonable and will wound us unreasonably. In some ways, one could say that the disinterested stance that Hemingway's code commands is the first expression of "cool." Hemingway was a frightened man and "cool" people are frightened people. "Cool" people show no emotion and live by ritual, and I would submit that this way of being is the legacy that Hemingway left our society. In *The Sun Also Rises*, while Jake Barnes lives a controlled life, things run rather smoothly, but when he becomes emotionally involved, life becomes unbearably painful ... All the

characters in *The Sun Also Rises* are playing it "cool." Some people have said that Hemingway's treatment of Robert Cohn is anti-Semitic, but I would submit that it is not anti-Semitism that causes the characters in the novel to turn against Robert. Rather, it is the fact that he is a relatively normal person, capable of showing love and anger and resentment; he is not in the least bit "cool," and thus he is a threat to the other characters.

Stephen Crane, in *Red Badge of Courage* (a novel written only a few years before *The Sun Also Rises*), pictures nature as being indifferent toward man, and this is frightening enough. Hemingway, however, goes one step further and pictures life as being actually "out to get man," while man remains helpless in the face of a malevolent fate. If we accept Hemingway's view of life, we must show no emotions or involvement in anything. We can have no allegiance to any cause, for if we let our guard down and fall into any emotional traps, we will suffer greatly. In many ways, Hemingway mounts his attack on transcendentalism and the American dream. The idea that man has dignity or is able to control his environment or his future is refuted over and over again by that famous "cool" member of the "lost generation," Ernest Hemingway.

Eulogy for Sam W. Jack

On February 27th, The Kiski School lost one of its most loyal alumni and perhaps its most generous supporter. On that date, Samuel W. Jack of the class of 1947 died. I was asked to write something about him, and frankly I found the experience very difficult for a couple of reasons. First, Sam was a valued and much loved friend, just how much he was loved, I didn't realize, until I felt such intense pain when I first heard of his death. It is also difficult to write about him because he was without doubt one of the most complex men I have ever known.

Sam Jack was, first of all, a very tough guy, a self-made man who had made his way on his own and who gave evidence of this fact every day. But there was another side to Sam which only a few of us knew. He was generous, at times almost to a fault, and he had an appreciation of the finer aspects of art, literature and cultural matters in general that most of the rest of the world never guessed.

I can't even begin to estimate how many Kiski boys were the unwitting recipients of his generosity. He would meet or hear of a student who was in need of help and I would receive a phone call saying, "Get that kid what he needs and send me the bill." This happened for so many; he'd end up purchasing new clothes so that a freshman could attend class in something nice, or he'd help young alumni who needed some material boost in college. He even helped young alumni get started on their first jobs. Always the phone call would come to me with a growl to, "Take care of that kid."

One of my favorite Sam Jack stories concerns the director of a prominent Pittsburgh organization given to the promotion of culture in Western Pennsylvania. I roared with laughter when he told me of his telephone conversation with Sam in which he was trying to solicit help for a special artistic program. He told me how his blood turned cold at the sound of that menacing telephone voice, expressing Sam's lack of interest in the project. He told me that he had never before felt so isolated, so intimidated and so foolish as he did making that phone call. But the sequel to all of this is that two days later an extremely generous check arrived at his office to finance the project. It came from my friend, Sam.

He had a frown that could chill the soul of a United States Marine and a glare that could seemingly penetrate a steel plate. But he also had a soft spot and generosity that few other men I've known have ever had. How often I observed that piercing glare in his eye transform itself into the far away gaze of the dreamer. He dreamed of the future of his company, his family, his friends and The Kiski School. Then he put his talents into making those dreams become reality. I learned a great deal about toughness and warmth and generosity from observing him in his life.

I learned something even more valuable, however, from his death. I learned that never again should I fail, out of embarrassment or procrastination, to tell those people I love that I do love them. I failed to do that with Sam, and now I can only hope that somehow he knows how much I regret it.

Eulogy for Clifford Nichols

I knew of Cliff Nichols well before I met him. Back in the days when I was a rookie schoolmaster studying at the feet of Frank Boyden at Deerfield, I heard Cliff's name, and I was aware of the fact that it was always referred to with enormous respect. At that time Sewickley Academy was a lower school, ending in eighth grade, and a large number of the youngsters who attended there went off to great boarding schools to continue their educations.

I distinctly remember sitting in a room with Mr. Boyden and the Director of Admissions at Deerfield, discussing the case of an applicant from Sewickley Academy. The boy's record did not look particularly promising in any way. Referring to a recommendation in which Cliff said that this was a good boy who should be admitted, Mr. Boyden simply stated, "If Cliff says it, it's true." Needless to say, the boy was accepted. True to Cliff's predictions he earned an excellent record as a student, athlete and citizen. But this incident made me take notice. If one word from Nichols could convince one of the greatest headmasters who ever lived to admit a boy, he must be quite remarkable!

It was truly a great thrill for me to finally meet Cliff later on in my life. I had left the safety and comfort of Deerfield Academy to come to Kiski, a forlorn, little school in Western Pennsylvania. Everyone around seemed to be sure that the school wasn't going to last too long. Those were the bleakest days of my life. How was I going to keep a school that was dead broke, had a huge debt, no facilities and a plant that was falling down in existence? In the midst of

trying to figure some of this out, my phone rang and a quiet, warm voice said, "This is Cliff Nichols and I'd like to come up and visit you." I couldn't have been more honored and shocked if it had been the President of the United States. I think I stammered something like, "It should be I who comes to see you." A few days later, while I was sitting in my office, feeling sorry for myself as I contemplated my fate and that of my school, in came Cliff Nichols.

He had a manner that drew me out and made me feel that he understood my dilemma. I managed that day to tell him all of my fears, all of my misgivings about having left Deerfield Academy and the embarrassment of presiding over an institution in its penultimate stage of dissolution. Cliff listened carefully; somehow, he managed to put an end to my fears of failure. He encouraged me, and he made me promise him that I would not give up. Then he said something that I still can hear clearly forty-two years later. He said to me, "You know, I believe in the Jack Pigeons of this world." He actually said that.

I don't need to tell you that Cliff acquired a grateful friend, a life-long admirer that day. This friendship persisted through the years, through the decades, through retirement and later. At all three celebrated landmarks in my career at Kiski, my twentieth anniversary, my twenty-fifth anniversary and my fortieth anniversary, the trustees have invited alumni and friends to speak. One of the primary roles I played in these activities (aside from immodestly listening to much undeserved praise) was to always insist that Cliff be one of the speakers. I did this for many reasons, one of which was that he was a dear friend. But even more important, perhaps, was that he was the funniest speaker I ever heard, a man who was simply incapable of phony verbal bouquets. What a relief he was. . . . always.

Cliff was a fine schoolmaster and all the praise he has received from others was well deserved. He never disappointed. In the world of education and human interaction, Cliff was one of the best. I doubt that we'll see his likes again.

Eulogy for Russell C. Swank '42

Russ Swank was a guy who hated to say good-bye and would, therefore, resort to all sorts of trickery to avoid farewells. I can't tell you how many Kiski football games he and I watched together on the Kiski field. When they were over, I often thought he was saying hello to people and I'd turn around to find that he had vanished, disappeared into thin air. I had this experience at Kiski commencements, banquets, and even at events when he was the one being honored. I'd be standing beside him greeting people and suddenly he was gone. Wanting to know his disappearance technique, I decided to pretend to be talking to other people but always keeping my eye on him. Sneaky as I was, misleading as I was, he was worse. He disappeared in a crowd faster than anyone I ever saw.

He even managed to seem to disappear from phone conversations. He'd call me and we'd chat animatedly for a while and then, suddenly, in the middle of a sentence, I'd hear a quiet sound that might have been "good-by" and then find myself quizzically staring into a dead telephone. I've never been entirely able to figure this pattern out and Russ never let me in on his sudden retreats. But I have a guess. Russell detested anything that smacked of false emotions.

One of Russell's most unique characteristics was his sense of loyalty. It's important to note that he was not merely my friend; he was my boss as well, and I benefited from his deep sense of loyalty more than he could have ever known. I assure you that throughout the last number of years, I have been frequently foolish and made some serious errors of judgment. But Russ was always more supportive

than I could have hoped, even when he knew that I was wrong, especially when he knew that I was wrong. I guess he thought I'd do better next time. At least that's what I thought I read in the grin on his face. I always had the feeling that he knew just how good I could really be. I imagined Russ saying to me, "I think you can be great and I'd really enjoy seeing you do it."

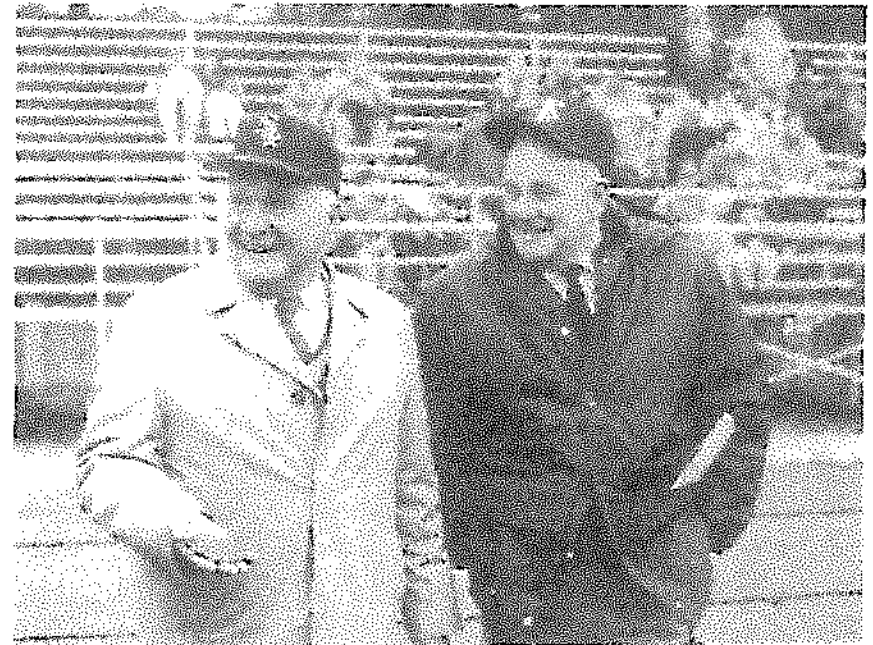
Russ was a man with a twinkle in his eyes. Just before his death, the wife of a Kiski graduate came to a football game and said, "I want to meet this Russ Swank that you talk so much about." I explained that he would be at the game, watching from his car, but she'd probably be disappointed because he was terribly ill. When Russ's car pulled up, I introduced them and they chatted as though they'd known each other for years. She thought that I had exaggerated his illness because, as she said, "No man who is seriously ill could have that kind of twinkle in his eye." Recently I asked a close friend what stood out in her mind about Russell. "When he looked at me, I felt he knew something that I didn't." Maybe it was that twinkle that made so many folks love Russ Swank.

Of course, Russ was a nice enough guy, a good person with a finely tuned sense of humor. I remember well the day that a member of the Kiski grounds crew was directing heavy traffic at a school function. With a grin on his face, Russ pulled up beside him, rolled down his window and said, "You know, you may be the ugliest guy I ever saw." Now this was not a man who knew Russell at all, but he found the comment so strange, so amusing, and such a relief from his chore that he roared with laughter. Russell had that kind of effect on others.

With the news of his illness and then of his death circulating through the Kiski campus, I was approached by countless people who wanted to talk about Russ. It is impressive to realize how many

people knew him well enough to be concerned; all of them expressed great sorrow and deep concern, for he was clearly known by them all to be a very special man.

Many of you are perhaps painfully aware that one of my favorite novels is F. Scott Fitzgerald's *The Great Gatsby*. In it the author describes the main character: "There was something gorgeous about him, some heightened sensitivity to the promises of life with an extraordinary gift for hope." Now, I don't mean to imply that Russell was "gorgeous" in the usual sense of word. He was not. But he certainly did have what Fitzgerald called "heightened sensitivity to the promises of life with an extraordinary gift of hope." I loved Russell Swank and will always be enormously grateful that we found ourselves living at the same time in the same place. God, it was fun!



Trustee Russell C. Swank '42 and Mr. Pidgeon.

Eulogy for E. William Turley '64

I have not been looking forward to speaking today because, you see, I've recently lost my closest friend. I'm also dreading this talk because I know that Bill Turley is sitting somewhere looking down on me and saying, "Oh, come now, Jack, let's not get too sentimental." Well, Turis, relax. I won't get sentimental, at least not *too* sentimental.

You know, I knew Bill Turley for a very long time, since he came to Kiski as a freshman. He was skinnier then, a whole lot skinnier, and we became friends. As most students who attend this school will attest, I've never been much for making friends with students, because I believe my job is to be their headmaster and not their pal. But Bill was the only exception I made to this general rule of behavior. We became friends, and I have wonderful memories of buying a bunch of popsicles on warm, spring evenings and driving around the back roads of Kiski, devouring the popsicles and talking to Bill on topics ranging from J.F.K.'s performance as president to literature and history (but never mathematics—he was always too polite to drift into an area in which I am certifiably retarded).

Our friendship continued through his days at Yale and was strengthened by his visits to my home during Yale's Christmas and spring breaks. Our relationship continued by mail throughout his naval career and during his tour in Viet Nam. When Bill came home from the war, he and I discussed the possibility of his returning as a faculty member, and we mutually decided to put that off for a while until he had done something else, so that beginning his Kiski career

would not be confused with returning to the womb. And so, he went to Germany where he commenced working at a hotel.

I clearly remember coming in from track practice one warm spring afternoon in 1970 and turning on the radio to hear that there had been a tragic shooting of students at Kent State University. Naturally, this was terribly upsetting for all Americans, but particularly for someone like me who had spent his life working with young people. Troubled by the whole event, I fretted during the afternoon and on into the evening. At about nine o'clock I realized where the vague feeling of uneasiness was coming from: I needed to see my buddy, Bill. I walked into my home, picked up the telephone and called Germany (not an easy task in those days). It must have been three o'clock in the morning there when I finally got through to him. He answered and I said, "Turis, I think it's time you came home." He answered immediately, "You know, I came to that same conclusion myself about five hours ago." So, come home he did, and as they say, the rest is history. He began a most illustrious career as a schoolmaster that anyone has ever known.

The whole subject of schoolmastering is dear to my heart. There are many teachers in the world, but there are few schoolmasters. Schoolmasters do not separate work from play, they are not confined by a classroom, they devote their lives twenty-four hours a day to their students. They are excellent teachers, of course, but their influence includes every aspect of a boy's life. I have known many good schoolmasters, but no one, absolutely no one, came close to Bill Turley, and that is why he has gained immortality. As long as Kiski boys who knew him shall live, and as long as their sons and their sons live, Bill Turley will always be alive.

The night after Bill's death, I received a phone call from a reporter asking my thoughts about him. I did the best I could under

the circumstances. Just as I thought the conversation was ending, the reporter asked, "Mr. Pidgeon, one more thing. I don't understand why a brilliant man who could do so well at schools like Kiski and Yale would become just a high school teacher." Well, as the boys would say, "I lost it." First, my profession was being maligned and demeaned and second, I realized that this arrogant idiot had no idea of what a schoolmaster was. In a few thousand decibels I defined the term for her. Finally, finishing up with words that will probably return to haunt me someday, I said, "Lady, referring to Bill Turley as just a high school teacher, is like referring to Rembrandt as just a house painter." And it's true. Bill was concerned with every aspect of a boy's life. I doubt that there was ever a freshman football, soccer or basketball game where he wasn't present either at home or away. You know, Bill Turley didn't know a damn thing about those games, but his boys were playing and that's why he was there.

As you know, I personally give out grades to each student each month. Before I would go to the freshman dormitory, Bill would come in to brief me. He'd say things like, "Even though so-and-so's grades are off, remember that his mother has been sick," or "So-and-so has done very well, but he needs a kick in the butt because he should be doing a lot better." Armed with these little nuggets of information I would then stride into the freshman dormitory and alternately pat backs and kick butts and when all the boys had left I'd look at Bill and ask, "How did I do, Turls?" He'd smile at me and say, "I think you're getting better."

Bill had a wonderful, dry sense of humor that I enjoyed on a number of occasions. I remember well one evening when I was having dinner with him and my older son at a restaurant. During the course of dinner we began talking about Joe DiMaggio. I got carried away, describing a catch I had once seen DiMaggio make in a World

Series. I was demonstrating the way he twisted his body in order to make that catch, and unfortunately I lacked the grace of DiMaggio. I twisted so far that my chair tipped and I found myself in a very bemused, confused and embarrassed state, looking up from the floor at Bill. Peering down at me, he simply said, "Yowzah, yowzah, good catch, old fellow!" That was the kind of wit I enjoyed in the friendship Bill and I had.

Bill and I used to go to the movies often. As a matter of fact, I don't remember attending a movie with anyone else for the past thirty years except Bill. People who saw us couldn't believe it, because when we went to the theater together, we'd enter and Bill would go one way while I would go the other way. When the movie was over we'd meet up with each other again.

Sometimes we'd go to dinner and never speak a word for at least a half hour. I remember driving to Ohio with him to go to a football game. He picked me up at my house and I got into his car and said, "Good morning, Bill." He answered, "Good morning, Jack." We had gone past the Ohio line when it suddenly occurred to me that we hadn't spoken a word since leaving the house. I turned to him and remarked, "You know, Turls, we don't talk much." He kept on driving, looking straight ahead and muttered, "We don't have to." He was absolutely right.

Bill could tell me off as well as anybody ever did. About three weeks before he died, we were having dinner and I was discussing another teacher who I felt wasn't good for the boys. In the discussion I related to him an incident that I'd recently been thinking about. He turned to me with that quivering lip with which we are all very familiar and said, "Well, it's no worse than your goddamned swimmers getting up at six in the morning to shave their goddamned heads." My meek reply was, "You're right, Turls," and I didn't say anything else.

for at least fifteen minutes following his remark. Turley was usually right.

I frankly don't know what else to say about my buddy right now except that he was the best schoolmaster I ever knew and the best friend a man could have. I recall the story of Mr. Lincoln's death. As you know he was shot in Ford's Theater and then carried across the street to a private home. As he lay dying, he was surrounded by some of his cabinet members and his wife. Secretary Stanton was sitting beside the bed. When the doctor announced that Mr. Lincoln had died, Secretary Stanton said, "Now he belongs to the ages." Well, Turls, now you belong to the Kiski boys.



E. William Turley '64 and Beata.



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