

## **Arent H. “Barry” Schuyler ’41 is honored with a Chapel plaque, the first in over 50 years to be mounted on the back wall of the Midland Chapel**

By Lise Goddard, 11/11/11

The clue for finding and then illuminating the dark back corners of the Midland Chapel, in whose recesses were hidden an important piece of Midland’s history, was placed into my hands by Barry Schuyler ’41 himself almost 10 years ago, the spring before I started working at Midland. He gave me a copy of Gary Lewis’s *Dominion Over Palm and Pine: Paul Squibb and His Students*, because he knew I needed to understand Midland’s history as recorded in this extensive, beautifully written scholarly text. He thought Lewis’s wonderful book would help me remain true to the school’s soul while its environmental ethic evolved to be relevant in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. And he was absolutely right. Every Midland conversation, piece of writing, and grant proposal I’ve had my hand in can be traced to Gary Lewis’s book.

*Dominion*’s most moving passage, the one that opens up the subject of losses felt during WW2 and Korea begins on p. 404, “Paul was not given to sentimentality. Even his patriotism was a kind of tough love. But it must have been hard that the boys killed in the war seemed so often to be the cream of the crop. And that they were so many. A lot of fathers lost a boy to the war; Paul lost eleven.” The next several pages are filled with descriptions of Paul Squibb’s attempt to appropriately honor those lost in war by building the Memorial Lookout on the top of Varsity Hill. “The strategy was quintessential Squibb,” Lewis writes, “people would learn to appreciate the memorial by helping to build it.”

The passage grabbed my heart and attention, and held it to the chapter’s ending: “Finally, as a sombre coda to the casualties of his era, Paul mounted engraved plates on the Chapel wall next to that of Mr. Hayman, in remembrance of John Wilgress, Alexander Hemsley Wood, Frederick Herbert Sill, and William Larned Thacher.” (p. 414) \*

### \*A brief history of those honored in these plaques:

Westby H.P. Hayman, namesake of the Hayman Trophy for outstanding academic and athletic achievement, was loved for his vigorous approach to coaching, teaching, and life, and died of a heart attack in the spring of his one year at Midland in 1935 at the age of seventy-six. His plaque is hung on the right side of the Chapel’s rear wall. John Wilgress, respected advisor of Paul Squibb, and Alexander Hemsley Wood were faculty members, and oddly, their plaques are nowhere to be found in the Chapel. Father Frederick Herbert Sill was Squibb’s mentor and advisor at Kent School, on whose plaque, the topmost of three on the left side of the Chapel, is engraved, “Who furnished the original inspiration for Midland.” William Larned Thacher, brother of Thacher School’s founder Sherman Day Thacher, is honored for being, “A warm-hearted friend” and “An Advisory Director.” Below Thacher’s plaque is one not named in *Dominion*, for William Bennett Munro, “A positive influence in the early life of Midland” and “An Advisory Director.” Also not named in *Dominion*, is a plaque for Edwin Moss, the school’s first Chaplain, hung below Hayman’s plaque.

These plaques give the dates of affiliation that each key advisor had with Midland School in its first decades, beginning in 1932 and ending in the early through late 1950s. These plaques have a few things in common. They honor the school’s beloved and influential advisors, not headmasters. They were all hung by Paul Squibb. And they have been enshrouded in almost complete darkness for over 50 years, including a chapel remodel and back wall extension. The plaques are mounted to the left and right sides of the large clear and stained glass windows that

fill the Chapel's rear wall, and these narrow, dark redwood edges are made darker when contrasted with light coming through the windows. Everyone who saw these plaques in the past few months cupped a hand to the side of their eyes to shade the windows, squinted to read *anything* on these time-darkened copper plaques, and said, "How did you find these things? I've never seen them." Again, it all goes back to the book that Barry Schuyler put in my hands.

Naturally, when Midland lost its greatest champion and longest term advisor to date last spring, one spot emerged as the obvious place to honor him with a plaque. It took someone as important to the history of Midland School as Barry Schuyler to literally bring to light this dark and important corner of Midland's past. So, for the first time in over 50 years, a new copper plaque has been mounted, accompanied by 1950s-era lights and the removal of cobwebs. This plaque honors Barry, whose tenure with Midland spanned over 70 years, from enrolling as a 10<sup>th</sup> grader in 1938 until his last months of life in 2011, when he was still visiting campus, cheering us on, and funding Midland's solar installations and Annual Scholarship Fund. This plaque reads:

Arent H. "Barry" Schuyler '41  
Student, Teacher, Trustee, Advisor, Benefactor  
A Guardian of Midland's Soul  
From the Kerosene Age to the Solar Age  
1938 - 2011

It occurred to me last spring when he died, when we all were talking about and mourning Barry's passing, that we should add three words after "passing." We should talk about Barry Schuyler's passing of the torch. A teacher in his core, this was his final lesson to us. He guided and helped carry Midland through seven decades, safeguarding Midland's soul – an academically rigorous, simple life school. He left the place better than he found it. And he passed the torch on to all of us to carry this great and unique school into the decades to come.



Lise Goddard, Jean Schuyler, Kate Schuyler, and Marguerite Graham at the Schuylers' home in Santa Barbara