

For *Orion's* Column, **Making Other Arrangements**

By Lise Goddard

September 14, 2007

Midland School (www.midland-school.org), in the hills behind Santa Barbara, California, is in its 75th year of embracing and living a mission of responsibility to community and environment, distinguishing between needs and wants, entrusting students with authentic leadership roles, and appreciating life's fundamental joys and challenges. Midland is a rigorous college preparatory boarding and day school with a diverse student body of 90 9th-12th graders on almost 3,000 acres, which we explore in classes. Founded at the height of the Depression by Paul and Louise Squibb, Midland is a community in which the ethics of "using up, wearing out, making do, or doing without" have remained at the core of our daily outlook. We have the high-speed internet access necessary for modern-day education. It's accessible in the library and faculty homes, but otherwise, our students are relatively unplugged, that is, from cell phones, television, and internet in their cabins.

Does Midland School have a place in today's world? Situated in Santa Barbara County, one could say we are embedded in high speed Southern California culture. Yet somehow, our lifestyles are healthier, more intentional, and more sustainable, but get less press and limelight than many of our neighbors. If ever our culture needs an example of uncluttered simplicity that is lived rather than just quaintly spoken of, it would seem that now is the time. Our students, who think about their carbon footprint, also manage to sing, dance, act, create art, and play sports at high levels. Our 2007 boys lacrosse team was undefeated. Our alums are sitting in college classrooms in UC's, Cal States, small liberal arts schools, technical schools, and the Ivy League.

Students and staff maintain a 7-acre organic garden and pastures for grass-fed cattle. Our local harvests travel a short unpaved path to our kitchen, where underclassmen are trained by 12th graders to serve the food, wash the dishes, and clean the kitchen. Sophomores and juniors who have worked through the ranks of kitchen jobs move on to daily jobs in trash and recycling or cleaning classrooms, bathrooms, or the library. Students heat their daily shower water in communal shower fire tanks, with rotations set up by their senior prefects. We do annual native valley oak restoration. Since our pilot solar project in 2003-04, sophomore classes have helped install a grid-tied solar photovoltaic system every year, which collectively help meet our campus's electricity needs. In 2007, our arrays total 10-kW and meet 10% of our electricity needs. We'll add to this incrementally until most of our campus is powered by the sun.

Paul and Louise Squibb believed in the educational value of students working to meet their basic needs and localizing the impacts, for this will set up lifetime habits rooted in knowing what it takes to heat water or produce food and electricity. This *knowing* should translate into treating these resources as precious. Our 75th year motto is, "Midland School – Thinking Ahead for 75 Years."

Lise Goddard

www.midland-school.org

Los Olivos, California

