



William L. Graham
Head of School

Thanksgiving Address November 22, 2007

“Thinking Ahead for 75 Years”

By Will Graham, Head of School

I would like to talk about light bulbs. On Tuesday nights at 7:30, students are invited to Ireland House to discuss any student life issue or school business with the School Prefects, Tasslyn, Race and me. It has been fairly quiet this year, but one night in particular about six students showed up, and I knew they had protest on their minds. Before presenting a recommendation or complaint, I asked if they had a commendation about something they thought was going well this year. They were quick to say the food seems good, but they were really concerned about the four new light bulbs that the student maintenance crew installed on the outside of two buildings near the Middle Yard. The motion sensors were making these lights come on and off in two very dark areas of the campus, and the feeling was that learning how to walk in the dark was an essential life lesson at Midland, and the bulbs should be removed. They argued that it was the responsibility of Midland students to learn to walk in the dark or navigate by the stars and moon light. After all, this is what Midland is all about!

There was further conversation, and an agreement was reached in order for visiting guests, during parents weekends or Thanksgiving, to have extra lights; however, the lights will remain off throughout most of the year. Fair enough; these are enduring lessons, needs not wants, and the conservative use of resources.

In 1947 Paul Squibb wrote:

“When we see how liberally California is provided with public and private schools that follow the best-is-none-too-good-path, I have always supposed it right to provide an alternative path. Anyone who does not approve of what we offer can easily find an alternative. We are probably performing our most useful function in providing an alternative to the regular thing...It is probably worthwhile to dust off these ideas occasionally.”

Midland’s alternative path is clear:

- The essential ingredients of learning are a student, a teacher and an idea.
- A simple self reliant life style close to nature teaches us to develop our inner resources, to distinguish between our needs and wants, and to appreciate life’s fundamental joys and challenges.
- We entrust students in the community with authentic leadership roles, emphasizing individual and collective responsibility, and relying on its own work to meet its basic needs, preparing students to take care of themselves and to serve others.

- In this age of increasing concern about the environment, Midland students learn, through academic education and everyday example to be good stewards of the earth.

This path is not always well lit, but I feel confident that Midland knows where it has been going for seventy five years.

On Sunday November 18th, Patagonia Incorporated Founder, Owner, and CEO Yvon Chouinard, spoke to our students about creating a life, and creating a business model for his company based on core beliefs that are authentic, truthful and enduring. Along with many other companies, he developed an initiative that reserves 1% of Patagonia profits for organizations that work towards preserving the planet, and he continues to find ways to recycle his products and fund producers of organic chemical free cotton.

As the world population grows, the demand for resources increases, and natural resources diminish. The outlook is dim, and it is easy to be pessimistic; however, he is not afraid to ask the hard questions and take a plan of action to move forward with positive steps on his alternative path. Although he is conscious of helping the planet, he said he is also not interested to losing his soul.

This is a powerful message, and I pause to test my assumptions about Midland. Although it is always up to individuals to take action and find their way, I do believe Midland students learn how to develop the skills and inner resources to understand what is important. They learn how to take individual responsibility, and serve others as well as themselves. Most importantly they know how to walk in the dark. It is up to all of us to ensure that Midland's alternative path is as well traveled in seventy five years as it is today. Let us be thankful for what we have been given and spread the good word.

Tribute and Presentation of Midland Chair to BG Kresse '68 For 30 Years of Service to Midland School

Throughout the last thirty years, BG Kresse class of '68 has served Midland as a teacher, coach, and first cook. He stands for the best of Midland's past and present. Today his classroom is Stillman Hall; his business is food, and his curriculum is introducing students to the kitchen and job program. BG and Joanne raised James, class of '02, on campus and for 30 years they have opened their home and their hearts to countless students during countless nights of GAME CLUB. Whether he is riding his dirt bike, cooking pizza in the pizza oven, slapping together a meat loaf, or fixing a water main, BG is 100% Midland. He is the mightiest of oaks. He reminds us often that change happens, but the essence of Midland remains the same. His skill set is deep, and his will to share those skills to help others runs deeper. Midland loves you BG, and I am pleased to present you with this chair to represent our thanks for thirty years of unparalleled service. Thank you...let's eat!!

William L. Graham
Head of School

wgraham@midland-school.org