

SCHOOL MEMORIES

Excerpts from
*Cherished Hopes and Honorable
Ambition:
A Centennial History of Loomis Chaffee*

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The Loomis Chaffee School
Windsor, Connecticut

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Cover Image: detail from *Main Street*, attributed to Osbert Burr Loomis, circa 1865.

This streetscape shows the Loomis family's brick home built in 1823 on Windsor's Broad Street Green and the family's store (back cover). In the original painting, the family's first home, where four of the five Founders were born, can be seen in the background.

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School Memories: Excerpts from *Cherished Hopes and Honorable Ambition: A Centennial History of Loomis Chaffee* -- 1st ed.

*In honor of Loomis Chaffee's
first 100 years*

“ . . . Hoping and trusting that some good may
come to posterity, from the harvest, poor
though it may be, of our lives.”

–Loomis Family Testimonial

1 FAMILY TESTIMONIAL

Hezekiah Bradley Loomis, one of the Founders, penned the Family Testimonial in 1878. The family gathered in Windsor on the first anniversary of their brother James' death to sign this document. These words continue to resonate with significance more than 100 years later.



Somewhere near the termination of the year 1871, or the beginning of 1872, a sentiment, born of the strong natural love and sympathy between us, and intensified by the loss of all our children, crystallized into a desire to leave some memento of our lives, failing the natural one of succession; and this finally took the form of a free educational establishment, called the Loomis Institute.

Those of us now living, admonished by the death of our brothers, James and Samuel, that whatever we wish to do, or make known, must be done now; and desiring to make a record of our united sentiments for ourselves, and all who in the future may be interested in the story of the love and tenderness we bear to each other, moving us to stand together, supporting at the close of our lives a common purpose, pledge ourselves to the support, care and personal comfort of each other, and to remain true and signally faithful to the Loomis Institute, acknowledging and accepting the duties incident, cheerfully, lovingly and devotedly; so that nothing short of death shall divert us from our purpose of mutual support; hoping and trusting that some good may come to posterity, from the harvest, poor though it may be, of our lives.

Windsor Conn Monday April 29, 1878

H.B. Loomis
Euphemia A. Loomis
Osbert B. Loomis
H. Sidney Hayden
Abby L. Hayden
John Mason Loomis

2 STUDENT GOVERNMENT

Four years serving on one of the oldest prep school Student Councils in New England blessed me with many gifts, but none greater than the ability to truly understand the “spirit” of the school. Every Tuesday night, I felt like I was part of something bigger than myself as I participated in discussion regarding ways in which we could make Loomis Chaffee the best school that it could be. It was only fitting that we held our meetings in Founders Lounge, the very room where former heads of school and chairmen of the Board of Trustees led their own meetings.

I quickly realized during my year as president that there was a very small margin of time to accomplish “change”

— at least the kind of change that many students expected, such as a new tradition or a revised disciplinary rule. There was no time for a cluttered agenda or a wasted meeting, especially amidst the chaos of unanticipated guest speakers or hurricanes. It was important to understand that many issues and proposals that the council tackled over the course of one year would make a future student’s experience on the Island more worthwhile. Overcoming the challenge of adopting this mindset — working not just for yourself, but for those you’ve never met before — was instrumental in my personal growth.

Every team of officers on the council brought a different twist and vibe — I learned the importance of maintaining a positive public image and professionalism from the Nick Judson '10 administration, and the need for strong communication and focus from the Lindsay Gabow '12 administration. This “institutional memory” was kept alive over the years by faculty advisors, such as Mr. Fred Seebeck, by archivists, and by Student Council presidents, who annually pass down not only the gavel but also the progress of several councils. By simply performing the act of congregating and conversing, the Loomis Student Council functions as the bedrock of a century’s worth of tradition; the council, like its constitution states, “maintains the school’s spirit.”

—Paul Lee '13

3 POETIC ROOTS

“A professional poet! My dream. Right now, that’s the only thing I want to be when I grow up.”

– Journal entry, November 23, 1972, age 16



My freshman year at Loomis-Chaffee was historic: Chaffee had just moved to the Island. My class (1974) would be the first to spend its entire four years there, housed in our extremely modern white building, far away from the quad. We could feel change and possibility in the air, that flutter of excitement and unease among both students and faculty as we unpacked our canvas book bags into brand-new lockers. Although we Chaffers were few — only about 30 day students per class (no boarders yet) — we knew our presence would alter this larger institution forever. As freshmen and sophomores, our classes were all female

(We were “easing into” coeducation.) and taught by long-standing Chaffee teachers — the same strict, precise, formidable women who had taught my older sister on the Chaffee campus. But we were in a new, exciting place — a beautiful place, actually. And there were boys out there somewhere, but we didn’t really have to deal with them yet.

This year was historic for me as well: For the first time in my life, I felt intellectually at home. I’d just come from public junior high and had frankly had it up to the eyeballs with boy/girl dynamics — the crushes, the drama, the makeup. Despite some obligatory eye rolling, I was happy to settle into all-girl classes. Finally, it was acceptable to speak up in class, to entertain odd ideas, to be creative, spontaneous, literary. I didn’t have to hide these sides of myself anymore; the girls around me in my small, close-knit classes were just as verbal and opinionated as I was. I began to learn not only from my teachers but also from my peers — peers who challenged me and stretched my perceptions. Those first two years in our small white building — before the complications of dating and college prep — were two of the headiest of my life.

Language and emotion were important to me, and so of course my favorite classes were English. Several of those “formidable Chaffee women” fed my need for words. In freshman English, Marcia Sanderson assigned

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an in-depth study of an author; I chose poet Conrad Aiken because of a poem I'd found among my parents' books: "Variations: XV (The Sea Falls All Night)." Writing that paper felt like diving into a deep lake of words; I never wanted to emerge (and I never have!). Mrs. Sanderson continued to be a mentor throughout my four years, achieving saint-like status for her unfailing willingness to read my unfocused, angst-filled poems and find something positive in each one. (Marcia and I remained in touch even beyond Loomis-Chaffee, and in one of those wonderful fortuitous quirks, we became neighbors and members of the same writer's group many years later. I dedicated my first published poetry book to her.) Dorothy Fuller — sophomore English — was a no-nonsense taskmaster, demanding excellence and insisting upon proper usage (diagraming sentences!); from her I inherited an obsessive need to correct "it's" and "its."

As we moved beyond the Chaffee building in our junior and senior years, we sampled other, delicious types of English courses — *Styles of Perception*, *The Meaning of Death*, *Studies in Literature* — which led to other, mind-expanding concepts: There is no light without dark. Facing death forces us to live more fully. The power of a narrative is in the details. But really, we had to write for every class, and we were always writing. Each week brought the discipline of weighing ideas, analyzing text, organizing facts, articulating

thoughts, finding examples to back up those thoughts. Thinking. Sorting. Expressing. I did so much critical writing in those four years that my freshman year of college seemed almost leisurely in comparison.

Senior year brought the culmination of all literary study: Studies in Literature, or AP English, with Bernita Sundquist. This class, though coed, was held in the Chaffee building in a corridor featuring the brass statue of “Minerva.” Perhaps 10 or 12 students, the class was a distillation of the most literary-minded students in our grade level (two of whom have since gone on to be English professors at prestigious universities). We knew each other from other classes, or work with the school’s literary magazine (the Loom), and could have spent the semester eyeing each other competitively, but Mrs. Sundquist had other goals. From the moment she stepped into that class, she regarded us as colleagues. She laid out how many books we would have to read, how many papers we would have to write, how overwhelming it would all be — and then she smiled. I don’t think she actually rubbed her hands, but she might as well have. She knew it would be exciting, and she knew we could do it — all of us, together, tackling the greatest literature of the English-speaking world. I will never forget that class: How I anticipated it every day, jumped in eagerly, groaned at the work, loved my classmates, and adored the wise, witty serenity of my teacher. It was

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everything a college seminar should be, only we were still in high school.

In junior and senior year, our classes were in different buildings, often at far ends of campus. It's only now that I realize how deeply important this was to me: it meant we spent part of the day outside. Not locked up in a monolithic building all day, but free to kick leaves, throw snowballs, feel the sun on our faces, pick lilacs, flop in the grass. To gape at the glittering flood of water that covered the lower fields in the spring. To ruffle the head of a faculty dog. To feel that pause, that release, between bouts of intellectual focus. So many of my memories of Loomis-Chaffee are sensory: the teeth-jarring bump of the pitted road at dawn, the smooth dip of worn bricks underfoot, the thwack of a field hockey ball, the cold brilliance of ice-covered twigs. In the turbulent, self-centered, existential miasma of adolescence, these touchstones of the outdoor world grounded me, both as a person and a writer.

I'm lucky enough to have fulfilled my dream of becoming a poet, of making my living writing and teaching — a dream that began in the heart of a 16-year-old Loomis-Chaffee student. It was not a perfect four years; I weathered periods of distress and confusion. But it was a formative time for me, one that revealed truths I have since kept close: Take yourself and your

passions seriously. Think through your ideas. Listen to others as colleagues. Language is important — use it wisely and well. And never forget to go outside.

—Joyce Von Dohlen Sidman '74



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“Babe in the Woods”

I know a babe in the woods,
 a fair, sparkling child
who laughs with the sun in her hair
 and wonders at the sea
 and the big, soft clouds.
She sits on the beach in the evening
 and waits while the waters lap
 over the sun, and a bubble of moon
 breaks from the surface,
 and all the beach grows grey and ghostly.
She watches as the phantoms
 leap and shiver on the black sea,
she listens as the forest around her
 rustles and scurries and peeps,
sighs as the sounds blend
 and melt and break on the shore
 and mix with the sea and the moon
 and the wet, sliding sand.

I know a babe in the woods,
 who is gentle and smiles
 with the ocean in her eyes.
A babe, and she speaks of the sand
 and the moon and the water;
she speaks as no one else could ever speak,
 of black night
 from beneath the solemn trees.

– by Joyce von Dohlen *The Loom*, February 1973

4 FOURTH DOWN AND A THOUSAND YARDS TO GO

I think it was touch and go, but, miraculously, I was accepted to Loomis the autumn of 1954. I arrived at the Island with a lot of attitude and a serious dislike of authority. . . .

During my freshman year in Founders, I led a midnight raid on the sophomore dorm (which was verboten). Climbing up through my room's "skylights" one night, I dropped water-bombs on sleeping kids in other rooms. Pouring yeast and raisins into apple cider jugs fermented tasty apple jack. I failed room inspection regularly and was so often late to classes and chapel, I wound up in detention study halls most weekends. While asleep and dreaming I heard councilors and dorm masters yelling at me: "Nichols, that's two hours!" Pause, then: "Nichols, that's four hours!"

And, needless to say, I did not believe in God and argued vociferously to that end with my fellow inmates. I made no bones that I hated attending chapel.

I was also put into remedial English classes with Rose Adams because I couldn't spell. I floundered in Algebra and Latin. And I feuded angrily with my French professor, Mr. Stookins.

Throughout my sophomore year I tended to mouth off at teachers and initiate fisticuffs with fellow students at the drop of an insult. After leading a raid on the Founders freshman class, I was remonstrated by Charlie Pratt's Discipline Committee which informed me, "On page 36 of the Handbook you will note a paragraph which says, 'At no time may Sophomores, Juniors, or Seniors go above the second floor of Founders, unless they have a school appointment there.'" The committee advised me my name would be "on its mind for quite a while," and it hoped I would "act accordingly."

This I did by throwing switchblade knives into the door moldings of my dorm room, and I was suitably charged and punished for the resulting damage. I kept trying to circumvent the dress code. Tauntingly, my hair grew extra long; thus I was constantly reminded by the authorities to "cut

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it.” Failing both Algebra 2 and French 2, I scored Ds in most everything else. And I again spent much “free time” in detention while limping along permanently on restrictions.

Too, I loved *Lucifer with a Book* and lobbied for my schoolmates to read the novel. Insult to injury, in 1955–1956 when rock and roll burst upon the scene, I went crazy for Elvis Presley, Chuck Berry, Carl Perkins, Bill Haley, and, especially, Little Richard. Accompanied by a cheesy Stella guitar, I couldn’t stop screaming out “Maybellene,” “Rock Around the Clock,” “Heartbreak Hotel,” “Blue Suede Shoes,” and “Long Tall Sally” when I should have been studying for English exams featuring Joseph Conrad’s *Victory*.

At the end of my sophomore year there was a Student Council election. The Elections Committee would not have included me on a ballot for all the tea in China. However, I had a partner in crime (later kicked out of Loomis) who circulated a petition around school to place me on the ballot, and he obtained enough day boy and boarder signatures to do that; whereupon, much to the consternation of Loomis administrators, I was voted onto the Student Council.

Democracy, love it or leave it!

George Hickok, my Latin teacher, called me up to his dorm abode. While at Loomis I kept a diary (penned by my alter-ego, Holden Caulfield), and I wrote down what Mr. Hickok said. He told me that sophomores (a word meaning “wise fools”) were the hardest boys to handle. He revealed that in faculty meetings some teachers “don’t think much of you.” Students he had talked with “say you’re moody.” However, “You were elected to the Council, by petition from your classmates, which is a rare thing I am told and shows you are fairly popular.”

Not popular among Loomis faculty, however, he reiterated; nor did he think much of me himself. “But they say that students have a knack for electing the right people, and I hope it's true.”

Next, he ran down the job expected of a student councilor, implying that I hadn’t qualifications for the task. Understand, he spoke gently, more as a friend than as a disciplinarian. Last year he’d thought I had potential, but this year, sadly, I had disappointed him. He summed up: “I still think you can do a good job if you really try and put your mind to it. But I think you’ve got a lot of thinking to do this summer. I don’t know what’s the matter, but you’ve changed a lot since last year,

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and you've really got to make up your mind to try harder."

According to my diary, Mr. Hickok ended by saying, rather apologetically, "Well, I'm not your advisor and perhaps I shouldn't have shot my mouth so much, but there it is. I hope you don't hate me too much after that."

Quite the contrary. That evening I journaled: "I didn't hate him, not by a long shot. If there's any master in this school that I like and that I'd want to be my advisor, that's him. He has nothing to do with me at all, but he is the only guy that will try to help me with something like that. God, I appreciated it."

The administration decided I could return as a junior providing I got tutored in Algebra over the summer and passed a makeup exam that fall. I would have to repeat French. As a student councilor I would be on probation, and, if I essayed a single wrong step, Loomis would can me instantly, no appeal.

There was, however, one saving grace for me during my first two years at the Island. What I really wanted to do with my life was play sports. So when

I matriculated as an obnoxious 14-year-old, I harbored a boundless hunger to become an athlete. Thankfully, in that matter Loomis and I were on the same page.

In fact, Loomis was determined to make me participate in athletic pursuits come hell or high dudgeon. The school needed Christians to throw to the lions from Choate, Taft, Deerfield, and Kent, I assume because all New England private schools advertised themselves to their (hopefully) generous alumni through the exploits of their (hopefully) successful sports teams.

Whatever the case, requiring yours truly to participate in sports was like tossing me directly into the briar patch. I was encouraged to play Wolcott Junior and Senior football (thank God!), which I adored. So what if we only won a single game over two years? Freshman year I then joined the hockey team, no doubt because we practiced on a pond that often melted dangerously around the edges, which appealed to my self-destructive impulses. That I couldn't skate was not a problem: Loomis had entertained no hockey program for seven years; therefore nobody else could skate either. I believe we won one game, then lost all the rest of them.

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Sophomore year the hockey team got a brand new artificial rink despite our continued inability to skate. We wracked up a 0-9 record distinguished by an 11-0 whipping administered by Deerfield and a clobbering by Taft, 15-2. Pretty mortifying, though our coaches emphasized we were “building character, so suck it up.”

Springtime of both my freshman and sophomore years I made the varsity tennis team, albeit as a grumpy fixture at the very bottom rungs of the ladder. No matter, I was thrilled to be on another varsity endeavor ... until I developed a personality conflict with the tennis coach, Stanley Shimkus, and quit the group in a huff, another highlight of my disastrous sophomore year.

I walked over to the track and asked Mr. Fowles if he needed runners in any particular event. He replied, “Yes, in the 220-yard low hurdles and in the mile.”

So that’s what I planned to do my junior and senior years if I could be tutored in Algebra, pass a makeup exam that autumn, and then succeed as a student councilor.

The day I reached my rural Virginia home after my catastrophic sophomore year, my father announced he was divorcing my stepmother. That bitter legal

battle raged all summer while I studied Algebra and shared with my dad a small Chevy Chase (Maryland) apartment where I wrote short stories that imitated the slang-filled New York gangster tales of Damon Runyon. Runyon's irreverent, comical, and amoral goodfellas were right up my alley.

At Loomis the fall of 1956, I passed the algebra makeup exam with a flat 60 percent and advanced to Geometry, which also stumped me, same as Trigonometry would befuddle me senior year. Nevertheless, I had decided to curb my temper, play by the rules, keep my mouth shut, and brown-nose all adults. John "Uriah Heep" Nichols. Mr. Hickok's admonition to "try harder" rode with me every day. Over the summer I had realized, given my family's dysfunction, that if I was booted from school, there would be no competent adults out there to catch me.

Hence Loomis must now become my port in the storm. I figured it was fourth down and a thousand yards to go. Buck up, buddy, and fly right.

When I went out for varsity football my junior autumn, the coach, Ralph Erickson, urged me to forget it because he did not want bad-tempered

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assholes on his team. Yet, grudgingly, he allowed me to practice with the lads, making it clear that I would not play one down until I'd proven to him that I had somehow evolved into a decent and dependable human being.

I became a professional toady. "Yes, sir, whatever you want, sir." I practiced hard, listened to the coaches, and was ignored by them for most of the season. Our boys stunk to high heaven. We did not win any of our seven games and went scoreless in four of them. I was finally inserted in the last couple of contests, and one LOG article credited me with making "several bone-crushing tackles."

That's right, you could look it up: "John Nichols made several bone-crushing tackles." This happened during our last game of the 1956 season when we were skunked by "previously winless" Taft, 12-0.

Yet those "several bone-crushing tackles" gave me more joy than I had ever experienced. Certainly that was the most triumphant moment I had experienced up until then at Loomis. It seems at last I had done something for the school instead of against it. And — surprise! — that felt good ...

At the end of junior year hockey season, my fellow

icemen elected me captain of our team. This was like being elected captain of the 1962 New York Mets, yet I was elated. That spring I learned to run the mile for the track team, winning one, and I even did well in a few low hurdles races. I greatly admired our youngest track coach, Don Joffray, and wished to excel for him. Sue me, but I wanted to earn his respect.

My grades were abysmal junior year. No, I don't believe I flunked any courses. Yes, I performed satisfactorily as a student councilor. I began writing for the LOG, published a short story in the Loom, and spent no weekends working off hours of detention. I had not fought with any masters or dorm advisors. And to prove my expanding community spirit, I let myself be snookered into acting with three other boys in a theatrical event called *If Men Played Cards as Women Do*, an embarrassingly misogynistic farce, which modern-day feminists and GLBT activists would have tarred, feathered, and run right off the recently christened Norris Ely Orchard stage after the first five minutes. The 1957 *Loomiscellany* called it, "A somewhat weak vehicle for the fine talents of the four boys."

I can't pretend I was an angel that year, though I seemed to have learned how not to dig my own grave. I figure I owed most of that to sports and to

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the people who coached me. They were also my masters, and I began listening more attentively during their classes.

Senior year was wonderful. I earned varsity letters in football, hockey, and track. I was starting right halfback on a football team that actually won three of its six games. I scored one touchdown. After the final whistle Coach Erickson patted me on the back, gruffly thanking me for my contributions. I almost fell to my knees and kissed his wedding ring.

Come winter, believe it or not, the hockey team finally accomplished a winning season. Our record was 6-5. We crushed Salisbury, 7-1; knocked off Hotchkiss, 6-2; beat up on that bully, Taft, 5-1; and slaughtered Suffield, 11-2.

Lord, what sweet revenge! Mr. Munger frowned, warning me not to get a swelled head and to stop gloating: "Have some humility, Mr. Nichols. Pride goeth before a fall." Amazingly, I took what he said to heart.

The warmth of spring can often bring back fond memories of my senior year track season. I won a couple of mile races. My best time was 4:47, nothing to crow about and yet I felt like crowing ...

though only in private. In public I had become properly self-effacing and “’umble.” I also excelled in the hurdles and scored the second most points for our squad. I was not an above-average athlete, yet I had participated on several successful “teams.” The chip fell off my shoulder as I merged with the Loomis community. Above all, sports had kept me at school.

Not until the 11th hour did I know if I would graduate. I believe you needed a 70 percent average to move on, and I was hovering around 67 or 68. Senior year I had barely survived Trigonometry and Chemistry. As I recall, a faculty committee had to vote me through. Of the 89 who graduated in my class, I stood perhaps 85th or 86th. My recollection is that getting out of Loomis was just as difficult as getting into the school four years earlier.

Hallelujah, I graduated! Did I squeak by, or win by a landslide? I never knew. Hamilton College accepted me. At the 1958 Loomis commencement I was given the Evelyn Longman Batchelder Sportsmanship Prize. That stunned me and touched me way more than you would ever believe. In retrospect, I must have felt like Sally Field at the 1984 Academy Awards: “I can’t deny the fact that you like me, right now, you like me.”

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Throughout college, athletics remained a huge part of my life, and they have played a dominant role over all the years I have lived right up until today. Senior hockey leagues, distance running, tennis, basketball, biking, fly fishing the wild rivers of New Mexico, hunting, climbing the high Rocky Mountains. True, I have also spent over 50 years camped on my butt typing up stories, novels, screenplays, and nonfiction essays, yet those endeavors seem almost ancillary to my other life of running, jumping, skating, swimming, hiking, hunting, biking, and hitting a tennis ball.

When I was a freshman at Hamilton the fall of 1958, I asked my faculty advisor there how come Hamilton, a rigorously academic school, had accepted me despite my terrible grades at Loomis. My advisor said, "Loomis told us you could do the work, and we always take their word because they know what they're talking about."

Loomis was right. My four years at Hamilton would be a breeze compared to the learning difficulties I suffered through on the picturesque Island beside the Connecticut River.

Yet as I walked away from him that day, my Hamilton advisor called after me, "But you should never forget, Nichols, that we brought you here, undaunted

by your low IQ, specifically to play hockey.”

Hey! Loomis paved the way and I’ve been grateful ever since. And I always remember with special gratitude George Hickok, a man I scarcely knew who took the time, one quiet spring afternoon, to be compassionate and caring with the no-nonsense truth.

—John Nichols ’58

5 PELICAN PRIDE

Loomis was by no means a split decision. My Pelican Pride had been developing since the second grade. Growing up in Windsor, I passed the Loomis Chaffee sign every day on the way to my public school. I distinctly remember asking my mother out of the blue what Loomis was, and she told me that's the place where all the smart kids go for high school. From that very moment, all my work went toward achieving the goal set forth by my seven-year-old self: attending the "smart people" school. For the rest of elementary school and through middle school, LC was my mission and motivation. So when my school counselor told me that Loomis "might not be a good fit" for me when the time came to search for secondary schools, I chose to take matters into my own hands. I managed my own application and deadlines (with extensive help from my mother, of course) and applied to my dream school despite what the people at my middle school suggested. And I got in. Then came the hard part.

My expectations of boarding school were based loosely on a mix of *Zoey 101* and “Fifteen” by Taylor Swift. However, the transition was not as simple as TV and music made it seem. For a while, high school felt more like *The Odyssey*. Freshman year, I struggled with the adjustment to the new people, the new rules, and the new community. I didn’t fully understand what it meant to be a Pelican, so I had trouble. Thankfully, I also had a network of people who only wanted to see me succeed, like Mrs. Moran and the Clearys and Sees. I also leaned on my prefects, specifically Kimmy Wynter. When I had trouble sleeping because of some problem at home or school drama, she’d always open her door to me. She was the big sister I never had. She’s the reason I decided to apply to be a prefect. The support team that Loomis had given me helped immensely in that first year, and for that I am grateful.

Sophomore year was fairly smooth. Junior year was the first year I struggled with the workload. I was used to taking six-and-a-half courses every term; however, I was not used to staying up until 4 a.m. writing essays, desperately trying to understand physics, and doing my prefect duties of dropping everything when one of the girls was in need. I survived, though, mostly thanks to my dean, Mrs. Sasser. Meeting Mrs. Sasser changed my attitude completely. As an African-

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American student, seeing a woman of African descent with such a high position at a prestigious prep school absolutely inspired me. The fact that she is so poised, positive, and pleasant only drew me to her more. Just the way she carries herself makes me think more about the way I carry myself, about the person I want to be, and how I should go about becoming that person. Meeting her was the highlight of my junior year, and even though she is no longer my dean, I still go to her for advice, for ventilation, or simply for a nice conversation. I appreciate her more than she knows.

So far, senior year has been stressful. The chaos of junior spring is augmented by the college process and, at times, things get overwhelming. As a senior, I know to whom I can turn. I've got my bearings and am more equipped to handle these issues. I often think about how the freshmen are handling their issues; my freshman problems seem so tiny now, but in the moment they were substantial. For that reason, I applied to be a peer mentor for the past three years. I know I needed a helping hand when I first arrived here, and I wanted the chance to offer my hand to someone else, a "pay it forward" mentality.

Looking back, I would have had more conversations. Sometimes, I fear that people are too afraid of offending one another to discuss topics that cover sensitive issues. In many of our classes, we read

sensitive works regarding race, religion, sexuality, or gender. How do you talk about the N-word in literature in a way that is effective and civil to all races or about the holocaust for all religions? As a campus, I think that we need more comfort in the classrooms to allow these conversations to take place, because without them, we don't take everything away from the novels that we should. I wish I would have spoken more with the staff, as well. In history last year, while learning about immigration, we spoke with some of the immigrated staff members, and their stories were truly touching. I'm sure more people have stories like those, and I wish I would've heard them. If I had to start back in freshman year again, I would try to accomplish those things.

Now I have more time to reflect. I think about the life-long friends I've acquired along the way. Friendship is a major affair at Loomis. Over the four years, I've learned more about to whom I relate and whom I can trust. I think about all the times I've embarrassed myself (like when I fell face-first in front of the entire football team), about all the times I've impressed myself (like when I performed a poem in front of 3,000 on the Bushnell stage just because The Connecticut Forum made a call to Loomis). I think about the laughter and the crying and everything in between. I think about previous graduations, breaking down while saying goodbye to the seniors, about the football team,

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joining the brotherhood, and going on adventures with the other managers. I think about my prefect group and my RA group. I think about being the only black student in almost all of my classes. I think about being called almost every other black female's name, even in my fourth year here. I think about the arguments and the frustration and the peace that followed it all. I think about lunch dates with Mr. Mitchell. I think about all the crushes and the drama and how funny they all seem to me now. I think about all the different activities I've tried (and the ones I failed) and falling in and out of love with soccer and painting and music. I think about the young woman that I am right now, how proud my family is of me, how proud I am of myself. I think about the doors Loomis has opened for me and all the opportunities I have for college and beyond. Mostly, I think about the poems.

I've written about 300 poems since becoming a Pelican. Each of them tells the story of my development on this campus, whether directly or indirectly. They document everything from the obvious "life changing" moments to the moments I'd most likely forget without the poem. Poetry is a form of self-expression that Loomis has definitely helped me develop. I've been given many chances to share my work with my peers, who respond well to what I write. I think it's a beautiful thing when my words touch somebody else.

—Kassidi Jones '14

6 RECOLLECTIONS

When I was accepted to Loomis and my parents drove me to Windsor in the fall of 1937, we were invited into the office of Nathaniel Horton Batchelder, the first headmaster of the school. He interviewed me because I had been selected as one of his five advisees from the entering freshman class. ... We had a cordial talk, and I was assigned to Room 22 on Founders Third. My four roommates, all Batchelder advisees, were David “Hughes” Bles, Art Dayton, Knight Edwards, and Art Fay.

I should mention with respect to Batchelder that not only did he take us all out on walks many mornings around the campus, but also he and his second wife, the legendary sculptor Evelyn Beatrice Longman, entertained us in the Headmaster’s House on Sunday evenings for readings from *At Good Old Siwash* among

other favorite stories, while Pocahontas (We called her that because of the way she bound her dark hair.) gave us cider and chocolate chip cookies.

Mr. Batchelder customarily would invite us to join his dinner table, and we participated in the conversation at that table on several occasions during the year. Neither Knight Edwards nor I ever forgot one particular dinner, and we would comment on it often in later years when it became significant. One night Mr. B had as his guest a member of the Board of Trustees, James Lee Loomis, who would later succeed Robert Huntington as Chairman of the Board, but already was in 1947 a significant Board member. We were only 14 years old, but I remember being impressed by the exchange during dinner between Loomis and Batchelder about the importance of being a Trustee and the vital decisions that Trustees had to make on behalf of the school. I remember going back to Founders Third that night and talking with Knight about what it must be like to be a Trustee of this school, and here we were only freshmen. We recalled that evening many times after we became Successor Trustees on that Board.

Graduating from Founders Third for our sophomore year, we separated in living accommodations, and I joined my friend John Flint on the third floor of Warham, where we had a beautiful end room with plenty of window views of the campus and the fields

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overlooking the Connecticut River. Alas, the Connecticut River was in those years not restrained by the vast network of dams that have reined in the waters since the 1940s.

By the time our class matriculated in the fall of 1937, the damage [brought on by the high waters of the Flood of 1936] had been fully repaired, but no permanent remedial plan [to prevent future flooding] had been devised. John Flint and I no sooner arrived in our third-floor digs in Warham when the second major flood combined with a hurricane in October 1938 to again inundate the Island campus. Once again, students had to depart by boat. I had what had first appeared to be the good fortune of being in a fairly good size boat with two outboard motors, which packed in about 20 students. Our journey was supposed to end at the railroad tracks, but we discovered that the tracks were underwater at the Island Road crossing. We motored all the way down to Hartford between the old channel of the Connecticut River and the mostly flooded Route 5.

About five hours after we left Windsor, we arrived in Hartford — an indelible memory as we motored into Bushnell Park up to the entrance of the famed Hotel Bond, except that we did not enter the front door of the Bond, since the water was up to the main dining room on the second floor. We went in through the tall

entrance doors from the dining room terrace into the dining room. The elevators were out of operation, but it was happily no problem for us teenagers to climb the stairs to the ballroom at the top of the Bond, where we camped out until the floodwaters receded some four days later and our parents were able to pick us up. The school was closed for two weeks before we could return.

—Warren W. Eginton '41

7 THE CHAFFEE SCHOOL FOR GIRLS

Now called “Old Chaffee,” the school we entered in 1948 occupied a couple of houses off Palisado Green. Classes were taught in the wooden Sill House and lunch served in the brick Chaffee House. A couple of tennis courts lay behind Sill House, and a path led down to a field on the banks of the Farmington where we played field hockey. These rather Spartan digs offered a rich and rigorous education to girls, who scored well on entrance exams, from Windsor, West Hartford, and surrounding areas. And it was free, asking only an annual fee of \$350 for lunch, gym bloomers, and books. In the male-dominant world of the time, this gift included entry into unexperienced classrooms, classrooms without boys. Here, girls mattered; here, we were equal; we were valued, and much was expected of us. As a Loomis Trustee once remarked,

“Chaffee was a feminist school in an ebb tide of feminism.”

Some of Chaffee’s 64 girls walked, some rode the chartered bus from West Hartford, some were driven by parents or, later, drove themselves to Sill House to start the day. Every morning we filled the eight rows of eight student chairs neatly, wearing our knee-length skirts and cotton blouses or sweaters, bobby socks, and saddle shoes. Our hair was curled nightly in rags and brushed under into page boys or over into flips. Our 11 female teachers sat in front of us to one side and a piano stood on the other side. One of the teachers, or perhaps a senior girl, would read from the Bible, though never, if I recall rightly, anything on the crucifixion. The Bible was read as literature. We stood to sing a hymn, perhaps William Blake’s call for the building of a new Jerusalem or one written by an earlier resident of the house in which we stood, Edward Roland Sill. Our very own hymn seemed to have been written as chastisement for our adolescent sarcasm: “Teach me delight in simple things and mirth that has no bitter springs.” Yeah, go ahead. The bell rang and off we went to the classrooms upstairs, once the bedrooms or parlors of a wooden house that smelled of years of sunlight absorbed.

What a surprise to find the classroom chairs arranged around the room so that everyone could see everyone

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else. Suddenly there was no place to hide. You had to talk. You had to have ideas. You had to answer questions. You had to have done the homework — two-to-three hours a day. You had to think. When the bell rang, we may have moved to another classroom, but we did not disperse from each other. So we began to study each other as well as our books. From one we learned fair judgment, from another a liberating recklessness, and still another showed us how to walk into a room and turn it into a social occasion. Leadership, humor, the best shampoo: Examples of such things sat before us to be mastered. We learned where we stood in talent or ability and that such rankings didn't matter. (Though I've since heard of the pain of those at the bottom.) We knew each classmate's sharpest shame and favorite parent, and we had to get along because the pool was too small for daily strife. The smallness of the group that brought us such a deep knowledge of each other also delivered an understanding of oneself. And that understanding — coupled with the many possibilities apparent before us — led to growth.

In Chaffee's single-sex environment, we girls played all the parts in our history books. We could see the day when we would discover something in a test tube. We might solve the great puzzles of mathematics. This imagining may sound simple. It wasn't. We'd been raised on Good Adam and Silly Eve. We'd made it

through coed grammar school and junior high in rooms where the older we got, the less we spoke. We were coming up on dating, and we knew brainy girls would not be asked out. Once we did begin to date, we slid back into the general culture on weekends, but when Monday came around, we were restored to full citizenship at Chaffee.

What our teachers taught us was never simply subject matter. Freshman year French teacher Edie Treadway, fresh from her honeymoon, gave us a tip or two on marriage, one being that if on your wedding trip your husband drives through a tunnel with his sunglasses on and suddenly shouts, "I'm blind!" you have to act. English teacher Josephine Britton crossed the spring grass in her high heels and linen dress, and we understood that a woman could be both pretty and smart — a rare message in those years when women were advised to hide their intelligence if they wanted to get married. These women taught the whole child. When I asked Mrs. Britton why she'd allowed me an A- for the quarter but only a "Satisfactory in Effort," she told me she knew I "could do better than A-." "Don't worry that your daughter has dropped to a C in Civics," Barbara Erickson noted on a card to my parents, "We all enjoyed her acting in Harvey and the play was understandably time consuming."

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They could be tough. I remember a moment of shame in Algebra One when Miss Speirs and I locked eyes over some barb she'd thrown my way and another in ancient history when I chanced to say to Mrs. Erickson that Mediterranean civilization had been planted in Europe by the Roman Catholic Church, a phrase virtually lifted from the night's homework. To that she replied, "You mean like a garden?" Our second French teacher addressed and remembered only as Mam'selle mocked our pronunciation to the extent that even after four years of study, we did not produce a single person who could actually speak the language. Ah, but there was Mrs. Parker in her dark red suit covered with cigarette ash and her giggle-producing pronunciation of Hond-your-ass. She filled us in on England's Bloodless Revolution, the Spanish American War (Who won? I couldn't wait to find out.), and our own American Constitution. For one bluebook quiz, she wrote this question on the board: "The religious results of the Crusades were negligible. If so, why? If not, why not? Discuss." The class sat silent until one of us raised her hand to ask, "What does negligible mean?" With that cleared up, we discussed. And I can remember the moment in Mrs. Finley's Junior English class when I realized that I now knew a lot of the things my parents knew and talked about. I was, in short, educated.

If our curriculum had great depth, it had little breadth. Required: four years of English, French, and

history, two years of Latin and mathematics, one of biology and some typing for everyone. Beyond that came a few one-year electives — calculus, Cicero, chemistry, or studio art. That was it. We longed for more. What we had for extras included trips to Loomis to play basketball on their court, trips to Loomis to take a painting course in Mrs. B's studio where her own works were covered with sheeting — little did we know or hear of her independent years as a sculptor, creating “The Genius of Telegraphy” atop the AT&T building in Manhattan and carving the letters of the Second Inaugural address into the marble of the Lincoln Memorial. Trips to the theater at Loomis to rehearse for *Iolanthe* or *The Madwoman of Chaillot* or *Harvey*. At Palisado Green we put out the Chaffee Chiel, ran ourselves deliciously winded on the green of the hockey field, cut up worms and heated Bunsen burners in the new laboratory in Sellers Hall. We played a single away game with The MacDuffie School and once sang our Christmas carols at Avon Old Farms — returning to neither school.

And we dated. Weekdays it was tie shoes, men's shirts knotted at the belly button, and your eyeglasses; weekends, it was cashmere and prom dresses, high-heeled shoes, and a field of vision in which everything was blurred because you didn't have your glasses on. We had no TV, no cell phones, no email, no Facebook, no Twitter. We had landline phones, and we had dances,

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dance after dance, evening gown after evening gown, dates made by phone or letter. We had chaperones and admonitions not to dance too close to our partners, and from Mrs. Sellers herself an admonition to “avoid the bushes.” Invited to a Loomis prom? You received a formal invitation from The Loomis School itself, including instructions about when to arrive, what to do, where to sleep. For the ordinary prom of our own making, there were always dance cards. You danced with your own partner the first and sixth dances and the eleventh and twelfth. You wore the dance card on your wrist. We filled them out in advance, and if we didn’t know the name of the boy, we wrote in the classmate’s name in the possessive case as in “7-Sally’s.” We danced the Lindy and the foxtrot and the waltz — and on zestier nights the Charleston that was just being revived.

That’s what it looked like from the outside, but what was on our minds during our high school years? Mostly our families, our schoolwork, and boys. Two of us were living in single-parent households, one was watching her parents’ marriage come apart, and another was living with grandparents; all of us were dealing with the question of how closely we wanted to follow the lives of our parents, particularly our mothers. But there were a few other concerns — some we spoke of and some we didn’t.

The Korean War began during the summer of 1950, and (to corrupt the movie title) we learned to start worrying and fear the bomb. Would the Communists drop it on us? Or we on them? Was this the Third World War? The End of the World? Our textbooks were too old to contain information about fusion or fission bombs: Miss Nicole had to give us chemistry students a mimeographed handout on the new bombs. What about the armed forces? Who would be drafted? One of us had a Quaker cousin working (unarmed) on a medical evacuation helicopter; another had a father who'd volunteered but had been sent to a subdued Germany. One had parents who worried about the red-baiting that Senator McCarthy was introducing. That was the world. What about us?

Women usually married after college and worked in the home, or took short-term jobs as secretaries, teachers, or nurses until marriage. But at Chaffee, we'd been told we could do anything. So what did we want to do? Junior year offered our first elective — a choice between Latin III or biology. If we chose biology, we could take chemistry senior year and maybe go into the sciences in college. Simple and restricted as the choice of Latin or biology was, it caused us to start imagining what we wanted to do in life. A short course in typing was also required, and much as I hated it, that skill led to my first jobs and would underlie my entire life as a writer.

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In our final year at Chaffee, we began to think more about our immediate futures. Where to go to college and would we get in? Did we want a coed school or to continue in an all-female environment? Did we want to go to a legacy school or escape one? All of the enrichment Chaffee had given us in theater, newspaper, student government, glee club, and sports gave way to the hard numbers of SAT scores. We took our SATs on a Saturday morning down in Hartford and then ate pizza (called a'pizz) for the first time in our lives and went out for a matinee in which Johnnie Ray sang "The Little White Cloud That Cried." He was a bit of a disappointment — and how were we to know he would lead on to Elvis and eventually the Beatles.

We graduated into the world of the early 1950s without knowing that we'd become a bridge generation connected to both the lives of our homemaker mothers and the world about to open up to Civil Rights in the 1960s and to Second-Wave Feminism in the 1970s. That tide of feminism broke upon most of us when we were already making school lunches for our kids. Still we were prepared for it, welcomed it, and went on to contribute to it. Thanks to Chaffee, we knew we were prepared for it, welcomed it, and went on to contribute to it. Thanks to Chaffee, we knew we were equal —

and valued — and that much was expected of us, and we were ready to give it.

—Zane Hickox Kotker '52

8 MASTER TEACHERS

When I first saw Loomis in 1960, on the occasion of a job interview, it was different from any school I had ever seen, and it looked like the ideal New England prep school. It was also very different from the school from which I retired in 2006, and probably still more different from the school it is today. Even its name has changed, but many of its virtues remain.

The Quad in 1960 was graced by huge elm trees on either side of the Senior Path, so large that their branches met high above, forming a green archway in summer. By the time I returned in September to begin work, the tunnel beneath the elms had already changed. A glancing blow from a hurricane had downed the two trees nearest Founders Hall, and Don Joffray was cutting them into fireplace logs with a chainsaw. Before many years had passed, Dutch elm disease had removed the rest of them, and new trees, now almost as large, were planted around the Quad,

much closer to the dormitories. The empty space between Taylor and Warham, which had provided such a fine view of the Meadows, was eventually filled by Ammidon and Flagg, and the Senior Path, originally a part of the Boston Post Road, was bricked over year by year, one brick for each graduating senior. Those elms were not the only noteworthy trees on campus, however. There was a scarred old giant in the Meadows, almost dead but showing a few green leaves every spring, that lasted until the early 1980s. I used to take my freshmen down to look at it and to write a description of it every September until one year it was gone. It was also a favorite subject for photography students. Walter Rabetz must have seen hundreds of photos of it, inspiring him at last to say to me, “The merely picturesque is banal.” Between the Dining Hall and the Infirmary there stood once a scion of the Constitution Oak, until the grounds crew, not knowing its aristocratic heritage, removed it to make room for a path.

Besides the physical appearance of the school, its culture and its customs were different from anything I had known, and different from what they are today. Loomis in 1960 had its own language, including words that have vanished. On the second floor of Founders, a narrow room housed the Nook, where Charlie Pratt and Al Beebe issued permissions and listened skeptically to student excuses for class absences and

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tardiness. Issuing permissions did not take up very much time: Students were not allowed very many. They could take only two weekends a term. Since classes met every Saturday, those who lived more than a few hours away could take only one weekend a year, an “extended” weekend that allowed them to miss Saturday classes. The class week was an unvarying, eternal Week One. Perhaps it sounds terrible today, but as a result there was much more free time. The extra day every two weeks, along with fewer required half courses, meant that everyone had eight or 10 free periods a week. The pace was leisurely compared to that of today, but even so the academic pressure was relentless. Once, around 1965, I awoke before dawn with a headache and left Batchelder Hall to get some fresh air by walking down the covered way. It was about 5:30 a.m., but the lights were burning in all of the social rooms, each of which held half a dozen students, doing homework they had not finished before lights out at 10 o'clock the previous night, when electricity in all but senior corridors was turned off. In 1987 two alumni from 1967 who had returned for Reunion dropped by and spent a couple of hours with me and my wife, Helen, reminiscing about their student years at Loomis. Approving of the changes in the school since their graduation, both of them said that they would never have sent their children to the Loomis they had attended, but the new Loomis Chaffee was a different story. One of them, who lived

in Vermont, said that for years, every time he passed exit seven or exit eight on I-91, his stomach tied itself in a knot.

It is tempting to think that the academic pressure of the 1960s produced superior students, and it is true that there were superior students at Loomis in those days. When those students took tests in class, they often quoted at length and from memory the texts they used. Nevertheless, all but the unusually gifted paid a high price for success, and many found the price too high. Each year the faculty reviewed students in academic difficulty in its year-end meeting, and many of those students were dismissed. Many of them returned to public schools, from which they graduated, went to college, and became successful doctors, lawyers, and businessmen. Their success suggests that the academic standards of Loomis in 1960 were unnecessarily demanding.

By the end of the 1970s, however, the school was a more enjoyable place for students and for faculty as well. About that time a senior told me one September that he had had a terrible nightmare over the summer. "I dreamed that something horrible had happened and that I couldn't come back to Loomis for my senior year." Probably the primary reason students of any era have been eager to return to their schools has always been their friends. Another reason for their desire to

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return to Loomis was the faculty, which, when I arrived on the scene in 1960, was composed largely of Master Teachers. The title of “Master Teacher” is sometimes bestowed on those who might more accurately be called “Elderly Teachers,” but the senior faculty in 1960, which amply deserved it, included most of the best teachers ever to grace the school. If life was hard for students, it was hard in a different way for young teachers. We had a lot of work to do, not only in the classroom but in the dorms and on the athletics fields. The senior faculty, who had done their time, had less to do in the dorms and in coaching, but they were priceless role models for young teachers and through their example taught them to deal with students academically and personally.

One day in 1967 or so I ran into Bert Howard in the hall outside his office in Founders and asked him about the formulas for finding the area of two-dimensional figures. I knew that multiplying the altitude by the base produced the area of a rectangle, and I had never doubted that it did: I could easily divide a rectangle three units high by four units long into twelve square units. There they were, plain to see; but what about the area of a circle? There was no way to break that into square units because the thing was round. For all I knew π^2 was a myth made up by mathematicians. Bert looked at me half quizzically and half pityingly for a minute and said, “Didn’t anyone ever show you

the proof using a circle circumscribed around a square?” Then he pulled an envelope out of his pocket, flourished a wooden pencil, and drew a circle inscribed around a square. He modified the square into an octagon and pointed out that as one increases the number of sides, the area increases but can never exceed the area of the circumscribing circle. If I had learned math from Bert Howard, I might have become a math teacher rather than an English teacher. In later years many alumni told me that the best teachers they had ever had were at Loomis. They had never found anyone in college to match them. Bert was the teacher they most often specified, but they made it clear that he was by no means the only one.

After the first English Department meeting he attended, in 1962, Harv Knowles asked me, “Who is Norrie Orchard?” He had been mentioned several times in the meeting, and Harv, in his first year at Loomis, did not know that he had been an alumnus who returned to teach and had been the head of the English Department until his death four or five years before. Like other senior faculty, he had left an indelible mark on the school. Harv’s first department meeting was presided over by Al Wise, another of the great teachers, who became Harv’s mentor and mine as well. When in 1964 Lou Fowles’s history of the first 50 years of the school, *The Harvest of Our Lives*, was published and distributed to each faculty member, I found my

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copy in my birdhole in the faculty room one afternoon after athletics. I opened it casually after dinner and couldn't put it down until I had finished it. It was a miniature masterpiece.

Joe Stookins, head of the Language Department, was a great French teacher, along with George Adams. Joe was primarily responsible for changing the emphasis in language instruction at Loomis from translation to speaking the language. Tom Finley, who, along with his wife, Mildred, had survived the sinking of the *Athena* in 1939, was the head of the Mathematics Department and the dorm master of Founders Hall in the days when the third floor consisted of freshman rooms with bachelor apartments at either end of the corridor. In the days when students had few privileges and freshmen had none, it was a challenge to control their high spirits and to direct their energies into positive channels since there were no rewards to offer them for good behavior and no punishments to curb rowdiness. I don't know whether it was Tom Finley or one of the other faculty who devised a solution worthy of Solomon. In the 1940s and early 1950s no students were allowed to have radios. The lowly freshmen in Founders, however, were allowed them so that they could be confiscated and kept by faculty as punishment for misbehavior.

It may seem odd that a school with such competent faculty, who were, in addition, appreciated and liked

by the vast majority of the students, should have been also so difficult and unpleasant for many of them. That oddness was, however, obvious to me, who was a part of it, only in retrospect. The obvious affection of the students for the faculty resulted naturally from the unmistakable devotion of the senior faculty to the school, to their students, and to the welfare of both.

Loomis in 1960 was what the senior faculty had made it as the result of their experience during the Depression and the Second World War. Although they could not recognize the changes that later became necessary, a large part of their contribution to Loomis was the training they gave to the younger faculty who would remake it in the 1970s and 1980s as a different and — in important ways — better school. The other important element in the transformation of Loomis into Loomis Chaffee was the addition of the students and faculty of Chaffee, where the tradition, far from being the Academic Darwinism of Loomis, was that of providing whatever help was needed to enable students to succeed.

Writing about Loomis in 1960 and beyond reminds me of Holden Caulfield's last words in *The Catcher in the Rye*: "Don't ever tell anybody anything. If you do, you start missing everybody."

—Samuel "Stevie" Stevenson

9 FORGET THE WORDS

“The reason for a fish trap is the fish. When you’ve got the fish, you can forget the trap. The rabbit’s reason for the snare. Once you’ve got the rabbit, you can forget the snare. The meaning of the song in your heart is the reason for the words, but once you’ve got the meaning, you can forget the words. Where can I find someone who’s forgotten the words — to have a word with him?” — Sam Hamill and J. P. Seaton, *The Essential Chuang Tzu*



I am an international student. I know time zones with superfluous precision. My five best friends all come from different countries. I am now studying my fourth language. But when I first arrived at Loomis Chaffee, I was not an international student — I was a student “from Russia.”

Nine-hour trans-Atlantic flights offer one a great opportunity to think. During my first journey to the United States, the hectic thoughts of everything I knew about American high schools set my head in turmoil. Vague Hollywood-inspired images of cheerleaders and a discriminatory system of seating at lunch tables came to mind and refused to leave. Tedious landing, Ellis Island-inspired lines at JFK airport, and a rather languid road trip along I-95 constituted more than 24 hours of transit: the time that I devoted, alternately, to unsuccessful drowsing and to teenage anxiety.

Some of my anxieties evaporated rather quickly, while others came to stay. Loomis did not have cheerleaders, but the fear of sitting alone at lunch transformed into its more general form: an unspecified teenage fear of awkwardness. I objected to this fear as well as I could. The very word itself seemed awkward, with its two double-u's and frequent misusage. I did not succeed at first impressions or introductions: overnight my name had turned from most common into an unpronounceable conglomeration of consonants. I substituted "Kath" for "Ekaterina," but could not fix my last name. When a teacher took attendance at study halls, I timidly raised my hand before he pronounced the third letter of my surname.

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I disagree with the term “culture clash,” for the American culture did not overwhelm me at once in open confrontation with my Russian roots. American social mores had a habit of sneaking up stealthily. For instance, during my first fall term, my prefects and dormmates all assumed that I suffered from a mild-to-moderate form of unhappiness or homesickness, and they asked me if I felt okay even on days when my spirits were rather high. I had not figured out the reason until later: I did not smile. An American smile manifests general well-being and amity, but Russians smile only in sincere response to jokes, compliments, and good news. Excessive smiling evokes thoughts of contemptuous sneering or oblivious foolishness, neither of which the culture condones. Moreover, when Russians smile, we do not show our teeth. I do not know the origin of the cultural difference: One could assert that the weather might be too cold to smile for no reason. I learned to smile eventually: Merciful New England climate and cordial Loomis atmosphere put me at ease.

My excitement knew no limits when I discovered snow days. Moscow authorities never cancelled school for such a trifle thing as precipitation, perhaps for the fear of granting students three months of vacation rather than out of sheer cruelty. After nine years in my Russian school, I had an immense appreciation for each

chance to sleep in while the snow piled up outside of my window.

Although I profoundly enjoyed my boarding school life, I still had to jump over the language barrier. I visualized the obstacle as follows: on one side, a treacherous maze of false cognates and fickle connotations; on the other, long-coveted fluency and freedom. I would be lying if I said that I did not know English when I set foot on the Island. But I assert that I did not know English in the faintest sense of well. I had been learning British English, the propriety of which did not deliver me from misunderstandings. Asking not to cut “the queue” at lunch engendered no effect but puzzled looks. My barely identifiable, but nevertheless thick accent did not make communication easier. I would ardently argue my point of view in English class, only to have my classmates mock my pronunciation of “reinforce”: “Did you just say, ‘rain forest’?”

All sophomore English classes read John Steinbeck’s *Grapes of Wrath* in the fall. My journey through the book was as tedious and exhausting as the characters’ travels in the Great Depression. Steinbeck took advantage of phonetic spelling. When I should have appreciated the literary device, I mentally scolded him for employing the words one cannot look up in the dictionary. Biology proved even more stressful, laying a

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layer of confusing latinates on top of the language I scarcely comprehended.

Unsurprisingly, out of all of my subjects, I favored mathematics. My Precalculus/Calculus teacher, Mrs. Byrne, tolerated my limited proficiency of the language. But much to my dismay, English eventually affected my mathematics as well: I received a test where the only mistake concerned the spelling of the word “ellipse.” Oftentimes I would know the answer, but would have to resort to more gestures than words to explain it. Trigonometry easily succumbed to gesticulation. As my classmates grew more impatient with my muteness, Mrs. Byrne just smiled — the Russian way — without showing her teeth.

I did not need more encouragement. My shyness began to fade and eventually vanished. When I went home for Christmas breaks, my parents noticed my Americanized gestures, notorious incessant smiling, and a few extra decibels in my voice. The transformation from “Ekaterina” to “Kath” troubled them. Too American in Russia, too Russian in America, I became too familiar with the concept of relativity.

At school, I was frequently in the minority: an international student in AP U.S. History and AP Government, a non-native speaker in advanced English seminars, the only sophomore in my Spanish class, and

the only girl in my AP Physics section and my Linear Algebra class. But none of these positions seemed to matter: Whether I had to debate the existence of Eurasia, dispute the textbook chapter about my country, resort to Spanish to explain a Russian concept, or prove that girls could do mathematics, I never had to see my point of view as a disadvantage.

The very same cultural conflicts that put me in such discomfort in the beginning turned into friendly challenges. By senior year, I inadvertently fit in everywhere without trying to fit in anywhere. To my genuine and profound surprise, I realized repeatedly that at Loomis, I always had more friends than I thought I did. My dormmates unlocked their doors, and my teachers welcomed invasions into their offices and occasionally their homes. With optional study halls and exams, Loomis reluctantly gave back the freedom that underclassman discipline had taken away three years before. My memories of senior spring consist almost entirely of conversations: a particular flavor of a lunch table chat, a dry debate on a humid May day, or a quiet talk in the echoing quad.

I do not know the particular source of the rich happiness that saturated every day of my last term. I tentatively attribute it to the fluent discussions, effortless and endless. Although I may forget the lessons in style and grammar that I had learned at the

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seminar tables in Chaffee Hall, Loomis also taught me to speak to and with people, and I hope to retain this skill.

-Ekaterina Kryuchkova '13

10 A GREAT TEACHER

The best definition of a great teacher is one who gets you excited about a subject you never imagined you'd take a shine to and weren't at all curious about. That's what Alice Baxter did for me. I walked into her chemistry class in the 10th grade prepared for drudgery, girded for a grind, convinced this would be my least favorite class. But she somehow made me want to memorize the periodic table. She somehow made me want to master the equations and fine points. It wasn't about beakers and smoke. She gave me — gave us — a key to understanding the world around us. Her confidence in explaining the material and her excitement about it were infectious. But she taught me more than chemistry. She taught me that a person's curiosity can stretch farther than he or she thinks, and so can a person's mastery.

—Frank Bruni '82

11 FAMILY, LOVE & NAPS

Each spring, as far back as I can remember, an image pops into my head of lying in the afternoon sun on the red high-jump mat after last period in shorts and T-shirt, waiting for track practice to start. It's always to the same time, same place. Though often I am joined by Carla, a high jumper and fellow 4x400 relay runner.

In my mind's eye, we're laughing.

The flashback only lasts for a split second, if that. And just as quickly as it comes, it goes. Until next spring.

When I was younger, I assumed the memory was triggered at random as if experiencing déjà vu in reverse. In recent years, I've come to know that the trigger is

even simpler. It is the smell of spring in the air on campus. Like pheromones bonding my subconscious consciously to the happy familiar. We don't pick our true memories. They pick us. I am sure of it.

They're everywhere at Loomis, memories. Most are fleeting with time, hidden in open spaces or attached to buildings that sadly no longer exist. And then there are others, as present and clear as the light before the dawn.

As I see it, those that stay, stay crystal clear for a reason. I have no doubts about it, as it is those profound memories that have opened my eyes to family, love and naps.

It was only in the last years of my Dad's life that I realized how much time he had spent on campus with me and my sisters. He had been battling cancer for more than 20 years and waited until he saw my younger sister graduate from college to start letting go. He was ready.

As he got weaker, I held on to the days when he was stronger. And those days were at Loomis.

It was the last time he was in our leisure lives full time before we went off to college, into the world outside. He made the most of it. In the stands at home varsity

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girls basketball games. At the finish line for every home track meet, come rain or shine. In the back of the auditorium at an all-school meeting when he received a letter in the mail that Dr. Ratté was to speak. He liked to hear the headmaster expound on the examined life and being our best selves.

Dad liked to think a lot, too.

Mom told me once that he repeatedly turned down promotions at work because they required the family to relocate. He wanted us to grow up with stability, she said. So off and on for nine years, he had his secretary cancel lunches and reschedule meetings so he could be that for us. (My older sister and I went to Loomis around the same time, and then there was a gap before my younger sister went).

He showed up so often that other students took note: Your Dad is here. I saw your Dad at the finish line, holding an umbrella. Isn't he cold? Your Dad just walked in. Did you see your Dad?

I remember the last night he spent at home. His joints and limbs were too weak for him to lift up his knees, so I came home from Manhattan to pick him up from the hospital and help carry him up the stairs. He wanted to sleep in his own bed. When he got to the top, he looked at me, nodded, and gave me a pat on

the back. That meant I did a good job. I knew it the second I felt it though he couldn't talk. Loomis gave me that. Because he did the exact same pat after every game or race; whether it was a win or a loss, it didn't matter.

Family was about being present. I understood.

But having a six-foot-something former football player father around wasn't always fun for a teenage girl with a lot of boyfriends. My parents thought I had too many. I like to think I got an early start on love. Senior year it was Damian, the super-popular cool jock. Van was junior year, a boarder from New York City. Sophomore year was Jim, whose parents, after they met me, told their son to dump "the black girlfriend," though apparently, they didn't use the word "black." It was a naively, eye-opening ride that Dad actually predicted, even though, as I told him, "His parents smiled at me the entire time we were together, going on and on about how nice it was to meet me."

But my first love was Eric, freshman year. And every clueless, naive, sweet, corny, cheesy cliché that applies was us. We wrote gushy love letters like water and exchanged them not once but at least twice daily. The ones with the big hearts and a whole lot of forever. We color-coordinated outfits and talked on the phone

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about absolutely nothing for hours after seeing each other all day at school until our eyes hurt for sleep. When we fought, I would storm off to find a place to do homework, and he would come looking for me with a book to read. He made a slow jam mixed tape. I giggled at the sound of his voice.

I never believed in love as much as I did that year at Loomis. It was uncomplicated and free.

Long after we broke up, his corduroy varsity basketball jacket hung in my closet like a trophy until Mom threw it away when I went to college.

Parents get it all wrong with daughters. Girls should fall in love in high school, a couple times over. That way there is no confusion about what it feels like when fast-talking college boys come knocking.

But love wasn't the only subject I got a jump on. I got a head start on power naps. I perfected them three decades before scientists at Harvard University confirmed what I already knew to be true at age 13. Quick naps are good for me — something about improving productivity, memory, creativity, and problem solving. Google it.

I loved to take naps before track and would change clothes quickly so that I could have a few minutes to

myself. It reset my brain to crank up the energy needed for a sweaty practice, though when other students came out to tan on the mat, they were always judgmental when they saw my eyes closed, nudging me with an annoying cry of “wake up, wake up.”

Obviously, they were ignorant to the natural ways of our body clock. Except for Carla — she took naps with me.

—Sana Butler '90

12 MY LIFE WITH LOOMIS

CHAFFEE ATHLETICS

Growing up on an all-boy campus as a faculty “brat” in the 1960s and 1970s, I couldn’t help but be consumed with athletics activities and playing every sport imaginable. You remember back then; we barely had television, no cell phones and Internet; and the world operated much differently than what we know today. The Joffrays, Greys, Palmers, Stevensons, Sullivans, Beebes, Dowers, Eatons, and many other families sent their children to the same schools in Windsor. There must have been 20 of us all riding our bikes to John Fitch Elementary through rain, cold weather, and snow. You know the story: When the bell rang, signifying the end of another school day, we would all race home, and before our lunch pails had

been unpacked, the phone calls began from house-to-house organizing the game of the day. Some days we would play football; other days, softball, soccer, basketball and hockey, depending on the season and weather conditions. Every once in a while, much to Mr. and Mrs. Erickson's and Eaton's chagrin, when it was damp outside, we'd all gather in the wrestling room and play floor hockey with plastic spoons and a newly made tape ball that we found outside of Mr. Enright's closed office door. We'd play until dark, or until someone got seriously injured, and we'd be forced to stop play simply because there'd be a mess on our playing surface!

I cannot remember a time when I couldn't find at least a half dozen or so friends as interested in playing any type of game as I was. As our parents were busy maintaining law and order in their jobs as school teachers and administrators, we never lacked for entertainment in our young lives living on the Island. As much as we could find fun in any game we created any day of the week, Wednesdays and Saturdays were the two days in the week we all looked forward to the most — Loomis game days. All of us involved ourselves in some way with various sports teams at Loomis, whether we were invited or not! We did so by volunteering to be ball boys for the soccer games, bat boys for baseball, and official ball retrievers for any of the remaining sports. It was always "first come, first

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served,” so we all felt like it was important to be on time for athletics contests. Some of us never had to read any schedules; we could just sense when the home games would occur. Maybe it was the new paint on the fields we noticed on our way home from school, or maybe it was the excitement we saw in some of the boys’ faces we met at breakfast before heading off to school. We were always ready to help, and we weren’t going to be denied.

One of my favorite memories of this period in my life came on those days when I would slip out of school early on a Wednesday and make it back in time to hop on a bus headed for Taft, Hotchkiss, or Choate. It felt as though I was going to a foreign country. Even on other school campuses, I was the ball person on the sideline. Looking back on it, I wonder now how those faculty children at those schools felt as I held onto my assumed position with the visiting team. Long before I had ever played in my first game for Loomis as a student, I was very familiar with the campuses of most Founders League schools.

I’ve always considered myself very fortunate to receive my high school education at Loomis. I played soccer, hockey, and lacrosse for some of the coaches I had grown up idolizing, and my experience at this next level was never disappointing. Early on in my life, long before becoming a high school student here, I dreamed

of what it would be like to put on that Loomis uniform and play for my school. When the time did arrive, I couldn't have been happier.

Now turn the clocks ahead — way ahead by close to 35 years — and I'm on the Island again. In fact, I've been back here as the school's director of athletics for 10 years now. The biggest fear I had when deciding to accept a job offer that came from Russ Weigel in 2004 was this: Would I be disappointed with my new home because what I had experienced as a boy growing up was so special? The thought challenged me, but I decided I could separate the two, and nothing could take away the memories I had growing up on the campus I called home.

As athletics director, some might consider me to be of the “old-school” type. I still believe young people should play multiple sports and that “being recruited” is a very misunderstood term. I also believe still that pick-up basketball games and hockey on a frozen pond are some of the best ways for young athletes to develop skills and, more important than that, to develop a deeper love for the sport and for competing.

For me, the biggest difference I see in sports today is that we adults are afraid to let our children fail at anything. We communicate so frequently with one another that we don't allow enough time and space for

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young people to figure out problems on their own. When you were outnumbered in a game of kick-the-can, or when your brother placed you on the really bad team yet again, you didn't get to go home. We learned to accept our circumstance and to figure out ways to make it work for us.

Today, the basic tenets of why athletics benefits young people remain the same. It teaches us to be humble when we are both good and bad. Playing on teams allows us to develop our own voice and to better understand how to get along with others when adversity comes our way. I love that I'm back at Loomis because it's a place where I still believe that we have the ability to make a difference in young people's lives. I think that my own experiences as a child on this campus inspire me to always be on the lookout for ways to make playing sports at Loomis Chaffee fun. The fun doesn't come from winning; it comes from the relationships you make with your teammates and coaches. When you think back on your high school experience in sports, you won't remember your win/loss record. What you remember are your friends and the lessons you learned along the way.

The challenge for all of us involved in athletics today is looking for ways to safeguard the fun in playing youth and high school sports. The coaches I had as a student at Loomis never made me feel as though I had to excel

at what I was doing in order to get something from it. Lessons from Jim Wilson and Chuck Vernon focused on how I could make others around me better by doing things better myself. For me, this has always been the magic formula, and it's how I want all our coaches to teach their teams today. It's about the process and not the product. When high-school-age athletes focus too much on their own benefits from doing well at sports, they are missing out on so much of why athletics participation at schools like Loomis can be such a positive activity.

Returning to Loomis has been a wonderful opportunity to give my children the experience that I had growing up in a unique community. I am reminded of my childhood each and every time I walk into the dining hall with my family and my children run off in the direction of one of their current heroes. We eat with members of the faculty who become a part of our extended family. I know from experience that these relationships in my children's eyes are bigger than we adults ever imagine. The same can be said for our influence as coaches with the students who play on our teams and live in our dorms. This impact will never change, and I'd like to think that a vital part of my job here at Loomis is to share these thoughts as often as I can with the coaches and faculty members with whom I now work.

—Robertson “Bob” Howe '80

13 THE CHAPEL

As Proust and Dickens remind us, the locales of one's childhood and adolescence trigger a unique nostalgia. They elicit narrative memories, of course, but they also awaken long-ago emotions with immediacy more powerful than do the revisited landscapes of adulthood.

A graduate of Loomis, I have served on the faculty since 1974, so I revisit the scenes of my adolescence many times a day and thousands of times every year. I gaze out on the Meadows on sunny fall afternoons and wonder if the students playing soccer there feel the lengthening shadows as I did in 1966, when I was one of the club soccer boys in the vivid blue, red, and green of Wolcott, Allyn, and Ludlow teams. It is said that as we progress through life, we retain all of our previous ages, so a part of me remains that earnest freshman

trying to play soccer but in truth more interested in the wildlife along the Connecticut River just beyond the fields.

I see a nervous student hurrying up the Founders stairway, a minute late for class, and wonder if she feels the same excitement and apprehension that I felt rushing up those same stairs on my way to Algebra II class so many years ago. I could tell her that I know what it's like to run to class late, feeling less than prepared to face the challenges ahead. With eyes grown increasingly more tender toward the trials of youth, I observe young men and women in the classrooms, dining hall, and dormitories that I knew as a student — and I'm reminded again and again of the rich emotional stew of my own student years, flavored with anticipation, promise, and fear.

As a graduate who has spent his career on the Island, I experience the physical spaces of the campus through layers of decades of memory. I visit a favorite classroom, and like the cinematic device in which a scene dissolves and then the camera refocuses in the same place at a different time, my focus blurs momentarily, years fall away, and as the room comes once again into focus, I am a student in that room and Allan Wise, dear man, is introducing me and my classmates to the Sophoclean arc of *The Mayor of Casterbridge*. The lens blurs again, refocuses, and it's

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10 years later: Standing where Mr. Wise stood, I try to inspire a roomful of juniors toward a fuller understanding of *Hamlet*. The focus dissolves, and shapes sharpen once again to reveal, five years later, a brilliant senior, Fiona Micheli Sewell '85, whose astonishing insights into a Toni Morrison novel fill me with admiration. Blur, refocus: It's several years earlier and an engaging young man, R. Pierce Onthank '79, comes grinning through the classroom doorway with a slow loris suspended from his forearm — and I delay the lesson plan while the students and I marvel at the deliberate motions of the mammal — and its enormous, unblinking eyes. On and on, the associations of every Island room, space, and view accumulate like innumerable layers of thin pastry surrounding an essential fruit at the center, my own student experiences forming the core for later accretions of memory.

Founders Chapel reigns above every campus space in the richness and power of its hold on me. It haunts my dreams and my memories. Many years of adult recollections of that room do nothing to diminish the potency of the adolescent memories; all are vivid. I close my eyes and recall exactly how it looked and felt to assemble in the chapel with my freshman classmates on a crisp Sunday morning in September 1966: *Meticulous, dutiful George Hickok is at the organ console playing a Bach Prelude with perfect rhythmic*

precision. Freshman boys in new suits that fit them now but won't by spring file in to the balcony to take their assigned seats. Downstairs, seniors fill the central pews at the front, juniors and sophomores behind them. The seniors are so big, so tall, so mature. They look like men. In the side pews sit the distinguished, admired, and beloved older faculty members — Joe Stookins, Tom Finley, Charlie Pratt '23, George and Winnie Adams, Herbert Howard, Lou Fowles — endlessly vigilant. To a 14-year-old boy, they look old ... but immortal. I feel a tingling anticipation. I have a small place in this ritual, enacted now as it had been in previous years and decades by other boys. Some of them are now in middle age; some are deceased. In a few years, I, too, will sit downstairs in a front pew. There is promise in the air, but also the specter of possible failure. Will I make it? Will I someday take my place among fellow seniors in the front pews? Will a freshman then gaze down at me from the balcony and feel what I now feel?

In those mandatory Sunday Chapel services, we sang hymns, some of us enthusiastically, some with indifference, some not at all. Although I knew that the school was officially nonsectarian, it didn't strike me as contradictory that we had a Christian chaplain and sang from a Protestant hymnal. It took a Jewish friend, David Margolick '70, to point that out to me. In what I suppose was a mild concession to the

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Founders, we didn't sing much about redeemers or sacred heads now wounded. But I could feel Mr. Batchelder's influence, and I expect he insisted that boys sing, and they should sing hymns, and hymns should have strong messages that apply to them. I especially remember two that we sang so often their words remain locked in my memory: *Come, Labor On and Once to Every Man and Nation*.

Come, labor on. Who dares stand idle on the harvest plain while all around him waves the golden grain? And to each servant does the Master say, "Go work today."

Come, labor on. No time for rest, till glows the western sky, till the long shadows o'er our pathway lie, and a glad sound comes with the setting sun, "Well done, well done!"

Among the more fashionably cynical of us, there may have been some eye-rolling about these words, by Jane L. Borthwick (1813–97), not because they aren't moving but because we heard this message daily from our teachers — masters, as we called them then — our coaches, and Headmaster Grubbs: "You've got to buckle down, boys, and get to work. This won't come easily, and it will take time for you to master it. The prize isn't won by slackers. You've got a lot of ignorance to overcome. Even great geniuses have to

work hard. I can't help you until you help yourself. The going gets good when the good get going." With English, algebra, history, and French assignments due every Monday morning, I found Borthwick's unharvested golden grain particularly apt in that first term of freshman year. But now, nearing the end of my career, I find that her western sky and setting sun speak to me with greater insistence.

The other hymn provides, even to this day, the accompaniment that plays in my mind when I visit or even think of the chapel. *George Hickok sets the somber mood with his organ introduction, we take big breaths and launch into it. My friend Sewall Arnold '70 gives it all he has; he loves to sing ... loudly.* Sewall, larger than life, was later to be the first of my classmates to die.

*Once to every man and nation comes the moment to decide,
In the strife of truth with falsehood, for the good or evil side;
Some great cause, some great decision, offering each the bloom or blight,
And the choice goes by forever, 'twixt that darkness and that light.*

These gripping words had been sung in chapel services by many boys before us, through two World Wars, the Korean "conflict," and the Cuban Missile Crisis. The honored dead, graduates whose names appear on the war memorial tablets in the chapel foyer, had sung

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these very words and only a few years later had answered the call. They had found the great cause — or it had selected them. To us in the late 1960s, as it had for previous generations, James Russell Lowell's poem threw a direct challenge in our faces: *In the great moment of peril to come, will you have the strength of mind, body, and spirit to choose light and truth over darkness and evil?* Lowell's insistent text finds a perfect complement in the fateful relentlessness of the Welsh hymn tune, *Ebenezer*.

In our classrooms, we boys faced a seemingly unending barrage of questions — *What are the limits of x in this equation? What is the proper placement of the object in this French sentence? What hindered Hannibal's invasion of Rome?* These questions had answers, some better than others as our teachers were eager to point out. But in the chapel, we were prodded with different kinds of questions, and we weren't expected to answer them — at least not then. Headmasters Frank Grubbs and then Frederick Torrey, faculty speakers, visiting clergy, and Chaplain John Howe challenged us to offer our answers not through words but rather through the decisions and actions of our lives to come. *What will you make of your life? Will you measure up in times of difficulty? What values are you prepared to defend — even in the face of death?* In the chapel, that most serene of settings amidst Georgian architecture reflective of Enlightenment rationalism, we contem-

plated the ongoing war in Southeast Asia, nuclear annihilation, discrimination, racial bigotry, strife, murder, assassination, civil unrest, and deceit at the highest levels of government. But we also reflected on heroism, kindness, altruism, duty, and the obligations of each toward all.

Later, student pressure abetted by a few faculty firebrands forced the abolition of required Sunday Chapel services. Headmaster Torrey allowed the change but wisely stipulated that a new academic requirement in philosophy and religion be instituted. Something of value was lost — and gained.

I enter the chapel alone sometimes, close the door behind me, and take a seat in one of the rear pews. The demands of the school momentarily retreat, and I listen to the muted eloquence of the room around me. In my imagination, I invite cherished souls to join me, those with whom my life has intersected at least in part in this gracious room: my wife, Nancy, and wonderfully supportive family members who have shared events with me here; my early student, the gifted choral conductor and scholar Marika Kuzma '77, the crystalline beauty of whose youthful soprano I can still summon in memory; my longtime friend, colleague, and fellow teacher and performer Faith Miller, with whom every collaboration has been joyful and enlightening; my more recent colleague and friend, cho-

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ral director Susan Barone Chrzanowski, whom it is a delight for me to assist as accompanist to the Concert Choir and the Chamber Singers; the scores of students I have had the pleasure of accompanying in recitals; classmates who sang hymns with me many years ago; colleagues who have wept with me during memorial services; master piano teacher Aaron P. Pratt, Jr. '35, who whispered to all his nervous student piano recitalists, "Think before you begin," as we mounted the steps toward the Steinway. Performing with Aaron as his faculty colleague in a series of annual duo piano and four-hand piano recitals remains one of the highlights of my career. Nowhere do I feel the sustaining presence of my late mentor and dear friend more strongly than here.

On several Memorial Days in recent years, the school has held moving observances in the chapel, culminating in the reading of the names of all graduates who have perished in war. One of the last names read is that of U.S. Army First Lieutenant Pierre Piché '92, who died in a Blackhawk helicopter collision in Iraq in 2003. I had taught Pierre. A gentle young man from Vermont, he had performed on the piano in many concerts in that room where we were later to honor his memory. For me, Pierre is ever linked with the chapel, and I mourn him nearly every time I visit that room where he had spent some of his precious youth.

I hope that Pierre will never fade in my memory, but recognize that time can cast an obscuring veil. When we visit the haunts of our youth years later, we are often amazed at how different things look. The chapel, though, more than any other room on campus, appears almost identical to the earliest photographs we have of it, newly-completed in 1916 and not yet storied by the memories of students and teachers yet to come. The chapel's timelessness inspires a wondrous reverence: "It looks just the same as I remember!" As the school and the world have changed around it, the Founders Chapel reminds me and other graduates of our past selves, the foundation of who we are today ... and what we are to become.

Since the cessation of Sunday Chapel services, other, and newer, campus rooms have assumed, at least partially, the roles the chapel once fulfilled. In the Olcott Center, where all-school convocations are now held, we gather — freshmen through seniors, faculty, staff, guests — to welcome speakers from outside or within the community, to face issues of pith and moment, to renew our sense of community, to reaffirm our shared obligation to bring to life the dream of the Founders. Yes, inspiration and enlightenment blossom in the Olcott Center — but without the chapel's encouraging nutrients of graceful architecture, powerful hymns, and timeless urgency.

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For me, the chapel remains the heart of the school. Nowhere on the Island are past, present, and future linked so immutably, and no other room on campus offers such a rich history of inviting its visitors to confront the profound challenges of life and death. The chapel stands apart in hushed solemnity from the frenzy of daily school life, inspiring visitors to speak in whispers. No longer used for religious services, it nevertheless remains a sacred place: a refuge for contemplation, a shrine for the generations of students who have passed through its doors, a sanctuary to reflect, undisturbed, looking westward out the graceful Palladian window toward promise and opportunity ... toward the setting sun ... toward eternity.

—James Stillwell Rugen '70

14 THE COCOON WAS PERMEABLE

I do not recall that the Cold War made much of an impression on me or on my classmates in the early 1950s. In retrospect, this is surprising since we were all approaching draftable age and the Korean War remained hotish until the year before we graduated. Somehow the school's insularity, both physical and psychological, sheltered us from the tensions and turmoil in the world beyond Windsor. The sense of isolation was undoubtedly enhanced by the fact that boarding students had no access to television and little opportunity to listen to the radio. If daily delivery of *The New York Times* was available, it was beyond my budget. Newspapers could be read at the round table at the front of the library in

Founders during breaks between classes. Even telephonic communication was limited to the single pay phone on the first floor of Founders. And, apart from vacations, boarders got home only four precious weekends per year.

Of course the cocoon was permeable. The 1952 Presidential Election generated some interest and arguments. Occasionally speakers came to address assemblies on Thursday; I recall Henry Cabot Lodge, Prescott Bush, and Abraham Ribicoff each came to speak. Bayard Rustin stimulated a short debate I dimly recall on the merits of pacifism. Chester Bowles addressed our Commencement and said some words about the Cold War. Perhaps the Political Club, of which I was not a member, generated some interest in world affairs, but I don't recall hearing about it. We all took the Time Current Events exam (I still have the *Oxford Book of American Verse* that I earned as a prize.), so I suppose we couldn't have been totally disconnected. Mr. Orchard had his English class write essays on democracy for a competition sponsored, as I recall it, by the Chamber of Commerce, and this was no doubt a pale reflection of the ideological struggle between the Free World and the Communists. But, whatever the competition's significance for the Chamber of Commerce, I remember it primarily because I received as a prize a small phonograph and a

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half dozen LP records that launched my lifelong love of chamber music.

Although America's titanic struggle with the Soviet Union seems to have made little impression on us at the time, one of its by-products did have an impact. There was a lot of talk about McCarthyism. I remember faculty members telling us what they had seen of the Army-McCarthy hearings, discussions about the revocation of J. Robert Oppenheimer's security clearance, and considerable concern about the danger of chilling freedom of speech and inquiry. Some but not all of this went on in Mr. Bridgman's course titled (provocatively?) *Problems of Democracy*. Much of that very excellent course was devoted to the great debates of U.S. history — ratification of the Constitution, causes of the Civil War, rise of the Robber Barons and the New Freedom, the New Deal, and so on. (As I recall it, we made heavy use of a series of pamphlet anthologies put out by Amherst College.) Among the items discussed at length, against the background of congressional investigations into "un-American activities," was the meaning of the Fifth Amendment's privilege against self-incrimination. Mr. Bridgman took a group of us to Boston to hear a lecture on the subject by Professor Erwin Griswold, who later became dean of the Harvard Law School and then solicitor general of the United States. (I wound up working for Griswold both at Harvard Law School and

in the Solicitor General's Office; so, I am sure that that excursion had an impact on me.)

Looking back, I think the almost monastic isolation we experienced at Loomis in my student days was not at all a bad thing. At least for me, it encouraged an inward focus on the functioning of a small, comprehensible community — a sort of social petri dish, largely insulated from the confusions of the outer world. As much as anything else, we got an invaluable education in how communities and institutions work, their strengths and weaknesses, how they change and resist change. That education served me pretty well over the years as I found myself trying to understand other more inchoate, less well-defined communities.

Finally, one other thing looms up in my memory of those days. Beyond recollections of classes and teachers and classmates, my memories are dominated by the sense of the place itself. I see vividly the marvelous quadrangle, one side still incomplete and open to the fields beyond, the double-file of elms along the Senior Path. I see the fine simplicity of the chapel, the paneled nooks of the library, the cloistered walkways and the cupolas crowning Founders and the Loomis Dining Hall. And beyond the confines of the quadrangle, I think of a walk in spring along Batchelder Road, past the little pond, to Windsor for an ice cream sundae or a visit to the Windsor Library; an autumnal stroll

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beyond the dining hall past the farm to the edge of the Connecticut River where I channeled Huckleberry Finn on the banks of the Mississippi; and a cold, lonely hike, suitcase in hand, across the railroad tracks on Island Road, returning from a weekend at home on a wintery Sunday night with the lights of the dorms beckoning in the distance. The place itself was the beginning of an education in aesthetics, and I am mindful of Churchill's observation: "We shape our buildings, and thereafter our buildings shape us."

Then too, these images serve as a sort of memory palace: On that bench overlooking Sellers Field, I had such a conversation. Under that tree, I read this poem. Little by little, the place brings back the whole.

—Robert Rifkind '54