"What the live creature retains from the past and what it expects from the future operate as directions in the present."

John Dewey

Diversity / Innovation / Citizenship
Fall 2014

MAKING A DIFFERENCE

INSPIRE

THINK OUtSIDE THE BOX

INNOVATE

BRAINSTORM
As we start the new school year, Parker is already alive with a sense of renaissance.

New people and new ideas in our community are making a refreshing difference in Parker’s approach to its present and the future.

And I mean, making a difference.

People make things happen. We make things happen through our reflective thought, deliberate actions and openness to experimentation and innovation. At Parker, we do this in our individual moments of creativity and through a vital culture of group collaboration. Our school thrives because students, teachers, administrative staff, parents, alumni, parents emeriti, grandparents and friends take a hands-on approach to engaging fully in the life of our school.

During the summer, new administrators joined returning staff to ready the school for students, teachers and parents in September. We are designing new ways to use our public spaces for community engagement and inclusion and implementing fresh ideas to improve communication and learning throughout our community. Teachers, too, have been busy participating in numerous professional development workshops and preparing to guide students toward new insights and growing maturity this year.

We have the people, the attitude, the history and the resources to make important and meaningful things happen for the students and adults in our community and beyond. We are blessed to have our beautiful campus with outstanding academic, athletic, art and community facilities. Strong humanitarian and democratic values shape our educational mission and allow dynamic ideas to flow easily at Parker. This is our collective good fortune. This is the shared responsibility we all must uphold.

We are especially fortunate to be part of an energetic, creative, entrepreneurial culture that embraces each person with respect and appreciation for the humanity and diversity we bring to the school every day. All of this, and an abiding love for children and learning, make Parker a school that understands what’s truly important and how to make a difference with joy and optimism.

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What Are You Making?
By Anne Blasko, Lower School Art teacher

“Curiosity is the engine of achievement.” —Sir Ken Robinson

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But part of what makes Parker Parker is asking students to participate actively in creating their own opportunities to learn, even breaking down the walls between disciplines.

For several years, the Art and Science Departments have been collaborating on projects to enhance the curriculum and enable students to see multiple perspectives and connections between the disciplines. Art and science are not stand-alone entities, and my colleagues on both faculties and I see real benefits for students when the two areas support each other and work together as one.

At the Maker Faire, anything was possible, and all ways of sharing interests or inventions had value. From the language of art, music, science, math or programming to knitting, cooking, lock picking, welding, soldering, hand woodworking, laser cut woodworking or 3D printing, the Faire offered a wide range of ideas Heather and I could bring back to Parker. Our goal was to learn how teachers and “makers” are creating innovative learning opportunities through alternative projects or methods.

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As part of this collaboration, Lower School Science teacher Heather Horton and I went to the World Maker Faire in New York in fall 2013. A “Maker” is a DIY (do it yourself) community that would rather “make” and “customize” instead of “buy.” Increasing interest in this way of creating things has been called the “Maker Movement.” The book Invent to Learn by Sylvia Libow Martinez and Gary Stager partly inspired our interest in this movement.

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With these projects, we incorporated the spirit of the Maker Movement and ideas from Invent to Learn, and we created opportunities for experimentation that engaged students in a process of curiosity and discovery. I hope we also helped them to see that different academic areas aren’t always separate and distinct; students can make something that combines principles of art and science that illuminate both fields in new and exciting ways.

Making A Difference

At its worst, History can be a class that treats students as mere receivers of information who must memorize and regurgitate facts. At its best, History allows students to be the shapers and designers of their own knowledge, exerting more control over what they study and produce as a result. Increasingly, particularly at Parker, History classes are reshaping the mold for ways of approaching and learning this subject.

My 7th grade History class includes a unit on the Abrahamic faiths of Judaism, Christianity and Islam. Before studying the particulars of these three historic religions, however, students engage with the content in a different way. I first want them to see, hear and feel the role of religion in people’s lives today. Their task is to conduct interviews and produce a podcast, but my real goals are to help them develop empathy and experiment with storytelling.

One way of accomplishing this is giving students more control over the content. For this podcast project, students spend time carefully shaping their personal questionnaires. Some might decide to focus on how religion has shaped one’s past; others might examine how people currently practice religion; and others are curious about the challenges and struggles people have faced with their faiths. Whatever
LEDs for eyes and eight solder joints. Students learned what a circuit is, what makes it work and how to problem-solve when it doesn’t.

In addition to the robot pin, students worked on making simple circuits by creating greeting cards using copper tape, LEDs and a battery. They also learned how to create a sewable circuit using conductive thread, an LED and a battery. While creating art, students learned the science behind circuits and how to create art out of science.

The 3rd graders were buzzing with excitement to try soldering. We went over safety considerations and introduced soldering basics. Typically, two students would solder while the others worked on their greeting cards.

Some of the comments I heard from students included, “Soldering was the best…while it lasted” and “I just loved it when I finished and my light didn’t work but I fixed it, and now it works and it looks so cool.”

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Connecting the Past with the Present
By Anthony Shaker, Middle School History teacher

Making A Difference

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the questions end up being, I hope they’re coming from a real place for the students. Similarly, students make deliberate choices about whom they’ll interview. Some have chosen people from the same family who practice different religions; others have interviewed people from different generations who share the same faith; and others have talked to Parker Upper School students who observe different religions.

After students have spent time figuring out their “content” (in this case, who they’ll interview and what they’ll ask them), they then have to actually gather the content by arranging, conducting and recording the interviews. For me, History is about understanding people and what shapes their identities. So when I see a student asking probing questions of another person and engaging in a thoughtful discussion, I feel they’re learning how to build deeper connections with others, making the learning more human-centered and encouraging them to develop empathy.

With this project, the recorded conversations are not just the content; they are part of the product. Once they complete their interviews, students begin the methodical and time-consuming task of turning them into stand-alone podcasts. In essence, they must make a puzzle—but they’re also designing the puzzle and creating the pieces before they assemble it. They listen to the interviews to identify the “standout” moments; they edit the interviews to precisely capture the clips; they decide how to arrange the clips so the podcast flows and makes sense; they think about how the listener will experience the podcast; and they make decisions and change course over and over again. Because the product is somewhat abstract, students need room to try things and make mistakes. Building the podcasts on their iPads makes it easier for students to experiment—cutting, splicing and arranging clips in seconds—and any decision is quickly reversible.

So the editing process doesn’t feel like a mechanical exercise, I try to keep the focus on storytelling. All the painstaking editing and arranging, in the end, should be about providing an interesting, probing and fluid story for the listener. Essentially, their podcasts should shine a light on their interviewees and the ways religion has shaped who they are. My hope is, once they’ve completed the project, they’ll be able to approach and appreciate the three Abrahamic faiths, and all religions, with a sense of empathy, curiosity and humanity.
So when I see a student asking probing questions of another person and engaging in a thoughtful discussion, I feel they’re learning how to build deeper connections with others, making the learning more human-centered and encouraging them to develop empathy.

At Parker we seek to equip students with a range of different approaches and techniques that they might draw on when trying to solve a problem, learning something new or instituting a change they would like to see in the world. One such approach, called design thinking, involves using analytical and creative thinking to define and develop solutions to real-world problems. Parker’s Science Department recognizes the utility of engineering project work, in class and after school, as an effective medium for developing design-thinking skills in our students. One example is participation in our Upper School robotics team.

Design thinking begins with clearly defining a problem or challenge, which one does most effectively by looking at the world or the problem anew without preconception or assumed ways of doing things. We must answer the question, “What are you designing for?” in a way that does not limit the solutions we might propose. Problems are not just handed to us ready-made; we must go out into the world, ask questions and consider how we should best frame the problem. For example, with FIRST Robotic Competitions, there are many rules and regulations for each year’s game, and students must think in creative ways about the game structure and the niches robots might occupy to be useful in an alliance with other teams. The team spends time determining the value of various game elements and prioritizing them based on what will achieve the best result. In the end, there are as many solutions as the thousands of teams competing each year.

Also crucial to design thinking is working collaboratively as a team to think in divergent ways about possible solutions. At Parker, the recorded conversations are not just the content; they are part of the product. Once they complete their interviews, students begin the methodical and time-consuming task of turning them into stand-alone podcasts. In essence, they must make a puzzle—but they’re also designing the puzzle and creating the pieces before they assemble it. They listen to the interviews to identify the “standout” moments; they edit the interviews to precisely capture the clips; they decide how to arrange the clips so the podcast flows and makes sense; they think about how the listener will experience the podcast; and they make decisions and change course over and over again. Because the product is somewhat abstract, students need room to try things and make mistakes. Building the podcasts on their iPads makes it easier for students to experiment—cutting, splicing and arranging clips in seconds—and any decision is quickly reversible.

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solutions. A successful brainstorm is a free-flowing and uncensored exchange of ideas in which no idea is bad; all ideas have value as one may trigger another, spawning new and unexpected solutions. We structure our team's brainstorms to welcome any suggestion from any team member. Whiteboards quickly fill up with lists, diagrams and strategies as ideas fly around the room in a flurry of creative energy. Smaller groups consider different approaches, and it may take several weeks of traveling down those initial paths simultaneously before we select a final approach.

A third key aspect is rapid prototyping, testing the fruit of brainstorming labor by making quick and simple prototypes to determine which ideas “have legs” for further development. No matter how appealing or promising an idea seems, to test its mettle, you must move it from inside your head out into the world to learn whether or not you can actually pull it off. Prototyping with cardboard or other low-cost materials provides an easy way to assess if an idea holds promise for further research. Our team creates simple mock-ups or scale models to investigate an idea’s feasibility.

A typical decision is choosing the type of drive-train to move the robot, ranging from a tank drive, which uses threads or chains to move the wheels with just a pair of motors, to kiwi or crab drives, which power each wheel with a separate motor and pivot on their own.

One year, the team was having difficulty deciding which drive-train to use and built three to test the performance of each one on the game field.

Finally, focused observation and systematic analysis become crucial as the team repeatedly tests, evaluates and redesigns in the cycles of gradual refinement that lead to further improved performance. Kids may expect or want things to work immediately but designers and engineers know better. “Fail early and fail often” may strike students as counterintuitive, but once they adopt that way of thinking, they see its value.

By making careful observations to understand why a design isn’t working, the team can debug the program or figure out how to make the robot more reliable and less likely to encounter problems at the competition. Nevertheless, no matter how many problems the team anticipates and fixes, new ones always arise during the competitions. Students learn this is a natural process, requiring them to quickly go through the cycle of analyzing, building and testing for the next match.

Working with professional engineers to develop their ability to engage in design thinking, students learn those skills have value beyond robotics competitions or engineering tasks, and their repeated practice with the process makes them resilient in the face of challenges that appear initially daunting in other areas of their lives.

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Independent Studies Promote Independent Thinking

In virtually every Parker classroom, whatever the subject, teachers facilitate opportunities for students to examine facts, issues and challenges critically from their individual points of view. As they grow and mature, students learn to ask questions and consider aspects of curriculum material more extensively, often provoking a desire to delve further into a subject.

In the Upper School, Parker encourages students to apply their existing knowledge and skill in advancing their exploration and overall understanding of particular areas of interest through Independent Study. The opportunity to propose an Independent Study project is available in all academic areas: English, History, Math, Science, Arts, Languages, Physical Education and General Curriculum.

During the 2013–14 academic year, there were projects on topics ranging from Digital Media in Journalism to Juvenile Disease, from Classical Music and Theory to Study of the Stock Market, from Latino Food and Culture to Digital Photography. Here we take a closer look at three Independent Studies in the area of science.

For their year-long Independent Study, seniors Nomi Frank and Sammy Riesmeyer proposed a project to expand upon their existing interest in acoustic guitars to understanding the schematics for electric guitars and amplifiers. They aimed to develop a thorough knowledge of the electrical components of a guitar and how they work together.

“I hope the students got a sense of how an engineer needs to think in advance about how to measure their design failures and successes.”

Sammy and Nomi worked on analyzing the acoustic and electrical signals generated by different types of electric guitars. The focus of their study was to discover whether acoustic signals from a microphone and/or electrical signals from a voltage sensor can distinguish the sound quality of different types of guitars, and whether one type of sensor is better than the other in predicting the sound quality of an electric guitar.

As a result of their first-semester work, noted Sammy, “we were able to see the sound waves created by a single note and how it changed for different guitars. We compared sound waves for acoustic, electric and semi-solid guitars.” During the second semester, she and Nomi built guitars from an electric-acoustic archtop guitar kit, and they “learned a lot about the setup and electrical aspects of the guitar. It helped us focus more on the wiring of the pickups.” She and Nomi shared their work, via a display for the rest of the school, to illustrate their understanding of the electrical aspects of an electric guitar.

“I think what the students learned most about are the techniques for operating digital sensors to collect quantitative data on sound quality, and the techniques for manipulating and making sense of the data,” said Science Department Co-Chair Xiao Zhang, the project’s faculty advisor. “I hope the students got a sense of how an engineer needs to think in advance about how to measure their design failures and successes.”
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Senior Max Drimmer had the opportunity to work at Fermi National Accelerator Laboratory (known as Fermilab), a U.S. Department of Energy national laboratory specializing in high-energy particle physics. Max was involved in writing computer simulation code to test the next generation of telescopes that function as Dark Energy detectors—specifically, MKIDs (Microwave Kinetic Inductance Detectors), devices that analyze the light from astronomical objects to a degree that has never been achieved before. Max worked to make sure the information the detectors received could be analyzed properly. By creating simulated data and measurement methods, the equipment could be tested to see if it was working properly.

“I looked for internships in physics laboratories because I wanted to see what physics looked like in the real world, and that’s exactly what I saw,” Max shared. “The most valuable part was meeting other people who shared my passion and helped me learn enough to work on it with them.”

Said Fermi scientist Juan Estrada, “Max worked with me in the initial R&D stages of the development of an astronomical instrument with superconducting detector technology. He worked with the engineers, scientists and technicians in the lab to understand the operations of this instrument. He monitored data…and helped us optimize our operations. Max presented his results regularly at weekly meetings. It is not common for us to have high school students presenting results on technical working meetings, but he did a job that kept everyone in the project very impressed. Max turned out to be a useful member of our team.”

Said Science teacher and faculty advisor George Austin, “Max gave an excellent Morning Ex presentation explaining what we know about Dark Energy and its discovery just 20 years ago. Dark Energy comprises the majority of our universe, but we have more questions than answers about it. We know it causes galaxies to expand faster away from each other but not much more about the mechanism of how that is happening. Finding out details about this mystery will require creativity, perseverance and talented individuals like Max.”

Fermilab administrators deemed Max’s work so critical that they hired him, in a paid position, to continue the work this summer. He plans to major in physics at Stanford University and hopes to work on the Large Synoptic Survey Telescope (LSST), the largest Dark Energy experiment on the West Coast.

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Focusing on a topic close to home, juniors Avery Bedows and Maddie Bender are writing a book about neuroscience aimed at an adolescent audience. The purpose of the book, which has required copious research, planning, and writing, is to serve as supplemental material for teachers to help them develop more student interest in the topic.

This project came about due to a combination of fortuitous circumstances and prior interest in the topic. Avery and Maddie had been interested in the brain and wanted to learn more about it. When Parker alumnus Dr. Eugene Lipov ’76 gave a Morning Ex, “Afterward, I approached Dr. Lipov and proposed the idea of an Independent Study,” Avery described. “Dr. Lipov responded with the idea of writing an adolescent neuroscience book. After some discussion and planning, Maddie and I were ready to begin!”

Maddie and Avery took away similar things from the project. Both thoroughly enjoyed having a reason to research a variety of topics about neuroscience. The most valuable part of the project came after the research: “Having an (albeit cursory) understanding of the human brain sheds new perspectives on everyday life and can lead to considerations from entirely new perspectives,” said Avery.

As an additional, related project, Avery has been working on a study of Parker Upper School students that considers a potential correlation between sleep and performance on a short-term memory test.

With one more year at Parker, Maddie and Avery have been looking at colleges and universities that offer degrees in neuroscience. Avery hopes to pursue neuroscience as a complement to another degree. “I believe having knowledge about the brain is extremely useful in nearly every field and can offer a different spin on ideas.”

Middle School Students Make Musicals Together

A special aspect of Middle School life at Parker is the opportunity to participate in a wide range of after-school activities, from the arts to sports to robotics and more. During these years, students don’t typically make lifelong decisions about their future, so the ability to sample different options helps them develop specific interests and have experiences with their peers throughout the division.

In this spirit, the Middle School Musical was born during the 2010–11 school year to provide students interested in the performing arts with an opportunity to work collaboratively to stage an independent production. Students not only perform but work on set design, costumes, and other offstage areas; they push themselves to take risks as they develop as individuals, students, and members of a larger community.

“Our role is to create an opportunity and structure for these kids to grow,” said music teacher Alec Synakowski. “Once you light the flame, it catches like wildfire.”

Middle School Learning Resources Specialist Megan O’Neill, who had a background in theatrical improvisation, directed the debut production, High School Musical, working with Synakowski. That first effort attracted 21 students, and involvement has increased dramatically each year: 40 kids participated in The Wizard of Oz in 2012, and the numbers grew to about 60 for Beauty and the Beast in 2013 and more than 70—90 including the backstage crew—for the 2014 production of Willy Wonka.
Focusing on a topic close to home, juniors Avery Bedows and Maddie Bender are writing a book about neuroscience aimed at an adolescent audience. The purpose of the book, which has required copious research, planning and writing, is to serve as supplemental material for teachers to help them develop more student interest in the topic.

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Maddie and Avery took away similar things from the project. Both thoroughly enjoyed having a reason to research a variety of topics about neuroscience. The most valuable part of the project came after the research: “Having an (albeit cursory) understanding of the human brain sheds new perspectives on everyday life and can lead to considerations from entirely new perspectives,” said Avery.

As an additional, related project, Avery has been working on a study of Parker Upper School students that considers a potential correlation between sleep and performance on a short-term memory test.

Middle School Students Make Musicals Together

A special aspect of Middle School life at Parker is the opportunity to participate in a wide range of after-school activities, from the arts to sports to robotics and more. During these years, students don’t typically make lifelong decisions about their future, so the ability to sample different options helps them develop specific interests and have experiences with their peers throughout the division.

In this spirit, the Middle School Musical was born during the 2010–11 school year to provide students interested in the performing arts with an opportunity to work collaboratively to stage an independent production. Students not only perform but work on set design, costumes and other offstage areas; they push themselves to take risks as they develop as individuals, students and members of a larger community.

“Our role is to create an opportunity and structure for these kids to grow,” said music teacher Alec Synakowski. “Once you light the flame, it catches like wildfire.”

Middle School Learning Resources Specialist Megan O’Neill, who had a background in theatrical improvisation, directed the debut production, *High School Musical*, working with Synakowski. That first effort attracted 21 students, and involvement has increased dramatically each year: 40 kids participated in *The Wizard of Oz* in 2012, and the numbers grew to about 60 for *Beauty and the Beast* in 2013 and more than 70—90 including the backstage crew—for the 2014 production of *Willy Wonka*. 
After the first year, part-time drama instructor Josh Lesser, who studied theatre at Northwestern University and the London Academy of Music and Dramatic Art (LAMDA), took over directing the productions, working closely with Synakowski for the past three years. “My particular interest and professional background is in ‘devised theatre,’ which is ensemble-driven—very similar to the Parker ethos,” Lesser explained. “Everyone is vital to the project. Even in crowd scenes and group numbers, the audience may be watching you, so you better know what you’re doing. That kind of theatre also offers teachable moments: you’re representing something larger than your own individual role, and you shouldn’t shirk your responsibility.”

The Middle School Musical is one of a few opportunities, along with athletics and community service, for Middle School students to work closely with those in other grades. “The Parker mantra is: everybody plays,” Synakowski stated. “We’ve adapted that mantra, with all 75 kids who auditioned this year, and turned the experience into something worthwhile and high-quality, befitting the confidence and energy that has been invested in it. When we’re casting the show, we think about how to put each student in a spot that will elicit the most growth for everyone.”

Lesser said, “Though there’s no ranking in terms of grade level, the older kids model the kind of behavior we want the younger kids to learn if they want more responsibility in future years: they don’t miss rehearsal unless there’s an emergency, they come on time ready to work, they know their lines, they don’t need to be reminded to be on task. This is part of what we look for when we are casting the show: maturity and leadership capabilities, as well as the ability to handle a role. We’re incredibly lucky to have a lot of talented kids who fit that mold.”

“Our role is to awaken possibility and engage the imaginations of our students and the audience,” said Synakowski. “I try to give the kids unlimited room to grow; they’re not daunted when I throw them the most difficult pitches, just like I would with a professional choir—Josh and I would be doing them a disservice if we pitched to them ‘underhand’—and they almost always hit it out of the park.”

Lesser looks forward to the project’s continued growth. “I have 4th and 5th graders coming up to me wondering what shows we’ll do when they get into Middle School. Some are siblings of the kids who’ve been involved, but there are others who’ve just heard about it and seen what we’ve done. It’s becoming part of Parker history. There is incredible support in the Middle School, and it gives me hope for this to continue—and possibly even expand to younger and older kids.”

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1. Sophomore Lucy Hartman—Ms. Darbus in High School Musical and the Cowardly Lion in The Wizard of Oz: “High School Musical provided a theatrical bonding experience for Middle Schoolers that hadn’t existed before. Theatre is amazing. Theatre brings people out of their shells. The process of theatre is a colossally life-changing one, whether that change happens during the show or after it ends.”

2. Freshman Nigel Schilling—Troy Bolton in High School Musical, the Scarecrow in The Wizard of Oz and Gaston in Beauty and the Beast: “The most enjoyable thing was spending time with kids in other grades because we don’t have many opportunities for the entire Middle School to be together. I also love Josh Lesser and Alec Synakowski; they are some really good people. Having finished my first Upper School production, Rent, I found the transition from Middle School to Upper School productions a great learning experience, and I will continue to be part of musicals at Parker.”

3. Seventh grader Nathan Satterfield—technical crews of Beauty and the Beast and Willy Wonka: “Last year I ran the sound effects using a program called Qlab. This year, on top of running the sound board, I made some of the sets. My favorite part this year was setting up the hanging microphones because I learned about the sound imports in Heller Auditorium and about microphone placement. I also loved learning how to run the sound board imports and how to customize the board to my specifications for the play.”

4. Seventh grader Emma Adelstein—Lumiere in Beauty and the Beast and Violet Beauregarde in Willy Wonka: “One of my favorite things about the musicals is making friends with kids in other grades. Also I love seeing the finished product and how everything is pulled together.”

5. Eighth grader Hannah Eisendrath—the Mayor of Munchkin City in The Wizard of Oz, the Beast in Beauty and the Beast and Grandpa Joe in Willy Wonka: “I love musical theatre, so I was one of the first on the sign-up sheet. I wouldn’t miss any chance to put on a great show, no matter what part I was given. And doing it with friends just made everything even better! I have loved every minute that I was a part of a Middle School Musical. I have played a male character every year, which ended up being a great learning experience! I have completely gotten over my stage fright and gained enough confidence to take on bigger roles, even outside Parker. I am a little sad that I am done with the MS musical, but now I am ready to jump right into next year’s Upper School production.”

6. Eighth grader Grace Adee—the Wizard in The Wizard of Oz, Cogsworth in Beauty and the Beast and Willy Wonka: “The Middle School Musical is a wonderful activity that many students, parents and teachers have devoted a lot of time to. Originally, I got involved because I wanted to try as much as possible during my Middle School years to see what I liked and what I wanted to devote time to throughout Upper School. I did it again because it was so much fun the first year, and it’s also really rewarding to work so hard on something and then share it with the community. I think what sets our shows apart is how there are super-talented people in both big and small roles throughout the show, making it a really strong production overall.”

7. Sixth grader Alexander Nikolaev, new to Parker this year—Mike Teavee in Willy Wonka: “The best part of the experience was meeting new people and friends I would not have been friends with otherwise. I loved doing the production and am looking forward to future years of musicals.”

8. Eighth grader Malcolm Hoerr—Belle’s father in Beauty and the Beast and the Candyman in Willy Wonka: “I saw Wizard of Oz in 6th grade and I thought it looked fun and enjoyable, and a lot of my friends did it so I decided to do it in 7th grade. This year I got to know 7th and 6th graders, which you can’t do in other activities. In mixed grade sports, you don’t talk. In the musical you literally have to talk and work in a small space. I now have friends in all grades, which is really cool.”
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"Parker is a school of great educational vision, and my wife, Jill, and I have been very fortunate to have had our three children get such a terrific start to their lives thanks to a Parker education."

Parker Life Trustee John Levi is himself a man of big vision and boundless energy. As co-chair of Founding Our Second Century, Parker’s capital campaign, and former board chair, Levi has been providing Parker with bold strategic thinking for more than 20 years.

And he comes by it naturally. Having grown up in Chicago’s Hyde Park neighborhood, Levi’s father Edward taught and served as dean at the University of Chicago’s Law School and became president of the university in 1968, leaving in 1975 when President Gerald Ford appointed him Attorney General of the United States. So academic life and organizational development were a big part of Levi’s life right from the start.

After he finished law school at Harvard and moved back to Chicago, settling on the North Side, Levi considered Parker for his three children. “Although I attended the Lab School and had cousins and friends who were happy at Parker, it was more than that,” he recalled. “The educational philosophy was so in sync with my own thinking about raising kids and what you want them to get out of their education. We started in 1986, and we’ve never looked back or regretted it for a minute. Parker’s lived up to everything we ever wanted in a school.”

From their first day at Parker, Levi and his wife Jill found opportunities to get involved at the school. “For Instant Art Day, both kindergartens turned into an art and shop smorgasbord. We still have the little desk Ben and I hammered together and painted.

“I started to see the magic that was happening at Parker, not only from the standpoint of being a parent, but the fact that my kids were excited about coming to school. Most days our kids bounded out of bed in the morning.”

Soon Levi, who is a partner at the law firm Sidley Austin LLP, got involved in the school in other ways. He ran the search process for the school’s interim principal after John Cotton decided to leave, leading to the selection of Tim Burns in 1993; he then led the search for a permanent principal, identifying Don Monroe, who was principal from 1995 to 2002. Meanwhile, Levi joined Parker’s Board of Trustees in 1994, serving as president from 1997 to 2003.

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A Community of Learners: Parents

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As a new trustee with a new principal, Levi became aware of financial, structural and space issues at the school. “The school was built in 1960, and 30 years later, we had serious needs. Pipes burst in the cafeteria, and I still remember Jimmy Ehrlich [‘73] calling board members and asking us to come and bail water in the cafeteria. There were leaking windows on the Clark Street side and significant heating and electrical issues all across the building. We had only a small endowment, maybe $3 million, which was not contributing much to the ongoing operations or sufficient to handle the millions dollars of issues we faced.”

So Levi and the board launched the Campaign for Parker to stabilize the school’s physical systems and expand the high school, the cafeteria and other spaces. “Don [Monroe] and I went to see Jay Pritzker, who said his two years at Parker were among the finest, if not the finest, years of his education, so he gave us a challenge grant. Parker people love the school but the challenge was to convert that love into financial support. We had to change that because our future was at stake.”

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Levi and the board also recognized they must make sure all the school’s stakeholders were invested emotionally before they could count on them financially. “You might ask the question: Who owns Parker School? It’s the alumni, students, parents, administrators, faculty, staff, neighborhood, even the larger educational community. So we didn’t just launch a campaign without talking to these groups and letting them know what we were thinking about and why.”

After stabilizing the school’s infrastructure—plumbing, heating, electric, window replacement—on time and under budget, Levi and the board took a step back. “There was pressure from the community to accommodate more kids. The class size was larger than optimal, so we began to consider expanding the lower grades to three sections of 18 and increasing the overall student body somewhat. Not long after that, we realized we needed to strengthen the identity of the Middle School with dedicated space, and we lacked adequate space for athletics, the library and meetings. So we designed the new building on the south end of the school, which opened in 1998, effectively closing the ‘horseshoe.” The Campaign also funded the new space for the Kindergartens.

Now it was time to look at the needs on the inside of the building. “Parker people are less about bricks and mortar and more about people—the teachers, the staff and making the school as affordable for as many families as possible. So we increased the Campaign’s goal to include scholarship and increased resources to hire and retain the best teachers.” The Campaign for Parker’s initial goal was $18 million, but its momentum increased the goal to $28 million before it concluded in 2001.

During the past decade, Levi and the board have dedicated their time and energy to increasing access to Parker by growing the Scholarship Endowment and improving its facilities through the current capital campaign: Founding Our Second Century. This campaign has supported expansion of the science wing and the Auditorium as well as raising the overall Endowment to its current position of about $34 million. “I’m happy to say the Endowment contributes more than $1 million to operations every year. I’m very grateful to this community, which continues to step up to support the school because it is such a special place.”

In addition to his pride in the board’s successes, Levi is proud of his children: Ben ’00, married and co-founder/COO of InCloudCounsel in San Francisco; Danny ’04, co-founder of GetAFive, which prepares students online for AP tests, in Chicago; and Sarah ’12, a sophomore at Yale who recently brought her college improv troupe to Parker for a Morning Ex. “My kids are independent thinkers with a broad range of interests. They have a sense of themselves; they are confident they can approach this world in all its complexity. Our kids graduated from Parker with remarkable groups of friends they still have today.”

Though he is retiring as a voting member of Parker’s board this year, Levi remains involved in planning and designing the school’s future. “What will Parker look like five years from now? Very much the same, with some exciting new programs and revamped facilities. With the good leadership here, we’ll keep our eye on how we can carefully move Parker ahead with the enormous availability of information. How do you use it in a way that’s consistent with Parker’s values? Parker has a time-tested educational philosophy, and we need to make sure the resources are there to support it and ensure Parker kids are able to continue harnessing the power of their minds, trusting their instincts and making a difference in their communities. What a great time to be a kid at Parker!”

The Levi family: (L–R) Danny ’04, John, Jill, Ben ’00, Ben’s wife Millie Tadewaldt and Sarah ’12.
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Lisa Nielsen: Junior Kindergarten Grade Head

For Lisa Nielsen, the Kindergarten years are a magical time. "Children are open to new ideas, and they have an excitement," she described. "If you put a box in the middle of the floor, they turn it into something. They're little engineers. They learn through play; they learn so much by exploring and asking questions. They discover things themselves instead of just memorizing things they are told."

Nielsen has taught for 37 years and been at Parker for 10; she's in her third year in Junior Kindergarten after seven years in Senior Kindergarten. "In JK you might have to repeat things a little more and tie a few more shoes, but the children are wonderful. I come down to their level, they rise to mine, and we meet in the middle."

Growing up in the Hyde Park area, she attended St. Columbanus, then St. Thomas Aquinas Catholic High School. She first developed an interest in teaching while studying psychology at St. Louis University. She started substitute teaching on the days she wasn’t in class and never looked back. After finishing her degree at St. Louis, she came back to Chicago and received a fellowship while working on her master’s in teaching at National Louis University.

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Nielsen's teaching career began with 1st and 4th graders at Holy Family Catholic School on Chicago’s West Side, then Kindergarten and 1st grade at Willard Elementary School in Evanston. A parent of a former student told her about Parker. "I was at a point when I was getting tired of the testing in the public school system, especially at such a young age. They wanted us to test five-year-olds on spelling, when they were still struggling to spell their own names! I didn't think it was developmentally appropriate, and philosophically, I couldn't fight about it anymore.

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Her experience in the youngest grades has been a deliberate choice. "With the younger child, you see that light bulb flicker, then it gets brighter and brighter as they 'get it'—it’s fascinating. They’re like sponges; they love learning. I love to keep that spark, that joy for learning alive. It’s rewarding to see that smile in each child every morning."
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Teaching at Parker has had many rewards for Nielsen, among them opportunities for professional development. “I’ve been able to attend seminars and conferences I feel are important for my growth and development. That really keeps me going because I continue to learn. And that’s a learning experience for the children: to see that just because you’re an adult, it doesn’t mean you’re done learning.”

She also has appreciated the freedom to explore her ideas. “One of my ideas is the garden outside our classroom. The children can get in there with their hands and tools and start digging and planting and see where our food comes from. We started last year and grew kale, lettuce, pumpkins and broccoli. Zac Maness from Food Services helped us by preparing the food, which we enjoyed tasting. This year we started planting inside; so far we’ve planted beans, carrots, peppers and kale.”

And Chicago winters don’t hamper Nielsen’s creativity, even one as challenging as the winter of 2014. “Every year I try to do something related to the cold weather. This year we made an igloo out of gallon milk jugs where we could get cozy and read books, explored the lifestyle of penguins and experimented with water and how quickly it can freeze outside. We also had Friday dance parties for indoor gross motor movement. When it was too cold to go outside, we brought the snow inside, using water colors to make it extremely colorful!”

Among her favorite projects has been hatching ducklings. “We go into the ‘laboratory’ (the washroom) with our flashlights to see what is inside the eggs and watch their development during the 28-day cycle. We keep them long enough so the children can observe their growth and see them swim. The children can watch them for hours.” Her class also has a pet rabbit, Snuggles, who they enjoy taking care of and who serves as a source of comfort for children who may be having a difficult day.

Always eager to learn more, Nielsen has been particularly excited about discovering the Reggio Emilia approach to teaching young children, created by Loris Malaguzzi in the Italian town of the same name. The philosophy begins with the idea that, from birth, the child is able to communicate in multiple ways. Malaguzzi believed the body cannot be separated from the mind; children have 100 languages, symbolic languages such as writing, drawing, playing, inventing, discovering, etc. Nielsen traveled to Reggio Emilia in April 2012 and more recently attended a conference in South Carolina. “Reggio emphasizes teaching the whole child,” she explained. “We highlight what the children generate and produce, rather than what we as teachers produce for them. The focus is on what the child brings to the classroom and how the child evaluates his/her own work.”

In addition to applying what she has learned in the classroom, Nielsen serves on the Crossroads board at Columbia College Chicago, which promotes the Reggio approach to teachers and parents, and is a member of NAREA (North American Reggio Emilia Alliance). Her other activities include serving as Parker’s diversity coordinator, a member of the fundraising committee for Camp Echo/McGaw YMCA, Girl Scout Troop Leader and member of The Evanston-North Shore Alumnae chapter of Delta Sigma Theta Sorority.

Nielsen has three children of her own: a son turning 21, who is completing a program in fire science and hopes to be a firefighter; a son who is a freshman in high school; and a daughter entering high school in the fall.

Working with children at Parker clearly gives Nielsen a great deal of personal and professional satisfaction. “Parker has given me the opportunity to continue my professional growth, and the structure allows so much autonomy to try new ideas. The whole child is celebrated here; it’s not just getting them to regurgitate facts and information, Parker has given me the opportunity to continue my professional growth, and the structure allows so much autonomy to try new ideas. The whole child is celebrated here; it’s not just getting them to regurgitate facts and information. We have the arts, sports and many opportunities for children to advance and grow at their pace. We don’t rush through the curriculum; we guide them and we allow them to guide us as well. It’s a partnership.”
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Justin Hall ’93

A Community of Learners: Alumni

Referred to as “the founding father of personal blogging” by the New York Times Magazine, Justin Hall started his Web-based diary “Justin’s Links from the Underground” (links.net) while a student at Swarthmore College. In 1994, during a break from college, he joined HotWired, the first commercial Web magazine started within Wired Magazine. Later Hall became a freelance journalist covering video games, mobile technology and Internet culture. In 2007, he graduated from the M.F.A. program in the USC Interactive Media Division. His thesis transformed surfing the Web into a multiplayer game through PMOG, the Passively Multiplayer Online Game. Hall went on to serve as CEO of GameLayers, which raised $2 million to turn PMOG into The Nethernet, an MMO in a Firefox toolbar. He later served as a producer of iPhone games with ngmoco), then became ngmoco)’s director of culture & communications. After working for ngmoco)’s parent company DeNA as a recruiter, he left the company in mid-2013. Today he lives in San Francisco and produces a Web-based video series, The Justin Hall Show.

You first used the Internet in 1988, before many of us were aware it existed. How did that happen?

My family had a home computer in 1981, and by 1983 I had experimented with a modem, dialing through the phone lines from one computer to another to exchange messages and look at documents. I was very fortunate to have early access to these tools and freedom to use them in my home!

Can you describe your undergraduate degree in “Meaning, Context and Media”?

Swarthmore in the late 1990s had roughly 21 departments, and by my junior year I had taken classes in about 19, but no more than two classes in any one department. Swarthmore required eight classes in a single department to become a major. My advisors suggested I propose a special major consisting of classes I’d taken; I wrote about eight proposals before “Meaning, Context and Media” was accepted. To finish my coursework, I wrote a 40-page hypertext thesis on the Web that connected a diverse range of topics with pictures and poetry. Wowza.

What was it like freelance writing in Japan and elsewhere?

From 2001 to 2005 I had a steady beat covering mobile and wireless technology for a Nokia-sponsored research publication called TheFeature. From 2001 to 2003 I was based in Tokyo as one of the youngest members of the Foreign Correspondents Club of Japan. I wrote articles about the first mobile phones boasting cameras, music players and video chat. I wrote about mobile multiplayer games and mobile dating and mobile spam. During this time I freelanced for Wired, Rolling Stone and the South China Morning Post. I landed on the New York...
The Live Creature

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I had a single, hard-working Mom who, in 1988, hired a medical student from Northwestern University to live with us and help take care of her two sons. He had an Internet account through Northwestern’s VAX system, and he let me roam through the USENET newsgroups. Before the Web, USENET offered global message boards on a wide range of topics populated mostly by academics. I wrote an article about cool stuff I found on the Internet for the 12/14/91 issue of the Parker Weekly!

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I firmly believe the Internet gets better if people contribute. I saw personal Web pages as an antidote to pre-Web corporate-controlled narrow-purview media. For a while I thought if I couldn't find something I was looking for on the Web, I should make a page about it. But that wasn't sustainable in the long term; it was much better to teach people to make Web pages instead.

My timing and persistence meant that "Justin's Links from the Underground" was one of the early guides to the Web and helped a few folks start their own websites. I'm proud of having helped spread access to personal publishing technology and began filming and publishing personal videos on the Web. I love making and sharing media! To spend more time on videos, I'm using Patreon—which is like Kickstarter—a crowdfunding platform for individuals to support artists. With Patreon, people can pledge $1 or $2 for each video I make. I'm grateful to have Internet patrons supporting my experiments.

Branding The Justin Hall Show has been a challenge because it chiefly covers whatever I'm interested in at the moment—personal expression, new technology, lifestyle experiments. I've interviewed journalist Walter Isaacson, software pioneer Richard Stallman, journalist Quinn Norton, entrepreneurs and artists. I covered Burning Man, Amtrak travel from Chicago to San Francisco and the Game Developers Conference. I experiment with content and form for each episode. Recently I tried singing a jingle!

Parker gave me many potential places to find and experiment with my voice, from publications to theatre productions to Student Government. I was an eager participant, and I love that Parker supported experimentation across these activities. After working on the Weekly, the Record and Phaedrus, I was ready to publish myself on the Web.

Amidst all that activity were some smart, hard-working faculty who pushed us to think about the social context that afforded our progressive education and encouraged us to make the best of our opportunities by doing good in the world. Andy Kaplan turned the key questions of Student Government back to the students. He said it was up to us, and we had to figure out what that meant. It was chaotic and challenging, but it was ours, and that made it valuable.

I recently digitized 270 "Comments on Individual Student" reports my Parker teachers wrote between 1979 and 1993. I was humbled to read how these hard-working, well-intentioned people dealt with my at-times disturbing behavior. Their comments suggest I made a concerted effort in my youth to undermine planned activities and focus attention on my personal drama. I feel some chagrin about this now and a ton of gratitude: I was in the hands of passionate people, many of whom knew me for more than a decade, guiding me toward the best use of my energies. Maybe more discipline in a more traditional school would have straightened me out somehow, but I enjoy being a little bit crooked, and I think fondly of Parker for encouraging me to be both creative and responsible.

In recent years, a number of my peers have been working on immersive experiences for people, presenting a rich world mixing electronic entertainment and live performance. You don't just watch a show, or play a game, you feel surrounded by a living environment that interacts with you. I think back to the Medieval Faire, for which 5th graders transformed an entire wing of the school into a 15th century European town with all manner of folks going about their business and presenting their affairs. In 6th grade we dressed up like Native Americans and settlers who had inhabited Illinois before us. We used multimedia stagecraft to turn the school into a time machine! I believe we were doing some advanced immersive learning. Bravo! I am grateful to have had those experiences, and I think they suited my hyperactivity well.
**Tell us about your new project, The Justin Hall Show.**

When I write on the Web, I use links to add layers and context. With video, I can use voice, music, pictures, effects and text to make an immediate multilayered story. I had a flash of insight last year: I needed to get a green screen for my home. A green screen, plus a video camera, meant I could film myself telling stories and change the background behind me. So I left my job, purchased a green screen and began filming and publishing personal videos on the Web. I love making and sharing media! To spend more time on videos, I’m using Patreon—a crowdfunding platform for individuals to support artists. With Patreon, people can pledge $1 or $2 for each video I make. I’m grateful to have Internet patrons supporting my experiments.

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**How did you get interested in video games?**

I love exploring worlds and testing limits at my own pace. By the time we had typing and computer class with Kathryn Smith in Middle School, I was sitting in the corner playing Leisure Suit Larry.

After college in 1998, I had an on-air TV show that was cancelled after the TV station received letters of protest due to the explicit content on my personal website. I switched to writing about video games professionally and keeping my Web page as an unpaid side project. Over the years I’ve produced my own games; I was fortunate to run a company making an online game but we weren’t a business success. Games are more complex to make than Web pages.

**What is “Justin's Links from the Underground”?**

I started a personal website in January 1994. It seemed only proper to introduce myself, so I posted a picture and some favorite sites. During the next few months, I added more promising Web links and information about myself.

The structure of the Web excited me: I could make pages and link between my mom, dad, brother, grandparents, uncle, friends, school and hometown. Once I had a growing collection of personal stories and weird links from the Web, I pulled it together under a single name: “Justin's Links from the Underground,” named after Dostoevsky’s *Notes from Underground* (which I hadn’t read), which Al Decker ’89 had borrowed for the title of his college newspaper column. The logo was a caricature of Hunter Thompson I based on a doodle by Ben Gordon ’92. I used my site to showcase the weird, the wild and the wonderful on the growing Web—and a lot about myself on the side. In 1995, I had 26,000 daily readers, mostly for my weird links. Meanwhile I was getting positive feedback on my personal stories; people emailed their own lengthy accounts of challenged experiences, and I think they suited my hyperactivity well.

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**What are some of your favorite Parker memories?**

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**What is “Justin's Undergound” to video games?**

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Alumni Reconnect

Mikhalla Grodzins Woodall '01 (L) and Samantha Schiff Kramer '01 at the Chicago Alumni Gathering.

Bob Adkins '63 (L) and Bob Eisendrath '45 at the Boston Alumni Gathering.

Outgoing Alumni Association President Kim Kamin '89, who was honored at the Chicago Alumni Gathering, alongside (L–R) Principal Dan Frank '74, current President Jeremy Goldblatt '92 and past President Keith Rudman '77.

Dana Segal (R), event chair, and Abby Prinn '96 at the 2014 New York Alumni Gathering at Rockefeller Center.

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Seth Anspach '03, event co-chair, and Parker Alumni Association Vice President Kim Kerbs '81 at the New York Alumni Gathering.

(L–R) Boston Alumni Gathering host Jim Solomon '83 and Chair Ayanna Pressley '92, Boston City Councilor At-Large, with Principal Dan Frank '74.
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Class Notes

1947

Thomas E. Hirsch, an architect, has been selected to receive the 2014 "Golden Award" from AIA Wisconsin, the state society of the American Institute of Architects (AIA). The Golden Award is the highest honor the state architects’ society can bestow upon a member architect. He is being recognized for his distinguished record of service, spanning more than 30 years, in advancing the profession of architecture and advocating for community revitalization, affordable housing, energy efficiency and accessibility. He has embraced many important leadership roles for AIA Wisconsin while demonstrating an ongoing commitment to community service and improving people’s lives through architecture. He is admired by and continues to inspire his peers across Wisconsin because of his ability to bring diverse groups together to address emerging issues.

1951

Joan Schwartz wrote a new blog for Psychology Today (psychologytoday.com/blog/uncharted-customs) about the recent renewed strife between Woody Allen and Mia Farrow. Twenty-one years ago, she wrote about their bitter custody fight for Psychology Today, one of four features she wrote (under the name Joan Ullman) for the magazine during that time.

1952

Chuck Maryan directed a reading of Anne Sexton’s play Mercy Street at the Drama Book Shop in New York City in May. This was the first public presentation of the play since its original production in 1969, which Chuck also directed.

1954

The class of 1954 is actively at work planning its 60th reunion in September. They are expecting more than 20 class members and spouses to attend the weekend events. Thanks to Christine Chapin Harris, Eric Martin and John Loeb who have taken leadership roles in this activity.

John Avildsen writes, “Thanks to the recent 2014 Parker Alumni Directory, I was able to contact my classmate Tony Roenwald. The last time I saw Tony was 1947. Last month, I sent Tony an email and had lunch with him two days later. We reminisced about our early years at Parker and agreed that Ms. Davis, our 4th grade teacher, was the best teacher we ever had. Here’s a selfie of Tony and me after lunch in Ventura, California, where we met, halfway between Santa Barbara and LA, where we live.”

John Avildsen (L) and Tony Roenwald.

Dorothy Ramm took a small ship cruise to Argentina, Uruguay and Brazil in March. The trip was a welcome break from the Chicago winter and brought back many memories of studying Latin America with Miss Marshall in 7th grade.

1955

Classmates recently met for lunch, including (L–R, sitting) Anne Kner Frenkel, Susan Mesirov Guthmann, Violet Hirsch Noah Margalit, Sally Jo Brady Murphy, Joan Makler Lieb, (standing) Marianne Moses Schenker and Joan Weil Smith.

1951

Larry Levin and Hara Levin enjoy good times with their children and grandchildren.

Larry Levin’s family: Son Adam and wife Jodi with grandchildren (L–R) Ivy, Noa and Asher.
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Larry Levin and Hara Levin enjoy good times with their children and grandchildren.

Larry Levin’s family: Son Adam and wife Jodi with grandchildren (L–R) Ivy, Noa and Asher.
1975

**Dr. Lawrence Quarles** and his wife Cheryl are completing a series of children's books and collaborating on their own artistic endeavors. They reside in Florida and Wisconsin. In addition, Lawrence’s oldest daughter Christina Quarles graduated from Hampshire College/Smith and is an accomplished artist. She has returned to Yale to complete her master’s in fine art.

1978

**Ross Blair** writes, “I’m pleased to report the following family news: I’ve been at IBM Legal for almost seven years now and was recently switched into IBM’s big cloud service provider acquisition SoftLayer, so I am happy to report that at last I get paid to keep my head in the clouds. My #1 son Ian has been ensconced in Vladivostok, Russia studying Russian and Russian culture since late January, and since he’s half Ukrainian, the recent events in Ukraine and issues with diplomatic relations between the U.S. and Russia have been cause for concern, including a possible Visa issue for him that fortunately was favorably resolved. He’s planning to take the Trans-Siberian RR west on his way home and study for two weeks in Prague, and since I’m half Czech, I am considering possibly joining him there for a brief visit this summer. My one and only daughter Emma Quinlyn, the one of Internet fame (she has 25K Twitter followers, and I’m told by many a local teen in the DFW area that she’s not just famous locally, but nationally among her age set) is off to U. of Arkansas, in Hog Heaven - Fayetteville, this coming fall. That’s just far north enough, and in the Ozarks, that I might see fall colors when visiting her this fall. My #2 son Alec hears soon if he may skip his last two years of HS and enter college early on a special TX public school academy program, giving me three in ‘college’ next year. Pity me, or better yet, send money. And I am writing you today on the 50th birthday of the Basic computer language, the one and only computer language I’ve been exposed to, thanks of course to my Parker math and science classes, and Messrs. Dreuth and Holland, and I am writing you today on the 50th birthday of the Basic computer language, the one and only computer language I’ve been exposed to, thanks of course to my Parker math and science classes, and Messrs. Dreuth and Holland, so it was a good day to be thinking of Parker and typing out this note. Cheers to all. Hope everyone is doing great, and finally warming up back up in Chicago.”

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Eric Forsberg writes, “Lots of things are happening. I have two movies definitely coming out in 2014—Doomed Planet and Dragons of Camelot—and a third shooting over the summer and may be released by the end of the year. It is based on Homer’s Odyssey—and if Mr. Markwell could see the extensive research I do on such films, I think that he would finally give me that ‘A’ I was avoiding in his classes. Also, a film that I was a writer on, Ghost Shark, is doing very well, and I am still getting residual checks from Mega Piranha, which, until Sharknado, remained SyFy’s second biggest premiere audience. I am also set to direct a New Year’s Eve horror thriller this fall titled Minutes to Midnight, which will be released either way too quickly to open next NYE or way too slowly to catch the one after that. In other news, my daughter Lola, 15, is turning out to be an amazing artist and unique mind, and her high school is allowing her to move into UC system college courses now and very possibly graduate two years early. Also, my former wife Karen, with whom I am still dear friends, is now on Food Network Channel as a chef/competitor and house chef (like an Iron Chef) on a number of shows, so keep your eyes open for her. I gained 100 lbs. on her food and you can, too. My marriage is a sorry loss, but I have moved on to another love and she is wonderful. I hope that you will all meet her at the next reunion. I have a few other things brewing, like a Patent Pending for a simple yet unavailable obesity related product, and a one-stop shopping weblink for crowd-funding perks.”

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Anne Witkowsky has transitioned from the Department of State’s Bureau of Counterterrorism to the Department of Defense/Office of the Secretary of Defense, where she started in January as a Deputy Assistant Secretary with responsibility for peacekeeping and humanitarian assistance, among other things. She returned to Parker in May to speak to Marty Moran’s class.

1981

John Bergan enjoyed the April celebration of the 50th anniversary of Northwestern Medicine’s Organ Transplant Program. Led by his sister Betsy Altman ’71, and joined by nephew Toby and his fiancée Emily, the “krewe” was there to acknowledge that, in 1964, John and Betsy’s father Dr. John J. Bergan led a team through the first successful organ transplant, a kidney, between two non-related individuals in Chicago. According to the current chief of transplantation at Northwestern, Dr. Michael Abecassis, this adventure in life saving was “insane.” According to John, “In April of ’64, a dawn broke of unfathomable proportions just off Lake Michigan. ‘Have a Grateful Day’ is a mantra Dr. John gave and will give to countless folks he will never meet whose organ transplants saved their lives. Clearly, Dad is about ‘strangers stopping strangers just to shake their hand.’ If you can, make sure you are a donor because ‘to live a love, you gotta be part of...’”

(L–R) Emily Barton, Toby Altman, John Bergan, Dr. Michael Abecassis and Betsy Altman ’71.

Ian Freed is vice president of Amazon’s Fire Phone division.

Jennifer Helle is still with The Discovery Channel, managing the Contracts and Compliance Department for a small, education-related unit in Nashville, but she recently started a part-time business that she is super-excited about, partnering with a company called Nerium International. The flagship products are two things near and dear to her heart at this age: anti-aging skin care and a body contouring cellulite product. Her website is jenhelle.nerium.com.

1983

Joe Weisberg was recently featured in Rolling Stone magazine: rollingstone.com/movies/news/12-tv-showrunners-you-should-know-20140429

1990

Katerina Christopoulos married John Ward (Germantown Friends School ’88) in Chicago on August 24, 2013. She writes, “It was a wonderful Parker reunion with fellow Colonels in key roles: Rebecca Hendrickson was our eloquent officiant, Rachel Bradley Sullivan ’89 coordinated the day with skill and grace, Cornelia McNamara created gorgeous flower arrangements, and Talia Kantor Lieber (daughter of Ron Lieber ’89) and Edie Goble (daughter of Elisa Tamarkin ‘88) were adorable flower girls.” After many years on the East Coast, Kat moved to San Francisco in 2008. She is on the medical faculty at the University of California San Francisco and based at San Francisco General Hospital, where she is an internist with a specialty in infectious disease/HIV. She sees patients in the clinic, teaches residents and medical students on the inpatient wards and conducts NIH-funded clinical research on HIV testing and engagement in care.

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Elizabeth Harding and her husband Kevin O’Reilly (Latin ’95) welcomed their son Lucas Alexander O’Reilly on November 29, 2013. Now five months old, Lucas is happy and healthy and has completely captivated their family, including Emily Harding ’99, his very proud aunt.

Christine Hollis (formerly Chandler) married Lawrence Hollis at the River East Art Center in Chicago on April 13, 2013. She is vice president of recruitment at Special Counsel, a legal staffing company, and her husband is a quality engineer manager for Pactiv. They live in Wicker Park.

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Laura DuFour and her husband Andy Rosenband (U-High ’99) welcomed a son, Theo George, earlier this year.

Arlen Ginsburg writes, “Here in Brooklyn the leaves are finally beginning to trust that the snow is gone for now. With this renewal, I’m sending along a few new projects of my own. I composed the score for two short films that premiered this spring, both directed by my friend and rising filmmaker Zach Carver. Sin Matador is a short film about an underground bullfight in New York City. Comedy, love, excitement and a bull in an elevator. In addition to my score, this film also features a song I produced for Bochan. Amateur Dictator is a documentary about a building superintendent in training to be a dictator. A new style of comedy meets documentary. “ Both films should be available online soon. He also has composed “Wintersong”—“about the light and beauty of winter”—and his band Lady Moon & The Eclipse has issued its first single, “Rain.”
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Ayanna Pressley writes, “On Sunday, May 25, 2014, I married Conan Harris, a national expert and consultant on violence prevention and gang intervention. We were married at the Museum of African-American History on Beacon Hill [Boston]. We honeymooned in Edgartown, Martha’s Vineyard. For as long as I can remember, I’ve been married to the Movement, and now I am married to my best friend, a great partner in this work. In other news, I recently did a Ted Talk X about identity entitled, ‘Dare to be You.’ I spoke a great deal about my experiences growing up FWP. And finally, I was surprised and humbled to make the cover of the May issue of Boston Magazine entitled ‘The Power of Ideas,’ prominently featured as one of 75 ‘bold thinkers who are shaping our city and the world.’”

Jesse Kulp, Megan Nakano and Justin Hall celebrated G.K. Darby’s wedding to Erin Genrich in the fall of 2013. G.K. is the founder of Garrett County Press, an independent publishing house based in New Orleans (gcpress.com). He and Erin are expecting their first child imminently! Jesse works in advertising and is an adjunct professor of human computer interaction at the Illinois Institute of Technology (IIT). He will be a featured speaker at the Total User Experience Conference in San Francisco. Megan is a consultant to high-growth minority business enterprises and organizations seeking to increase their supplier diversity. She has served as president of the Japanese American Citizens League, the nation’s oldest and largest Asian-American civil rights organization, and the Asian American Coalition of Chicago. Justin is living in San Francisco with his girlfriend Ilyse. He produces a weekly viewer-supported video program on YouTube called The Justin Hall Show; read about his adventures at links.net (and starting on page 31 of this issue of The Live Creature). They’re all very eager to turn 40 at the end of the year!

(L–R) Jesse Kulp (front), Megan Nakano, G.K. Darby and Justin Hall at G.K’s wedding to Erin Genrich.
Katie Nordine and her husband Dave Heltibrand welcomed their second child, Vallely Sylvia Nordine, on March 4, 2014. Her big brother Nils Heltibrand is very excited she finally arrived.

2001

Mikhaila Grodzins Woodall recently partnered with the doctors who created Proactiv to launch a new business selling the anti-aging skincare line Rodan + Fields. She writes, “I was blown away by the quality of the product as well as the innovative business plan the company had developed. I love that I’m able to integrate this work alongside being a stay-at-home-mom with my two young daughters. But it also provided an outlet for productivity that I had been craving for quite some time.” In addition to helping her customers tackle their skin concerns, she is helping women across the country build their own businesses. “Being able to offer this amazing opportunity to others is incredibly satisfying. I feel like my Parker experience—ensemble work in plays and musicals, Social Committee, Student Government, Grape Jam—really prepared me to work harmoniously with other, and be a strong network builder.” More information about her product line is available mwoodall.myrandf.com/Shop; ask about her Parker Perks Program!

2007

Jonah Frank has taken charge of the cocktail program at Trencherman in Chicago.

Elektra Musich writes, “Four years ago I became interested in lampwork glass. After a lot of classes and practice, I began teaching and met my partner, John. We have been collaborating and making glass for a few years, and we have opened our own studio in Chicago. Not only is it our own studio space, we are also teaching classes in lampwork glass, stained glass and more. We are excited to be sharing our love of glass with the neighborhood and hope to find others who love this as much as we do. You can see some of our work and our current classes on our website: everlastingfirestudio.com”

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Alice Rossiter writes, “I recently finished my master’s degree at Sotheby's Institute, and my thesis has been receiving press for uncovering smuggling tactics and money laundering schemes between the U.S. and Chinese in the fine art trade. It was published on Bloomberg and was a main feature in the Art Newspaper. Read more at businessweek.com/articles/2014-04-22/to-smuggle-antiquities-out-of-china-traders-make-them-look-cheap and theartnewspaper.com/articles/Where-is-Chinas-hidden-art-money/31628.

In Memoriam

Jerome Carlin ’45 was “a vibrant force in art, law and social justice in the Bay Area,” according to an obituary in the San Francisco Chronicle. He earned a degree in social relations from Harvard University, where he was the student chairman of the Henry Wallace for President Campaign. He received his master’s and Ph.D. degrees in sociology from the University of Chicago and his LL.B from Yale Law School. “He wrote two books about the legal profession, Lawyers On Their Own, a study of individual practitioners in Chicago, and Lawyers Ethics, a survey of the New York City Bar while at Columbia University's Bureau of Applied Social Research. Both are considered seminal works in their field. He was a recipient of a Fulbright Scholarship and a grant from The Social Science Research Council. “In 1964 he moved to Berkeley to teach and do research at The Center for The Study of Law and Society. In 1966 he left the University when his proposal to provide for the first time major city-wide free legal services to those who could not afford them was accepted by the Johnson Administration and he was chosen to be its Director. This was The San Francisco Neighborhood Legal Assistance Foundation, providing storefront law offices in five low-income neighborhoods throughout the city.

“In 1970, as the money from Lyndon Johnson's Poverty Program was drying up, and his activities became more and more administrative, he decided to give in to his lifetime passion to paint. For the past 40 years Jerry was a full time painter with work in the collections of The Art Institute of Chicago, The Oakland Museum, The Metropolitan Museum of Art, and in many private collections. His work has been shown in San Francisco, Oakland, Chicago and New York.
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“But he also continued his social activism. He swiftly opposed the War in Vietnam before it was popular to do so; helped create Bay Area Lawyers for the Arts that has grown to be a very effective and more encompassing organization now called California Lawyers For The Arts. He was active in creating the Bay Area Artists for Nuclear Sanity, supported The Ploughshares Fund, the UC Berkeley Botanical Garden, worked with The Berkeley Fire Department to get a new firehouse built after the Oakland fire, and many other civic and peaceful causes.”

His great nieces Mikhaila Woodall ’01 and Sasha Grodzins ’07 also attended Parker.

Tracy Oppenheimer O’Kates ’49 graduated from Wellesley College in 1953 and lived in New York, Boston, Costa Rica and Berkeley, California. She married Robert Katz and had four children. According to an obituary written by her children, “Her joie de vivre and love of travel and friends everywhere made her a citizen of the world.” According to her sister Jo ’53, Tracy was a filmmaker and a poet, and she supported various artists during her lifetime. Her brother Barry ’54 also attended Parker. Classmate Joan Elden Feitler remembers her as “very bright.” A memorial took place in Berkeley earlier this year.

Frances King Widmann ’52 had a brother, Alfred M. King ’50, who also attended Parker.

Richard “Rick” Levin ’60 spent much of his life in Madison, Wisconsin, according to his brother Larry Levin ’61. He earned a B.S. in architecture from the University of Illinois. He worked as a specifier at several firms, including A. Epstein & Sons, Ragnar Benson, Brown & Root, Murphy/Jahn, Raymond J. Green & Associates and Flad & Associates before joining the notable architectural firm Kahler Slater as head of specifications. The many facilities he worked on prior to joining Kahler Slater included projects for the University of Wisconsin, Chicago O’Hare International Airport, Chicago’s State of Illinois Center and Board of Trade, Searle Pharmaceuticals in Skokie and Eli Lilly & Company in Indianapolis. He worked on more than 300 projects for Kahler Slater during his 15 years there, including medical facilities in Virginia, Wisconsin, New Mexico and Illinois; the University of Wisconsin-Madison’s Kohl Center and School of Nursing; Eaton Corporation in Milwaukee; and the UW-Whitewater School of Business. He was a member of the Chicago and Madison chapters of the Construction Specifications Institute, serving as president of the Chicago Chapter from 1987 to 1989.

William Schwartz ’61, according to an online tribute, was known as the “Mayor” of his street in the Park Hill neighborhood of Denver: “Bill got this title because of his willingness to oversee his block, making sure it remained a tight-knit community. Always giving, organizing events, keeping tabs on developments and street sweeping days, and possessing a magnetic charm and wit, Mayor Bill will be deeply missed. He was an ambassador of his neighborhood and his many circles. For years, he contributed his talents creating the brochures for the Park Hill Home Tour, a major fundraiser for the community. His community of friends and colleagues spread much wider than his block. Everywhere Bill went, people were drawn to his engaging personality.

“Bill belonged to the Denver Tennis Club and enjoyed playing there for as long as he could. He loved dogs. His neighbors’ dogs, as well as his own, roamed freely from house to house. He seemed to know every dog and cat in a two-mile radius of his home and often visited them on his walks. He loved cars, from early hot rods to Corvettes, Porsches, and Mercedes. In his younger years, Bill also liked to ski.

“Because of his broad interests and many talents, Bill had several careers. His first career was in advertising. Later he was a pioneer in the emerging Denver film scene, both as manager of the ‘Flick’ theater and as a cinematographer in the film business. His film work took him to Australia, the Netherlands, and around the U.S. Next he became a divorce mediator, and Family Mediation Group helped resolve difficult issues for many people. He also trained others in divorce mediation. Founding Resolution Graphics, Bill had his last career in desktop publishing.

“He also loved working on his home. He designed, remodeled, and fixed anything; he could always find an ingenious solution for any problem. He planned, oversaw, and worked on the addition of a second story to his home. His creativity and artistry really shown on this beautiful project.

“Bill…attended Roosevelt University in Chicago and Menlo Business College in California, earning his B.A. degree. He served in the Air National Guard of Colorado and the United States Air Force. He moved to Denver in 1970 with his first wife, Kevin. Bill had a big presence and made a lasting impression on people. He was a true friend, and his circle of friends was wide and deep. Everyone has a funny story about some wild thing he did, idea he shared, or joke he played. May he be remembered as someone who truly made a difference in the world.”

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William Schwartz ’61, according to an online tribute, was known as the “Mayor” of his street in the Park Hill neighborhood of Denver: “Bill got this title because of his willingness to oversee his block, making sure it remained a tight-knit community. Always giving, organizing events, keeping tabs on developments and street sweeping days, and possessing a magnetic charm and wit, Mayor Bill will be deeply missed. He was an ambassador of his neighborhood and his many circles. For years, he contributed his talents creating the brochures for the Park Hill Home Tour, a major fundraiser for the community. His community of friends and colleagues spread much wider than his block. Everywhere Bill went, people were drawn to his engaging personality.

“Bill belonged to the Denver Tennis Club and enjoyed playing there for as long as he could. He loved dogs. His neighbors’ dogs, as well as his own, roamed freely from house to house. He seemed to know every dog and cat in a two-mile radius of his home and often visited them on his walks. He loved cars, from early hot rods to Corvettes, Porsches, and Mercedes. In his younger years, Bill also liked to ski.

“Because of his broad interests and many talents, Bill had several careers. His first career was in advertising. Later he was a pioneer in the emerging Denver film scene, both as manager of the ‘Flick’ theater and as a cinematographer in the film business. His film work took him to Australia, the Netherlands, and around the U.S. Next he became a divorce mediator, and Family Mediation Group helped resolve difficult issues for many people. He also trained others in divorce mediation. Founding Resolution Graphics, Bill had his last career in desktop publishing.

“He also loved working on his home. He designed, remodeled, and fixed anything; he could always find an ingenious solution for any problem. He planned, oversaw, and worked on the addition of a second story to his home. His creativity and artistry really shown on this beautiful project.

“Bill…attended Roosevelt University in Chicago and Menlo Business College in California, earning his B.A. degree. He served in the Air National Guard of Colorado and the United States Air Force. He moved to Denver in 1970 with his first wife, Kevin. Bill had a big presence and made a lasting impression on people. He was a true friend, and his circle of friends was wide and deep. Everyone has a funny story about some wild thing he did, idea he shared, or joke he played. May he be remembered as someone who truly made a difference in the world.”

Linda Ruck Cowan ’61
Maurice “Moe” Ginsberg ’66 attended the University of Denver where he joined the Pi Lambda Phi Fraternity and graduated with his bachelor’s degree. According to the Denver Post, he obtained his master’s degree from Phoenix University and a teaching certificate from Metropolitan State College, then went on to become an outstanding instructor for Smoky Hill High School in the International Baccalaureate program, specializing in European history. He was recognized as Smoky Hill’s “Teacher of the Year” in 2008 and spent many years listed in the “Who’s Who of Teaching.” History was a fascination for him. A master storyteller, he had a knack for making history “come alive.” He hoped not only to imbue a love of history, but also, at the very least, to help his students avoid being condemned to repeat the mistakes of the past as they grew into productive and active citizens. Though he retired from teaching in 2010, he is still held in high esteem by his students and their parents. Jim Schultz ’65 writes, “Now that I have attended two memorial services for Moe I have been deeply impressed by his strengths as a teacher. We have had people speak who were school administrators, colleagues and students of Moe's and it is gratifying to hear what an impact he had on their lives. We met two students who told us that because of Moe's example they both went on to become history teachers.”

Stephen Hines ’83 lived in Golden, Colorado.

Adam Fels ’88 worked in copyrights for advertising, according to classmate Darryl Tom. His brother Sam ’99 writes, “he was an award-winning copywriter for Lowe in New York, a beloved Cubs blogger at this point, a great writer in general, and an even better person.” Classmate Catherine Bentivegna Adami writes, “Adam was extremely gifted with his words and incredibly passionate and opinionated about music and sports, which his Parker classmates can attest to. He was taught by famed Am Lit Guru Dr. Marie Stone. He attended Marlborough College after Parker and lived in NYC and Columbus, Ohio, where he followed in the steps of his late parents who both worked in advertising. Any sports fan would enjoy reading his uniquely written and entertaining Cubs blog on Chicagonow.com, which elevated sports news to a higher level. Adam's father George Fels was an award-winning journalist for Billiard Digest and my father's best friend (Freddy the Beard Bentivegna) for over 50 years. Adam had a penetrating and thought-provoking author's voice that left its mark on the world and will not easily be forgotten. He will be greatly missed.”

His colleague for the Chicagonow blog, John Arguello, writes, “Adam was one of Cubs Den's first readers and when the blog grew too big for me to handle on my own, he volunteered his unique brand of recaps in our comments section. They were hilarious. He made us laugh when we should have been crying. He developed a cult following here. I am not exaggerating when I say we have readers that read Adam and only Adam.

“And with good reason.

“We at Cubs Den tend to be analytical, often trying to remove ourselves from passion to give you a calculated, reasoned analysis, but Adam was the yin to our yang. His passion for the Cubs was evident in his writing. He went straight for the gut. He told it as he saw it. One of his favorite things to say was that if he didn't make someone upset, then he was doing something wrong.

“We enjoyed reading his encyclopedic knowledge of music and pop culture. Sooner or later, he was going to find that one reference that made you remember a time you had long forgotten. He brought many of us together through those memories, constantly reminding us how much we all have in common not just as fans, but as human beings who in some way or another are connected with each other, no matter how small that connection might be.

“Yet there was much more to Adam than that. I was lucky enough to get to know him as a person and I can say this with absolutely no hesitation: You could not get to know Adam and not like him. It was simply not possible. He was intelligent and witty, yet he always treated people with kindness and respect. He was and is a good soul and I am a better person for having known him.

“We will miss you Adam. Rest in peace, but don't forget to ruffle a few feathers up there.”

Former Staff

Mary Callahan Stollman was a longtime Parker librarian and the mother of Sasha ’73, Katherine ’79 and Sarah ’81.
Maurice "Moe" Ginsberg ’66 attended the University of Denver where he joined the Pi Lambda Phi Fraternity and graduated with his bachelor's degree. According to the Denver Post, he obtained his master's degree from Phoenix University and a teaching certificate from Metropolitan State College, then went on to become an outstanding instructor for Smoky Hill High School in the International Baccalaureate program, specializing in European history. He was recognized as Smoky Hill’s “Teacher of the Year” in 2008 and spent many years listed in the “Who’s Who of Teaching.” History was a fascination for him. A master storyteller, he had a knack for making history “come alive.” He hoped not only to imbue a love of history, but also, at the very least, to help his students avoid being condemned to repeat the mistakes of the past as they grew into productive and active citizens. Though he retired from teaching in 2010, he is still held in high esteem by his students and their parents. Jim Schultz ‘65 writes, “Now that I have attended two memorial services for Moe I have been deeply impressed by his strengths as a teacher. We have had people speak who were school administrators, colleagues and students of Moe's and it is gratifying to hear what an impact he had on their lives. We met two students who told us that because of Moe's example they both went on to become history teachers.”

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Mary Callahan Stollman was a longtime Parker librarian and the mother of Sasha ’73, Katherine ’79 and Sarah ’81.
Parker’s Newest Creature

This summer, Francis W. Parker School welcomed a new resident, a “Creature” created by Emmons Blaine, Jr., a 1908 Parker graduate and the son of Parker’s co-founder and benefactor, Anita McCormick Blaine.

The Creature is a gift from Adrian De Mooy, who previously gave the school a color photograph of Mrs. Blaine playing the piano in her home, which hangs across from the Archive Room with other iconic Parker images. Adrian’s daughters, Adele De Mooy, Diane Vander Pol and Adrienne Sremba, and Michael L. Leventhal, Jr. ’56, Adele’s husband, facilitated the delivery of the Creature to the school. Mike is a past president of Parker’s Alumni Association and is currently a Life Trustee.

“The animal that we are viewing is new to us,” wrote Adrian De Mooy. “Some may see features of a bird, and yet it has four legs. So one looks at this stylized creature and calls it just that—a Creature.

“We believe Emmons Blaine constructed the Creature in a shop or art class at Parker School. It exemplifies: (1) learning by doing, a cornerstone of progressive education; (2) fun and imagination in creativity; (3) a striving toward excellence in result of endeavor; and (4) the responsible freedom that Parker, from its very beginning, has sought to engender in its faculty and students.

“As it is for many of us, small things in our lives may seem insignificant at the time, and later they become cherished. In his Gettysburg Address, President Lincoln used the words ‘it is altogether fitting and proper that we should do this’ in the dedication of the cemetery at Gettysburg. In that same spirit it is fitting and proper to return ‘the Creature’ to Parker School.... It is a tribute to the school and to its mission, its teachers, its administrators and supporters.”

According to Mike and Adele, the Creature “was a happy inhabitant of Mrs. Blaine’s home on Erie Street and was given to Mr. De Mooy’s sister Anna upon Mrs. Blaine’s death in 1954. Anna De Mooy had been Mrs. Blaine’s personal secretary for many years. The Creature was an honored member of Adele’s family, most recently residing in Michigan, from which it has made the journey home to Parker to matriculate once again with the hope of witnessing all of Parker’s traditions, old, new and yet to be hatched.

“Just as our reverence for Mrs. Blaine is timeless, the Creature will remind generations to come that the spirit of creativity at Parker endures.”
A Fond Farewell

At the end of the 2013–14 academic year, seven longtime faculty and staff, representing more than 175 years combined, completed their tenure at Francis W. Parker School. The Board of Trustees, students, alumni, parents and their colleagues are grateful for their immeasurable contributions to the Parker educational experience and our community.

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“Just as our reverence for Mrs. Blaine is timeless, the Creature will remind generations to come that the spirit of creativity at Parker endures.”
“What the live creature retains from the past and what it expects from the future operate as directions in the present.”

John Dewey

Diversity / Innovation / Citizenship
Fall 2014