

The Postscript

The Park School Brooklandville, MD

December 17, 2004

Volume LXV

Issue No. 4

Board moves Graduation '05, avoids religious holiday conflict

Policy guarantees all students may attend events

by Allison Gross '05

One of the school's few traditions is the timing of graduation. Normally scheduled for 7 p.m. on Monday after the last day of school, ceremonies for the Class of 2005 will take place Sunday June 12 at 4 p.m. because of a conflict with the Jewish holiday of Shavuot. The Board of Trustees decided to move graduation rather than exclude any student from attending.

According to Head of School David Jackson, the School, as a policy, will not schedule significant events on important religious holidays because it would mean that observant students might be not be able to attend such milestone events as Graduation or May Day. Last year's May Day celebration was moved because it coincided with Shavuot.

While in the past, only Christian or Jewish holidays were

under consideration, the list of holidays now includes those from other religions such as Islam, "and possibly Buddhism and Hinduism," said Jackson. "We are consulting religious authorities about which holidays would require observant students to be absent from school." He noted that the full list is still being compiled.

According to archivist and Middle School faculty member Larry Gilbert '67, a review of school records for the past 40 years shows that the Monday graduation date had never been altered.

Parents of the senior class had suggested the graduation time change both because of the holiday conflict and to give families a chance to have a celebratory dinner at a reasonable hour following graduation. In recent years, families have found it difficult to arrange dinner because Upper School class sizes have grown and therefore

ceremonies have lengthened, lasting well into the evening.

With the change in commencement, the Senior Prom date also came up for review since it would fall on the night before graduation. The seniors voted to switch prom to Friday, June 10, giving themselves an additional day in between prom and graduation to recuperate.

Once they confirmed the date, Seniors next selected the venue, settling on the Creative Alliance on Eastern Avenue.

There was also much discussion about having a chaperoned after-prom party at venues such as the Charles Theatre or ESPN zone. Parent-sponsored parties have become standard events in recent years amongst most area independent schools.

Many seniors stated that they would not be interested in attending an after-prom party; after much debate, the parents committee decided to drop the idea.



photo courtesy R. Kutler '06

Gender Week took place November 29 through December 3. One off-campus day included a trip to Washington, D.C. for (clockwise from left) M. McMahon '07, J. Schwartz '07, J. Breiter '06, R. Martin '06, R. Kutler '06, C. Schleider '06, C. Young '07. See articles page 3.

School store gets extreme make-over, cameras to safeguard merchandise

by Ben Hyman '06

During a traditionally busy holiday buying season, school merchandise is moving out and the School Store, run by Helen Keith, has moved in.

After moving from its original location next to the nurse's office late last year, and then temporarily relocating twice, the store has finally arrived in its new, permanent location at the end of the upper C hallway, across from the cafeteria annex.

"I am so thrilled that we did this," said Keith. "The school gave me everything I wanted for the store, and more. Amongst all the independent schools, we went from a vastly inadequate facility to one of the best in terms of size, design and ability to display merchandise. That's no exaggeration."

The store boasts more than a new location. It is now protected by department-store-like cameras similar to ones in the Athletic Center. While there was mild outrage when the Athletic Center cameras were installed, there has been no such uproar regarding the cameras in the School Store. Cameras in the Athletic Center have prevented crime says Jim Howard, Direc-



photo by R. Kutler '06

D. Butler '08 and R.S. Sweren '05 approve of the new school store.

tor of Academic Support Services. Says Howard in an internal memo, "You might recall that we have had several successful prosecutions of outsiders stealing from students and the institution ... I'm sure the ones in the store will [be a deterrent of crime]."

Another new feature of the store is its method of payment. Not only will customers be able to pay with cash and their school ID card, but credit cards will also be accepted. The store will accept Visa and Mastercard. The store is open 8 a.m. to 5 p.m., Monday through Friday.



photo by R. Kutler '06

New displays will improve school store sales.

Immersion Week offers unusual activity selections

by Cassidy Fein '07

Plans for Immersion Week are coming along smoothly, but the special short session of non-academic activities held between semesters is never guaranteed to happen.

Immersion Week, which is subject to approval by Upper School teachers and comes up for debate each year, was reaffirmed by faculty vote. Science teacher Dorrie Bright supported Immersion Week. "I really enjoyed getting to know students outside of the classroom, and I value that." (For another view, see *News Opinion*, page 2.)

There were other questions about whether or not the school should make time for Immersion Week again. Numerous complaints from parents and some students weighed heavily on faculty consideration of running the special week. The general complaint was that, because the week was not being taken seriously as a time to learn, students were either napping during their activities or just skipping school altogether. Upper School Scheduler Kim Wecht, who coordinates Immersion Week, said that non-participation and lack of commitment by students make it hard to defend the program and "creates an environment where you have to

justify the week."

With the go-ahead from faculty, Wecht urged students to submit their ideas early in the school year and followed up with an assembly. "It was difficult getting [activity proposals] on time before the assembly, but once people realized that this thing doesn't happen on its own, there was a flurry of activity," she said.

Starting Tuesday, January 18, right after Martin Luther King Day and ending that Friday, Immersion Week will allow Park students to engage in activities that they normally would not be able to do during school.

Courses will include Rock Climbing, Juggling, Stage Combat, Color Photography, Cake Decorating, Martial Arts in Film, War Games, How to Be a Guy, Model Boat Building, Gun Control Lobby, Jewish Cooking, French Cooking, and Ceramics.

Students, faculty, parents, and outside specialists will head activities.



Arctic group plans cold swim in school's pond

by Vera Eidelman '05

An enormous, white, furry bear ran through the Upper School halls Thursday, December 9 promoting hot chocolate and candy cane sales.

David Peck '07 donned the bear costume, made by a freshman club member's grandmother, in an effort to raise funds for the Arctic X-Block activity. Plans for future fundraisers include a dive into the Park School pond. Activity members have met with School Nurse Jan Brant to verify that the dive will not lead to any health issues, but approval for the idea is still pending a meeting with Jim Howard, Director of Academic Support Services and Security.

Members of the activity are "doing scientific research, learning about Inuit culture, and [are] going to be doing community service in Baltimore to get people interested in the arctic and to educate people," said Peck.

"We needed a way to get at-



photo by M. Levy '06

E. Himeles '08, a member of the Arctic activity, wears the bear to drum up hot chocolate sales.

attention," he continued. "So we said, 'why don't we get a giant stuffed bear?' but we didn't think anyone would care. So then we said, 'why doesn't one of us become a giant stuffed bear?'"

During the first day of hot chocolate and candy cane sales, the activity sold out of hot chocolate in the first 10 minutes.

Park service groups in action

Habitat for Humanity

Over the past weekend, Park students, faculty, and parents began work on the fifth Park-sponsored Habitat house, located at 620 Cator Street. Habitat's fundraisers are currently in full swing with \$22,000 collected through fundraising, grants, and donations.

Habitat successfully completed both a raffle and a Halloween box project in partnership with the Lower School, which raised a combined total of \$4089. The first-ever Habitat Phone-a-thon took place this week.

The next builds are scheduled for Saturday January 8, and Monday January 17, Martin Luther King Day.

Faculty activity advisor Julie Rogers will be on maternity leave through March. During this time, students will manage

Habitat with support from Science teachers Elliott Huntsman and Karen Weeks, and Traci Wright, Coordinator of Community and Student Services.

Community Support

Community Support, an Upper School X-Block activity, is collecting toothpaste for the homeless during December. The toothpaste can be placed in the bin below the Community Support Board, across from Mrs. Scherr's desk. This collection is part of a larger project known as "Boxes of Care," run by the Students Sharing Coalition (SSC), which is a non-profit organization which provides service opportunities for high school students.

During second semester, SSC will also be taking high school students to Annapolis to lobby for universal healthcare.



photo by M. Levy '06

Habitat's front lobby mailbox invites donations of change.

Let's bury Immersion Week

by John Roemer, Upper School History

Immersion Week's origins are lost in the murky progressive past (i.e., the "tradition" is older than a year or two), but my dyspeptic recollection is that it was created largely in response to the faculty's need to

News Opinion

have time to write final reports after we shifted from trimesters to semesters. Since we now have a couple of long weekends for report writing, the original inspiration has vanished, but Immersion Week rumbles on like something out of *The Terminator*. It's for art education - no, wait, it's for academic variety of all kinds; oops, no, it's not purely academic - we want to do cooking or mountain biking. Then again, it's an opportunity for students to plan courses, except when teachers or MICA or Kim plans them. The purposes

change, but the beast cannot be killed.

The rational among us would prefer just to continue with regular classes, since this part of the year is so egregiously fractured anyway: Thanksgiving, Gender Week, winter break, two weeks of classes after break, report writing, snow days - I can barely sustain the thread of what I'm teaching at this time of year, and I suspect that students are even more befuddled.

Immersion Week courses require significant planning, if they're done properly, and take up more time - six hours a day - than regular classes, keeping teachers from whatever reports are left to do, from thought about the next semester, even from reading the day's newspaper. And I guess that's a progressive faculty's bizarre little secret - we love self-flagellation, extra work, inventing novelty, endless days of no attention to the outdoors, our families, our dogs, or any-

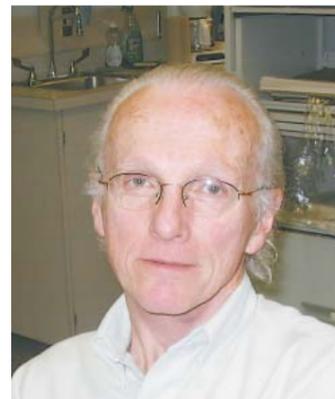


photo by M. Levy '06

thing remotely resembling a sane and balanced life. Maybe we feel guilty about spring, summer and winter breaks, so we do double time in sympathy with the groaning millions in coal mines, factories and retail. Or maybe we recognize that despite all the niceness of liberal theory, we need to model capitalist reality for students - never walk when you can run, reinvent the wheel every week, constantly market your wares, and sell 'em rhinestones if you ain't got real gems.

MS raises gym uniform standards

by Everett Rosenfeld '09

What's old is new again, at least as far as middle school gym uniforms are concerned. Park currently requires mesh shorts, a Park shirt, white socks, and some reasonably acceptable shoes, but now the dress code is about to get more specific.

The dress code itself isn't actually changing; it will just be enforced more. "Over the past years some physical education department members allowed students to migrate away from the standard uniform and allow any pair of athletic short," said Physical Education Chair Robin Lowe. As of January, the only shorts allowed will be Park-issued black shorts; other colors will be prohibited.

Middle School students deviated from the dress code around 20 years ago. "All of the sudden the school store started selling different kinds of shorts and we didn't know how to react," said Lucky Mallonee, another gym teacher.

Regularity isn't the only reason that the uniform is being enforced. "The three most crucial reasons are to improve hygiene among middle schoolers, to help our classes run more efficiently, and to teach students responsibility and help them learn preparation for life. [This last part] is as equally important as the experience," said Lowe.

Some students aren't happy about the changes. Eighth grader Chris Benn says, "I think that [the dress code] being stricter is

bad. The shorts are really short, and they're really expensive." A sixth grader, Brandon Keiser says, "I don't like that we now have to wear the black Park shorts. I mean all athletic shorts are basically the same."

Many feel that this dress requirement goes against Park's philosophy of freedom of expression, but Lowe says, "It is really about being able to conduct your classes so everybody learns. In Athletics you have to be in uniform...to be able to distinguish teams."

Whatever their opinion of the enforced dress code is, Middle School students will have to follow it when they get back from winter break. Without the proper attire, they will not be allowed to participate in gym class.

Casino Night players ante up cash for sophomore fundraising evening

by Lucy Silver '07

Shortly after Principal Mike McGill and the faculty banned gambling from the Upper School, the sophomore class discovered a way to profit from the ban by creating an outlet for avid card players to gamble without running the risk of losing money. Casino Night was held November 23 from 7 to 9 p.m. in both the Upper and Middle School commons. Senators from the tenth grade organized

the fundraising evening of activities. Attendees paid \$3 at the door, and then received a stack of fake money with which to gamble as they played.

Multiple tables of different games quickly shifted to nearly all being Texas Hold 'Em and Craps. "The whole thing was organized so that people could play different games...and learn [to play]," said senator Mara James '07, "but people began learning at the playing tables, so that only a few of the tables

were used [for real play]."

Food was offered, but the music was unavailable due to a technical difficulty. Approximately 50 people came, and the class made a profit of almost \$80. "It was a success in that people had fun," said senator Carrie Young '07. Andy Lilywhite, another sophomore senator, agreed, saying, "It was a success...and even though we didn't make a ton of money, people had fun and that's what matters."

Victory to the Boys; Girls take tough loss

by Ben Warren '05

The Boys beat the Girls in their own game last week with a shut-out victory in Gender Week. The Boys, who initially resented the week, came to school for regular classes on Monday and Tuesday and put up a strong performance, both in class and in the hallways.

The Girls struggled to keep up with the standard set by the Boys. They just couldn't seem to keep things together on Wednesday; they dressed down, proving their desire for male approval; class discussions were thin and futile, and to drive the nail into the coffin, the power went out. The Girls stepped up their game on Thursday, avoiding any serious utility breakdowns, but it was too little too late. A junior girl comments on the loss, "It was a tough loss you know, we were just too arrogant going into the week. You know, people talk about how much more mature high school girls are than high school guys. We thought it would be a breeze, but the Boys put up a tremendous effort and we just weren't prepared to match it."

The Boys were quite happy with their win. A senior comments, "It's just great, I've been on this team for years, and we've had so few victories. It's great to win this one, one that really counts."

Some say that the Girls set themselves up for a loss before the week even started, signing up for shadowing instead of community service. It's no secret that this is a smart league; Park kids are just more intelligent than girls at other schools. But signing up to shadow simply proved their preoccupation with trivial things. Shoes, shopping, and chocolate, interests shared by girls universally, outweighed their superior intelligence. The Boys, however, chose community service, using their days off campus to enrich the community.

For years the Boys have been seen as responsible for many of the average school day defects: girls not talking in class, loud and messy hallways, and unproductive class meetings, to name a few. The Boys hope that their upset victory will change their image in the league, and no one doubts that it will.



photo by T. Szalay '06

Boys ponder the eternal question: does size matter?

St. Paul's v. Park: all in the attitude

by Carly Donnelly '06

Having been at Park for two years, I had begun to adopt the conventional wisdom that schools like Bryn Mawr and St. Paul's School for Girls are over-structured, overrated and unoriginal. I assumed my day shadowing during Gender Week would confirm my appreciation for the luxuries of Park. I thought eating in the hallways, freedom of speech, trust between teachers and students, and open discussion were all unique to Park. After all, unlike the traditional prep schools in the area, Park was founded as a progressive school.

Walking into St. Paul's, I was nervous. Wearing my button-up J-Crew shirt and pearls to blend in, I walked into the admissions office with a notepad and pen, ready to observe the horror of this Protestant, conservative school. From my appearance, the admissions people assumed I was a prospective student. Their fake welcome faded once they learned I was there for gender studies.

My hostess introduced me to several girls who were confused as to why I was there. "So you're part of the psychology experiment, right?"

"Right," I said, not wanting to explain what would seem like an obscenity to these conservative strangers. "Neat" they said. Soon the topic was dropped and they all got to gossiping about people they knew. Every so often they would pause to fill me in on the life story of the person that had been previously described.

In each class the teachers would ask me about my day and introduce themselves. Classes would then begin and the teachers and students would start by

discussing break, the exam process and the Christmas Bazaar responsibilities to come. After five minutes, the discussion would die and typical class would start. When the class ended after 40 minutes, the teacher simply dismissed the class. No bell rang, there was no need to yell or prod to get the students to hand in homework and no need to announce the new homework; everything worked like a well-oiled machine.

During my hostess' free block, we proceeded to the commons to get an afternoon snack and hang out. Several students were lying on the chairs and tables or surfing the Internet when I entered. "They all have free periods?" I asked my hostess. "Sure, you don't?" she responded. "No," I said, confused as to why it was acceptable to have frees. "Sucks for you," she said as she popped the lid on her Diet Coke and offered me a sip. Lunch came quickly enough and she dropped her only half-empty Diet Coke can in the trash before leaving the commons. "You aren't allowed to drink in the hallways?" I asked in revenge. "No," she replied, "but it doesn't seem to be a problem," she said pointing to several students with Starbucks mugs walking down the junior hallway. "Where did they get that?" I asked, surprised at the scandal of the situation. "At Starbucks" she replied, laughing

at me.

The entire day, I found myself wondering what about Park was so radically different after all. Students that are not under Park's progressive philosophy are allowed just as many, if not



photo by R. Kutler '06

Girls worked at the Maryland Food Bank.

more, privileges than Park students are. They have the privilege to leave campus as juniors, enjoy unhealthy food during their free blocks, and feel open and comfortable with their teachers—all without a philosophy stating that these relations are acceptable and practiced at their school. What makes Park School need this philosophy to function as a "progressive school?" Why are we losing our privileges one-by-one when we are under such an open and progressive administration? Is it the comfortable nature provided by single sex education? Or is it that the students admitted to the Park School are unruly and defy the philosophy? Knowing that, does Park School need single sex education—or an attitude change?

Liberals at Park talk the talk, but don't walk the walk

by Jen Webber '07

People tell me they're liberal. They say they believe in welfare and a woman's right to choose. They tell me that they supported Kerry, and that Bush is a dumbass. They inform me that the war in Iraq is a waste of time. They say that amnesty is a good thing and that all people should be welcomed into this country. They tell me it's unconstitutional to offer prayer in school. They let me know that words like "rag head" and "nigger" are racist and derogatory. They tell me gay and lesbian couples should be allowed to marry. They tell me conservatives are close-minded. And I tell them, "OK, I'll admit that conservatives can be closed

minded, if you admit that liberals are just as skewed."

Liberals are supposedly tolerant. Students at Park School, a very progressive liberal school, call each other "fag," "gay," "retarded," and "red necks." Gay people, mentally disabled people, and people from less sophisticated environments than the ones we live in are labeled with negative names. Why would a gay or lesbian in a community like Park's, which prides itself on being a safe atmosphere, come out when his or her peers and fellow coworkers clearly judge people based on something as simple as sexual orientation? It by no means changes who they are, yet we label them. While liberals are open-minded, they contradict themselves. They

can talk the talk, but they can't walk the walk.

What about "retarded?" Liberals say everyone's equal and should be given a fair chance and a decent life, but they disrespect them by labeling people "retarded." Why should liberals make derogatory comments when they say that everyone deserves the same courtesy regardless of their skin color or mental capacity? Nobody should be labeled or looked down on, especially at Park.

What about "red neck?" This is generally an upper middle class to wealthy community. We're cultured. We go on school trips to New York and Europe. We take frequent trips to galleries and museums, and we are taught to think of other

people's cultures and heritages with the same respect and interest as we think of our own. Why then would such a fine-cultured, open-minded Park student refer to someone as a "red neck?" What makes someone a "red neck?" Is it because they go to a school where agriculture is taught, because they race tractors for sport or simply because they live differently than us? Isn't "red neck" just as derogatory as "fag" or "retarded?" Should a liberal community like Park allow itself to make comments like these? Are the "liberals" here really playing the role of liberal thinkers or are they just pretending?

Liberal, in the true sense of the word, is a person who lives his/her life without passing judg-



photo by M. Levy '06

ment. A true liberal has to be able to see both sides of an argument or issue. He or she has to know that there is no right or wrong answer to anything; it's all just a matter of perspective. He or she needs to realize that it's not enough to say he or she is a liberal thinker; he or she must actually believe in and carry out his or her liberal beliefs.

Senior year defined

Senior year is the year of definition.

Take, for instance, college. To begin the process, we must decide which schools to apply to. Will we apply to the small, progressive schools? The big universities? Live in a city? A town? Will we apply to the Vassars or the Vanderbilts? The Hampshires or the Harvards?

Then the application itself forces us to compress our entire lives into several pages. What aspects of our lives are the most important to us or what do we want the college to think is the most important to us? Should we focus on the unique or the impressive? Which activities should we include?

Next we have to condense ourselves into 500 words (also known as *less than one, single-spaced page*). That condensed version of us must define our essence: as Howard Berkowitz would say, we must write an essay which, were it dropped on the floor, could be picked up and placed in our mailbox specifically.

The final definition comes, of course, when we must choose which college to attend. Where do we want to spend the next four years of our lives? What, and who, do we want to be?

While we're busy trying to sort through all the demands the college process puts on us, we're asked to create a senior page for *Brownie* and write a "thank you". The senior page forces us to represent ourselves in a single page, while we must thank everyone we've ever known in only 400 characters (not words, *characters*) for our thank-yous.

While the college essay defines which parts of ourselves mean the most to us, the thank you must define what other people mean to us- who is worth thanking and why. Some of us choose to fill our thank you space with a list of initials, others use it as an extension of their senior page, and some opt to circumvent the difficulty of a final thank you by making jokes.

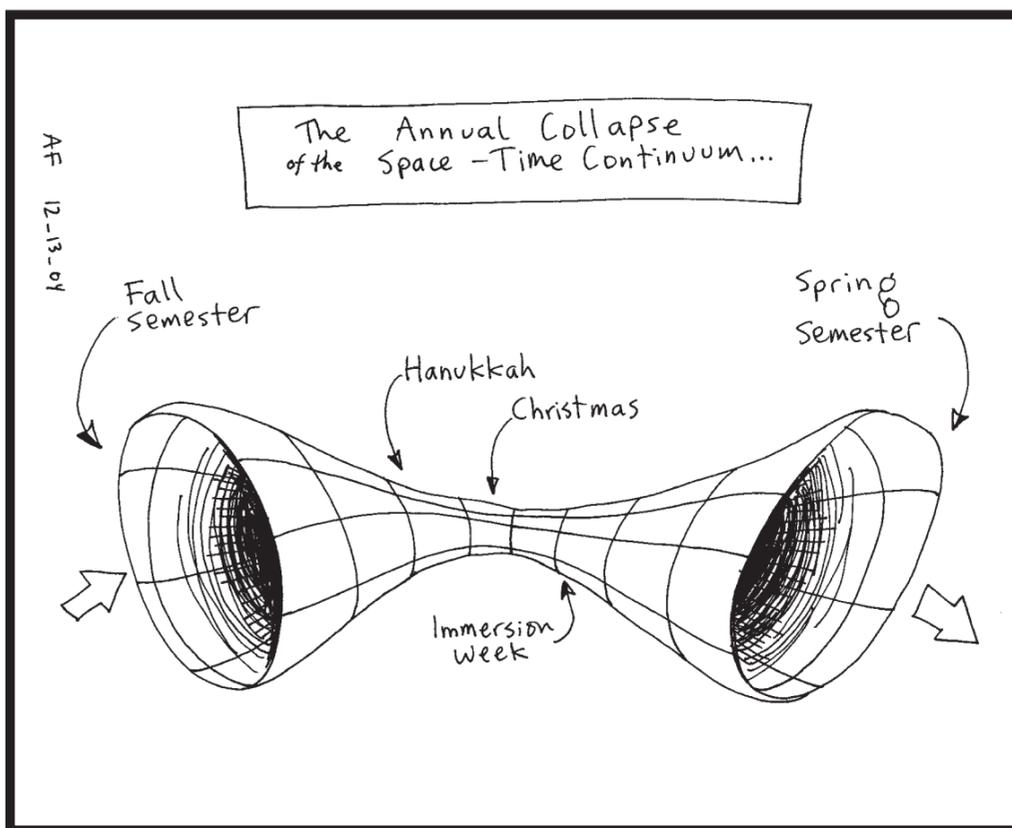
The true irony of our situation comes with the fact that every senior to go through Park has felt the same way. So, once we get to where we think we want to go, how much will any of this matter?

Let's talk about it

Often, we view assemblies as a passive experience. We sit in the seats, stare up at the speakers, and burst out of the theater as soon as we're no longer obligated to be there.

Friday, December 3 was different. For once, we had an active assembly in which everyone was focused on the subject at hand. We held a town-meeting about Gender Week, which served as a conclusion to the experience. We talked, we listened, we responded. We discussed. Granted, it got a little catty at times. But, with more practice, we can learn to voice our opinions and remain active while being respectful at the same time.

In truth, very few assembly presentations are standard school-assembly fare. Because our assemblies are of such high quality, we should appreciate them. Every assembly should be an active experience, one filled with listening, thinking, and questioning.



Letters to the Editors:

Gender Week lacked positive students' expectations

To the Editors:

I am confident that, had I stood up in the Gender Week assembly December 3, something as thoughtless as several of my peers' comments would have come pouring out of my mouth. I was glad to see several others take that deep breath and count to...well, a far smaller number than I.

I am not here to express anger; I simply wish to express disappointment with the lack of respect and thought put into the

comments made by several students. Although I'd prefer not to throw quotes at you, these seem to fit the situation well: I think it was my father who would always tell me, "If you think you can do a thing or think you can't do a thing, you are right." (Henry Ford) As one student put it, "If you come into this week thinking it's going to be worthless, it will be."

I just wish that students who had negative expectations for Gender Week would have re-

alized the benefit of not having any. At Park, we've been taught to be skeptical, not to simply bash an idea because no one can answer you when you ask "why?" Gender Week was an experiment, prefaced with the notion of no expectations. We were asked to go into the Week with a few questions in our heads, questions like "what's different?" not with the attitude that "this is going to be awful."

-Nick Hudkins '05

Gay rights are undeniable human rights

To the Editors:

Pam Fitzgibbon's election commentary asserts that America must move beyond the controversy over marriage equality "to something that affects far more than two percent of the American polity." Pam's concern is understandable, despite the questionable nature of her statistic (estimates generally

range from two to 10 percent, possibly higher). Yet I take issue with the idea that marriage equality, and gay rights in general, is a narrow interest-group concern. Each year that we deny the equal protection of the law to all of our citizens is another year that children learn that there is respectability in prejudice, discrimination, and bigotry. The marriage equality issue affects us all, whether

gay or straight, because it shapes the moral values of the community in which we live and the lives of the people that we know. If human rights are not worth standing up and fighting for, I don't know what is.

-Mike Fishback
Middle School Social Studies and Language Arts

The Postscript makes an impression

To the Editors:

Just a brief note to express my sentiments regarding the fine job you are doing this year. The overall content, thorough coverage of myriad topics, excellent photography, proof-reading, etc., make this one of the finest volumes of

the *Postscript* I can recall in my 39 years. I feel that the US Council President's commentaries, keeping everyone abreast of Council activities, and the open dialogue reflecting disagreement among the Editors-in-Chief over the *cartoon* in the last edition are but two examples of a refreshing

style of journalism which has wide appeal. You have certainly "raised the bar" for those to follow you in the future.

-Jim Howard
Director, Academic Support Services & Security
Director, Appalachian Challenge®

The Postscript

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HAVE A HAPPY HOLIDAY!

All opinion, no facts

by Eric Gottlieb '06

Fresh in our minds is the discourse that pervaded every channel of communication at Park in the months preceding the November election. Discussions in classes, Student-Faculty forum and *Postscript* were overwhelmingly pro-Democratic. Students went on school-sponsored trips to New Hampshire



photo by M. Levy '06

and Pennsylvania to support Democratic candidates. And while it is commendable that teenagers formed opinions and advocated them so strongly, students and faculty members remained quite narrow-minded, unwilling to enhance their own viewpoints by listening to those of others.

The most notable demonstration of this occurred when Mark Luderman, a Republican entrepreneur, came to Park to speak in favor of the President. Students cringed every time he uttered the word "business" and were unwilling to consider what he had to say. A believer in trickle-down economics, he explained how the President's policies would help small business and thus, improve the economy. Whether we agreed or disagreed with him, he was thorough and transparent in explaining his reasoning. Our response was militantly negative and disrespectful, showing our unwillingness to listen to somebody with whom we disagree.

To the contrary, when a raving liberal and conspiracy theorist, Mark Crispin Miller,

came to speak and portrayed Kerry as a saint, students not only respected him, but believed every word. His style was to provide isolated examples and then make gross generalizations about the government and the media based on them.

When a student asked Miller for one question he would pose to Kerry, he replied, "How's the weather up there?" as if Kerry were a flawless candidate and there was nothing he had to explain other than his height. Students overwhelmingly supported Miller, repeating his conspiracy theory, especially with regard to another draft and the theory of a 1984-esque media.

For every issue on which we have strong feelings, there is another side that we choose to ignore. For example, there are economic reasons for not raising minimum wage, but, on the other hand, executives often make 450 times the wage of the average worker.

In the case of executives, their salaries are dictated by intense competition for a small pool of qualified people; if the minimum wage were raised as well, hiring more workers would be less profitable for companies and jobs would be lost. While there are reasonable arguments on both sides, reducing the argument to "workers are not paid well; all money going to rich people at the top," is ignorant and wrong.

Students at Park have strong opinions on a range of other issues, including gay marriage, universal health care, taxes, foreign policy and education. But we all too often forget about reality and practicalities, which often encompass the viewpoints of the other side. We forget how complicated national politics is. When we hear differing viewpoints, we brush them off and refuse to give them a moment's thought, neglecting the slight possibility that they may be right.

Registration nightmare

by Madison Elliot '07, Eva Fillion '07 and Shivani Patel '07

First semester, we were "ones." Life was great. Registration was smooth sailing. And then...dun, dun, dun...second semester struck. We found ourselves standing in the Atrium ready to register, hearing moans from previous registrants. "Everything's full!"

We had been waiting in line for 20 minutes. When we were finally released into the A Hallway, we ran like horses from a starting gate, having awaited our race to registration success.

Once we gained entrance into the English sign-up room, our hopes and aspirations were trampled upon by full classes and lengthy waiting lists.

Soon 1:30 was upon us, and we were belligerently sent away to class, many of us without new classes for second semester.

With our names on every waiting list, we left with broken hearts and sad faces. Our spirits were low. With second semester looming on the horizon, many "fives" are still missing classes in various blocks. Registration was truly a nightmare.



photo by M. Levy '06

On any given day, a mixed group of Upper Schoolers inhabits the Atrium benches and floor.

A freshman stepped on my eye

by Carrie Young '07

Imagine this: you're lying on a backpack in the atrium staring up at the freshmen who are sitting on *your* benches. So you're lying there, talking to your friends and minding your own business, when out of nowhere, a giant foot lands on your eye. There's a moment when you're not quite sure what's happening. And then you realize it's one of those annoying freshmen, and they've finally done it. They're not just annoying anymore. They're dangerous.

When I was a freshman, all of seven months ago, I was terrified of the sophomores. I would never have dreamed of taking one of their benches. They were my elders. I kept my distance. I knew my place. But as a sophomore I find myself benchless, reduced to sitting on the hard, hard ground looking up at the freshies seated on *our* bench like a herd of princesses on their thrones. Now, it's a given that they need some place to sit. But as it currently stands, they have taken over *our* sophomore bench.

This is just one of the problems that I've seen

of overcrowding in the Upper School hallways. At times it is almost impossible to walk through the little hall between the Atrium and the Math/Science classrooms without tripping over stretched legs or leaping over sprawled bodies.

Every bench of every hallway has been claimed by a grade or group of friends which does not want to give up its prime seating location. Not only are all the benches filled, but there isn't even a good place to sit on the floor. This problem may have been caused by the increase of students in the Upper School. The Upper School now has more than 320 students, the most it has ever had.

One may ask why we don't want to share our bench with the freshmen class. We would happily welcome them to our bench if there were enough room for everyone, but since there isn't, there are certain things that freshmen have to go through. And, now that we've had the experience of being freshmen, we deserve a place to sit with our friends. With all the free time in the Upper School schedule, there needs to be ample space for all members of the community to sit.

Best intentions after the prom

by Jenna Breiter '06 and Jaime Savage '06

Parents of the junior class hope to start a new tradition: an after-party for junior prom.

The parents have been meeting since the beginning of this year to discuss where and how this party should be held. The party would start immediately after the dance ends, and would run until three or four in the morning. Students would be allowed to leave at any time, although once they had left, they would not be allowed back into the party.

After months of planning, the heads of the parent after-prom committee finally met with the junior class senators this month. They made it very clear that the party would not be man-

datory, but they'd like to achieve a consensus amongst parents that no individual events would take place at any of their homes.

The parent committee decided that it would not distribute door prizes as other private schools do. The parents believe that coercion is not the way to lure the junior class to the after-prom party; their hope is that juniors will actually want to attend.

They feel that a good way to spark student interest is to pick an exciting place for the party to be held. This is where the students can step in and help out; we should begin thinking along the lines of the Charles Theater, The Elm, or even The Evergreen House. Or perhaps The Cheesecake Factory has a party room?

Aside from where the party

could be held and what mode of transportation could be used, the real question is, why do we need an after prom party at all? Haven't we, as a class, proven our ability to make responsible and well thought-out decisions? What has the junior class really done to make parents think that our choices on prom night will be any different? And let's be realistic, we're going to have to make these decisions independently sooner or later.

Junior prom is scheduled for May 14, a Saturday not too long before the end of school. Next year we will be seniors, and then we will be off to college. Who will be watching out for us then? When will we be considered mature enough to make responsible decisions on our own?

No Salt for You!

by Dan Demmitt '08

Recently I was asked by a good friend of mine to write a review of something for *Postscript*. I thought about describing one of my favorite



drawing by C. Hankin '06

books, CDs, or movies, but I quickly realized that I couldn't choose just one. This was a problem. Luckily for me, the solution came almost painlessly.

Last weekend as I was doing something I do pretty frequently—eating soup out of the can—something interesting happened. Instead of joyously and ignorantly enjoying my Progresso® Manhattan Style Clam Chowder as I have in the past, I realized that I actually didn't like it at all. The broth tasted like a couple of cans of tomato paste had been thrown into a tub filled with water and that as much salt as possible had been shoveled in as well. For the first time, I also noticed the outrageous lack of vegetables and clams. Yes, there was the occasional lump, but they were mere turbulence in my ride, certainly nothing to get excited about. The only purpose the so-called "vegetables" and "clams" served was to make my soup more

challenging to eat.

After realizing how obscenely salty and stripped of nutritional value the soup seemed, I did something I do pretty infrequently; I read the nutrition facts. According to the label, Progresso® Manhattan Style Clam Chowder has 37% of the recommended daily amount of sodium. Now that sounds bad, but I also noticed that this number was for only one serving, and a can of soup has two servings. According to my math, if I were to eat the entire can of soup, I would have already consumed 74% of the sodium I'm allowed to eat every day, leaving me with only 26% of my daily sodium allowance to spend on other foods. Another source, saltinstitute.org, said that in eating this whole can of soup I would have already exceeded my daily salt quota.

Perhaps I am extreme, perhaps the average American would eat only half a can of soup and put the rest aside for the sake of health, but I doubt it.

The soup may be salty because people like it that way. Maybe it's because saltiness is an easy taste to create. Maybe Progresso® is orchestrating a plan to make their soup addictive. Maybe not. Canned soup in general seems to be too salty; I don't think Progresso® is to blame.

I don't like canned soup anymore, and I hope that after reading this you examine what is so appealing about the canned soup you eat. Perhaps canned soup is an acquired taste, but this is one taste I'd rather not acquire.

Life As We Know It Lacks Edge

by Rachel Kutler '06

Life As We Know It is a genuinely bad TV show. The acting, writing, and overall production are horrible. Based off of the novel *Doing It* by British writer Melvin Burgess, the show is not much more sophisticated than

in on his mother (Lisa Darr) having an affair with his hockey coach (a little cliché?). Needless to say, this leads to his parents having marital problems. Meanwhile, one of Dino's best friends, Jonathan (Chris Lowell) is dating the token fat girl played by Kelly Osbourne. As they

between the actors and general ambiguity in their relationship leaves the viewer yearning to get more details.

The same goes for the relationship between Dino and his parents, particularly his father with whom he has moved in with. It is interesting to compare

the thoughts of Dino and his father throughout the separation, yet the dialogue between the two feels forced and dry. Finally, the friendship between the three boys has the possibility of offering real insights into the minds of teenage boys (although the actors look about five years older than the characters they are playing), yet we hardly see the three interacting.

Despite a corny script, unrealistic situations, predictable plotlines,



photo courtesy Touchstone Television

the book's title suggests. The plot is not unique among TV shows geared at teenagers—three hormone-charged teenage buds, Dino, Ben, and Jonathan, are coming of age and discovering what relationships, sex, and life are all about.

Dino, played by Sean Faris, is a blindingly cute hockey player who cannot get it right with his drama-queen girlfriend Jackie (Missy Peregrym). He walks

tackle the idea of having sex, the third part of the trio, Ben, is fooling around with his English teacher (Marguerite Moreau) and may be interested in Jackie's best friend, Sue (Jessica Lucas).

The combination of thin plot and bad acting is lethal. Several plotlines have potential yet come up short. Ben and his teacher provide an intriguing relationship, yet the lack of chemistry

and everything else mentioned thus far, I love *Life as We Know It*. Every Thursday night at 9, I flip the channel from Fox to ABC (skipping over *The Apprentice*) and spend another sacred hour in front of the TV. So, in the era of dramatic soap opera-esque TV shows like the *O.C.* and *One Tree Hill*, watch *Life as We Know It* to get an entertaining, fun, and by no means realistic portrayal of teenagers.

The Year in Hip-Hop: Top Five Albums of 2004

by Zach Leacock '05

It's now December and soon 2004 will be gone as quickly as it came. This was the year of many highly anticipated releases for the hip-hop world and, although a lot of them didn't live up to expectations, there were some surprises. This year-end "rap-up" should shed some light on a few of those surprises.

Nas- *Street's Disciple*

The *best* album of the year. Not too many rappers have released double-albums full of quality tracks, but hip-hop veteran Nas gets the job done. Many consider Nas one of the best MCs ever; his *Illmatic* and *Stillmatic* are considered classics by most, but I am willing to make the bold statement that *Street's Disciple* eclipses both. Taking it back to an early '90s

sound, Nas goes against the grain and shines as a result. With the mix of tracks, ranging from the personal "Getting Married" and "Me and You" to the eye opening "These Are Our Heros" and "The American Way" to the club moving "You Know My Style," this album will have something for you. Not only that, but I'd venture to say that *Street's Disciple* is the best double-album ever. Many would tell you otherwise, referencing critically acclaimed double-albums like *Life After Death* from the late Notorious B.I.G., Wu-Tang Clan's *Wu-Tang: Forever*, and even OutKast's *Speakerboxx/The Love Below*, but they'd be wrong. This is the best one, and you need to pick it up if you haven't already.

Kanye West- *College Dropout*

Some people will hate me for

making this number two, but face it, the album is a classic. Every track is ill and the skits are funny. Radio and video program directors still keep his singles in heavy rotation and, months after *College Dropout's* release, it is still impossible to listen to 92Q for an hour without hearing Kanye's voice. *College Dropout* is one of the most important rap releases ever, proving that you don't have to sell yourself out by following trends to be super-successful. Kanye deserves each one of his 10 Grammy nominations.

Ghostface Killah- *The Pretty Tony Album*

Carrying the Wu-Tang name on his back, Ghost delivers a strong CD worthy of the "repeat all" button on your CD player. From the car with your boys, to the crib with your lady, to your

Walkman on the bus, you can still take this CD anywhere and let the music serve as the soundtrack for your day. Bringing back a vintage hip-hop sound similar to Nas, Ghostface's commitment to setting trends but not following them makes him stand out in a world of mass-marketed music.

Royce 5'9"- *Death Is Certain*

Eminem's former protégé steps out of his shadow and drops one of the best, yet highly slept-on, albums of the year. This album's lack of variation in the tone of its tracks gives it a nice thematic coherence from song to song. Royce often credited Eminem with helping him hone his mic skills, but now it seems that the student has surpassed the teacher. Songs like "Death is Certain," "I Promise," and "Bomb 1st" demonstrate that

Royce is a monster on the mic and that underground talent like his should not be overlooked.

Eminem- *Encore*

I had very low expectations for *Encore*. Although Eminem is one of my favorite MCs, his absurdly stupid first single ("Just Lose It") made me doubt that he would provide music that was up to his usual quality. Luckily, I was proven wrong; *Encore* is quite an enjoyable listen. Although it does have some stupid tracks to skip over (like "One Shot, Two Shot," featuring D-12), *Encore* also has some extremely personal gems with a lot of replay value, like "Yellow Brick Road," "Toy Soldiers," and "Crazy in Love". Those songs, coupled with the songs on which Eminem spits with his familiar lyrical style, make *Encore* worth buying.

The Firm: Classic Suspense Thriller

by Yohance Allette '05

The Firm was published in 1991, and almost overnight John Grisham became a household name and a force to be reckoned with in the realm of fiction. Grisham knows how to make a novel come alive and ensnare any reader who comes along for the ride.

The Firm follows the life of Mitch McDeere. McDeere is a highly intelligent, yet monetarily challenged, law student finishing his degree with high honors at Harvard. Although he has offers from prestigious Chicago and Wall Street law firms, he decides to interview at a small law firm located in Memphis. What he hears is an offer he can neither believe nor refuse: a starting salary significantly higher than he imagined, promises of large bonuses for staying with the firm, an ascension to partner in a decade, a new house with a miniscule mortgage rate, a brand new BMW, and other fringe benefits. This tremendous

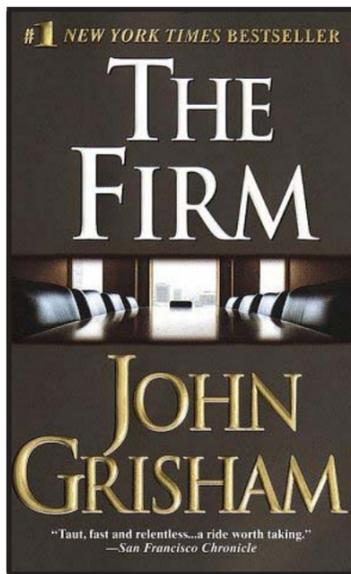


photo courtesy Dell Books

opportunity leads to Mitch and his wife Abby settling down in

Memphis, ready to enjoy the life of luxury they always envisioned. The firm really seems to care about Mitch and his family, taking every step possible to make their lives easier. However, when the firm starts asking for a happy, long lasting marriage with several children, the McDeeres quickly become sus-

picious to the true nature of this dream job.

Throughout the entire story, Grisham never drops the ball, keeping the reader entwined within the ever-thickening plot. He keeps the novel going at an incredibly fast pace, never slowing down or confusing the reader. It's almost as if Grisham analyzes the reader's mind, because he always presents another twist or reveals a secret that changes the course of the book. It is simply amazing how well the novel is crafted. Within the first chapter, you become emotionally attached to the McDeeres, cheering when they succeed, and fearing for them when danger looms around the ever present corner. I honestly felt as if Mitch McDeere was a close friend of mine.

The only problem with the book is that it ends too soon. From start to finish, I couldn't stop thinking about the next event and Mitch's reaction to it. It's not hard to see why Grisham changed the suspense genre permanently with *The Firm*.

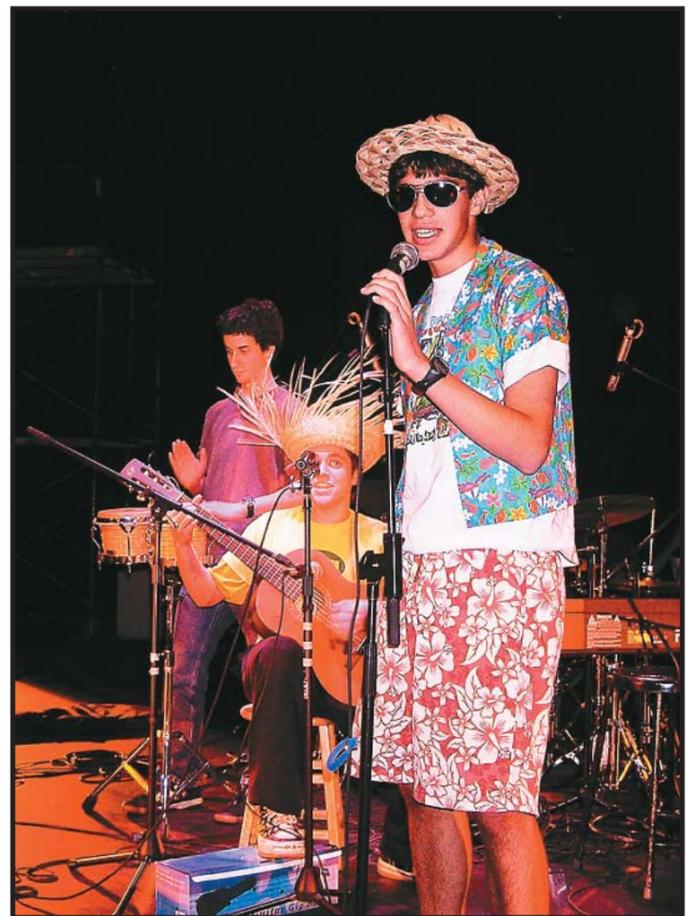


photo by M. Levy '06

Cabaret, the Upper School's unplugged twice-yearly casual concert, took place December 10 in the Black Box theater. A. Fillion '05, B. Starr '07, and M. Roswell '07, among others, performed. Fillion and A. Jacobs '05 acted as emcees.

The Meaning of Life

by Michelle Madow '05

"This is the story of a man named Eddie who was shown the secret of heaven: that each life affects the other, and the other affects the next. The world is full of stories, but the stories are all one."

The Five People You Meet In Heaven by Mitch Albom is a

heaven is unique: according to him, you meet five strangers who explain to you how they affected your life.

In the beginning of the book, Eddie thinks of himself as a loser with a meaningless life who maintains an old fashioned amusement park. As each person discusses how his or her life was entwined with his, he or she gains closure with his or her life and Eddie finds meaning in his.

If you are looking to read a challenging book with difficult vocabulary and seemingly endless pages, this book is probably not for you. But as I think back on books I have read throughout my life, this one sticks out, not only because of its originality, but because you come out of it with deeper insight into how much other people can affect your life.

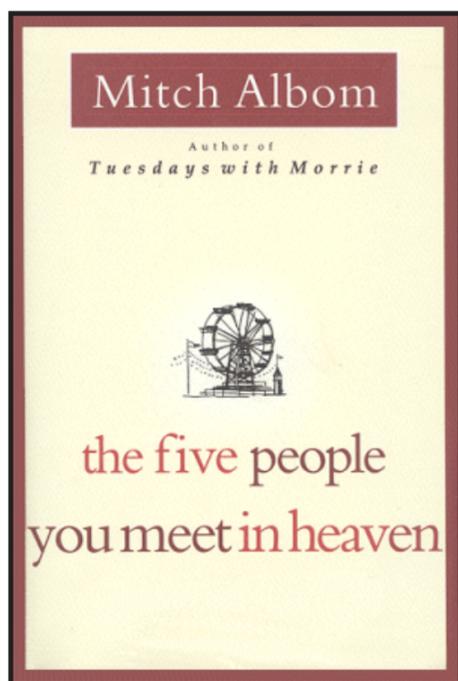


photo courtesy Hyperion Books

short, quick read, packed with a great deal of information. The book begins by informing the reader that Eddie, an 86-year-old maintenance man with a bad leg, is going to die and describes in detail the last minutes of his life on Earth. When he dies, he enters a heaven that he created in his mind. Albom's theory of

You do not have to be of a particular faith to enjoy this book; you could enjoy it even if you have no faith at all. Albom puts such detail and imagination into his explanation of heaven that even if you do not believe in it, you still finish with a deeper understanding of how every person on Earth is connected.

Babel: Parkhurst's Stunning Debut

by Rebecca Martin '06

The Dogs of Babel, by Carolyn Parkhurst, is a captivating story and a stunning debut. The premise of the book seems lighthearted, even silly. It's about a man who tries to teach his dog to speak, but don't let that fool you; this novel is anything but light fare. Instead, it's a moving portrayal of love and marriage, and the extremes to which grief can push a man.

The novel begins in the middle and moves forward and backward, telling two interlocking tales, one of falling in love and one of grieving. Paul Iverson, a happily married linguistics professor, calls home to find a detective answering the telephone at the other end. His wife, Lexy, has fallen to her death

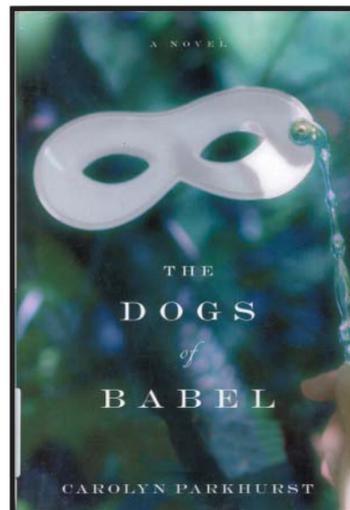


photo courtesy Brown Little Books

dog, Lorelei.

And so begins the story of grieving and obsession. The early chapters sometimes highlight the odd humor in Paul's attempt

Parkhurst half-persuades us to take his offbeat logic seriously: she uses the first person point of view so that Paul's desperate pursuit spills across the page.

Paul can only begin to break free of his obsession and fully reconcile his loss of love as he gradually assembles a new picture of his marriage and his wife. So too, the reader learns the story of Paul and Lexy together, from the day they met at a yard sale up through the day Lexy died. This is a tale of love, of playing board games by the fireside and of a kitchen in which the words "I love you" have been painted on the ceiling. The reader comes to know Lexy as Paul did: a beautiful, spontaneous girl who is touched by an offering of square eggs and can take a spur of the moment trip

Grief stricken and desperate, Paul turns to the only witness to the fall: their dog, Lorelei.

from the apple tree in their backyard. Although her death is declared an accident by the medical experts on the scene, Paul can't let go of the idea that Lexy may have taken her own life. Why else was she in that tree? And why, in the days following her death, does he discover "incongruities" like evidence of an entire steak having been fed to the dog and a bookshelf having been rearranged? Grief stricken and desperate, Paul turns to the only witness to the fall: their

to get Lorelei to talk: he once drinks out of Lorelei's bowl in an effort to get her to associate the sound "wa" with water. The mood of the novel darkens as Paul's work with Lorelei tracks his gradual decent into obsession: Paul takes a sabbatical so that he can concentrate on his ever more bizarre experiments, his crackpot theories render him the laughing stock of the campus, and he eventually puts himself and his beloved dog in real danger. Even so,

to Disney World on the first date. But as Paul sorts through his memories, he comes to see that her impulsive joy was also punctuated by dangerous flares of anger and bouts of self-loathing.

There is not a moment in this novel that is not suffused with emotion. Sometimes humorous, other times heartbreaking and even, occasionally, deeply disturbing, this engrossing book proves Carolyn Parkhurst to be an exceptionally talented writer.