

An Essay to Our Seniors

When I think of this year's senior class, I often think back to last year's gala, the first one with a swing band and where many of them discovered that dancing the way their grandparents did is really fun. How impressive they were! So much so that the singer in the sleek silver gown, having just sung the last lyrics of Les Brown's *Undecided*, was heard to exclaim "Let's hear it for our wonderful dancers; we love you! You want to go on the road with us?" What an internship that would be.

I was on the small balcony of the Bronxville Women's Club, overlooking the dance floor and wondering at the sight of 20 or so teenagers dancing with one another in steps stepped by young soldiers in crisp khaki World War II-era uniforms to melodies hummed by USO volunteers in swing skirts and Betty Grable shoes. The hallmark of a classical school is an appreciation of precious things past and a renewal of those things in an improved present. How my reverie was rocked when I saw one of our boys swing one of our girls by her legs through 360-degrees of space, catch her, and land her safely on the flight-deck again in flawless Navy flyer fashion; as if to say *How's that for improving upon the good work of our grandfathers?* The product of classical education at its best!

I romanticize the innocence and the integrity of that era gone-by and lament its passing from us long-before I ever got to know it. My father danced in his Army uniform with USO girls, and my mother served coffee to soldiers and listened to their dreams and fears long before I was born. In weak moments, I allow myself to believe the lie that innocence and integrity are lost forever. Our youth are too jaded to dance, too distracted to dream, and too self-conscious to acknowledge, share, or confront their fears, alone or with those they love.

Then, there are these young men and women of The Montfort Academy. I watch them dance together the way my parents did; with joy and energy, trust and caring, innocence and integrity. There is genuine trust in the aerobatics of their 21st century Lindy, and I am reminded that the best thing about our school is the friendships it engenders. These are friendships that recognize, appreciate, and treasure the sacred dignity of the other; that marvel at the beauty of the other as a product of the goodness within; that allow its participants to laugh freely and frequently and feel safe in sadness, pain, or righteous anger without sacrificing true happiness.

I was a privileged spectator on that balcony one year ago. I've been a willing witness each day to the proof that innocence and integrity are alive and well. I am a grateful servant in the vineyard of Our Lord watching over the fruit of His imagination. All to swing music.

Congratulations graduates and may God always bless you.

Ad majorem Dei gloriam.

Lt Col David Petrillo, Headmaster