

Welcome grandparents and special friends to St. Joseph's Chapel on this 30th anniversary of Grandparents and Special Friends Day at Kent School.

Any day Main Street in Kent, Connecticut is navigable I ride my bike to work.

Several years ago, a proper cyclist asked me what bike I own and uncertain of the model I responded (with a degree of smugness) that mine was a **red** bike.

My red bike was given to me by my brother over 30 years ago and at the time I did not fully appreciate its value. Its true worth I would discover could not be measured by AMAZON Reviews – rather, in where it has taken me the past score and ten plus years. And while it lacks the bells and whistles of many other bikes it has proven sturdy and reliable and will be with me until the very end (*far more likely, that references me rather than my bike*).

My bike, much like Kent School – as reflected in its motto: Simplicity of Life, Directness of Purpose and Self Reliance, was built not to impress, rather to prepare its user to navigate life's inevitable ebbs and flows. It's most elemental purpose, to get one where he needs to go - with the person in the handles doing the legwork and the vehicle providing the requisite support.

Influenced by a perceived need to keep pace with changing times, I purchased a fancy road bike a few years back thinking it could better get me where I wanted to go. Last spring, after sitting in the back of my garage the majority of its life, I gave my fancy bike to a colleague and once again have only my standby to get me where I actually need to go.

My daily commute takes me across the Housatonic – the waterway Father Sill recognized as an ideal spot to site a school and crew program (*recent Ice Dam notwithstanding*) some 112 years ago.

Occasionally, when the conditions are ripe, I am witness to the rising sun's rays beating back the haze on Mount Algo – the very sight that inspired the words of Robert Hillyer, Class of 1913 in the school song we will soon sing.

I then pass the Armstrong Gate – adorned with the words “Before the Gates of Excellence the High Gods have placed Sweat” that brings to mind a guiding philosophy I call the 3 P's – Preparation, Perseverance and Passion that has served as a personal roadmap through waters calm and turbulent most my life.

Once on campus, I encounter Connor returning from a 6:00 a.m. workout in the Fitness Center. A football captain elect and Honor Roll student, he greets me on his way to breakfast and his school job - all before his 8:00 first period class.

I then exchange greetings with Harold, proudly donning his Bell Tower Society pin as he greets most (*still half asleep*) students by their first names. Ever armed with a warm smile and comment on his beloved Yankees or prior night's homework, Harold arrived at Kent at age 15 and has stood at his post the past 46 years – providing countless students far more than eggs over easy on a daily basis in this span.

Later that morning I meet with a very capable though at times struggling advisee from the Midwest. We discuss ways to navigate the, at times, tricky waters that stand between adolescence and

adulthood. All the while I have no doubt he will overcome his difficulties with the help of the supportive and structured environment Kent School provides.

In the early afternoon I receive an email from Dan Pike – my first football captain at Kent 25 years ago – currently living in Austin, Texas. In addition to being a good friend, Dan is my source of inspiring articles on character development, often related to one of our military academies that I, in turn, share with colleagues and students.

Later in the day, on my way to the gym, I pass Foley Hall and hear the unmistakable voice of Ed Dunn bellowing from the 2nd floor as yet another class of A.P. US History students preps for their May exam. For 34 years few have been better prepared not only for the college courses to come yet for anything life will throw at them as a result of Ed's teachings.

As JV Baseball coach in the spring term, I ride my red bike to South Fields as the ice on the Housatonic's banks recedes. Three years ago we lost 20-0 to Trinity Pawling in our opening game – by the mercy rule in 4 innings no less. In the season finale – against the same TP team we manage to eke out an 8-7 win. Following the game, TP's coach noted it was the most dramatic turnaround he had seen in his decade's long coaching career. That season epitomized the best of Kent athletics – a group of good kids working hard, playing together and maturing on and off the field.

For dinner, I share a table with Keith Krizan – security guard of 25 years, frequent contributor to the Kent News and loyal supporter of Kent Athletics and Performing Arts who rarely misses a Guild presentation. A political ally, Keith and I search for solutions to global warming and gun control over a bowl of 3 Bean Vegetarian Chili.

Kent School - much like a bike of humble origins – helps transport those fortunate enough to be part of its community on life's journey. Father Sill chose a river as did Norman MacLean in the closing lines of *A River Runs Through It* when he said "Eventually, all things merge into one, and a river runs through it. The river was cut by the world's great flood and runs over rocks from the basement of time. On some of the rocks are timeless raindrops. Under the rocks are the words, and some of the words are theirs. I am haunted by waters."

The sun's rays now blocked by Mt. Algo, I peddle my red bike home across the Housatonic - whose rocks are etched with the words of – the Armstrong Gate, Connor, Harold, the struggling advisee, Dan, Ed, my baseball team and Keith. These words merge into a story and a river runs through it.

Thank you