

# Fair Play

In early September 1963, I sat in the Chapel of the Lower School surrounded by new classmates and teachers, adjusting to the sights and sounds of my new school. I had transferred from Orange School for eighth grade and, in so doing, became somewhat of a black sheep within my family, as I was the first male in four generations to not wear maroon and black. Red and gray seemed like a better choice for me. And the ensuing decades proved me to be wise beyond years.

During those first few weeks, as new classmates became new friends and new teachers became new mentors, I was introduced to the concept of “Fair Play.” A sign with those words inscribed was hanging in every classroom and it seemed to be in the vernacular of the teachers as well. I don’t recall anyone sitting down to explain its meaning; nevertheless, it became intuitive that this reflected how all of us were expected to conduct ourselves. It was clear that “Fair Play” had a lot to do with “character” and it was even clearer that the faculty and staff were equally concerned about our academic progress and character development. This was reinforced daily when we left school for the afternoon by walking through Headmaster Dick Day’s office, shaking his firm hand and looking him in the eyes.

The mid sixties were the “pioneer” days for Hawken’s new Upper School. We were a small student body (about 200 boys) set in a rural campus, where you were free to do most anything reasonable when not in the classroom. We were guided by the likes of Bud Kast, Peter Relic, Jim Young, Rodger Rickard, Jim Snively, Jim Bresnicky, Sam Jackson, Bob Wheeler and many others. Of all my pleasant reflections from that period (and a few not so memorable), one that has stayed with me is that we were well instructed, well coached and we had fun... there was a tremendous amount of school spirit. Perhaps the epitome of this was the Saturday brunches before football and soccer games, followed by a caravan of cars winding its way from some home in the Heights to the Gates Mills campus.

*This feature is by or about individuals in the Hawken community who capture in deed the spirit of Fair Play. As stated by Mr. Hawken, “the main purpose for which the School exists is the development of character.” The School’s motto of “Fair Play” emphasizes the importance of integrity, respect and accountability. Here we bring you some thoughts on Fair Play as it relates to Hawken’s new strategic plan from Jeffrey M. Biggar ’68. Jeff retired as Senior Managing Director & CEO from National City Bank/Sterling, where he enjoyed 34 years of service. Currently a vice president on Hawken’s Board of Trustees, Jeff is also a talented photographer.*



Or the Saturday night battle of the bands between the Naughts and the Nomads. Or bow-tie Mondays. Or just playing buck-buck on the lawn in front of the White House. All of these “traditions” were symptomatic of a “young” school that swelled with school spirit.

Upon graduating from Hawken I was fortunate (lucky) to be accepted at The University of Virginia. During my first week there, I attended a mandatory convocation where we were introduced to the Honor Code (UVa has the oldest

student governed honor system). It was then that I made the connection between “Fair Play” and the Honor Code. And I recognized that it has a lot to do with character: the respect you show to others and how you wish to be respected by your peers and the community. “Fair Play” and the Honor Code became guiding principles for me as I set off into the world of adults.

I have had the privilege and honor to serve on Hawken’s Board for the past 25 years. During this period, I have witnessed the evolution of the School under successive administrative teams. We have made steady progress in transitioning from “good to great.” But I have observed in recent years that school spirit has not been as strong as I once knew it to be. Perhaps it’s a generational thing. Having spoken with students, faculty and parents, as well as with my own two sons, my sense is that everyone recognized the value of strong school spirit but some catalyst was needed to jump start this.

Earlier this year, Head of School Scott Looney led the Board in a strategic planning retreat where he laid out the “3 Ps” – the School’s Purpose, Promise and Principles. And he also announced the “Friday Night Lights” concept (Walton Stadium) as a direct response to having asked students what they felt was needed to address school spirit. In listening to his presentation about the “3 Ps,” I was struck with his focus in the Purpose statement on the phrase “development of character and intellect.” As Scott drilled down into some of the goals and strategies, especially “character development programming,” I commented to the Board that I felt invigorated because we were returning to our roots. And while I don’t know if he plans to shake hands every evening with the Middle School students, I am convinced that he and his team of administrators and faculty get it – they understand that “Fair Play” and character development are essential to becoming a great school.

– Jeffrey M. Biggar ’68