

## “Fallen Heroes”

For twelve straight years I have written this *Compendium* article with ease. Typically, the stories of student transformations, multiple building projects, and faculty accolades simply leap from my memory and onto the page with both abandon and excitement. Regrettably, I have been staring a blank screen for several days now, not quite sure what to say or how to say it.

Lest you misunderstand, the 2004-2005 year was chock-full of transformations, construction projects, and faculty magic. In fact, the 2004-2005 academic year will go down as one of our greatest ever in all three respects. We witnessed twenty-eight confident seniors walk across our hallowed stage with both diplomas and college acceptances in hand, and over one hundred underclassman mature and develop beyond their wildest dreams. In terms of the physical plant, we witnessed the razing of Quabbin Hall, the grand opening of the new athletic fields, and the groundbreaking of Richardson Hall. And, not surprisingly, all year long we heard story after story about the care, the compassion, and the love with which our faculty found the genius in each of our students.

Despite all of this, for me the year was marked by the loss of three amazing human beings, all of whom had one thing in common—a deep love and respect for this amazing school. In very different ways, all three individuals left indelible marks on Eagle Hill School...fingerprints with which their legacy will always be identified. More personally, each one of these individuals had a profound affect on my life, both personally and professionally.

Thomas R. Kneeland taught us all the meaning of courage, respect, and honor. For eight years, Thom served as the head of overnight security with great pride. It was not uncommon, however, to see Thom on campus at various times throughout the day. He loved the kids, and the kids loved him. To honor his memory, the Thom Kneeland Distinguished Service Award will be awarded annually to a member of the faculty or staff that consistently goes above and beyond the call of duty and who continually strengthens the EHS community in a quiet, dignified, and unassuming way.

Jean M. Nardini, a member of the executive committee of the Eagle Hill School board of trustees for seven years, was a remarkable woman from whom we all learned a great deal about dedication, commitment, and compassion. Although Jean never had a child attend EHS, over time the school became her highest service and philanthropic priority for which we all owe her a debt of gratitude. Given her life long passion of caring for others within the medical profession, it was only fitting that on May 22<sup>nd</sup> I had the pleasure of presenting Jean with a beautiful framed announcement from the board of trustees proclaiming that hereafter all EHS students in need of medical attention would be treated in the Jean M. Nardini Health Center. Jean passed away the following day.

Charles H. McDonald, Eagle Hill School’s beloved thirty-year headmaster and both my predecessor and father, taught us all about passion, vision, and determination. A true pioneer in the field of learning (dis)abilities, Charles proved all the skeptics wrong and

stayed the course during those difficult early years. Eagle Hill School was his dream—a dream now fully realized because of his commitment to excellence and love of children. Charles leaves an indelible legacy of leadership, laughter, love, and learning. The new Charles H. McDonald Faculty Library now stands in testament to this legend's unwillingness to take "no" for an answer.

In the loss of these remarkable human beings, we are all reminded of the need, the value, and the importance of giving and service to others.