

A MODEST SUGGESTION REGARDING OUR SHARED PAST...AND FUTURE

1. Purpose. Provided below is an extremely innovative and well thought out concept, submitted by Dick Currie, '58 (he now goes by Neil Currie). It addresses how the Lenox School legacy could possibly endure by a method that may fill a currently existing educational niche and is significantly less complex than attempting to create a more traditional day or boarding "New Lenox School". We hope to investigate the feasibility of this concept as one of the Proposals in the "Creating A New Lenox School" Quo Vadis Project Initiative.

2. Concept.

Much was said at last weekend's reunion (2009 Reunion) about the actuarial tables catching up with us and what that portends for the future of the alumni association and the legacy it seeks to perpetuate. A suggestion was advanced that children and grandchildren of alumni be invited to join the association. It's an interesting idea but, quite frankly, based on my own experience, I doubt it would work. My kids were interested enough to take a walk through the school once and be told that's where Daddy studied. (Other things Daddy may or may not have done while in residence were not discussed and let's keep it that way.) In any event, it was a curiosity for them, not a commitment.

I suspect a commitment requires personal participation. Even a one-off relationship is probably not enough. Which brings us to the effort some years ago to reopen the school. For a variety of reasons it didn't happen and for those, and other reasons of more recent vintage, probably won't, at least in the classic Lenox model. On the other hand....

On the way back home I thought about the school and what, if anything, could be done to keep its memory alive. "Alive", of course, means living. Now. Present tense. But what, short of buying back the campus, refurbishing the buildings, hiring faculty and staff and doing it all for roughly \$1.98 per alum could we do? I've come up with an idea which might have some possibilities.

Membership in an ongoing institution with a resulting allegiance to shared values does not necessarily require twenty-four-hour-a-day, nine-months-of-the-year, total immersion. I look back with great affection on summer weeks spent at Camp Bement and Bucksteep Manor, two youth-oriented facilities of the Diocese of Western Massachusetts. (Bement continues. Bucksteep does not.)

What if the Lenox School were reconstituted as a summer program with a concentration on the arts, music, literature, and other disciplines in which the Berkshire neighborhood abounds? The model already exists in any number of theme-oriented summer camps, albeit usually focused on sports. It would not be a remedial activity but a rewarding "extra" for young people who have already demonstrated interest and ability in the several fields we elect to comprise the curriculum.

Those who seek to attend could be selected using the very same criteria that are now used to determine our scholarship recipients which, I gather, are based in turn on the original Lenox admissions standards. The concept of "Not to Be Served but to Serve" would remain at the core with a typical day modeled on the days we knew combining work, study and physical activities, whether sports, hikes or other pursuits.

It would not be free. Lenox wasn't free. Parents had to make a commitment then, too. What it would cost would depend on such factors as its location, staffing, insurance, food, etc., etc. That need not be excessive. It has been pointed out that the Lenox student body was not drawn from the typical prep school pool. We all remember the elegant luxury of some of the schools we visited as team members. That wasn't Lenox, at least not before Schermerhorn.

So, where do we find students who are highly motivated, whose parents are supportive and who would consider a few weeks of further learning in a summer setting something other than a punishment? I would

suggest we might look to home schoolers. I must confess I know little about them apart from the fact that their numbers are growing, they are testing well and their parents are often motivated by a desire to include a moral dimension in their education. For our purposes they have two other pluses: 1) they bear no allegiance to any other school; 2) they might well relish the idea of being with others for a while after a year of studying alone.

There are obviously a lot of questions to be answered, not least of which would be location and cost. In time Shakespeare & Company may have housing and classroom space that could be leased but at present they do not. However, they and other Berkshire institutions ranging from Tanglewood to the several art museums might be amenable to an academic relationship...a weekly workshop backstage at a theater, a morning painting in a real studio, field trips of living history, etc.

The Berkshires offers an extraordinary canvas. A Lenox Summer Program could make it available to qualified students, perhaps even redirecting our scholarship program to help those who otherwise might not be able to afford to participate. In that way we would be investing in our own educational heritage rather than another school's. In the process, we would re-create an on-going, living institution to which a new generation of students would feel kinship, become alums and thus perpetuate the Lenox legacy. And, who knows, having taken this step what others might one day follow?

I toss this idea out for the discussion of fellow Lenox alumni who, like me, don't want to see the school die as, inevitably, we do.

Dick Currie, '58

Note: Sometime after leaving Lenox I began using my middle name (Neil) so don't be confused by my e-mail address neilcurrie@radiofeatures.com . It's all the same loveable person.