



KENNETH L. GREIF
Celebration of Life • November 3, 2019
The Park School of Baltimore



Kenny Greif

This is definitely the worst assignment of my life: write a brief, emotionally charged but not maudlin, essay about, arguably, one of Park School's greatest teachers. I suppose the good news is that Kenny will not be able to correct my grammar, ferret out my comma faults, or hash through my clichés. The bad news is, however, that Kenny is not here to correct my grammar, ferret out my comma faults, or hash through my clichés.

We all loved Kenny. I'd wager that everyone in this room believes they were his favorite. It was a particular genius of his that he could do that — make each of us feel so very special. He was so much more than our high school English teacher. He was also our baseball coach, our occasional ride home, our Miss Lonelyhearts, our college reference, our class advisor. He was Kurtz and Binx Bolling and Banquo's ghost and Jim and Jude and Juliet and the Swede.

He cheered our games — JV, Varsity, and the occasional Little League. He applauded our recitals, concerts, and plays. He came to our weddings and our bar mitzvahs. He had total recall of every paper every student ever wrote, much to the eternal shame of many of us. He loved a cold martini, the trout at Petit Louis, and ballpark fare. He could give play-by-plays of every Orioles, Colts, and Ravens game he'd ever attended. He was our private tutor, sponsor, benefactor, and spiritual guide. He feared the possibility that in a million years the earth might leave its orbit and crash into the sun. He dreaded faculty meetings. He seldom traveled without a canvas bag, stuffed with newspapers to read, papers to grade, gifts for friends, and an extra sweatshirt, in case a cold front blew through Memorial Stadium in July.

The touchstones of Kenny's life were Camp Wigwam, Brown University, and Park School. Campers, roommates, students. We were his family. Now, in this theater, our dear Kenny, who hated being the center of attention is, for his last hurrah, the center of attention. I imagine I can hear him, with utter clarity, reading to this final class of friends and relatives:

So we beat on, boats against the current, borne back ceaselessly into the past.

And there's one more thing — I know the real truth about Kenny. In spite of what the rest of you may think, I was always his favorite.

—*Julie Andres Schwait '68*

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Dan Paradis, *Head of School*

Deborah Weiner '82

Tom Rothman '72

Richard Lavenstein '69

Amanda Lipitz '98

Musical interlude – Timo Andres

Schumann: Canonic Etudes, Op. 56, 1. Nicht zu schnell

Josh Tyrangiel '90

Genine Fidler '73

Greg White '81

Alfred Uhry

Ruth Franklin '91

Musical interlude — Siobhan Kolker '89 and Marc Irwin

Medley: You're the Top/Time After Time (Cole Porter/Jule Styne)

Suzy Blaustein '70 and Stephanie Jed '71

Roger Seidenman '85

Shale Stiller, *Former President of the Board of Trustees*

Video Producers

Rick Schaeffer '69

Kathy Shapiro '75

Videographer/ Editor

Billy Michels

Thank You

In order of appearance: Rick Schaeffer '69,
Michael Hettleman, Buzzy Hettleman,
Bob Strauss, Sid Steinberg '80,
Pelle Wertheimer '80, Andy Kolker '99,
Ruthie Kalvar '85, Nancy Royster,
Michael Stiller '85, Jack Kalvar '18,
Alex Kalvar '15, Kevin Fruman '92

Reception and book sharing to follow.

(Kenny has donated his collection of books to Park. Please take several books home to remember Kenny, his teaching, and his love of literature.)

When Great Trees Fall

Maya Angelou

When great trees fall,
rocks on distant hills shudder,
lions hunker down
in tall grasses,
and even elephants
lumber after safety.

When great trees fall
in forests,
small things recoil into silence,
their senses
eroded beyond fear.

When great souls die,
the air around us becomes
light, rare, sterile.
We breathe, briefly.
Our eyes, briefly,
see with
a hurtful clarity.
Our memory, suddenly sharpened,
examines,
gnaws on kind words
unsaid,
promised walks
never taken.

Great souls die and
our reality, bound to
them, takes leave of us.
Our souls,
dependent upon their
nurture,
now shrink, wizened.
Our minds, formed
and informed by their
radiance, fall away.
We are not so much maddened
as reduced to the unutterable ignorance of
dark, cold
caves.

And when great souls die,
after a period peace blooms,
slowly and always
irregularly. Spaces fill
with a kind of
soothing electric vibration.
Our senses, restored, never
to be the same, whisper to us.
They existed. They existed.
We can be. Be and be
better. For they existed.

Poem contributed by Cindy Krause '72