

# ALUMNI CHAPEL

## *A Chapel Tale*

*By Terry Mullin '73*

The Invitation—Wow! How exciting, being invited to give a talk at my Seventh Grade son's chapel. Sounds easy enough. My whole life has been prepped, groomed and conditioned for these types of events; after all, my career is in the advertising field.

I am to present a five-minute chapel talk drawn from my life experiences with a nugget of a moral at the end. No problem, so off to the drawing board I go.

The Aftershock—Oh no! What have I gotten myself into? What could I possibly share with a bunch of seventh and eighth graders—most of whom tower over me and seem more experienced. Not to mention the possibility of embarrassing my son. Yikes! Maybe I should cancel.

The Build-up—I am scouring through the tapes in my brain, searching for the perfect story which will demonstrate how cool and smart I have become. You know, really show these kids something. But is there any story or experience worth sharing? I will have a captive audience starting their spiritual day with me sharing one of my profound lessons. There still might be time to back out of this.

The Morning—After all-night deliberations with myself, I wake up confident that I have selected an appropriate story of growing up and doing the right thing. Okay I think I've gotten it straight. I review and re-review the details of this version. I put on my preppy outfit and off I go.

The Chapel—I arrive at school early and do the normal formalities with John Dearie and colleagues. We walk up the circular stairs and enter the Chapel. Nobody's there yet and I take a seat on the back bench by the organ. It seems safer next to where Mr. Moore resides. The boys start filing in and all glance over, wondering why Patrick's dad is sitting there. The jovial and relaxed Mr. Kilkeary and the wily Mr. Ryan each give me a handshake. The hymns begin to chime.

The Walk—The organ stops bellowing and Mr. Moore is finished turning pages of music. Mr. Kilkeary leads the prayers and then it's time for me to walk down the aisle. The boys are all seated and row by row their heads turn. "Easy does it," I say to myself as I try to remain calm.

The Tale—I begin by introducing how all things are connected in life. These connections begin early at home, school and church, which provide the basic pil-



*Terry Mullin '73 (right) with Alumni Coordinator John Dearie '95.*

# TALK

lars and sign posts that help you navigate your life's journey. The tale that I am about to share draws from these early connections and reminds us of their importance. When a true test arises you are grateful for this foundation.

My tale is set in New York City after I graduated from Saint David's. Things were different back then—from both a cultural and a philosophical standpoint. It was the early 1970's, complete with all the love and revolution stuff. My parents were out of town and I and my handicapped brother were in the care of my 80-year-old Italian Grandma. It happened to be a hot summer evening and I was “hanging out” with some of my rock 'n' roll, skateboard buddies on the steps of the Museum of Natural History. All of a sudden we noticed the streetlight and cross signals weren't working. It quickly became apparent to the elders of the pack that we were in the midst of a blackout.

It was beginning to get very dark and the bright idea came to this mischievous bunch that if the electricity was off that probably meant the alarms were disengaged in the museum, so why not break in? At this moment an alarm went off in my head. I didn't need electricity or any other energy source to figure out what NOT to do.

First of all, I was afraid to be a burglar and, second, I never was comfortable being coerced into a decision by a group conscience. Most importantly, what raced through my mind was that my grandmother and brother—not the most resourceful duo— were in our apartment alone, with no electricity. Being neither a superhero nor a coward, I pretended to head down the steps with my friends toward the museum entrance and then slipped away when the timing was right. I hustled across Central Park toward the East Side. Out of breath and at my apartment building, I looked up and detected some flickering of light through the dark windows of my kitchen. I went upstairs to confirm that both my grandmother and brother were safe. To my relief, they were. As it happened, I decided to go out and get some milk and ended up helping direct traffic on the corner of 79<sup>th</sup> and Second for a good part of the night.

The Moral—Whenever possible, don't succumb to peer pressure. You know what's right . . . even before you do something. And, think of others first. I wish that I could say all of my adventures had such a positive outcome, but we are all human and make mistakes. That said, I always feel better when I listen to the alarm in my head.

The End—Thank goodness that is over. I can't wait to do it again.

