

# Tradition & Innovation

This spring's graduation marked a milestone for Saint George's School. Our first ever group of graduates returned to campus to celebrate the 50th anniversary of their own graduation. Six of the original nine graduates processed with our faculty and current students to the playing of the bagpipes at the opening of this year's ceremony—just as they did as seniors 50 years ago.

They would all tell you that they love the traditions that have persisted: the bagpipes, the crossing of the bridge, the white dresses and blue blazers. And they would tell you that some of the innovations have been an improvement—in particular the kind words spoken for each student before they are handed their diploma.

Being graduates of Saint George's, they have strong opinions as well that they shared, primarily that with this many graduates everything took too long. Given that this was a class of 28 and we have 44 seniors next year, we will have to work on that!

This month's magazine celebrates just that tension between tradition and innovation. By the time you are 50, there are long enduring traditions that you hope persist through the next 50 years. But there is also a deep understanding that times have changed and will continue to do so—not just from the inevitable passing of years, but from the positive results of the actions we take.

Our students and teachers have embraced innovation this year, experimenting in numerous ways with what we teach and how we teach it. You will read about the Upper School experiment with Spring Term that allowed groups of students and teachers to experience and learn about new topics in depth over a two-week period.

Our other divisions have been testing new ideas as well. The Lower School, particularly the 5th grade, took advantage of our Outdoor programming by incorporating

leadership opportunities into the 5th grade experiences such as canoeing on the river and navigating low and high ropes courses. In the Upper School, the English teachers are exploring blogging opportunities for their students, and the Middle School teachers are talking about creating bigger blocks of class time and more integrated programs. These innovations—stemming from faculty commitment and creativity—keep our curriculum fresh and relevant, while taking advantage of our spectacular campus and region.

There are things we did 50 years ago that we no longer do. The students can't bring their own horses to campus, they don't help take care of the farm animals, and we no longer hold classes in a barn. But the core of the school we were then—high academic standards, an expectation that every student is engaged in activity beyond academics, and a close bond between students and teachers—still endures. These are traditions that will continue to define Saint George's for the next 50 years.

— Mo Copeland, Head of School



**The 5th graders crossed a red-carpeted bridge to the Middle School at the end of the school year. Their ceremony is a “new” tradition patterned after the 50-year old Upper School graduation.**

