The Park School of Baltimore

THE FIRST SEVENTY-FIVE YEARS

By Jean Thompson Sharpless

CROSS CURRENTS

75th Anniversary Edition

Volume 11, Number 2
June 1988

The Park School of Baltimore
BROOKLANDVILLE, MARYLAND

ca. 1913: Could this be the first Park School May Day?

CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION 3
FOUNDING THE PARK SCHOOL: THE STORY IN BRIEF 5
THE HISTORY OF PARK SCHOOL'S EDUCATIONAL PHILOSOPHY 7
THE SMITH YEARS 1912–1922 14
MARGARET FULTON COE ESTABLISHES PRIMARY SCHOOL PHILOSOPHY 30
THE LEYDON YEARS 1922–1925 35
THE SIPPLE YEARS 1925–1932 36
THE FROELICHER YEARS 1932–1956 38
THE THOMASON YEARS 1956–1967 50
THE CALLANAN YEARS 1967–1975 64
THE SHARPLESS YEARS 1976– 75
APPENDIX 95

ca. 1940: May Day

It came to me like a flash that this was the opportunity, not only to overcome this prejudice against the Jews, but also to carry out a plan which might as well be termed a dream as a plan, namely to establish a new type of school. . . . In order to succeed, such a school must be better than any now in existence . . . so superior that neither Jew nor Gentile can ignore it. . . . It must open up new fields in education.

Professor Hans Froelicher*

*Professor Hans Froelicher, recalling—in a letter written in 1925 to Stanwood Cobb, president of the Progressive Education Association—his momentous 1912 meeting with Eli Frank and Louis Levin, when Froelicher described to them the original inspiration that was to support the founding of The Park School.

ca. *1913:* Park School students in Druid Hill Park

INTRODUCTION

Significant events in history depend upon the convergence in time and place of exceptional people with an idea that has universal appeal. The conditions surrounding the founding of The Park School are no exception to that rule. The vital elements that merged in 1912 and resulted in The Park School were

a growing national trend toward strengthening the role that schools play in educating children for citizenship in a democracy.

specific efforts to introduce these educational ideas into the Baltimore public school system.

a political split between the mayor and the Board of School Commissioners over these educational reforms, climaxing in the dismissal of three commissioners and the resignation of two others.

the fact that one of these men was a Jew whose children were excluded for religious reasons from the existing private schools, and another was a college professor with a firm belief that the essence of education was to treat learning as a lifelong process.

the interest and influence of a group of civic-minded men who sought to establish a democratically based private school "open to Jews and Gentiles alike."

The most critical component was the extraordinary good character of the men who became the founders of The Park School. Indeed, the strength and idealism of the many men and women who have contributed their talents and abilities to Park School over the years have made it possible for Park School to hold fast against the harsh winds of financial hardship, erosive influences on its educational philosophy, and the injustice of religious prejudice. The spirit of the school community has been imbued with the courage and good will of the founders, enabling the school to excel and to thrive throughout 75 years. Park School's history is an inspirational story of what good people can do when they band together in an idealistic spirit.

ca. 1913: Charles Hutzler '20 and Sol Kann '20 at Park School

Part of Park School's strength is rooted in righteous indignation, since Park School was founded in protest to a public school system that was being threatened by the political ambitions of a newly elected mayor and in protest to the exclusionary practices of most private schools during the first decade of this century. Still, in choosing to rise above the social injustice their children had suffered, the men who founded Park School were determined not to do to others as others had done to them, and they used their energies to found a school that would be "frankly non-sectarian, open to Jews and Gentiles alike." The inspiration of their humanity has been the guiding spirit of The Park School for 75 years. Current confirmation of their educational idealism is the intellectual excitement that prevails at Park daily, and the lives of the graduates of the school as they enter the adult world and carry out the values and ideals of the institution.

The history of Park School is an inspiring story of the lasting influence that the actions of honorable people can have on society. This 75th Anniversary issue of *Cross Currents* is a historical record of their vision, taken from the writings of headmasters, teachers, student editors of *Brownie*s, editors of *The Park School Magazine,* and from recollections of teachers and alumni.

The scope of The Park School family of parents, alumni, students, and teachers is vast, and it has not been possible in this brief history to mention all the many people who have contributed to the success of Park School throughout the years. I like to think that 25 years from now, in 2012–13, as Park School celebrates its centennial year, someone will publish a longer, more inclusive history.

I want to thank Larry Gilbert '67, archivist and math teacher at Park School, for all his help. This history could not have been attempted without his 10-year effort in reorganizing and carefully filing cartons and cartons of papers and photographs that had been randomly stored in the school archives, as well as his willingness to compile the information contained in the appendix.

In planning and writing this issue of *Cross Currents,* I have relied upon the judgment and advice of the Editorial Board: Gretchen Vogel Feldman '52, Nancy Kohn Rabin '61, and JoAnn Cohen Fruchtman '61, and appreciate their wise counsel in helping me to avoid some of the pitfalls such an enterprise contains; in the final stages, Ann Malman Stiller and Joel Rabin offered helpful editorial advice. The handsome design by Susan Panitz Fillion '70 allows me to tell two stories simultaneously: the institutional and educational history of the school and the accompanying commentary from *Brownie* editors, alumni, and teachers. I want to thank Cornelia Cody, teacher of foreign language and dramatics at Park School from 1981 to 1987, for extracting pertinent excerpts from the *Brownie*s of the last four decades; and Joan Shaull and Barbara Bates for their skills at the word processor. Finally, I want to thank my husband, Parvin, who has given this effort his encouragement, a careful and intelligent first reading, and invaluable editorial comments.

Jean Thompson Sharpless