



ST. EDMUND'S ACADEMY

WILLIAM L. KINDLER, PH.D · HEAD OF SCHOOL

KEEPING IN TOUCH

December 10, 2009

Dear Parents,

HAPPY HOLIDAYS!

Shortly, St. Edmund's Academy will close its 2009 regular education programs, with community members enjoying the holiday break in a multitude of ways and locations, and returning relaxed and contented for the resumption of school on January 4, 2010.

The field of education is like life itself; always flowing in the ebb and tide of existing conditions, forces, and influences. I remain in awe, at times, at what we are able to accomplish with our young, budding children in the face of both opportunities and barriers. I also become sadly disappointed and even discouraged on those occasions when we are unable to satisfy and/or solve issues/problems that can and do impede the school's mission, curriculum, and culture. We function and survive in the ocean of human behavior, and on any school related item, the range of responses often reaches the statistical 180 degree level.

In the first three weeks of March 2010, we will ask you to participate in a well-designed Parent Satisfaction Survey as part of the preparation for our accreditation self-study program, and more importantly, because this is what we should do on a regular basis. The survey is designed by the National Association of Independent Schools (NAIS) and is kept current by the results and recommendations of user schools who are NAIS members. The results from this online, confidential survey become useful to the Board of Trustees, administration, faculty, and staff as benchmarks for the improvement and sustainability of St. Edmund's Academy. In January, I will inform you of the specifics and urge (plead if helpful) everyone to participate. The higher the percentage of respondents, the more "powerful" the information becomes.

A tribute to Anita Gevaudan Byerly.

On Saturday, November 21, 2009, Anita Gevaudan Byerly passed away at age eighty. Ms. Byerly was St. Edmunds' Academy's secretary for thirty-one years and the School's **Poet-in-Residence** for eight years. At age fifty, she enrolled at the University of Pittsburgh and graduated with a degree in English writing. "She was really, really happy about that," her son-in-law, Gerard Katilius, said. "She was just thrilled to be going, and she loved her classes and loved her experiences." Ms. Byerly immersed herself in Pittsburgh's literary scene and published two books of her poems, [Digging a Hole to China](#) in 2001 and [October Light](#) in 2008. Both books are in our School's library. On April 17, 2008, St. Edmund's Academy sponsored "An Evening with Anita Byerly." This highly-attended event ended with a book signing reception in the library. Fifty percent of the book sales were donated back to SEA to enhance reading opportunities for children.

In the last weeks of her life, Ms. Byerly put the final touches on her third book of poetry. When she fell into a coma, her friend placed the final proofs of the manuscript [Steam Rising](#) in her hands, and her granddaughter read selections aloud. When the book is published, we will secure copies for the School's library from the

contributions we continue to receive, as her family requested that donations be made to St. Edmund's Academy or to The Western PA Writing Project at the University of Pittsburgh School of Education. Steam Rising can be ordered from beattyjp@aol.com.

I remember so well one of the many poems Ms. Byerly read during our enchanting evening with her and have reread it many times, among the other wonderful poems in her two published books.

January Thaw

**Red rose on white snow,
a voiceless cardinal
by grandma's grave
where we stood, linked
by blood; distanced
by coats, hoods,
scarves, time.**

**Down in the valley
the Monongahela slept
under its cover of green ice
while the smokestacks
of the Edgar Thomson coughed
black phlegm into gray sky.**

**"Dust thou art, and to dust
thou shalt return," the priest
intoned, but it was later
in the car with Cousin Emma
when the flood of my tears
broke through.**

**Now ice cracks the Allegheny,
spilling the river over its sides,
leaving Pittsburgh behind
in mud, that primordial muck,
that in the sun dries to dust.**

Anita Byerly's work radiates memory's infrared projectiles, deepening our fragile experiences of the now. Her intimacy with the physical elements of this world infuses October Light with wisdom and grace. Endangered cities, families, songs, and ghosts create an unusual dominion in which everyone matters. Such a wide embrace is the central gift of these fine poems. – Judith Vollmer, poet

Yours in peace,

William Kindler