

September 9, 2011

Dear Parents,

Last weekend, as I was driving from Columbus to Gambier, Ohio, for a Chatham Hall-related event, my GPS deposited me in the middle of nowhere.

When it told me that I had a mile to go, I had become a bit nervous. There was not a house in sight, nevertheless the energetic Kenyon College campus, where I was headed. The polite but firm voice instructed me to turn right at a desolate intersection, then, abruptly, to stop. “You have reached your destination,” she said confidently.

Corn to the left of me. Corn to the right of me. Corn in front and in back of me.

My destination, indeed. There was not a house in sight. The familiar panic of being lost and late struck me. I felt that distinctive, traveler-without-a-clue loneliness.

Then, like a gun slinger in the frontier reaching for his Colt 45, I grabbed my BlackBerry, re-Googled Gambier, plugged in a more specific address, and off I went. I arrived at the event ten minutes early.

And, so, we have spent two weeks (or in the case of pre-season athletes, three weeks), setting up the directions, positioning your daughters and ourselves, and doing everything in our power to make Chatham Hall their home destinations. Some may have had to do the occasional re-Googling.

Some of the signature points on our journey together so far:

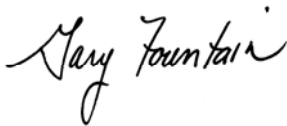
- A huge pre-season—44 athletes returned early to run many miles, spike many volleyballs, and smack many field hockey goals. There has been strong competition for the varsity teams. Our cross country runners took the first three places in a practice meet two days ago.
- A beautiful evening picnic under the 300-year-old oak tree on campus. New girls and faculty became either a Purple or a Gold, the Golds won the tug of war, and the Seniors presented a gorgeous lantern ceremony after darkness fell.
- A group of freshmen on a Sunday afternoon, sitting on the grass in front of the campus, reading aloud the play for English class, from their iPads.
- Advisee groups meeting on a Friday afternoon and heading to faculty houses or trips off campus for the evening. Several ended up late that evening at the frozen yogurt place in Danville.
- The cast for the production of *Little Women* set. Very competitive, with roles available for only half of those who tried out.

- Graded homework assignments, once again, crowding the ABC board.
- A Chapel Service that served as the debut of the Chatham Hall Ukulele Orchestra, five girls and a Chaplain who love that twang.
- Our first formal (tablecloths and candles) Sunday dinner, including instruction on etiquette, following Chapel—a wonderful, dignified gathering of the whole community in worship and fellowship.
- A student quivering with excitement in my office, as she explained the thrill of leading her first seminar discussion in history class.
- An Honor Code Chapel that challenged us to stand up for what is right and fair, even if doing so is not popular.

Most important: we are settled into the routine of daily classes and nightly homework. Suddenly, and magically, the whole campus goes starkly quiet at 7:30 each weekday night, as your daughters dig into their work.

And meetings are buzzing with plans for the year: Leaders in Residence, the service trip to South Africa (see the School's Web site for information), and the summer study trip to Oaxaca, Mexico for Spanish students. The Seniors' college visit weekend is around the corner. So are the retreat weekend for the Sophomores, a day trip to Monticello and UVa for the Juniors, and a canoeing trip down the James River for the Freshmen.

See you Parents Weekend.



Gary Fountain
Rector

P.S. The new video about the iPad Pilot Program: <http://www.chathamhall.org/ipad/index.php>.