

From the Head of School



Frank Phillips

I spent my column in last quarter's edition of *The Messenger*

bragging about all the accomplishments at St. Mary's. It'd be easy enough to do that again since we did, indeed, enjoy a great spring, winning the Oregonian Cup and graduating the Class of 2007, the members of which are heading off to a variety of exciting pursuits and interesting, often prestigious, colleges. In this column, however, I'd like to call your attention to some changes and look ahead just a little bit. First, you will notice something different about *The Messenger*. St. Mary's has a new logo and look! A year-long marketing study conducted in 2005-2006, to which I've referred in previous columns, revealed much about what we all value at St. Mary's. Large numbers of students, parents, faculty, friends, and community leaders were interviewed in this study. The list of what our community likes about the school is an admirable one! Here are the big three:

Intellectual atmosphere: St. Mary's is a place that requires thought and learning and research that lead to calm, articulate, well-informed conclusions. This sets us apart from much of modern society.

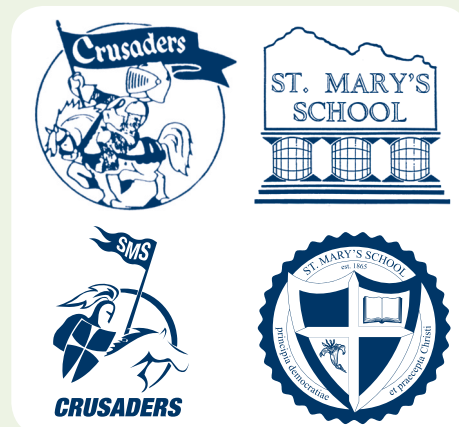
Community Service: Our people believe it is a duty, a moral imperative, to roll up one's sleeves and make some positive change in the world.

Global Education: It's no secret that the forces of globalization call upon our students to realize that their livelihoods and their lives require an understanding of the planet, economically, politically, culturally, and scientifically. Continuing improvement of and additions to our curriculum and to our extra-curricular programs address these issues more and more effectively, setting St. Mary's apart from many other schools. (See the article on ISA testing on page 6!)

So, with that information on board, how does one go about picking a new logo? Well, of course, one forms a committee.

Our committee included parents, teachers, administrators, and members of the St. Mary's Board of Trustees. The services of an agency were retained, and we spent several months looking at dozens of options.

One thing that is important to realize, is that for an institution almost a century and a half old, St. Mary's has never had an official logo! Look below and you'll see pictured several images that have represented St. Mary's over the years.



The one with the longest shelf-life was Cedric, (that is, in fact, his official name for you St. Mary's trivia buffs) the pudgy Crusader man on his pudgy little horse. He has the biggest fan base and a huge nostalgia factor. Mr. Naumes loves that guy! In the 1990s, he was replaced in school publications with a graphic image of the sculpture in our courtyard called "Mountains of Support." This lasted until 2002, when a former Head and an art teacher who is no longer here, a committee of two, came up with "The Crest." The crest is very traditional looking, like a doily with Latin and a shield on it. It has always been a bit of embarrassment to me, however, since I was asked to supply the Latin for "the principles of Democracy and the teachings of Christ." Well, the Romans didn't have a word for democracy (they were an aristocratic republic and then an empire, and the Caesars weren't big fans of "one-man-one-vote"), so I was compelled

to deliver a fake Latin word for our official logo, which was then endlessly reproduced and disseminated. The scholar in me has been deeply ashamed of this for the last several years, so I'm glad to get that off my chest.

Finally, marketing studies for independent schools reveal, literally, thousands of day schools who copy this Harvard-y looking kind of crest with a shield and Latin upon it, or, if not Latin, some saying written in what people think is a classy font. Lots of schools, many of them founded very recently, like to try to get some mileage out of this faux-heraldic look. Harvard has right to it. St. Mary's, at 142 years-old, has some legitimate claim to a traditional look, but many schools do not. In fact, some recently started schools use this approach, as if printing a medieval looking logo lends them instant academic credibility. Marketing studies show that there are so many of these look-alike crests out there, that people tend both to ignore them and to be unable to associate them readily with the schools they represent. In other words, they are not effective logos for marketing an independent school. And, we have to admit, marketing plays an important role in running St. Mary's. Increased enrollment helps us to control tuition increases and to offer a higher quality program.

So where's that leave us? The committee knew that St. Mary's wanted a logo that spoke to what the school offered, those core values mentioned above, and was memorable and instantly recognizable. We also wanted a logo that differentiated us from other schools. So you're probably screaming to yourself right now, "How did we end up with a big green leaf?" Well, we looked at cleaned-up and simplified versions of the crest, we looked at stylized versions of the shield, we looked at multiple and layered shields, we looked at books inside of globes, we looked at all sorts of religious symbols, realistic and abstract, we looked at purely abstract symbols along the line of the Nike swoosh, we looked at simple "word marks", different ways of boldly printing "St. Mary's School" and letting the words stand as our logo, and we

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looked at combinations of all of these things. We kept returning to the leaf, however. It is simple. It is clean, clear, and crisp. It reproduces well in color and in black and white. It represents growth and a healthy environment and possibility and spring and life. It's friendly, like St. Mary's. It leans upwards and to the right – like the graph of a rising stock, it indicates a positive trend. It injects a little color into our letterhead. People who looked at a bunch of test logos remembered it most easily. It is not a crest with a shield and fake Latin, which represented pretension, defensiveness, and an image of St. Mary's as a stodgy old institution looking to the past, something we clearly are not. We are proud of our past, but we are really excited about the present and the future! Now, the vote by the committee for the leaf was a simple majority vote. It was by no means unanimous. Some members of the committee frankly opposed it. Like anything else in life, from politics to marriage to death itself, it's easy to poke fun at. And that's OK. Have a field day with it. But that's our new look launched now, officially, in time for the upcoming 2007-2008 school year, and for all the reasons I just laid out, we are proud of it and think it looks great!

"But," I am sure you're asking yourselves, "what about our athletic program? Surely, we are not going to put our kids out there on the fields and courts with a wimpy leaf on their gear? It'll signal the end of the world!" Of course not. The leaf represents St. Mary's School overall. The athletic logo got revamped separately. It has changed. As I pointed out previously, Cedric, the pudgy Crusader on his hypothyroid pony, served the school faithfully since post WWII. He was compelled to take early retirement in 2004 when he was replaced by our current, more aggressive cartoon Crusader, who has a much more threatening spear and a better body mass index. The marketing committee took a look at this image too. Now here's where things get even more contentious. The issue has certainly been raised over the years that the Crusades, as an historical

event, were, shall we say, a mixed bag. There are many historical arguments to be made about positive outcomes from the Crusades: for example, that they provided Europe the breathing space that kept it from being overrun by Islam, or that a great benefit of the Crusades was the opening of trade routes with the East. The Crusades, however, were holy wars, a phrase many contend is an oxymoron. And any cursory, realistic, impartial examination of the Crusades reveals all the atrocities and human depravity normally associated with wars. And any cursory glance at the world today reveals the untold anguish caused on the planet by wars, whether holy or secular. A number of schools and colleges with the Crusader mascot are asking themselves, given terrorism and religious wars in the world, if the Crusader projects the values on which these schools pride themselves. Yes, I don't blame you if you want to scream that this is "politically correct" hogwash, but the Crusader, within the context of a marketing study commissioned by the St. Mary's Board of Trustees, raised some questions, serious questions that we had to address. "Is the Crusader a mission-appropriate image for St. Mary's School in the 21st century?" "Should we adopt a new mascot?" The answer to the first question was, "Ummm . . . maybe . . . it depends on how cleverly you define Crusader." The answer to the second question was "No." We are, and always have been, the St. Mary's Crusaders. The majority of us could never imagine being anything else. What the committee did decide however was to move away from a graphic representation of an actual warrior threatening harm to a more collegiate look. We are, after all, a serious college preparatory school and it's good for our students and our athletic programs and materials to sport a collegiate look. We therefore moved to the college-style block letter word-mark below for our athletic logo:

Again, we like the crisp, bold lettering, we like the way this new logo avoids confusion with South Medford (we both used to use "SM"), and we like the way the logo reproduces on clothing, sports memorabilia, and print materials. And we clearly advertise ourselves to the world as the Crusaders, while not projecting a medieval image of violence.

So there you have it, an explanation of how, and why, we came to our new look and logos. You'll notice some other changes, too, in the St. Mary's world. Visit our website (www.stmarysschool.us). You'll see that it has been completely redesigned, is much easier to navigate, and offers a dynamite interactive calendar that you can sync to a PDA and customize to e-mail you reminders of the St. Mary's events that interest you. There are many other bells and whistles on the website that you will find, including access for parents and students to on-line grading, an alumni update page, and an on-line applicant inquiry page. Finally, what else is new at St. Mary's? How about an all-time high in enrollment! We jumped from 325 students to 395 students last year. Next year, we'll open up with a minimum of 415 students, waiting lists at several grade levels, and great interest in the best educational program in the Rogue Valley! Stay tuned for more in the fall edition of *The Messenger*.

