

News and Events

AN UNDERSTANDING OF THE LARGER WORLD

By Principal Tyler C. Tingley '48, '64, '01 (Hon.); P'99

"Exeter is a place where one works out not only the beginnings of a self-identity and sense of a personal future, but also a general understanding of the larger world."

This is how the U.S. Ambassador to the United Nations, John D. Negroponte '56, introduced his talk at the Academy's annual New York dinner early in December. Having just returned from visiting with alumni/ae and parents in Hong Kong and Seoul, Korea, I was struck by how Ambassador Negroponte's description of an Exeter education echoed the educational objectives of the Asian parents I met. His words also reflected what the alumni/ae I talked with felt was the most valuable part of their Academy experience. These alumni/ae and parents from cultures with different traditions and pedagogical histories clearly set great store by Exeter's educational values.

During my visit to Seoul, Scott Hahn '90 arranged for me to be interviewed by a reporter from *The Chosun Ilbo*, a prestigious Korean daily newspaper. The reporter's questions again

highlighted the general interest in our Harkness style of teaching and our respect for the pupil. I was quoted in the article as saying, "A classroom in which the teacher lectures while the students sit and listen is not comparable with the real global world. It is important to teach students to develop their ability to express themselves clearly."

This trip has set me thinking a great deal about the Exeter student body, and the experiences they are having in our Harkness classrooms, on the playing fields and in dorm rooms across campus. At Exeter it seems to me, our students are in fact practicing something rather rare. Exeter asks them to dig deep not only into their own ideas and opinions, but also into the ideas and opinions of others.

Those I spoke with on my trip appreciated that the goal of a Harkness discussion may not be agreement or persuasion. It may in fact be respectful and significant disagreement. They understood that the ultimate goal is always thorough and critical understanding, for the benefit of everyone around the Harkness table. Our students find themselves immersed in a diverse community fully committed to a meritocracy of ideas, and to the notion that all members are equal and valued, not for their power or background or privilege, but for the quality of their thought and character, regardless of whether or not they agree.

Parents and alumni/ae appreciate the impact of that experience. Exonians speak so often about Exeter as a touchstone, a transforming experience that stands out among other educational or life experiences. The critical insights and perspectives our students gain at Exeter go on to influence their work, their families, their communities and the world. When I think about the complexity of the world 10 or 20 years from now, I want to be sure there are Exonians participating in the local, state, national and international dialogues—helping to shape that world. To borrow a phrase from Ambassador Negroponte, our students must be equipped "to clarify differences even when they cannot be resolved." This ability will set them apart, no matter what work they undertake in their lives and no matter where they choose to do that work.

Lighting up the winter night



Shortly before the holiday break, Principal Ty Tingley (left) joined students for a tree-decorating contest in the newly landscaped Wetherell Quad. Shown here with Principal Tingley are (left to right) Meg Allison '04, Kelsey Meuse-Hassinger '05, Cat Hollander '05, Jess George '04, math instructor Paul MacManus, Soo Hyun Roh '06, Donnelley Hayde '05 and Chelsea Rodriguez '06.