



The **Skirmisher**

Fall 2007

St. John's Military School

**Keith Duckers**  
1927 - 2007

**President of**  
**St. John's**  
**Military**  
**School**  
1960 - 1993

*A Legacy  
Remembered*

# The Skirmisher

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### The Skirmisher

The Skirmisher magazine is a publication of St. John's Military School in Salina, Kansas. It is published three times per year and sent to alumni, parents, cadets and friends of the school.

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# The Chairman's Message...

Dear St. John's Family,

St. John's Military School is a very special place, and over the past several months we have searched nationally for the right person with the special qualities it takes to be its President. I am pleased to announce to you that we have found that person.

Mr. Larry Lysell has agreed to accept the presidency. Many of you will remember the name. Lysell has a history with our school as a teacher, recruiter, and administrator. He has been teaching and serving as a superintendent in the Kansas public schools for the past 20 years, but has not lost his love of SJMS. His energy and enthusiasm for the post are contagious.


As we enter the fall and a new beginning for the 120<sup>th</sup> Corps of Cadets, there is a renewed energy surrounding the Corps. The Leadership Camp for the cadet leadership, and in-service days for the military and academic staff were successful and everyone is off and running. The cadet leadership, headed by Battalion Commander Nathan Dixon, has displayed a very proactive leadership style and has the New and Old Boys looking great. The



addition of an obstacle course, development of a paint ball range, and a host of other new and developing cadet programs has the cadets and staffs excited for the upcoming year.

The 120<sup>th</sup> Corps formed with just 92 boys. The number of cadets is reflective of the challenges facing all military schools across the nation, and the continuing challenges St. John's faces in identifying and recruiting the boys we want to serve. St. John's has always served boys that need the discipline, faith, and leadership challenges we provide. We intend to continue this mission and ask for your assistance identifying and recruiting these boys.

Please stop by at your next opportunity. Feel the energy and get in on the excitement.

  
E. Andrew England  
Chairman  
SJMS Board of Trustees

# VISION

# The Fo



The 120<sup>th</sup> Corps of Cadets followed tradition on Tuesday, the 28<sup>th</sup> of August, at 1300 hours, by participating in the annual Forming of the Corps.

With the 120<sup>th</sup> standing in a line formation under cover of Clem Ferris Hall, 1Lt. Damien Pulscher of Springfield, Missouri, announced each cadet and the state or country they were from. As each cadet's name was called, he sounded off "yes, sir" and took his place in the battalion. Temperatures soared as the ceremony progressed, without a single word of complaint echoing from within the Corps.

Lt. Col. Antonio Pino, Commandant of Cadets, presented the Dwight Woodall Air Force Sabre to Sgt. Francisco Laso-Castro of Hermosila, Mexico, as a symbol of his position as sergeant major of the 120<sup>th</sup> Corps.

2Lt. Kevin Broeils received the sabre donated by "Old Boy" Derek Barth, Alpha Company Commander in 1989, to signify his role as Alpha Company Commander.

Battalion Commander Maj. Nathan Dixon of Great Bend, Kansas, received the Hardy Sabre to signify his position as commander of the 120<sup>th</sup> Corps.

Lt. Col. Pino and Maj. Dixon presented streamers earned by companies for distinction in various activities. Bravo



# Blessing of the 120th Corps of Cadets

BY MAJ WENDY STEIN, SJMS

Company, commanded by 1lt. Jonathan Frank of Ardmore, Oklahoma, received streamers for academics, deportment and physical fitness. Alpha Company received streamers for the Mule-Skinner Olympics and intramurals.

While the members of the 120<sup>th</sup> Corps remained at attention on the Teardrop, Maj. Dixon stepped up to the podium to explain that under his command the Honor Code would be followed. He instructed the Corps to raise their right hand and repeat after him:

*"A cadet at St. John's Military School will not lie, steal or cheat, nor tolerate those who do."*

The faculty, staff, parents and guests in attendance joined the Corps in Armstrong Chapel to witness the annual Blessing of the Corps.

Chairman of the SJMS Board of Trustees, Andy England, spoke to the Corps following the blessing.

His words were both inspirational and encouraging.

*"You are here because your parent or guardian saw in you the potential to be great. Reward their faith in you by striving for excellence in the classroom, in the barracks and in the Corps."*

England, a graduate of Virginia Military Institute, shared the words displayed over the entrance of the barracks at his alma mater; a quote by Gen. Thomas J. "Stonewall" Jackson which says, "You may be whatever you resolve to be."

He challenged the 120<sup>th</sup> to come up with a motto to believe in and to use as their "battle cry." Maj. Dixon has since surveyed the Corps of Cadets for ideas and has done some research on his own. The 120<sup>th</sup> Corps has chosen for its "battle cry": Invictus! Invictus! This phrase is latin for "unconquered" or "invincible," and is from the poem of the same name by William Ernest Henley. It encourages us all to take responsibility for our own destiny.

In closing, England gave the New Boys some sage advice: "let me remind you,

especially you New Boys, that you are not alone here. You have a dedicated staff of teachers, military advisors, the chaplain and support staff to look to for help. More importantly, you have each other. Come together as a Corps, lean on each other, support each other and complete every daily task with focus on personal betterment and the betterment of the Corps. My military school experience made one thing quite clear: you cannot and will not succeed as an individual. You will only succeed as a whole."

The 2007-2008 school year is in full swing with the 120<sup>th</sup> Corps of Cadets distinguishing themselves at every level, in the classroom, on the field and in the barracks. Invictus!



# Invictus!

September 14, 2007

# Salina Pays Tribute to Fallen Soldier

BY TOM PITTENGER  
SALINA MEDIA GROUP  
NEWS DIRECTOR

Sgt. Joel Murray remembered as a man of courage and character, who died protecting his family and country.

A man of courage and character, who loved his family and his country. That's how Sgt. Joel Lee Murray was remembered Friday morning in Salina.

Murray was one of three soldiers from Fort Riley killed last Tuesday when an improvised explosive device exploded. He was born and raised in Salina before moving to Beloit during his junior year of high school.

Murray was escorted to the First Southern Baptist Church Friday morning by riders from the Patriot Guard and Salina Police. Along the way, hundreds of Salinans gathered with flags, many of them at the corner of Magnolia and Ohio. They joined soldiers, Patriot Guard members, and St. John's Military School students for a patriotic tribute to Murray.

During the service, which included full military honors, Murray was remembered as a man who loved his family, and who died protecting both them and his country. He leaves behind a wife and two-year-old-son who live in Ogden, a mother who lives in Salina, and a father who lives in Simpson.

Murray is a third-generation soldier. His grandfather fought in World War II, and his father fought in Vietnam.

Following services in Salina, Sgt. Joel Lee Murray was to be buried at the Fort Riley Cemetery.

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PHOTO BY SCOTT WIEDEMAN



# Reflections from Cadets...

By New Boy Dustin Lisle

I woke up in a cold sweat after first call and I knew why: I have to go to another military funeral. I had gone to one only last year. That one was for my cousin-in-law. He was a medic on the frontline part of the Big Red One. I knew it wasn't going to be a very good thing for me to go through again. But I also knew that they were over there doing this for our freedom, so they deserved our respect.

It was hard for me when we got there. I had to hold back everything I felt about it. But it's still really bad because your life could end in one instance. I personally have already had two close encounters with near death incidents. Most of all, that funeral made me think of all my friends I have that are enlisted that I can't talk to while I am at this school as a new boy, but that is beside the point.

The saddest part about that funeral was the end as the little boy ran after the casket carrying his father. I could hear him asking what was going on and where was his dad.

by Jacob Wilcox-Haskett  
New Boy

On the 14<sup>th</sup> of September I was part of a very dedicated event. It was a funeral for a Sergeant that made the ultimate sacrifice in Iraq. Along with about 90 of my fellow cadets, and about 200 of the Patriot Guard, and many other civilians, we honored this fallen soldier.

Although I felt many emotions during his service, the most impacted feeling was thanks. Thanks for knowing that people are willing to give their lives to keep us free. I felt thanks for all of the other Veterans who have served and were there to help honor and hold a flag. Just by staring at the enormous crowd and the unlimited number of flags, you could tell that in the long run America does support everyone.

Another feeling I felt was anger. Anger mainly because that Sergeant had to die to make somebody else happy and give them a little more power. Anger that we can't all just get along.

I felt proud as well. Proud to be part of such a great institution, and proud for helping to honor a fallen soldier. All in all, this experience was something that will help me to realize the respect and honor, as well as dignity that America has for itself.

Friday

By Pfc. Dylan Cruz

We slept late that morning and put on our Class-A's and after a quick brunch we loaded the bus and we were on our way. Driving down the street we saw hundreds of people with American flags. I thought, "If you looked at Salina from above it would look like it was painted red, white, and blue." All the cadets were glued to the windows waving and smiling at the families and friends. Even though the weather looked bad, I knew it would be a good day.

We arrived at the chapel. Everyone jumped off the bus and formed up the battalion and in rolled the Patriot Guard on motorcycles. At least two hundred of the Guard was there and showed us where to get our American flags. Then we unraveled them while marching across the street and we stopped in a line going down the pavement about a foot away from the street. We stood at parade rest, which requires us to look ahead, but everyone couldn't help but notice the protesters and how mad they made us. From there we marched back in front of the chapel making an L shaped around the parking lot.

We stood around for about an hour until finally they came out with the flag covering his coffin and a group of people stood around while the preacher said some words for another hour. By now all the cadets were hurting for a seat so we bent our legs, wriggled our arms, and stretched our backs. It rained for maybe two minutes and the wind picked up a bit so it was a little cold.

At last the hearse drove up and after the twenty-one gun salute they loaded him up in the car. Then the hearse rolled out so

we rolled the flags just like we had got them and put them back. This guy came up to us and handed us a Patriot Guard patch and that was so cool.

Fallen Hero Comes Home

By 2LT Justin Pennington

Last Friday the Corps was getting in their Alpha uniforms early in the morning. Shortly before we left there was quite a scramble for extra uniform items. As we started to load the bus I reminded my subordinates that I didn't want to hear any complaints about being uncomfortable because I'm sure this man was uncomfortable when he died for our nation.

When our buses were on the road to the funeral home I think everyone was surprised when we saw the crowds of locals formed on both sides of the street. It seemed like everyone had a flag in their hand and a tear in their eye. On the bus there was a kind of respectful silence.

After the buses unloaded I formed up with the Color Guard as the American flag bearer. The Color Guard marched into the main lobby where we stood for 3 hours. Eventually the doors opened and my eyes got watery as soon as I heard the beautiful sound of the bagpipes playing. The casket was rolled in with a procession of friends and family dressed in black.

The next two hours were the hardest for me because I was the American flag bearer so I couldn't move even though the casket was only about 3 feet in front of me. I had to stand there and watch as his family and loved ones one at a time slowly approached the flag draped coffin, giving him their last goodbyes and final respects. I wanted so badly to just walk up to his mom, give her a hug and let her know how sorry I was for her loss. My mind was racing the entire time.

At one point I wondered where I'll be in 5 years. A cold chill ran up my spine as I realized that I could very easily be in my own flag-draped coffin with everyone I know saying goodbye for the last time and the sound of bagpipes in my ears.

## Friday's Funeral

By New Boy Chris Weldon

Many people will tell you, "You will have many different experiences in life." Let me tell you that at St. John's you will have many, including the funeral we went to on Friday morning.

When we went to sleep on Thursday night we were told a soldier from Fort Riley died in Iraq, and that we would be attending his funeral on Friday morning. All night we prepared our Alpha jackets for the funeral.

Around 7:00 in the morning the Corps woke up and prepared for the funeral. We got dressed and headed straight for mess. After mess we spent about an hour helping others that weren't ready to go. An hour passed and we headed for the bus.

We went to a church at the other end of Salina. We were given American flags and marched in a single file line everywhere we went. The battalion lined up at sort of a 90 degree angle. If you were looking down on us, it would look like a long line in front of the church. There were soldiers from the Army around getting ready and there was also family and friends of the soldier.

When the funeral started you heard bagpipes playing as the family walked out of the church. The casket was rolled out on some sort of rolling bed. Following it was a family drenched in tears. An American flag was over the casket. The soldiers that were there did flag detail and handed it to his family. A little boy, which obviously was his son, was in ACU's and looked like he had no idea what was going on. He ran for his father as he was getting lifted away. That was the saddest part of the whole experience.

My first time going to a soldier's funeral and knowing that he died for our country, was a hard experience. After it was all done and over with we had stood for a total of two hours and got loads of compliments from several people. So all in all, Friday was a good day with one exception.

## Hometown Hero

By New Boy Austin Strecker

Last Friday was one of the best, but saddest times I have ever experienced. I thought it was cool that we were at a soldier's funeral, because I think that it's an honor to do something like that. You hate to see something like that though, especially in person.

We started the day by going to mess, loading onto the bus, and then were on

our way there. On the way there we saw hundreds of people lined up on the side of the streets and sidewalks. When we finally got there, there were at least 200 bikers from all over coming to show their appreciation. We loaded off the buses and were each given an American flag to carry. Next we got in a formation and marched to the side of the road to join soldiers, fellow classmates, and civilians. We started to line up and you could hear the sirens from the police and people crying all around you. After we waited for the hearse we marched around the perimeter of the church where the service was held that day. Then we stood at attention while waiting for them to bring the body out. After about two and a half hours they brought the body out under the awning. By that time we could hear people crying and then it began to rain. We were called at ease and then back to attention. They folded the flag while doing the 21 gun salute and then gave the flag to the mother. From there we waited for them to take the body to the hearse. We waited for it to leave and we were marched back to the busses.

By Private First Class

Ian Vaughn

It was Friday, September 14 as I boarded a bus to go to a military funeral. A knot settled in my stomach and a dark fog came over my heart. As we went down the road to get to our destination, Patriots lined the sidewalks in honor of Sgt. Joel Murray.

When we passed the First Southern Baptist Church members of the American Legion, Navy, Marines, Army, and even the Air Force lined all the sidewalks around the church. We exited the bus and were given American flags and fell into a battalion formation. We marched first to a spot across the street and then to the front of the church after the casket got to the church. When I saw the soldiers carrying the casket shivers crawled up my spine like a spider climbs up his web. That dark fog thickened like a blanket over my heart, deep in sadness.

The family and friends of Sgt. Joel Murray came gloomily out of the church and sat and stood under the awning. Then God started to cry. Tears poured down from the heavens as Sgt. Joel Murray's coffin came out of the church. Sadness loomed around the church. The soldiers folded the American flag delicately as a reward to the family members. As they loaded the casket into the hearse and it drove off the finality of the situation hung over us.

By Private Jacob Hooker

When I got on the bus I kept messing around not thinking about the funeral or the people that had to go through this horrible experience. When we reached the funeral home I saw a huge crowd filled with many Army soldiers and family members to honor this fallen soldier, Sgt. Joel Murray. That is when I got serious about this and realized it wasn't a time to play around. When I got my flag I felt like it was great that I could have a part in an American soldier's funeral. As we were standing there listening to the bagpipe playing all I could think about was my mom and the way she passed away. But then they came out and I saw the looks on the sad faces and I almost cried. I kept thinking about how the little boy was going to have to deal with this. I wanted to start to cry too, but I didn't. At the end when it was over and we got on the bus I didn't talk the whole way because I kept thinking about this and my family.

## Reflections of a War Hero's Funeral

By New boy Joshua Batchelor

It's morning as we pile into the buses. Many questions and ideas fill my head. We drive through town and by many Salinas that are lining the street. Kids are sitting on the tops of cars, little American flags waving back and forth. Seeing this is a whole other thing. I almost wept at the things I saw.

On the trip over, the bus driver says, "It is said there are 2 single entities that will die for you. Jesus Christ for your salvation, and the American Soldier for your freedom." At the church, we all get out and got ready for the march. Many people look at us. There are motorcyclists all around and it feels like a rally. A motorcyclist calls us over and tells us that there are protesters on the other side of the street. He seems like he is going to cry. He also tells us to go over to a truck and that we each will get a long pole with an American flag on it. After that, there is just a lot of marching and standing at attention. But I still know I almost lost myself to tears when I saw the way the war veterans showed up and absolutely gave more respect to this soldier than I have ever seen. Nothing I have ever done, nor anything I ever will, will be as cool, weird, sad, astounding, and soul lifting, as what occurred that day.

As the casket left the building God seemed to cry as the water poured from the heavens. May God be with Sgt. Joel Murray's family. May God have peace on him.





# 120th Corps of Cadets BATTALION COMMANDER

BY MAJ WENDY STEIN, SJMS

## Nathan Dixon

Cadet/Major Nathan Dixon can see for miles and miles: miles into his future, and miles into his past. He arrived on campus six years ago from the town of Great Bend, Kansas. He was small but mighty and looked for every opportunity to become involved in Corps activities. He quickly became a favorite among the older cadets, settling into a kind of mascot for the Corps. During that first year at St. John's, he made up his mind that he would one day take command of the Corps....yes, he could see for miles and miles.

Things were not easy for Dixon through those early years....he missed his home, his friends, and his beloved grandfather, Lee Ray Dixon. His grandfather became a fixture on the St. John's campus, eagerly waiting for Nathan to finish his obligations on Saturday so he could spend time with him off campus. We all remember Grandpa's beautiful Cadillac parked by the duty office set for a quick get-a-way. Dixon's

grandfather was a wise and caring man; he knew that Nathan would grow strong under the guidance of the men and women of St. John's and that his time at St. John's would not be wasted. We looked forward to seeing the two of them together and to visiting with Grandpa: his kindness knew no bounds and his smile was contagious. Nathan adored his grandfather and he thought of him more like a father. Nathan quickly rose through the ranks, taking very seriously every position offered to him from within the Corps. With help from both the staff and his family, Nathan grew into a confident high school cadet with a clear vision of his own destiny!

Tragedy struck during Nathan's freshman year when he lost his dear grandfather to cancer. Several staff, faculty and fellow cadets made the trip to Great Bend to say farewell to Grandpa. Each in attendance that day vividly remembers the agony we felt as we attempted to comfort our student and

friend. It might be said that Grandpa's hand is still on Nathan's shoulder as he assumes command of the 120<sup>th</sup> Corps. Grandpa's financial planning has made it possible for Nathan to keep his eye on the future while he continues to grow and prepare for his adult life while at St. John's.

The summer of 2007, Dixon joined the Army National Guard and will spend a portion of the school year training with his company. He plans to follow in the footsteps of former SJMS Battalion Commander Peter Wilcox, "Old Boy" Patrick Johnsen, class of 2003, and Chairman of the Board Andy England by attending Virginia Military Institute to continue his military training in college.

The 120<sup>th</sup> Corps is sure to benefit from Dixon's steady hand, kind heart, clear vision and steadfast loyalty to St. John's. We aren't sure but maybe, just maybe, there is orange blood running in those veins. Invictus, Maj. Dixon!



*"One positive thing that I can say I have accomplished here at SJMS is that I have gotten a little stronger and that I have made some cool friends along the way, including Best and Ruiz. I have also gained a better liking of school because I don't have to do PT when I'm in it."*

Andre Cardoso



*"I have made the best friend in my life. His name is Miguel Castro. At first I didn't know if he spoke English, but now I think he speaks it better than me. I think we will be the best of friends for a LONG time."*

Patrick Sullins



*"I made new friends that I will have for life."*

Steven Crockenberg



*"There have been many positive experiences. Many friendships. This New Boy training wouldn't have been the same if I wouldn't have met Sullins. Sullins is definitely my best friend. All the time I'm with him we are*

*always cracking jokes. A good friendship like ours makes New Boy training go by much faster. I think even if I don't come back we will keep in touch and stay friends for quite a while."*

Miguel Castro

# Welcome to



Alpha Troop New Boys

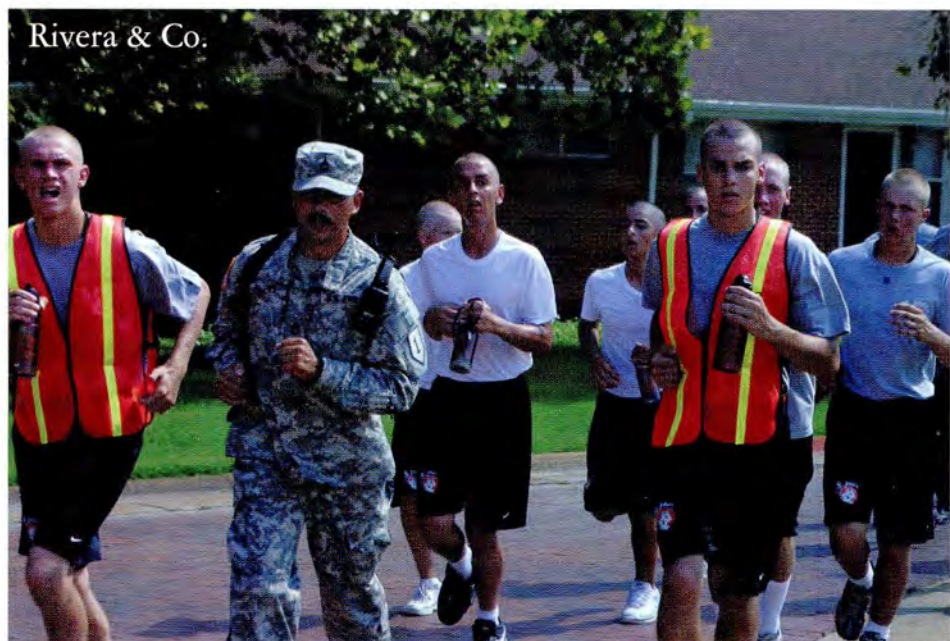
Welcome to the 120<sup>th</sup> Corps of Cadets!! The majority of New Boys arrived Monday, August 20, overwhelmed and unsure of the next step. All 36 have been busy training their bodies and minds, adjusting to life as a cadet, learning cadet protocol, traditions and regulations. The New Boys seem to be standing a little taller, squaring their shoulders a little tighter and are showing the pride that goes along with being a cadet.

The New Boys have embraced the New Deal and have promised to uphold the Honor Code: A cadet will not lie, cheat or

steal, nor tolerate those who do.

SFC Geronimo Rivera knew there would be challenges with his first class, but the boys have exceeded his expectations. One of the most difficult things for new cadets is not having an understanding of the expectations. According to Rivera, the boys did not realize just how physically challenging SJMS really is. "This is the most activity these boys have had in a long time, for some their entire life", said Rivera.

Being held accountable for actions has been another tough lesson. Now that the



Rivera & Co.

# St. John's

BY MARCIA HEINS  
SJMS ADMISSIONS OFFICER



Bravo Troop New Boys

rules have been established and the New Boys understand the consequences for not following the rules, it seems they have turned the corner. "I am not sure any would admit it at this point, but some of the New Boys have realized that home is not really as bad as they once thought," said Rivera.

Physical training, leadership, messages and packages from home, getting involved on campus, and bonds of friendship and brotherhood are just some of the highlights from the first class of New Boys for this school year.

One trio that can be seen together during the precious minutes of free time is Merrick Best, Josemaria Ruiz, and Andre Cardoso.

Two other cadets who have become close in a short time are Patrick Sullins and Miguel Castro. The two did not let a language barrier come between friendship.

Chris Weldon, Stefan Dekraker, and Steven Crockenberg have also formed a tight bond in the short time they have been together.

Many New Boys have grown to appreciate the friends and family at home. Letters and packages from home, a phone call on the way back from the hospital and dreams have just been a few ways this appreciation has been expressed.



*closer than us three."*

Stefan Dekraker

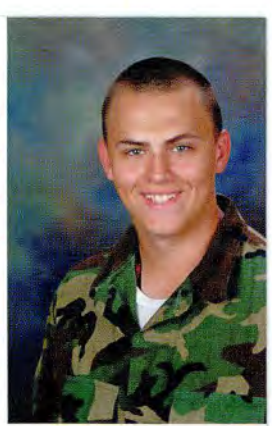


*them out. My roommate and I are doing real good in the barracks. We have passed all but two inspections, and we get along. School has also been a good experience."*

Jacob Wilcox-Haskett

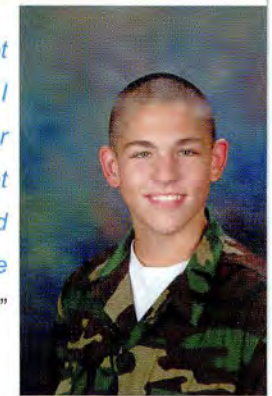
*"A positive experience that I've had at SJMS is doing PT. It's really hard at first, but it builds muscle and makes you a better person physically and mentally as well. JROTC is, as their motto says "motivating young people to be better citizens" and that's exactly what they do here. Also, Drill and Ceremony is great because it teaches you discipline and gives you leadership skills for the future. Every Drill Instructor or higher are very good at their jobs and how they do them so they make it simple while being disciplined."*

Austin Strecker



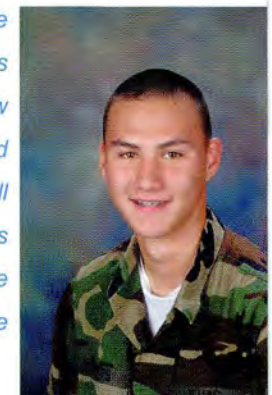
*"In my lifetime, which is not very long, but some time I have never drawn closer to my friends than here at SJMS. Crockenberg and Dekraker are my positive experience at St Johns."*

Chris Weldon



*"One positive experience I have had at SJMS was when I realized just how special my friends and family are to me and all the special characteristics each person back home had and how they were special to me."*

Jackson Moyers



*"Being able to play basketball on Friday for gym. Being able to learn leadership skills to help through future generations."*

Fadl Safieddine





# A SJMS Legend:

BY TERRY PLUMBERG  
SJMS ALUMNI COORDINATOR

I remember the first time I met Col. Keith Duckers. He had a firm handshake and eyes that could see the answer before he asked the question. He was inquisitive as to where you came from, your goals and your dedication to SJMS. Duckers was a people person, a leader, friend and supporter. He stood for the highest standards and expected no less from you. When SJMS was notified of Ducker's death, the world seemed a littler darker.

President Emeritus Keith G Duckers worked as a public information officer, superintendent and president during his 43 years at St. John's Military School. After his retirement, Duckers and his wife Liz, were often seen driving through campus, checking on "their school"

When the news reached the Old Boys, many of them felt they had lost their father. Duckers formed a connection with many, and in the Old Boys eyes, he was their guiding force. Many will respond, "I am who I am today because of Colonel Duckers." His tireless efforts and inspiration are still molded in time.

Duckers was involved in many activities and organizations which have been noted in other tributes. He got involved because he wanted to promote and gain support of the school.

SJMS was his life. He claimed to have spent more hours kneeling in Chapel services than Bishops did in their lifetimes. No cadet ate as many meals, good or bad, as he did in the mess hall. He spent his life waking to the raising of the flag and going to bed after "Taps."

Tributes have come from many. Perhaps the most meaningful tribute mailed to the family came from the 105<sup>th</sup> Corps, his last before retirement. It said, "Your husband, father and grandfather was to us a great mentor and much needed guide as we began our lives as men. He will be missed but celebrated always."

Recollections from Richard Retrum, 1966, "He and his wife sat at the same table in the mess hall. Cadets didn't always sit at the same table, as we moved around. I can't remember how that was done, but you were bound to end up sitting at Keith Duckers table at least four times in the school year. You were expected to be on your best behavior, sit up straight and watch your table manners. He would always ask you questions about yourself. Where you were from, did you have brothers and sisters, what do you want to do after you leave St. John's, how did you happen to join the Cadet Corps. By the end of the year, he knew you as well as any other cadet. If I remember correctly, he wasn't afraid to make suggestions about improving your table manners or making sure you ate your vegetables. He was part of the process of molding boys into men and he did it well."

Joseph "Joa" Schwinn, 1969, said "There are no words that suffice at this time, but the special moments when memories give us pause to recall something special of those who have passed, it is then that we can know there is something beyond of life eternal, to have hope of meeting again."

**How it all began:** Duckers, a recent Kansas State Journalism graduate, was



# Col. Keith G. Duckers

hired in 1950 by two trustees to promote the school and recruit students. Enrollment had fallen to the low sixties after a disastrous fire in 1948 that destroyed the towers and the fourth floor of Vail Hall. The Board felt that if the enrollment could be increased from 68 to 80 the school could survive.

Duckers began taking the Crack Squad (Drill Team) to drill at football and basketball games. He took the Crack Marching Platoon to parades from the Jewell Corn Days to Neewollah parade held in some Kansas town.

Duckers wrote stories about cadet achievements and mailed them to hometown papers, called on Episcopal churches all over the Midwest and provided programs for civic clubs.

His wife, Elizabeth, recalled that the first summer they were married that if they could reach an enrollment of 120, they had it made. Enrollment in some years did go above 200 with the high being 235.

Then Vietnam came with the distrust of the military and the free lifestyle of the drug culture.

Duckers recalled at a Christmas service in the early 1970's, he looked at the families that depended on the school for their income. He wasn't sure how he would make payroll in January.

When family and friends called, the first question asked was "what is your enrollment?" There was no lifeline except for earned income, as the school had no endowment.

The fire that destroyed Vail Hall in November of 1978 and the recovery from

that event is another whole story. With insurance money and private gifts in a "Bridging the Gap" campaign, Vanier Hall was built. Mrs. Duckers said that the day they placed the eagle weather vane on the hall roof, we knew we were going to make it.

Duckers somehow persuaded Warner Brothers to film a movie on campus when the administrative building was a hole in the ground. This film never won any awards, but the gates in front of the school came from the enterprise. Donna Vanier, coordinator between the school and the movie company, and Duckers "laughed all the way to the bank."

An endowment was created for the school with two major gifts from Walton Ferris, father of a former student, and Lyman Linger, a SJMS Old Boy. Gifts came from other benefactors including Maud Beech, Cecil Jordan, Wiley Baner and the Vanier family.

The only building remaining that was on campus in 1950 is Armstrong Memorial Chapel, which has been renovated. The sandstone gates remain as they were.

Buildings constructed during his time were Nichols Dining Hall, Ferris Hall and Clem Library, which was combined into a barracks after the 1978 fire, Mize Hall, Vanier Academic Center and Linger Hall. Houses for faculty and staff were added to the campus. Stevens Dining Hall was built after Duckers' retirement using funds from the endowment and private donations. Now a new dorm is being constructed with funds from an anonymous Old Boy.

Duckers was an innovator. He started the Mule-Skinner fund raiser, the Freedom Tree ceremony, Honorary Colonels, the Wall of Fame and the Handle Ceremony with the door handle Old Boy Jack Vanier salvaged from Vail Hall. During his time the school celebrated its Centennial with the idea for 100 flags coming from his imagination.

During his time, he hired many outstanding young men and women to teach, coach and recruit. One was Larry Lysell who was his administrative assistant and admissions director. In the school history, Duckers wrote, "In my opinion Larry has done an outstanding job in keeping most of the bunks filled during difficult times."

During one summer, Duckers worked for the *The Tipton Tribune* in Oklahoma. In his "Memoirs" he wrote "The greatest impact my Tribune experience gave to me was the statement on the mast head "what a man does for himself dies with him. What he does for his community lives on and on." He commented in some way, I have tried to follow that in my own life.

The plaque on his bust in the teardrop, or as many Old Boys call it, the Bullring, reads:

*St. John's was his life  
A friend to students and alumni  
A gentleman to all  
A man of insight,  
compassion and vision*



# Cantrell Family Gives Back to St. John's

BY MAJ WENDY STEIN, SJMS

Cantrell used while at St. John's and donated a brand new Band Mace inscribed with Nicholas' name and his many accomplishments while Band Master during his sophomore, junior and senior years at St. John's.

The drum set is being used in combination with the school set to create a marvelous double bass drum kit complete with multiple cymbals and six toms. The Band Mace will be christened sometime this year during one of the many on-campus military ceremonies.

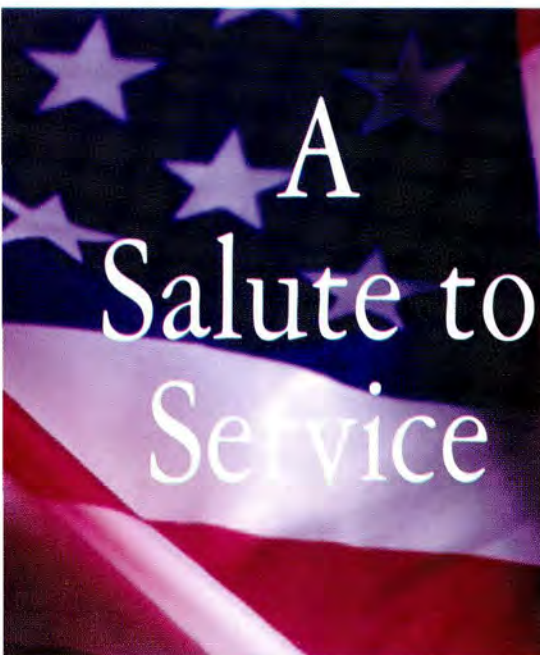
Giving comes in many forms here at St. John's. In Cantrell's case it came in the form of fierce dedication and attention to duty while he was a cadet. Now as an Old Boy he continues to look out for the Corps while he takes on the challenges of life after St. John's.

While it was difficult for him to move on, he has found a way to remain a part of the Corps of Cadets for many years to come. We thank the Cantrells for their generosity and look forward to seeing Nicholas on campus whenever he is in town!

When a young man graduates from St. John's it is often difficult for him to leave. One way Old Boys remain connected to St. John's is to leave behind a part of themselves.

Sometimes they leave written notes with members of the staff to express gratitude for help along the way. Often they offer gifts as tokens of their appreciation, each chosen with care and neatly wrapped by Mom. Other times they donate something that will benefit Corps that have yet to form.

Nicholas Cantrell, "Old Boy" class of 2007, along with his parents, Patty Cantrell and Steve Cantrell, donated the drum set that



Please keep our Old Boys in your prayers, as they are deployed.

Jake Redd 2001; Nate Sutera 2005; Adam Goodman 2004; Richard Wood 2004; Paul Dowling 2004; Josh Selland 2004; and Peter Wilcox 2002.

# Welcome

# Larry Lysell to Become 15th SJMS President

BY TERRY PLUMBERG  
SJMS ALUMNI COORDINATOR



He is no stranger to education, to Salina or St. John's Military School. Larry Lysell has come home.

Mr. Lysell was born in Lindsborg, KS, where both parents were educators. He graduated from Marymount College in December 1972 and received his master's degree in Educational Administration from Kansas State University in 1982.

Mr. Lysell began his teaching career on the SJMS campus in 1974, where he taught social studies and coached wrestling, golf and assisted in football. He then changed hats and worked in Admissions for seven years and three years as an administrative assistant; serving under the helm of Col. Keith G. Duckers.

His first administration position was held at Wilson as principal of their school. He subsequently served as superintendent of schools in several Kansas districts and was the first to actively operate two adjacent districts in the state concurrently.



Mr. Lysell and his wife Kathy have been married for 36 years and are the parents of two daughters, Mija and Mauri, and grandparents to 5 children.

Mr. Lysell states: "I'm really excited about this opportunity and look forward to meeting the new staff & greeting those I've known for years."

***Welcome back to the  
SJMS Family!***

# New Face

## Academic Staff



Paula Wilton is the middle school reading teacher at SJMS. She states: "I love the structure and the interaction from all the cadets."

Hector Serna teaches Life Science, Physical Science and Biology. His hometown is in San Antonio, TX, and he thoroughly enjoys the interaction with the kids.



Kurt Herrel teaches Math, Algebra, Geometry and Business Math. He also finds time to coach football and will coach basketball this winter. Herrel was in the Air Force for 19 years. He enjoys the structure of the classes at SJMS.

## Business Staff

Delores Longenecker is the Chief Financial Officer at St. John's Military School. Since college, she worked in retail customer service for 1 ½ years, and in public accounting for 11 1/2 years (Clubine & Rettele, Chartered). She graduated from Chapman High School in 1990, and Bartlesville Wesleyan College (now Oklahoma Wesleyan University) with a BS in accounting in 1994.

In her spare time, Delores enjoys working with the children's department at her church, baking, gardening, sewing, and may other forms of crafting.





# s at SJMS

## Commandant's Staff

The Commandant's staff has gone through a major "face lift" over the past year. Several of the "old timers" decided it was time to move on and enjoy life as retirees. We will miss Master Sergeant Garry Heath, Major Jeff Roberts, and Sergeant Major Johnnie White who have retired their uniforms and gone on to enjoy life in the slow lane. Major Lawrence and Captain Redmond have also departed from the Commandant's Staff; however they remain at SJMS working in different departments.

The new additions to the Commandant's staff are Captains Peter Kent, Sheldon DeArvil and Robert Pearson who will be working with Major Felix Moret on the night shift. The other new members are Captain Doug Watkins, Master Sergeant Johnnie McGee, Sergeant First Class Danny Phillips and Sergeant First Class Geronimo "Moe" Rivera. These gentlemen are assigned as Company Leadership Advisors (CLA's) and will work as mentors during the afternoon and evening shifts. All of the above mentioned advisors bring with them a wealth of knowledge and experience. MSG McGee, SFC Rivera and SFC Phillips retired from the United States Army and Kansas National Guard as senior NCO's and are very familiar with the military environment and regimented life style that governs SJMS. The other men have served in the armed forces and are also very familiar with those requirements that make SJMS a great training arena for the young cadets that have elected to be part of this military school family.

In just a few short weeks all have displayed the type of dedication and commitment that is expected of military advisors. Their professionalism and work ethic is apparent in their daily operations and certainly will play a major role in the leadership development of the young warriors that have been placed in their care!



**Captain Kent**



**Captain Watkins**



**MS McGee**



**Captain DeArvil**



**Captain Pearson**



**SFC Phillips**



**SFC PhillipsRivera**



# The Mule-Skinner Campaign

## **Recruiting**

Historically, our cadets, parents and graduates have been our best recruiters. To maintain a full Cadet Corps, one of the campaign goals is to formalize our Parents and Old Boy recruiting network. We want to encourage everyone to volunteer to help us recruit a New Boy. Sending just one more cadet to St. John's adds substantially to the bottom line – the same effect that a monetary gift would have. Please return the enclosed reply card if you are willing to volunteer to help us recruit. A gift of your time is a tremendously valuable contribution.

## **Leadership Training & Physical Fitness Education Programs**

We must vigorously enhance our Junior ROTC and Boy Scout programs and projects. Although we already have active and effective programs for JROTC and the Boy Scouts, we need to provide the Commandant with increased funding to implement all of the programs that would make St. John's a much better experience for each cadet. As an example, we want to expand our athletic facilities and programs for our non-varsity athletes.

## **Christian Environment**

We must continue to enhance an active moral environment for all cadets regardless of their faith or belief.

## **Academic Program Funding**

We must continue to elevate our level of instruction by well-trained, competent teachers in small classes with individual attention and high expectations for success.

## **Construction & Renovation Needs**

As noted, we have received a lead gift of \$4 million from an anonymous donor to fund a new barracks. We also have other worthwhile and much-needed projects on the list – renovate Mize Hall, expand our library, just to name two.

## **Annual Fund**

In order to keep our annual fund drive going, a portion of each campaign gift will go to support the many projects that the annual drive has funded.



# for Excellence

Your support of the goals outlined here are crucial and essential to continue the tradition of excellence at St. John's.

It is our intent to serve you better by simplifying the giving and fundraising process. In short, a portion of your gift will be used to ensure that the campaign goals are funded, as well as our ongoing annual needs (scholarships, leadership programs, academics, and capital projects).

By asking everyone to make one gift that will support both the campaign and the annual fund, we will eliminate the duplication and confusion sometimes caused by multiple appeals in the past.

## ***New Giving Levels:***



**Bishop's Circle**

\$25,000 and up



**Chairman's Circle**

\$10,000 - \$24,999



**President's Circle**

\$2,500 - \$9,999



**Brigadier's Club**

\$1,000 - \$2,499



**Colonel's Club**

\$500 - \$999



**Major's Club**

\$250 - \$499



**Captain's Club**

\$100 - \$249



**Trooper's Club**

Gifts up to \$99



reach ♦ recruit ♦ represent

# New Obstacle Course... New Challenge



St. John's Military School has completed the installation of a new and challenging obstacle course. This is a great addition to the school for cadet life; a course which was built to be challenging, fun and rewarding. All cadets will have the opportunity to go through the course several times throughout the school year.



The inaugural group for the course was the cadet leaders who attended leadership camp this August. The course will allow SJMS to implement this challenge for our New Boy program. During parents weekend all the cadets will have an opportunity to complete the course with parents, family and friends cheering them on.



The obstacle course could not have been completed without the generous contributions of the following businesses and individuals: Jack and Paula Lambert (**SJMS**), Mike and Brian (**Lowes Hardware Salina**), Gregg Jackson (**Weststar Energy, Salina**), Kathy Shively (**Koppers Inc., Pittsburg, PA**), Steve Welborn (**Welborn Sales, Salina**), Jack Hutchinson (**Ropes Inc., Ft. Lauderdale, FL**), Bruce Carver (**United Building Supplies, Salina**), Dennis/Employees (**Union Pacific Railroad, Salina**) and Terry (**Kansas Land Tire, Salina**). A special thank you to Andy England for donating his time and equipment to dig 58 holes for the course and Lance Werber for his time and assistance in supplying the tools needed to work on the course, as well as being there to pick up materials. Major Robert Forde was instrumental in soliciting donations of products and supplies to complete the obstacle course with minimal cost.



# New Barracks Construction Update

BY TERRY PLUMBERG  
SJMS ALUMNI COORDINATOR

*“The new barracks is awesome, and it will help secure the future of SJMS”*

*Jonathan Frank, SO,  
Ardmore, OK*

This field of dreams held the tears of many Commencements, the sweat of numerous football/soccer/drill team practices and games along with the anticipation of AFI's. Many Old Boys have marched on this field, and many have shared their dreams on this field. The field is now home to an almost 40,000 square foot barracks.

The two-story barracks, a gift from an anonymous Old Boy, will house 66 rooms; 32 on the first floor and 34 on the second floor. Two cadets will fill each 11x17 room along with an office at the west end and apartments for the BLA's on the east wing.

To give you some little known facts concerning the new barracks, there are two 200 gallon water heaters; over 24,000 cinder blocks and 100,000 bricks make up this building. The walls are eight inches wide, with two feet thick flooring in the basement. The flooring will consist of vinyl tile with ceramic tile in the bathrooms.

At the very beginning of the project, weather proved to be a problem. Approximately 6 weeks of work time was lost due to either cold weather or flooding.

It is anticipated the construction will be complete by January 1, 2008.

# Leadership

**Nathan Dixon, SR, from Great Bend, KS,** is the BC (Battalion Commander) of the 120<sup>th</sup> Corps of Cadets. He is responsible for the Corps. Nathan meets this job head on and expects only the best from the rest of the Corps. He promotes the Honor Code and sets a fine example. Along with his many duties, Dixon still maintains his honor roll status and participates in football.

**Brandon Holmes, SR, from Woodland Park, CO,** is the XO (Executive Officer). He is the principal assistant to the BC. The XO directs, supervises and coordinates the work of the staff, ensures the BC's orders and instructions to the staff are carried out and is Commander of Troops for all pass in reviews. Holmes states this has been an outstanding Corps and he is looking forward to the rest of the year.

**S-1 (Personnel Officer) Damien Pulscher, SR, Springfield, MO,** handles all cadet JROTC personnel records, and personnel management, appointments, assignment and promotions. He is also in charge of the morale activities, health services and duty roster.

**S-2 (Intelligence Officer) William Mauck, SR, Lake Zurich, IL,** is the Provost Marshall and responsible for conduct and proper performance of the Cadet Patrol. He is also the Battalion Investigation Officer for Class I offenses and responsible for selection, assignment and training of Cadet Patrol.

**S-3 (Operations & Training) Philip Gamito, SR, Denver, CO,** serves as Senior Staff Officer. He also handles all preparation and execution of training programs. He establishes and implements the New Boy training program.

**S-4 (Logistics) Brian Wheeler, SR, San Diego, CA,** is responsible for planning and coordinating transportation. He also makes recommendation for selection of the mess officer and the laundry NCO, and is responsible for the supervision of both.

**S-5 (Public Affairs) Justin Billings, SR, Pensacola, FL,** has the responsibility for planning, coordinating and supervising public affairs and media coverage for St. John's. He is responsible for the *Skirmisher*, yearbook and the JROTC scrapbook.

**Battalion Command Sergeant Major: Francisco Laso Castro, Sr; Mexico;** selects and trains the Corps Color Guard and appoints a commander. He assigns areas of police responsibility to each company, insuring all campus areas are covered in the plan. He is in charge of all flag details conducted during the entire school year.



# 2007-2008

BY TERRY PLUMBERG  
SJMS ALUMNI COORDINATOR



The 2007 SJMS Leadership Camp took place in August under the guidance of LTC Pino, MAJ Stelljes and the new BC, Nathan Dixon, with 1SG Blair teaching the Squad Leader's Course to the new squad leaders. The theme of the camp was for the cadets to learn about leadership, teamwork, trust, and build self-confidence.

The cadets took classes on leadership and teamwork and began putting that knowledge to work on the team building and leadership reaction courses. They learned to trust each other as they took turns doing the blind man walking exercise where a blindfolded cadet was led around the campus by a cadet who could see but not talk.

Each cadet also participated in the trust fall, where they fell backwards off the bleachers into the waiting arms of seven cadets. This summer two teachers, Pam Krause and Sandra Wallace joined in the fun and learned how it feels to place your trust in others as they fell into the arms of the cadets.

The obstacle course at Ft. Riley was unusable this year because of the summer flooding, so the cadets got to enjoy an orientation on the Field Artillery, put on by B Battery, 4-1 FA. CPT Padilla and his fellow artillerymen did an outstanding job as the cadets learned how a modern day artillery battery does its job in a field environment.

The cadets also traveled to the Rock Springs 4-H Camp to try their luck at canoeing and riding one of the palomino horses, plus going through their adventure course. Several of the cadets got to ride a horse for the first time and many of them enjoyed tipping their canoes into the cool water. The 4-H instructor was very impressed with the teamwork that the cadets displayed on the adventure course.

The final event of Leadership Camp was the 10K road march led by LTC Pino and C/Maj. Dixon. The cadets used a brisk pace to finish the course before breakfast and then held a promotion ceremony in the dining facility.

It was a very successful camp and has the 120<sup>th</sup> Corps of Cadets moving in the right direction under the dedicated and caring leadership of LTC Pino and the cadet battalion staff.



# Cross Country



Some days the team works on speed with 1 mile intervals. Other days are distance workouts, running 6 miles but working up to 8 – 9 miles. Some days the team is running on the golf course, and others around parks. Some days the weather cooperates and others it's not so pleasant. Join the life of a cross country runner.

Gerald Martin, coach of the SJMS Cross Country team, joins the team in running and keeping them in condition for the upcoming meets. He gets excited when a member of the team sets a personal best record.

The SJMS Cross Country team has one senior, William Mauck, Lake Zurich, IL; Juniors Jose Ruiz, Mexico; Fadl Saffieddine, Denver, CO; Carlos Ballina, Mexico; Aaron Haase, Castle Rock, CO; and Sophomores Kang Lee, South Korea and Edgar McBee, Wichita, KS.

Imagine if you will, joining a group of people you've never met before, of which you have very little in common and your main task is to come together to defeat an opponent of gargantuan abilities.

This is exactly what the SJMS football team faces each season. The gargantuan opponents the cadets face each week on the gridiron come in the form of groups of young Kansas men who have grown up together, know each other's every move and eat, live and breathe football. The Mule-Skinners form a team with only two weeks of football camp under their belts and many other obligations to fulfill as members of the Corps of Cadets.

The first game of the season is now a distant memory; the Lakeside Knights came in and got the job done. Mule-Skinner Head Football Coach Phil Kellogg was encouraged by both the effort and the determination of his inexperienced team. Kellogg was impressed by the amount of improvement the team showed from the practice field to the game and the few penalties called on the Mule-Skinners. This shows that the team executed well, communicated well and showed great poise under difficult conditions. Coach Kellogg also admired his team for "showing a great deal of heart and for never giving up."

The football season will provide the cadets many chances to find their game and compete with the best. GO Mule-Skinners!



# Football



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