



MILTON  
HERSHEY  
SCHOOL

**MILTON HERSHEY SCHOOL**  
**P.O. Box 830**  
**HERSHEY, PENNSYLVANIA 17033-0830**

March 25, 2004

Dear Fellow Alumnus/a,

By the time you read this, I hope spring is busting forth like our Spartan Pride is beginning to do. Just in winter sports alone, our wrestling team set a record for the most dual meet victories and advanced five wrestlers to the Regional Championships; and our boys basketball team won the Mid Penn Conference and made it into the State Playoffs. Add to that, we have students working with NASA on the Mars Athena project and --- “Holy Cow!” --- you should see the life-size bovine that our kids painted to include in the Harrisburg regional Cow Parade. I could go on, but you get the picture. We have some distance to go, but pride, hard work, and sacrifice for MHS is re-emerging.

MHS Pride for many of us alumni has been symbolized by our “Flagship on the Hill” – Old Senior Hall. Getting authorization from the Board to restore our most sacred building for the next 100 years gives me goose bumps. It won’t be easy or inexpensive to overhaul this precious landmark. Old Senior Hall has suffered from joint expansion, cracking and decay in the exterior envelope for over 50 years. Beyond fissures in the bricks, towers are leaning and steel in many of the columns has corroded to half of its original thickness. However, to be absolutely sure about how much structural work has to be done, our architects will be employing leading-edge diagnostic tools (i.e., the equivalent of MRI for buildings) to rule out all unnecessary work. Among the greatest costs will be the complete replacement of the 70-year-old utilities and addition of HVAC to last another century. It will all be worth it.

If you are at all like me, you may have automatically assumed that Old Senior Hall would be utilized as our high school building. With nostalgia, I remember the rites of passage as young boys and girls moved up to the Hill to become young men and women and had the crowning experience of their academic journey. But early in ’03, numerous staff pointed out that MHS recently invested enormous resources into the infrastructure of the current campus, into state-of-the-art theaters, studios, music rooms, gyms, libraries, and a stadium mostly with a high school audience in mind. And, others reminded me that our best facilities for independent living for our upperclassman are near to Spartan Commons (what used to be called the Town Center). I am now convinced that moving our older students five miles away from their best facilities makes no sense at all.

However, Old Senior Hall does make perfect sense for our middle school where we are looking to have a more structured experience and a distinct identity out from under the dominant shadow

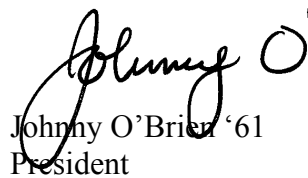
of our high school. It also aligns with our concept of potentially placing some of the middle school housing north of Senior Hall and Hotel Hershey, and of experimenting with a more agrarian lifestyle for the Middle Division. So, I have been enlightened and now believe that our middle school programs --- and our "Flagship on Pat's Hill" --- are made for one another. Both the Board and I see the wisdom of this decision.

Our architectural team is up and running and if we get reasonably good news from the diagnostics, we hope to dedicate a revitalized Senior Hall in '07. It will be new and customized for the middle school on the inside but some things, like the front exterior, the lobby, and the auditorium, are sacred and will retain their classic look forever. We know MHS is built upon the quality of our people, not buildings, but Old Senior Hall, as well as, many of our old farm homes, are the material essence of our home and school and simply must be preserved.

In closing, we just had our finest Fellowship Day and Dinner in a decade. Over 35 of you grads came back to help counsel our older kids on career possibilities and we had enough alumni to pair with each senior at the dinner for the first time in quite awhile. Thank you, MHSAA and our Graduate Services Office. It shows the power of partnership when we pull together for our kids in Spartan Pride.

Onward and Upward Spartans!

Yours for MHS,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Johnny O'Brien". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial "J" and a distinct "O'Brien".

Johnny O'Brien '61  
President