



Mr. O'Melia engages in conversation with Class III boys.

Twenty-five Years of Pursuing Excellence

Gregory J. O'Melia is in his 25th year as Buckley's sixth Head of School. Since then, he has overseen significant achievements and advances to the School's facilities—from the complete restoration and modernization of the Walsh Building to the purchase and construction of the Arts & Sciences Building to the recent acquisition of 109 East 73rd Street. For the past quarter century, Mr. O'Melia has upheld Buckley's motto of *Honor et Veritas*, guiding boys through the formative years of adolescence and helping them understand what it means to be both a leader and a gentleman. He has also brought in faculty of the highest caliber, reinforcing Buckley's position as one of the nation's leading independent all-boys schools. During his first year at Buckley, Mr. O'Melia was interviewed by a writer for *The Shield*, the School's student newspaper. I recently had the opportunity to speak with him about his time here, asking a mix of both new and familiar questions.

— ZACHARY REIF, ACADEMY YEAR,
EDITOR-IN-CHIEF OF *THE SHIELD*

WHAT IS YOUR FAVORITE PART OF BEING HEAD OF SCHOOL?

I enjoy my work at Buckley because it has so much variety. From reading to Beginners, to teaching classes in Values and Leadership, to leading assemblies, to working with boys and parents in secondary school placement, to spending a half-hour with every seventh grader to talk about his progress, to speaking with prospective parents, to meeting with alumni, to working with the Board of Trustees and serving with my dedicated colleagues, among other activities, every day is interesting and full of opportunities. I'd say my favorite part is developing relationships with others and being able to help and serve others.

YOUR PREFERENCE FOR THE RED SOX REMAINING UNEXPRESSED, NOW, AFTER MORE THAN TWO DECADES IN NEW YORK, HAVE YOU DEVELOPED AN ALLEGIANCE TO THE YANKEES OR METS?

I am happy for the boys and my many friends in New York City when the Mets or Yankees do well. I do like rooting for the underdog, so I might have a slight lean to the Mets when they play the Yankees.

WHAT ARE SOME OF THE BIGGEST CHANGES YOU'VE SEEN AT THE SCHOOL?

Buckley has a strong mission and culture with a history of success. So our current school is more similar to the Buckley of 2001 than it is different. But from my perspective, the biggest changes probably would be factors outside the School, such as the rising use of technology and an increased emphasis on specialization. In pursuing our mission at Buckley, we have been very thoughtful in how we use technology in the classrooms, and we continue to advocate that young boys benefit from a strong academic program and a wide variety of activities—public speaking, acting, and team sports, among others—that build a strong foundation from which to grow. I have witnessed numerous alumni who were specialists in college and beyond credit their success to Buckley's ethos that every boy does it all.

WHAT WAS THE HARDEST PART ABOUT YOUR HEADSHIP IN YOUR FIRST YEAR?

This question makes me chuckle as I remember on one of my first days, I forgot to wear my blazer while walking around the School. Thankfully, a colleague reminded me of our dress code. On a more serious note, although I now was the leader of Buckley, I had not hired and did not know most of the faculty and staff. I did not know the loyal alumni who support our School, and I was now reporting to a dedicated board of 20 trustees with high standards. So there



Excerpt from Mr. O'Melia's interview by Andrew Langer '02, published in the December 2001 issue of *The Shield*

were many new relationships to develop. At the same time, the School ran like a well-oiled machine. I still remember my first assembly, when I walked up to the podium and you could have heard the proverbial pin drop. It went so smoothly!

WHAT ARE YOUR FAVORITE BUCKLEY TRADITIONS?

There are so many I treasure! Some that stick out are the Woodruff Public Speaking Competition, the coat-and-tie dress code, that we wait for everybody to be served before we eat, and most important, that every Buckley boy does it all.

WHAT MAKES YOU MOST PROUD WHEN YOU THINK ABOUT YOUR TIME AT BUCKLEY?

The growth of the boys (and parents) over their time at Buckley, the talented faculty and staff we have hired during my tenure, and the financial foundation we've established through our annual fund and endowment—it has enabled us to renovate and construct our buildings that will serve generations to come. ♦