

# Henri Pechin retires from St. Andrew's

Gregory Doyle, Oct 23 2009

## Remarks by Headmaster Tad Roach:

It is a privilege for me to honor Henri Pechin, one of my all time St. Andrew's heroes, as he prepares to retire after 27 years of dedicated and brilliant service to St. Andrew's. We are happy to welcome members of Henri's family to our ceremony today—Henri's wife of 43 years, Agnes, his son, Henri, his sister, Marie Darling and his sister-in-law, Theresa Crew.

Much of our life as students and adults is committed to the concept and reality of work, and to a great degree personal happiness, fulfillment and success in our lives depend on an embrace of an ethic of work, industry, discipline and commitment. Over the last few years, scholars have studied a phenomenon they identify as good work, work that expresses a core value or mission, work that best reflects one's calling, work that expresses the moral and ethical beliefs of the individual. This research confirms that work is a way of expressing our creativity, our values, our belief systems and our deep respect for the welfare of others and the world.

In her great 19th century novel, *Middlemarch*, George Eliot creates the character of Caleb Garth, and she locates the very center of her vision for humanity in his memorable character. Caleb Garth is a man of high principle with a deep and profound reverence for the calling of work. He thinks of his work not as a job, but as something vitally important, sacred and unique. Eliot writes this memorable passage as Caleb Garth expresses the meaning of work to a young man eager to begin his professional life:

*You must love your work, and not be always looking over the edge of it, wanting your play to begin . . . you must have a pride in your own work and in learning to do it well . . . No matter what a man is—I wouldn't give two pence for him if he didn't do well what he undertook to do.*

Over his years at St. Andrew's, Henri Pechin has established a commitment to the value and centrality of work—he has never missed a day of work in his career, and he has expressed a deep ownership, stewardship and responsibility for the beauty and majesty of St. Andrew's fields and campus. His commitment and dedication to our campus reflected both his deep appreciation for the beauty of this setting and his desire to create a stage for the life of the School to flourish. And because he saw work as an expression of his core beliefs, principles, Henri worked with joy, dignity, resilience and commitment each day.

Here are the words of colleagues who worked beside Henri each day:

Sandy Abbott: "If you ever wanted an example of the work ethic that this country was founded on, you need not look any rather than Henri. Always here for everyone, ready and willing to do whatever needed to be done. Willing to stay over if needed. Never asked anyone to do something he wasn't wiling to do."

Russ Perry: "Great work ethic—loyal, caring, proud of not only his work but also his crew of guys, extremely dedicated to St. Andrew's, willing to do whatever it takes to make and keep St. Andrew's the pristine place it is."

Penny Bartsch: “Henri is the most down-home, friendly person you will ever meet. He can make you smile, lift your spirits, and help you walk that extra mile. He is always willing to lend a hand and be a friend. He won’t tolerate a liar or a thief. He loves his wife, kids, grandchildren, horses, goats, polka dancing, and just being home. He’s a unique and wonderful person in this sometimes not very nice world.”

Mike Schuller: “His reliability is unsurpassed: he holds the School record of 27 years of employment without a single missed day of work for any reason, unparalleled consistency that may never again be matched. He will be sorely missed.”

On behalf of the St. Andrew’s Board of Trustees, faculty, staff, students and alumni, we thank you for your service, your inspiring example and your love of this place. You have taught us how to live, how to work, how to serve and how to express and enact an integrity, goodness and strength. May we who follow you strive to meet the standards you have set. You are always a member of the St. Andrew’s family.