

“Our Sons HAVE SOMETHING TO Say”

National editor Harry Jaffe hosted a chat on October 10 to discuss “Our Sons Have Something To Say,” his article in the October issue about last year’s SAT cheating incident involving students from the Landon School. [See the chat transcript.](#)

When Ten Landon Boys Got Caught Up in a Cheating Scandal, the School’s Honor Was at Stake—and Students, Parents, and Faculty Were Faced With Tough Moral Choices

The Landon School as we know it cannot exist save in an ethical atmosphere where **trust and respect** among all members of the community are implicit in every activity . . .

—*From the Honor Code of the Landon School*

BY HARRY JAFFE

Landon School’s commencement on June 6 struck the perfect balance of tradition and achievement. Sun filtered through the leafy grove at the edge of the Bethesda campus and played on the faces of the 65 boys graduating that day. Most were sons of privilege, schooled in history and language, music and math. Dressed in white shirts, red ties, blue blazers, and light khakis, they sat on stands in the amphitheater below the red-brick administration building before smiling friends and family. A choir of underclassmen sang. Awards were given for citizenship and excellence. Most of the boys were headed for fine colleges. A faculty member dressed in a plaid kilt stood ready to play the bagpipes, giving the moment a British boarding-school affect.

Damon Bradley, Landon’s portly and bearded headmaster, took the podium. He opened with a lighthearted anecdote and said he was there to “celebrate” the graduates. Then he paused, looked up from his notes, and lowered his voice.

“We all know there’s an 800-pound gorilla sitting among us this morning,” he said. “All has not been perfect for this class, especially this past year.”

Ten Landon seniors had been caught cheating on an SAT examination the previous fall. The scandal had been played out at cocktail parties for months. Eight of the boys graduating that day had been suspended for more than a month and were not allowed to receive commencement awards.

Two boys were not there that day. Both had been “withdrawn” from Landon under the threat of expulsion. They had been forced out not because they had cheated any more than the other eight. As Bradley had written in a letter to students and parents: “They had committed an offense of extraordinary seriousness, but without extenuating circumstances.”

For the two boys absent that day and their parents, the circumstances were not so clear. In their view, the way the school’s honor code had been applied seemed arbitrary at best. One family sued the school for “breach of contract and defamation.”

Landon is one of Washington’s elite prep schools. Annual tuition is just over \$20,000. Like other top private schools, it carries with it a stereotype. Sidwell Friends is the politically correct Quaker school for the liberal and politically wired. St. Albans and the National Cathedral School cater to the patrician class. Landon has a reputation for cultivating athletes—especially lacrosse players—and using athletic competition to instill a boyish camaraderie.

“It is the school for the military-industrial complex,” says Charles Castaldi, a film producer who attended Landon in the 1970s.

By many measures, Landon delivers a very good education and creates a strong loyalty. Most graduates get into top colleges. Among its alumni are historian Alan Brinkley, DC Superior Court Chief Judge Rufus King, Atlantic Records founder Ahmet Ertegun.

More than most prep schools, Landon trumpets tradition and honor. Legacies of fathers and sons and uncles and cousins stretch back generations that define the term “old-boy network.” Along with tradition and honor, the school is known to have its share of elitism and arrogance. All of those traits came to the surface in the moral choices made along the way by the students who cheated and the adults who meted out the punishment.

“This is not about the boys,” says Mary Anderson, who with her husband, Byron, sued Landon on behalf of their son, Will. “All of them are great kids. It’s the adults who didn’t tell the truth—or act with honor.”

On October 12, 2002, the day of the Scholastic Aptitude Tests, the Washington region was in fear of a sniper—or snipers—who were shooting people seemingly at random in schoolyards, parking lots, and other public places. The eleventh known victim had died the day before. Most schools were locked down during the week and had canceled weekend activities. Many called off the SATs scheduled that Saturday.

Holton-Arms School, a private girls’ school on River Road in Bethesda, decided to proceed with the tests. Holton is thought of as Landon’s “sister” school. Landon boys often date Holton girls; brothers might go to Landon, sisters to Holton.

In part because of confusion over the sniper attacks, Holton-Arms was short on

proctors on October 12. Some arrived late; some never showed.

Eight Landon boys arrived at Holton together that morning. All were athletes and friends; several had been out together the night before. They gathered outside the school, walked in together, and headed for the library.

Pressure to get high scores on the verbal and math sections of the SAT is intense. A perfect score is 1,600—800 on the verbal section, 800 on math. A score of 1,400 or higher opens the door to many of the nation's top colleges. Many high-school students take the SATs twice, hoping that on their second try their scores might rise 50 or 100 points. Poor results on the SAT can ruin a \$150,000 investment in private elementary and secondary education.

In most schools, the SAT is administered in a big, open room, such as a cafeteria. Students sit at tables in clear sight of proctors, who can monitor every move. At Holton-Arms, students had their choice of testing venues. By regulation of the Educational Testing Service, which oversees the SAT, students are supposed to sit in assigned seats. At Holton-Arms that Saturday, students were allowed to sit where they pleased.

In the library, the eight Landon boys headed toward a long table situated behind a railing. Holton-Arms girls heard them talking, according to a report in the *Washington Post*.

"Hey guys," one said. "This is perfect."

All eight sat on one side of the table. The boys were separated by partitions that formed carrels. Proctors could not see them, but the boys could stand up and see one another. They could push back their chairs and pass papers back and forth.

Across the table from the eight, an arm's length away, sat two other Landon seniors, bringing the total to ten.

At 9 AM proctors handed out the test. That was virtually the last anyone saw of them.

The Landon boys were essentially taking the test on their honor.

Honor is a word often used at Landon. Students hear it from teachers and see it on the cover of the school directory. The honor code punishes, among other things, cheating.

Athletic competition also has been at the center of Landon's approach to forming solid young men. Paul Landon Banfield, who founded the school in 1929 and moved it to what's now 75 acres of a large estate in 1934, made football compulsory. Every Landon boy started the school year crashing into his classmates in pads and helmets. The school's culture seemed to emanate from battles on the playing fields.

“Football,” says one graduate, “was a metaphor for life.”

Landon’s dedication to sports is on display when you enter the drive off Wilson Lane. Spread before you is a green expanse of athletic fields arrayed at descending levels on both sides. The academic buildings are back against the woods along the edges of the fields. Some faculty live in old stone buildings up the hill overlooking the ten tennis courts and new track.

“If it isn’t a jock school,” says a former teacher and dean, “the jocks are the most powerful at the school.”

If jocks rule, the boys who play lacrosse now are kings. The game, played with netted sticks and a hard rubber ball, can be as violent as football but with fewer pads. It requires the finesse of soccer and adds the brutality of rugby.

In the last two decades, coach Robinson “Rob” Bordley has built the squad into a national powerhouse. Lacrosse Magazine named it the top team in the country in 2000 and 2001. At the time of the cheating scandal, Landon had not lost a conference game in ten years.

Landon attracts promising students who want to excel at sports. Lacrosse stars get into Princeton, Duke, and the University of Virginia. Lacrosse helps the school raise big money from alumni.

“What brings in money better than a great sports team?” says one alum and donor to the school. “It’s not that they had a great school play but that they won the big game. Right or wrong, it’s true.”

At the library table at Holton-Arms that October morning, five of the ten Landon boys were senior members of the lacrosse team. One was a co-captain; one was a promising goalie; one was the star midfielder; one was the coach’s son. Three of the lacrosse players were sons of Landon alums. One already was all but admitted to Princeton.

They were the lords of spring, Landon’s best.

The cheating started slowly. One student had smuggled in a hand-held electronic dictionary. Those who were strong in verbal skills had agreed to swap answers with their friends who had scored high in math. Two of the boys earlier had scored very well on both math and verbal; they would help friends who had the lowest scores.

Why would students with good scores be taking the test again? Landon requires all seniors to do so.

Will Anderson was one of the two boys facing the eight across the table. He was not a lacrosse player but was an example of the well-rounded Landon boy. He had entered Landon in third grade, the school’s beginning class. Nine years later, midway through his senior year, he had very good grades and a spotless discipline record. He played ice hockey and lettered in cross-country. A lean,

handsome boy with dark, wavy hair, he lives with his parents, Byron and Mary, in a big home in Chevy Chase.

Byron Anderson is a lawyer and lobbyist serving as a Bush appointee in the Agriculture department's Risk Management Agency. Mary is a banker. She grew up two streets away from her current home. Her father and brother went to Landon, her father once having served as chair of Landon's board. Will's younger sister attends Holton-Arms.

Will was president of Landon's choir. Last year Harvard selected him as one of 50 high-school students to tour the East Coast performing and broadcasting live on NPR. He was a choirboy but not an angel: He and his friends had gotten into a few scrapes outside of school; the license plate on his Jeep reads BADBOYS.

At the October 12 SAT, Will Anderson started off as one of the good boys. He had not been invited to swap answers. His previous score was high enough to get into a good college.

The test is given in three sections, with breaks in between. As there were no proctors around and the boys were tucked away out of sight, the eight shared answers near the end of each session. Heads popped up to see if a proctor was in sight. Answers were whispered back and forth.

Anderson and the boy next to him watched as answers were traded, but they were not in on the deals. Then, according to Anderson, the boy next to him asked him to get answers from one of the eight on the other side—the lacrosse goalie.

The goalie stood up and read answers to math questions to Anderson, who punched them into his calculator. He passed the calculator to the student next to him, who translated the numbers into letters and filled in his multiple-choice boxes.

At noon the boys turned in their tests and sauntered out into the warm fall day. They were feeling good. Will Anderson hadn't used the answers, but he felt like part of the in crowd.

Monday morning in Landon's senior lounge, the cheating was all the talk. Everyone seemed to know about it; some boys gave the test-takers slaps on the back.

Alumni, students, and parents interviewed for this article say cheating is not unusual at Landon. Pressure to get good grades is high; the boys know one another well and want to help out; and the faculty is not eager to catch cheaters and turn them in. Adding to the pressure are strict grading policies that make it hard to maintain high grade averages.

"I certainly had the impression there was a culture of cheating when I was there," says film producer Castaldi. "I failed a Spanish class that others got through by cheating."

Says Damon Bradley: "More often than cheating, we run into plagiarism from the Internet. Cheating is not something we see in large numbers by any means."

Cheating has become enough of a problem that a businessman who sent several sons to Landon was moved to write a six-page letter to the school's board of trustees early this year. Most of his boys had had positive experiences there, but one had been expelled for cheating. The man, a former member of Landon's board, had investigated.

"Without exception, everyone we talked with told us that there was widespread cheating throughout Landon," he wrote. All of his sons "over a fifteen-year period of time said that cheating was rampant in each of their classes and had gotten worse over the years."

The board never responded to the letter; board chair Henry Dudley refused the letter writer's request to appear before the board on the grounds that it would set a bad precedent.

Given that culture and the pressure to succeed—good grades and high SAT scores mean a top college and happy parents—sharing answers on the SAT may have seemed a smart move.

Said the goalie that Monday in the senior lounge: "I'm so set."

Larry Lamade, Landon's outside general counsel, was at home the Monday night after the SAT when a friend called.

"Did you hear about the cheating on the SATs?" the friend asked. The caller did not have a son at Landon, but his daughter had taken the test at Holton-Arms. Everyone seemed to know that Landon boys had swapped answers.

"News to me," Lamade responded.

Larry Lamade knew almost everything about Landon. A lawyer at Akin, Gump, he's a Landon man through and through. His father, a career Naval officer, had brought the family to Washington when Lamade was in grade school. He had entered Landon in third grade and graduated in 1965, one year ahead of lacrosse coach Rob Bordley. A short man who has turned husky as a lawyer, Lamade was a jock at Landon, playing soccer, baseball, golf, and football. Lamade went to Princeton and Georgetown law school, served two years in Vietnam, returned to Washington, and became active in the Landon alumni association.

In 1980 Lamade joined the board of trustees; he became chair in 1989 and ran the board until he left it in 1993. One of his first acts as chair was to hire Damon Bradley as headmaster. In the last few years, Lamade has donated his time as counsel to the board and to the headmaster.

Lamade's older son graduated from Landon; the younger, Peter, was a starter on the lacrosse team when his father took the call that Monday night.

After the call, Lamade had to make choices in several capacities: as a father, as a lawyer, and as a Landon alumnus.

“It was a funny situation,” he tells me months later, after the lacrosse season and graduation. “I chose to sit and listen.”

Interviewed in the conference room at Akin, Gump, Lamade refers in a joking manner to the boys who sat next to one another as the “notorious eight.”

“Did I have an obligation to pass on rumors as counsel to the school?” Lamade says. “I came to the conclusion—no.”

Damon Bradley got word of the cheating that same Monday. An educator from another school called to say he had heard about Landon boys cheating on the SAT. At first Bradley discounted it as misinformation. But the head of the upper school, William Crittenberger, got a call from a parent who related rumors of cheating at Holton-Arms the previous Saturday. He told Bradley. “It was impossible to imagine,” Bradley says.

Bradley is a headmaster out of central casting. Born in the Boston region, he has a round face and a close-cropped, white beard, blue eyes behind wire-rimmed glasses. After graduating from Boston University and getting advanced degrees from Yale and Syracuse, he taught at private schools in Europe, the Middle East, and on the West Coast. Before coming to Landon, he was headmaster from 1979 to 1990 of the Elliott-Pope Preparatory School near Palm Springs, a 60-year-old institution that failed for financial reasons six months after he left. Bradley’s wife teaches at Holton-Arms. Landon’s 2001 tax statement puts his salary at \$202,000.

Bradley took over from Malcolm Coates, a headmaster for many years whose trademark was cultivating a sense of family among the students and faculty. The school was in debt because of cost overruns on an art building. The board of directors was looking for a “change agent,” says Larry Lamade. “There was a lack of crispness in the physical plant and the way finances were managed,” he says. “We needed more of a taskmaster.”

Bradley showed little interest in Landon’s sporting tradition and rarely attended games. He set about changing the academics and demographics. He added a humanities series and made music and art full-credit courses that students were required to take. “We’ve got music coming out of our ears,” Bradley says. He encouraged minorities to apply and hired faculty members of color.

Washington, he discovered, was not California. “Washington has its own special pressures,” he says. “The parents are very successful, and they expect the same from their children. They see their schools as entrée to fine colleges. That stress exists.”

Bradley launched a campaign to refresh Landon’s image among colleges. It included recalculating grades so college applicants would have higher grade-point averages.

“Damon brought a different style than Malcolm,” says a former teacher. “He didn’t seem to be aware of the everyday plight of the faculty members in the trenches.” The old-line faculty resisted changing the grades. “He was changing the soul of Landon. The board was so pleased with the way things were going financially, they didn’t see the festering dissatisfaction in the faculty.”

Landon’s headmasters were known for establishing bonds with the boys; Bradley needed nametags to identify them, according to some graduates. He once greeted a senior-class president by reading the name on his athletic jacket—but the jacket belonged to a friend.

Little things bothered the boys. There is a small NO PARKING sign on the drive in front of the administration building. Though Bradley lives on campus an easy walk from the building, he would often drive over and leave his car in front of the NO PARKING sign.

“So much for playing by the rules,” says an alumnus.

Big things got to them, too. Landon seniors pull a senior prank every year, the goal being to make it more outrageous than the last. This year the boys built a huge fish tank in one of the school buildings by bringing in sandbags at night, making a tank out of heavy plastic, then filling it with water and fish. Teachers came to school to find the hallway turned into an aquarium. Bradley’s response was to fire the security guard who let the boys in after dark.

“We called the administration building Baghdad,” says a senior. “Bradley went in and we never saw him—like Saddam.”

It didn’t help Bradley’s image when veteran teachers started to leave and Lowell Davis, the longtime athletic director, was forced out. Many in the Landon community were beginning to believe that Damon Bradley was turning a brotherly institution into a bureaucracy.

Two weeks after the SAT, the results came back to the students and the school. Bradley looked over the scores: A few had spiked by more than 100 points, some by 200. Scores usually go up no more than 50 points.

“It was our first hard evidence,” he says.

The headmaster started a confidential investigation with the help of three faculty members: upper-school senior master William Crittenberger; Jamie Kirkpatrick, director of college counseling and a baseball coach; and Maggie Raines, assistant director of college counseling.

Bradley contacted ETS to get a seating chart and seek help in the investigation. He found there was no chart. ETS offered “little cooperation,” he says.

At the same time, Holton-Arms was hearing more rumors of cheating during the October 12 test. On November 4 the school’s test supervisor contacted ETS. “That phone call initiated an investigation,” Holton-Arms headmaster Diana

Beebe wrote in an internal memo. ETS investigators came to the school to interview students. They also spoke to students at other schools.

Bradley is adamant that word of his private investigation never leaked to students or parents. In the senior lounge, the obsession at the time was the culmination of the football season. Landon was 3-4 and had lost to Georgetown Prep 28-0. No one seemed worried about the SAT.

“We thought it would blow over,” says Will Anderson.

Larry Lamade says he was not aware of Damon Bradley’s investigation of the cheating. Even though he was counsel to Bradley and the board, he says, he had been “sitting on” the rumors for weeks. As he tells it, his son Peter—a football, hockey, and lacrosse player—came to him one evening in mid-November, perhaps Wednesday the 13th. He recalls the conversation this way:

Peter: “I hear that some of the seniors cheated on the SAT test. What should I do?”

Lamade: “What does the honor code say?”

Landon’s honor code says that a student who finds that a fellow student has violated the honor code—by cheating, for example—must inform two of his friends and the three should confront the alleged violators.

“What will happen if they turn themselves in?” Peter asked.

“My experience is that cheaters get caught,” Lamade says he told his son. “You have a duty to talk to these kids. And if they turn themselves in, they will probably do better.”

The Landon honor code says, “If the accused student subsequently turns himself in to the Student Council President, this will be viewed by the Council in a favorable light.”

Peter Lamade enlisted two of his friends, both lacrosse players. On Thursday and Friday, the three confronted the “notorious eight.” On Friday night, the eight gathered at the Chevy Chase home of Will DeFrancis, honor-council head, and decided to confess.

“Basically,” Larry Lamade says, “I stepped away.”

Damon Bradley was at his office early Saturday morning to prepare for an open house for prospective students. It was pouring rain. He heard a knock on his door at 7:30 AM. He opened it to a group of students and parents.

“Our sons have something to say,” the first parent said.

Bradley had expected them. One father had called him late Friday afternoon and said his son wanted to confess. A student called him Friday night and asked

in a quaking voice if he could come in Saturday morning. Another father called to say the group would show up in the morning. Bradley had called Bill Crittenberger to join him in hearing the confessions.

One by one, some with parents and some alone, the boys sat on the love seat in Bradley's office and admitted that they had cheated. They cried. They stammered. They looked down at their shoes. Each student sat in the office for about half an hour. "I had to give them credit for coming to me before I got to them," Bradley says. "But I was concerned for what it all meant." Bradley urged each boy to tell any others involved in the cheating to turn themselves in.

When it was over, Bradley and Crittenberger checked the students against the list of probable cheaters that had turned up in their investigation. Some they had expected; some were not on their radar. His investigation had turned up more suspicious scores.

"There are others out there," Bradley told Crittenberger.

Three days later, on Tuesday, November 19, the student council convened an honor court to hear the eight boys' confessions.

Heading the 13-member council was Will DeFrancis, who had met with the "notorious eight" Friday night. Each boy confessed in less than 15 minutes. They admitted to sharing answers and expressed their regrets. They came off as forthright and contrite. Their stories matched.

Each was asked if he knew of other students who had cheated that day. All eight answered no.

As elsewhere, honor has two meanings at Landon, and they are in conflict. The honor code says you have to counsel a violator to turn himself in; if he refuses, you have to expose his transgression. But the true code of honor among boys says you do not rat out your friends.

"What they don't get about that is it goes against the peer pressure and social pressure of boys at 15 and 16," says Charlie Castaldi. "It felt as if it went against the grain of being truly honorable."

Will Anderson was caught in the middle. He knew the other boys at the table had turned themselves in, but he also believed his name would not come up. He rationalized that he didn't really cheat since he didn't change any of his answers. His test scores improved only 20 points on the second try. And he didn't want to tell on the boy he had passed answers to. But he was worried enough to consult his friends.

Anderson says he ran it by a senior who was the son of a board member. Should he turn himself in?

"Give me a break," Anderson says the boy responded. "Why turn yourself in and risk getting suspended?"

The student who got answers from Anderson put the same question to a member of the honor court, who also advised him to lie low. Both boys decided to do so.

The question is, why didn't Will Anderson and the other boy get a call from Peter Lamade to meet on Friday night and organize the mass confessions? Why didn't their friends who sat across the table from them in the library not clue them in to the choreographed move to confess?

There are several possible explanations. While both were popular boys, they were not members or close friends of the lacrosse clique. And it may be that not all of the "notorious eight" knew that the two boys on the other side of the table had cheated. But some of the eight knew that answers had crossed the table—including the goalie, who had passed them. In the final analysis, the boys' code of honor trumped the school's honor code: No one wanted to rat them out.

Damon Bradley and Bill Crittenberger kept poring over the SAT results, and they saw that one boy's scores had shot up nearly 200 points. On Friday, November 22—three days after the eight had confessed to the honor court—Bradley hauled the boy out of class. He and Crittenberger took him into a room, locked the door, closed the blinds, and interrogated him. He broke down and confessed that Will Anderson had passed him answers.

Anderson was not even a suspect at that point. Bradley got him out of class and put him in a separate room, locked the door, closed the blinds, and questioned him. Crittenberger and Bradley continued to question the boys in separate rooms, checking each one's answers against the other's. The questioning lasted more than two hours.

By the end of the day, Bradley knew that the goalie had given answers to Will Anderson, who had passed them to his friend. Bradley told Anderson he was likely to be expelled.

Will Anderson, shocked and scared, drove home to tell his parents.

Byron Anderson came home that Friday to find his son and wife in tears. His son had been at Landon for nine years, and this was the first disciplinary action he had faced. Byron Anderson expected a call from Bradley with some kind of explanation. It didn't come. So Anderson called Bradley.

The headmaster was curt. He said Will had been caught cheating and had not confessed. "There is a chance he will be expelled," Bradley said.

Anderson asked if he could come in to talk about it. Bradley said that was not in order. The student honor court would meet to judge his son.

Landon's honor code sets strict requirements for a trial. Not all were followed. The code says it is "imperative" that the student-council president be involved at the outset in any investigation leading to a trial. Bradley and Crittenberger investigated both the "notorious eight" and the two others without consulting

William DeFrancis.

The code states that “the boy’s advisor should speak with him before any questioning.” Bradley grilled Will Anderson and the other boy long before their advisers were involved. It also says that the “appropriate dean will inform the student’s parents of the proceeding.” Byron Anderson had to call the school to find out his son was to be tried. The trial was set for Sunday, November 24.

Saturday morning the Andersons and the Landon community awoke to this headline in the *Washington Post*: EIGHT AT LANDON SCHOOL ADMIT CHEATING ON SAT.

The *Post* reporter had the names of the “notorious eight”—though she didn’t print them—and she had called every family. None would comment, but Damon Bradley did.

“There will be punishment,” Bradley said. “Severe punishment.” He went on at length to the reporter.

Bradley was widely blamed within the Landon community for talking too much to the *Post* reporter. In a similar situation, Georgetown Prep, a school that competes with Landon, had responded to reporters’ questions by saying the matter would be handled internally, and the story had died. The *Post* reporter says she gleaned the names from the rumor mill and interviews with students and parents.

With the *Post* coverage, pressure mounted on the students and the administration.

Bradley said the penalties for the cheaters would be announced the following week. “We think it is fundamental that they came forward,” he told the *Post*. Referring to the honor code, the *Post* story said suspensions were likely but added, “Expulsions are rare and have been limited to serious, repeat offenders, school officials said.”

Byrson and Mary Anderson were upset, but the most aggrieved parent may have been lacrosse coach Rob Bordley. Not only were five of the accused cheaters on his team, but one was his son.

Bordley told the *Post* he was “immensely disappointed.” Bordley had been a coach and a history teacher at Landon for 33 years, but he means much more to the school. He is in many ways the embodiment of Landon—he started school there at age eight and, except for four years at Princeton, has been there his whole life. A small man with piercing blue eyes and a chiseled jaw, Bordley is a Landon legend. In the 1960s he played varsity on four teams a year and graduated with 17 letters.

He graduated in the same class as the current board chair, Henry Dudley. He was one class behind Larry Lamade and publisher Knight Kiplinger. “He was a thorn in the side of the study-hall proctor—me,” says Kiplinger. For a senior-

class prank, Bordley and his comrades deposited a Volkswagen bug at the bottom of the school's amphitheater. He describes himself as a "mischievous kid."

But he was also an athlete who excelled way beyond his size. At Princeton he was All-Ivy wide receiver in football. He took up lacrosse for the first time and won varsity honors. He tried rugby and played so well that he was named captain of the USA Eagles, the national team, in 1975.

After Princeton he returned to teach at Landon. Paul Banfield, the school's founder, hired him in 1969, his last year as headmaster. Bordley transferred his skills on the athletic field to the task of motivating young boys to work hard and play even harder. Whether it was junior-varsity soccer players or stars on the lacrosse team he took over in 1975, Bordley had the ability to connect with boys and make them play with passion.

Bordley's cramped office in the basement of Landon's gym has *Posters* of both General Patton and Che Guevara on walls plastered with photos of boys in lacrosse uniforms.

"Mr. Bordley is more than a coach—he's a father figure," says Brendan Healy, a standout on Landon's 2001 lacrosse team and a student-council president who now plays for the University of Maryland. "He teaches us to be men, not just lacrosse players. That's why we play so hard for him. We don't want to disappoint him. That motivates us."

When Bordley learned of the cheating episode and his son's involvement, he was humiliated, he says. He went home and "checked out" for ten days.

"It was not just an episode involving the school and the students," he says. "It was my own son. I was a mischief-maker, but there's a difference between making mischief and a dishonorable action."

"The spin that lacrosse played a role in the matter was perplexing," he says. "The whole notion that lacrosse players received preferential treatment is hard to swallow. Press accounts made it seem like a renegade program. That hurt the most."

That Saturday morning a lacrosse player called Bordley in tears because he had heard the boys found cheating might be expelled. The coach drove from his home in Virginia to the Landon campus and found Damon Bradley.

"No one needs to be expelled," he says he told the headmaster. He says he was "philosophically opposed" to expelling students.

"You make it sound as if the school should never expel anyone," Bradley replied.

"Only in the case of a kid who is immoral, heinous, or untrustworthy," Bordley said.

Bradley said he was worried there might be more students who had cheated and hadn't come forward. Bordley asked if he could help. Bradley said he could make some calls. One of his first was to the Anderson household.

First he spoke to Will. "Are there any more names that will come out?" Bordley asked.

"Not that I know of," Will responded.

"Do me a favor and ask around. I don't want any more surprises."

Will was holding back tears. "Mr. Bradley said I might be expelled. Do you think that's a serious option?"

"I can't really imagine that would be the case," Bordley said. "You've never been in trouble before."

Byron Anderson got on the phone and asked about expulsion.

"It is used only for students who are repeat offenders," Bordley responded, "a cancer on their class. It happens once every ten years."

Later that day Robert Condit had called to console Will Anderson. Condit had been a chemistry teacher and guidance counselor for decades at Landon. A venerated member of the faculty, he had retired after the 2001 school year. He had been Anderson's adviser; he had heard about the trouble and called to offer a few words of hope.

After talking with Bordley and Condit, Will Anderson felt encouraged. His father appreciated the call from Bordley. "Bordley has more influence than Bradley," he says. "He's king."

The honor court commenced Sunday morning in the Corcoran Room, a small auditorium in the upper school. In addition to the 13-member honor court, several faculty were there, including Bill Crittenberger and Jamie Kirkpatrick. Damon Bradley was not in the room.

The goalie went first. He was asked again if there were any other students involved in the cheating on the SAT. This time he admitted he had been untruthful in the first trial. He now said he had passed answers to Will Anderson and the other boy. He was in and out in a few minutes.

The student who had used the answers testified next. He confessed in great detail, expressed remorse, and was finished in under an hour.

Will Anderson waited outside alone, entered the room last, and began answering questions. Landon's honor code says the student will be counseled by his adviser before the trial. The first time Anderson saw his adviser, Todd Barnett, was right before the trial. "He told me to tell the truth," Anderson says, "which I did."

Crittenberger and Kirkpatrick acted as prosecutors. The first thing Anderson did was plead guilty to cheating by passing answers.

“Did you use the answers?” Crittenberger asked.

“No,” Will answered.

Crittenberger asked again and again.

“Compare my answers to the ones I passed along,” Anderson said. “You will find they are different.”

The two teachers asked Anderson over and over whether he asked the goalie to give him the answers or whether he was a passive conduit. Anderson said he couldn't remember.

They grilled him about his calculator. Where did he buy it? How much did it cost? Where was the receipt?

Anderson's trial took more than two hours. He emerged shaken but content that he had been honest.

“I had nothing to lose,” he told his parents. “Why would I lie?”

On Monday morning, assistant college counselor Maggie Raines pulled Will Anderson aside. “The honor court thinks you are lying,” she said. There were discrepancies between Anderson's account and that of the other two boys as to whether he actively participated in the cheating and used the answers.

She recommended that he talk to the honor court again. “Tell the complete truth,” she advised. “Be contrite. You will get off with a suspension.”

Anderson went to Crittenberger to clear up the matter. Crittenberger convened an impromptu meeting of the court in the school cafeteria.

At this session, Will was even more contrite. He said he had screwed up and it would never happen again. He stuck by his story that he did not use the answers, but he admitted that he had been more active in asking for the answers and describing how he could use his calculator to transfer them.

After the session, Bill Crittenberger shook Will Anderson's hand. “Glad we cleared that up,” he said.

The next move was Damon Bradley's. The honor code is specific about the court's role. Lying before the court can result in expulsion, but a vote for guilt must be “unanimous.” The court also must assess the seriousness of the offense and weigh previous violations, among other things. It then passes on its determination of guilt and recommends a “punitive or educational response” to the headmaster, who exercises his discretion.

Bradley says he felt like he was on “the edge of a knife.” Alumni were telling him to apply the harshest penalties and throw all the boys out; parents were asking him to be lenient.

Lacrosse coach Rob Bordley argued against expulsions.

“Whatever answer we reach will be the wrong one,” Bradley told a colleague. “That’s what happened.”

Bradley considers himself an ethicist. On this matter he was consistent: “It was the difference between those who waited and watched and those who came forward,” he says. “There was a clear distinction.”

On Tuesday morning Byron, Mary, and William Anderson were called in to meet with Bradley and a faculty member, Andrew Katz, in Bradley’s office. Bradley opened the conversation by reading from the honor code. He kept mentioning “expulsion“ as one of the possible outcomes. Finally he said the honor court had voted unanimously that their son had cheated and should be “separated.” Bradley said he agreed.

“But William has never been in trouble,” Byron said. “He hasn’t been given one slap. He never even had his shirttail out. He has represented Landon well in national choral competitions.”

“William did not come forward,” Bradley said. “And he changed his story to the honor court.”

“But Maggie Raines coached him to change his story,” Mary Anderson said. “And he was interrogated for hours.”

Bradley did not address her concern. “Now that the *Washington Post* is involved, we have to take a hard line,” he said, according to the Andersons. “If the *Washington Post* was not involved, we could have handled this internally.” Damon Bradley denies making the comment and insists that the *Post*’s coverage had no influence on his decisions.

The Andersons later would find out that the vote for expulsion had not been unanimous after all. But by Landon’s constitution, rather than the honor code, a recommended punishment need not be unanimous.

“You have two choices,” Bradley told them. “You can withdraw William, or we will expel him.”

“Can we appeal?” Byron asked.

“No,” Bradley said.

Byron Anderson stood up, shook Bradley’s hand, and walked out with his wife and son.

Andrew Katz, the teacher who had been present, chased after them. "What will you do, withdraw him?" he asked.

The Andersons kept walking.

When the Andersons had left, Damon Bradley put the finishing touches on a four-page, single-spaced letter to students and parents. "Regrettably," it began, "we have learned that ten Landon Seniors cheated by sharing answers (either giving or receiving information) on the SAT exam administered at Holton-Arms School on October 12."

Bradley described the school's informal investigation, how eight boys had come "voluntarily" to his office, and how he had discovered the two boys who had not come forward "when a window of opportunity presented itself." He recounted the honor courts and the punishments recommended by the student judges: suspensions for the eight, a stiffer punishment for one who didn't confess in advance, and "separation" for the tenth.

Bradley offered no explanation for the tougher penalty for Anderson. He had changed his story in his second session with the honor court and said he had been a more active participant in the cheating. The lacrosse goalie also admitted he had lied the first time about giving answers to Anderson, but even though the honor code says a lie is a lie, his fellow students spared him the harsher sentence. (Bradley later characterized the goalie's initial lapse as "an oversight.")

"The Student Council recommends punishment to the Headmaster," Bradley wrote, "but he is not obligated to accept the recommendations without demur."

Bradley said he felt obliged to make harsher the penalties recommended by the student judges: He increased the suspensions for the "notorious eight" from five days to the six weeks between Thanksgiving and the first week in January, and he expelled the two who did not admit to cheating.

"Some may worry that the actions of these may have tarnished Landon's good name in the eyes of colleges and universities," Bradley wrote. He said he would call every admissions director, "preemptively making known all the disagreeable details of this incident. . . ."

In closing, Bradley wrote: "By their actions, they have undermined one of Landon's core values; and they have brought disgrace to themselves and embarrassment to their parents. They have lost their good name and must earn it back."

In December the Educational Testing Service, citing "testing irregularities," threw out the SAT scores of the ten Landon students—and 71 others who had taken the test in inadequately supervised rooms at Holton-Arms on October 12.

Will Anderson was relieved. No more sleepless nights, no more interrogations. He enrolled at Bethesda-Chevy Chase High School, a well-regarded public

school closer to his home. He joined the hockey team. The B-CC guidance counselor came in over the winter break to help him get his transcript and recommendations together for college applications.

Anderson wrote a letter to the admission office at each of the colleges he had hoped to attend. He described the cheating episode and wrote: "I have learned the hard way that there is accountability for bad behavior." He applied to eight schools—including Middlebury and the University of Virginia—and hoped for the best.

At this point, Will Anderson was a martyr to his friends at Landon, but he started to lose contact with them. "We didn't finally bond or say goodbye," he says. "There was no closing ceremony on all my friendships."

Neither was there any closing of the questions gnawing at Byron and Mary Anderson. How did the eight boys come to confess together? Why was Will not included? Had Landon's honor system treated their son fairly?

Shortly after his son's expulsion, Byron Anderson started to field calls from friends at Landon and the Chevy Chase Club. They wanted to make sure he knew about Larry Lamade's involvement.

Anderson first called board chair Henry Dudley and said he was troubled by Lamade's role in the affair. Would the board look into it?

Dudley said the cheating episode had been no secret, that it had been all over the cocktail circuit, but he was not aware of Lamade's actions. Dudley said the board would not investigate, and he suggested that Anderson call Larry Lamade directly.

Anderson did so.

"I heard rumors you played a role in the cheating scandal," Anderson recalls saying. "I hear you tipped off the eight boys."

"That's right," he says Lamade responded. "I was contacted by the father of one of the boys involved." Lamade described how he had told his son Peter to confront the students who had cheated and suggest they turn themselves in.

Mary Anderson was distraught over the portrayal of her son. "William is a good kid. He had a strong, clean record at Landon and in everything he did," she says. "Then my friends and neighbors read in the paper that Landon only expels 'serious, repeat offenders.' And William gets expelled. He looks like a troublemaker to all the world. Is that fair?"

Byron and Mary talked for hours after the Lamade call and came to the conclusion that their son had been treated unfairly. They contacted a lawyer. "If Larry had not owned up to his role," says Byron Anderson, "we would not have pursued the complaint."

The Andersons sent a letter to Bradley on January 22 asking the school to settle the matter by sending a letter to the Landon community and to colleges essentially saying that William had been treated unfairly. They asked that part of his tuition be refunded and that they be reimbursed \$5,000 in attorneys' fees. The school did not respond.

The Andersons filed suit against the Landon School Corporation in Montgomery County Circuit Court on February 6. The complaint alleged "breach of contract and defamation" against Will Anderson, "who was unfairly threatened with expulsion and defamed by Landon School officials in order to make him and another less-favored student scapegoats for public relations purposes."

The cheating scandal and the Anderson lawsuit opened a rift in the Landon community. A private e-mail line burned with emotions. Old-line families wanted the boys punished and the school protected; newer families wanted the school to administer lighter punishment and move ahead.

The Andersons heard mean-spirited comments from some of Landon's old guard, but they also got plenty of support. One handwritten note said their son was "a scapegoat. What they did to him is in my opinion just as bad as the cheating."

Another letter-writer congratulated them and apologized for being anonymous: "There is a very real fear culture at Landon. Even otherwise successful and powerful people shudder in fear that Landon will somehow undercut or penalize their son."

At the start of Landon's spring semester, William Crittenberger addressed the eight suspended cheaters in the Upper School News: "I want to welcome you back to the Landon community with open arms."

The lacrosse team was about to welcome back five players. Rob Bordley had a promising team of seasoned seniors, including the five who were back from suspensions. The squad included sons of three alumni: a Lamade, a Dudley, and a Bordley. The team was working on an unbeaten streak in the Interstate Athletic Conference dating back to 1993. Landon had a good shot at making it 11, but Georgetown Prep stood in the way.

The lacrosse rivalry between Landon and Georgetown Prep is legendary and fierce—approaching blood sport. In recent years, some 3,000 fans have shown up to watch the teams pound each other. The winner gets bragging rights for a year, and the bragging has been all Landon's: Since Prep started playing lacrosse in 1986, Landon had won every year, 18 straight games.

Inside Lacrosse, a national newspaper, ranked Landon and Georgetown Prep seventh and eighth in the country in its spring high-school report.

On April 24 Landon laid its unbeaten string on the line. Prep (15-1) was atop the *Washington Post* rankings; Landon (9-2), not as dominant as in previous

years, was third behind DeMatha. It was a blue-sky spring afternoon. Landon's emerald lacrosse field was ringed with spectators. Cigar-smoking alumni in blazers and bow ties were crowded in among giggling girls.

A sign behind the scoreboard read:

USA v. Iraq = Undefeated

Landon v. Prep = Undefeated

A Prep fan standing on a rise behind one goal said, "It's like the Super Bowl. This has got to be our year."

Prep dominated the game from the start with a tough defense. Bordley's son tied the score at 2, but Prep scored the next five goals.

"These f---ing p---ies can't play lacrosse," a Landon player said as his team ran off the field after the first half.

"We're losing right now," a coach shot back.

Landon was known for coming back in the final quarter. Rob Bordley always pulled some magic or spurred on his boys. But on this occasion time ran out with Prep ahead 8-5. The 18-game streak was over.

Coach Bordley told the *Post*, "We've had a lot of success at Landon. I don't think anyone is going to feel sorry for us."

Damon Bradley did not attend the game.

"It's good to get the monkey off our back," he said when the season was over. "This is not a lacrosse school. We had a good run, but we've had good runs with other sports, too."

Before the year was over, Damon Bradley expelled three more Landon students. A security guard at the Hilton Washington was checking the halls during a national meeting of the Model UN and smelled marijuana coming from one of the rooms. Landon boys were registered there. The guard told a Landon teacher, who confronted the students. Three admitted to sharing a joint.

"Landon's good name will not be associated with illegal drugs," Bradley wrote in a letter to students and parents. All three boys "have been separated from the school, effective immediately."

Bradley didn't write that more Landon students had been disciplined for drinking at the conference. Several were suspended. "Alcohol and marijuana are part and parcel to life these days," he tells me. "It was not an honor-code violation. It was a disciplinary matter."

Bradley says he informed colleges of the drinking-and-marijuana incident.

“They didn’t seem to care,” he says.

The Landon board of trustees cared enough about the cheating scandal and the other incidents to establish a special committee. Made up of current and former board members and headed by Lee Verstandig, a parent and longtime Washington lobbyist, its purpose is to “study the subject of honor at Landon, with particular emphasis on the recent cheating incident and examination of all factors that may have contributed to it.”

As the committee began to meet and take comments from the community, the board was dealing with Damon Bradley’s retirement. After 14 years at Landon, he was ready to move on. But he wanted to stay on one more year, to celebrate the school’s 75th anniversary.

Word that the board was considering a retirement package leaked to alumni and provoked a blast of anti-Bradley venom, in particular an anonymous letter to the board calling for a “formal evaluation” of the headmaster.

“Damon is a strong leader,” says publisher and alumnus Knight Kiplinger, editor-in-chief of the Kiplinger publishing organization. “He has many admirers and many detractors.”

The board elected Kiplinger chairman, and he quickly wrote an open letter to the Landon community: “It is clear, from national research and student surveys, that academic dishonesty is widespread in America at colleges and high schools of every quality, and the elimination of all cheating is not realistic. Our goal is to educate Landon boys on their ethical responsibilities, to minimize the incidence of cheating in our student body, and to deal evenhandedly with offenders.”

Kiplinger says in an interview: “The feeling of community at Landon is already on the mend.”

On May 21 a Montgomery County judge dismissed the Anderson lawsuit. Without addressing the merits of the case, the judge ruled that Maryland had no jurisdiction over disciplinary matters in private schools. She stopped the legal action before the Andersons were able to gather any documents or take depositions.

No court will rule whether justice was served in Landon’s handling of the SAT cheating, whether deviations from the school’s honor code were crucial, whether it was fair that the “notorious eight” were tipped off and got together to confess while Anderson and the other expelled student were left out in the cold.

“The tip-off, while interesting, was not persuasive,” Bradley says. “I don’t know if they [Anderson and the other student] had a tip-off, but they had plenty of time to make things right.”

Even Larry Lamade questions whether the system is “right” for the long term. “I think the punishments that were handed down were appropriate, given


Landon's honor code and past precedents," he says. "But I think the school has to take a look at where it goes from here. In the future, only boys who are a cancer to their class should be expelled from school."

Will Anderson ran into several Landon buddies at the beach over spring break. He offered his hand. They refused to shake his. The lawsuit had changed him from martyr to enemy in their eyes.

Anderson graduated from Bethesda- Chevy Chase with grades good enough to get him accepted at a couple of good schools. "Sure, I am disappointed I didn't get into schools like Georgetown and the University of Virginia," he says, "but I am excited about getting a fresh start."

All ten of the boys caught cheating on the SAT were admitted to good colleges, including Duke and Haverford. The lacrosse player who went into the SAT with the highest scores and the expectation of winning early admission to Princeton was rejected after the scandal, though he will be attending Duke.

On September 13, Landon dedicated the new Robinson M. Bordley Stadium. Scores of athletes and alumni came to honor the living legend.

Meanwhile, three of the main players in the cheating drama might have a chance to work out their differences in college. Will Anderson, the other student who was expelled, and honor-court president Will DeFrancis are all at Southern Methodist University in Dallas. 

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National editor Harry Jaffe (hjaffe@washingtsonian.com) played lacrosse for Lower Merion High School, near Philadelphia, on two state championship teams.

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