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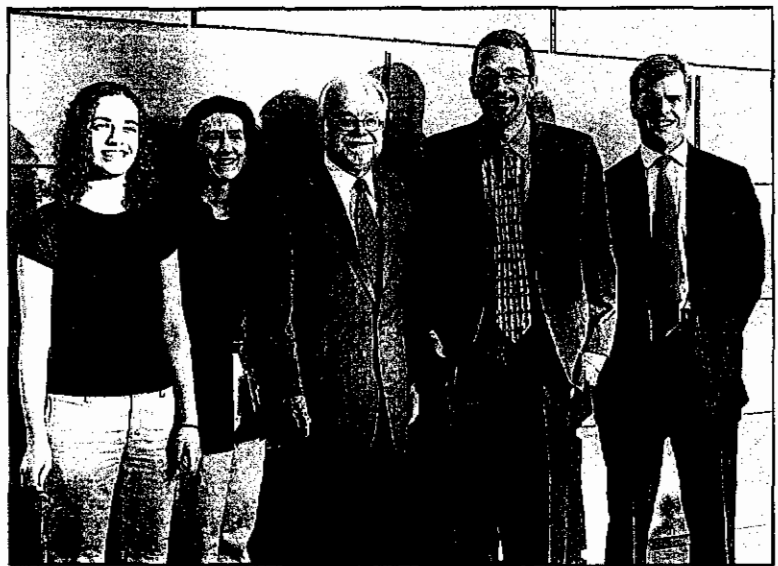
FINDING SOLUTIONS IN SEARCH OF PROBLEMS – TEACHING CREATIVE PROBLEM-SOLVING

IAN AYRES '77
MARY C. HAZARD LECTURE SERIES SPEAKER

At an early morning assembly in September, Ian Ayres '77 grabbed a bunch of bananas and tossed them into the crowd challenging the upper school students to think in a different way. As the students caught the flying fruit, he advised, "Try flipping it upside down and peeling it from the bottom. It's easier and that's how the experts – monkeys – peel their bananas." The amused students ate their treats while Ian enjoyed talking about what he likes to do best – asking questions and challenging others to do the same.

Ian returned to his former campus as the speaker for the Mary Hazard Lecture Series. Established in 1976 by the Sunset Hill Alumnae Association, the lecture series was created in memory of Mary C. Hazard, former head-mistress of the Sunset Hill School from 1931 to 1939. She was a strong believer in giving students opportunities to learn from experiences outside of the classroom.

"It was a great joy returning to my alma mater," said Ian. "It was amazing to see teachers still there from my era. I came to Pem-Day the second half of fifth grade, and I still have vivid memories of



Members of the Mary C. Hazard Lecture Committee and Dick Hibschan, head of school, greeted Ian Ayres '77 prior to the lecture. Pictured here are (l-r) Chloé White '05, Peggy Huycke, upper school French teacher, Dick, Ian and Brad Kroh '90.

Barry White and his green weenies. Bob Hicks was a great track coach, and during our many morning runs, he taught me so much about basic decency. Kevin Madden was a quiet, gentle soul. Dr. Schulkin was my history teacher, and it seems like a simple thing, but he really pushed us to crisply state a thesis and then showed us how to "marshal our evidence." I took a class over at Sunset from Val Ostarch that had such a big impact on me. I still remember discussing *The Sun Also Rises*."

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After graduation from Pembroke-Country Day School in 1977, Ian earned a bachelor of arts degree from Yale University, a law degree from Yale Law School and a doctoral degree in economics from the Massachusetts Institute of Technology. Since 1994, he has been a full-chaired professor of law at Yale School and has a joint appointment at the Yale School of Management.

“I am deeply grateful for Pem-Day teaching me how to write,” he said. “When I first got to Yale as a freshman, I was really worried about whether I would be able to hold my own with the kids from fancy eastern prep schools. But when my very first English paper was returned, I remember the teacher was trashing the other papers left and right, but he actually circulated my first paragraph as an example of how to make a clear claim. Then and there, I knew that Pembroke had given me some pretty important basic tools – tools that I’m still using today.”

Following the lecture, Ian spent the morning teaching a couple of history and statistics courses. “Teaching the classes was a blast. It was very challenging for me to try to switch gears to teach high school students rather than law school students,” he said. “The fact that PHS has an AP statistics class tickles me pink. I passionately believe that high school students should have a basic vocabulary for describing how variable something is. We know how to communicate averages, but very few of us can speak in terms of standard deviations. And it’s really not that hard. Empirical social science is one of the few areas where a high school student could write an important publishable paper. In fact, if anyone at Pembroke would like to work with me on such a project, feel free to e-mail me (ian.ayres@yale.edu).”

His lecture *Can Creativity Be Taught? Why Not!* featured information from his recent book with co-author Barry Nalebuff, *Why Not? How to Use Everyday Ingenuity to Solve Problems Big and Small*. He and Nalebuff analyze similar topics on public radio’s *Marketplace* and also write a column in *Forbes* together. Ian has co-authored many books

pertaining to law and published articles in scholarly journals, newspapers and magazines on everything from auto theft to bankruptcy to labor strikes to Kobe Bryant’s recent legal problems to the invasion of Iraq. He is also frequently called upon to testify as an expert economist witness in legal cases.

“I love co-authoring,” Ian said. “It lets me bounce ideas off of other people and the mixture of different projects keeps me interested. It would get stale if I were only teaching or only writing. It’s fun to write an article for a technical journal in the morning and then turn around and try to write an op-ed for *The New York Times* or a radio commentary where you want your words to be clear enough so that people can understand you while they are driving.”

He continued, “I do write esoteric math articles, but I like to keep it ‘real’ too. An article that is about to be published in the *Yale Law Journal* collected information about taxicab tipping – and found that taxicab passengers tipped black drivers a third less than white drivers.”

He has three books that will be published soon. “The books are pretty different,” said Ian. “One’s about insincere promises (where people make promises that they never intend to keep); another, called *Straightforward*, is about how heterosexuals can support gay rights; and the last is pretty much a math book using option theory to analyze how legal rights should be protected.

“I want to make it socially acceptable for everyone to suggest better ways to organize the world and, like RFK, ask ‘Why not?’” Ian continued, “I encourage people to check out www.whynot.net, a website where you can actually post your ideas and see tons of cool ideas that others have posted. There are about a dozen ideas that are now becoming a reality. Come join the open source movement for ideas. What’s your best idea?”