

# First Words

By Karl Lindholm '67

Home will take on a stillness when  
you're gone  
We'll leave your room as is — at least  
for now  
Here — wear this watch my father gave  
to me  
His face dissolves within the whirling  
snow  
Don't lose the watch — the inside  
is engraved

*Robert Pack, "Departing Words to a Son"*

My father grew up in Waltham, Mass., his family part of a large Swedish community, many of whom worked in the Waltham watch factory on the Charles River. As a child, I admired the three Waltham pocket watches my father kept in his top bureau drawer, watches that had been passed on to him by his family. One, a gold watch in a blue velvet pouch, always drew my keenest interest. I loved to feel its weight in my palm, snap it open and see the Roman numerals arranged perfectly around its face. I would sneak in my parents' bedroom and hold the watch and wish it were mine.

My father, always wise and reserved, told me that one day I might have the watches, but not for some time. I am careless; I lose my glasses, jackets, umbrellas, tormented by thieves who take my things and hide them cleverly for months before I rediscover them in obscure places.

Three years ago, my father gave me a pocket watch, not the gold one, but a wonderful watch nonetheless. It had been given to him by his old football coach at Bates College, Dave Morey. Coach Morey was divesting himself of valued possessions, making gifts to friends who would treasure them as he had. My father was Dave Morey's captain at Bates in 1934, a single wing center, one of the most crucial "skill" positions on the team. The great triumph of Coach Morey's team in the Lindholm years was a scoreless tie with Yale at the Bowl in New Haven before 20,000 fans.

I was a center in football, like my Dad, though I moved to guard on fourth down because I never mastered the long snap to the punter, much to my father's chagrin. I did not love the game as my father did in the 30's; my body was suited to the game's brutality but, alas, not my nature. I



*Coach Dave Morey*

steeled myself at Lewiston High School in the 60's to be brave and not let down my teammates or my father and I think I knocked down about as many opponents as knocked me down.

I remember falling in love for the first time in my junior year in high school and spending Friday nights before Saturday football games at her house before sprinting a mile home to meet my 10 o'clock pregame curfew. When I arrived home, invariably late by a few minutes, my father would look up from his chair and book and ask, half kidding, "You can be a lover — or a football player: What's it going to be?" I always answered, "Football player," as much as I longed to be back on Jeanie's front porch, holding her, loving her with adolescent desperation. On Saturdays, in games, I would try mightily, try not to quit in the fourth quarter, and I never did, and returned home pleased to get my father's sparse words of praise.

The watch my father gave me is a silver Elgin about three inches in diameter with bold Arabic numerals on the face. The outer circumference of the watch has a design of delicate filigree and on the back side are a series of vertical lines beneath a horizontal stripe of diamond shapes. In the center, in elegant calligraphy, are the initials "DBM," for David B. Morey. The most wonderful feature of this watch, and the reason my father gave it to me, is the engraved inscription on the inside: "To Coach Dave, From his Middlebury Football Squad, 1923."

Dave Morey coached at Middlebury for five years, 1920-25, before moving on to

## My Father's Watch

Auburn University in Alabama and then to Bates and 10 years there. As an undergraduate at Dartmouth, Dave Morey was twice an All-American halfback (and second leading scorer in the country in 1912 to Jim Thorpe), an accomplished violinist in the Dartmouth orchestra, and a baseball player skilled enough to play pro baseball in 1913 for Connie Mack's Philadelphia A's. His years at Middlebury were an unqualified success: He was described in the Boston press as "Middlebury's Miracle Mentor" for his ability to take on powerhouse teams from much larger schools and battle them on even terms. The highlight of the 1923 Middlebury football season was a shocking 6-6 tie of Harvard in a game that brought Middlebury national attention. Dave Morey lives today on Cape Cod; he is 95.

In an extraordinary letter to my father accompanying the watch in October, 1979, Coach Morey explained his motive in entrusting this treasured artifact to the sure hands of his old center and captain:

*Milt — please open the back and read the legend on the inside. I realize my time here is limited, as with everyone, and I am trying to care properly for my few material possessions following my death. I cannot, by my own action, drop them — the tokens which mean so much to me — casually in the trash basket. I am asking permission to leave this watch — this token — with you because you have a definite tie-in with Middlebury.*

*I hold for you, Milt, a deep respect, admiration, and affection, and I am sure that the Middlebury boys would be very happy with the manner in which I have handled the situation. Do what you will, for I know it will be the appropriate action.*

My father, Milt, gave the watch to me, for I am that "tie-in with Middlebury" and have been since 1976 — and before that from 1963-67 as an undergraduate. Middlebury is my home and the setting of my fatherhood. The year my father retired at Bates (1976) and stopped being Dean Lindholm there, I became Dean Lindholm at Middlebury.

In his letter to my father, Dave Morey wrote of his years at Middlebury and told the lovely story of the gift of the watch to him.

*(Continued on page 51)*

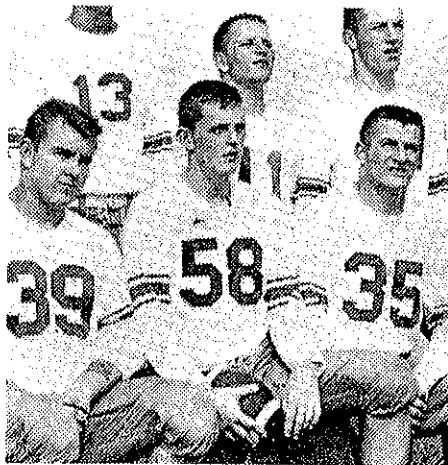
# First Words (continued from inside front cover)

*I feel sure that in talking about my coaching days at Middlebury, you may recall hearing me say that of my 45 years in coaching, the five at Middlebury were the happiest beyond description.*

*At the close of the 1923 season at Midd., which was our last game and at home, I was just going into my office. Without warning, I was pounced upon, lifted bodily by several of my squad, carried to the shower room, and there thoroughly soaked, while the rest of the squad looked on, smiling and laughing and giving the 'regular Midd cheer for Coach Dave.'*

*When I was allowed to emerge from the shower, dear little Connie Moynahan came to me and said: 'Coach, as a symbol of our esteem and love, we want you to have this token. BUT you must promise us that you will not leave Middlebury until we have licked West Point, Penn State, Harvard again, and Princeton.'*

**I**'m afraid that I have inherited from my father a Nordic reserve. He is 72, I am pushing 40 (my God, can that be true?) and we don't have long talks about mortality and life's great lessons, though he is a man of wisdom, much beloved at Bates where he worked for 35 years, and I am capable of hearing his message. But we talk instead of the Red Sox and their faltering pitching.



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I resemble my mother and she is more my confidante and support. I sense she approved of my implicit preference for "lover" over "football player." But, oh, the complexity of father and son. How I admire my father and sometimes also resent deep in my heart his easy way with people (everyone calls him "Lindy") and the obvious love they feel for him.

Does he love his only son? He must. He gave his son this watch, this beautiful watch. The watch symbolizes our unspoken bond, our mutual love of sports, Bates and Middlebury, our time together, acknowledged in incidental moments of communication and not in

great outpourings of paternal and filial emotion. It means, it must, that he appreciates his son's achievement at Middlebury, modest on some scales, not bad on others, where his coach, Dave Morey, spent five years, the "happiest beyond description."

I have lost the watch twice and have been desolate with the loss. Though it has little intrinsic value, it is my favorite thing. Both times it turned up, the second time deep in the car's glove compartment, months after I had given up hope for its recovery.

*Stillness deepens pulsing in our veins  
My father's words still speak out from the watch  
Some day you'll pass this watch on to your son  
My father's words still speak out from the watch*

"Departing Words to a Son"

I may lose it again. My daughter plays with it when I leave it about, holding it in her hand, loving its feel. She is careless, a five-year-old, and might well drop it or misplace it. Foolishly, I still leave the watch in lockers and on desk tops, ripe for real theft. But I will do my best not to lose it. I like knowing it's in my pocket. It tells me the time, a useful service in my life, and it reassures me of my father's love. □