

The Spirit of Alfred
By Margaret A. Aylor, Class of 1943

Even though it was written almost sixty years ago, this speech, given at a 1942 Freshmen Week program, still holds true:

“You can’t see this spirit with your eyes; you can’t touch it with your hands; and you can’t hear it with your ears. It is something you must feel deep within.

Like the soul of a person, you won’t find it by merely passing. You must stop awhile, work a lot, play, and, without your realizing what has happened, it will be a part of you.

It comes to you across an age filled with struggle to build these halls, to set high standards, to found traditions which could exist nowhere else simply because of these hills and the fundamental aims for which the school began. It is something to which time has given meaning.

To various ones of you, it will be evident in different ways. To an athlete, it may be the feeling of accomplishment which comes after a victory in sport; an artist may sense it in colors. Perhaps some Sunday as you walk, the sound of the bells will tell you what it is. Or you may find it in the friendly ‘hellos’ that greet you everywhere. Or your professors, or chapel talks or the way the campus looks in Spring – these are a part of it.

Sometime you may think that even red tile roofs against a blue sky have something to do with it. And you’ll be right because all these outer forces which create impressions within are founders of the Alfred Spirit.

Since it will be a part of you, you are the ones who will make it live during your stay here. The way you work, the way you play, the way you cooperate with your fellow next door – these will affect it. The opinions you form, the attitudes you take toward this future of ours – these will be your contributions to the spirit. It is very important that you form these opinions wisely and face this future courageously because we want the Spirit of Alfred to continue as enduring as ever.

Probably, to the majority of you, it will be the most valued possession you will find at college. It will surpass all the others and overshadow them, finally, because of this, its greatest quality – it will embody the memories which you, having been a part of Alfred, will take away with you.”