

# A YEARBOOK IS A LOVE LETTER...

By Pat Conroy

A yearbook is often the first historical document to teach young men or women everything they need to know about the swiftness of the passage of time. Whenever you gaze at a picture of yourself as you go about your business at school you can be absolutely certain you will never be that young again.

A yearbook is a love letter a school writes to itself. It pays homage to its teachers and coaches and librarians and administrators who helped shape the youth of America for little acclaim and small paychecks. It flings roses to the class leaders and student council members, athletes in their great prime of life, band members who bring music to fields and auditoriums, reporters who bring news of the day in the student newspaper and photographers who will make this book live forever.

A yearbook is a love letter, but this love letter will notice the unpraised citizens of your school: The janitors and cafeteria workers, the new students who walk the halls, friendless and unpraised at that mocked and overlooked notion of students who would never expect to find their pictures in any book, let alone something as necessary and wonderful as a yearbook.

A yearbook is a shining novel which talks the whole story and leaves nothing or no one out, the way the great novels used to do. The book you hold in your hand will never change in any way. If you blinked when the photographer took the picture, your eyes will be closed for all eternity.

A yearbook is a thumbprint, an archeological dig where you left your laughter, friends and achievements in the hallways of a school, which will soon become just an artifact of your life. This yearbook will serve as living proof of what you once were and will offer a glimpse of what you might become.

A yearbook is a touchstone which enables us to make time stand still as we make our glorious and painful way into the secret lives ahead of us. The yearbook will trap one year of your school life in the chill and motionlessness of photography. Your friends will call out to you from these pages for the rest of your life and so will your most relentless and embittered enemies.

A yearbook is a chronicle of life. The very best ones have a snapshot of every student and teacher in the school. The great yearbook never overlooks the shy kids or the kids who hold back or keep to themselves. It embraces everyone and everything because it will serve as the history of this one year of the singular school which exists beneath the shadows of your buildings and all the roads and highways that have led inexplicably to your school.

You will devour this book because it tells one complete version of your life and the life of your school better than anyone or anything has ever done before or will ever do again. But here is the secret of your book. Its heartbeat will start again and its eyesight will be restored whenever you pick it up. It is one of the most important books you will ever own because it contains all the memories and dreams and anxieties and sorrows and triumphs of this single year of your life.

This book will be deathless, one of a kind and you will reach for it a thousand times in the future.