On Wittgenstein

Sometimes an apocryphal story is too good to resist repeating. It’s said that when Ludwig Wittgenstein presented the Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus as his doctoral thesis at Cambridge, Bertrand Russell, his supervisor, declared: “Mr. Wittgenstein has written a work of great learning and originality. Nevertheless it still satisfies the criteria laid down by the University of Cambridge for the award of the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.”

Apocrypha aside, William Day (SF82), associate professor of philosophy at Le Moyne College, considers Wittgenstein the most interesting 20th-century philosopher.

“Wittgenstein’s life and his concern with the way that he lived it, his concern with his moral being and for his immortal soul, were unique among important thinkers of the last century,” says Day, who in December was putting the finishing touches on a volume of essays about Wittgenstein, co-edited with Victor J. Krebs of Pontificia Universidad Católica del Perú. Titled Seeing Wittgenstein Anew, the book is due out in March from Cambridge University Press.

Day, also a jazz pianist, developed a deeper interest in Wittgenstein’s later writings, particularly his discussion of “seeing (and hearing) aspects,” after coming across something Wittgenstein told his friend Maurice Drury: “It is impossible for me to say in my one word about all that music has meant in my life. How then can I hope to be understood?” Day suggests that Wittgenstein found in the puzzle of musical meaning an emblem for the demands that his later writings make on his reader. As Wittgenstein explains, sometimes understanding a sentence means sorting out your experience of it, seeing how it cannot be replaced by any other sentence, just as understanding a musical theme means hearing how it cannot be replaced by any other musical theme.

Wittgenstein turned away from a life of wealth and privilege to pursue profoundly difficult things on an untraditional path. As a young man he was drawn to philosophy by way of engineering. His fascination with the foundations of mathematics led him to Bertrand Russell’s Principles of Mathematics and, in 1911, to study with Russell at Cambridge. After he wrote the Tractatus (1921), the only work published in his lifetime, Wittgenstein decided he had solved all of philosophy’s problems and moved on.

But he returned to Cambridge in 1929, and until his death in 1951, Wittgenstein set aside the systematic philosophy with which he concerned himself in the Tractatus to focus instead on how philosophy creates its own problems when it considers words (such as “knowledge,” “being,” “object,” and “name”) apart from their original, everyday use. He dedicated himself to doing away with philosophical problems by showing that puzzles arise when language “goes on holiday.”

Wittgenstein wasn’t on the Program when Day was an undergraduate. He first encountered him in grad school at Columbia, and as an exchange scholar at Harvard, where he attended some of Stanley Cavell’s seminars. (Cavell’s The Claim of Reason: Wittgenstein, Skepticism, Morality, and Tragedy, was published in 1979.) When Day was studying philosophy, the ethical side of Wittgenstein’s concern with the workings of language was largely ignored by professional philosophers other than Cavell. That began to change in 1990, when Ray Monk published his Wittgenstein biography, The Duty of Genius. The work drew attention to the religious or ethical dimension of Wittgenstein’s thought.

In this issue of The College, Annapolis tutor John Verdi examines how Wittgenstein reexamined the very work that made him famous and repudiated nearly all of his earlier conclusions. Verdi’s book on Wittgenstein, Fat Wednesday (Paul Dry) is due out this spring.

We also profile three Johnnies with careers in publishing, from the writer whose imagination begins the process to the publisher who brings it to fruition. Also, Santa Fe senior Jacob Dink explores how learning Brazilian Jiu-Jitsu is like learning a new language.

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DOING THINGS WITH WORDS
Tutor John Verdi suggests there are two philosophers to consider when approaching Ludwig Wittgenstein.

THE BOOK: A STORY IN THREE PARTS
The publishing world is going through revolutionary change, but these Johnnies wouldn’t do anything else.

SOMETHING DEEPER
What’s behind all that rolling and hugging of Brazilian Jiu-Jitsu? Jacob Dink (SFro) explains why this gripping martial art is like studying language.

A WAY OF LOOKING AT THE WORLD
He arrived at St. John’s uninspired and indifferent; he left full of passion and purpose. Hugh Curtler (class of 1959) explains how St. John’s shaped a career.

HOMECOMING
The Class of 1959 reflects on ways St. John’s never left them.
Achieving reaccreditation is a significant accomplishment of which any college may be proud, but equally noteworthy is the successful completion of the process leading to achievement of this distinction. This past June, St. John’s Santa Fe campus received a 10-year re-accreditation from The Higher Learning Commission of the North Central Association of Colleges and Schools. The 10-year re-accreditation is the accrediting body’s most positive endorsement.

Colleges and universities seek accreditation because it adds to the credibility of the institution and also enables it to qualify for U.S. Department of Education Pell Grants (to support students based on financial need) as well as for work-study subsidized loans, explains Susan Kaplan, director of Corporate and Foundation Relations. Once an institution is accredited, it must be reaccredited every 10 years.

For St. John’s in Santa Fe, this process got underway at the end of 2006, with the establishment of a steering committee appointed by President Michael Peters. Chaired by tutor and musician-in-residence Peter Pesic, the committee included Victoria Mora, dean; Judith Adam, tutor and then assistant dean; Krishnan Venkatesh, then director of the Graduate Institute; Bryan Valentine, treasurer; Jim Osterholt, vice president for Advancement; and Claudia Honeywell and Philip Bartok, tutors.

Charged with organizing the self-study—the centerpiece of the evaluation process—the committee referred to the commission’s 192-page Handbook of Accreditation to structure the college’s response to the evaluation criteria. The commission “doesn’t want you to assess yourself against other universities in the North Central region. They encourage you to do a self-assessment, to take the criteria and measure how well you are doing what you say you’re doing,” Kaplan says.

“The process mirrored our fundamental commitment to self-knowledge,” Mora adds. Because the Program is based on conversation among tutors and students, both were key participants in the self-study. The process was both reflective and prospective: that is, the goals were to assess how the college meets the HLC’s criteria, to analyze the college’s present situation, to identify strengths and challenges, and to suggest future directions.

By the summer of 2007, the data-gathering process was in full swing, propelled by a series of small-group, open conversations designed to be as inclusive as possible. These discussions included tutors, staff, alumni, members of the college’s Board of Visitors and Governors, and officers of the college. In addition, undergraduate and graduate students were encouraged to conduct their own self-studies. The discussions were not confined to the Program; they embraced academic support structures and the administration of the college as well.

“We wanted to make a thorough and searching review of the college and have the self-study come out in one voice,” Pesic explains. “We wanted to explain ourselves to the outside world. It was a grass-roots process. In the end, the report had to balance many perspectives.”

The final product, first drafted in December 2007 by Pesic with assistance from fellow tutors Bartok and Honeywell, went through numerous revisions, taking into account suggestions from a diverse group, including an active BVG committee. It also needed to be responsive to recommendations made by evaluators at the conclusion of the previous evaluation cycle. The organization of the self-study is a departure from the presentations made by most colleges, Pesic suggests.

For example, the report devotes a number of chapters to providing an overview of St. John’s and a discussion of Program aspects—how they have changed and how they might be improved—before addressing the HLC’s five core criteria. (These criteria cover an institution’s mission; resources to respond to future challenges; student learning and effective teaching; acquisition, discovery, and application of knowledge; and engagement and service.)

“Our self-assessment,” the report’s summary concludes, “is that St. John’s College in Santa Fe is strong; its Program is alive and vital to those who dedicate themselves to it; we are reaping the benefits and the challenges of being a more mature campus; and . . . we are poised to meet the challenges that face us going forward.”

Peters had decided not to wait until the end of the 2008-2009 evaluation period to have the HLC’s peer-review team come to campus, but to have the self-study completed early so that the evaluators would be in Santa Fe by November 2008. He wanted the bulk of the self-study completed before Pesic, its chief author, went on sabbatical. “I also thought we’d have a richer pool of potential reviewers [for the evaluation team],” he explains.

The self-study was completed in September 2008, which gave the evaluators time to read it thoroughly before their three-day visit. Besides reviewing a mass of required documentation in its temporary “resource room”—from five years’ worth of publications to audits, from BVG meeting minutes to treasurer’s reports—the team conducted interviews with selected officers, staff, and tutors; held open meetings; and attended classes.

“This is the best way to understand St. John’s,” Peters notes of the classroom visits. “It helped us convey what we’re trying to do. They found it helpful and
that came across in their report.”

The four peer reviewers served as both evaluators and counselors. “The team was a terrific group of people and fair-minded,” Peters adds. The team’s leader met with Peters at the beginning and at the conclusion of the visit. “They offered suggestions and took away some very positive lessons about the process,” Peters notes.

In particular, the team singled out for praise student involvement in the self-study. “They thought that it was amazing” to have this level of student input, Kaplan says, and suggested that this is a model for other institutions. “The students gave a thoughtful response to their own education,” Mora observes.

The evaluators also understood, Peters says, “the distinctive nature of what we are doing.” A preliminary draft of the team’s findings was presented to Peters in January 2009, and in June word came from the HLC’s board that St. John’s had earned its reaccreditation. “The process for us was about as smooth as it could be,” Kaplan reflects. “We got the best outcome you can get: a 10-year accreditation with no required interim visits and no required interim reports.”

“It is testament to the integrity of our liberal arts program and to the dedication and hard work of the faculty, staff, students, and board members over many years,” Peters emphasizes. The college also was encouraged to share its approach to learning with the higher education community. “They told us, you’re being too modest; don’t hide your light under a basket.”

“Everything the evaluators mentioned [in their report] had already emerged in our own conversations,” Pesic notes. “We need to project ourselves out into the world. We need to continue to work to improve the Program and help students move out into the world with as much support as possible.”

Reflecting on the process, Mora says that it is clear that the college is in the middle of an institutional transition, becoming a college with more fully rationalized structures to support the Program. “We need to prepare the college for the future,” Pesic agrees. The evaluators’ report also occasions reflection about possible changes in two areas: community outreach and aggregate assessment of students.

The commission considers how an institution is doing not only within its own community, but also within the larger community in which it is located. “So, we want to look at what [our community outreach] is and what its purpose is,” Mora explains.

Meanwhile, the Instruction Committee is examining the notion of aggregate assessment; that is, gauging the academic progress made by groups of students. “We got praise for our one-on-one assessments of students,” Mora notes, but there is pressure to demonstrate that St. John’s, as an institution, “is doing what we say we’re doing.” Since the college doesn’t test incoming students and then re-test them to gauge their academic progress, the challenge is to determine whether there is a method of aggregate assessment that is a natural extension of the Program. “That remains an open question,” Mora says.

The self-study process also highlighted the extent to which the college needs to supplement oral tradition with written documents, Mora points out, adding that now an institutional infrastructure is in place to respond to questions that may be posed during the next evaluation period, such as how the college is making its now more informal practices more rationalized.

“We received stellar comments from the evaluators during the exit interviews,” Mora says. “To them, we are on the cutting edge of pedagogy—a testament to the rarity of the conversation, I suppose!”

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St. John’s College and the Economy

Questions and answers

St. John’s College is responding to the economic downturn by taking the same measures enacted by nearly every college and university across the United States: cutting expenses whenever possible, slowing down hiring or freezing staff positions, and freezing faculty and staff salaries. No personnel cuts or furloughs have been necessary, although some tutors have voluntarily taken a cut in teaching stations for this fiscal year. The result is that this year, like the prior year,

These steps, along with tapping reserve funds, have helped the college preserve what is most important: the quality of the academic experience for students. To avoid operating budget deficits in the future if the nation’s economy does not improve, the college is scrutinizing its operations to see where more savings can be found, and devoting more resources to strengthening student recruitment efforts.

Here are answers to common questions posed by alumni, parents, students, and friends of the college.

What is the state of the college’s financial health now?

The successful completion of the college’s capital campaign, which raised $134 million, provided money for ongoing financial aid, enabled the college to build several needed buildings, and strengthened the endowment significantly. The endowment continues to be an important source of revenue for the college. Although the endowment lost value as the recession deepened in 2008, it has rebounded somewhat (from $100 million to $117 million) by the end of October. The college draws between 4.5 and 5.5 percent from the endowment for operating expenses—faculty salaries, financial aid, student services, and administrative office expenses. While the draw amount is down for 2009-2010, a measure of overall progress is that in 2005, prior to the campaign, the college’s endowment was $100,000 per student; it is currently $133,000 per student.

However, the recession has affected every area that brings revenue to the college. A drop in freshman enrollment on both campuses, while not as steep as at some other colleges and not as steep as predicted, will affect St. John’s for the next few years. Grant support from the Selliger Program in Maryland is down, and the college expects The Fund for St. John’s (which raises money for annual expenses) to be flat, or to bring in about the same as in the 2008-2009 fiscal year—approximately $3 million.

Did the college raise tuition to help increase revenue?

The college enacted the smallest tuition increase in 20 years, raising tuition just 2.9 percent for this academic year. This decision reflected both an awareness of how the economic crisis is affecting current students and their families as well as a desire to keep St. John’s competitive with peer colleges.

Is the college still providing financial aid?

The college significantly increased the amount of financial aid to meet the needs of students this year. Across both campuses, 62 percent of St. John’s students receive financial aid, and costs in this area have been climbing steadily. The average St. John’s grant is $24,000. Nevertheless, in terms of college priorities funding need-based aid is—and will continue to be—second only to preserving the quality of the academic program.

How did changes in enrollment affect the college budget this year?

The college budget reflects a 7 percent drop in enrollment in the 2009-2010 academic year, primarily due to the recruitment of smaller freshman classes. That meant the college brought in less tuition revenue, and since tuition makes up about 65 percent of the college budget, this loss in revenue is noteworthy.

Having encountered swings in enrollment in the past, the college does not expect this downturn to continue. However, to ensure a stronger applicant pool the college has made significant changes in its admissions practices. The college has hired more admissions counselors and has changed its practices to extend the reach to prospective students. New marketing materials are being prepared this year by North Charles Street Design, a top firm that also represented the University of Chicago.

What is the college leadership doing to plan for the future?

The St. John’s Board of Visitors and Governors, in concert with the Management Committee (the college presidents and deans, working with the treasurers and vice presidents), has named a task force to study the college’s financial model and make recommendations to ensure the long-term financial health of St. John’s. The Sustainability Task Force brings together board members with extensive, high-level experience in the finance and business sector with representatives from the college. Board members include Annapolis Dean Michael Dink and tutor Joseph MacFarland and Santa Fe Dean Victoria Mora and tutor Stephen Van Luchene. The group will meet regularly and report on its recommendations at future board meetings, beginning in January.

Responsible financial planning requires the college to take into account all scenarios, including the “worst-case” model which shows a deficit in the operating budget by 2013. This model would become a reality only if the nation’s economic state worsens, hurting endowment and philanthropic support, and if enrollment fails to rebound. Ensuring that the college avoids this scenario is the reason the task force was assembled. Overall, the college remains strong financially; the endowment is highly diversified and well-managed, and fiscal responsibility is a priority on the campuses.

What can alumni and friends do to help St. John’s?

Alumni and friends have always been an important source of assistance for the college. They support St. John’s by making gifts, acting as volunteers, and advocating for the college. Continuing these support activities is crucial to St. John’s.
GI director Matt Davis

Every day that Matthew Davis (A82) goes to his office in Weigle Hall, he observes the progress being made next door on the Norman and Betty Levan Hall. Since beginning his duties as Graduate Institute director last June, Davis has witnessed the construction site evolve from a gaping hole to a concrete, masonry, and steel-beamed preamble to the future home of the GI’s two programs, Master of Arts in Liberal Arts and Eastern Classics.

Planning the transition to Levan Hall next August, Davis already is acquiring books for a library dedicated to the graduate program. Dr. Levan (SFGI74) will be donating a large collection of his own books, but Davis is hoping to augment that generous contribution with additional books.

The library project is just one of many on Davis’s to-do list. His top priority is boosting enrollment in the two graduate programs. “I’d like to be back to more than 100 students, possibly more,” he says. (This fall, the GI opened with 86 students.) To that end, the college has been tapping technology; for example, putting the admissions application online and increasing the GI’s Facebook presence.

Davis is also turning his attention to ideas for improvement to the graduate programs. One of those ideas is revising policies concerning the optional master’s essay. In an effort to improve the completion rate, Davis and the members of his mini-Instruction Committee are examining ways to support students to do this work successfully. “Students feel like they get a kind of depth with [the master’s essay] unlike anything else,” Davis observes. Students work closely with an advisor, applying careful thought to a particular text, and produce a major piece of writing.

In response to student requests, Davis and his committee also are exploring how to incorporate Greek instruction and reading into the curriculum of the liberal arts program. “We’re looking at a preceptorial sequence, without prerequisites, that would give students an introduction to the language and to using it to read texts,” Davis says. He envisions a summer preceptorial that might evolve into a more extensive program, similar to the Greek Institute at the University of Chicago, only with the St. John’s way of “learning the language through extensive translation of the original texts.”

An Annapolis graduate, Davis earned a master’s degree in philosophy in 1984 from Dalhousie University, was a doctoral candidate in philosophy and classics at the University of Pittsburgh, and earned a doctorate in political science in 1995 from Boston College. He has held academic positions at the University of Toronto, Carthage College, and Boston College. In 1998, he joined the St. John’s faculty.

In his new role at the college, Davis enjoys meeting and teaching GI students, who bring diverse experiences and viewpoints to the college. As one of his first duties as director, he interviewed graduating students, and met a man who had been a firefighter in New York City during the 9/11 attacks. The student had left firefighting to become a teacher and enrolled in the Graduate Institute to learn more from the great books. “He had experienced something profound [through 9/11] and he found something truly significant here,” Davis says.

Levan Hall Update

Bordered by Weigle Hall and the Fine Arts Building, Levan Hall is beginning to suggest its final form, asserting a modern interpretation of the campus’ “Territorial style of architecture. Alumni who want to watch this long-awaited graduate center emerge on the Santa Fe campus can visit the college’s webcam: www.stjohnscollege.edu; click on Outreach.

Levan Hall has been designed as an energy-efficient building, says Peter Brill, president of Peter Brill, Inc., the owner’s representative for the project. Designed to earn LEED Silver certification, Levan Hall might be able to achieve Gold certification, Brill says. The building will be heavily insulated, and rooftop photovoltaic arrays will convert solar energy into electricity that can be returned to the grid. Large windows, including a three-floor array of glass on the back side of the building, take full advantage of passive solar heat and light.

The first building on campus to significantly harvest rainwater, Levan Hall will direct roof water to catchment tanks—an ample reservoir for irrigating nearby trees and plantings. In construction and function, the new building suggests an environmentally responsible way to live in the high desert.

The 9,200-square-foot building will span two and three-fourths floors. The front entrance will open onto the second floor, with a hallway leading all the way to the back of the building, also with its own entrance. At this point, the building is three stories high, with a balcony overlooking hills filled with piñons. A third entrance will face Weigle Hall. A Zen garden is planned for one side of the building.

Contrasting masses are a thematic element: for example, the front entrance presents a light, portal-like side next to a heavy masonry structure.

Levan Hall’s design also has inspired changes in the surrounding architecture and terrain. For instance, new second-floor balconies on the Fine Arts Building and the Peterson Student Center will echo the balconies of Levan Hall. The Meem Library Placita will become part of a more open central core, distinguished by an expanded landscape of connected walkways and sitting areas.

On schedule for completion by next summer, Levan Hall will be ready for its occupants by August 2010.

{From the Bell Towers}
THE STORYTELLERS

A small but enthusiastic group of Johnnies makes time every Wednesday for an old-fashioned pursuit. They put aside their Program readings, lab manuals, and Greek lexicons to gather in the “Chasement,” the cozy basement of Chase-Stone House in Annapolis. On chilly nights, they’ll lay a fire in the fireplace. Someone brings the milk and cookies. And someone brings a story: often a favorite from a children’s book or a short story collection; sometimes a yarn spun from their own imagination.

The Storytellers Club is in its fourth year on the campus, and it attracts a loyal following of students (10-15) who find it a perfect midweek break, an alternative to dorm parties and trips to downtown bars. “People want to entertain others and be entertained,” says Kelly Trop (A12), who brought a favorite children’s book, the Squishiness of Things, to Storytellers one night. “You might make up a story, read a story, recite a favorite poem—it’s all about sharing something you like with others.”

The focus isn’t on creative writing, Trop explains. Instead, it’s about the spoken word, the shared experience of hearing and reacting to a story. Some students deliberately choose stories that allow them to dramatize the tale. Others are eager to share a favorite genre, such as science fiction, or a favorite modern writer. Daniel Dusman (A11), co-archon of the club with Trop, has brought Polish science fiction stories from Stanislaw Lem’s Cyberiad series, as well as medieval tales such as the legends of the Rhineland.

There are generally just two criteria for a work brought to Storytellers: “It has to be good,” Dusman says, “and it has to be brief.”

Participants always consider the audience when selecting material for Wednesday nights. “It has to be enjoyable for the listener all the way through,” and lend itself to dramatization. For example, Melville’s “Bartleby the Scrivener” may be a brilliant short story, but it’s a snoozer when read aloud, notes Eric Honour (A10). Mark Twain and the Brothers Grimm are more entertaining for audiences. A few years ago, the group found an Internet story that combined the Republic with Quentin Tarantino’s Reservoir Dogs, which was a real hit.

At a college where one must be conscious of not doing all the talking, “storytelling lets you practice skills of speech we don’t really get to use at St. John’s. And with all the reading we do, just listening is really fun,” Honour says.

A couple of times a year, the club puts aside printed material and hosts a special “Tall Tales and Liars” event, inviting Johnnies to bring their best made-up stories. The group votes on the best yarn, and a tacky prize is awarded to the winner. Halloween each year brings ghost stories. Last year, one Johnnie read several stories with a marriage theme, then proposed to his girlfriend right in the middle of Storytellers. (She said “yes.”)

It’s always fun to see what Johnnies will bring when they go out of their way to entertain their friends in these free-wheeling sessions, says Honour. But there’s just one hard and fast rule: “No Program readings,” he says.
A Meeting of the Minds
Alumni invite Johnnies to neuroscience conference

by Kelley O’Donnell (A04)

Like J.P. Snyder (A10), who told me he believes “that neuroscience is the next logical step for philosophy,” I was led to neuroscience out of a love not of biology, but of wisdom. While at St. John’s, I could not imagine being as happy anywhere else; I had a nebulous desire to “help people,” but I believed that no altruism, however expansive, would be meaningful outside the context of the examined life.

Shortly after graduation I began a post-baccalaureate premedical program, but soon experienced a profound crisis of faith in that path. Homesick for my alma mater, I considered leaving behind the multiple-choice tests and the problem sets that characterized my new, albeit temporary, life, but in doing so was forced to consider what questions I would rather be asking. Time and again, I found myself considering the nature of the mind, of the self, of the means by which we perceive ourselves and the world, of personality and habit, of mental fortitude and mental illness. I wanted to ask questions that mattered, as I had done for four years at the college.

Thinking back to my summer as a Hodson intern in the pathology laboratory of Dori Borjesson (sister of tutor Gary Borjesson), I recalled the sense of both humility and empowerment that characterized my time at the bench. It occurred to me that through neuroscience I could experience that same exhilaration, taking questions that interested me on a philosophical level, and asking them in a way that would allow me to apply the fruits of my inquiries to the mentally ill, in whom such questions acquired a heightened urgency.

I had the privilege of meeting Mr. Snyder, along with his fellow seniors Elizabeth Fleming (A10) and Jacob Dink (SF10), in October in Chicago, at the annual meeting of the Society for Neuroscience. There we were joined by over 30,000 neuroscientists, among whom were my fellow alumnae Leslie Kay (SF83, Director of the Institute for Mind & Biology at the University of Chicago), Taffeta Elliott (SF97, a post-doctoral fellow at the University of California, Berkeley), Pamela Bergson (A99, a post-doctoral fellow at the University of Chicago), and Patricia Sollars (A80, Associate Professor at the University of Nebraska, Lincoln). In a heroic effort of advocacy and organization, Ms. Sollars had arranged for the three seniors, who had expressed an interest in neuroscience, to attend the meeting, thanks, in part, to the generosity of Chicago-area alumni Elisabeth Long (A86), Rick Lighthurn (SF76), and Barbara Schmittl (A76) who opened their homes to provide places for the students to stay.

Ms. Sollars had also contacted the other alumnae attending the meeting and had organized a dinner for all of us one evening. There our talk of neuroscience ranged from the crystal structure of certain proteins to a lecture we had heard earlier that evening, the title of which (“Origins of Abstract Knowledge: Number and Geometry”) would have appealed to any student of Euclid and Kant, and was a marvelous affirmation of why the path from St. John’s to neuroscience sometimes seems so obvious.

From the current students’ perspective, the most valuable aspect of the trip was that dinner, in which we discussed at length the paths that led us out of Annapolis and Santa Fe. Ms. Fleming said, “We often hear that it’s hard to ‘get a real job’ after St. John’s, or that jumping into an academic field, especially science, is a daunting task, so it was very encouraging to see alumni who were doing just that . . . and offering to help us make that leap ourselves.” Every St. John’s student or alumnus has been asked to justify the “practical” benefit of his education, as though the examined life was of no intrinsic merit. The cumulative effect of that pressure is often a sense of anxiety, a fear that we are indeed unprepared to “do” anything.

Certainly in the sciences, and I suspect in any field, such a fear is unfounded, but the unique gift of a St. John’s education can seem more distant to seniors faced with the task of moving outside the brick or adobe fortress, into a world that seems interested only in more traditional and quantifiable measures of skill and success.

Mercifully, the college is in no danger of becoming a place in which one acquires professional “training”; however, measures must be taken to ensure that graduates do not feel hampered by or apologetic about their background when faced with the task of moving on. Though this meeting, Ms. Sollars has set a precedent that I hope can be followed in the years to come, for students interested in any number of fields.
Aaron Bisberg (class of 1949) remembers only some of the details: “It was 1944. I was on a landing ship-tank that was being used as a troop transport for my Air Force repair outfit being transferred from the Philippines to Ie Shima. We were laying off Okinawa waiting for the convoy to assemble.

“I remember I managed a boat ride to land, and at the airport I hopped a helicopter ride to a merchant ship in the bay which my cousin Simon was on—all this to spend a little time with him.

“Simon and I stood on the bow of his ship talking and he tells me about this very small college he read about and thought I would be interested in it. He described what he knew about the great books program. I was hooked. I wrote a letter to [then Dean] Scott Buchanan. He responded with “come along,” and described the protracted first year starting a little late for the returning vets. I joined the class of 1949.”

At Mr. Bisberg’s suggestion, The College asks alumni to share how they first heard about St. John’s. Some responses will be published in the Spring 2010 issue of the magazine. Send your story to: rosemary.harty@sjca.edu.
NEWS & ANNOUNCEMENTS

Novelist Johnnie Receives Whiting Award

Salvatore Scibona (SF97) received the 2009 Whiting Writers’ Award in October. This prestigious $50,000 award recognizes 10 young writers for their extraordinary talent and promise and is one of the most coveted prizes for new writers. Scibona’s first book, The End, was the winner of the New York Public Library’s Young Lions Fiction Award and a finalist for the National Book Award.

HONORS FOR WINIARSKI

Earlier this year, the college awarded Warren Winiarski (class of 1955) the distinction of Honorary Fellow, a rare honor bestowed on individuals who have been outstanding supporters of the college. The faculty of St. John’s College awarded the distinction in appreciation of his achievements as a vintner, his distinguished service on the Board of Visitors and Governors, his generosity and leadership in capital campaigns, and his selfless work leading to the eventual sale of California property intended originally for a St. John’s campus.

TUTOR NEWS

In Annapolis, tutor Stuart Umphrey retired at the end of the academic year, 2009. Umphrey had been a member of the St. John’s faculty since 1984. Felicia Martinez has joined the Annapolis faculty. She earned a bachelor’s degree in English literature and studio art at the University of Notre Dame, then went to Stanford University, where she earned her master’s and doctoral degrees in English literature. Her doctoral dissertation was on: “What We Are: Interpreting Personhood in the Experimental Novels of Conrad, Faulkner, and Naipul.”

PUBLIC SAFETY OFFICER HONORED

The Northeast Colleges and Universities Security Association has recognized an Annapolis Public Safety officer for meritorious conduct. PFC Brandon Hudson received an honorable mention for the association’s Outstanding Performance Award in recognition of “an act which exhibited a risk to personal life or safety in the course of his or her duties or who performed a life-saving action requiring the highest of professional conduct.”

In December 2008, Officer Hudson took action to prevent a possibly serious injury to a student.

BVG Member Serves on Presidential Committee

Jill Cooper Udall, a member of the college’s Board of Visitors and Governors, has been named to the President’s Committee on the Arts and Humanities. The committee works with federal cultural agencies on programs that recognize excellence in the arts and humanities. A lawyer, long-time arts advocate, and former head of New Mexico’s Office of Cultural Affairs, Udall works with the Smithsonian Institution’s National Museum of the American Indian.

LETTERS

Inspiring Resilience

I read “Resilience in a Recession” (Summer 2009) on a night when I was trying to figure out where the money was going to come from to pay this month’s bills. The article was exactly what I needed to place my particular circumstances in perspective and to remind me of the needs of others. Thank you for publishing such an inspirational piece.

Heather Elizabeth Peterson (A86)

Still a Great Idea

Concerning A Great Idea at the Time: The Rise, Fall, and Curious Afterlife of the Great Books, reviewed in The College (Spring 2009): The subject prompted a request to the college bookstore for a copy. The quality of a good story-telling newspaper columnist is well represented. The human interest aspect that the subject has on the public is told movingly.

My father looked for the “romance” attendant to [St. John’s]. Here are found such accounts in which the founders of this educational endeavor would be satisfied, and which would alleviate the despondency they felt as failures.

H. A. Hammond (class of 1947)

Free Thinking

The three essays on freedom (Summer 2009) speak to the diversity of free thinking that goes on at St. John’s. I especially like Mr. Pastille’s essay because his notion [of] watcher conscience paraphrases my own question, “What is happening here?”, when I begin a poem.

For example, there is a tradition in Oxford, Maryland, that winter sunsets must be watched. Men, women, and children come around 4:30 p.m., bringing a glass of wine or coffee, and they line the banks of the Tred Avon River, where it enters the broad Choptank River, to sit or stand, sometimes arm in arm. It is not odd that there is little or no talking. To the casual observer, what is going on is people watching a sunset.

But I want to write a poem about Oxford Park and the people and the sunset. Here is my “watcher” conscience kicking in, and there is more than the physical sunset. There is the freedom to see its effect on three age groups—and on me in my thought to write about it.

Mr. Pastille, thanks for tweaking an old man’s brain with something new to think about, and of course question.

Ernest J. Heinmuller (class of 1942)
Ludwig Wittgenstein (1889-1951) was two of the most influential philosophers of the 20th century. His early work, *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus* (1921), the only book he published during his life, conceives of philosophy as the critical analysis of language. It initiated the "linguistic turn" in philosophy, which proposes that philosophical problems may be solved or dissolved by paying attention to language, either by reforming it or simply clarifying how the language we use actually works.

In this book, Wittgenstein addresses two major questions: What is the nature of logic? and How is language related to the world? The answers to these questions turn out to be related in a fundamental way. He believes that language and the world must hold something in common that allows us to talk meaningfully. This common feature is the "logical structure" of both. "Logic is... a mirror-image of the world" (*TLP*, 6.13). Speech is meaningful when its structure reflects the structure of the world. Just as a picture is a model of a real scene, language is a picture in words. The meaning of a name is the object to which it refers.

An experience that helped Wittgenstein develop this view was reading a report on a court case in which an attorney used small toys to reconstruct a traffic accident. These toys could stand for real objects, and the way that they related to each other (while being moved around a table, for instance) was just the way the real objects were said to have related. Language works like this. (4.01: "A proposition is a model of reality as we imagine it.") Truth is the correspondence of the language-model to reality, while falsehood is the correspondence of the model to something that is not real.

Wittgenstein suggests that in order for propositions to be meaningful, they must consist of elements, "atomic facts," put together to be isomorphic with the world. The truth of a proposition is determined entirely by the truth of these components. These atomic facts cannot be analyzed, and Wittgenstein never gives an example of one. Still he considers them necessary to explain how language works. Nonsense arises when we attempt to represent what cannot be represented. Just as Kant draws limits to thought by establishing the limits of the mind’s powers, Wittgenstein reveals (5.6: “The limits of my language mean the limits of my world.”) For Kant, synthetic a priori truths, such as Newton’s laws, apply only to appearances, while the “things-in-themselves” can never be known. For Wittgenstein, thought and language are not separable, and so an investigation into language is an investigation into thought, and hence into “my world.” The propositions of logic demarcate the limits of what can be said, much like rules in a game make clear how a game is to be played. Language has meaning within the limits of logic, just as a game is played according to rules. At the limits of language lie logical truths, such as “Nothing can both be and not be at the same time in the same manner,” or "Red is a color." They are not a part of meaningful speech, as for instance are, “Red would go well in this room,” or, (said in exasperation), “I can’t be in two places at once, can I?”

Meaningful speech can be true or false, depending on whether it mirrors the structure of reality. But tautologies can be only true, and contradictions only false. According to Wittgenstein, they thereby show that they say nothing. They are senseless. Beyond the limits of language established by the tautologies of logic (that is, by the world) lies the mystical. It cannot be said, but only indicated by what can be said. Attempts to say the mystical lead to nonsense, in particular to metaphysics, ethics, aesthetics, and theology, which all try to say what cannot be said. Philosophical propositions are not true or false, but rather nonsensical. They sound like ordinary propositions because, after all, they are grammatically constructed and consist of parts we understand. Wittgenstein holds these nonsensical propositions in great respect. They attempt to express what is of most importance, but which cannot be expressed.

“My whole tendency and I believe the tendency of all men who ever tried to write or talk about Ethics or Religion was to run against the boundaries of language. This running against the walls
of our cage is perfectly, absolutely hopeless. Ethics so far as it springs from the desire to say something about the ultimate meaning of life, the absolute good, the absolute value, can be no science. . . . But it is a document of a tendency in the human mind which I personally cannot help respecting deeply and I would not for my life ridicule it” (LA). Philosophy’s new job is to allow the mystical to make itself manifest by saying only what can be said—by getting out of its way. (“What can be said at all can be said clearly, and what we cannot talk about we must pass over in silence” TLP, Preface). Philosophical, ethical, aesthetic, and religious problems are like knots which we must untie, and since they are knots of language, it is through analysis of language that we must loosen them.

After Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus was published, Wittgenstein left Cambridge and academia because he believed that he had found the definitive solution to the problems of philosophy. He thought that one major value of his book was that “it shows how little is achieved when these problems are solved.” He left England and returned to Austria, his birthplace, where he became a schoolteacher. He also designed and helped to build a house in Vienna for his sister. But he began to have serious doubts about the correctness of the view he espoused in the Tractatus. His work with young children was no doubt one stimulus to this reconsideration. How do I discover if a child knows the meaning of a word except by how he or she uses the word? A teacher doesn’t look into a child’s mind, but observes what he or she says and does.

Several visits by Frank Ramsey, a young philosopher of mathematics, also seem to have influenced Wittgenstein to go back to Cambridge. After Wittgenstein returned he held many discussions with the Italian Marxist economist Piero Sraffa. One day while talking about the Tractatus’s claim that meaning arises through the correspondence of the form of expression with the form of the fact to be expressed, Sraffa made a familiar Neapolitan gesture of contempt, by flicking his chin with the back of his fingers. “What is the logical form of that?” he asked Wittgenstein. Sraffa’s point was clear: this gesture has meaning, but it does not derive its meaning from any isomorphism between it and the world. Instead, its meaning arises from its use in human life. Wittgenstein’s intellectual honesty and passion for truth and clarity compelled him to challenge the very position that had made him famous, prompting him to question the idea that there are foundations to thought at all. Eventually, he repudiated the Tractatus view of meaning.

The question that had motivated that book, namely, How can sentences mean anything?, evolves into, How can we do things with words? He comes to believe that philosophers had spent too much time determining what we mean without examining the nature of meaning itself. His shift from the correspondence view of meaning to a new, use-related view, is decidedly pragmatist. Concepts now are not correct or incorrect, but more or less useful. Logical analysis is not the way to achieve clarity about philosophical problems; description of our linguistic practices will lead to their dissolution.

Wittgenstein’s new view has its roots in the American pragmatic tradition of C. S. Peirce and William James. Wittgenstein much admired James’ The Varieties of Religious Experience,
wherein James says something about attempts to establish the “essence of religion” that sounds much like what Wittgenstein will come to say in *Philosophical Investigations*: “Let us not fall immediately into a one-sided view of our subject, but let us rather admit freely at the outset that we may very likely find no one essence, but many characters which may alternately be equally important to religion.” Wittgenstein is working towards a fundamentally new conception of language, and of the proper procedures for philosophy.

The “second Wittgenstein” rejects analytic philosophy because he no longer thinks that analysis can reveal the truth about how language connects with the world. Philosophy cannot be analysis because philosophical propositions and ideas are not constructed. They emerge from ordinary language, in which propositions are vague, inexact, and indeterminate, but *work*. Not only is there no need to correct or idealize ordinary speech, but how would we begin to do so? “When I talk about language (words, sentences, etc.) I must speak the language of every day. Is this language somehow too coarse and material for what we want to say? *Then how is another one to be constructed?*—And how strange that we should be able to do anything at all with the one we have!” (PI, 120)

Wittgenstein’s reformed position begins to emerge in *The Blue Book*, the transcription of lecture classes he conducted in his room to a small group of students at Cambridge. One of the most important influences on Wittgenstein’s thinking came from the people with whom he could discuss ideas, and so he conducted his lectures in a kind of dialectical style. He never used notes, but would appear to be thinking out loud. These thoughts usually formed themselves into a question, for which someone from the class was to provide a response—a starting point for new thoughts leading to new questions.

*The Blue Book* begins: “What is the meaning of a word? Let us attack this question by asking, first, what is an explanation of the meaning of a word; what does the explanation of a word look like?. . .The questions ‘What is length?’ ‘What is meaning?’ ‘What is the number one?’ etc., produce in us a mental cramp. We feel that we can’t point to anything in reply to them and yet ought to point to something. (We are up against one of the great sources of philosophical bewilderment: a substantive makes us look for a thing that corresponds to it.)” In philosophical discussions, in place of asking a “What is?” question, we ask instead something like “How would you explain the meaning of this word to someone?” This question reminds us that we learned how to use words when we were children. We are not born speaking our language, and it does not develop in us automatically, as does walking. We learn language from our parents, our teachers, and friends. We’re corrected when we make mistakes because there are right and wrong ways of speaking. These corrections depend on what we say and do, on what others see of us. No one teaches a child how to speak by looking into its mind and determining that now she has the right idea. Learning how to talk is to learn a technique for doing something, for doing many things. In a sense we train children to use words as tools, and just as the uses of tools can be manifold, so can the uses of words. “Am I doing child psychology?—I am making a connection between the concept of teaching and the concept of meaning” (Z, 412). Rather than think of what a word *means*, think of how it is *used*. Wittgenstein thinks this will help us avoid philosophical problems that arise because we tend to think of a word’s meaning as something the word *has*, rather than what we *do* with it. We then
The contexts in which words are learned and used, and what is accomplished by using them, Wittgenstein calls “language-games.” He did not think that language was a game; our linguistic activities are less trivial than games because of the way they are interwoven with our lives. He hopes that the image of the game will help us obtain a perspicuous view of at least parts of language, by emphasizing some of those features of language whose importance he believes is frequently overlooked. He means to “bring into prominence the fact that the speaking of a language is part of an activity, or form of life” (PI, 23). The rules of chess, for example, determine what moves are permitted. They tell us how to play the game, although not how to play it well. No examination of the shapes of the individual pieces on a chess board could accomplish this, just like no examination of a word, however carefully done, will tell us how the word is actually used. Words, like chess pieces, are defined by how they are used in common with other people. The functions—and hence the meanings—of individual words, phrases, and sentences can be determined only by observing how they are in fact used in the various neighborhoods of our language, and in what circumstances and for what ends we use them. This makes language essentially public, even when we use it to talk about our inner life. For any description of what goes on inside me must be given in words whose use I learned from other people, and did not invent for myself. A private language, according to Wittgenstein, makes no more sense than a private game or a private rule. None of these makes sense because in every such case, there would be no criterion for what is correct, except what I say is correct. And if I am the only one who can judge correctness, then the concept of correctness degenerates into simply what I am inclined to say is correct.

A question that ought to concern us as members of the St. John’s community, and simply as thinking beings, is what becomes of philosophy in the light of Wittgenstein’s proposed reorientation of our concept of meaning. Wittgenstein believes that “a main source of our failure to understand is that we do not command a clear view of the use of our words; (PI, 122) Because philosophical problems have the form “I don’t know my way about” (PI, 123), it is precisely the perspicuous representation of how we do things with words—that is, how we use them—that is of fundamental significance to any effort to answer philosophical questions and to dissolve philosophical problems. We are led to philosophical problems when we confuse the forms of our expressions with their uses. “Words like ‘thinking’ and ‘thought’ alongside words denoting (bodily) activities, such as writing and speaking, make us
look for an activity...corresponding to thinking” and to a product of thinking analogous to the products of writing and speaking, “When words in our ordinary language have *prima facie* analogous grammars, we are inclined to try to interpret them analogously” (*BB*, p. 7). Similarly, for each substantive we tend to seek a substance and so are led to ask, for example, “What is length? What is meaning? What is number?” instead of “How are lengths measured? What is an explanation of meaning? How are numerical expressions used?”

Related to this source of confusion is our tendency to mix up language-games. We might imagine, for example, that *certainty*, be it about the weather, a geometrical proof, or my own pain is the selfsame concept, and differs only in degree in these cases. Instead, we ought to consider it to be more like the concept of *winning*, as we find it in football or chess. We also easily succumb to the temptation to project grammar onto reality, and to think of words as names and sentences as descriptions. It is a short step to the conceptual confusions of psychology, where “I” becomes the name of a person who has privileged access to her own mental objects, states, and events, and which she then describes when she says “I have a pain,” “I am anxious,” and “I am thinking.”

What Wittgenstein offers to help solve these problems is “not a philosophical method,” but “methods, like different therapies” (*PI*, 133). For “the philosopher’s treatment of a question is like the treatment of an illness” (*PI*, 255). If we are willing to admit that Wittgenstein, too, philosophizes, then we’ll see that the Wittgensteinian philosopher’s task differs in important ways from that of many of his predecessors. His job is “to show the fly the way out of the fly-bottle” (*PI*, 309). The clear glass fly-bottle sits slightly raised on a table. It has a cork in the top and a hole in the bottom. The fly is initially drawn into the fly-bottle through this hole, attracted by a trough filled with beer that rims the inside of the bottle. (I’ve heard that sugar-water can be used, but I prefer the beer version.) Once inside, the insect does not escape, because its phototropism keeps it from returning the same way it entered. It bends its head repeatedly on the sides of the bottle, until it eventually falls into the beer, dead. Just so, “a person caught in a philosophical confusion is like a man in a room who wants to get out but doesn’t know how. He tries the window but it is too high. He tries the chimney but it is too narrow. And if he would only *turn around*, he would see that the door has been open all the time!” (*Malcolm*, 51)

How does the new philosopher liberate those of us who have become trapped by the intoxication of philosophy, and who don’t even realize we are trapped? Wittgenstein’s approach is like that of Socrates in that both attempt to bring people to remember what they have forgotten, which is still somehow alive within them. Both try to elicit from others the consequences of their own words, and both frequently do this by asking questions. (*Philosophical Investigations* contains 84 questions, of which only 110 are answered—and 70 of those answers are meant to be wrong!) Wittgenstein’s philosopher treats this illness of chronic forgetfulness by assembling reminders of how we actually use words and what we have learned to do with them in everyday contexts. He says: “When someone uses a word—‘knowledge,’ ‘being,’ ‘object,’ ‘I’—. . . .and tries to grasp the *essence* of the thing, one must always ask oneself: is the word ever actually used this way in the language-game which is its original home?” (*PI*, 116). We might say that according to Wittgenstein, “it is the whole of philosophy to realize that there is no more difficulty about time than about a chair” (*L*, p. 119).

This image of philosophical problems as a kind of forgetfulness that must be treated with aids to remembering reminds me of the *Meno*. *Meno* poses a famous paradox about coming to know anything: if I don’t know what I am looking for, how can I recognize it when I have found it? And if I do know, why do I need to look for it? Socrates suggests as a solution that in a previous life we learned all things, and that in our present life, what appears to be learning is really recollection of what we knew but have forgotten. Wittgenstein is saying something similar. Birth may be a protracted process: We are perhaps not fully born until we have mastered our native language. The time before our birth, that is, the time before this mastery is achieved, is the time during which we were learning how to talk, when we were learning how to do things with words. Later, especially when we philosophize, we tend to forget what we know and need to be reminded of it. Once we are, the problems which trouble us dissolve. We once again can operate with words according to their true grammar, which expresses the essence of things.

The consequence of this Wittgensteinian dialectic is to lead us out of the fly-bottle of philosophical problems and questions and restore us to our ordinary ways of speaking. Imagine that you are trying to describe in words how to do a dance. At a certain point in the description, you get stuck—you just can’t remember if the left foot or right foot takes the next step. The answer to the question will come as soon as you grab a partner and dance. Wittgenstein might say that philosophical problems can come on the scene whenever we stop dancing and try to talk about dancing, whenever we take ordinary words out of their usual contexts and stop using them in their ordinary ways.

This, however, shouldn’t lead us to think that philosophical problems are avoidable. Most of us cannot spend all our time dancing; we find other activities enjoyable, too. And sometimes using words in extraordinary ways, as in poetry, is just what we...
want to do. But to someone enmeshed in a philosophical problem, it is never useful to say simply: we don’t talk that way. Wittgenstein puts it like this: “You must not try to avoid a philosophical problem by appealing to common sense; instead, present it as it arises with most power. . . . Philosophy can be said to consist of three activities: to see the common-sense answer, to get so deeply into the problem that the commonsense answer is unbearable, and to get from that situation back to the commonsense answer” (BB, pp. 108-109).

In a sense, Wittgenstein’s work is aesthetic: he draws our attention to certain features of language and places things side by side to exhibit these features. The hoped-for result is a change in the way we view things. Wittgenstein also said that, while he was not a religious man, he could not help seeing every problem from “a religious point of view.” Three of Wittgenstein’s favorite authors were Augustine, Kierkegaard, and Dostoevsky. All three share a conviction in the importance of what cannot be said, a conviction Wittgenstein expressed in the Tractatus, and which remained with him until his death. He agreed with Kierkegaard that the most important things are best shown, not said. “If only you do not try to utter the unutterable, then nothing gets lost. But the unutterable will be—unutterably—contained in what has been uttered.” (Engelmann, 9) Even of his own late work, he writes in Philosophical Investigations: “Where does our investigation get its importance from, since it seems only to destroy everything interesting, that is, all that is great and important? (As it were all the buildings, leaving behind only bits of stone and rubble.) What we are destroying is nothing but houses of cards and we are clearing up the ground of language on which they stand” (118). Wittgenstein does not provide arguments for a new truth about things, but instead lets us see anew, in a changed way. As Socrates first taught us, there is no prescribed set of rules for bringing someone to see differently. For Wittgenstein, the religious point of view is the one that approaches a philosophical problem with the belief that its solution lies in radical re-collecting and re-visioning. The new vision is not a truth to be proved, any more than faith is taking someone’s word for it, even God’s. Our new eyes cannot be given to us by another, and certainly not by any book.

There is a long tradition of philosophers who have griped about the quarrels of their predecessors. They offer their own solutions, new methods they believe can put an end to these disagreements. Descartes gives us clear and distinct ideas, Hegel gives us the dialectic of Spirit, Husserl “bracketing.” Wittgenstein One thought he’d solved the problems of philosophy by revealing the logical form of language, while Wittgenstein Two believed that if only we could see how philosophical problems arise through language, we would also see their solutions.

But the later Wittgenstein might be right. The challenge he poses to philosophy cannot be simply rejected. We can’t simply say that all he’s talking about is words, because we can’t be really sure what all the others have been talking about until we understand how language and thought tie up together. If it turns out that eternal questions are eternal errors, then we shall have learned something important. Maybe we’ll find a way out of the fly-bottle, or discover that it’s not such a bad place to be after all. 🦋 extrême
THE BOOK

A Story in Three Parts

To those who love to read books, the prospect of being a part of bringing them to life—from idea to printed volume—must be Nirvana. The College explores the careers of three alumni who have been successful in the publishing industry: an independent publisher whose personal passions led him to success, an editor with an eye for winning titles, and an author whose first book was 20 years in the making.

The Publisher

Jeremy Tarcher (class of 1953)
Founder, Tarcher Publishing

by Rosemary Harty (AGI09)

True love led Jeremy Tarcher to a career in publishing. Real passion for his subject matter propelled him to success.

Tarcher was a writer and producer working in the television industry when he met his first wife, Shari Lewis, who was on her way to becoming one of the most beloved children’s entertainers in television history. They both knew a long and happy marriage was more likely if one of them got out of television. Tarcher decided to try publishing, because, as he explains, “it was employment.”

To learn the business, Tarcher went to work as an assistant to Ben Rayburn, founder of Horizon Press. “I worked with him for two years. In that time, I thought I had seen every mistake that could be made in the publishing business. I discovered that there were plenty more to make.”

By the early 1960s, Tarcher was ready to venture out on his own. At first, he teamed noted celebrities with authors to produce best sellers including Johnny Carson’s Happiness is a Dry Martini and Phyllis Diller’s Housekeeping Hints. A desire to follow his own personal interests—rather than industry trends—led him to success as a niche publisher. He developed a specialty in books about health, philosophy, psychology, and human potential. Tarcher Publishing led the way in offering titles that coincided with California-born trends that would sweep the nation beginning in the 1970s and ‘80s.

His biggest success came in 1980, when he published The Aquarian Conspiracy by Marilyn Ferguson. Establishing a personal relationship with the author—primarily by persuading her how much the book captured the desires for his own life—led Ferguson to choose Tarcher instead of a large New York trade house. “There was no book with which I felt more closely associated, and for which I felt a greater participation in the development of the text,” Tarcher explains. “The book made a big different in my life.”

The Aquarian Conspiracy, Tarcher explains, “caught the spirit of the times. People were open to new spiritual perspectives, new ways of thinking about things.” Ferguson’s book “brought together a lot of different perspectives at the leading edge and made them into a path along which many people wished to stride. It called for the better parts of humanity when no one was really calling for that.”

By today’s standards, the book wasn’t a blockbuster; it sold about a million copies in hardcover and paperback. Yet Tarcher considers the book a resounding success because
his enduring message that each individual can make a difference was carried worldwide. “The greatest fun in publishing is that for a very small amount of money and a few seconds of TV time, one can get an idea out to a general public, distribute a book, send it to the opinion makers and really get a bang for your book-publishing buck,” he says. “It’s possible to be an active citizen and affect a lot of things that go on in the country and the world.”

Independent publishing is a tough business, he concedes. When interest rates soared in the late 1980s, money got tight. “Capitalization is a big problem,” he says. “The more successful you are, the larger inventory you need to carry. Higher advances are expected for the authors, by their agents and by themselves. The more books you have out, the greater the debt to you, further diminishing your cash. Twice I had to sell because I became too successful and no longer had cash. I could not maintain the company without pulling in very strongly, and I chose not to do that; I thought being with a large company was the answer.”

Tarcher sold his company first to Houghton Mifflin, but when that didn’t work out, he bought it back a few years later. He sold it again, to Universal Studios, which had Putnam as part of its corporate empire; thus Tarcher became part of Putnam. When Viking/Penguin took over the company, it began publishing books under a Tarcher/Penguin imprint. “For the most part,” Tarcher says, his name is still carried on good books.

If he were just starting out today, Tarcher doubts that he could succeed. “I could not possibly duplicate what I did now with the amount of money I started with, which was really very little,” he says. He wouldn’t have been able to acquire significant authors without paying huge advances. “Nobody really knows what’s going to happen next,” he muses, “with the Kindle, the blogosphere. The world is changing with [such] rapidity that a one-year plan is impossible to make. Who the hell knows what five years ahead is going to look like?”

And today’s business world, he observes, is dominated by e-mail and text messages, computers and Blackberrys. When Tarcher started out, he didn’t even have a fax machine or a Xerox. Much of his time was devoted to talking with authors and agents. “It was a much more human world then,” he says.

Always grateful to St. John’s for putting him on the path to success, Tarcher is frank about what led him to Annapolis: desperation. He had yet to prove himself as a student when he began applying to college. “I couldn’t get into any other college in America at the time,” he recalls. His family knew the Pinskers, whose son, Adam (class of 1952), had attended St. John’s. “My parents applied to St. John’s for me while I was away in Colorado,” he recalls. “I came onto the campus, and I knew that I had found my home. High school was memorization; at St. John’s, I was able to open up, discover new ideas. The whole feeling of St. John’s was to open the mind and open the spirit, which I guess in some ways I have carried on in a different perspective in my publishing life.”

He wrote his senior essay on Nietzsche and Goethe and the will to power. “Every day I’m grateful to St. John’s for the inspiration, for the love of books, for the love of learning, perhaps most of all, I’m grateful for the sense of— if not the perfectibility of man—the improvement.”

After St. John’s, Tarcher joined the army and was assigned to an education center in Verdun, France. After
his discharge, he traveled the world and returned to New York to find a job in the burgeoning television industry. He started out as a cartoon timer, eventually becoming a producer and writer. Tarcher accompanied a friend to a radio show audition one night, and in the studio he spotted a “lovely girl who captured my heart.” He and Shari Lewis, known for her puppet Lamb Chop and her long-running PBS television show, spent 40 “very good years together” before she died of cancer in 1998 at age 65. Their daughter, Mallory, became a producer, writer, and entertainer.

It was also love at first sight when Tarcher met his second wife, Judith Paige Mitchell, a television writer and novelist. They were making marriage plans by their second date and have been married 10 years.

Although the industry will continue to go through tumultuous change, Tarcher says Johnnies who pursue publishing careers may succeed “if they find something they really care about and become expert in it.”

“All of my success came about because I had the friendship of and tutelage of many people who knew a great deal about spiritual development and were able to teach me its ways,” Tarcher says. “I don’t care if you’re interested in model railroads or transcendent spirituality, you should know something about the field into which you’re going.

You’re going not just as a publisher, but as a person.”

**The Editor**

Colin Fox (SF97)
Senior Editor, Simon and Schuster

By Nat Roe (SF08)

Every day, Colin Fox walks through labyrinthine hallways to an office tucked in a corner. Stacks of books line every wall along the way. These halls—publishing giant Simon and Schuster’s portion of Rockefeller Plaza in Manhattan—don’t look much different than a Johnnie’s dream.

Fox’s own corner office is crammed with books, many of which he has helped to publish. Sitting behind his desk with a Beach Boys haircut, a striped dress shirt and a broad smile, Fox appears professionally savvy, but beams with youthful energy. His job as a senior editor is to acquire and develop new books for publication. With a list of authors including political heavy-hitters like James Carville and Tucker Carlson, entertainment legends like David Cross and Billy Crystal, and respected fiction writers like Donald Westlake and Stephen Hunter, Fox has worked hand-in-hand with some of today’s most notable minds.

A book first reaches Fox through a literary agent’s pitch, one of the social perks of Fox’s work. “It’s a very personal transaction often,” he explains. “Many of them [literary agents] are personal friends of mine.” Fox evaluates the viability of a book based on the scope of the subject matter, the size of the target market, and the past work of the author. If the book seems to merit publication, Fox buys the book and then begins a lengthy period of discussion and revision with the author. This conversation can last for close to a year.
Once the manuscript is complete, months of in-house selling of the project to marketing staff takes place before the book is ready for the public. “A lot of my job is selling. You learn very quickly in this business that this has nothing to do with being a philosopher-king. Simon and Schuster is dedicated to quality, which is wonderful, but we have to make money.”

Still, Fox maintains that the publishing industry isn’t excessively money driven. Instead, the industry attracts those impassioned with the written word. “I think the people are what drives it most,” he says. “Everyone comes in early [in their careers] wanting to find the great American novel. We were all book people in college,” he says. From close contact with authors to spending his days with similarly minded coworkers, Fox enjoys a society of letters similar to St. John’s.

Moreover, Fox finds his work fulfilling for its social impact. “S & S has done a lot of very important books in terms of driving the national debate and being involved in major news events.” Former Vice President Dick Cheney, for example, recently signed a book deal with Threshold, a politically conservative wing of the publishing house. Fox himself tends toward the liberal side with his own acquisitions, but uses this example to point out an interesting quirk of book sales: the opposition party often sells more books than the party in power.

Insights like this one drive publishing, but Fox discusses these issues with an air of opportunity rather than of shrewd greed. It seems he has struck a happy middle ground in his field. Fox’s task is a “nebulous” balance of cultural curation and business sensibility, with one foot in the ivory tower and the other foot behind the cash register.

Fox’s experience also vouches for the practicality of the St. John’s experience. “Publishing is a kind of bizarro professional continuation of St. John’s. It’s the same act, too. You just read all the time, then talk about your reading and then you write about it.”

As Fox describes it, the smooth continuity from college to career came as a pleasant surprise. “When I was at St. John’s, I willfully avoided the thought of what I would do next. Even senior year, I said to myself, ‘I’m focusing on this.’”

Having a connection at the Warner Books publishing house, now known as Grand Central Publishing, Fox found himself in publishing a few years after graduation. One might even say that this is the path he was born for. His father, William Price Fox, was a novelist (best know for Ruby Red), and his mother worked as an editorial assistant.

This is a difficult time for his chosen industry, but Fox is hopeful about its future. “This is the worst environment retail-wise for books ever,” he says. “Even huge, bestselling authors have seen diminished numbers.”

But Fox sees lagging numbers as indicative of the economy in general and predicts that the publishing industry will recover with the rest of the world. E-books, including the Kindle and iPhone applications, will help the industry become more efficient, he believes. “The book, whatever its Platonic form is, will be fine,” Fox says. “You have to be an optimist to be in book publishing, whether you’re an agent or an author. You have to be able to have faith in the face of most people being disappointed at the end of the day with the results.”

A great book, Fox admits, is a career goal rather than a daily reality. It’s this goal, however, that drives Fox. “It’s so rare for something to catch on and get the attention it deserves and be commercially successful that when it does, it’s just a real treat. That’s what keeps you going.”

The Author

Victoria Hanley (SF’76)
Novelist

by Cathi Dunn MacRae

Since 2000, four young adult novels by Victoria Hanley (SF’76) have captivated readers in more than 20 countries, winning literary awards and critical acclaim. And although Hanley didn’t divine her writer’s future at St. John’s College, she “often marvels at how three semesters in Santa Fe had a much larger influence upon the workings of my mind than expected. That education continues to shape my mental life in profoundly beneficial ways.”

Having graduated a year early from high school, Hanley was 18 when she left St. John’s at the end of 1973, in the middle of sophomore year. As she explained to then-dean Robert Neidorf, “I feel like I’ve been in school forever. I want to live my life instead of discussing it.”

Career plans took a back seat to “stocking up on experiences.” During nearly 20 years before she began to write, Hanley worked at 19 occupations in at least 27 jobs
including house painter, Montessori teacher, dishwasher, folksinger, corporate financial manager, massage practitioner, and anatomy instructor. Other than the corporate job’s “dreadful managers,” Hanley savored her experiences.

Her long succession of jobs occurred in four states (New Mexico, California, Oregon, and Colorado) and 12 towns and cities, where she lived in 35 dwellings, including a yurt. In 1977, Hanley bicycled from Eugene, Oregon, across the Rocky Mountains to Boulder, Colorado, to attend Naropa Institute. She spent a “life-changing” summer at the Buddhist institute, taking classes in writing, aikido, voice, and meditation. She attended open lectures by Allen Ginsberg and poetry readings by Anne Waldman and Peter Orlovsky.

Hanley and her soon-to-be husband then moved into the Nyingma Institute, also in Boulder, where Hanley became the retreat center cook while beginning “serious studies of Buddhism.” The following summer, their son Emrys was born, and Hanley became a busy working mom. A move to Denver, a divorce and remarriage, the birth of her daughter Rose, and demanding jobs consumed her. When did she make the transition to writing?

“Like many people,” says Hanley, “I’d always planned to write a book someday. I started a couple novels but never finished them, telling myself I didn’t have time. Then I went through my second divorce, quit my job, and moved away from Denver. I was miserable and afraid, and thought: I’ve had this dream of writing a novel for long enough. So I began and kept going (with numerous necessary interruptions) until the book was finished.” It took five years.

When Hanley married again in 1997, still laboring on her novel, her husband Tim joined her teenaged children Emrys and Rose as “ardent supporters” of her writing. Now having weathered the publication of six books, Hanley realizes that “their love and interest and perspicacious comments have made all the difference.”

After persevering through many drafts, Hanley submitted her first novel to an agent. Two rejections later, she tried a literary agency in London, which has represented her work ever since. Her first novel, *The Seer and the Sword*, was published in the U.K. in 2000, and in the U.S. later that year.

An exciting heroic fantasy for young adults aged 12 and up, *The Seer and the Sword* takes place in a palpable, original otherworld with Arthurian echoes. According to Hanley’s tag line, “Prince Landen loses his father, his kingdom, his sword, and his freedom.” This multi-layered tale of treachery and intrigue is ultimately about the transforming power of peace.

Hanley’s first novel earned enthusiastic praise. Seer won the 2000 Colorado Book Award, the 2003 Kallbacher Klapperschlange Award in Germany, a nomination for the U.K.’s 2001 Carnegie Medal, and placement on several state lists of teen favorites. But she identified herself as a writer only when she sold a companion novel, *The Healer’s Keep* (2002), which explores her otherworld characters’ abilities to perform spiritual healing or harm. Her third
book, *The Light of the Oracle* (2005), examines this otherworld’s compelling mystical religion with a pantheon of seven gods, animal helpers, and a hierarchy of ambitious priests and prophets young and old, locked in harrowing power struggles.

Hanley’s study of Buddhism informs the spiritual concerns in *The Healer’s Keep* and *The Light of the Oracle*, where she navigates her characters’ “inner landscapes,” which the Oracle’s Master Priest refers to as “the abanya, the vast ethereal lands that existed, unseen by most, alongside the physical realms.” Hanley explains, “From my early twenties to mid-thirties, I carried on an in-depth study and practice of Buddhist meditation, which gradually deepened my awareness of various states of consciousness. I still practice meditation daily. The examination of psychic landscapes is a personal interest.”

But it was the St. John’s program that introduced her to spiritual themes. “I was raised in an atheistic household where intuition and emotion were discouraged and even disparaged, and where terms like soul and spirit were considered suspect. So I really enjoyed Socrates as written by Plato: the pristine flow of his ideas could be said to be reasonable and yet seemed to have intuition at its core. It became apparent that great thinkers did not necessarily dismiss spirit out of hand. Emotional truths kept showing up as viable, too.”

In Hanley’s writing, “Intuition brings forth the story, and once the story is written, logic carefully examines the whole in a very Johnnian way—looking for whether the structure, as built upon the premise—is sound,” she says. “I was surprised by how much I liked Euclid and his theorems. Along with Plato’s dialogues, they taught me how much a premise influences the integrity of what follows. This understanding is crucial for writing fiction.”

A different type of fantasy for “tweens” (ages 10 to 14), Hanley’s *Violet Wings* (August 2009) ventures “behind the inner looking glass to reflect upon the possible fey view of humanity.” In this page-turner, young fairy Zaria Tourmaline learns to use her magical powers while searching for her missing family in “the fabled land of humans.” Hanley has finished the first draft of the sequel, *Indigo Bottle*, to be published next year.

Why write fantasy? In her youth, Hanley read Howard Pyle’s *King Arthur* books, Andrew Lang’s fairy books, Madeleine L’Engle’s *A Wrinkle in Time*, Tolkien’s *Lord of the Rings* and several books by Ray Bradbury. Although she now reads little fantasy, it is “well suited to examining universal themes; when fantasy books explore the human psyche, they help us deal with this world rather than escape it. For instance, in *The Seer and the Sword*, when the hero Landen loses everything, he must draw deeply on his inner strength to lift himself up. The story of his challenges and heartaches is the story of anyone finding a way through grief and loss.”

Also, she concludes, “fantasy is so enjoyable to a certain type of kid, it can serve as an entry point to other kinds of literature.”

Aspiring writers ask her so many questions that Hanley wrote *Seize the Story: A Handbook for Teens Who Like to Write*—the book she wishes could have jumpstarted her own writing journey. Published last year, it offers exercises in using each tool of the writer’s craft, from freeing the imagination to creating characters. Sixteen authors share their best advice, and Hanley answers young writers’ questions. She will soon launch an interactive site for teen writers at www.seizethestory.com.

Hanley’s *Wild Ink: How to Write Fiction for Young Adults*, also published in 2008, is another book that she wishes she’d had as a beginner. Coaching adult writers entering the thriving arena of young adult literature, it describes YA genres, advises how to address the teen audience, and demystifies the process of getting published. Interviews with agents, editors, self-publishers, and 19 YA authors demonstrate how tenacious a writer must be.

Having birthed five novels, Hanley trusts the process that began at St. John’s: “Seminar discussions of the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* opened my eyes to the layers and levels of symbolism and emotional truth in a work of fiction. And although I didn’t stay long enough to participate in seminars on Jane Austen’s books, I have read and re-read all her works, and appreciate her extraordinary ability to blend a good story with witty commentary on human nature.”

Surrounded by mountains in her home in Loveland, Colorado, Vicky Hanley recently sang harmony on her son’s debut album, “Emrys.” Her song is about Santa Fe.
THE LANGUAGE OF BRAZILIAN JIU-JITSU

by Jacob Dink (SF10)

Brazilian Jiu-Jitsu baits us with a misleading first impression. We hear the name, so evocative of oriental antiquity. And we imagine some caricature of a choreographed and arcane martial art—perhaps respectable, but abstruse and impractical to all but bearded, meditative masters on forlorn mountainsides. St. John’s campus in Santa Fe certainly resembles such a setting, and scrappy beards abound. But the college’s Brazilian Jiu-Jitsu classes, taught by Santa Fe alumnus and Jiu-Jitsu purple belt Quinn Mulhern (SF08), defy such a caricature. The classes certainly strike a traditional chord, with bowing, lessened emphasis on strenuous muscular workouts, and retention of the traditional uniform (the “gi”). Nevertheless, this martial art cannot be characterized as some quaint Tai-Chi simulacrum.

“People realize that Jiu-Jitsu is very different from traditional martial arts,” says Mulhern. Brazilian Jiu-Jitsu is a no-striking, ground-fighting art that focuses on positions, leverage, and submissions. Its territory is the ground, because the ground is where real fights inevitably end up. Jiu-Jitsu’s emphasis on practicality is an essential characteristic that a cursory glance would miss.

Such misconceptions—and their subsequent disabusal—permeate Brazilian Jiu-Jitsu and its origins. One example is the United States’ most notable introduction into the art. Brazilian Jiu-Jitsu was founded by brothers Carlos and Helio Gracie, after Carlos learned it from Mitsuyo Maeda, an innovative Japanese judoka. Helio adapted it to his smaller frame. After years of trial and evolution in Rio de Janeiro, in 1993 Helio sent his son Royce to compete in the very first “Ultimate Fighting Championship” in the U.S.

The pay-per-view tournament featured a bevy of fighters from various disciplines: boxing, kung-fu, muay-thai kickboxing, taekwondo, sumo, and many other combat sports. The idea was to determine superiority. Which martial art would win in a real fight situation? Some competitors were as large as 260, 430, or (at a later tournament, an unbelievable) 770 pounds. American audiences expected strikers to down their opponents with a kung-fu “death punch,” or some muay-thai knees. Small ground-fighters, we thought, would not stand a chance against the big strikers. Royce won all of his matches in a total fight time of less than five minutes. Real fights go to the ground.

The motivation here was purely competitive: Brazilian Jiu-Jitsu is obsessed with proving itself. It’s tied up in the very genesis of the sport. The Gracies wanted to change the way people thought about fighting—and they did. The effect on martial artists was dramatic; everyone started training in ground-fighting. The sport of fighting evolved into modern day Mixed Martial Arts (MMA), a sanctioned, mainstream competition in which well-rounded athletes test their striking, wrestling, and submissions.

Here Jiu-Jitsu branches off, and here a second misconception looms. Brazilian Jiu-Jitsu’s influence on MMA becomes somewhat orthogonal, overemphasizing the fighting element of the art. The self-testing character of Jiu-Jitsu’s genesis should not be misconstrued as egotistical machismo—Jiu-Jitsu’s concern with self-testing is not a fundamental concern with fighting. Rickson Gracie, Royce’s half-brother, describes his take on Jiu-Jitsu: “I’m not a fighter. But I believe in Jiu-Jitsu. I believe it’s a self-defense art. So to keep believing in what I teach, what I share with my students—to trust in my own words—I must make myself available for any kind of competition. But the most interesting aspect of Jiu-Jitsu... is the sensibility of opponents: the sense of touch, and weight, and momentum, to the transition from one movement to another. That’s the amazing thing about it.”

Sparring (called “rolling”) is the central activity of a typical class. Students use their skills against each other, “tapping out” if caught in a submission (choke or joint-lock). The lack of striking and the relative safety of most submissions mean that students are free to practice at high levels of intensity with little risk of injury. Such considerations are a large part of the emphasis.

But something deeper is going on in Brazilian Jiu-Jitsu’s most crucial activity: Students are learning a language. The “rolling” part of Jiu-Jitsu—in which students test their control over opponents’ frames and their own—creates and plumbs an ever-growing well of knowledge: possibilities for movement, techniques, counters to those counters, and so on. The well deepens into labyrinthine caverns to be unconsciously explored. The process must, of course, be unconscious—a chasmal echo in the back of an adrenaline-fueled cortex—because the majority of learning in any language is implicit. In language, the resulting stream of unconsciousness is called fluency. One develops a sort of flow, an ineluctable spontaneity of knowledge. One cannot identify “where” the stream comes from. Words just pop into our head. We can’t identify the fount from which the well springs. Brazilian Jiu-Jitsu shares this curious characteristic. In “rolling,” the flow through movements similarly inhabits the penumbra of conscious calculation.

This description of Jiu-Jitsu as a language is not an analogy; it is a definitive testament to Jiu-Jitsu’s depth and legitimacy as not just a hobby, but a lasting venture. One sees this characteristic in any worthwhile endeavor, because the potential for fluency—a horizon
Learning Brazilian Jiu-Jitsu takes more creativity than strength, says Jacob Dink (SF10), one of many Johnnies captivated by this martial art.

that can be approached but never actually reached—signifies a near infinite depth.

The effect of this endlessness is an astounding profusion of, and exponential disparity between, the skill levels in Brazilian Jiu-Jitsu. A student of several months can soundly handle an athletic newcomer. A student of one year can easily best this verdant monther. A student of three years (like the author) can often beat a one-year student without much effort. (I know, because I have terrible endurance.) Quinn Mulhern can beat me without any threat of submission to himself. And we haven’t even mentioned black belts.

Not that the ascent would stop there. Without seeing their ranks, it might be difficult to distinguish the effortless domination of a white belt by a black belt, from the effortless domination of that same black belt by a more elite black belt. Within the black-belt class, the tiered system of skill levels and exponential disparity persists, as does the limitless potential and eagerness for improvement.

Pedro Sauer, a seventh-degree black belt, recently invited Eduardo Telles (who is in his 20s) to teach part of seminar. Asked why he was so eager to meet the less seasoned Telles, Sauer replied, “because I want to know what that guy is about.” Known for his ability to use an unconventional “turtle guard” in competition, Telles has valuable insight for a veteran who has owned his black belt for about as long as Telles had been alive.

Another prime example of the pinnacle of the elite is Marcelo Garcia, who typifies several important aspects of the art. Garcia is a multiple-time champion in Abu-Dhabi Combat Club, the most prestigious and well-known grappling tournament in the world. Although Garcia epitomizes Jiu-Jitsu’s ability to dominate much larger opponents—he is a silver and bronze medalist in the absolute division (no weight limit), despite his 5-foot-8-inch frame—it’s more interesting to observe how he defeats these opponents: by being creative.

Garcia is extremely innovative: his strategy largely consists of techniques, or combinations of techniques that he has originated.

Garcia’s success exemplifies another characteristic of language: the possibility for and rewards of creativity. This characteristic, like the others, pervades Jiu-Jitsu’s origins: adopted from judo, innovated by Maeda, reinvented by Helio, evolved in Rio de Janeiro, and still evolving today. Says Mulhern, who has trained with Garcia, “Jiu-Jitsu is an open art form. . . . It’s possible for anyone with great insight into the sport to add to it. That’s something Marcelo has done. But it’s not just Marcelo—it’s something about Jiu-Jitsu. It’s organic. It’s always changing.” Fluency engenders creativity.

There is a downside, however, to the potential for fluency: some people aren’t fluent. It is undeniably hard to appreciate a language we’re not fluent in, or haven’t even dabbled with. In some languages, we’re all fluent. We jump, run, balance, and exert ourselves, so we appreciate obvious feats of speed, strength, or balance. But it’s difficult to appreciate a language in which we’re not all fluent. With Jiu-Jitsu, “there’s a subtlety that people don’t understand,” says Mulhern. “It’s not about punching and kicking, there’s something else going on. It’s about an inside space, about balance.” A layman watching an elite display of Jiu-Jitsu can’t appreciate what looks like “advanced hugging.”

This third, more lingering obstacle to understanding Jiu-Jitsu, is that general under-appreciation that accompanies the novelty of a foreign language. Such a frustration is unfortunate, yet inevitable, and little improved through my fumbling articulations. I’m writing in the wrong language. I can only hope to convince the reader that it is difficult, or has depth, or is worth a try. To learn how, one has to try the language. “My first impression was with sparring,” says Mulhern. “It was some secret I had to learn, something I had to be a part of. It inspires humility: every day you’re made to feel like you know nothing.”

{The College: St. John’s College: Winter 2010}
A WAY OF LOOKING AT THE WORLD

A philosophy professor reflects on a “debt” owed to St. John’s

Many Johnnies find their way into higher education. Hugh Mercer Curtler (class of 1959), a recently retired professor of philosophy at Southwest Minnesota State University, describes his persistence in bringing great books into the curriculum wherever he taught.

I attended Polytechnic Institute in Baltimore, a city I hated after growing up in a small town in Connecticut. But I memorized and regurgitated and passed the tests well enough to be handed a diploma. I suppose you could say I had learned to play the great American game called “school.” I aspired to be a priest in the Episcopal Church, and I needed to get a bachelor’s degree, so the curate of my church recommended that I take a look at nearby St. John’s College. I did so and was astonished to find myself meeting with Dick Weigle (HA49), then president of the college. Imagine: a college prospect meeting with the president! I was impressed.

In addition, I loved to read, and at that point all I knew about St. John’s was that they read a lot. So I decided to enroll. After all, college was a means to an end, and with a state scholarship, I had to go somewhere in Maryland. That was the long and short of it in my mind at the time.

I was told I had to read five books of the Iliad before entering as a freshman, and I thought “what on earth have I gotten myself into?” In my mind I was being asked to read five entire books before I ever set foot on campus! I was that naive and just a little bit stupid. I dallied for the first two years, playing intramural sports and organizing a basketball team in the local YMCA league, playing poker with my friends, and doing enough to get by with stern looks from my tutors. Needless to say, I did poorly on my sophomore enabling exams.

I met with Dean Jacob Klein (HA76) and assured him I was going to turn things around, only to be told that, “the road to Hell is paved with good intentions.” I was placed on academic probation, given a semester to turn things around. I made the most of it. I never shone at St. John’s, though I became a much more serious student and began to enjoy the discussions more and more. The curriculum was having a profound effect on my way of looking at the world, though I don’t think I knew it at the time. I graduated with 19 other people in the spring of 1959 and decided after four years (well, at least two years) of intense study I needed a year to let the dust settle before attending seminary. I took a job teaching at a private boys’ school in New York and found that I loved to teach. But I wanted to teach something I couldn’t fully master, something that would keep my mind alive for the rest of my life.

I had decided that the priesthood was not for me and that I would pursue philosophy instead. Now there was a moving target that would be hard to hit! I was lucky enough to be accepted into graduate school at Northwestern University. I did well. In fact, after
St. John’s I found graduate school to be fairly easy. I earned the MA and the PhD and looked for a teaching job. What else was there to do with degrees in philosophy? I found myself at the University of Rhode Island, where I taught for two years.

There I realized that I was being squeezed into a niche in a department of seven people, each with a specialty within philosophy. I read that a new college in Iowa wanted someone to head up a department of philosophy and teach “humanities.” Now that sounded great! And they paid well. I was awfully young and inexperienced, but I applied and was hired as the chair of a department of two. My job was to initiate basic courses in philosophy while teaching two required courses in what I knew were great books by another name. I am sure my background at St. John’s was the key to my being hired. I enjoyed teaching those courses, as my love for the books allowed me to read them again—this time more carefully—and talk about them to classrooms full of eager students.

The college had a remarkable curriculum with a two-year general education requirement that included a year of reading the great books of Western civilization. But the college foundered financially, and I moved on to a public college just opening in Minnesota where I would, again, start a philosophy program and also head up what they called “Ideas in Flux.” Once again, the breadth of my preparation helped me land the job. I wanted to turn that course into one that focused on the great books, but it was a required course taught by the entire faculty and as most of them had not read the books (as was the case with the dean of the college), it was not to be.

In those days experimentation was all the rage, and “tradition” was a bad word. The books were considered irrelevant and too difficult for students to read. Being young and powerless, I played the role handed to me and assigned the weaker works that were approved by the dean for several years, sneaking a really important piece of writing into the curriculum when I could. I always thought it was a mistake to withhold the great books from these students and spent much of my time attempting to place before even the most reluctant of readers some of the great works of the human mind. And every now and again, I knew it was paying off, as student comments showed. These are books that are approachable on so many levels, and those in higher education, I was beginning to discover, tended to sell the students short.

Eventually, sad to say, that course died a slow and painful death as specialized faculty resisted being forced to teach outside their field. So I simply taught philosophy for a number of years, feeling more and more constricted. I also realized how much those students could benefit by being introduced to great writing, including, but not restricted to, philosophy. By this time I had tenure and had been around long enough that I was able to convince the faculty to institute a pair of courses in “humanities” in the general education requirement. Several people were hired to teach the courses, and while they started out being great books courses, each of those teaching them turned them in their own direction.

I remained loyal to the books and continued to require that my students read the classics, including a number of Greek plays, several Platonic dialogues, portions of Thucydides, Shakespeare, and even some Dostoevsky. Assignments nearly always focused on selections, but one must begin somewhere! I also started up an honors program and required each graduating honors student to take a seminar in the great books before graduating and also had the incoming honors students read selections from Tocqueville, among others. Those were some of the best classes I taught in my 41 years of college teaching.

A few years before my retirement I wrote a book, Recalling Education, in which I attempted in my small way to restore some semblance of sanity to the higher educational system I was becoming increasingly familiar with. I argued for a solid core requirement built around the great books, which are increasing increasingly ignored in the academy but which are nonetheless the cornerstone of any attempt to free young minds from narrowness, prejudice, and stupidity. The book sold fairly well, and one reviewer on Amazon likened it to the writings of Mortimer Adler—hyperbole, but a high compliment in my mind.

Throughout, I have retained my love for the books. In my retirement, I reread many of them and added others to my list. Eventually I worked up a book of meditations on sundry topics, drawing on the books I have read over the years. I called the book Provoking Thought, and it reflects the enormous debt I owe St. John’s and the love for the books that has remained with me throughout my adult life.

Excerpt: Provoking Thought
(Florida Academic Press, 2009)

In Provoking Thought, Hugh Mercer Curtler explores issues of contemporary life in the context of “a number of important books and what their authors had to say to us.” Like a stimulating coffee-shop conversation, the book ranges over diverse topics—Plato, the Iraq War, George Eliot, Brett Favre, Tocqueville, Boston Legal, even Rod Blagojevich. Central to Curtler’s thesis is how a liberal education, in producing citizens who are able to question and reconsider their opinions, advances democracy and improves society:

“Given that a liberal education should...put young people in possession of their own minds, the question is how best to achieve this goal. How is it to be done without merely exchanging one set of chains for another? Clearly the answer to this question is of central importance not only to professional educators, but also to all who are concerned about the survival of this Republic. A democracy cannot function unless its citizens are educated, that is, capable of informed choice, unless they are in possession of their own minds. This is possible only if the students become well-informed and are able to process this information—in a word, if they can think. Thinking, in turn, is a function of the ability to manipulate the symbols of language and mathematics, to analyze and to synthesize. Content is less important than process, but both matter if the goal of an educated person is to be achieved.”

Throughout, I have retained my love for the books. In my retirement, I reread many of them and added others to my list. Eventually I worked up a book of meditations on sundry topics, drawing on the books I have read over the years. I called the book Provoking Thought, and it reflects the enormous debt I owe St. John’s and the love for the books that has remained with me throughout my adult life.
A stark contrast to today’s typical university gym—with rock-climbing walls, aerobic studios, and fitness rooms packed with shiny equipment—Temple Iglehart speaks to dignified simplicity. A basketball court. A weight room. Locker rooms that could best be described as Spartan.

But this is a building steeped in history. Slip out of your street shoes in the foyer to protect the polished gym floor. Climb the steps to the banked wooden running track, where the brick walls are lined with plaques celebrating century-old athletic feats. Below on the basketball court the Maenads and the Amazons are fighting it out with three minutes left in the half. Some of these athletes will be awarded a coveted prize: the blue blazer. Others are making some of the best memories they’ll carry forward into their lives as alumni.

Happy birthday, Temple Iglehart. You don’t look a day over 90.

Ellen Alers (A82): “Once I was asked, ‘If your house was burning and you could save one thing, what would it be?’ Without hesitation, I said, ‘My St. John’s athletic blazer.’ I won it my sophomore year and treasure it. It reminds me of my best times at St. John’s and keeps me from cringing, too badly, when I think of my dismal academic performance. No matter how bad the day, every game was an opportunity to make a fresh start, encourage my teammates, and have fun. Although I never shone in the classroom, the St. John’s sports program gave me the opportunity to lead, follow, learn, teach, encourage and support my fellow athletes, and they reciprocated. Without it and them, I would have never survived.”

Talley Scroggs (A01): “I always prized the 30 minutes or so before the Kunai basketball games. As the women started gathering around the benches, various groups would head out to the court to practice jump shots or free throws. There was no real organization, and we would mingle with the opposing team all during the warm-up. Those pre-game moments really captured the spirit of

Basketball and a balance: the simplicity of Iglehart Hall reflects the simplicity of the Program.
conviviality and fun that I’ll always associate with SJC sports.”

Paula Swann (AGI97):
“My husband, John Swann (AGI97), and I met in the Temple at St. John’s. We were playing on opposing teams (I was a Greenwave, he was a Hustler) during the winter tournament. I was guarding John under the basket. Unfortunately, he is 6’4’, and I am 5’6’. So John would just reach over my back and grab every rebound despite my best efforts to box him out. I wasn’t getting an over-the-back call from the refs, so the next time he came over my back, I nudged him a little and he fell on the floor! The next semester we had all three classes together and soon started dating. Seven years later, we got married in the Great Hall. That’s 13 years total that we’ve been together since that first game in the Temple. Now we have a son, Maxwell, 2 1/2 years old.”

Steven Reynolds (A83):
“My memories of Iglehart Hall are suffused with camaraderie and a sense of justice not seen in other sporting venues. . . . I was assigned to the Hustlers my freshman year, and played basketball with a senior full of passion for the game and an unrelenting drive to win. Another senior, a Greenwave, made a drive to the hoop and was fouled by our player-coach, who had the skill to stop a drive with his body with impunity. But our man’s feet were in motion at the moment of impact, and 10 players on the court knew it was a foul. As impartial as [then Athletic Director Bryce] Jacobsen was, his eye was not always the most discerning, and play continued. The missed call provoked Greenwave Tom (A80) to quote Kant: ‘Mr. J., you’re disrupting the synthetic unity of my apperception!’ Only at Iglehart Hall.”
Feeling Our Feelings: What Philosophers Think and People Know
By Eva Brann (HA89)
Paul Dry Books 2008

In Feeling Our Feelings, Eva Brann considers what the great philosophers on the passions and feelings have thought and written about them. She examines the relevant work of Plato, Aristotle, the Stoics, Aquinas, Descartes, Spinoza, Adam Smith, Hume, Kierkegaard, and Heidegger, and also includes a chapter on contemporary studies on the brain. Feeling Our Feelings provides a comprehensive look at this pervasive and elusive topic.

“Feeling our feelings’ comes from the words a little boy called Zeke said to me some thirty years ago when he was four,” Brann writes in her preface, “I was singing him in a park in Cambridge, Massachusetts, and not doing it right. ‘Swing me higher,’ he said, ‘I want to feel my feelings.’ The phrase stuck with me; you might say it festered in my mind; it agitated questions: Why do we all want to feel our feelings, so generally that people ‘not in therapy?’—as, when you sing a song, the mere consciousness of being affected, and his particular feelings, the distinguishable affects?—as, when you sing a song, there is a difference between the singing done and the song sung—or is there?

The Main Street Manifesto
By Michael Waldock (SFGl03)
Ailemo Books 2009

Michael Waldock’s The Main Street Manifesto is a call to ordinary citizens to rise up to the challenge of getting the country back on track by making a series of “bite-sized” fixes. Waldock calls for “good old-fashioned American fairness and practicality,” as well as a need to re-examine “how we live, what we manufacture, what we buy, and what we can do to rebuild our failing economy from the bottom up.”

With more than 70 percent of our GDP composed of consumer spending, the United States faces permanent trade imbalances and a national debt that will continue to grow. At the same time, only 10 percent of Americans are working in manufacturing, compared to one-third of Americans 50 years ago. Waldock sees other threats in the growing gap between the rich and the poor, as well as failures in education, from grade school through college.

As a former CEO and president of the U.S. subsidiary of The Body Shop, a retail cosmetics company known as the original “company with a conscience,” Waldock is familiar with activism. During his tenure at The Body Shop, he initiated a program to employ the home-bound disabled and gave staff paid leave time to work with community programs of their choice.

“I know we can fix our economic and social problems,” Waldock said, “and it is the Main Street activists who will rebuild and relocalize our economy.”

In this slim volume, Waldock passionately addresses several major issues: the moral imperative for a free press, the need for universal health care, the role of lobbyists, the outsourcing of jobs, rebuilding the country’s manufacturing base, and the danger the United States faces of becoming a plutocracy, among others. Each chapter addresses a particular issue, often giving a brief background history and citing several studies to supplement Waldock’s view, before going on to end with a set of recommended action items. Among them: send a copy of the Constitution to a friend and post parts of it online, watch a video on emerging democracy in China, write your legislators to express support for healthcare reform, and read The Economist.

Culture Club
By Katherine Wolff (AGI93)
University of Massachusetts Press, 2009

Founded in 1807, the successor to a literary club called the Anthology Society, the Boston Athenaeum occupies an important place in the early history of American intellectual life. At first a repository for books, to which works of art were later added, the Athenaeum attracted over time a following that included such literary luminaries as Ralph Waldo Emerson and Henry James.

Yet from the outset, Katherine Wolff shows, the Boston Athenaeum was more than a library; it was also a breeding ground for evolving notions of cultural authority and American identity. Though governed by the Boston elite, who promoted it as a way of strengthening their own clout in the city, the early Athenaeum reflected conflicting and at times contradictory aims and motives on the part of its membership. On the one hand, by drawing on European aesthetic models to reinforce an exalted sense of mission, Athenaeum leaders sought to establish themselves as guardians of a nascent American culture. On the other, they struggled to balance their goals with their concerns about an increasingly democratic urban populace. As the Boston Athenaeum opened its doors to women as well as men outside its inner circle, it eventually began to define itself against a more accessible literary institution, the Boston Public Library.

An independent scholar and researcher, Wolff holds a PhD in American literature and history from Boston University.
Giving Women a Running Start

Kelly Keenan Trumpbour (AG106) finds her niche in advocacy.

by Rosemary Harty

Why hasn’t there been a female president of the United States yet? For the women who founded the nonprofit organization Running Start, there’s a simple answer: women are still not running for elected office—whether the town council or the U.S. Senate—in numbers anywhere close to men. That means fewer women gain the credentials they need to win national offices.

As senior director of Running Start, Kelly Keenan Trumpbour (AG106) is working to change that. She helps guide a nonpartisan organization that works to plant the seeds for a political career in the minds of young women. “This is not about bashing men,” says Trumpbour. “It’s a pipeline issue.”

Trumpbour always wanted to do “meaningful, change-the-world work.” After finishing her degree at the University of Detroit Mercy’s College of Liberal Arts, she worked with Detroit Mayor Dennis Archer on urban revitalization projects throughout Michigan. She moved to Maryland to attend the University of Maryland Law School, knowing she was interested in advocacy rather than “typical firm work.” After graduation, she worked on a senate subcommittee on Capitol Hill and lobbied on behalf of female business owners as Public Policy Chair for the Maryland chapter of the National Association of Women Business Owners. Her public affairs experience led her to write a book, Working at Interest Groups and Nonprofits, to introduce others to a satisfying line of work.

“A lot of young people say ‘I want to go out and make a difference in the world,’” Trumpbour says. “They often get stumped trying to envision what a job like that looks like.”

Working on the book brought her into contact with Susannah Wellford Shakow, the former president and co-founder of Women Under Forty Political Action Committee (WUFPAC), created to funnel financial support to women running for office. What Shakow and many others learned as they help women gain office was that “the biggest thing that was holding women back was really themselves.” It was more difficult for women to see that committing to a career in politics didn’t rule out other choices, such as starting a family.

Trumpbour was invited to sit on WUFPAC’s board, and that led her to join with Shakow and others to create Running Start. “What we decided was that it was much more important go back and talk to girls in high school and in college to get women thinking about running for office in their 20s.”

The group’s first step was to create, in 2007, a five-day summer leadership program for high school girls. They managed to draw 25 girls to their inaugural session at American University, a five-day program in which elected officials, speechwriters, campaign managers, even unsuccessful candidates, offered a view of life in politics. The next year, the program expanded to 50 students, and 300 women applied. “That seemed really impressive to us,” recalls Trumpbour. “Then we had a presidential election.”

Having a woman and an African-American man vie for the Democratic nomination in the 2008 presidential race changed everything, Trumpbour says. For the 2009 class, Running Start received 30,000 applications for the 50 slots in the program. “It was mind-blowing,” Trumpbour says.

Whether any of the young women who come to Running Start’s Washington program will be a congresswoman, or even a local school board president, is hard to say. But Trumpbour is impressed with the ambition, skills, and experience these women have developed at such a young age. One woman, a Native American, aspires to be a leader in her tribe. Another participant launched a bicoastal conference on interfaith relations.

While law school prepared her well for a career in advocacy, St. John’s gave her something else, Trumpbour says. There was a moment in law school when Trumpbour realized, “this is not fun, this is boring, and hard.” Then she ran across St. John’s and its dual degree program with Maryland, which allows students to obtain simultaneously the Master of Arts in Liberal Arts and Juris Doctor degrees. “I couldn’t believe it—you sit on this beautiful campus and talk about books.”

With three GI segments to complete, Trumpbour enrolled in her first semester at St. John’s after her first year of law school, her second after she passed the bar exam, and her third after she completed an MBA at Johns Hopkins University. Whenever she felt overcome by drudgery, her husband, Jason, would suggest, “you need a semester at St. John’s.” Philosophy and literature, great discussions, and her tutors always restored her.

At 31, Trumpbour hasn’t ruled out running for office. For now, though, she’s happy to be a mentor and a teacher to others. Although she finds it frustrating to see women lead other countries when a woman has not yet achieved the highest office in the United States, she believes it won’t be long before a woman stands on the steps of the Capitol to take the oath of office. “It is still an uphill battle for women,” Trumpbour says. “But I hope what we’ve shown is that it doesn’t have to be scary.”

{The College: St. John’s College. Winter 2010}
1937

**Jack Owens** sends regards from Naples, Florida, where he and his wife, Peg, recently celebrated 65 years of marriage. He writes: “I am still trying to comprehend the philosophy course I took with Dr. Bernhard in 1936.”

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1943

**Burton Armstrong** notes that he met his wife, Peggy, while at St. John’s. “We are now both 88, have been married for 66 years, and have lived in Charlottesville, Va., since 1982.”

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1946

**Peter Weiss** gave a talk on June 26 at Humboldt University, Berlin, on “The International Law Obligation for Nuclear and General Disarmament.”

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1949

Charlotte Anderson passed along this news to the college: “My husband, **Clarence Anderson**, philosopher, accountant, business manager and dean of financial services and administration at Patrick Henry Community College in Martinsville, Va., scuba-diver, swimming teacher at the YMCA, little league baseball coach, boxing instructor, teacher of philosophy, runner, past member of a rescue squad, graduate of an auto-mechanics program, owner of a patent, registered nurse, and airplane pilot, died peacefully of pneumonia at the age of 87 on July 1, 2009. He always spoke proudly of his education at St. John’s and was a true St. Johnnie. He loved to argue and discuss. The Great Books program enriched his life and, indirectly, mine as well. There was a 36-year age difference between us, but he was always younger than his years. (P.S. He also tried hang-gliding.)”

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1950

**Tylend Westcott Street** received a Medal of Honor from Maryland Institute College of Art. He continues to teach young sculptors interested in human anatomy and figurative sculpture.

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1959

**Katherine Haas** writes: “My husband, James O. Brooks, died September 12. He was my second husband. We had a wonderful marriage and I miss him terribly. He had a lengthy illness with Parkinson’s, but was able to deal with it very well. He taught at Villanova University in mathematics and computer science. I taught at Valley Forge Military College, computer science. I retired early so we could spend more time together, and we traveled quite a bit as well. We have two children, our son is in Manhattan, also in computer science working in industry, our daughter is married in northern New Jersey.”

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1961

As part of a featured exchange titled “Life Without Lawyers” in its May 14, 2009 issue, The New York Review of Books published a lengthy letter by **Harrison Shepard**. His letter, criticizing the book of that name by Philip K. Howard and its review by Anthony Lewis in the April 9, 2009 issue of the *NYRB*, argued that both the book and the review failed to identify the root cause of abuses in American legal education and practice as attributable to the dominance of an adversarial “war-making” model as opposed to a “problem-solving, peacemaking model” of the kind Yale Law School Dean Anthony Kronman identifies as the “lawyer-statesman ideal.” Shepard maintains his solo civil law practice in San Francisco while continuing his nonfiction writing and editing. His last published book was *Too Much for Our Own Good: The Consumeritis Epidemic*. He is at work editing the manuscript of a distinguished physician concerning the need to separate the teachings of dogmatic religion from reasonable moral judgments, and a second manuscript relating to the early career of Elvis Presley.

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1963

**David Michael Trusty** has been traveling all across the country on Amtrak. He lives 10 minutes away from the Santa Fe station at Lang, N.M. He is enjoying train travel.

After more than 30 years in advertising, **Jed Stampleman** is now retired and enjoying as many weeks on Cape Cod as the weather will allow. He is also participating in monthly seminars held by the New York alumni chapter. He went through a bout of cancer but is doing fine, and the doctors are happy with his recovery. Best to all at St. John’s.

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1964

Earlier this fall **Jeremy Leven** was in Royaumont Abbey outside Paris for six weeks as a guest of the French government with three other Hollywood screenwriters, including Frank Pierson (*Dog Day Afternoon*, *Cool Hand Luke*, etc.). “I’m writing Girl On A Bicycle to be shot in Paris, produced by Max Weideman and Quirin Berg (Oscar and César for *The Lives Of Others*). My Sister’s Keeper came out in June, did well in U.S., considering it’s a story of a girl dying of cancer, and very, well, foreign; also *Time Traveler’s Wife* (uncredited, but worked on for two years) did well. In the works: novel for Knopf, *The Savior and the Singing Machine*, will be done by end of year with any luck; play on Francois Premier for Comedie de Theatre Champs Elysees in Paris is in works, but lots of work, so who knows when; film of true story of theft of *Mona Lisa* in 1911 (*Lovers, Liars and Thieves*) now casting, hoping for Paris shoot 2010 or 2011. Wife and five kids

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When Pope Benedict XVI was preparing for a visit to the United States in April 2008, Martin Marklin (A85) got a telephone call from a monsignor in New York. “The Pope needs a candle,” he told Marklin, an artisan who specializes in candles for religious services. Marklin was given two weeks to craft the 5-foot, 65-pound candle, inlaid with the Pontiff’s coat of arms. Pope Benedict lit the candle during a ceremony at Ground Zero to honor the victims of the September 11th attacks. “It is very rare that the Pope lights his own candle—this is usually done for him,” Marklin says. “So this was an honor.”

There were numerous technical requirements for the custom candle, including the inlay, a “secret process” Marklin has perfected over the years. Also, the candle needed to burn well for at least 20 minutes and be draft resistant. “I am Aristotelian in my approach—if a candle looks beautiful but doesn’t burn well, it won’t make it,” he says.

Marklin added a personal touch to the candle: “I put the initials of my four children on the bottom of the Pope’s candle, as a silent prayer for peace.”

Captivated by the craft of inlay since childhood, Marklin experimented in the basement of his parents’ home in St. Louis and began making candles while attending St. John’s. After he made a candle for St. Mary’s Church in Annapolis, one of the priests, Vincent Dwyer, encouraged him to start a business. He told Marklin that no one was producing artistic candles, gave him the seed money to start his business, and put him in touch with contacts.

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While at St. John’s, Marklin learned another trade that helped him become a candle maker. During his junior and senior years, Marklin worked in the college print shop under the tutelage of Chris Colby (HA08). That gave Marklin the skills to work in his brother’s print shop in New Hampshire while he launched his candle business.

Today Marklin Candle Designs is based in rural Contoocook, New Hampshire, and Marklin shares the 50,000-square-foot manufacturing center with his wife, four children, and about two dozen employees. The company supplies more than half of the nation’s cathedrals with custom, hand-dipped beeswax candles. “Our designs struck a chord [because] they are more inventive,” explains Marklin. “We are liturgical artisans trying to make a business, so we are in touch with how we worship.”

Marklin also recently opened a small retail shop in the old barn that is part of Marklin Candle Design. The shop includes accessories designed by noted children’s book illustrator Tomie de Paola as well as a new line, MarkMoments, of custom, hand-dipped candles for lay people. “There is something evocative and life giving about a candle. When a ceremony is over, you take the registry book, the Mass card, put them in a drawer, but a candle you keep as a symbol.”

Last year, Marklin got another telephone call from a church leader, this time, a bishop who wanted to congratulate him. He had spotted one of Marklin’s large paschal candles in the Clint Eastwood film Gran Torino. It’s standing next to the casket in the opening funeral scene, filmed on location at a church in Grosse Point, Michigan. Whether on a movie set, at Ground Zero, or in a private home, Marklin hopes all his candles “are tapping into what we do best—creating this light, these symbols of hope, spiritual life.”

Martin Marklin (A85) started his candle business as a student in Annapolis.
and their spouses all well, employed, healthy, happy, and that’s what counts.”

1965

**JAN H. BLITS** recently published *New Heaven, New Earth: Shakespeare’s Antony and Cleopatra* (Lexington Books). It’s his sixth book. He is also the recipient of the Foundation for Individual Rights in Education’s first Prometheus Award for his work protecting the rights of students at the University of Delaware, where he teaches.

1966

This past January, **IAN HARRIS** traveled to Sri Lanka to give a keynote speech at a peace education conference. “On the way home I lectured on the growth of peace studies at the University of Pisa and Florence in Italy.”

1968

**BRUCE (SF) and Ina BALDWIN** happily announce the birth of first grandchild Gavin on July 28 to daughter-in-law Ashlea and son lan.

**CARL BOSTEK (SF)** is finishing a work assignment in Kona, Hawaii, and returning home to Anchorage for three weeks before returning to New Zealand, where he hopes to get his schooner back in the water after a major refit. Next summer, he’ll be back in Alaska working. In between, who knows?

“Pretty interesting year,” writes **JOHN FARMER (A).** “Where to start? Enjoyed going back to St. John’s for the Piraeseus program. Went to D.C. as a member of a Food and Drug Administration committee I was on. I pushed the envelope and took up golf! Trying to keep up my practice while getting older is a challenge. The best way to travel is to visit friends, I found. The chance that I will climb Mt. Everest or swim the English Channel is getting smaller. Now can get senior citizen coffee at McDonald’s.”

**CHARLES WATSON (A)** reports that his eldest son, Ivan, is now a CNN international reporter based in Istanbul. Charles was also the recipient of a minor award at the most recent American Society of Anesthesiologists Meeting, when the Malignant Hyperthermia Association of the U.S. presented him with the Malignant Hyperthermia Hotline Partnership Award for working together with/assisting another physician (an anesthesiologist in California) manage a patient with malignant hyperthermia crisis during anesthesia. “A long-standing (more than 20-year) project of mine is voluntary service as a phone consultant for both the malignant hyperthermia (MH) and the neurolp/malignant syndrome information service (NMSIS) Hotlines,” writes Watson. “A pleasure to help others treat patients with special problems. It has brought me together with physicians and nurses from various special areas of practice (anesthesia, surgery, critical care, internal medicine, psychiatry, dental surgery, etc.) from around the world.”

1970

**MAUREEN BARDEN (A)** has been the Department of Justice’s prisoner reentry coordinator in Philadelphia since October 2006, working primarily with a federal reentry court program. After many years as a prosecutor, she is happy to be using her skills to help people stay out of prison.

**BENJAMIN BARNEY (SF)** writes: “I am living at my house in Lukachukai in the middle of the Navajo Nation. If you should heading through Arizona get in touch and stay over. I am in North-east Arizona in the Chihuel Valley (Canyon del Chelly area). I am no longer working at the Dine College. Right now I am reading, writing, and hosting relatives and friends. The winter ceremonial calendar started the first week of October; the yeibichaii and fire dances are taking place each week until end of December. I try to get to most of them as well as other Native festivals and major events. Where are all those people who graduated in 1970 from Santa Fe campus with me?”

**LES MARCULIS (A)** has been in Mumbai now for almost six months running an ad agency. “Loving Indian food and the colorful dress,” he wore a “spiffy-looking” outfit to celebrate Diwali. He says, “It really is a ‘Marriage Suit’ and it must have worked as I had four proposals before noon.”

1971

**TRAVIS PRICE (SF)** was just awarded Alumnus of the Year at University of New Mexico School of Architecture and Planning.

1972

**DAVID S. CAREY (A),** emeritus professor of philosophy at Whitman College, received the George Ball Award for Excellence in Advising at the end of the 2008-2009 academic year. Carey, who joined the Whitman faculty in 1989, recently retired.

1973

After writing a how-to management book in 2006 called *Management by Baseball*, **JEFF ANGUS (SF)** spent the next couple of years doing workshops, seminars, and speaking to groups while gearing back his management consulting practice. Now he’s back to consulting work full time, currently away from his home in Seattle, working mostly in San Francisco. “I’m reading a ton, he says. “Last year I re-read Lucretius and all of Herodotus—not just the seminar bits, alternating fiction and nonfiction, particularly enjoying Thomas Pynchon, William T. Vollmann & George Soros. I practice guitar and I’m somewhat active in Society For American Baseball Research. My granddaughter just turned four, so she’s old enough to be entertained by my humor and the fact that I can run faster than anyone else she knows, and concurrently too young to have decided I’m full of crap—the perfect age.”

**JAN LISA HUTTNER (A)** is the founder of WITASWAN: (Women in the Audience Supporting Women Artists Now!)

1974

**JON HUNNER (SF)** just published a biography, *J. Robert Oppenheimer, the Cold War, and the Atomic West*, through University of Oklahoma Press. He is now on a semester sabatical from New Mexico State University, traveling, writing, and reading. Jon and Mary Ellen’s son Harley is now a Peace Corps volunteer in Cameroon.

**DEBORAH ROSS (A)** has published an historical novel, *Konrad and Alberta*. It’s based on the true story of one of Puget Sound’s pioneer families. Deborah lives in Olympia, Wash., and summers in Fox Harbour, Nova Scotia, with husband Brian Hovis and their teenaged son, Jamie.

1975

“Since we are now empty nesters my wife, Patti, and I moved from the Westchester County (N.Y.) suburbs back into Manhattan,

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Passionate About Pinot

Zach Rasmuson (A95) finds clarity in wine.

by Deborah Spiegelman

The chronicle of how Zach Rasmuson (A95) came to take up residence in Philo, California, population 1,098, could easily be called The Tale of the Serendipitous Work-Study Job.

Rasmuson grew up in rural Massachusetts, in a bedroom community of Worcester. He left high school early to attend the Armand Hammer United World College of the American West, in Las Vegas, New Mexico. Before the year was out, however, Rasmuson realized that this was not the right fit.

Succumbing to his father’s repeated entreaties, he applied for admission to St. John’s.

“I had no idea of what I was getting into,” Rasmuson admits. Ultimately, attending St. John’s turned out to be “the most important thing I did.”

Rasmuson landed a coveted work-study job. On Friday afternoons, he worked for John Agresto, then president of the Santa Fe campus, who hosted gatherings for board members and other distinguished visitors. Rasmuson found himself pouring a glass of Stag’s Leap for the winery’s founder, Warren Winiarski, a pioneer in the American wine industry.

Rasmuson, who regularly participated in a wine study group hosted by Abe Schoener (then a tutor, now himself a winemaker) began to lobby Winiarski for a job. Persistence paid off, and, after graduation, Rasmuson drove straight from campus to Winiarski’s Napa Valley-based operations. “I guess [Winiarski] figured that if I didn’t make it as a winemaker, I could be a carpenter and build sheds,” says Rasmuson.

Working at Stag’s Leap, however, proved to be Rasmuson’s apprenticeship. “I studied what I could, focusing on the viticulture side,” he explains. Rasmuson took an extension course at the University of California-Davis—recognized as the center for oenological studies in the United States—and he learned from Stag’s Leap winemaker Michael Salacci that quality is determined in the vineyard, not the winery.

Grounded in the production of Bordeaux varieties, Rasmuson found himself naturally gravitating to pinot noir. Pursuing his growing passion for the variety, he left Stag’s Leap in 1988 to become assistant winemaker at Robert Sinskey Vineyards. Two years later, he came to the Anderson Valley as winemaker for Husch Vineyards.

“It was an adventure, taking oneself out of Napa,” Rasmuson recalls. At the time, the Anderson Valley, which cuts across the coastal region of Mendocino County, was known principally for its timber and marijuana production. “It was evolutionary for me to start at Stag’s Leap and end up in the Anderson Valley,” he adds. “I believed in the region.” In particular, he was certain that the area offered the right growing conditions for first-class pinot noir.

In August 2003, Rasmuson became the winemaker at Goldeneye Winery, where he now is also vice president and general manager. The process of producing pinot noir is one “of minimal intervention, of finesse not muscle,” he explains on the winery’s Web site. “Pinot noir reflects its terroir with remarkable clarity,” he adds. This understanding of place manifested in the wine he attributes to Schoener’s tutelage.

Rasmuson also credits his St. John’s education with keeping him patient and humble in the face of the challenges and rewards of winemaking. “I learned to focus on the key principles,” he says.

Now recognized as one of the top pinot noir regions in North America, the Anderson Valley is “a hot spot,” says Rasmuson. While the movie Sideways helped propel pinot noir into the public consciousness, Rasmuson works assiduously to maintain superior quality. He keeps vine yields low and select only the finest fruit for the estate wines.

Having traded rural Massachusetts, via small-town Annapolis, for a still remote and rugged Anderson Valley, Rasmuson says: “I wouldn’t live anywhere else.” His young children attend a one-room schoolhouse, and he and his wife appreciate the peace and quiet of life close to the land.

In a tidy switch of roles, Rasmuson helped his former wine study host pursue his own passion. He got Schoener a job at Stag’s Leap, when the tutor was on sabbatical. Schoener became quickly hooked, decided to stay in California, and now has his own label, Scholium Project.

The irony in this business, Rasmuson explains, “is that we work hard—blue jeans and boots—and then there’s this other lifestyle, where we get to meet lots of people and have great conversations.” And, he might add, drink some fine wine.
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where my daily morning commute is now an 18-minute walk past Matt, Meredith, Ann and Al doing the Today Show on Rockefeller Plaza," writes Gershon Ekmam (A). "My oldest daughter graduated from Michigan and is teaching English in Nanjing, China, while she decides whether or not to go to law school, which is what college graduates do when they can’t decide what to do after college. The twin girls are sophomores at Lehigh and Tulane. The Great Wall Street Meltdown has made for an interesting and busy year and a half, career-wise; so far I’ve managed to hang on to my job. Isaiah Laderman (A75) and I frequently have lunch together to discuss the state of the world. See you at the 35th reunion!"

On June 6, Cynthia Kirshner Swisw (A) graduated from the Dietetic Technician Program at Baltimore City Community College. “On October 29 I started my new job at Medifast Weight Loss center as a member of the Nutrition Support Team. I answer e-mails and phone calls from all over the country. I give advice on weight loss, daily nutritional requirements, and food composition. I am enjoying my new job.”

K.C. Victor (A) has been in Los Angeles for 12 years now. She is still recruiting lawyers, as she has done for 25 years. “Still liking what I do. Still married to my first husband (the wonderful Iv Hepner who some of you know), now 31 years. Still a mom (of Kate) 24 years and a grandmother of Bailey (5 years). Kate and Bailey live about three hours away by car so we see them often. The only current dog (one of life’s sad facts is that dogs live shorter lives than we do) is a black Standard Poodle puppy born last Thanksgiving. We named her Laska after Levin’s first wife. I am enjoying my new job.”

1976

Carol Dockham (SF) is a doctoral student at Georgetown University, Washington, D.C. Her special interest is the Russian Orthodox Church during the Soviet era.

Cliff Adams (A) is now married to a German woman who he met in Erding, Germany (just outside Munich) where he has been living for the past eight years. He was working for a major airline computer services company, now he works at home, developing websites, Web 2.0 technology, and creating technology learning materials. On the hobby side, he is involved in a number or projects that came out of his association with Landmark Education, (e.g., www.israelpalestineproject.com). The St. John’s program is still very present in everything he does.

1979

In accordance with the Annapolis class pact made at Homecoming (90 years!), Kathy Buck (A) is submitting some of the highlights for those who weren’t there. They were honored by the presence of Dr. Stevens, Dr. Silverman, the Dr.’s Howard, and Dr. Fine. Nathan and Bruce celebrated four years together in Chicago (mazel tov!) Marge A. revealed the real reason she wants to go to St. John’s but did not have what he calls ‘enough courage’ is basically an unofficial alum,” she notes. Irv attends alumni seminars and others think of him as a St. Johnie. In other words, he knows how to read and how to listen. Most recently we put together a group of some Johnnies and some others to tackle Ulysses, slowly. Irv and I and almost all the others are reading this great work for the first time. If you are in Los Angeles and want to join us, it is not too late!”

1980

Geraldine Glover Rosenblum (A) recently accepted a position as director of the Sunnyvale (Calif.) Public Library. Earlier this year Lisa was named one of the American Library Association’s “2009 Movers and Shakers” for her innovative work modernizing the Hayward Public Library and jointly managing the Library and Neighborhood Services departments.

Books in Baltimore

Joe (class of 1953) and Trudy Kauffman have formed a foundation to supply Baltimore’s inner-city elementary schools with library books. “This is charity at its best,” writes Joe. “Children who have books and have read them donate these books to schools where decent libraries do not exist. Kids are involved with the true meaning of charity: to give something that you have cherished. We started in May 2007, and to date we have delivered more than 12,000 books. All of this is being accomplished without money. What little operating costs are, Trudy and I cover. This can be done everywhere; if you are in the Baltimore area, please join us in obtaining books. Visit our website: trudyjoe.org.”

In Bellingham, Wash., and prepare our off-the-grid home on Lasqueti Island, B.C. As soon as the Bellingham house is sold and gainful employment sloughed off, we plan to replicate the Odyssey including the side trip to Hades. Please send any thoughts you have on this intended voyage to Jon, the cunning, and Marie at phoenix@svphoenix.net.”

From Marie Raney (A): “Jon (Raney, A75) and I sailed to Hawaii last summer on our 40-year-old sailboat and Chuck Hurt (A79) helped Jon bring her back to Bellingham from Hawaii. That was a fabulous trip and you can read about it at our website http://svphoenix.net. While we repair and regroup from that trip we continue to work in
1981

ALINE BRANDAUER (SF) is living in Santa Fe with her husband, Charles, daughter Sarah (10) and two cats. She is doing a variety of community and arts projects through her company, Vani Productions. She also is part of STEVE WARSHAWER’s (SF’78) Beneficial Farms CSA and wants to sing his praises for helping to develop local food systems.

1982

With daughter Alyssa graduating from the University of Chicago and son Sam attending MICA in the fall, LESLIE SMITH ROSEN (A) is an empty-nester. Glad to hear from so many SJC friends on Facebook and happy to see more!

1983

Last August, DAVID CARNES (A) completed the Norseman—the world’s hardest ironman triathlon—in just over 17 hours. “Unfortu-
nately, I crashed on the bike leg and sustained a hurt shoulder, broken ribs, and a deep laceration on my hip. The injuries made it somewhat unpleasant to finish the bike leg and then run the marathon up Mount Gaustad. I also had to replace my beautiful bike as the frame was cracked in two places. Kirsten agreed to let me apply for a place in next year’s race, this time without a crash.”

1984

PETER GREEN (A) is living in New York’s Washington Heights and loving New York. He’s a world news reporter at Bloomberg News and was heading off to Prague last summer to interview Vaclav Havel, the former Czech president, and then wander around the East for a few weeks. He is looking forward to the next reunion!

1985

JAN CONLIN (SF) writes: “I have been promoted to fulltime mom to my 8 1/2 month old son, Patrick, while I wait out the recession.”

1986

“My family and I still love living in North Bend, Wash., at the foot of Mt. Si,” writes LINDA GREZ (A). “We’re launching a new business, Propelo Electric Boat Motors this winter. Propelo specializes in quiet, lightweight electric motors for small craft such as canoes, dinghies, rowboats and fishing boats. We hope to see them in the Chesapeake soon.”

1987

CELESTE DNucci (A) is pleased to announce the end of a long and often pointless ordeal that has
resulted in the completion of her PhD in English from the University of Pennsylvania. This was made possible, in part, by her winnings from Jeopardy!, though she is still often on the fence about whether this was the best option for their use. Celeste is residing in Philadelphia, trying to decide what she wants to be when she grows up.

**Michael Vitakis** (A) is spending a year in Dunedin, New Zealand, while his wife, Chiara, completes a master’s in International Studies at the University of Otago. His most recent book, She and I: A Fugue (under his birth name Michael R. Brown), was published by Petrarca Press earlier this year. He is working on several other projects and welcomes e-mail from all Johnsies via his website: www.fuguewriter.com.

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**1988**

“I’m taking a break from my corporate career to do research on the Tierra del Fuego work of the American painter, Rockwell Kent (1882-1971),” writes **Fielding Dupty** (A). “After Kent’s return from South America in 1923, he was among the most famous artists in the U.S., becoming an all-around cultural phenomenon, known equally for his paintings as for his writings, illustrations (Moby-Dick, Candide, Leaves of Grass, etc.), and his adventures to cold climates. His leftist social activism in the post-war years, however, led to a McCarthy Commission subpoena, revocation of his passport, and a swift decline in his popularity.

The Tierra del Fuego travels came at an inflection period in the artist’s career and yet they have never been fully studied, perhaps because the region itself is so forbidding. Last winter, I spent two arduous months in Tierra del Fuego, retracing Kent’s route and locating the scenes he depicted in his canvases and in the book he wrote about his travels, Voyaging: Southward from the Strait of Magellan. I am now working on an article about Kent’s work in the region, as well as laying the groundwork for an exhibition sometime in 2013 or 2014. I’ll be returning to Tierra del Fuego to complete my research next month.”

**James F.X. O’Gara** (A) is working for the Department of State in Kandahar, Afghanistan, at an intelligence fusion cell targeting corruption related to the insurgency. He writes: “The privations of life in southern Afghanistan have been softened by his discovery that a colleague at the fusion cell studied political philosophy and has mild Straussian leanings, i.e., he reads books carefully, but does not number the sentences. For reasons of national security, the mildly Straussian analyst’s identity cannot be disclosed, other than to say that he is a former student of [University of Texas professor] Tom Pangle.”

**Barbara Hahn** (A) received her PhD in business history and the history of technology from UNC-Chapel Hill in May 2006, and has since been on the tenure track at Texas Tech University in Lubbock, Texas. Her current manuscript examines the interactions between the tobacco industry and tobacco agriculture over three centuries—but, perhaps ironically, she no longer smokes. She would love to hear from old friends at b.hahn@alumni.unc.edu.

**Kim Paffenroth** (A) has a new anthology of zombie stories available: The World Is Dead. Unlike most all zombie tales, stories in this collection are set significantly after the dead have risen and devoured all of humanity. Put it on your list of zombie reading alongside Kim’s other works, as well as the enormously popular Pride and Prejudice and Zombies, by Seth Grahame-Smith.

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**1989**

**Mandy Dalton** (A) has moved to Cheverly, Md. “I am still a clown. Business is improving. Too many video projects to keep up with.”

**Dixie Davis** (A) is back in Texas, probably 30 years sooner than she thought she’d be, currently dealing with an aging, disabled mother with diabetes issues and various other “fun” issues that we get to deal with as we get older. After working in the nonprofit field for many years, she is currently helping a friend rescue his failing small business. She also rescues dogs (nominally Welsh Corgis and Great Danes, but in reality, lots of other stuff that comes along as well). She was very much looking forward to the 20-year anniversary of her Annapolis class this fall. Even though she did not graduate SJC, her years at St. John’s have shaped her tremendously and she treasures the experience.

“It’s late 2009, 20 years and a few months after leaving St. John’s... and I’m still writing batch code and administering computers,” writes **George Erhard** (SF). “This time, it’s for AT&T U-verse, and I’m responsible for approximately 7,000 servers in 64 cities. Stress? What stress? This is fun. My wife, Claire, and I are living happily ever after in Irving, Texas, and at some point, I hope to get to Santa Fe again, possibly showing up to a seminar in riding leathers.”

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**1990**

**N. Tatiana Masters** (SF) finished her doctorate in Social Justice and is starting a one-year post-doc position at the University of Washington. Husband [Jason Spainhower](also SF90) is still consulting. As always they are in Seattle and like to hear from people.

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**1991**

After three nonfiction books, J. Christoph Amberger (AGI) is looking forward to the publication of his first novel. The Lazarus Smile will be published by Secret Archives Press as an e-book on November 10, and as a paperback by December 15. “I got the idea for the plot back in Annapolis, and it took almost 10 years to put it all down on paper,” he explains. He hints that a tutor will meet with a bad end in his book.
Slow-Food Salumiere

Mark Sanfilippo (SFGI00) makes sausage the old-world way.

by Patricia Dempsey

When he was a screenwriter in Los Angeles in the 1990s, Mark Sanfilippo converted the empty closets in his apartment into cool, dark places where he could hang homemade salami. “When my friends came to visit they would ask, ‘Why does it smell like the back of a deli in this apartment?’” Sanfilippo hung the salami as the final step in a patient process, in which penicillin mold slowly hardens the fat, readying the salami for slicing. “Americans don’t want mold, but for centuries it’s been done this way, so I make my salami in the old way.”

Self-taught as a salumiere, Sanfilippo took a chemistry class and “picked the brain” of Armandino Batali, one of the top salami makers in the country. Sanfilippo also jumped at the chance to introduce his handmade salami to patrons in a Los Angeles restaurant where the chefs were curing their own meats. “They were tuned into slow food, which basically means using traditional techniques and local products, using foods that are handcrafted and artisan. There is a recipe I created myself called super sutta Sicilian that we served. It’s a nod to my Sicilian roots.”

For Sanfilippo, who grew up in a second-generation Sicilian family, salami and sausage were always more than just food. “On Christmas Eve the Italians celebrate the Feast of the Seven Fishes. They prepare fish in seven ways: anchovies, salt cod, linguine with clams, things like that. We didn’t do that. Instead, we had homemade sausage. After Mass we would come back and have sausage, bread, and wine. So sausage was always very mysterious and magical to me.”

Today, Sanfilippo is back to his roots. He now lives in his hometown of St. Louis, where his Sicilian grandfather sold vegetables in the city market. In 2008, he launched his company, Salume Beddu, in St. Louis, where he still pursues the old-world way, albeit now in a commercial kitchen. Sanfilippo creates fresh artisan salume—Italian for all salted and cured pork products—and fresh salsiccia (sausages) and sells them at local farmers markets. He also makes Roman guarniale and pancetta, as well as gan and lardo, “which is a bad name for a very good product,” explains Sanfilippo. “It’s delicious—big, thick slabs of fat cured for six months.” His coppa rossa, cured pork shoulder, is flavored with Spanish paprika and New Mexico Chimayó chiles—a nod to his GI days, when he lived in Santa Fe and worked at a bakery.

Sanfilippo pairs his traditional old-world techniques with local ingredients. Much like farmers who use heirloom plants to preserve certain older varietals and flavors, Sanfilippo uses heritage pigs. “I buy from more than one farmer. It’s more trouble but it makes for higher quality. Oscar Meyer will just have one kind of pig that they will breed to the max to be as lean as possible, with less flavor, but for maximum profit at the slaughter—and they slaughter them weekly. The smaller farmers I buy from in Illinois, Iowa, and Missouri might have say, 20 pigs, and they breed them to be flavorful and only slaughter them when necessary. Instead of dirty pens, my farmers give the pigs space and land to graze on. This is the Italian model. It makes a difference in the taste.”

The old-world way can take several months, but Sanfilippo savors every step. “I love the work itself. It’s very meditative. I find a beauty in the product, its deep red color. There are many complicated factors that make it a puzzle: the fermentation, a pH test to cure the meat. Basically you are cooking salami without using heat. And there is the mold—you have to inoculate it with penicillin mold and keep it out of the light or the fat will not harden. So there’s a whole delicate process.”

As for eating them, he says, “It’s a little like antipasto. You don’t want to cover up the flavor. Do what the Sicilians do, serve it with crusty bread and a smear of butter, and some red wine.”


**JOAN CRIST** (A) is serving as assistant professor of Religious Studies at Calumet College of St. Joseph in Northwest Indiana, and coordinator of ecumenism and interreligious affairs for the Catholic Diocese of Gary. Several faculty at Calumet know and admire the St. John’s Program, writes Joan. “Six of us junior faculty have been tasked with proposing revisions to the general education curriculum, and we’re looking at a renewed emphasis—sort of a back-to-basics—on reading classic texts, possibly including a ‘minimalist canon,’ for the college,” she writes.

**JON ARNO LAWSON** (A) has a new book of poetry forthcoming, this time for older children. The book is called *Think Again*, a tortured philosophical love story told in four-line rhymes. It will be published by Kids Can Press in March 2010.

**STEVEN MCNAMARA** and **ANGE MLINKO** (both A) are moving to Beirut this fall where he will be teaching law and ethics courses in the Olayan School of Business at the American University of Beirut. Ange’s third book of poetry *Shoulder Season*, is forthcoming from Coffeehouse Press in 2010. Any Johnnies passing through Lebanon are encouraged to get in touch at: sm99@aub.edu.lb.

**BLAKE SITNEY** (SF) recently married. “My wife is Thai and her name was Naraporin Kaichayaphoom, now it is Naraporin Sitney. We live together in Khon Kaen, Thailand. When I am not working on software projects, and she is not working in her beauty salon, we tend to our fruit tree orchard and organic garden. We enjoy traveling when we have free time and we are looking forward to starting a family together.”

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**1992**

**ALEC BERLIN** (SF) wrapped up three months in the Bay Area performing in Green Day’s American Idiot at the Berkeley Repertory Theater. With a little luck, East Coast performances will follow shortly. He’s also finishing up a new record. Watch www.alecberlin.com for details.

**ERIK FISHER** (A) is involved in a project that studies the practical possibilities and potential outcomes of ongoing interactions between humanities scholars and laboratory practitioners researching new and emerging science and technologies. The project places liberal artists and social scientists in over 20 laboratories around the world to explore the role of interdisciplinary dialogue in shaping research decisions. Erik would love to hear from fellow alums who have been involved in similar kinds of collaborations, who know of similar programs, and/or who can suggest relevant theoretical or empirical work in this area. Erik’s e-mail is efisher@asu.edu.

After almost a dozen years as a corporate training manager and consultant, **MARTHA (MARITI) ACOSTA HOLMES** (A) embarked on a new path: “For my midlife crisis I eschewed cosmetic surgery and extramarital affairs and choose to pursue a doctorate in Human and Organizational Learning at George Washington University. I fly to D.C. from Santa Fe every month for classes and have enjoyed catching up with Johnnies in the area. I would love to catch up with more classmates and anyone who is thinking about complex adaptive systems and organizational failures.”

“I am full of joy from the birth of my firstborn,” writes **MICHAEL KOPPLE** (SF). “Levi Simcha Kopple was born on September 15, 2009, and is now the ‘little man’ of the house. All is well in Los Angeles, and I continue to practice as a trial lawyer.”

---

**1993**

**JOANNA CORWIN** (SF) married David Hassell in the middle of Shenandoah National Park this past summer. She’s still working in the U.S. Copyright Office and is newly enjoying the joys of home ownership in Bowie, Md.

**ELLEN DORNAN** (SF) is proud to announce the launch of the Centennial Atlas of Historic New Mexico Maps, at atlas.nmhm.org. This unique resource, developed for the New Mexico Humanities Council to commemorate the centennial of statehood, features 20 historic maps from over four centuries, each annotated with the stories of the people who witnessed the events and places that defined New Mexico during that time, as well as historic photos and illustrations, Native American oral histories, and audio from New Mexico historians and scholars. Lesson plans support use of the Atlas in the classroom, and instruct students in creating their own rich media maps of their community histories and cultural resources, and sharing them as part of the Atlas.

**KEVIN JOHNSON** (A) plans to get married next July, to Sonora Thomas, a body-oriented psychotherapist. “I’m completing a certificate program in executive coaching. I work at Harvard Medical School in HR, working on programs that are meant to create a more engaging and productive workplace culture. I’m savoring Galsworthy’s *Forsyte Saga* after seeing the brilliant BBC mini-series based on these novels. And I’m putting my own blend of chai spices in everything I bake—try them in waffles, yum!”

**PENNY SINONE** (SFGI), actor and writer, recently performed, “Leftovers: Taking Turns,” for the Monologue Festival at the Filling Station Theatre in Albuquerque. This monologue is part of a large body of work, “Leftovers: Dirty Panties, Bones and Fish Sauce,” performed in Santa Fe in February.

**WALTER STERLING** (A) and wife Meghan welcomed their son, William Galloway, to the world on April 12, Easter Sunday. All are doing very well.

**ERIKA SUSKI** (A) has been in Dumfries, Va., for the past decade, commuting to work and working on a College of Science master’s degree from George Mason University. She is living with her family, they’re all having fun. She hopes everyone is good. Her mail address is P.O. Box 1333, Dumfries, VA 22026

**ASHLEY WARING VICTOR** (A) reports that she and her husband, Oliver, and their five children (Eliz-
abeth, Lucy, Alexander, Mary Virginia, and Caroline) moved to Phoenix from Virginia four years ago. “We left the Episcopal Church (my husband was a clergyman for six years) and converted to the Catholic Church in Advent 2007,” she writes. “Oliver is currently awaiting ordination as a Catholic priest through the Pastoral Provision. In the meantime I am putting my St. John’s education to work by homeschooling our son and rediscovering some of the classic children’s literature I read when I was young. We love exploring Arizona and welcome any visitors!”

1996

This summer, Paula Gillis (SF) marked 10 years at The Press of Atlantic City, and, she writes; “I still can’t believe I get to read for a living. In August, my boyfriend, Krishna Mathias, marked our 10th anniversary by proposing; we plan to wed in September 2010. We’re shopping for horse- and artist-friendly properties in South Jersey. He’s an illustrator (we met when I was hired at the paper, where he’s an editorial artist) and I teach riding part time. We’re excited to find a place with room to play in the dirt!”

Ryan McBride (SFGI) is excited to have started a service-learning project called “Aristotle in New Orleans,” which has his Tulane University students studying ancient rhetoric while starting debate teams in local public middle schools. “Besides attending St. John’s, this is the most Johnnie-esque thing I’ve ever attempted.” Here is a link to the project wiki: http://aristoteleinneworleans.wiki spaces.com/

Brian McGuire (A) made the switch from speechwriting to newspaper reporting. “I have spent most of that time working for the Republican Minority Leader of the U.S. Senate,” he says. “It’s a rewarding line of work, and I’m more than happy to talk with anyone (of any political persuasion) who is interested in D.C. politics in general, or speechwriting in particular.”

Kelly Nash and Matthew Schertz (both SF) are now living in Missoula, Montana. After working at Colgate and Penn State, Matthew finally got his dream job as a philosopher of education at the University of Montana. “We have a beautiful toddler named William who is keeping us both on our toes and another wee one on the way. Western Montana is simply beautiful. We can see elk from our back porch and a mama bear periodically comes by to eat berries and apples from our fruit trees. If you are into wild things drop us a line and/or come visit!”

May Strickland (SF) just moved out to the Navajo Reservation in Chinle, Ariz. “Finally done with medical training and working as a full-time pediatrician for the Indian Health Services. Loving it out here and glad to be back near Santa Fe, the desert and the Southwest. If anyone is interested in visiting (we have a beautiful canyon, Canyon de Chelly) or writing to wed in September 2010. We’re shopping for horse- and artist-friendly properties in South Jersey. He’s an illustrator (we met when I was hired at the paper, where he’s an editorial artist) and I teach riding part time. We’re excited to find a place with room to play in the dirt!”

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1995

Thea Agnew Bemben (SF) is currently commuting between Pittsburgh where her husband, Will, is a third-year medical student, and Anchorage, where she is still running a community planning and development firm. Their 3-year-old son, Noah, is doing great and is excited about baseball and long-boarding.

Ronale A. Moss (SFGI) is enjoying reading, hiking, biking and visiting family members now that she is in retirement from teaching high school English in Los Angeles.

Love on the Appalachian Trail

Joan Henrikson (A05) is currently living in Brewer, Maine, and working as a ridge-runner for the Maine Appalachian Trail Club. More importantly, she is eloping with her fiancée, Dan Silsby, on October 22, so by the time this notice gets to press, they will be wed. She has been making up for all the studying at St. John’s by spending the last four years outside. She has spent time with the Student Conservation Association in Hawaii, and traveled to Australia, New Zealand, and Southeast Asia. In the spring of 2007, she began a hike of the Appalachian Trail, where she met Dan. After the hike, she and Dan moved to Utah, where she spent 15 months as a field guide at a wilderness therapy camp call Red Cliff Ascent. Now she is back in Maine, and waiting until next spring, when she and Dan will be making a trek of the Pacific Crest Trail. Anyone is free to contact her at joan.hendrikson@gmail.com. She would love to help anyone interested in long-distance hiking, or outdoor jobs. ♦

1997

Benjamin Bloom (A) is happy to announce the birth of Emily Rose Bloom on July 8, 2009. Mother and daughter are both doing wonderfully.

This July, Linda May (SF), married her partner of five years, Nate Calkins, in a small gathering of family and friends on a farm just outside Portland, Ore. In August, they officially became homeowners and moved into their new home. Nate works as an art installer in Portland and has a small business making banjos.

1998

“Booting my own and other Johnnie actors’ horns in the hopes that more Johnnies in the DC region will come out to see some excellent theater,” writes Sara Barker (A). “As a founding member of Factory 449, a theater collective, over the summer I led an ensemble in Psychosis 4.48, by the late British playwright Sarah Kane, at the Capital Fringe Festival in Washington, D.C. The production won Best Drama and Best Overall in the festival and was highly praised by theatre critics in the press. We remounted the production this October for an additional 16 performance. Also, as a company member with the Washington Shakespeare Company (WSC), from November 12 through December 1, I will be playing the title role in Lulu by Frank Wedekind. Also with WSC, I will be in Molière’s The Miser from January 8 through February 28. Visit www.sarabarker.com/acting for more information! Sara’s not the only Johnnie doing theater in the Capital. Kimberly Schraf (A95), was nominated for a 2009 Helen Hayes Award, Outstanding Lead Actress in a Resident Play, Jill Niemhiser (SFGI97) recently

continued on page 41
A “Big-Picture” Thinker in the Library World

by Rosemary Harty

Sure, those MacArthur “genius” grants are impressive. Nobel Prizes, too. But what could be more gratifying to Johnnies than to have one of their own honored by the American Library Association? Lisa Ginsberg Rosenblum (A80) was recently named one of the ALA’s 51 “movers and shakers.” ALA’s Library Journal noted her accomplishments modernizing the Hayward Public Library and jointly managing the city’s Library and Neighborhood Services departments. Rosenblum directed the construction of a new main library, renovated interior design and services at the city’s library facilities, launched an Early Learning with Families program, and assembled a teen advisory group. Now the library director in Sunnyvale, Calif., Rosenblum describes her career path.

What does it mean to be a “mover and shaker” to the American Library Association?

Movers and Shakers represent innovators in the library world. I earned the award for my work as a “Big-Picture” thinker. I wasn’t just a library director who was focused on library service; instead, I tried to connect the dots in my city so the library would become more relevant and important to the community.

Did you come to St. John’s knowing you would like to be a librarian?

Not at all. It was a bad economy when I got out of school, and I happened to get a job with a government contractor on the Beltway who provided library books to Army libraries. I was terribly underpaid—earning minimum wage and frankly annoyed that this was the best I could do with a degree from St John’s. This, however, got me my next job in Houston in the library at Rice University, cataloguing. I didn’t like that either. Finally I started working in a public library and really enjoyed it. I liked being with the public and enjoyed the variety of the work, especially answering difficult questions. I went on and got my master’s in library science from San Jose State in 1994, and the rest, as they say, is history.

I would describe myself as a fairly mediocre student at St John’s. Certainly not an intellectual. In fact, my favorite memory of SJC is being on the Maenads, my first experience with team sports. I earned a blazer my sophomore year! Growing up in the 1960s, girls were excluded from such things. I think I learned as much from that as I did from Kant, which admittedly I learned very little from. So I want to make a plug for those of us who were not SJC stars. We still can do well!

Because many Johnnies think that being a librarian is even better than being a rock star, tell us something about your job that’s not so glamorous.

I have dealt with some rather unglamorous behavior from our patrons, some that I cannot share. Suffice it to say it concerns bodily fluids. The library is a place that everyone can go and everyone is not always on his or her best behavior.

And what’s the very best part of your job?

I love doing and talking about library redesign. I think we have a long way to go on this, and I am proud that the libraries where I have been director all look much better because I insist they look more like retail stores. I also like seeing teens—our most at-risk group at our libraries—engaged and off the streets. And of course I like seeing little children toddling home with stacks of library picture books.
Alumni Notes

1999

Anna L. Boozer (A) has just begun a new position teaching Roman Mediterranean Archaeology at University of Reading just outside of London. She would love to be in touch with any Johnnies in the area and can be reached at AnnaBoozer@gmail.com.

Michael Olsen (A) writes: “I taught history in grades 6-12 in Chicago for seven years. I’m now a graduate student and a graduate teaching fellow in the Department of History at the University of Oregon. My research is focused on the history of the American West during the 19th century. Any Johnnies who will be passing through central Oregon are invited to contact me. I’m also interested in hearing from anyone who is studying or teaching history, or is thinking about doing so.”

Claire Sullivan Peterson (SFGI) is celebrating three personal achievements this year: her (class of 1995) 50th high school reunion, 25th undergraduate (Hood, class of 1984) college reunion, and 10th (St. John’s) GI reunion! Her eldest son, Douglas, is a Lt. Commander in the Navy and is a F/A-18A Hornet pilot on the carrier Nimitz. He is also the dad of her (to date) only grandchild, a 2 1/2-year-old Maeve. Her twin daughters are Lisa, also a Lt. Commander in the Navy, who recently completed her pediatric residency and is stationed in Sicily, Italy, and Amy, who is completing doctoral studies at the School of Public Health, Johns Hopkins University. They are her real achievements.

Heather (Richardson) Wilde (A) and her husband are busy running (way) offshore technical support for a software firm in Mountain View, Calif., from their yacht in the Sea of Cortez, Mexico. At the time they sent in their alumni note they were likely somewhere south of Latitude 22, working furiously.

2000

Christine Curran (A) moved to Chicago last year and is currently working as director of Mission and Volunteers at Franciscan Outreach Association, a homeless-services organization in the city. This December, she will receive a master’s in religion from Yale Divinity School, and she has been taking classes part time at Catholic Theological Union. “It would be great to meet up with other Johnnies in the Chicago area!” she writes. Contact her at: christine-jcurran@gmail.com

Karina Hean (A) has moved to Missoula, Montana, for the 2009/10 academic year to work as a visiting professor of art at the University of Montana and is preparing for an exhibition at the Center for Contemporary Art in Santa Fe, among group and solo exhibitions. Next summer it’s back to Santa Fe. Visitors welcome. (karinhean@gmail.com)

Flame Schoeder (SF) and her husband had their second baby (a boy this time!) in August 2007. “Now that the family is complete,” she writes, “I am dividing my time between supporting them and growing my three-year-old personal coaching business in Omaha, Nebraska. I spend a lot of time debunking the myths that coaches are therapists, which they are not, and that they are pompous know-it-alls, which some are and some are not, quite frankly. Using an ontological model, it’s amazing to watch people grow and fulfill their potential right before my eyes. I’m sure my kids get some side-benefits, too.”

2001

Nathan Craddock (AGI) is teaching ESOL at Stonewall Jackson High School in Manassas, VA., his third year.

Marshall Hevron (A) graduated from Tulane Law School last May and was admitted to the Louisiana Bar in October. He’s now working at a large regional law firm in New Orleans.

In August, Talley Kovacs (A) started a one-year fellowship as a law and policy analyst at the Center for Health and Homeland Security in Baltimore. Earlier in the summer, Lou (A02) began his first year as a family medicine resident at the University of Maryland Medical Center. “We’ve moved into new digs in South Baltimore near a beautiful park and can be found most evenings on our roof deck watching ships and tugs come and go on the Patapsco River,” writes Talley. “We’re also expecting a little Kovacs at the end of January 2010, Tout va bien.”

Andrew Ranson (AGI) was finally able to travel to Italy last summer and was thrilled to see so many Johnnies: “I visited a former classmate, Dusty Ritter (AGI 00), and unexpectedly ran into Eva Brann in Rome, and Laura Thayer (A02) in Amalfi. I am continually elated by how such a small school can have members of the polity everywhere.”

After discovering a passion for African djembe drumming six months ago, Giovanna Vecchitto (SF) will be moving to Trinidad indefinitely to continue...
An Ethical Approach to Design

Nadia Nour (SF00) Balances Couture with Sustainability

By Nathaniel Roe (SF08)

Nadia Nour’s showroom in Manhattan’s Garment District was crowded with her fellow designers and prospective buyers; Nour herself was working feverishly to prepare her spring 2010 collection for a runway show during Fashion Week last September. Dresses, skirts, and blouses bound for boutiques, specialty stores, and the upscale chain Anthroologie were arranged on two racks.

Flipping through the dresses, Nour described her creative vision. In her holiday collection, she experiments with the idea of transparency: sheer overlays sewn above opaque textures, and transparent patterns combined with each other to form new patterns. While these techniques are Nour’s trademarks, she is better known for ethical methods of production. Since launching her collection in 2007, Nour has been committed to economic and environmental sustainability. She is on a mission to produce organic fashion with a couture-inspired, urban design sensibility.

Most associate organic clothes with dull earth tones and scratchy fabrics. Nour’s introduction of vibrantly dyed, delicately textured organic silks to the United States market was an industry breakthrough. By commissioning fair-trade organic silks and cottons hand-loomed in a village in India, and using organic dyes derived from sources such as pomegranate rind and turmeric, Nour supports businesses that provide the foundation for self-sufficient communities.

Workers who dye her fabrics use the runoff to fertilize an organic vegetable garden outside of the factory that provides food for the entire village. A far cry from conventional fabrics requiring pesticides and toxic dyes, Nour’s fabrics help to feed families.

While many designers outsource production to foreign countries, Nour’s collection is produced by a team of industry veterans in a factory a few blocks from Nour’s showroom. With a close eye on production, she is dedicated to responsibly managing every aspect of her collection.

Her apparel is also made to last—a basic, often overlooked model of sustainability. High-quality fabrics and construction are combined with a timeless design aesthetic to produce garments fit to be modern-day heirlooms.

“Fashion has become really disposable,” Nour says. “For me, the heirloom aspect [of design] is really about breaking that cycle and just giving somebody something that they’ll be able to pass down to their daughter ideally.”

With quality and endurance in mind, Nour’s garments are highly detailed for their price range. “I really want the wearer to feel the energy of the person who put it together. A lot of my garments are very labor intensive, so when people wear them, they can almost feel the spirit of the person who constructed them.”

Even as a child, Nour had a natural affinity for manipulating fabrics. “When I was a kid I used to customize my clothes and cut up curtains and blankets and sew them into things, so I’ve always been attracted to working with fabric. When I would finish one of my homemade creations I would think to myself, no one else in the world has this. This is something truly unique in this vast world. It sounds like a cliché, but I feel like fashion chose me.”

Despite a few doubts about the practicality of pursuing a career in fashion, Nour felt compelled to follow her heart. After graduating from St. John’s, she earned a BFA with a concentration in Fashion Design from Columbia College of the Arts in 2003, blasting through the four-year program in two years. Determined from the start to launch her own clothing line, Nour sought out experience in all aspects of the fashion business. She started out as technical design manager for jewelry line Lee Angel before going to work for Elizabeth Gillett, designing and managing the development of woven, knit, and crocheted apparel and accessories. As the production manager for couturier Robert Danes, Nour learned every detail involved in producing a $10,000 evening gown.

Today, Nour’s distinctive approach to fashion reflects the time she spent at St. John’s. “How, one might ask, is the quiet consideration of timeless questions related to the ever-changing fashion world?”

“Fashion combines a lot of the aspects of what we studied at St. John’s, which are basically the ideas of communication and identity,” Nour explains. “Verbal communication is very conscious,” she says. “We can monitor it. But with body language, gestures, and clothing—they really get at the unconscious. It’s a really personal form of communication, and that’s what I’m interested in.”

While her St. John’s education prepared her to think creatively, Nour also credits the college with developing those traits that were essential to succeed—on her terms—in a world of cutthroat competition. “The ability to consider ideas from multiple angles and to independently evaluate multiple factors gave my company a definite competitive advantage, and ultimately put me in a better position to succeed.”

Designing beautiful fashion is satisfying for Nadia Nour (SF00), but sustainability and ethics matter more.
2003

MEREDITH ENA BARTON BOHANNON (A) is working on a PhD at the University of Maryland, College Park, in the Marine Estuarine Environmental Sciences Program. She and her husband, DAVID BOHANNON (Agg), are expecting their first child in January.

ERIN M HANLON (SF) has been living in Sacramento again since December 2007 and working for the U.S. Army Corp of Engineers since March 2008. If anyone is passing through Sacramento and wants to visit let her know: E.I.M.Hanlon@gmail.com

JONATHAN (SF) and TATIANA LINDSAY (SF04, nee FISCHL) ZECHER celebrated the first birthday of their little girl, Zoe, born October 7, 2008. They are currently living in Durham, England, while Jonathan works on his PhD in theology at Durham University, and Tatiana works as the only female at an IT company in Newcastle, which may or may not be considered odd for a technophobe. They hope to be back in the U.S. by the beginning of 2011.

2004

NOAH J. AUGARTEN (A) is currently working on finishing his BA with Prescott College in Arizona. He will be moving to Germany to work in youth guidance at an international community called the Heydmühle.

After spending a rollercoaster three years in Hawaii, Mackenzie (a years) and MARYIRENE CORRIGAN (A), will be following Devin (USNA03) to the Naval Post-graduate School in Monterey, Calif. After spending 18 months along the beautiful central California coast while he works toward his master’s, they will head to Naval Station Patuxent River, Maryland, to complete the TPS program. In addition to wrangling a toddler and trying to plan a move from the most remote island in the world, she is currently working on a master’s in Elementary Education, a bachelor’s in psychology, and looking for another job to add to her random resume. She is also trying to figure out how to adjust to seasons, Daylight Savings Time, and a cold ocean. Ultimately, she hopes their slow move east will bring her in sight of the Annapolis campus, so that she can teach Mackenzie the finer points of croquet.

After graduating with a master’s from Harvard, MICHAEL LOOFT (AGI) has been working in Sierra Leone as VP of Operations for Village of Hope International, which focuses on education, health, and economic security in rural areas. When he is not in Sierra Leone, he lives in Toronto with his lovely wife, Adrienne. They are expecting their first child in December.

On August 1, BENJAMIN REIKE (SF04) and ANN KEATING (Ao7) were married in Santa Fe. The Reikes live in Chicago. Ben works as a consumer counselor for a nonprofit, and Annie is a graduate student in education. They are both writers.

THEODORE C. ROGERS (AGI) was inducted into the American Academy of Arts and Sciences in November. The American Academy of Arts and Sciences is an independent policy research center that conducts multidisciplinary studies of complex and emerging problems. The Academy’s elected members are leaders in the academic disciplines, the arts, business, and public affairs.

2005

Happy news from CHRISTIAN and MARIE ACEMAH (both SF). “Our son arrived on Oct. 30, 2009, at 2:28 a.m. He weighed 8 pounds on the nose and was 20.75 inches long. We have named him Tchabo Njagala Acemah.”

After two years of “post-bac” coursework, JAMES HARRISON (A) will be starting med school at Penn this fall. “To old friends and classmates,” he writes. “All are welcome if you’re passing through Philly.”

MIRANDA (FOSTER) MEREKLEIN (SFGl) will graduate this year from the University of Southern Mississippi with a PhD in English/Creative Writing—Poetry, with a research emphasis in music, and Spanish as a second language. She just finished her first book of poetry, “Demonian,” and is currently looking for a publisher (and a job after graduation). Her work has appeared or is forthcoming in Oxford American, Iron Horse Literary Review, South Carolina Review, and others. She does miss Santa Fe.

JACOB THOMAS (A) is, perhaps surprisingly, living happy and, relatively, healthy in Berkeley, Calif. This past July, he married his longtime partner, Phoebe, at the Alameda County Clerk’s Office in beautiful downtown Oakland. He wore a “Repeal Proposition 8” shirt under his Dario Di Napoli suit coat. He continues to work full time in the special education department of the Berkeley Unified School District, while waking up at 5:15 every morning to write. His poetry appears, with some regularity, in unknown small press magazines across the country. It’s an interesting enough life.

ABRAM TROSKY (SFGl) is in his final year as a Presidential Teaching Fellow in Boston University’s Department of Political Science. He hopes to defend a dissertation prospectus before his hire as senior teaching fellow/lecturer for Modern Political Theory this spring in the department comes into effect. Continuing the service in student government he began at St. John’s, Abram is acting vice president of the BU Graduate Student Organi-
zation. When not engrossed in teaching, writing, and extracurriculars, Abram keeps it academic by hanging with Johnnie alums JESSICA DIAMOND (A03), PIERCE HARMON (SFGI195), and PAUL DENBY (SF06).

2006

MEGAN CALLOW and ADAM MORSE (both SFGI) were married on the 4th of July, 2009, nearly five years after meeting in Ms. Knight’s preceptorial on Gustave Flaubert. Morse works as a technician on a wind farm, and Callow will soon be teaching writing at the local community college. They live in Hood River, Ore., a small town in the Columbia River Gorge.

DANIEL GRIMM (SF) writes: “Jennifer and I closed up Fishbar for the season, and are traveling to Thailand for seven weeks. Jennifer has been invited to compete on the Food Network show ‘Chopped,’ which should film in January. We’ll keep you posted at freshlocalfish.com.”

JIM KENTCH (SFGI, EC06) has recently opened his law office in Santa Fe specializing in immigration and consumer protection matters.

After teaching language arts in a Santa Fe private school, JUSTIN NADIR (EC) started a business called Luna Moruna Productions, producing world-class flamenco performances for the Juan Siddi Flamenco Theatre Company. The company presents traditional and contemporary flamenco music, song and dance nationally and internationally and with their summer seasons in Santa Fe. Find out more at: www.juansiddiflamenco.com

ALLISON OWENS, now Bastian (AGI), married Zach on November 7, 2008. Now she’s in medical school at the University of North Dakota and lives in Fargo. She wonders: Any other Johnnies in Fargo?

JOHNNIE PROGENY

SARA ROAHEN (SF94) sent in this picture of a passel of Johnnie kids: They are (from l. to r.) Louise Olivier (parents Sarah Todd Olivier and DAVID OLIVIER, A94); Emmett Caswell (parents CAMERON HALL CASWELL, A94, and MATT CASWELL, A96); June Olivier, Agnes Caswell, Tibo de Schutter (parents Sara Roahen and MATTHIEU DE SCHUTTER, SF94); and Rose Mae Sothern (parents NIKKI PAGE and BILLY SOTHERN, both A98). No ID on the dog, however. ♦

DENNY MAISON (SF) graduated from Willamette University College of Law in Salem, Ore., was admitted to the state bar, and is now practicing criminal defense in Salem with the law offices of Jeffrey M. Jones, P.C.

SARAH and DANIEL RERA (both A) celebrated the birth of their first baby, a girl, Elliot Martha Rera. They cannot wait to introduce her to the St. John’s community. Sarah is an associate attorney at Barth Sullivan Behr in Buffalo, and Dan is a data analyst for Kaleida Health and working toward his MBA.

If you live in Santa Fe, RUSSELL SIMON (SFGI) wants your vote. He’s running for Santa Fe City Council in District 7; the election is March 10, and has a website: www.russellforsantafe.com.

Continuing her international adventures, SUSAN SWIER (AGI) is at St. Andrew’s University and is excited to be comprising on her PhD. “I’m living on campus, less than a five minutes’ walk from the library. The dorm itself is quite small and run-down, especially considering how much it costs, but I guess it’s worth it for the location. The English department is also very close and that’s right beside the ruins of a castle. This semester, I have just one required class, once a week, and nothing but the dissertation after that. I’m thinking that I might stay here for just a year and get a good start on my dissertation, then move somewhere else to finish writing it. The last year I spent in Taiwan was good overall, and I might even go back and settle there.”

KELLY KEENAN TRUMBOUR (AGI) was recently named senior director of Running Start, a nonprofit dedicated to inspiring women in high school and college to pursue political careers.

MICHAEL ZITO (AGI) is teaching history and English at the Pennington School. Zito served in the Navy on active duty and then became an instructor in English at the US Naval Academy. He comes to Pennington from Christ School in Arden, N.C., where he taught English, directed plays, and was a house parent.

2007

BRENDAN E GREELEY (SFGI) has completed primary flight training in Corpus Christi, Texas, and is now in advanced jet training, flying the T-45 Goshawk, in Kingsville, Texas, for the Navy. He was scheduled for promotion last August to Lieutenant Junior Grade.

2008

JOHN NEWTON (A) is a JD candidate at the Maurer School of Law, Indiana University at Bloomington, class of 2012. “I’m engaged to my dear old friend from pre-St. John’s days. I’m having a blast with law school, and I’m looking forward to being a lawyer back in California when I’m done. Anybody have ideas for a law student’s summer work in the San Francisco Bay area?”

On October 3, 2009, SCHUYLER STURM (A09) and JULIA PATTERSON (A09) were married in Glover, Vt. A bunch of former and current Johnnies (and one tutor) were in attendance. ♦

What’s Up?
The College wants to hear from you. Call us, write us, e-mail us. Let your classmates know what you’re doing. The next issue will be published in April; deadline for the alumni notes section is Feb. 15.

Alumni will also be sent a call for classnotes via e-mail in March. To see the last mystery picture identified, visit the online community at www.sjohnscollege.edu, click on Alumni.

The College Magazine
St. John’s College, P.O. Box 2800 Annapolis, MD 21404; rosemary.harty@sjca.edu
Francis Mason  
Class of 1943  

Francis Mason, a cultural diplomat, author, dance critic, and ardent supporter of the arts, died on September 24, 2009, at the age of 88. He was well known and admired as a cultural critic and supporter of dance, having close friendships with dance greats George Balanchine and Martha Graham.

After graduating, Mr. Mason joined the Navy. A lieutenant, he served on a supply shift and participated in the D-Day invasion. He returned to the college to serve as a tutor from 1946-47. In 1948, he joined the State Department’s international broadcasting division and the Voice of America as an information specialist. From 1954 through 1965 he was the press attaché in Belgrade, Yugoslavia, and attaché in the U.S. Embassies in Belgrade, Yugoslavia, and cultural affairs attaché in London. Mason was successful in persuading the American government to sponsor appearances by American dance companies, gaining international recognition of American choreographers, and ultimately helping to boost the popularity of American dance troupes both in Europe and the United States. He was the chief of East-West Exhibitions for the USIA (1963-66) and served as the Policy Officer, Office Assistant Director, Europe, Foreign Service Institute (1966-67).

In 1968, Mr. Mason became the assistant to the President of Steuben Glass, where in 1972 he took on responsibilities in marketing and special projects. He later became the assistant director of the Pierpont Morgan Library in New York City in 1975.

Mr. Mason’s lifelong devotion to dance began in 1948, when a friend brought him to the world premiere of Orpheus, with music by Igor Stravinsky and choreography by Balanchine. From 1969 to 1982, he was the Vice President and President of the Dance Research Foundation. In 1974, he became the president of the Martha Graham Center for Contemporary Dance. He served as the center’s chairman from 1975-76, and its chairman emeritus in 1979. He was chairman again from 2000 through 2007. For many years, he was the weekly radio commentator for the “World of Dance” on WQXR in New York. In 1980 he became the third editor of Ballet Review, and was credited for improving the quality of the publication. He wrote three books: Balanchine’s Complete Stories of the Great Ballets, 101 Stories of the Great Ballets, and Balanchine’s Festival of Ballet.

In his Vanity Fair blog, author James Alcott wrote of Mason: “A man of qualities (elegant taste, impeccable tact, unfailing cheer), Francis Mason might have stepped out of a Louis Auchincloss novel, only without the stiff rectitude and plaster dust.”

Mr. Mason was a longtime supporter of the college, active in the Alumni Association and a gracious host of receptions for prospective students. He also served on the college’s Board of Visitors and Governors for six years (1974-80). In 1984 the Alumni Association of St. John’s College honored him with the Award of Merit.

John Harrington Brown  
Class of 1937  

John Harrington Brown, class of 1937, died August 1, 2009, in Glendale, Arizona. He was 92. A Maryland native, he received his bachelor’s degree at St. John’s and his master’s from Redlands University in California. Mr. Brown was a B-26 pilot during World War II and flew 68 combat missions while in Europe. He received the Distinguished Flying Air Cross and the Air Medal with 11 clusters, among others. Upon retiring from the Air Force, Mr. Brown spent the next 20 years teaching in Riverside, California.

Amanda Lake (SFG195)  

Amanda Ridgely Lake died on August 19, 2009, at her home in Fairhaven, Mass, at the age of 44. A graduate of Hamilton College, Ms. Lake was a devoted and accomplished sailor. She began her career on the water at an early age, skippering tourists and residents between Edgartown and Chappaquiddick on Martha’s Vineyard. She later joined the crew of the Regina Maris, a wooden barkentine, studying Humpback whales in the Caribbean and North Atlantic. She became one of only a handful of women to earn a 100-ton Near Coast Master’s License, allowing her to pilot large vessels in and out of commercial ports. At the time of her death, she taught classes on advanced ship-handling and maritime safety at the Massachusetts Maritime Academy.

Ms. Lake worked for the Audubon Society as their Internship Program Coordinator, and for PBS, helping them to design an award-winning educational website. Her unfailing and sometimes mischievous sense of humor and her constant volunteer work inspired her friends and family.

Also Noted

Lawrence Sandek, Class of 1954, Sept. 4, 2009
Paul Whittenburg, Class of 1956, Aug. 20, 2009
Rodney Witt (SF85), Sept. 13, 2009
CALENDAR

January 15-17, 2010
Piraeus, Santa Fe

In January, tutors Susan Stickney and J. Walter Sterling, Jr. (A93) will lead seminars on Aeschylus’s Oresteia. The weekend begins with a welcome reception on campus Friday night at 6 p.m. Seminar continues Saturday at 10 a.m., followed by a catered lunch on campus. Afternoon seminar will begin at 3 p.m., followed by a cocktail hour. Sunday seminar begins at 10 a.m., and a closing luncheon on campus completes the weekend. Continental breakfast before morning seminars will be available.

Cost: $250. A $50 nonrefundable deposit is required to reserve participation. Alumni can register by calling the alumni office in Santa Fe at 505-984-6121 or e-mailing Alumni Activities Director Nancie Wingo: anwingo@sjcsf.edu.

January 19: 6:45 to 8:30 p.m.
Washington, D.C., chapter seminar: John Locke’s “Letter Concerning Toleration”

March 22: 7 p.m. to 9 p.m.
New York City chapter seminar on The Fall, by Albert Camus, led by Santa Fe tutor Grant Franks (SF77).

June 3-6, 2010
Piraeus in Annapolis
Choose from two selections offered this summer in Annapolis. Tutors Debbie Renaut and David Townsend will lead seminars on William Faulkner’s Go Down, Moses. Eva Brann (HA89) and David Carl will lead seminars that bring together two intriguing novels: Jane Austen’s Mansfield Park and Charlotte Brontë’s Jane Eyre. For more information, contact the Alumni office in Annapolis at 410-295-6926 or visit the college website: www.stjohnscollege.edu.

September 24-26, 2010
Homecoming, Annapolis

The Alumni Association extends sincere thanks to Jason Walsh (A85) for his contributions in leading the association, first as vice president, and as president from 2006-2009.

The college’s presidents, Michael P. Peters in Santa Fe and Christopher B. Nelson (SF70) in Annapolis, thanked Walsh for performing a “remarkable job” for the college and the association.

“With a clear sense of purpose, the respect of your peers, and your natural gift for consensus-building, you led the Alumni Association through some turbulent times,” the presidents wrote in a letter of thanks. “As the leader of our most important constituency, you challenged us to better serve our alumni while encouraging the members of the association to renew their commitment to St. John’s College.

We are indebted to your service and anticipate that the next era of collaboration between the college and the Alumni Association will bear witness to the vision, inspiration, and cooperative spirit you provided. It is a worthy legacy.”

Leading the association involves attending Homecomings, board meetings, and working closely with chapter leadership, notes Jo Ann Mattson (HA87), director of Alumni Relations. “Serving as the president of the Alumni Association entails a tremendous sacrifice of time and genuine dedication to the college,” Mattson says.

“We’re very grateful for Jason’s energy, his enthusiasm, and his willingness to serve St. John’s.”
Alumni Volunteer Profile

Name: Dave Heimann (A87)

Profession: Information Technology/Management

Volunteer Service: Longtime volunteer for the Alumni Association; served on Alumni Task Force setting a new direction for alumni involvement.

Last books read: I’ve finished two recently: A Good Man is Hard to Find by Flannery O’Connor, and The Girl with the Dragon Tattoo by Stieg Larsson.

Family details: Married to Jeannie (daughter of Dolores Strissel, alumni office) with three sons: Jake, 8; Noah, 6; and Matthew, 4

ST. JOHN’S COLLEGE ALUMNI ASSOCIATION

All alumni have automatic membership in the St. John’s College Alumni Association. The Alumni Association is an independent organization, with a Board of Directors elected by and from the alumni body. The board meets four times a year, twice on each campus, to plan programs and coordinate the affairs of the association.

President – Steve Thomas (SF74)
Vice President – Patty Sollars (SF60)
Secretary – Liz Travis (SF83)
Treasurer – Richard Cowles (SFGI95)

Mailing address – Alumni Association, St. John’s College, P.O. Box 2800, Annapolis, MD 21404, or 1160 Camino Cruz Blanca, Santa Fe, NM 87505-4399.

Beantown Chapter Born from a “Bribe”

David Schiller (class of 1962) and Leland Giovanelli (A78) were walking from one of the dorms during a summer alumni seminar program in 1981 when former president Richard Weigle button-holed them. Famous for his persuasive powers, Weigle informed them that they were to start an alumni chapter in Boston, and, by the way, he had two tickets to the Santa Fe Opera. It wasn’t a bribe, though. “At least that’s what he said,” says Schiller.

Schiller and Giovanelli thoroughly enjoyed Stravinsky’s The Rake’s Progress. On their return to Boston, they carried out Weigle’s wishes. Schiller made up a three-year list of monthly readings, and Giovanelli supplied a meeting place. The first seminar of the fledgling Boston chapter was on Hegel’s Phenomenology, concerning the master/slave relationship. Says Schiller, “I figured that if people would attend seminars for that, they would attend seminars for anything I proposed!” When Schiller ran out of ideas for readings, other chapter members came through with suggestions. One of these was Layla and Majnun, a classical Arabian tale of star-crossed lovers. “It took nearly the entire seminar for us to finally realize that the story is actually a religious treatise about a believer’s love for God,” recalls Schiller.

Since then, the Boston chapter has been among the most active in the nation. Current members are carrying on their founders’ predilection for reading a wide variety of texts in their seminars. Recently, they read Proust’s A la recherche du temps perdu, in full. The seven-volume work consumed an entire year, and it was a small group of extremely dedicated readers who finished. Last October, members took on something shorter: Vladimir Nabokov’s Lolita.

Members come to seminars not only from metro Boston, but also from Vermont, Rhode Island, and Maine. This makes logistics somewhat challenging for current president Dianne Cowan (A92), because, in addition to the length of the commute, finding parking in the Boston area is always a daunting prospect.

Cowan has been attending seminars in Boston for the last 13 years and has seen many faces come and go. Aside from a core group of about a half-dozen people who attend every meeting, many alumni attending graduate school in Boston cycle through regularly. Members are welcome to bring friends, partners, or spouses to the meetings. The constant influx of fresh opinions strengthens the conversations. “Occasionally though, someone new shows up once and then we never see them again,” says Cowan. “I always think that’s sad.”

Cowan tries to organize a few meetings outside of seminars every year. During the summer, when the library where they meet closes on Sundays, the group gets together for a dinner cruise on the Concord and Sudbury rivers. There are also potlucks at members’ homes and an occasional game of Team Trivia at a local bar. Cowan most enjoys spending time with other alumni. “I like talking to other Johnnies,” she says.

“...And I like giving other Johnnies the opportunity to talk to each other.”

—Keileigh Rhodes (A13)
You can always witness creativity at work when you venture back to Santa Fe or Annapolis for Homecoming each fall. In Santa Fe, Johnnies from the class of 1969 relived what it was like to be a Johnnie—on the new campus of an old college—during the summer of Woodstock and Apollo 11.

They enjoyed Homecoming with an Italian twist, venturing onto the soccer fields to play bocce, a game that dates back to 5000 BC.

In Annapolis, the class of 1959 spent all day together Saturday, reveling in a seminar on art, then talking with each other about the lasting influences of the college on their lives, and finally toasting the college and their class at the annual banquet. There was an art show in Santa Fe, and a big celebration in Annapolis marking the 100th anniversary of beloved Temple Iglehart. The gym was decorated as it was 100 years ago when Johnnies of another era first engaged in competition there.

There were awards and honors, and lectures and seminars. Perhaps there were even rekindled romances, but it’s certain many a friendship was renewed. For photo galleries of both events, visit the college website: www.stjohnscollege.edu and click on “Alumni.”
The Class of 1959 enjoyed sharing memories at Homecoming.
Ciao, Johnnies!

Johnnies on the Santa Fe campus for Homecoming October 9-11 enjoyed a near-perfect fall weekend, reconnecting with old friends and making new ones while dipping into Italian culture with opera, cannelloni, and bocce ball.

The weekend began with a reception for classes marking a reunion year, paying particular homage to the class of 1969 with music, décor, and cuisine from the 1960s. Photographs displayed on easels took alumni on a nostalgic journey back through the decades, providing a visual tour of how both the campus and its students have changed over the years. Tutor Sam Kutler (class of 1954) delivered the Homecoming lecture on poetry and mathematics.

Saturday began with the State of the College address from President Michael Peters and Dean Victoria Mora. Mora conveyed the news that the college has received a 10-year re-accreditation from the Higher Learning Commission of the North Central Association of Colleges and Schools. Peters addressed the continuing effects of the economic downturn on St. John’s and spelled out how the college is addressing these concerns.

The slate of new officers for the Alumni Association Board was presented and voted into effect: President: Steve Thomas (SF74); vice president: Patty Sollars (A80); treasurer: Dick Cowles (SFG195); and secretary: Liz Travis (SF83). Ymelda Martinez-Allison (A74) presented the slate of officers, who begin their three-year terms in January.

Seminars followed that meeting, many with an Italian text or theme, and afterwards an Italian lawn party took place on the soccer field. Alumni and their families feasted on panini, cannelloni, opera tunes, and bocce ball. It was a beautiful afternoon of play and reminiscing.

This year, the All Alumni Art Show was expanded to include work by students as well as by alumni. Friends from the Santa Fe community joined alumni, students, faculty, and staff for the opening of the art show and were entertained with music performed by tutor Bill Donohue and student Ari Winneck.

The Great Hall was the setting for the Homecoming banquet, where toasts from the classes of 1969-2004 were made. Alumni recalled fond memories of shared experiences and continued gratitude for all the significant ways their St. John’s education continues to affect their lives. Steve Thomas presented Mike Peters with a check for $25,000 completing the gift pledge made from the Alumni Association.

Following the banquet, alumni and students alike provided an impressive display of dancing skills to the world-beat music of Wagogo. The weekend concluded with the traditional brunch at Hunt House. ♦

Above, Santa Fe President Michael Peters welcomes an alumnus to brunch at Hunt House; At right, Santa Fe tutor Cary Stickney lets the bocce ball fly.
Two campuses, two homecomings. the settings are different, but the spirit is the same. Clockwise, from top left: In Santa Fe, Allen Schwartzberg (l.) and Dan Cleavinger (both SF69), enjoying the president’s brunch; Tiemar Teclemariam (A11) leads a seminar on a children’s book for johnnies-to-be in Annapolis; Ruth McCoy Miles, daughter of Jack Miles (A89) becomes a flower girl; In Santa Fe, alumni take in the Homecoming Art Show; in Annapolis, a confectionary replica of Iglehart Hall.
Before the Student Activities Center opened in Santa Fe, the Great Hall in Peterson Student Center served, among other things, as a dance studio for Johnnies. This photograph from the college archives in the Greenfield Library was probably among those taken for college promotional material produced in the 1970s. Today, the Santa Fe campus has a popular dance program, based in the Student Activities Center, where Johnnies can learn ballroom dancing, swing, and the tango—plenty of fancy moves to show off at waltz parties. ♦
A Day at the Carnival

Photos and text by Brendan Bullock (A01)

Brendan Bullock has spent the past eight years pursuing photography in Santa Fe, Washington, D.C., and Portland, Maine. Self-taught, he’s refined his skills by assisting photographers, working in fine art galleries, and studying the work of historic and contemporary photographers. He spent four months in 2009 working as a teaching assistant at the Maine Media Workshops. In working with documentary classes, he captured these images of a traveling carnival in Maine.

The images are dark; there is a recurring ominous undertone. I didn’t set out to make photographs depicting the subject in this way, but consistently, my images contained this feeling. Photography remains a magical medium because it uses a cold, unfeeling machine to capture a scene, and yet time and time again, the emotional perspective of the photographer comes through. This is due to many factors: where one chooses to go make photographs in the first place, what one finds interesting within that location, where the camera is placed, how the camera is operated technically, and ultimately, which moment is chosen to make a photograph. Personal psychology, emotion, and past experience seep in subtly to all of these decisions, and result in a subjective image that often reveals as much about the photographer as his or her subject.

Carnivals and fairs are meant to be diversions that are strictly happy places, but in actuality, there is a lot of heaviness and depression emanating from the scene. There is poverty and strife evident in the lives of those attending and those traveling and working the fairs. It was incredibly interesting to view all of this without the rose-colored glasses of youth, when everything is shiny and exciting. Through the camera, I saw outdated rides with rusty edges, junkie and alcoholic ride attendants, and meaningless plastic prizes that would find their way into attics, basements, and dumpsters. Most of all, I saw many parents spending hard-earned cash that they seemed scarcely able to afford in order for their children to have this experience. Essentially, all of the subtexts that you might imagine woven into a small-town carnival in a recession.

See more images at www.brendanbullock.com.