New York City
February 26, 1997

An Evening for 70's Decade Alumnae/i
with 70's Decade Trustees
Jamshed Bharucha '78
Joan Strashinsky Kjelleren '71
Bob Machinist '75
Bill Plapinger '74
Monica Vachher '77
Richard Van Demark '77

San Francisco
April 22, 1997

An Evening with President Frances D. Fergusson
and Debra Elmegreen
Maria Mitchell Professor of Astronomy
speaking on Cosmic Fireworks:
Star Formation in Galaxies
The Academy of Science Planetarium
San Francisco
A program for alumnae/i, parents, friends and admitted students

Los Angeles
April 24, 1997

2 Museums, 2 Directors, 2 Perspectives:
An Evening at the Los Angeles County
Museum of Art
Dr. Andrea Rich
President, Los Angeles County Museum of Art
James Mundy '74
Anne Hendricks Bass Director
The Frances Lehman Loeb Art Center
Followed by a Reception and
Private Exhibition Viewing
A program for alumnae/i, parents, friends and admitted students

Philadelphia
June 1, 1997

A Conversation with Five Trustees
Andrea Baldeck '72
Jamshed Bharucha '78
Joan Strashinsky Kjelleren '71
Sally Lyman Rheinfrank '63
Richard Van Demark '77
At Hawkhurst, the home of Andrea Baldeck and William Hollis; a program for alumnae/i, parents,

A Vassar Horticulturist’s Tour of Hudson Valley Gardens
June 13, 14, & 15, 1997

Jeff Horst
Director of Horticulture, Vassar College and guests
Participants will reside at Alumnae House. Please contact us if you wish information.

Maria Mitchell: A Celebrated Life
Nantucket, Martha's Vineyard, Cape Cod Region, Rhode Island
August 16 & 17, 1997

A Commemoration of the 150th Anniversary of the discovery of the Maria Mitchell Comet
Debra Elmegreen
Maria Mitchell Professor of Astronomy
The Maria Mitchell Observatory, Nantucket
Please contact us if you would like more information but do not have a primary address in these regions.

Trusteeship Conference
The College is planning to host a conference for alumnae/i currently serving on boards of colleges and universities.
Please identify yourselves to our office in writing.
Include your name, the institution/s on whose board/s you serve and the committees on which you serve.

For more information on any of these programs contact:
John Mihaly '74
Vassar College Box 587
124 Raymond Avenue
Poughkeepsie, NY 12601
Telephone: 1-800-443-8196; or 914-437-5294
Facsimile: 914-437-7008; E-mail: jomihaly@vassar.edu
“Filling out your income tax forms using Roman numerals will give the hardworking folks at the IRS a much-needed touch of comic relief.”

—’74

What do you do to lighten and brighten other folks’ days? Let your classmates know.

Class Notes, of course.
Deadlines for submission of Class Notes columns to the VQ

are three months in advance of publication.

Individual postcards to class correspondents must be received in the VQ office three weeks in advance of the deadlines listed below to be included in a given issue.

Cards and notes may also be sent directly to the correspondents, whose addresses appear above their respective columns.

The long lead times are to permit the writing, editing, checking of all names, typesetting, proofreading, and layout of the longest section in the magazine.

Columns for the spring (February) issue are due November 20; columns for the summer (May) issue are due February 20; columns for the fall (August) issue are due May 20; columns for the winter (November) issue are due August 20.
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edited by Joyce Bickerstaff

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“The diagnosis of a life-threatening illness brings about an erasure of self which renders the soul empty and in need of reinvention.” In this case, through poetry.

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by Benjamin Lotto, assistant professor of mathematics

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LETTERS

The Quarterly welcomes letters to the editor, preferably typed, double-spaced, and no longer than 350 words.

Publication will be as space permits. We reserve the right to edit letters for style and length.

Letters reflect the opinions of the writers and not those of the magazine, AAVC, or Vassar College.

To be eligible for publication, letters must be signed and include a current address.

Send letters to:
VQ, Alumnae House
61 Raymond Ave.
Poughkeepsie, NY 12601
or, e-mail: geweir@vassar.edu

Grace Murray Hopper and Devils, Too

Take the question mark away from the letter about Grace Murray Hopper ["Grace Murray Hopper's Brush with Failure?" Fall 1996]. My room was next to hers in Davison freshman year, and I'm sure I would have known about such a catastrophe [as having four D's at midyear]. In 1924, we had to take mostly required courses, and may have received a D in some unenlisted daily assignment or paper. However, the story she told Barbara Reimers may be true—a bit of hyperbole to end a lengthy, boring faculty meeting wouldn't be beyond her.

I shall ever be grateful to Grace for her taking time to tutor me in physics when I failed the midterm. With her help, I suddenly began to understand the approach to science. My midyear mark was a C and, on my own, I inched up to an A at the end of the year—"a great teacher," as Barbara said.

I'd also like to add my bit to the Vassar Devil stories. In the 1920s, we went to the Flag Shop about a block away on Raymond Avenue. It was a small, cluttered store selling all sorts of things I never needed. One clambered down rather dark and steep stairs to the basement and gorged on the best, the biggest, the richest concoction imaginable—the Vassar Devil. Maybe they also had the Angel, but I never ate one. I seem to remember the price was 25 cents.

Another 25-cent favorite was the Saturday and Sunday morning "all-you-can-eat" pancake and syrup breakfast in a woman's home nearby. I can remember we even had to make a reservation at prom time to fill up our hungry guests cheaply.

Janet E. Fox '28
Medford, New Jersey

The Joy of Remembrance

In the fall edition of the VQ we issued a plea for stories related to the cookbook Joy of Cooking, whose mother-daughter authors include Marion Rombauer Becker '25. The occasion was the impending publication of a biography of the book and its authors, Stand in Front of the Stove. We received several notes: the letter below and others referenced in a brief story on page 28.

My Joy of Cooking, 1953 edition, was given to me at a shower before my wedding in 1954. It is dog-eared and slightly brownish. The binding is loose. I did cover it with white contact paper, which is now gray, and it has sat in my kitchen all these years.

It has several bookmarks for favorite recipes, but mostly it has been used as a file for a family history of parties in the forty-two years of my marriage raising six children. On mini, yellow, lined paper I list the guests and menus for every party I host and note whether it was too much food, too little, liked or not liked, and whether it was fun or not!

I realized I did not start to do this until the 1970s, when we moved east to be near our families. As I look back at my notes, I can see my mother's 75th birthday party (Vassar '26), when my father-in-law was also alive. There are notes about an engagement party for my daughter (Lee '79 and Roman Kichorowsky '80), wedding rehearsal parties for some of my sons, retirement parties for friends, christening parties for some grandchildren, Thanksgiving and Christmas dinners, and holiday cocktail parties with guest lists.

Poignant memories return when I see my mother, father-in-law, and my brother's names as they are now all gone. I see the first holiday my divorced son came with only his dog, and, later, with a new fiancée. Especially sad, the first Christmas without a beloved 4-year-old grandson, who had died, and I noted we all held hands and said grace as his mother and father and siblings and we each remembered a happy moment with that dear boy.

There was another Christmas spent with a friend whose grown daughter had just died—and so on. Happy, sad, these notes have chronicled our family history and are all held in Joy of Cooking.

Mary Lee McPhillips Hartzell '53
Scarsdale, New York

Table that "Chair"

You seldom goof, but you didn't "go back to the source" this time! I am not, as you credited following my letter in the fall issue of the Quarterly, a "former chair of the AAVC Alumnae House Committee." That honor goes to Beatrice Meyer Wilson '36 (1980-1984) and Marjorie Bain Chadsey '47 (1984-1992). During those years, I was the "decorating person" on that committee, and I looked to Bea and Midge as my "bosses" (bosses: "someone who makes decisions or exercises authority"—American Heritage Dictionary). Incidentally, in the decorating profession, a "chair" is . . . well, a CHAIR.

Jean Crego '32
New Canaan, Connecticut

More Cornaro Details

I am writing to correct some details concerning Ruth Crawford Mitchell '12, who...
Class of 2000

The 618 members of the class of 2000 hail not only from New York State, Massachusetts, and New Jersey, the top three "feeder states," but also from as far away as Japan, Kenya, Kuwait, and Nigeria. The class is 39 percent men and 61 percent women. For more information about the newest Vassar class, read on.

Completed applications: 4,037
Number admitted: 1,954
Number enrolled: 618

Men: 237
Women: 381

Diversity
Students of color comprise 23 percent of the class of 2000.
The listed categories show:
Asian: 68
Black: 38
Latino: 33
Native American: 2
Total: 141

SAT scores
Average SAT verbal score: 667
Men: 660
Women: 672
Average SAT math score: 639
Men: 656
Women: 628
Composite SAT: 1,306
Men: 1,316
Women: 1,300

Regional representation
Mid-Atlantic: 42 percent
New England: 22 percent
West: 14 percent
Midwest: 9 percent
South: 6 percent
Southwest: 3 percent
International: 4 percent

Top ten feeder states
1. New York
2. Massachusetts
3. New Jersey
4. California
5. Connecticut
6. Pennsylvania
7. Maryland
8. Washington
9. Ohio/Maine
10. New Hampshire

Some leadership stats
24 valedictorians
8 salutatorians
52 National Merit finalists
95 National Merit commended scholars
6 National Honor Society presidents
70 editors in chief of high school publications
80 varsity sports captains

Enrollment overall
The Office of the Registrar reports that 2,488 students were matriculated at the college this fall semester.

Computer Conversion:
Please Check Your Labels

College records, including your name and address, have been converted to a new computer system. Please let us know if the mailing information on this issue of the Quarterly, or other mailings you receive from Vassar, is not correct. Contact the central records office (914/473-5404) or drop the offending information into an envelope with corrections clearly marked, and mail it to Central Records, Maildrop 159, Vassar College, 124 Raymond Ave., Poughkeepsie, NY 12601.

Raymond Is 100

Students of Raymond House found a reason to party in the pages of an old yearbook. The 1897 Vassarion shows that the college officially broke ground for Raymond House on October 6, 1896. Completed the following year, Raymond is the second oldest dormitory on the residential quadrangle. (Strong was completed in 1893.) Students celebrated the 100th anniversary with an evening party in the house parlor that included cake and entertainment by the Vassar Devils.

Today, Raymond is home for 171 students, 89 women and 82 men. By class, the student census in Raymond shows 53 from the class of 2000; 58 from the class of '99; 45 from the class of '98, and 14 from the class of '97. Rebecca Hyde '92
"It's impossible to become a writer if you don't read. On the other hand, reading itself isn't going to lead you to writing—only to imitation. The thing that makes a person become a writer, I believe, is an empty space. Something that needs to be filled. If a person were a normal, healthy, functional, well-adjusted individual, they would have no need to become a writer. If you're slightly dysfunctional, have sweaty palms, and wake up in the middle of the night and worry—which may describe all of you in this room—you will have a very good chance of becoming a writer."

Paul Theroux
Braque, Rauschenberg, and Modigliani.) Organized in conjunction with the Neuberger Museum of Art, the exhibition will open there before traveling to the Frances Lehman Loeb Art Center.

**Man Ray's Man Ray**

*April 4 through June 8*

*Prints and Drawing Galleries*

Forty-five photographs and six objects documenting the career of the American-born avant-garde artist, Man Ray (1890-1976) will be on exhibit. The works presented in this exhibition are from the holdings of the Man Ray Trust in the United States. The exhibition has been organized by the Man Ray Trust through the efforts of Janet Lehr Inc., New York, and is sponsored by the Friends of the Frances Lehman Loeb Art Center.

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**Fall Sports Results**

Most fall teams were still in mid-season play as of this issue's deadline. The exceptions were the men's and women's tennis teams and crews.

Vassar women's tennis captured a third-place finish in the New York State Championships in October. The team's fall record also shows five wins and two losses in dual matches. The men's record for the fall was four wins and two losses in dual matches. Also, they placed third out of twelve teams at the Flower City Tournament in Rochester and placed sixth out of sixteen in the Eastern College Athletic Conference, Oct. 4-6, at Vassar.

Vassar crew competed in Head of the Ohio, Head of the Connecticut, and Head of the Fish. Coach Andrew Carter reported great improvement over the season; at the final regatta of the season, the Head of the Fish, Vassar medalled in five of the seven events it entered.

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**Main Gate Fall 1996**

roadway leading to and around Main Building was reconstructed and landscaped, on-campus travel became easier and much more pedestrian-friendly.

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**Olympic Chef**

Bruce Harms, Aramark executive chef and the man behind the meals at ACDC and the Retreat, went to the Olympics this past summer as part of the behind-the-scenes team that prepared five million meals in thirty-three days. Mr. Harms was one of five executive chefs supervising workers feeding Olympic athletes. It was, he reports, "the experience of my life. I'm looking forward to Sydney."
The urbanization of black folk—84 percent of whom are now urban dwellers, according to the 1990 census—has been examined and chronicled by social scientists for more than a hundred years (Woodson, *A Century of Negro Migration* 1918). Immediately after emancipation, freedmen began a steady exodus from southern rural communities to southern urban centers. Since the Civil War era, black migrants from the rural, agricultural South have sought economic and social justice in the urban centers of both the North and the South.

Yet the myth of the "promised land" characterizes this urban odyssey—the Great Migration—as almost exclusively a northward, "one-way permanent movement." In spite of the massive out-migration of blacks from the South over this century, the majority (53 percent) of blacks still remain in the South today and are returning in ever increasing numbers.
The course Black Metropolis would take Vassar students where few would otherwise rarely, if ever, go: the South, a region of critical importance to the study of African American culture and our nation's concept of race.

Contrary to traditional black out-migration patterns, more blacks are migrating into the South than are leaving. This most interesting demographic shift of the black population has been apparent since the 1970s, and it is predicted that this "southward trend will continue well into the next century." (Stack, Call to Home, African Americans Reclaim the Rural South, 1996)

Anthropologist Carol Stack writes, "By 1990 the south had gained more than half a million black Americans who were leaving the north—or more precisely, the south had regained from the cities of the north the half-million black citizens it had lost to northward migration during the 1960's." She further states that since the seventies, the southward migration of black Americans has swelled to about 50,000 a year. (Stack, 1996).

The primary focus of an annual, team-taught seminar on the Black Metropolis offered by Africana Studies traditionally has been on the most populous urban migratory centers of the non-south—New York, Chicago, Detroit, Philadelphia, Cleveland, and Los Angeles. Upon reexamining the intellectual context on which the course was based, we realized that we too might be unduly promoting the popular culture myth. We had practically ignored the migration streams from rural to urban centers within the South, overlooking a critical aspect of black community development and the evolution of a cultural hegemony in southern cities such as Atlanta, New Orleans, Birmingham, Charlotte, and Richmond.

With this current demographic data and the need to give balance to the "promised land" myth, we revised the course framework to reflect the complexities of a comprehensive urban black culture—South and North. We were seeking a better historical balance and cultural continuity while providing students an opportunity to explore a region of the United States that is frequently understudied and underexposed in the Vassar curriculum.

The low visibility of southerners in the Vassar community (according to the Office of Admission and the registrar, about 7 percent of the Vassar student body, and 6 percent of the class of 2000, is from the South) is but another observation that reinforces the need for our curricular attention to this important region of African American and American heritage. The South is of critical importance to the study of the evolution of African American culture and the evolution of a concept of race in our society.

The idea of a study trip to the South had been percolating in my mind since my own two-year visiting stint at Berea College in Kentucky five years ago. I dreamed of the right moment when faculty leaves, teaching schedules, research and publishing deadlines, and requests for commissioned works were no longer obstacles in bringing together the two other faculty colleagues with whom I wished to collaborate, Jeh Johnson and Laurence Mamiya.

All three of us have childhood, school, or work experiences rooted in the Black South. I am a native of Harlan County, Kentucky, where I spent my growing-up years in the coal-mining hamlets of Benham and Lynch, and was educated in segregated schools, primarily in a one-room school in Kitts.

My maternal and paternal grandfathers spent a combined eighty years handling the "black gold" as coal miners for U.S. Steel and International Harvester. Black Appalachians and their lives in coal-mining towns within the Appalachian region are little known and often misunderstood aspects of the Black South.

Jeh Johnson, architect, senior lecturer in art, and visiting lecturer in Africana Studies, is the son of the late Charles Spurgeon Johnson, first black president of Fisk University (1946-56) in Nashville, Tennessee. Mr. Johnson recalls his early childhood years on the Fisk University campus in the company of his father's distinguished sociologist peers, W. E. B. DuBois, E. Franklin Frazier, and Robert E. Park. He has vivid memories of accompanying his father on many of his research sojourns to the Mississippi Delta when he was a young boy. Mr. Johnson's family roots are in southwest Virginia.

Hailing from the southernmost state of Hawaii, Lawrence Mamiya, professor of Africana Studies and religion on the Mattie M. Paschall Davis and Norma H. Davis Chair, was trained as a communi-
ty organizer in Harlem and did civil rights work with the Southwest Georgia Project of the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee. From the violent days of gun battles and confrontations with the United Klans of Georgia, he has seen major changes in southern culture. Before coming to Vassar, he taught at Fisk University. Coauthor with C. Eric Lincoln of a major study of black churches, The Black Church in the African American Experience, and at work on the forthcoming Islam in the African American Experience, Mr. Mamiya has traveled extensively in the South.

This past spring, the trip finally happened. It was the focus and highlight of our refocused Black Metropolis seminar, which last semester we taught under the theme “The Black South: Old Traditions, New Visions.” Our travel was intended to make real the region that symbolizes the “crucible of black identity” from the period of enslavement through the protest and resistance movements of the modern civil rights era.

Our odyssey took us through the “black belt” (a term used by social scientists and geographers to refer to that part of the South dominated by cotton plantations and a high proportion of blacks in the population), the Appalachian Mountains, and the “mecca” of the urban black metropolis, Atlanta, Georgia. We walked the campus greens of historic black colleges and the narrow roads of rural coal mining communities. We drove through upper-middle-class black neighborhoods not born of white flight. We visited Portal 31, the site of an abandoned 1920s coal mine that in its forty-year heyday yielded over a million tons of coal per year. We listened to a black retired schoolteacher talk of the times when schools were “separate but not equal” and to a group of local citizens, black and white, recollect their past experiences of “integration.” And we learned that though schools are now “mixed,” churches and neighborhoods remain separate.

We stood in awe of the Birmingham Civil Rights Institute, shed tears at the Sixteenth Street Baptist Church, ate lunch on the grounds of Kelly Ingram Park, “a place of revolution and reconciliation”—all part of the new Birmingham Civil Rights District. We were inspired by the old and the young at the Tutwiler Community Center, and roused the defiant ghosts of the Highlander Folk School (now the Highlander Research and Education Center) with our newly learned freedom songs.

One news writer described our trip this way: “Their journey took them along the route of the civil rights trail throughout the southeastern portion of the United States . . . to focus on the economic and social changes that had occurred between the races during the past century.” (Chester Chafin, Tri City News, March 20, 1996).

We came away with a new respect for the complexities and contradictions of southern mythology in its entirety . . . the enduring South . . . the changing South . . . the revolutionary South . . . the reconciliatory South . . . the Faulkner South . . . the Sterling Brown South . . . the sharecropping South . . . the black entrepreneurial South . . . the blues South . . . the distinctive South . . . the American South . . .

Were it not for the students’ journal accounts, I might still think I am dreaming.

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Texts Required for “The Black South: Old Traditions New Visions”

Taylor Branch, Parting the Waters: America in the King Years

C. Eric Lincoln and Lawrence Mamiya, The Black Church in the African American Experience

Daniel M. Johnson and Rex R. Campbell, Black Migration in America: A Social Demographic History

Lillian Smith, Killers of the Dream

Howard Rabinowitz, Race Relations in the Urban South, 1865-1890

John Gaventa, et al, Communities in Economic Crisis: Appalachia and the South
1. A little more than 50 years from the date of our trip departure, American poet and scholar Professor Sterling A. Brown lectured to the Vassar community. His topic, "A Negro Looks at the South." Professor Brown, of Howard University, came to Vassar that same year on a a one-year appointment as a visiting professor in the Department of English. He was the first African American professor to teach at Vassar (VC Misc News, March 28, 1945).

2. In Students' Own Words

Joyce Bickerson, whose own origins are in Kentucky, knows that for many northerners the South is a foreign country. This was yet another reason to take a group of Vassar students on a study trip of the South—in particular, the Black South—that extended all the way to the Mississippi Delta. Here, Ms. Bickerson brings together the eight voices of these students, drawn from their required travel journals. As many voices mingle in a classroom to create a multifaceted but shared experience, so here they mingled to create a multifaceted, narrative of one group's shared cultural exploration. The eight students whose words comprise this account are Carl Brown '96, economics; Ashani Maxton '96, Africana Studies; Emma Mekinda '96, history, Rusha Hamid '97, Africana Studies; Leera Rosenberg '97, political science; Reahah Jamal '98, economics; Nichelle Roberts '98, psychology; Ebony Rucker '99, biology.

Preconceptions

Most of my preconceptions were formed from television programs such as the Dukes of Hazzard," the Beverly Hillbillies," and the Andy Griffith Show," which depicted southerners as slow, friendly folk with draws. They lived in small, self-sufficient towns next to nowhere. I had notions of the Klan and rednecks ready to Lynch the "fast coiled" boy dry sea," and semi-literate black folks speaking slang and living in crowded shacks. Now after row of cotton and tobacco stretching to the horizon, "Big houses" and run-down shacks. Dirt roads. Signs that read "WHITES ONLY." White, nightstick-bringing police officers with fire hoses and dogs, hooded Klansmen and flaming crosses. These are the images that came to mind when I thought of Souther.

I knew there were cities in the South, but I thought none could compare to New York or Philadelphia. My basic idea of the South was the little towns where everyone knew one another by first and last name; dainty southern ladies with their perfect manners and high-pitched southern drawl, southern men in their drug overalls riding around in pickup trucks with bumper stickers proudly displaying the Confederate flag; and black folk with an incomprehensible southern twang. When a Texas student friend expressed her annoyance at what she saw as prejudice and ignorance on the part of northerners toward the South, I could not disagree. Even though we had spent seven weeks in Olmsted Hall talking about the "Black left" and its demographics, landscape, economy, and culture, I could not picture what the South would be like. I had to go there.

Being There

Day 2. New Market, Tennessee.

An occasional farmhouse in the distance. No concrete. No traffic. No noise. Just a mile-long gravel path. Fog made it difficult to see where the clouds ended and the mountains began. We arrived at the Highlander Center just in time for a hearty lunch.

Founded in 1931 by the late Myla Horton, the Highlander Center is internationally known for its Citizenship Schools, its grassroots labor organizing work with the poor, its literacy programs for black southerners, and its community activism in the Appalachian region and the South. Its philosophy is based on people learning from each other. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., and other civil rights activists spent many days and nights in this "sacred" space building strategies for the movement.

Sitting in the "community room" that Rosa Parks sat in many decades ago, I imagined myself being a part of what those people fought for and believed in. The comfortable rocking chairs made for easy, nonthreatening dialogue. In the evening, we had lunch for an unexpected opportunity to accompany a staff member to a meeting of the Citizens for Job Equality and Fairness in a nearby community. These black parents were concerned that the 35 black students in the district school were experiencing a great deal of prejudice and racial harassment emanating from a Klan incident. Parents and concerned members of the surrounding black communities were demanding that the school system support sensitivity training, a guidance counselor of color, and recruitment of black teachers in its future goals.

Guy Carawan, freedom song writer, accomplished guitarist, and a permanent "fixture" of the center since the early fifties, began our final day at the Highlander. I knew very few freedom songs. "If You Miss Me from the Back of the Bus," "Oh Freedom," "Ain't Gonna Let Nobody Turn Me Around," and of course, "We Shall Overcome.

We joined in and sang the songs we knew and quickly learned the songs we did not know. I bought a songbook at the Highlander bookstore, Rise Up Singing, and was happy reading through its 1,200 songs for the entire nine days of the trip.

Days 3, 4, 5. Atlanta, Georgia.

A friend of mine from Atlanta assured us that it would be warm. He said Atlanta, the so-called "Black Mecca," was always warm. He lied. Temperatures barely reached the fifties.

Our first afternoon in Atlanta we caught our collective breath and headed out to Paschal's, the ultimate southern dining experience. Southern fried chicken, candied sweet potatoes, collard greens, fried corn, macaroni and cheese... and peach cobbler à la mode for dessert.

We were greeted by the recently honored host of Paschal's (this was her fiftieth year at the restaurant), who could not have offered a better picture of southern hospitality if she had tried. She told us of the distinguished history of Paschal's and of the "movers and shakers" who had eaten breakfast just feet from where we sat—Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., and other clergy, politicians, businessmen, national leaders, foreign dignitaries, entertainers. We felt privileged to meet eighty-six-year-old Robert Paschal, who happily signed autographs and took pictures with any of us who asked.

"Goin' Where the Southern Cross the Dog" is a song title that came to Mr. Bickerson's attention during his visit to the Delta Blues Museum in Clarksdale, Mississippi. She reports: "Local folkies tell us that W.C. Handy was in Townsend, Mississippi (the furthest point south traveled by a lively, for-bidding night in 1923), when he was awakened by a ragged black man, playing a picar and singing the tune. Handy later learned that the track of the Yazoo & Mississippi Valley Railroad, known by the locals as the "Yellow Dog," crossed the tracks of the Southern at right angles. The poor, ragged man was on his way to a town just a little farther south, across the railroad tracks, in the heart of the Delta, and he was singing about it."


Cross the Dog
2. Our visit to the Atlanta History Center, where Billie Davis Gaines, former Vassar trustee and AAVC president, administers a fellowship program in museum studies for students of color, missed by three days an exhibition, “The Herndons: Style and Substance of the Black Upper Class in Atlanta, 1880-1930,” curated by Carole Merritt ’62, director of the Herndon Home, another notable black landmark in Atlanta.

We started day two at the Television and Communications Center of the Atlanta-Clark University complex. We were invited to send greetings to the city of Atlanta via the air waves. To our surprise and delight, at that very moment, the Honorable Maynard Jackson just happened to be listening to his favorite morning radio show. The former mayor responded with a robust call-in welcome, reminding us of our shared Vassar connection with their beloved Billie Davis Gaines ’58. Minutes after this public welcome, Mrs. Gaines excitedly called the studio to make plans to join us that very afternoon.

Meanwhile, amongst hurried preparations for the summer Olympics, we briskly walked the grounds of Spelman, the Inter-Faith Theological Seminary, and Morehouse College.

Overwhelmed by all of these black historical institutions, I wished that I had attended a prestigious black university, at least for a semester. There are opportunities and events unique to these institutions that I won’t have while at Vassar. I now believe that every black college-bound student should take part in the black experience at one of these historically black schools.

Just steps away, we ventured to the Martin Luther King Jr. Center for Research and Non-Violent Social Change. An older black woman stood weeping quietly by my side as we read about Dr. King’s heroic life.

A driving tour of one of the most beautiful neighborhoods many of us had ever seen confirmed for us that Atlanta has a thriving black middle-class community with many profitable historic black businesses. As we passed mansion after mansion we were buoyed by the evidence of wealth—one-of-a-kind architecturally designed homes with intricate glass doors, fountains and streams, and exquisite gardens. Reverting to our fantasy world, like children, we found ourselves “claiming” houses. “That one is mine. In a few years . . . No, that one is mine.” Could this be our first time to experience a black middle-class neighborhood not born of “white flight”?

A brief two-hour lunch stop in the Civil Rights District, the site of Kelly Ingram Park, “a place of revolution and reconciliation.” This sculpture park across the street from the impressive Civil Rights Institute makes a powerful historical statement with its lifelike scenes of police dogs, fire hoses, and children. We meditated at “one of America’s freedom shrines,” Sixteenth Street Baptist Church, c. 1873, the First Colored Baptist Church of Birmingham, Alabama, and the place of the bombing that took the lives of four young girls during the turmoil of the sixties. Today, the church views itself as “a symbol of courageous spirit that helped make each American more truly free! . . . a pivotal reminder that racial unity is a struggle involving all citizens.”

By midafternoon we were on the road again, headed for the Mississippi Delta region, with a first stop in Oxford, Mississippi, the home of Ole Miss (the James Meredith crisis of 1963), the Center for the Study of Southern Culture, and William Faulkner. As it was their spring break, too, there were no students on campus. But a driving tour of the grounds revealed an abundance of tradition and the presence of a distinct culture strongly felt.

The next day, after a classic southern breakfast of biscuits n’ gravy, grits n’ sausage, we were fortified for the drive to Clarksdale, Mississippi, home of the world-famous Delta Blues.

A most lifelike wax figure of Muddy Waters, the legendary blues artist, greeted us at the doorway of the Delta Blues Museum. The museum was like an almanac packed with exciting tidbits of information about an area rich in blues culture and its resonant rhythms, celebrating the origins of the worldwide blues diaspora in this “black belt” town.
And on to Tutwiler, Mississippi.

From Clarksdale on Highway 49, a one-hour drive south to Tutwiler; a town of about 1,300 people. There are no colleges, no fast food restaurants, no businesses. Before 1992, just people working and "getting by" in a town that posted street signs less than two years ago. This small, dusty, one-road town is now the home of a highly successful, nationally known community center—Tutwiler Community Education Center—the product of determined and dedicated members of the Tutwiler community and the Catholic Order of Sisters of the Holy Name.

On hand the day of our visit was a group of high school students meeting to prepare the next day's program for the younger children. We met Linda, a sixteen-year-old dropout, who obtained her GED by taking preparatory courses at the center. She now has her sights set on college. Could we possibly one day see her at Vassar?

How thrilling to observe firsthand the benefits that a black community has brought to itself through its dedication, perseverance, and ingenuity. A place for quilting, voting, educating, playing, learning, and healing. How I wish that when I was growing up such a center had existed in my neighborhood.

Day 7. On to Nashville, Tennessee.

We began the ascent north with a brief stopover in Nashville, childhood home of our expert navigator, Professor Jeh Johnson. It was the classic work of Mr. Johnson's father, the distinguished sociologist Charles S. Johnson, Growing Up In the Black Belt (1941), that served as motivation for our visit to Coahoma County, Mississippi. Here lay the foundation for Johnson's pioneering ethnographies on the socialization of black youth in the rural South. This day, however, was not to wax academic. We were joyful of the opportunity to experience the Fisk campus and the famous Jubilee Hall with an "insider." We chatted with several students, among them a candidate for the Miss Fisk University title.

Fisk's art gallery held us for longer than we had planned. A few hours later, we were on the road again. A window-view of the black neighborhoods that had been so transfigured by urban interstate highway renewal was disconcerting.

Day 8, 9. Benham, Kentucky, and Home

Benham, a classic coal-mining company town of approximately 1,600 (and its sister-city Lynch) has just been designated a national historic preservation site. The former company store is now home to the impressive, newly established (1994) Kentucky Coal Mining Museum.

At the museum we were warmly greeted by a retired schoolteacher, a former coal miner, two community activists, the "petticoat mafia" (women members, black and white, of the Benham city council), and a writer. They enthusiastically shared, firsthand, their experiences of the era of segregation and the aftermath of school desegregation (again, "oral history in-the-making"). To this day, however, there is still a black side of town and a white side of town! They all get along and seem to like it this way.

For an area whose primary livelihood for more than half a century was coal mining, there is but one small coal-mining company left. Today, the main employer is Southeastern Community College. Bruce Ayers, president of the college, hosted a morning visit at its Appalachian Center; its mission is to "promote the preservation of the region's history and cultural traditions."

We lunched outdoors in the mountains, at Kingdom Come State Park. At Lookout Point, we had a godly view of the adjacent mountains, but it was a true test of one's mettle as we drove out of the mountains—a frighteningly winding roller coaster road—homeward bound—Interstates 81, 66, 95—Back to Vassar.

Contrary to campus lore, we neither had to cross the Atlantic nor the Color Line—simply the railroad tracks or the Appalachian mountains—to become steeped in cultural difference.

3. Some ten years after his visiting professorship at Vassar (1945-46), Sterling A. Brown lectured again at the college as part of a conference on the "Changing South." His topic, "The Negro in the Faulkner Novels." (March, 6, 1957. VC Miscellany News)

4. The Fisk Jubilee Singers made an appearance at Vassar College in 1872.
Poet M. Wyrebek (left) was diagnosed with bone cancer in 1977. That she is alive today she credits in part to her doctors and nurses at Massachusetts General Hospital, Children's Hospital, and the Dana Farber Cancer Institute. Her first book of poems, Be Properly Scared, was published this year by Four Way Books; its title is taken from the last letter written by Flannery O'Connor, which can be found in the collection of her letters, The Habit of Being, edited by Sally Fitzgerald. Ms. Wyrebek's work has twice been nominated for a Pushcart Prize, and her poems have been published in literary magazines and medical journals.

104°Fahrenheit

is forty degrees Celsius.
Sounds like a warm day in Alaska, the nurse chirps, appearing at my bedside with clean linen.
Shades blot light out of my room.
I drench my hospital gown three or four times a shift and my sheets are always wet, as though I were showering.
The air conditioner hollies me back to that limbo—not quite sleep—where my arm moves, its paralysis undone, the doctors discovering why I am burning up in a room my nurse thinks is freezing.
I let her change me, drawing my arms through the big-looped sleeves.
Are you sure you aren't cold? she asks.
I am trying to remember.

I do not write poems; they write me. Most of the time I feel as though I were a satellite dish through which is broadcast the havoc of my body. Or I feel as if Roethke felt when he admitted he wrote only about "the people and things that I know thoroughly."
"The diagnosis of a life-threatening illness brings about an erasure of self which renders the soul empty and in need of reinvention."

His observation—"Perhaps I have become a mere reporter, not a writer"—describes how I feel about the poems in my collection Be Properly Scared. The poems express what I know best—as I see it—about my self and my world.

To my mind, the process of writing a poem about illness is no different from writing a poem on any other subject—the level of engagement is the same, I think, although an added degree of attention is needed in an illness poem in the sense that anatomical and medical accuracy should be maintained in order to achieve credibility in such a poem. In being ill there is a vigilance, an acuity of feeling, a monitoring of the world and one's place in it, and a constant processing of the unspeakable that is not unlike what the poet brings to the table each time he or she sits with an unwritten poem.

The poems "104° Fahrenheit" and "Respiratory Distress" speak of my preoccupation with community, or more precisely, with the disassociation with community that illness causes. When I consider my medical history, what stays with me are my failures—in communicating with caregivers, family, and friends, mostly—and my sense of alienation, yet I am considered a medical success story, someone who has found her place not only in the world of medicine but also in the world at large.

Perhaps this explains my fascination with paradox, my tendency to fix on instances of parallel and opposing perspectives—those times when conflicting interpretations of the same experience exist. When I began writing "104° Fahrenheit" and "Respiratory Distress," I knew I was being governed by what I call "the persuasion of paradox," that sense that there is an underlying logic to that which on the surface appears illogical.

In "104° Fahrenheit," the ongoing high fevers, caused by a drug called amphotericin, and the paralysis of my left arm were real, but the arm was paralyzed during a thirteen-and-a-half-hour operation to remove my right leg, not during the amphotericin treatments. When I woke after that long operation, I kept asking my nurse where my left arm was, and she kept reminding me—in the kindly manner nurses use when they think their patients are out of it—that it was my leg that had been amputated, that it was my right leg that was missing, not my left arm. The discrepancy between my nurse's reality and my own seemed funny to me then, on a par with Abbott and Costello's "Who's on First?" routine—and it is that miscommunication that later became the core of "104° Fahrenheit."

When I was receiving the amphotericin treatments, I was sleep deprived—I could only doze for five or ten minutes at a time. This was a strange paradox: I disliked being awake because it allowed me to slip into that frightening abyss of my condition, and yet I fought sleep because I couldn't control its impact on me. My exhaustion had bankrupted my imagination, and as a result my mind stole stories from headline news and placed me in those larger-than-life events. The dreams were terrifying and yet laughable in their outrageousness and their degree of realism. The poem "104° Fahrenheit" probably took root in these circumstances. Though I didn't know it at the time, the amphotericin had provided a tone for the poem I would one day write. The dreamlike half-awake half-asleep quality of the poem gives the reader a sense of the beleaguered extremes I existed in—cold-hot, light-dark, paralysis-mobility, certainty-uncertainty.

During this treatment phase of my illness I had unrelenting fevers and torrential night sweats. Massive infections do cause chills and hot flashes; the body is either begging for blankets or dying for a cool breeze. My sheets and hospital gown did have to be changed three or four times a night, sometimes more than that. It was exhausting—not only for myself, but also my nurses; they'd expound about how wet everything was. Their concern was as much awe as it was worry: how could an eighty-four-pound body produce so much perspiration? There was a potential for melodrama in what I was experiencing that made the situation seem comical, even farcical, to me.

In "Respiratory Distress," a gale-force storm provided an apt objective correlate for my breathing difficulties, which at the time were particularly intense.
Respiratory Distress

The clapboards are whining, stiffening against the wind’s persuasion as it wrestles the pines, wraps around the chimney and whirls down the flue. The wind won’t give up declaring its intentions against the windows and doors of my house. Trying to ignore its voice is like being in a dream of water that floods my insides as if I have no dams, no flesh or bones, no solid nails or organs to keep out onrushing nightmares that wash into me as if were mesh.

I can’t catch my breath: this bitter breeze so cold in my small throat it freezes my vocal cords.

I will die in this house and go back to that place before dreams, that land where water becomes whatever it meets, where drowning is just another way of breathing as fish do underwater. Their cheeks billow in and out as if shaping wind or carving it from the block of sea with their sharp-edged gills.

I free every fear into the air pouring over the landscape and feel myself fluid, dispossessed of body and mind, and no longer needing.

The speaker in “Respiratory Distress” is more in tune with her feelings than I was when I was experiencing that respiratory episode. I think this poem addresses the paradox of need: the sicker I got, the more I needed; the less I desired my needs. This was emotionally crippling: how does one stop paying attention to what the body and soul call out for?

Although I was not alone in the house at the time, I felt as though I were, as though the wind had chosen my house because it knew I was there and couldn’t catch my breath. Once again, there was melodrama, and the potential to use it in a poem was not lost on me.

Temperature and weather are often the organizing principles in my illness poems. The wind was powerful and loud that day—as impossible to ignore as my breathing difficulties—yet it was glorious in its assertion of its right to be there, blowing so hard on my house. As confusing as my feelings were at the time, at my center—like the proverbial eye of the hurricane—was a calm desire to not want to have to breathe anymore. Not a desire to die—but a desire simply to not need breathing. The poem arose from the paradox between an ordinary necessity and my unusual desire.

The diagnosis of a life-threatening illness brings about an erasure of self which renders the soul empty and in need of reinvention. In the absence of anything good happening directly to me, my imagination paid close attention to the lives of others, borrowing details, feeling vicariously the emotions I had numbed as I struggled to endure my difficult times. As a fledgling writer I take comfort in something Dean Inge said: “Originality is nothing but undetected plagiarism.” What he means, I think, is that nothing new happens in the world—everything that occurs has occurred previously, in one form or another. What causes suffering or happiness remains essentially the same, only the particulars change. I am willing to, and often do, share the story of my pain because it is of some interest to some people. Who knows when such knowledge may be needed? Fate is capricious.

Rilke believed that “art is only a way of living.” For millions of people, including myself, illness is only a way of living. Illness creates physical chaos, which in turn inevitably creates chaos in the mind and soul. I believe language is a way out of chaos, but it took me many years to learn this, and to see how a body’s suffering could teach a person a thing or two about writing. Not only to bear the unrelenting assaults on my body, but also to heal from them, requires work—and it is hard labor: twenty-four hours a day, fifty-two weeks a year—and the work of healing can’t be assigned to someone else. Poetry is like that too—it’s really a job with crazy hours—and the poet’s shift lasts a lifetime. I see now that the rigors of illness prepared me well for the task of writing: cancer and poetry are demanding bosses.

Roethke said “the final triumph is what the language does, not what the poet can do, or display.” So perhaps it’s obvious to think that language may heal. Perhaps poems are a way of accounting for my life. What I know is poetry is a medium of inclusion, not exclusion; that it is, most importantly, about possibility.
It All Adds Up to Elegance and Power

A computer puzzle as a paradigm for doing mathematics

by Benjamin Lotto
Assistant professor of mathematics
A few years ago, a friend showed me a computer puzzle called Quinto.

**Here's how it works.**

There's a 5-by-5 grid of squares, each of which is either light or dark. Clicking on a square lights it if it's dark or darkens it if it's light. At the same time, all its neighboring squares change as well. (See Figure 1.) When we start, all the squares are light. The goal of the puzzle is to make them all dark.

After clicking on a few squares at random, I realized that the puzzle was too hard to solve by guessing. So I got out paper and pencil and started attacking the puzzle using mathematics. I'd like not only to share the solution with you, but also to share the process by which I discovered the solution. That's because the process is essentially the same as the process any mathematician uses to solve any problem—even one as difficult as Fermat's Last Theorem. (See Figure 2.) On the way I'll make some points that summarize some of the general principles of mathematical problem-solving. In fact, most of these points are valid for any sort of problem solving, mathematical or not.

We've already taken the first step in the mathematical problem-solving process:

1. **Find an interesting problem.**

Interest in a problem provides motivation. Solving a brand-new problem is hard work, and without the motivation provided by keen interest, that work becomes a hundred times more difficult. When I find an interesting problem, it grabs hold of me and won't let go until I solve it. I think about it all the time, from the time when I wake up in the morning to the time I go to bed at night. In fact, there are times when I've been in the shower and realized I can't remember whether or not I've washed my hair because I've been thinking about a problem.

So, what can we do to solve Quinto? We've already tried random guessing, to no avail. That brings me to my next point:

2. **If you can't solve a problem, try solving an easier problem.**

One hopes that the solution to the easier problem will provide clues to the solution of the more difficult one. For Quinto, let's look at smaller versions of the puzzle and see if they're easier to solve. Using guesswork on the 2-by-2, 3-by-3, and 4-by-4 versions of Quinto, I found the solutions indicated in Figure 3. After staring at these for a while, I couldn't see any pattern that might help me with the 5-by-5 puzzle. How frustrating!
Don't be discouraged if a solution attempt doesn't work. Most attempts, even by professionals, fail.

Let's try another tack. Instead of looking at a smaller version of the puzzle, let's look at a small piece of the whole puzzle—a single square. Start with all squares light, as usual. Fix your attention on a single square. If I now tell you which squares I'm going to click, can you tell me what will happen to your one square? We reason out the answer as follows: That square changes exactly when it or its neighbors are clicked. It doesn't change at all when other squares are clicked. Therefore, we can count the number of times it changes just by counting how many times it and its neighbors are clicked. And since it changes from light to dark and back, all that matters is whether this number is even or odd.

We now know exactly what happens to our square—it is dark if the number of clicks on it and its neighbors is odd, and it is light if this number is even. This is a nice answer to the smaller problem and allows us to deduce two important facts. First, if we only know how many times each square is clicked on, and not the order in which they're clicked, we can still determine the configuration of light and dark squares at the end. That's because only the total number of clicks at the end matters, so the order in which the clicks occur is irrelevant. Second, since only the evenness or oddness of the total matters, we will end up at the same configuration of light and dark squares if we replace multiple clicks on the same square by 0 clicks (if the original number of clicks was even) or 1 click (if the original number was odd). (See Figure 4.) So, if we can reach a certain configuration, we can reach it by clicking on some of the squares once and the others not at all.

The idea that only odds and evens matter reminds me of some mathematics I know, which brings me to my next point:

If a problem reminds you of another problem or is even vaguely similar to something else you know, try to make a connection.

Figure 4
If we click on the squares the number of times indicated in A, we'll end up with the same configuration as clicking on the squares as indicated in B. To see this, focus on the upper left square. Clicking changes it and its neighbors and clicking again changes them back, so we really don't need to click at all. The resulting configuration (starting from all squares light as usual) is given in C. Things would be different if the order of the clicks mattered. Then our puzzle would be more like Rubik's Cube, which is a much harder puzzle than Quinto.

Figure 5: Modular arithmetic
If you were in elementary school in the sixties, you might remember something called clock arithmetic. The idea of adding on a clock is familiar. We would have $5 + 9 = 2$ since 2 o'clock is 9 hours after 5 o'clock. The mathematical term for this is addition in base 12 or addition modulo 12. For Quinto, we use addition and multiplication modulo 2.

The important point here is that adding an even number to an odd number always gives an odd number. We can also do multiplication:

$$0 + 1 = 1$$ because even + odd = odd

$$1 + 1 = 0$$ odd + odd = even

$$0 \times 1 = 0$$ because even \times odd = even

$$1 \times 1 = 1$$ odd \times odd = odd

We're going to be working a lot with our new numbers 0 and 1 and the new way of adding and
You've tried clicking buttons with random abandon. No luck. You experiment with an artistic approach, clicking in symmetrical patterns. A solution remains elusive. Why not try one of the oldest of the liberal arts? Why not try math?

multiplying them. To make sure that no one gets confused, it is important to have a way of simply and efficiently reminding each other that we're doing our arithmetic in the new system. One way to accomplish this is to give this system a mathematical name. The commonly used name for this system is $\mathbb{Z}_2$. This name might be used in the following manner: $1 + 1 = 0$ in $\mathbb{Z}_2$. Now it's an established mathematical fact that all the usual rules of arithmetic, including addition, subtraction, multiplication, and division, are still true in $\mathbb{Z}_2$. The addition and multiplication tables for $\mathbb{Z}_2$ are given in Figure 6.

Figure 6: Addition and multiplication tables for $\mathbb{Z}_2$

How can we connect this back to Quinto? Recall that a square is light or dark depending on whether the total number of clicks on it and its neighbors is even or odd. An even number of clicks is 0 in $\mathbb{Z}_2$, and an odd number of clicks is 1 in $\mathbb{Z}_2$. We can find the total number of clicks simply by adding the number of clicks in our square and in its neighbors. If we do this sum in $\mathbb{Z}_2$, then the result will tell us the state of the square—0 means light and 1 means dark. Let's do an example. Suppose we click once on the following squares:

Our problem is to decide which squares to click on to make all the squares dark. Since we don't know whether or not to click on a square, we need to use some unknown variables. We'll use the variable $a$ for the square in the upper left corner. It will be 0 if we need to not click on that square and 1 if we need to click on it. Similarly, $b$ will be 0 or 1 for the square immediately to the right of square $a$. Continuing in this fashion, we get 25 variables, one for each square, ending up with $y$ for the lower right corner. Since we want each square to be dark, we (We don't need to worry about the order in which the squares are clicked, because we've already figured out that order doesn't matter.) Now focus on the middle square. Looking at just it and its neighbors we get

where I've put in a 0 if the square isn't clicked on (0 clicks is an even number) and a 1 if it is (1 click is an odd number). The total number of clicks is $0 + 1 + 1 + 0 + 1 = 1$, where the addition is done in $\mathbb{Z}_2$. Consequently, the middle square will be dark.

We now have a nice mathematical description of what happens to a single square.

**After you understand the details, try to step back and get the big picture.**

We need to introduce some notation to be able to refer to the different squares. Label the squares as follows:

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The puzzle only hints at the power of mathematics to probe, unlock, describe, interpret, relate, create, and understand problems.

$$a + b + f = 1$$
$$a + b + c + g = 1$$
$$b + c + d + h = 1$$
$$c + d + e + i = 1$$
$$d + e + j = 1$$
$$a + f + g + k = 1$$
$$b + f + g + h + l = 1$$
$$c + g + h + i + m = 1$$
$$d + h + i + j + n = 1$$
$$e + i + j + o = 1$$
$$f + k + l + p = 1$$
$$g + k + l + m + q = 1$$
$$h + l + m + n + r = 1$$

$$i + m + n + o + s = 1$$
$$j + n + o + t = 1$$
$$k + p + q + u = 1$$
$$l + p + q + r + v = 1$$
$$m + q + r + s + w = 1$$
$$n + r + s + t + x = 1$$
$$o + s + t + y = 1$$
$$p + u + v = 1$$
$$q + u + v + w = 1$$
$$r + v + w + x = 1$$
$$s + w + x + y = 1$$
$$t + x + y = 1$$

Figure 7: The 25 equations for Quinto

$$a + b + f = 1$$
The neighbors of square $b$ are squares $a$, $c$, and $g$, so we want
$$a + b + c + g = 1$$
Continuing, we get an equation for each square—25 equations in all. The equation for the middle square is
$$h + l + m + n + r = 1$$
The total list of equations is given in Figure 7.

All the work we've done up to now tells us that if we can find values for these variables that make these equations true, those values will tell us how to solve Quinto—we just click on the squares corresponding to the variables that have the value 1. These equations can be dealt with using linear algebra, which tells us exactly what we need to do to solve these equations. (If you're not familiar with linear algebra, you're invited to enroll in Math 224 at Vassar.) The end is in sight—we have a problem that we know how to solve.  

$$\text{It is often possible to transform a problem that we can't solve into an equivalent one (or almost equivalent one) that we can solve.}$$

It is possible to solve the equations by hand, but that is a tedious and long process that invites mistakes. Fortunately, there are computer programs that solve these kind of equations for us.

$$\text{Computers can be useful tools.}$$

The computer's output was a little surprising. It turns out that there are four different solutions to Quinto. They are shown in Figure 8. Looking at the solutions, we can see one possible reason why this want the total number of clicks on it and its neighbors to be odd. This means that we want the sum of the number of clicks on it and its neighbors to be 1 in $Z_2$. For example, the neighbors of square $a$ are squares $b$ and $f$, so we want
$$a + b + f = 1$$
The neighbors of square $b$ are squares $a$, $c$, and $g$, so we want
$$a + b + c + g = 1$$
Continuing, we get an equation for each square—25 equations in all. The equation for the middle square is
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$$\text{Computers can be useful tools.}$$

The computer's output was a little surprising. It turns out that there are four different solutions to Quinto. They are shown in Figure 8. Looking at the solutions, we can see one possible reason why this
puzzle is difficult—its deceptive symmetry. When making a first attempt at the puzzle, it is tempting to click symmetrically, repeating any click on the left by the corresponding one on the right. Now that we know the solutions, we can see that maintaining such a pattern can never solve Quinto.

Are we done? Never!

Answers always lead to more questions.

Here are some questions about Quinto that our solution suggests.

Can we darken all the squares if we start in some other configuration, with only some squares light? Starting from a configuration other than "all light" changes the equations in Figure 7, replacing the 1's on the right side by 0's in those equations that correspond to squares that start dark. We can then solve these equations using linear algebra, just as before. Using some linear algebra theory, one can deduce that because Quinto has four solutions, only one-fourth of starting configurations will have solutions, and there will always be exactly four solutions for those configurations that have solutions. One can also devise an easy test that will tell when a configuration can be solved.

Can we solve 6-by-6 or larger versions of Quinto? The issue of larger puzzles is trickier because the number of equations grows as the size of the puzzle increases. However, after some consultation with other mathematicians, I was able to formulate a theorem, that is, a mathematical statement together with a proof that it is true, that says that puzzles of any size always have solutions. The proof of a theorem proceeds by logical deduction. The current state of computer technology is not advanced enough to formulate theorems and find proofs; this remains a human endeavor—in fact, this is what most mathematicians spend most of their time doing. The proof of the theorem needed here was shown to me by someone else. What happened is that I got stuck—I had an idea about what should be true, but I couldn't prove it. So I started asking other mathematicians if they had any ideas about what to do next, and one of them came through and gave me the proof I needed.

Benjamin Lotto, seen above with student Karen Robbins '98

Don't work in a vacuum. Talk to others and ask them for help when you're stuck. Two (or three or more) heads are better than one.

Can we find a solution that works for all sizes at the same time? This question and many other questions about Quinto are open; that is, the answers are not yet known.

Incidentally, Tiger Electronics has recently marketed a version of Quinto called Lights Out, which is available at toy stores for about $20. It's quite fun and even slightly addictive—I highly recommend it!

That's the end of my tour through the solution of Quinto and through the process of mathematical problem solving. I hope that I've at least begun to convince you that mathematics isn't just the mysterious, useless, and abstract ravings of a few lunatic nerds, but rather something practical, accessible, universal, and essential. In this particular case, a systematic, objective, mathematical approach to Quinto—which at first glance looks like a non-mathematical problem—gives us a complete solution. Such is the power, grace, and beauty of mathematics. VQ

Benjamin Lotto is teaching Calculus, Real Analysis, and Complex Analysis this semester. His research interests include Linear Algebra, Complex Analysis, and Functional Analysis.

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OMNIUM GATHERUM

Poetryslam, the Board Game

Words haven’t always been poetry for businessman Martin Smith ’80, creator of a new board game called poetryslam.

“When I was in grade school, communicating in typical ways was very difficult because of my inability to write and spell,” Mr. Smith recalls of his early struggles with severe dyslexia. “I have distinct memories of sitting in Mrs. Hill’s second grade class and drawing stick figures in an attempt to diagram my sentences.

“This formative experience was one of the primary reasons to develop poetryslam. I’ve come by my love of words from the hard-fought battle of simply trying to express myself. My mission through poetryslam is to help others enjoy creating with words.”

Introduced this year, poetryslam the magnetic word game™, is a Scrabble-like game that requires players to fill the board with sentence/poems. Players are supplied with nouns, verbs, adjectives, adverbs, etc. and set loose with their creativity. In addition to the basic game, additional packages of words are available in themed sets, such as Psychology and Arts and Artists. The game is the first product from poetryslam, Inc., a product design company dedicated to producing toys and games that challenge people to create.

Mr. Smith, the founder of the North Carolina-based company, left a career in sales and marketing at the Nutrasweet corporation to begin this new venture. He had previously been in sales and marketing at the M&Ms Mars and Procter & Gamble corporations.

Of the influence of Vassar he says: “Vassar instilled courage in me for exploring the unknown. I know that this is why I had the courage to start this company, create this game and put it in a store for people to buy even though I am not Milton Bradley.”

Poetryslam is available through a number of stores and catalogues, including The Museum Company, the Whitney Museum’s Store Next Door, and the Flax Art & Design Catalogue. Or visit the World Wide Web site at www.fringenet.com/poetry or contact him by fax at 919/967-2421.

Annalise McKeen-Marcus ’83

Ms. McKeen-Marcus shares both Vassar and family connections with Mr. Smith; he is married to her sister.

Soho Parenting Center

In a city known for high anxiety when it comes to raising children, New York’s Soho Parenting Center is a beacon of calm, offering parents the one thing they cannot get enough of: reassurance. “The biggest concern parents have is that they will damage their child,” says Lisa Spiegel ’82, co-director of the popular Soho Center. Her goal is to give new mothers and fathers enough confidence to relax and enjoy the first few years.

In 1988, Ms. Spiegel and co-director Jean Kunhardt began offering mother-infant classes out of Ms. Spiegel’s living room on Manhattan’s Upper West Side. Less than a year later, they teamed up with two pediatricians, and a new concept in primary care was born. “We found that many parents in our practice couldn’t rely on their own instincts,” explains one of the doctors, Marie Keith. “They really needed a support network that could help them with the skills of parenting.” Today, the Soho Pediatric Group and the Soho Parenting Center share 5,000 square feet of sunny space. “We pinch ourselves a lot to believe that it really happened,” Ms. Spiegel says with a laugh.

Pediatric fees at the Soho Center include periodic checkups and booster shots, of course, but there is nothing routine about the other services offered down the hall. Parents can elect mother-infant classes, one-on-one counseling with a staff psychologist, or small parenting classes for couples. Ms. Spiegel and Ms. Kunhardt meet frequently with the pediatricians to assess the well-being of each patient and family. The result is a fully integrated approach to the emotional and physical needs of young children.
Ms. Spiegel and Ms. Kunhardt, who met while working in the Child Life department of Bellevue Hospital, recently co-authored A Mother's Circle (Avon Books, 1996) with writer Sandra Basile. The paperback culls from nearly nine years of running support groups for new mothers, not to mention the authors' own experiences as parents.

Ms. Spiegel is sympathetic to the strain of balancing work and family, describing parents today as more "self-conscious" and isolated than previous generations. "The best advice for mothers and fathers is to spend time with other families," she says. With the Soho Parenting Center, Ms. Spiegel has made this possible, creating a warm and welcoming home away from home. —Cathy Rindner Tempelsman '79


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**People**

**HEADS NEW JERSEY BAR**

Cynthia Jacob '63 was elected president of the New Jersey State Bar Association and assumed the post in May. Ms. Jacob, a labor lawyer, is the second woman to head the New Jersey Bar. She is described as a vocal feminist who seeks to bring greater diversity, in both professional and personal experience and background, to the organization. Ms. Jacob is a 1966 graduate of Yale Law School.

**ELECTED TO PHILOSOPHICAL SOCIETY**

Distinguished sociologist Harriet Zuckerman '58 has been elected to membership in the American Philosophical Society. Ms. Zuckerman, professor of sociology at Columbia University and vice president at the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation, is the author and editor of several books, including Scientific Elite: Nobel Laureates in the United States, and, with Jonathan R. Cole and John T. Bruer, editor of The Outer Circle, Women in the Scientific Community.

**NAMED TO PRESIDENT'S BIOETHICS COMMISSION**

Patricia Backlar '52, of Portland, Oregon, has been appointed by President Clinton to the National Bioethics Advisory Commission. Ms. Backlar, who is known for her advocacy of such vulnerable populations as the mentally ill, will represent the public on the group. Ms. Backlar is a senior scholar at the Center for Ethics in Health Care, an adjunct senior instructor in the Department of Psychiatry at Oregon Health Sciences University, and a senior research associate in the Department of Philosophy at Portland State University. She is the author of The Family Face of Schizophrenia (Putnam Books, 1994).

**ON SEASPECIALITIES BOARD**

Patricia M. Hall '76, president and CEO of Hallmark Capital Corp., an investment banking firm, has been named to the board of directors of SeaSpecialities, Inc., a $60 million Miami-based manufacturer and distributor of specialty food products.

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**Teatime in the Village**

We all have fond memories of afternoon tea in the Rose Parlor, but perhaps no Vassar grad cherishes that ritual more than Judy Paul '78, who has managed to turn it into a successful sideline business. In 1992, Ms. Paul opened C3, an intimate restaurant on a landmark block in Manhattan's Greenwich Village that sits adjacent to the Washington Square Hotel (a property owned and managed by her parents). To generate more business in the downtime between lunch and dinner, Ms. Paul instituted informal afternoon teas modeled on Vassar's ritual.

Of course, the refreshments here are a far cry from mere cookies. The "American Style" menu, created by noted chef Ted Siegel, features Hot Fudge Brownie with Vanilla Ice Cream (a decadent treat not unlike a Vassar Devil), finger sandwiches filled with inspired combinations (turkey-cheddar-watercress, pesto-arugula-roasted peppers, gravlax-cucumber-capers), and a pastry selection including fruit tarts, biscotti, homemade muffins, and scones with fresh fruit butters. Then, of course, there are the teas—sixteen varieties to choose from. All of which has understandably attracted a core clientele of neighborhood characters: NYU faculty and graduate students, bridal-shower groups, the occasional celebrity—Paulina Porizkova, Matthew Modine, Olympia Dukakis, and Martha Plimpton among them. In spring and autumn, the hotel sponsors walking tours of its historic neighborhood conducted by noted tour guide Arthur Marks. These outings always end (surprise) with tea at C3.

As inspired as she was by Vassar's teatime tradition, Ms. Paul's class schedule
OMNIUM GATHERUM

Julia Szabo is a free-lance writer in New York City.

Vassar in Olympic "Rings"

This summer over 200,000 people had the chance to view a Vassar treasure. People from around the world, in Atlanta for the Olympics, visited the High Museum of Art's blockbuster exhibition "Rings: Five Passions in World Art." This exhibition used the metaphor of the five Olympic rings to focus on five emotions, or "passions," shared universally: love, awe, anguish, triumph, and joy. Hans Hofmann's painting Au Printemps (1955), from the Frances Lehman Loeb Art Center (collection of the late Katherine Sanford Deutsch '40), was one of 128 art treasures from 44 nations that comprised the exhibition.

J. Carter Brown, director emeritus of the National Gallery of Art in Washington and director of this exhibition, explains that this abstract expressionist painting was a key link in the "joy" section. Mr. Brown needed a work that could lead from celebrating the life-affirming joy of nature to the aesthetic joy of sheer visual delight. He had seen Au Printemps while visiting the Loeb Center with architect Cesar Pelli, and knew he wanted it for the "Rings" exhibition purely for its joyous colors and forms. Then he spied the title and realized how wonderfully it would make the link between the joy of nature and visual joy. Once the painting was installed, its colors and size played off masterpieces by Matisse, Monet, and Georgia O'Keeffe nearby.

—Kathleen Peckman '89

Kathleen Peckman is coordinator of School Services and Publications in the education department at the High Museum. She was a contributing writer to a multicultural curriculum handbook that accompanied the "Rings" exhibit and frequently staffed the exhibit.

From a Scrambled Place

Yolk
Short Stories
by Josip Novakovich '78
Graywolf Press, 1996

Josip Novakovich describes Yolk as "realistic observations of my living in Croatia." His short stories echo the title of this linked collection, inviting readers to see directly into the "heart of the matter." Writing with a compelling voice, he shares his experiences of a disappearing place; attracted to the "graphic and disgusting details," he brings into memorable focus the common human reactions to life's challenges.

Yugoslavia is the primary setting for these stories, and a sense of folk tale magic combines with the violent reality of life during a war. "When I began writing fiction I thought everything should be strange and bizarre and fanciful," Mr. Novakovich comments. "Now, I write more realistically."

After several return visits to Croatia, he found "the war going on was certainly stranger than any fiction I could create." And, he discovered, "What I set there makes better stories, sounds more authentic than what I set in the States."

He opens Yolk by introducing his "vision of the oral tradition, my notion of how I would learn to write stories" by the telling and retelling of embroidered legends. However, instead of repeated tales, his work is reinvented experience, richly layered with simple wisdom and biblical allusions. In this excerpt from "The Burning Clog," a series of stories within a story, the character Nenad describes another war and a soldier who gave him an aspirin:

At the beginning of the war, the Germans barged in there, seized my father and grandfather from the dinner table, and shot them to death against the barn. Several years later half a dozen Germans walked into our yard, and I
had no time to run and hide in the woods, so I hid in bed and shivered under a thick goose-down cover. A pair of boots stamped over the floorboards toward me, louder and louder. The cover was pulled off and a huge soldier loomed over me. An 'Agkhh!' broke out of my throat, my eyes bulged. The German lowered his hand, I thought to strangle me. Instead, he placed his cold palm on my forehead and held it there. Then he poured a glass of water from the bucket that was on the chair in the kitchen, put some white pills into the water, crushed them with a spoon, and pressed my lips with the edge of the glass against my teeth. I could hardly swallow. The liquid was shudderingly bitter—I thought it was poison, I would keel over and die. He took a paper sack out of his black leather bag—I guess he was a military doctor—and produced a honey cake. Where he'd got it I'll never know, but I am sure he hadn't baked it himself. He gave it to me, and I have never chewed anything sweeter before or since.

Mr. Novakovich delivers through his storytelling exactly what he teaches his students at the University of Cincinnati is the purpose of fiction: to gain an understanding of something that happens, "to deepen our concern and empathy for what does happen."

Denise Marie Clemons '78

Denise Marie Clemons has an M.A. in writing from Johns Hopkins University and is a freelance writer in Bethesda, Maryland.

Generating Politics

The Stevensons
A Biography of an American Family
by Jean H. Baker '55
W.W. Norton, 1996

Jean Harvey Baker, author of the newly published family biography The Stevensons, decided on the study of social history when, as a Vassar student, she heard Carl Degler, then professor of history at Vassar, talk about bundling, a courtship ritual in colonial New England. Ms. Baker, who is now a professor of history at Goucher College, is the author of six books, including the award-winning Mary Todd Lincoln: A Biography (1987). She returned to another Illinois subject when she learned that the Stevenson family papers had become available to scholars. The result is a fascinating story of four generations of Stevensons told in the context of the American political scene.

We see the traditional paterfamilias, Adlai I, an affable politician whose ability at storytelling and compromise won him the vice presidency (1893-97) while his wife, Letitia, became a national leader in women's organizations.

The next generation, Lewis Stevenson and his wife, were professional invalids; she smothered her two children with obsessive, controlling love. Their son, Adlai II, was successful as governor of Illinois and as a UN representative, but his presidential campaigns were disasters, as was his marriage, which ended in divorce. His son, former Senator Adlai Stevenson III, is happier in his personal circumstances but perhaps even more impatient with conventional partisan politics than was his father.

Ms. Baker has created a rich tapestry of biography, political history, and a description of the changing role of women in America, both in the context of family and as political helpmate. In this election year, when so much media attention has been paid to the role of the wives of the candidates, Ms. Baker's description of the life of Letitia Stevenson, wife of the vice president and mother of four, is of interest. Letitia found time to be elected twice as president of the newly formed Daughters of the American Revolution and to be an active board member of the National Association of Mothers, precursor of the Parents Teachers Association, traveling throughout the country giving speeches.

Ms. Baker writes: "In these years [1890s] Letitia and Adlai complemented each other—she a gracious and able administrator involved in the good works for which she had trained during her husband's absences."

Adlai recognized the benefits of their partnership while Letitia developed a theory about the importance of symmetrical marriages grounded in a wife's "thorough knowledge of her husband's 'business' and the husband's commensurate understanding of his wife's 'occupations.'"

In contrast, Ellen Borden Stevenson, wife of Adlai II, did not measure up to the family's standards. Ms. Baker writes: "Adlai expected a more solicitous wife and more traditional homemaker than Ellen." She tried: "When the head of the Democratic National Committee came for lunch in 1940, Ellen supervised a complicated meal of veal, gelatin salad, baking powder biscuits, and a French import, baba au rhum." However, their marriage was marked by sharp disagreements over everything from Ellen's tardiness and extravagance to Adlai's career and absences. Adlai was "unable to fathom his wife's sense of suffocation and loss of identity in what she considered a bad marriage to an unresponsive man..." The marriage finally ended, and Adlai II campaigned for the presidency with the disadvantage in 1952 of being a divorced man.
As a Stevenson volunteer in 1952, I was fascinated to learn more about my hero and the many reasons why his campaign failed. 

Paula Ivaska Robbins ‘57

Paula Robbins is a writer and editor in Charlotte, North Carolina.

The Trials Behind the Joy of Cooking

Stand Facing the Stove
The Story of the Women Who Gave America The Joy of Cooking
[Irma Rombauer and Marion Rombauer Becker ‘25]

by Anne Mendelson

Henry Holt and Co., 1996

You never know what you’ll find in The Joy of Cooking: “If the water has been exposed to radioactive fallout, do not use it” (page 520, 1975 edition). Attorney Susan N. Perkins ’61 recalls a family favorite page from the 1953 Joy that illustrates how to skin a squirrel. “This page kept a little boy occupied in the 1970s while Mom studied for the bar exam with one hand while cooking with the other.”

Another alumna writes of her delight with the preface to Pecan or Angel Slices (page 703 of the 1983 edition), which reads: “Many a copy of the Joy has been sold on the strength of this recipe. One fan says her family is sure that these are the cakes St. Peter gives little children at the Gates of Heaven, to get over their homesickness.”

Yona Zeldis McDonough ’79 comments: “It gives me comfort to think that the celestial afterlife is filled with angels who remember how much children—and the rest of us—love sweets.”

For devotees of The Joy of Cooking, there is now a biography of the book. Stand Facing the Stove traces the tumultuous publishing history of what has become a standard American home cooking reference as well as the lives of the two women who created and shaped it since its premiere in 1931 as a vanity publication.

A perhaps typical experience of the Joy as the ultimate kitchen reference is described in a note to the VQ by Elizabeth L. Wadsworth ’45:

In the summer of 1943, I got my Joy of Cooking—obviously, the 1943 edition. It was contributed, “with braised love,” by a favorite aunt. . . . I had known cooking basics, but Irma Rombauer enabled me to deal with victory garden produce, meal planning and shopping, guests for dinner—the lot.

My all-time favorite incident: From 1952-1956 I lived with my then husband in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil. One day, probably in 1954, a friend gave us a dozen small birds which he had shot. I learned they that they were snipe. I also learned that the donor and his wife would come to our apartment to eat them on a Sunday evening—when the cook and maid were out.

No problem, I thought. All I need is a sophisticated cookbook. So I started with the Gourmet Magazine book. (No snipe. No “small birds.” No likely cross references.) Well then, James Beard’s Fireside Cookbook. (Nothing.) What about the three French cookbooks I then owned? (No luck.) And so on. Till I suddenly woke up: Of course! Where do I always turn when the need is very great? IRMA!

And there it was in the index. “Snipe—broiled, roasted, smothered.” (I roasted.)

Ms. Mendelson’s account of Joy also describes changes in American food fashion over the decades and American women’s tempestuous relationship with food preparation—Is it art or is it drudgery? You may be surprised to learn where the Rombauers come down in the debate.

G.W.

One Way to a Dream Vacation

Home Exchange Vacationing
Your Guide to Free Accommodations
by Bill and Mary (Mansell) Barney ’45

Rutledge Hill Press, 1996

The voice crackling over the telephone was full of energy: “Right now, we’re in Suffolk [England] for two weeks; then we got to Cornwall for two weeks; then up to Wales for two weeks; then into Scotland [Inverness] for two weeks; and then we’ll be staying outside London for five days.”

For Mary Barbour and her husband, Bill, it was just another home exchange holiday.

Home exchange—vacationers of all ages exchanging their homes with other vacationers—is catching on. Annually, about 200,000 people worldwide do home exchanges. “A woman I worked with and her husband did a home exchange in the 70’s,” Mrs. Barbour recalls. “We read more about it, and when we retired, we thought we’d get our feet wet. This is a great way
to [travel] once those paychecks stop coming in."

The Barbours' first home exchange, in 1984, took them to a Portuguese villa overlooking the Mediterranean, while the owner of that home enjoyed the Sanibel Island, Florida, condominium the Barbours owned at that time. Nowadays, they do anywhere from six to ten weeks of home exchanges each year. A secretarial service relays important calls and mail from their home in Fort Myers, Florida.

The Barbours have written two books on home exchange. The most recent is filled with practical strategies and anecdotes from their travels and from surveys of 1,300 experienced home exchangers. Associated Press called it "one of the most comprehensive books on home swapping."

Planning is everything. "Don't get discouraged," Mrs. Barbour advises. "It takes a lot of phone calls, faxes, and pictures back and forth, preferably nine months to a year ahead of time. This is how you get to know the people."

One memorable exchange found the Barbours in Darbyshire, England, luxuriating "in a fifteenth-century manor house with 15 bedrooms, eight bathrooms, two formal sitting rooms, a ballroom, a billiard wing, . . . a heated indoor swimming pool, and horses to ride. We had a Mercedes to drive, too—you can do car exchanges as well."

Dream vacations aside, the Barbours have also formed lifelong friendships with fellow exchangers. "The fact that you can trust people like this is mind-boggling," says Mary Barbour. "And 99 percent of the time it works out."

_Toni Sciarra Poynter '81_

_Toni Sciarra Poynter is a writer and book editor living in New York City._

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**Noted**

**Books**

**NONFICTION**

**Perfect Enemies**

_The Religious Right, the Gay Movement, and the Politics of the 1990s_

_by Chris Bull '86 and John Gallagher_

_Crown Publishers, 1996_

**Hard Lessons**

_Public Schools and Private Lessons_

_by Carol Ascher '63, Norm Fruchter, Robert Berne_

_Twentieth Century Fund Press, 1996_

**Tax Guide**

_Tax Court_

_by Jane C. Bergner '64_  
(in Vol. 8 of West's Federal Forms)

**TRANSITIONS IN LAND AND HOUSING**

_The Religious Right, the Czech Republic and Poland_

_by Ann Louise Strong '51, Thomas A. Reiner, and Janusz Szczmerek_

_Stephen's Press, 1996_

**ALONG THE RIVER ROAD**

_Past and Present on Louisiana's Historic Byway_

_by Mary Ann Sternberg '65_

_Louisiana State University Press, 1996_

**AGAINST THE TIDE**

_Career Paths of Women Leaders in American and British Higher Education_

_edited by Karen Doyle Walton '65_

_Phi Delta Kappa International, 1996_

**THE SOUND OF A MIRACLE**

_A Child's Triumph over Autism_

_by Annabel Siehli '61_  
_paperback edition, 1996_

_The Georgiana Organization, Inc. (Westport, CT)_

**FICTION**

_Memories of My Ghost Brother_

_by Heinz Insu Fenkl '62_

_Dutton, 1996_

**LUCY ON THE WEST COAST**

_A Collection of Lesbian Short Fiction_

_by Mary Beth Caschetta '86_  
_Alyson Publications, 1996_  
_(The Rosen Group, New York City)_

**POETRY**

_Lives Plucked from a Discarded Address Book_

_by Terry Wagnor Berger '54_  
_self-published, 1996_

**FOR YOUNG READERS**

_A Sound of Leaves_

_by Lenore Blegvad '47_  
_illustrated by Erik Blegvad_  
_McElderry Books, 1996_  
_For ages 8-11._

**ONCE UPON A TIME AND GRANDMA**

_written and illustrated by Lenore Blegvad_  
_McElderry Books, 1993_

**PHOTOGRAPHS**

_The Good Night Blessing Book_

_by Nancy Willard_  
_Lecturer in English at Vassar College_  
_The Blue Sky Press, 1996_

**MUSIC**

_Classical_  
_Todd Crow, professor of music, piano_  
_Mozart and Liszt concertos in arrangements_  
_by Harold Farberman for piano and percussion_  
_Golden String, CD, 1996_
Nomination

The Nominating Committee of AAVC has met and proposes the following slate of candidates to be voted upon by ballot this spring:

(Single slate positions)
For AAVC Trustee (two)
Liz Wexler Quinlan '59
John B. Wolf '74

For Vice-President for Administration
Mary Kay Sullivan '72

For Secretary
Sudie Mixter Blanchard '70

(Double slate positions)
For Director-at-Large
Virian Halpert Hall '44
Ellen Zinsser Green '45

For Director-at-Large
Christopher H. Martin '90
C. Andrew Wilson '92

For Nominating Committee
Krista Johnsen Leuteritz '88
Margaret Venekel Johnson '84

For Nominating Committee
W. Morgan Smith '89
Heinz Insu Fenkle '82

For Nominating Committee
Hannah Koopmann '94
Erin Howarth Bardaley '92

Independent nominating
Nominations may also be made by petition, such petition to be signed by not fewer than fifty members, representing at least ten classes and five states, and filed with the executive director not more than thirty days after publication of the slate of the nominating committee. Such petition must be accompanied by the written permission of the candidate, and should be sent to the executive director, AAVC (Bylaws, Article XIV, Section 2).

From the Executive Director

You're It

My first year as executive director is also my sixteenth year as an AAVC staff person. For fifteen years I have worked closely with hundreds of alumnae/i leaders in the planning of large class reunions on campus and mini-reunions around the country.

I am, by this time, steeped in AAVC. So I can't help but be surprised whenever I hear, as I do, the questions "What is AAVC?" and "What does AAVC do?"

First, What is AAVC?

If you're reading this magazine, chances are you are. AAVC is the Alumnae and Alumni of Vassar College, a not-for-profit corporation chartered by the state of New York. Its membership comprises all graduates of the college as well as anyone who ever matriculated at the college once her or his class graduates. We currently number nearly 32,000 members. Policies are determined by a twenty-two-member board of directors, six of these members also serve on the Vassar College Board of Trustees. The AAVC president is one of those with dual board membership. AAVC has its national headquarters and staff at Alumnae House.

What does AAVC do?

In general terms, and as stated in our bylaws, our purpose is to advance the interests of Vassar College. AAVC works to this purpose by cultivating an enduring attachment between alumnae/i and the college that will serve as a solid and dependable foundation for Vassar.

Somewhat more specifically, AAVC nurtures mutual understanding between the college and its alumnae/i, builds a network of knowledgeable advocates and future leaders for Vassar, ensures that all alumnae/i are valued by Vassar, cultivates and celebrates among alumnae/i lifelong connections with Vassar, responds to the needs and interests of alumnae/i, and represents alumnae/i interests on campus.

Very specifically, AAVC—volunteers and staff—plans reunions, publishes the Vassar Quarterly, keeps Vassar visible to alumnae/i through class, club, and affinity group programs, and it raises the Vassar presence in communities around the country and world through the work of Vassar clubs—scholarship fundraising, faculty programs, admission support, social events, community volunteering, and career networking. The staff facilitates contacts between alumnae/i and other members of the college community; we do mailings for clubs, classes, and affinity groups; we provide up-to-date directories of club, class, and affinity group members; we handle the logistics of many events, maintain historical records, and provide our local leaders with the information and services they need to accomplish their work. We also manage the 45-bedroom inn, restaurant, and meeting place known as Alumnae House.

In the future, we hope to do all of this even better. We are auditing our procedures, redefining jobs, shifting personnel (some new appointments are announced in this section), and initiating new programs and services. We will, however, continue to take advantage of our constituency's natural groupings into class, regional, and affinity affiliations, and we will continue to give particular attention to initiating our young alumnae/i into the tradition of AAVC activism on behalf of Vassar College.

AAVC is, as always and like the college, a work in progress. Stay tuned.

Terri O'Shea '76
AAVC Executive Director
914/437-5439 (5440)
e-mail: teoshea@vassar.edu

Panvini Takes on Volunteer Stewardship Position

Willa Panvini '92 has been named associate director of AAVC. Ms. Panvini was previously associate editor of the Vassar Quarterly, a position she held since shortly after her graduation.

In her new role, Ms. Panvini will be responsible for AAVC leadership development. She will work closely with the leadership of classes, clubs, and affinity groups to provide services, information, and support for their work. She will assist with volunteer training and recruitment, manage communications between volunteers and AAVC headquarters, and coordinate similar activities between AAVC and other college offices that also rely on alumnae/i volunteers.

She can be reached at 914/437-5443 or e-mail wipanvini@vassar.edu

Events Coordinator Appointed

Judy Green has been appointed to the position of assistant director of AAVC. She is charged with planning on-campus events for alumnae/i. The biggest of these events is the annual Reunion Weekend in June, which regularly attracts up to 2,000
Rebecca Hyde Joins VQ

Rebecca Hyde '92 has joined the Vassar Quarterly as assistant editor. Ms. Hyde worked as a local government reporter for the Post-Journal, a daily newspaper located in Jamestown, New York. At Vassar, she majored in American Culture and played on the women's soccer team. Ms. Hyde's major responsibilities at the Quarterly include reporting news of campus, alumnae/i, and AAVC, and coordinating the production of the Class Notes section. She can be reached at 914/437-5448 or e-mail rehyde@vassar.edu.

AAVC Travels to Ireland October 1997

AAVC travelers will join Eamon Grennan, who is Dexter M. Ferry Jr., Professor of English, on a ten-day literary tour of Ireland, October 16-26, 1997. Professor Grennan is helping AAVC develop an exciting itinerary that will enable our travelers to explore many of the backgrounds that feature so importantly in Irish literature, history, and politics, as well as to appreciate the rich heritage of the centuries-old Irish culture. His lectures during our trip will help us to better understand those special elements of the country's history, topography, and cultural heritage that have so strongly influenced the literary tradition of Ireland.

Professor Grennan teaches courses in Irish literature, one of which, "The Irish Literary Revival," has been part of the English curriculum for a number of years. He is Dublin-born and spends most summers in Clifden, County Galway. He has written extensively on Irish writers and their work. He is himself a poet whose work has appeared in several collections and in major literary magazines on both sides of the Atlantic, including The New Yorker, Paris Review, Nation, New Republic, and Poetry Ireland Review. Professor Grennan has received a number of awards, the most recent a Guggenheim Fellowship for 1995.

Our trip will begin in Dublin, which has been described as the most intimate of Europe's capital cities. Our walking tours of the city will acquaint us with the literary landmarks of Dublin (surely, there will be time for a stop in one of the pubs featured in James Joyce's work), as well as its rich architectural beauty and centuries-old history.

Day trips out of Dublin will let us enjoy the beauty of County Wicklow to the south. North of Dublin, in County Meath, neolithic ruins and intricately carved Celtic crosses will be reminders of the importance to Ireland's culture of its earliest history and myths. We cross Ireland to Sligo on the west coast; William Yeats described Sligo as "the land of heart's desire," and we will see many of the places that figured in his work.

Then we go down to Galway, Ireland's cultural capital in the west. Both Yeats and his brother Jack, one of Ireland's best-known painters, were greatly influenced by this beautiful, rugged west country. We conclude our trip in Adare, called Ireland's prettiest village, and return home via Shannon.

As with all AAVC trips, the pace will be brisk and the days full. Participants should expect a fair amount of walking, often on uneven ground. The number of participants is limited and we should alert you that these trips fill up early. A detailed itinerary with costs is available from the AAVC office.

Karen Metcalf '58
Nancy Purdy '51
AAVC Travel Program co-coordinators

Election Changes

The AAVC Board of Directors and its Nominating Committee continue to review the process by which alumnae/i are identified and proposed for board and committee membership. The goals of the board and committee are to increase the pool of potential candidates, broaden participation in the nominating process, maintain the openness of the process, and ensure the best use of our volunteers.

Earlier this year, a proposal was put forward to the membership to change the selection of director-at-large positions to a single-slate process. (See Summer '96 VQ article on page 32 by former Nominating Committee Chair Mary Balfour.) Following research and consideration of alumnae/i opinions received about that proposal, the AAVC Board approved the change at its meeting in November 1996. The change will take effect with the 1998 election.

The AAVC Board and Nominating Committee are now considering models other than election by double-slate for positions on the Nominating Committee. We seek input from all alumnae/i as part of this review. Please send your comments and suggestions by January 31, 1997, to: Barbara Singer Demerath '72 Chair, Nominating Committee AAVC Alumnae House 61 Raymond Ave. Poughkeepsie, NY 12601 or e-mail c/o teoshea@vassar.edu

Irish literature will be the theme for an AAVC trip to Ireland in October 1997. At left: Entrance to the Dublin Writers Museum
It's like coming home again. Fall Council, the annual rite of passage which strengthens relations between alumnae/i and the college, begins. I can feel the energy and vibrancy of faculty and students, as well as that of the 137 class, club, reunion, and fund representatives—from 29 states and classes from 1924 to 1996—who are on campus to visit classes, have lunch with students, and get caught up with Vassar and AAVC.

This year's program began with Director of the Libraries Sabrina L. Pape, who took us, via slides, on a lively trip through Vassar Library history, from 1865 when a 30'x35' library was located on the third floor of Main Building, to the opening of Thompson in 1905, the completion of Lockwood in 1977, and plans for the next phase: construction of an addition, to begin in the summer of 1997. The impending project will add 25,000 square feet of space to accommodate Special Collections and the college archives, microtext, a periodical reading room, an electronic classroom and seminar room, a new courtyard area, and shelving for periodicals and other printed collections. The renovation will provide network access at all tables and carrels, and there will be a new informational resources complex in the center of the library with an updated reference room and a multimedia complex that will house multifunctional workstations and computers.

And hundreds of thousands of books, of course. "With the new addition and renovations, we hope to be ready to embrace the challenges of the future and the information revolution and continue to enhance the Vassar education with the best traditional resources as we have in the past," said Ms. Pape.

Reference librarian Kathleen Kurosman followed with a description of the library home page, and William Tschumy '97 discussed his extensive project of digitizing the Art 105/106 slides, thus creating a Web resource that students can use to study more effectively and easily for class.

President Frances D. Ferguson was next, and she enthusiastically described the successful completion of the Campaign for Vassar, which raised $206,280,000, the largest fundraising campaign to date for an undergraduate liberal arts college. She reviewed recently or soon-to-be completed projects that have substantially improved the physical environment in which students live and work: a renovated lobby in Main building; a redesigned outdoor terrace for the Retreat; a new College Center art gallery, where students and faculty can display their works; landscaping enhancements; new classrooms and labs in Ely Hall; and the Carol and James Kautz Admission House, dedicated on September 9 and located in the former Good Fellowship House behind Main Building. Students will soon begin astronomy study and skywatching at the Class of 1951 Observatory, which will house the largest telescope in New York State. President Ferguson assures us, "We are entering the new millennium a much strengthened place."

**On the Drawing Boards**

While many changes have already taken place, other challenges remain. With continued support from alumnae/i, parents, friends, and other volunteers, future improvements will include an improved gymnasium at Walker Field House, the creation of changing facili-
Meeting of the Council of Representatives. New AAVC Executive Director Terri O'Shea '76 gave us a report on renovations at Alumnae House and future plans, i.e., new windows, new offices, and, with sufficient fundraising, an elevator to be installed before the house's 75th birthday in 1999.

Karin George, vice president for development, thanked donors and volunteers for helping the college reach its campaign target. The oldest donor heralded from the class of 1911; the youngest from the class of 2000.

We were introduced to David Borus, the new dean of admission and financial aid, who gave a positive and upbeat commentary on the incoming class (see page 3) with a discussion on his goals and plans for admission and financial aid.

We Mark 125 Years of Service

Finally, Joan Strashinsky Kjelleren '71, AAVC president and trustee, saluted the excellent volunteer leadership of Vassar alumnae/i as we continue the year-long celebration of the 125th anniversary of AAVC.

Much has changed since the organization was founded in 1871 by 118 alumnae, remarked Ms. Kjelleren. For one thing, 52 percent of our 32,000 alumnae have attended a coed Vassar. "This is a time of great change and great achievement." What remains constant, said Ms. Kjelleren, is AAVC's mission to advance the interests of Vassar College. This work includes recruiting more young alumnae/i and undergraduates to the tradition of Vassar activism; in this spirit we welcomed for the first time the participation in our program of the president of the Vassar Student Association, this year, Jennifer Kohnen '97.

As Council ended and many participants looked ahead to another 24 hours of leadership training, I recalled comments made by David Borus. He was impressed, he said, by, among other things, "the feisty intellect and warmth of Vassar people."

That's Vassar. That will always be Vassar.

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**A Movie Weekend Like No Other**

**Second Annual Alumnae House-Vassar College Film Weekend 7-9 March 1997**

Theme: Produced and Abandoned

Ah, winter. Chestnuts, fireplaces, snowflakes.

All very pretty.

Then suddenly, it's March. Winter is no longer all that pretty; spring is a word that's lost its meaning. And all you want to do is settle in with a good movie and some popcorn and hide out for a while, say all afternoon . . . say all weekend . . . say for the entire month of March. Boy, are you in luck!

Maybe not for the entire month, but for one full glorious weekend. One full glorious weekend filled with seven great movies, continuous popcorn, enough M&Ms to soothe your chocolate needs, and the best possible hiding place . . . the same place you used to hide whenever finals rolled around . . . the Vassar College Alumnae House.

Only this time, there will be a full staff to make your bed, clean your room, serve you three perfect meals a day, satisfy your emotional craving for junk food, your intellectual craving for great films, and your physical craving for a good, old-fashioned all-nighter, without the term paper to go with it. And all with other intelligent Vassar-like people who crave the same things and who will join you for limitless nightly hours of stimulating filmic—if not cosmic—discussions. As luck and planning would have it, some of these discussions will be under the guidance of our own Jim Steerman, professor of film, as well as a few other distinguished professionals who deftly make their livelihood from the movie industry. Of course, nothing will prevent the formation of several ad hoc independent discussion groups made up of film addicts, insomniacs, and those of you who like to pull all-nighters just because you can. Bliss.

How can this be, you ask? How is this possible?

Ah. Through the magic of the Second Annual AAVC Film Weekend. This year's theme is "Produced and Abandoned," and the weekend will feature a series of brilliant, provocative, entertaining films that never made it to the local joint (for any number of reasons, such as bad distribution, bad timing, bad advertising). These are films that feature actors like Jessica Lange, Jamie Lee Curtis, or Denzel Washington in great performances that the studios decided you wouldn't want to see. And boy, were they wrong. Anyway, the point is, there are many of these . . . and this is your chance to see them, explore them, be swept away by them, be moved to laughter and tears, and experience that slightly breathless sensation that happens when a movie moment has recognized and captured, in essence, you. What more can a great film be expected to do?

This event is scheduled for the weekend of March 7-9, 1997, and participation is limited to 35 people (so don't wait sign up now) and to Vassar alumnae/i and Select Significant Others, providing they don't snore through movies. (Incidentally, that condition is not waived for alumnae/i.)

This is the picture perfect (pardox the pun) March weekend, which is no mean feat, since until now, there was no such thing as a perfect March weekend.

And more important, this is your chance to be a film critic, heard and recognized. If that prospect both excites and unnerves you, don't worry: we will supply you with some homework and first night/late night/first-rate reading so you can feel that familiar Vassar pressure, get three full hours of sleep, and wake up to your own set of personal flashbacks, groggy but informed.

So leave your chat rooms at home. Bring your sweats, your appetite for exquisite meals, service, celluloid, and intelligence (stimulating but not too strenuous) and get ready to relax with 34 of your new and closest cinema-loving friends in the place where no matter when you go there, they have to take you in.

Not just home, the Alumnae House at Vassar College.

Sherry Jacobs Nemmers '76

Program Chair
The club presidents listed at right are the primary Vassar alumnae/i contacts in localities throughout the country and around the world. Vassar clubs provide services and activities for alumnae/i and the college, including social events, internships and scholarship opportunities, career networking and admission work.

Additionally, many alumnae/i residing in areas not served by clubs provide valuable assistance to the college, particularly in the realm of student recruiting.

For up-to-date information about club contacts in any geographic area, call associate director of AAVC Wila Panvi '92 at 914/437-5443.

For information about the alumnae/i admission program and local alumnae/i clubs, call Nancy Rubsam '64, associate director of admission at 914/437-5365.

AAVC is the network of 32,000 Vassar College alumnae/i worldwide.
AAVC's mission is to support Vassar College and to keep alumnae/i in touch with each other and with the college.
AAVC's work is done volunteers with the support of staff and services located at the national headquarters in Alumnae House.
Get connected: call 914/437-5443, or visit www.avvc.org.
PERSON, PLACE AND THING

Vassar faculty, students, alumnae/i, and staff are invited to submit items to PPSFT. There is no charge for this bulletin board service; publication is as space permits. Submissions should be typed and 75 words or less; they may be edited for length and style. Deadlines are three months in advance of each issue. Please note that AAVC cannot verify the terms of ads that are unrelated to AAVC activities.


1997 Vassarions are on sale now! Support one of Vassar's oldest traditions by purchasing a 1997 Vassarion for only $60. Also available for $50 each are yearbooks for the years 1985, 1987, 1990, 1993, 1994, 1995 and 1996. Send check (payable to Vassarion) and order to: Vassarion, Maildrop 171, Vassar College, 124 Raymond Ave., Poughkeepsie, NY 12601-6198. Questions? Contact Jessica Kohnen, business manager, at 914/451-2953 or by e-mail: jkohnen@vassar.vassar.edu.

"Pack of Royals": Playing cards featuring wicked caricatures of British royal personages on the face cards. Royal corgis prance across the backs. Red or blue—state preference—$10.50 per pack, airmail postage included. Send check with order to Mrs. T.A. Bird (Alice Hunsaker Bird '47), Turville Heath House, Turville Heath, Henley-on-Thames, RG9 6JY, U.K.

Need a Summer Housesitter? I'm finishing my dissertation and would love to house sit in the Westchester/Putnam/Dutchess area for the summer 1997. I'm female, quiet, great with pets, plants, and flowerbeds. Will pay some rent if needed. Please call or write: Annie Pulis '90, 8 Dorsey St. #2, Columbia, MO 65201; tel. 573/446-4769; or e-mail: cs623827@showe misouri.edu.

Overwhelmed with paperwork? Sick of clutter? I'll reorganize your files; work with you on closets, cabinets, etc.; help prepare a move—downsize, dismantle an apartment, house, office for you and/or your family members. New York City and vicinity. Call Judy Kupersmith Katz '62 at 212/988-8450, or write 123 E. 75th St. 5 D, New York, NY 10021.

French Provinces: Rent lovely, rustic farmhouse in southwestern France. Midway between Dordogne and Lot rivers. Quiet, picturesque farming village near Figeac and St. Cere; 45 minutes to Sarlat, capital of the Dordogne Valley; 70 km to Cahors and its vineyards. Available May, late July, August, September, and October. Well located for those interested in pre-history, medieval history, gastronomy, hiking, and canoeing. For further information, contact Professor Geoffrey Jehle, 914/437-5210.

Freelance editing by retired university professor with 20 years experience in publishing/editing. Any kind of writing welcome: journalistic, academic, technical, commercial. Reasonable rates, prompt delivery. Naomi Ritter '59, 827 Poplars, Indiana University, Bloomington, IN, 47405. 812/855-6539. Fax 812/855-0886. e-mail: nritter@indiana.edu

Paris, France: Housesitter available. Searching for someone to mind your home during the 1997-1998 school year? Look no further! I am an extremely responsible nonsmoker who will take good care of your house or apartment. I will be in Paris studying language in Sept. 1997, but am available to you from June 1997 until at least May 1998. References available. Renting also an option. Contact Glynis Vance '95, 12812 Rexford Ave., Cleveland, OH, 44105.

Notice: We are pleased to announce the formation of a new AAVC affinity group—

Jewish Alumnae/i of Vassar College.

However, before JAVC can begin planning activities, admitting new members, and attending other Vassar-sponsored events, it must form both an executive committee and a board of officers. All interested alumnae/i should contact the acting JAVC chair, Mik Moore, for more information. He can be reached by phone at (d) 212/675-1168 or (n) 212/740-5230, mail: 630 Ft. Washington Ave., Apt. 3A, New York, NY 10040, or e-mail: jps@panix.com


Eat correctly and confidently when traveling with Dietary Passports. Dietary restrictions (vegetarian, heart-wise, diabetic, Kosher, allergies) are concisely translated into French, Italian, Spanish, Portuguese, and German. Separate, passport-sized travel cards may be customized. Money-back guarantee. $5 to Lake Associates (Sarah Kramedjian '77), 191 Walnut St., Livingston, NJ 07039.

Winter in Arizona: Lovely, tranquil, one-bedroom patio home in central Scottsdale available for winter rental (October-April, three months minimum). $1,700/month. Call 212/686-8934.


Issued for the Olympics! Decorative Vassar poster with early Vassar track photographs "Celebrating a Century of Women's Track and Field, The First Women's College Field Day in America." Attic Studio Press, phone or fax, 914/266-4902. $5 plus $3.50 postage. New York state residents add 7.25 percent tax.

Entertainment for hire! Founded in 1980, the Accidents! Vassar's premiere all-male singing group. Their repertoire is known for its finger-snapping, mood-lifting feel. Music aside, Axi humor creeps its way into performances through skits and the group's informal attitude, immersing the audience in a truly unique and entertaining experience for any occasion. For more information, contact Matthew Wilson '99: 914/451-2297, Maildrop 2306, Vassar College, Poughkeepsie, NY 12601-6198. E-mail: Mawilson@vassar.vassar.edu

LAGAVC Conference February 14-16, 1997. The agenda includes time with students, a visit to Blegen House, a tour of the new observatory, an introduction to the Internet and World Wide Web, and our annual business meeting. For information, please contact Nancy Sahli '67 (301/587-0574 or Thom Finn '93 (617/547-5862 or tfinni@macemps.com). To put your name on LAGAVC mailing list, write to AAAC (attn: Nancy Wanzer ) at Alumnae House, 61 Raymond Ave. Poughkeepsie, NY 12601, or call 914/437-5441.
was largely responsible for the "Cornaro renaissance" described in "Lady in the Window" (Vassar Quarterly, Fall, 1996).

In college, Ruth Crawford Mitchell was listed by her maiden name, Ruth Crawford, not Ruth Mitchell. After graduating from Vassar, she earned the master's degree from Washington University in St. Louis. She married and went to Pittsburgh in 1923 with her husband, a Westinghouse engineer. She was always called Mrs. Ruth Crawford Mitchell, not "Dr." The University of Pittsburgh gave her an honorary degree.

E. Maxine Bruhns, Mrs. Mitchell's successor as Head of the University of Pittsburgh's Nationality Rooms, adds: "Readers might be interested to know that the legacy of the Lady in the Window continues. At the University of Pittsburgh, headquarters in the Cornaro tercentenary in 1978, a translation is under way of the Italian book by Father Ludovico Mashietto on the life and times of the Cornaro.

Margaret Moore Hodges '32
Professor Emeritus, University of Pittsburgh

Statement of VQ Ownership, Management, and Circulation

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This information is reported on U.S. Postal Service Form 3526 and here as required by 39 U.S.C. 3685

If you spot news of a Vassar person, please send it to:

Vassar Quarterly
Alumnae House
61 Raymond Ave.
Poughkeepsie, NY 12601
An Optimist’s Skepticism after a Year in Russia
by Eric McGlinchey ’95

Tanya Sergeieyevna, the babushka who lives with her husband in the third room of our communal apartment in Yaroslavl, pokes her head in occasionally to see if our unemployed neighbors, Volodya and Genya, are still breathing. She gave up calling the ambulance years ago—the men simply refuse to leave their beds. “If they drink themselves to death, k chertu, the hell with them.” She spits these last words out; yet it is not in the Russian soul to be callous. The old woman leaves two bowls of cabbage soup on the windowsill. It will be hours before Genya and Volodya awake. Swollen-eyed, they will drag themselves into the kitchen and eat the broth. The oil will have congealed around the edges, and fat globules will bob with the carrot slices on the surface. It is food, though, and they will eat. Nothing will be said, and the next evening, once their stomachs have settled, a meal of potatoes will appear anonymously.

Sveta is in her late twenties. Previously a journalist in Osh, the southern provincial capital of the Kyrgyz Republic, she now rides the trains between Central Asia and Russia, selling melons and grapes in Moscow, electronics and clothing on the return trip to the southern capitals. Sveta’s husband, whom she met while writing for the Osh daily, still works as a journalist. Two years ago the young couple was faced with a new reality: they could no longer support their family with their evaporating writers’ salaries. Sveta had friends working at the bazaar. They told her there was money to be made. She bought three vinyl duffle bags, talked to her cousin, a conductor on the Bishkek-Moscow line, and said good-bye to her eight-year-old daughter and her husband.

Sveta sits in the train seat across from me. She smiles and pours me a glass of tea. Nothing, not even the baking heat of the Kazakh desert, will keep Russians from their tea. I ask her if indeed there is money to be made. A smile flashes to her lips, and she pulls a photo from her purse. In it she is standing, smiling with her young daughter and husband. Her daughter is now in private school; the girl comes home every afternoon excited to repeat the new English words she has learned. In a moment the smile is gone. Sveta looks up. Her voice, now strained, startles me. “I’d give it all up if I could. My daughter is growing up without me.”

Whence democracy?

In May 1995, I left the inviting green lawns and lush, shady trees of Vassar. Promising to write friends and professors, I said my farewells and set my sights east. I was off to Russia as a Thomas J. Watson fellow, ready to spend the year among the kommerzanty, the petty traders of the new free markets. My focus during the first months of the fellowship year was strictly economic transition—to discover if indeed capitalism was something readily acceptable to a people who had lived under seven decades of central control.

In Western development, the cradle of civil society—the set of informal institutions and laws by which societies govern themselves—has been the marketplace and its early founders, petty traders. In studying the kommerzanty I sought to discover a parallel, a liberating rather than limiting model for post-Soviet economic and political development. What I found, however, was not nascent civil society but, ironically, a widely shared nostalgia for the old, a longing for strong central rule.

On the trains, in the buses, and at the bazars—all the kommerzanty with whom I talked, whether in Russia or in Central Asia, exhibited a common gesture: they would squeeze their right hand into a fist, repeat the country president’s name, and then slam their fist into their left hand. Over and over, men and women would invoke the new patri-archs: President Yeltsin, President Akaev, President Nazerbaev, President Karimov, accompanied by the strong arm gesture. Contrary to my well-reasoned hypotheses, it seems that culture, not economics, this longing for the strong man, will remain ascendental.

Living among the kommerzanty I have come to see that Western theories, regardless of how appealing and compelling they may appear as models for political and economic growth in less developed countries, simply cannot be forced upon cultures and societies that are patently non-Western. Although some “democratic” institutions have arisen across the post-communist states as a result of reemergent trade, the overwhelming trend is the resurgence of patriarchal authoritarianism.

Admittedly, this realization has thrown my own Western-centric research and studies in political philosophy and economic growth into chaos. It is a chaos that I welcome. It is a chaos that was further transformed by my encounters with individuals. As my year progressed and as I can read in my journal, I became less and less drawn to the economistic of Russia’s future and more observant of the countless examples of daily struggle and human compassion that I witnessed.

Now, back in the United States, I am continuing the formal study of Russia’s economic and political transition. I hope in some way to understand the correlation between Russia’s past and the potential for future liberal, free market development. I am an optimist who will continue to look to the promise in Russia’s future. My grounding, however, will forever be in the struggles of the Tanya Sergeieyevnas and Svetas of today.

Eric McGlinchey ’95 is now in his first year of a Ph.D. program in politics at Princeton University.
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**Above:** New address (or second address with dates of residence)
We'll be serving up movies at the

2nd Annual
Alumnae House - Vassar College

FILM WEEKEND

7 - 9 March 1997

For more information, please turn to page 33
A Literary Tour of

IRELAND

16-26 October, 1997

with Professor of English
Eamon Grennan

Please turn to page 31 for more information.