memories returned

healthy woman: bernadine healy '65

looking back and looking forward: colton johnson
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features

8 Looking Back and Looking Forward
For nearly 40 years, Colton Johnson has been a prominent figure at Vassar. In June, he will step down from his position as dean of the college and likely return to his “other” position as professor of English. Current junior and Raymond House President Jonathan Cruz talks with Johnson about Vassar over the years. by Jonathan Cruz ’05

14 Memories Returned: History of a Dress
Sorting through a family home full of memories and forgotten heirlooms is a difficult task. How do you preserve history and still clean out the attic? Read how one wedding dress passed through the hands of four Vassar women.
by Liz Dubben Livingston ’69 with Eleanor Livingston ’41

18 Healthy Woman: Bernadine Healy ’65
She’s been the director of the National Institutes of Health, president of the Red Cross, Republican candidate for Ohio state senator, and president of the American Heart Association. Now, once again, Dr. Bernadine Healy is in the spotlight. The VQ talks to her about her role in bringing women’s health care issues to the fore.
by Maryann Teale Snell

departments

3 Letters
4 Vassar Today
22 Beyond Vassar
26 Vassar Yesterday
27 Class Notes
62 Connecting
63 Announcements
64 The Last Page

on the cover  The satin wedding dress pictured has been in the Livingston family for more than 100 years. Photograph by Andrea Modica.
Friends Give to Art Center

On April 16, members of the Friends of the Frances Lehman Loeb Art Center attended a gala dinner and enthusiastically participated in the museum's art acquisition process. They voted for one of three works of art to be donated to the center in honor of its 10th anniversary.

The three artworks under consideration were brought to the campus for the "View and Vote" evening. The attendees in time-honored Vassar tradition were presented with the opportunity to see for themselves what the director, James Mundy '74, and curators, Joel Smith and Patricia Phagan, had selected as desirable additions to the collection. An open forum prior to the vote allowed for an enthusiastic exchange of viewpoints. The Friends gave an important gift to the Art Center, and the Art Center gave the Friends an opportunity to reconnect with the roots of their own interest in the arts in the context of Mundy’s lecture, "Building a Museum Collection: An Inside View." The winning selection (pictured left) was Alfred Leslie’s Self-Portrait, 1982, which is now hanging in the permanent collection galleries. (The other two pieces under consideration were Robert Colescott’s Knowledge of the Past is Key to the Future. The Other Washingtons, 1987, and Richard Serra’s Spiral Cord, 2001.) Born in 1927, Leslie's first paintings were cast in the mold of the Abstract Expressionists, and he was regarded as one of the most talented of the second generation. He turned away from abstraction in the early 1960s in favor of portraying everyday people in a heroic manner steeped in tenebris, a style inspired by Caravaggio. The Frances Lehman Loeb Art Center has a strong core of mid-to-late 20th century realism. Other realist works in the collection from this period are by Jane Wilson, Jane Freilicher, Don Nice, Alex Katz, and William Bailey. The Art Center owns two lithographs by Alfred Leslie.

— Purcell Schen Palmer ’62, chair of the Friends of the Frances Lehman Loeb Art Center
More on the Albert Einstein Collection

In recent months a great deal of excitement has been generated on and off campus by Vassar’s acquisition of the Morris and Adele Bergreen Albert Einstein Collection [“Newsworthy Notes” Spring 2004]. I thought readers of Vassar would be interested in learning a little more about how the collection came to the college and its connection to Vassar.

Adele Gabel Bergreen ’44 majored in political science. While at Vassar, she studied with Otto Nathan, who taught economics in the early ’40s. After graduation, Bergreen and her husband Morris (who together had a law firm in New York) stayed in touch with Nathan and came to know him quite well. Nathan was a German émigré scholar who had left his country of origin when Hitler came to power. He was also a close friend of Albert Einstein. Their relationship was so close, in fact, that Einstein appointed Nathan to be his executor. Nathan collected the great physicist’s papers and eventually deposited them at the Hebrew University in Jerusalem. Yet he retained much of the personal correspondence he had with Einstein (as well as some photographs, books, and other memorabilia). Toward the end of his life, Nathan left his collection with the Bergreens, and now it has come to Vassar.

The collection is thus connected to the college through both its faculty-creator (Nathan) and its alumna-donor (Bergreen). It has great teaching and research value not only for faculty and scholars, but also for Vassar students from a variety of academic disciplines.

RONALD D. PATKUS, HEAD, ARCHIVES AND SPECIAL COLLECTIONS, VASSAR COLLEGE LIBRARIES
Poughkeepsie, New York

VC Encounters

My husband and I were invited to a luncheon at Great Windsor Park, outside London, and an afternoon of polo. The British lady sitting next to me noticed my VC ring and was very curious as to how I had the Victoria Cross symbol on my ring. The Victoria Cross is one of the highest honors the Queen bestowed.

BETTY COATS ZIMMERMAN ’53
Sedona, Arizona

THE RECENT VO ARTICLE “WHAT’S IN A MARK?” [Spring 2004] reminded me of my own VC story. When I was living in Madrid in 2000, there was a restaurant called Casa de Vaca, and the logo looked identical to the Vassar logo. I always imagined walking in, flashing my ring, and pretending to be the owner’s son. Even though I’m a vegetarian, I thought it would at least be good for a free salad.

DAVID RUBIN ’96
New York, New York

I WAS IN CHICAGO, ILLINOIS, LAST YEAR AT THE American Bar Association’s HIV/AIDS conference. I sat down to lunch on the first day with the group from my office, and a nice young guy sat down at the table with us. I spied his ring, held up my own, pointed it at him in the classic cartoon superhero style, and announced, “Shazam!” — it was Michael Silverman ’91, who works with NY Lawyers Public Interest. No one else at the table understood what just happened. We touched rings and explained. I saw him again this year at the conference in New Orleans; he was as soon as I saw the ring.

LESLIE F. KLINE CAPELLE ’86
Venice, California

IN THE SUMMER OF 1966, I WAS AN INTERN IN Washington, DC, as a member of the Vassar/Wellesley summer internship program. One day the person sitting beside me on the bus asked to look more closely at my ring. He then asked me if I were a supporter of the Viet Cong. He was much relieved to discover I was merely a supporter of Vassar College!

TIRRELL BARBERI GRAHAM ’67
Mill Valley, California

Catching Up

At last I’m getting around to writing you regarding articles in the Spring 2003 and Summer 2003 magazines. I very much enjoyed Franny Kildpatrick Field’s ’42 letter “Founder’s Day Relived” [Summer 2003]. I was surprised and pleased to see the article and picture of the elephant in the spring Quarterly [Vassar Yesterday]. I enjoyed and lived that memorable day (we were juniors in charge of the entertainment that year, 1941) all over again.

LINDA EMMERSON ’66
Poughkeepsie, New York

I also enjoyed the article on the Wimpfheimer Nursery School [Summer 2003]. As a child study major, I spent two or more wonderful, fulfilling, and enjoyable years there. I even spent most of one summer typing notes for Joe Stone’s research. Mary Fisher Langmuir, head of the department, and Joe Stone, then a fairly new faculty member, were both inspiring, kind friends to me. Many years later, my two sons attended the nursery school. It was a welcome sight to see Mrs. Fisher Langmuir still there when my oldest son attended in 1953.

P.S. The Spring 2004 Quarterly just arrived for me to “catch up on.”

ELIZABETH PUDD LONG ’42
Poughkeepsie, New York

Inspirational Parenting

The article [“WONDER AND THE ART OF Parenting”] in the Spring 2004 issue of the Vassar Quarterly was a delight to read. Although I have no children of my own, I have done plenty of parenting.

The summer after my sophomore year in college I answered an ad in the International Herald Tribune and became the governess to a family of six children ages 2 to 12 in Ireland — an experience I adore. I also established a prep school, Heavenly Mountain Ideal Girls’ School, featuring a Consciousness-Based approach to education. What I found most interesting in the article was the inspiration and wisdom author Seamus Carey ’87 derives from the great philosophers throughout the ages, who look within and sense a field of wholeness that transcends and brings completeness to everyday existence.

For more than 30 years I have been a teacher of the Maharishi Transcendental Meditation (TM) program, and can say from my own experience as a TM meditator and teacher that the refined approaches to parenting the author describes come very naturally to those who are regularly having the experience of their own inner Self through daily practice of the TM technique.

MEG CUSTER ’72
Boone, North Carolina

Correction

In the photo accompanying the article “Science, Technology & Society” [Spring 2004], Professor of Astronomy Debra M. Elmegreen was mistakenly identified as Ellen Kevner Silbergeld ’67.
New Adviser Energizes Jewish Community

As you push open the door to the Bayit, you are greeted by an animated “Hello!” This welcoming voice belongs to Rabbi Rena Blumenthal, Vassar’s new full-time adviser to Jewish students. Despite her close-cropped hair and small frame, Blumenthal displays a big presence and sparkling enthusiasm the moment you meet her. It is this energy that has propelled Blumenthal to accomplish some important, vital steps in reinvigorating the Jewish community on campus.

Officially, Blumenthal’s title is the Rose and Irving Rachlin Adviser to Jewish Students. In the early 1990s, Paula Rachlin Gottesman ’86 established a fund in honor of her parents to strengthen the support of Jewish religious and cultural life on campus. For many years, the position was part time, but in 2001 the Gottesmans increased the fund to create the new full-time position. “With Rena there is more stability,” said Samuel Speers, director of religious and spiritual life. Although the Vassar Jewish Union (VJU) is one of the strongest religious groups on campus, he said, there was always turnover as leaders graduated. Now there are more underclassmen involved — partly because Blumenthal has raised the level of Jewish participation on campus overall.

Blumenthal is modest when describing her first year, saying she has focused on restoring the Bayit, Vassar’s home of Jewish campus life, and improving community outreach. To engage the on-campus and local Jewish communities, Blumenthal meets monthly with local rabbis at the nearby Jewish Community Center, attends VJU board meetings, and sits down with the president of the VJU once a week. This has given her the opportunity to observe, and grow to understand the Vassar and local Jewish communities and strengthen relationships.

Also during her short tenure, Blumenthal and four student assistants cleaned out and cleaned up the Bayit from top to bottom. Buildings & Grounds landscaped the front yard, and Campus Security installed card-scan access on the front door. The improvements to the physical space have created a more vibrant and appealing center, and have succeeded in “lifting the morale of the Jewish students who use the house,” said Blumenthal.

Located at 51 Collegeview Avenue, behind the All-Campus Dining Center and just beyond North Gate, the Bayit has been a place for Jewish students to convene for worship, community, or programming since 1996. “The Bayit is not only home to our services and weekly [VJU] board meetings, but also to Israeli dancing, a Shabbaton (weekend retreat) for Jewish college students in the area, Purim spiels, ice cream socials…or whatever other program someone thinks up next,” said junior and VJU vice-president Sasha Swartzman. But being off-campus, albeit by only a few yards, has created a barrier. “By crossing the street you feel that you are consciously going there to be Jewish,” said Susannah Howland ’03, a former president of the VJU who sat on the search committee that hired Blumenthal.

After reviewing more than 50 applications, the search committee of faculty, administrators, and students chose Blumenthal. She holds a B.A. in psychology and religion from Barnard College and an M.A. in clinical psychology from Fordham University. Most recently, she graduated from the Reconstructionist Rabbinical College in Wyncote, Pennsylvania. Blumenthal previously worked as a psychologist in schools and mental health clinics in New York and Jerusalem and served as a student rabbi to congregations in Pennsylvania and Florida.

Blumenthal’s position falls under the purview of the Office of Religious and Spiritual Life. Director Speers believes that in order for Jewish life to thrive and grow, it needs to be connected to the overall mission of the office — which, he says, “works to make religious and spiritual commitments and practice part of a student’s education while at Vassar.” Speers continued, “Students often confront critical questions: What does it mean to come from a different background to a secular culture? What do I want to carry forward to my college life and beyond? These questions are sometimes overlooked at institutions of higher education. We want to address how people are formed by a tradition and in what context. We want to help students integrate these questions with ones that arise in the classroom, to under-
Every Friday afternoon, the Bayit’s student assistants cook for upwards of 20 students. “There has been a wonderful response to the Friday night services and dinner,” said Blumenthal. “There is a core group of students who attend every Friday, but there is always somebody new.” Swartzman looks forward to each Friday dinner, “Shabbat services just wouldn’t be the same without the home-cooked Kosher meal that follows.” In addition to cooking duties, Sara Egan ’07, Matt Tyson ’07, and Brenna Koch ’05 help coordinate programs, such as the December conclave that brought the Jewish communities at SUNY New Paltz, the Culinary Institute of America, Bard College, and Marist College together for a weekend of programming and an art exhibit titled Self and Community, which featured works by members of the Vassar community exploring issues of personal and communal identity.

One of Blumenthal’s main goals for year two is to strengthen the social action aspect of the Bayit’s general programming. The VJV has started working with Hudson River Housing to create a partnership that Blumenthal hopes will get students involved in the wider community. She will also offer support to other Jewish groups on campus, such as the Jewish a cappella group Yafeiyah and the literary magazine Ra’ishan. “Rena has been a smash hit,” Swartzman raved. “It’s been so important to have someone working with us full time, and her religious and spiritual guidance is invaluable at our weekly VJV meetings as well as during holidays. But more importantly, she’s great to have around. You can tell that Rena really cares about Jewish life on campus. Her knowledge and enthusiasm enriches our services, programs, and lives as Jewish students at Vassar.” —Samantha Soper ’01

Around Campus
This fall, the Jewish Studies Program celebrates its fifth year as a multidisciplinary major at Vassar. Academic departments such as history, religion, literature, anthropology, Germanic studies, political science, English, classics, and psychology make up the Jewish Studies Program. And every year the Jewish Studies Program sponsors a three-day seminar to educate faculty on topics connected with Jewish studies. Program Director and Professor of Religion Deborah Dash Moore works closely with Suzanne Rubenstein Fishman ’55 and her husband Larry, who endowed the faculty seminar and were instrumental in getting the program off the ground in 2000. In May, University of Michigan Professor of English and Judaic Studies Anita Norich was the seminar leader on the topic of Yiddish modernism and its discontents. In addition, this year the program offered a new course called “Zionisms.” Team taught by Professor of Hispanic Studies Andrew Bush and Associate Professor of Political Science Andrew Davison, the course examines the different perspectives of conflicting and contested theories of Zionism.

As the Jewish Studies Program continues to develop, other campus changes are also enhancing Jewish life on campus. The All-Campus Dining Center has introduced kosher dining, and next year, Terrace Apartment 7 will be designated as a kosher residence.
Winter Wrap Up

Women’s Squash Team Finishes Season Ranked 15th in Nation

Vassar capped off another spectacular season by defeating Mount Holyoke College 8-1 at the Howe Cup Championship to finish the season ranked 15th in the nation.

Bernstein Qualifies for NCAA Men’s Fencing Championships

Sophomore Justin Bernstein became just the third Vassar fencer to earn an NCAA Championship berth after placing eighth in men’s saber competition at the NCAA Northeast Fencing Regional Championships. Bernstein joins Peter Epstein ’96, who advanced in 1994 for foil, and Claudia Lockett Allbritton ’98, who qualified in 1996 for women’s épée. “We are delighted that Justin has fulfilled his dream of qualifying for the NCAA National Championships,” head fencing coach Heather Whitefield said. “After recovering from a ruptured Achilles tendon last year, he has made a wonderful, determined comeback. He fences a game that is smart, elegant, and tactically sophisticated.”

For the second time in three years, Vassar hosted the Intercollegiate Fencing Association Championships, where Bernstein was awarded the George Cointe Award for Sportsmanship.

McGair, Evans, Harper Join Basketball Record Books

Despite several injuries and a 5-20 finish (1-13 in the UCAA), three athletes finished the season on VCC’s record charts in several categories.

Sophomore Meredith McGair, who was named to the UCAA All-Conference Team, finished second in the conference in scoring at 14.4 points per contest. Her 361 points rank seventh on Vassar’s single-season list, while her 35 blocks are second. Sophomore Erin Harper broke Vassar’s single-season record for assists (135), and her average of 5.4 per contest was good for 21st in the nation. Freshman Lizzie Evans led the conference in three-point baskets made, just two off of Kathleen Landry’s ‘01 school record of 62.

Meredith McGair ’06 drives toward the basket.

Men’s Fencing

3-14, 7th at New England Champ.

Sophomore Justin Bernstein finished eighth in saber competition at the NCAA Northeast Regionals. Junior Ben Bedore was 23rd in épée.

Women’s Fencing

4-16, 7th at New England Champ.

Vassar had strong performances by freshmen Karolyn Upham (19th in épée) and Melissa Sepe (23rd in foil) at the NCAA Regionals.

Men’s Squash

5-17

After a 1-13 start, Vassar picked up wins over Middlebury, Fordham, Northwestern, and California to finish the season ranked 30th in the nation. Senior Rahul Lulla won 7 of his 13 matches.

Men’s Swimming and Diving

2-7, 6th at UCAA Champ.

The 800-yard freestyle relay team of Rob Greil ’06, Eric Eilenberger ’04, Jim Dodington ’05, and Drew Duncan ’04 broke the school record with a time of 7:22.20 as Vassar finished 10th overall at the New York State Championships.

Women’s Swimming and Diving

3-4-1, 7th at UCAA Champ.

Juniors Megan DeLong and Ashley Colgate broke several school records this season. Colgate owns the top times in the 50- (32.56), 100- (1:09.58), and 200-yard breaststroke (2:31.85) events. DeLong set records in the 400 individual medley (4:54.86) as well as in the 200 backstroke (2:15.71).
The Other Class of ’04

Though this May brought commencement ceremonies for the class of 2004, another group of people departed Vassar with considerably less fanfare. Three professors retired this spring, and they will certainly be missed.

Harvey Flad, Professor of Geography
Professor Flad began his teaching career at a time when the future of his department at Vassar was uncertain. In 1972 Flad was hired by the college to fill the sole position in the Geography Department. Though there was talk of abolishing the discipline, Flad persuaded the college to not only keep the department, but to develop a major for geography in conjunction with anthropology.

In his 32 years at Vassar, Flad has served as chair of the Geography Department (1983–98), chair of the Geography and Geology Department (1988–98), and director of the American Culture Program (1998–2001). He also has acted as director for both the Urban Studies and Environmental Studies Departments. In 1997 he was awarded a Fulbright fellowship and lectured in Kyrgyzstan.

Flad gave the spring convocation address in 2003, speaking on "Sense of Places, Senses of Place." He recalled that his grandson, upon viewing the distinguished, robed faculty members, had exclaimed, "Wow, it's just like Harry Potter!" This, along with handing daughter Krista Flad Lewis ’90 her diploma at graduation, ranks among his favorite Vassar memories.

One of Flad’s advisees, Craig Dalton ’04, said: "As my academic mentor, Harvey has given me unparalleled advice and opened many important and fascinating doors in geography and academia. Never before have I met someone with such a great understanding of American culture as part of the American landscape and who is so involved with local geographic processes."

Flad’s plans for post retirement are numerous, including work on a book about the history of Poughkeepsie, continuing legal testimony regarding a proposed cement plant in the Hudson Valley, and more travel ("Why do you think I became a geographer in the first place?" he quipped).

Eamon Grennan, Professor of English
Eamon Grennan started working at Vassar in 1974. Formerly a professor at Lehman College of the City University in New York, he has spent the bulk of his academic career in Poughkeepsie. Since arriving at the English Department, he has taught courses ranging from freshman English to Shakespeare to Irish literature to a poetry seminar.

Grennan began to focus on his poetry shortly after taking his professorship, and "since that time the writing of poems has edged or pushed or jostled its way to more or less the center of my working life, to take its place alongside teaching," he said. His published works include Still Life With Waterfall, Relations, and As If It Matters. Grennan has also published a book of essays about Irish poetry and a collection of Giacomo Leopardi translations.

A dedicated professor, Grennan stressed the interactions between teacher and student as integral to Vassar’s character and said, "In my 30 years here I have grown increasingly to admire and feel good about the particular nature of that relationship as it is lived out in classrooms and offices and all the other incidental spaces that make up the community of the college." He seems to personify that relationship. Eric Motylinski ’04 praised the way Grennan "gracefully and flawlessly blends the simultaneous roles of being his students' most passionate critic and zealous defender."

Richard Lowry, Professor of Psychology
Richard Lowry came to Vassar in 1965 after receiving his Ph.D. from Brandeis University in the same year. In 1987 he was appointed for a three-year term to the William R. Kenan Chair, and he currently holds the Jacob P. Giraud Chair of Natural History.

Lowry has written or edited a multitude of publications, including The Architecture of Chance: An Introduction to the Logic and Arithmetic of Probability; The Evolution of Psychological Theory: A Critical History of Concepts and Presuppositions; and the 3rd edition of A. H. Maslow’s Toward A Psychology of Being.

His courses have included "Introduction to Psychology," "Personality Theory," "Research Methods," and many more. Katherine Oliver ’05, described Lowry as "possibly the only person who could ever make ‘Statistics’ even remotely interesting. He’s a real gem." Though his teaching days may be over, Lowry has plenty to keep him busy. In the past few years, Lowry has developed an award-winning "statistical computation Website" (faculty.vassar.edu/lowry/vassarstats.html) that has attracted "about two hundred thousand ‘hits’ per year worldwide." Lowry intends to continue work on this project after his retirement, in addition to hiking and spending time with his wife.

As for what he’ll miss about Vassar, Lowry said, "now and again, perhaps in one out of every 10 classroom sessions, everything clicks together in just the right way and you find yourself wishing it would never end." — Rachel Beck ’04
Looking back...and looking forward

By Jonathan Cruz '05
Photography by Will Faller

"The mantra that I currently recite," Colton Johnson tells me, "has three parts."

"I am coming to the end of my second five-year term as Dean of the College. I was 65 last October. It would be absurd — bordering on the obscene — to think that I will be doing this job when I am 70."

Three simple reasons for leaving his position as dean of the college, he claims. Three simple reasons why he is stepping down from the latest in a series of prominent, influential positions on our Poughkeepsie campus. And he adds part four, one certainty about the future, "that my wife of 44 years does not want my undivided attention."

Loitering alone in Johnson's unassuming office — he has gone to ice his shoulder after one of his regular (and intense) squash matches — gives one the opportunity to consider the man who has had more impact on the character and mission of Vassar than many committees, commissions, and offices have collectively. There are mementos strewn about the simple, white-painted bookshelves: photographs of friends and family, invitations to bygone events and ceremonies, a shiny gold medal in a display box, a delicately folded, bold green sweater. And books by and about W.B. Yeats. Everywhere.

As dean of the college, Johnson has had less time than he'd have liked for active teaching. Nonetheless, the specialist in modern English and Irish literature was able last semester to teach a seminar on Yeats, based on material from his recent book, volume X of the Collected Works of W.B.
Yeats. He enjoyed it so much that he hints he might try to put together another class after he leaves his dean position this summer. Johnson, in fact, has no intention of retiring as a faculty member just yet. He’s hoping to keep an office on campus as well as his study in the library. And, for the moment, he has no specific plans for a sabbatical (how could a man who has taken only one six-month sabbatical since 1975 know what to do with his free time?). Among eventual activities are Vassar and Yeats research projects and sorting through decades of files in preparation for their review by Vassar’s archivist.

When Johnson, who earned all of his degrees from Northwestern University, arrived on campus in 1965, he didn’t think he’d be here for more than a couple of years. “It was an odd time to be on the market,” he remembers. “I had 16 job offers, ranging from UVA and UCLA to Manhattanville College of the Sacred Heart. My mentor at Northwestern assured me that my career would be in the university world, but said teaching at Vassar for a year or two would be a good chance to learn how a college works.” Vassar hired Johnson before he had started his dissertation.

Within the first years of his arrival in Poughkeepsie, he witnessed some dramatic changes at Vassar. The college was mulling over issues of identity, first and foremost, could Vassar continue to exist successfully as a single-sex school? Would an unprecedented move to coeducation destroy the college, or would it enrich it? These were serious questions that were debated daily, but Johnson confesses he did not focus as much on them as others did at the time. “I was still trying not to get fired,” he deadpans.

From Johnson’s viewpoint, Vassar’s decision to go coed was driven largely by geography. Most women’s colleges, he noted, had formed some sort of relationship with men’s colleges that often led to their absorption. Brown had Pembroke, Harvard nearly had Radcliffe, and each of the other “Seven Sisters” was located close to one or more men’s colleges. The closest place to Vassar was West Point, and “that wouldn’t really have worked,” Johnson pointed out. Going coed, he added, was “probably the only logical step. However, the times — economic and political, combined with our own extraordinary fame as a women’s college — made this more of a challenge than perhaps any other college’s transformation.”

But “Vassar is infinitely better as a coeducational institution,” Johnson notes — in part because that decision was not the only major change the trustees had to face in 1969. Two other strategic goals — increased diversity in the faculty, staff, and student body and a complete review and modernization of all aspects of the college — continue to shape the college today. “The success [of these three initiatives] is undeniable,” Johnson stated. “The curriculum is far more complex and interrelated and the community more diverse and inclusive, and yet the changes led — even if not always smoothly or predictably — to an institution that has many of the most desirable hallmarks of the old Vassar.”

The reorganization of the college also had a personal impact on Johnson, setting in motion policy changes that led to his present post in campus administration. The entire curricular side of Vassar developed rather peculiarly and rather late compared to its peer institutions — partly because it was a women’s college, but also because of personalities involved.

Elizabeth Drouilhet ’30, a campus institution in the middle decades of the 20th century, was a powerful woman, already deeply entrenched in the Vassar psyche, when Johnson arrived. “She was essentially everything aside from the business office and dean of the faculty,” Johnson notes. She came to campus as its warden, a role that evolved into the now-defunct office of Dean of Residence. Referring to contemporary offices, Johnson observes that “ResLife, Campus Activities, probably even health services reported to her.” (Even as late as 1975, when Johnson became dean of studies, there was no dean of students and no fully articulated set of student resources outside of the curriculum, no doubt partly because Vassar had been so dependent on Drouilhet’s strength and ability.)

In turning to coeducation, the college needed to reorganize and modernize, but had to do so quickly. Despite its status as one of America’s most established colleges for women, the school’s physical plant and academic resources had simply not grown at the pace of its peer institutions. One of its first moves was to introduce a new office — the vice president of student affairs — and in 1975, Dean of Studies Natalie Junemann Marshall ’51 was asked to succeed the first student affairs vice-president, John Duggan. Johnson, married with a young child and living in Rhinebeck, New York, was newly tenured and busy teaching literature and writing, and had not envisioned himself an administrator. Until, he recalls bemusedly, “I got a call early one morning from Alan Simpson.”

Simpson, then-president of Vassar, told him a search committee had recommended Johnson for the position of dean of studies, and encouraged him to accept the invitation. Johnson rationalized that he would keep
"COLTON HAS GREAT TRUST IN STUDENTS, making real our belief that our students help to forge the Vassar of tomorrow."

— Vassar President Frances Fergusson

his office in Avery Hall, his advisees, and his senior seminar and only do this work for three years. He would not think of himself as abandoning one thing and starting another. Reluctantly, he took the job.

Realignment of campus administration had been but one of many changes that the new Vassar undertook. Indeed, the development of a vibrant, coeducational campus had a long way to go. Letters from Vassar girls of the 19th century are replete with descriptions of lectures, activities, symposia, debates, and other activities designed to fill the girls' time out of the classroom. By the time Vassar went coed, however, the relaxing of campus restrictions (including travel regulations) contributed to the development of a culture of desertion. When Johnson came to Vassar, the Retreat, for example, closed at 4:30 on Friday afternoons and did not reopen until Monday morning, and the library also was closed for much of the weekend.

The administration was not blind to this problem, and it was by no means the only significant issue facing the campus, and it searched for ways to develop a new set of resources for the "cocurriculum." What was needed, Johnson explains, was "not necessarily a separate bureaucracy, but an organized set of resources." Recognizing this need shortly after taking office, President Frances Fergusson had substituted a dean of student life for the student affairs vice-presidency, and in 1981, when the first dean of student life, James Montoya, resigned, Johnson was asked to step in for a year.

Then he was asked to stay a second year. And finally he was asked to just stay, as Vassar's first dean of the college. The appointment, he knew, would facilitate the types of far-reaching changes he had been eager to implement. In the next few years Johnson, with Acting President Nancy Shrom Dye '69 and then with President Fergusson, helped develop a new model for Vassar's cocurriculum.

The model also allowed for the creation of new resources, and Johnson—who had developed an interest in Vassar's transfer students—initiated discussions with LaGuardia and Dutchess Community Colleges, to see if there was interest in developing some type of cooperative program with Vassar.

One of Vassar's key goals after 1969 was increasing diversity—"which we largely understood as race in those days," Johnson says—and the college was still grappling with this issue in the 1980s. Vassar vied with Wesleyan, Dartmouth, and others for the few students of color that had found their way into prep-school programs designed to identify students of promise in inner cities and prepare them for the Ivies. This limited pool of students was avidly sought after, but few colleges or universities had thought of working to expand it.

The focus on racial diversity coincided with Johnson's interest in creating more resources to draw community college transfers—many of whom were eager and qualified students of color—to Vassar. In 1984 he conceived of a summer program that would introduce promising
community college students to residential college life. They would enroll in classes devised and taught by both Vassar and community college teachers. The experience would be immersive: students would live in dormitories, eat in dining centers, and experience “2 a.m. bull sessions.” Much research at the time suggested that liberal learning on a residential campus, after all, took place in many spaces between classes; the concept of a cocurriculum was increasingly central to the college experience.

The program, dubbed Exploring Transfer, was finalized after a meeting in then-President Virginia Smith’s conference room — she had obtained money from the Mellon Foundation (“thankfully, because I had no idea what I was doing!” Johnson notes) — and the program developed quickly. (Thomas McGlinchey, who will retire this year as a writing specialist, was named coordinator, and was from the start deeply committed to the program’s aims.) The college would be giving the Vassar experience to those who did not have access to this type of educational opportunity.

It took some convincing to get the program started. Sometimes the resistance came from the community colleges themselves. Many remarked that they didn’t have folks who were the “right type” to come to Vassar. The students, however, were more than up to the challenge. For four weeks, five days a week, they took in the newness of everything — from waking up in a dorm room to eating at the dining center to delving into incredible amounts of engaging reading and writing.

The observations of outsiders were similarly positive. After the program’s inauguration in 1983, support from alumnae/i and foundations helped fund program operations as well as establish an endowment.

Sometimes, Johnson admits, he found it difficult to explain why Vassar was seeking such funding. It was awkward, for example, to represent Vassar before foundation officers who had just heard Amherst or the University of Pennsylvania ask for money for anthropological research, biology, and the like, and to request money for community colleges. Grant-givers would routinely inquire why Vassar wanted money for something that seemingly didn’t benefit Vassar. Of course, the integration of such students into the campus community did and does benefit both the college and the larger community of higher education, and with a little convincing, the foundations and donors became remarkably positive and eager.

In 1989 the Charles A. Dana Foundation presented Johnson and LaGuardia Community College’s Janet Lieberman with the Dana Award for Pioneering Achievement in Higher Education, a major award in the field. And now, almost 20 years after its inception, the Exploring Transfer program is still being hailed as an enormous success. What started as a consortium between a few professors at Vassar, LaGuardia, and Dutchess Community College blossomed into an enduring, inspiring program.

Multiple colleges have explored the possibility of cloning Vassar’s program; projects at Bucknell University and Smith College have grown into success stories of their own. Many Exploring Transfer participants became Vassar graduates, and a number have made significant accomplishments post-college. “These are wonderful, inspiring people who continue to be so,” he says. (One, he observes, is now a faculty member at an Ivy League school.)

Despite his central role in the project, Johnson is the first to share the responsibility for its success. “Without Tom McGlinchey, without funders,
Without [the support of Presidents Smith and Fergusson, and without enthusiastic faculty — this program would not exist. And the Development Office recognized that this was consistent with the mission of the college... There has just been enormous support.” (Look for a feature article on the Exploring Transfer Program in the full VQ.)

With retirement from the deanship on the horizon, one might expect Johnson to slow things down a bit. But that hasn't been the case at all. “Colton’s dedication to Vassar students is astounding,” comments Vassar Student Association President Laura Robertson ’04. “In our weekly meetings, he always communicates his trust in the students, and the way in which he hopes that trust and respect is [conveyed] in the regulations and structures of Vassar College.”

Johnson is confident in the state of Vassar as he steps down from his administrative role. He points first to the college’s much-loved president, Frances Fergusson, and her central role at the college as one reason for this attitude. “Fran is an incredible leader, and the integrity with which she thinks and speaks is extraordinary,” he affirms. “The positions she takes on the issues she speaks out on are the same whether she is speaking privately or to faculty, alumnata, or accepted students. That's not always the case with college and university presidents, but it's invariably so with Fran. This inspires my confidence in the future of Vassar. The course she's set the college on is a sound one.” And President Fergusson is equally generous with her praise for Johnson. “I can only say that I could not have had a better colleague in working on so many projects that benefit students directly. Colton always thinks about what the students need to make them successful in whatever they try to do. And he has great trust in students, making real our belief that our students help to forge the Vassar of tomorrow.” Alumni/a, too, recognize Johnson’s contribution to the college. To acknowledge his extraordinary career, Vassar trustee Lurita Alexis Doan ’79 has endowed a scholarship in his name so there will always be a Colton Johnson scholar on campus.

Both related to and independent of the Exploring Transfer program, Johnson feels the serious discussion of issues of diversity on campus is another reason to be positive. Recent activities, he feels, have moved beyond talk of general access (such as bringing more traditionally underrepresented students and faculty to campus) to institutional inclusion; in other words, the dialogue is now about how to create an environment of inclusiveness. He points to a recent visit by Peggy McIntosh, author of the influential essay “White Privilege: Unpacking the Invisible Knapsack” as a sign of this deeper commitment. Johnson also stresses the importance of bringing these issues into all aspects of the college, including the classroom and the curriculum. (He relates his own teaching experience to explain how issues of diversity can be touched upon in any class. Class issues during the long struggle for Irish independence, he notes, became racial issues. The Catholic Irish were not only not English, they were also not upper class Irish, and thus were seen as a lower people, a distinct race. Understanding these tensions is essential to understanding centuries of Irish literature. This understanding has allowed for greater discussion of general diversity issues in his class.) Diversity is about more than access and inclusion, he notes; it also includes equity of outcome. This is the next challenge he sees facing the college — but one he knows Vassar is ready and willing to take on.

Johnson's course evaluations from last semester were gratifying and have encouraged him to consider taking on an active teaching role again. “When I came here on a one-year appointment, having begun as tenuously as anyone might have,” he reflects, “I had no idea that I would still be here all these years later. I am so thankful for the extraordinary multiplicity of careers I’ve had at the college. I have enjoyed being dean of studies. I have enjoyed being dean of the college. I have enjoyed being a professor.”

As chair of the Board of House Presidents, Jonathan Cruz ’06 is intimately involved with fostering a sense of community on campus, and has accordingly worked with Dean Johnson on the Committee for College Life, a “clearinghouse” organization that approves and alters campus organizations and regulations. About Colton, Cruz said, “One of the joys of being a student leader is the opportunity to find similar levels of enthusiasm among those on the ‘other side’ — the faculty, the staff, the administration. Colton is, without a doubt, one of the most dedicated people with whom I have had the pleasure to work. you can talk to him about the Vassar experience, and he’ll go on with endless energy, rare even in the newest arrivals on campus. As someone who loves the history of the college, it’s a secret pleasure of mine to have someone who is not only willing to hear me ramble on about it, but to talk to someone who can fill me in on the details I didn’t know.”

“I AM SO THANKFUL FOR THE EXTRAORDINARY MULTIPlicity OF CAREER OPPORTUNITIES I’VE HAD AT THE COLLEGE.

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memories returned
THE PAST, THE FUTURE, THE FANTASY, THE REALITY—SO MUCH COMES TOGETHER IN A WEDDING DRESS.

Story by Liz Dubben Livingston ’69 with Eleanor Livingston ’41
Photography by Andrea Modica
It is an overcast day in August, and I am sitting with three other women at a lunch table, chatting about this and that. Three of us are in our fifties; Eleanor, our hostess, is in her early eighties. We are all Vassar graduates, but that is not what has brought us together today.

After dessert, as four glasses of white Zinfandel are drained, Eleanor pushes back her chair and says, “Well, shall we go look?” We all go into a bedroom. On the bed is a long white box. It holds the wedding dress that had been in Eleanor’s family—except for a recent 10-month period—for over 100 years. I stand on one side of the bed next to Laura (Laura Jordan Sawyer ’69), my close friend. Across from us are Eleanor (Eleanor Livingston ’41) and Cate (Catharine Livingston Tyler ’71). Cate is Eleanor’s niece and my sister-in-law.

Eleanor removes the lid of the box and carefully pulls back a fold of white tissue. Laura then lifts the dress, and as it unfolds, Eleanor claps her hands to her breast. Who knew that she, who has not married, would have been so grief-stricken at the, albeit temporary, loss of the dress? At first I supposed it was simply a feeling for family history, but now in this room it seems more than that. Eleanor gives a short exclamation of pleasure, takes the dress, and holds it up to her frail chest. Her eyes are alight as she does a half twirl, saying, “Ladies, you never know, I might just wear this one day.” I look at an elderly woman suddenly transformed into a giddy girl, and laugh in delight.

I cannot tell you very much about the dress itself. It is made of satiny material, and it buttons down the front to a kind of lace petticoat that bustles out in back. The lace looks old and slightly yellowed. My description is paltry because I know next to nothing about wedding dresses. When I married in 1976 I wore a dress I’d gotten at a shop that specialized in things from the Greek islands. It was white, but short and simple—without any personal, cultural, or traditional significance. Eleanor knows the dress intimately. It had been worn by her grandmother, Emeline Livingston, somewhere around 1879, and by Emeline’s three great-granddaughters, Eleanor’s nieces. The name and Fifth Avenue address of the dressmaker are sewn in the waistband of the dress, and there’s also a pair of tiny (size 4 1/2 A) white kid-leather shoes.

Once we’ve all admired the dress, we fold it back into its box, and Laura and Eleanor make their way to the kitchen. They sit at a Formica table. Eleanor carefully makes out a check and pushes it across to Laura. Done. The dress is back in the family, the planets once again in alignment.

Cate, who had worn the dress, the question was more complicated. Like me, she’d been swept into the anti-establishment temper of the ’60s. When it came to marrying, however (in 1975), she and her husband discovered they both felt strongly about having some traditional elements as part of the ceremony. So Cate wore the family dress and carried a bouquet (but the wedding was outdoors). Cate had two daughters who, like my own, were approaching an age when they might marry; but she didn’t think they’d want to wear the dress. In hindsight, too, she remembered that the dress had given her a vaguely uncomfortable feeling of being in costume—and, then, her marriage had ended in divorce. The thought that the dress might add to the interest, and thus the success of the auction, was the deciding factor, and she voted to let it go.

Already exhausted from having to make so many decisions, my mother-in-law sighed and said, “All right then. Young people these days will have their own ideas about wedding dresses anyway.”

Carl, I see you finally got a date.” The auctioneer was ribbing his assistant who was pushing a headless mannequin onto the auction platform.

There was a sprinkle of laughter as the mannequin, dad in the family wedding dress, hunched into place. Now, under the harsh lights of the

HISTORY OF A DRESS

The decision to sell the dress, in which I had played a small part, was made quickly. It happened at my mother-in-law’s kitchen table the previous November. My husband’s family was in the midst of breaking up the house they—and generations before them—had lived in for many years. There would be an auction for some of the things, and countless difficult decisions had to be made: What do you do with a trunk filled with old letters? a butterfly collection? a tiny pair of children’s shoes? Could we justify holding on to things that no one ever looked at, things destined to sit in boxes in attics? It was in this vein that the wedding dress came up. Cate and I both had daughters. What, asked my mother-in-law, did we think? I was quick to answer. My family, unlike my husband’s, barely acknowledges tradition (“Are they still doing that?” my mother asked recently when I told her I was going to a funeral). This, and the fact that I came of age in the ’60s, made me pretty much indifferent to wedding “dither.” Even though I had two daughters who theoretically could wear the dress, I couldn’t imagine my girls would want something that old-fashioned. I voted to let it go.
A convention hall, our decision seemed all wrong.

I was sitting with several members of the family and Laura, who was just to my right. She'd come along to the auction hoping to find porcelain, but as the bidding on the dress — halting at first — accelerated, she got a resolute expression on her face and raised a hand. Laura has one son, no daughters; I couldn't have been more surprised.

She stayed in, until she got the dress. Later I asked her why. "There I was in the midst of your family — including your sister-in-law, who'd actually worn the dress — and I just couldn't stand the thought of it going off to strangers." Seeing the dress on the block had given me the creeps, but to me the dress was more a relic than a living piece of history. Then again I hadn't worn it, and — maybe more importantly — I hadn't ever dreamed of wearing it.

Eleanor called several months after the auction to ask if I knew what Laura planned to do with the dress, clearly upset by its loss. As it turned out, Laura had no plans. She'd vaguely thought of donating the dress to a museum, perhaps with a proviso that family members could borrow and wear it for their weddings if they chose to. Basically it had been put on a shelf in her closet, where it might have stayed for years if I hadn't called. Laura was delighted to think of the dress finding its way home.

The return of the dress put us in a celebratory mood, and we all decided to go and walk the Vassar campus, which is not far from Eleanor's home. We parked at Alumnae House, and then walked down the hill, setting out along still familiar paths and sidewalks. As we passed old buildings and new, we remembered, or tried to, the names of classes and professors, and told stories of our times as students. I have thought back on that day more than once, of the deep feeling of connection I felt to these women, suspended as we were between past and present.

Later Laura and I drove back together to our homes in neighboring suburbs. "Just out of curiosity," I asked her, "where is your wedding dress?"

"In the attic," she answered simply.

My nontraditional dress was in the attic, too. I'd thought about getting rid of it from time to time, but somehow I couldn't. The dress newly rescued by Eleanor would undoubtedly be relegated to a closet shelf or a place in the attic. There are probably thousands — perhaps thousands upon thousands — of wedding dresses in boxes in closets and attics all across the country. What was the sense of all this? I wondered.

I pointed out to Laura that this had not been a "good-luck" dress. Care divorced after wearing it, as had her older sister. Her response was quick and emphatic, "It's not the fault of the dress!" she said. It turns out Laura had called off her first engagement, just weeks before the wedding. "I put my dress in the box," she said, "then crisscrossed it with tape as if it were a spirit to be locked in." Later, when she was ready to marry (a different man), she pulled the tape off the box, and retrieved her dress.

I thought of my sister, who had one of the most bitter and protracted divorces in history. Had she saved her wedding dress? "No," she answered when I asked her some days later. "I finally decided not to keep it; but I did keep the garland of flowers that I pinned to my hat." A memento of the beginning, even though the end had been harsh.

But what about Eleanor? Why such pain about a wedding dress? Eleanor and her cousin Alida were in line to wear the dress, she told me, the only two in their generation to be eligible. Alida, however, died at the tragically young age of 23, and Eleanor has not married. The beautiful dress was passed on to a new generation; but even so, Eleanor's feelings about its importance, the connections and the rich associations embodied by the dress, remain to this day.

As I thought about Eleanor's strong emotions, two pictures came oddly to mind. In the first, my daughter Elizabeth is setting up a Barbie wedding under the apple tree behind our house. She and her best friend are busy lining up all the guests dolls, putting apple blossoms in Barbie's hair. Ken, in a suit, stands ready to claim his bride. The girls are totally, happily absorbed in their production. Now flash forward to Elizabeth, age 17. We are driving home from a college visit, and she is worrying about the cost of tuition. I tell her that her father and I have planned how to cover the expenses, and not to worry — maybe it just means she won't have a big deal wedding. Her face falls. "Oh, but I want a beautiful wedding," she says, and goes on to describe in startling detail how the bridesmaids will look, the wildflower bouquets on each table.

The past, the future, the fantasy, the reality — so much comes together in a wedding dress. Like many in middle age, I want to get rid of things, to simplify. I am all for cleaning out the closets of our lives; but this was one time it felt right to put something back on the shelf. 

Liz Dubben Livingston '89 is a writer and editor living in Connecticut. She is working on a collection about wedding dresses, and would love to hear from any readers with stories they'd like to share (vq@vassar.edu). Eleanor Livingston '41 lives in Colorado; where she is pursuing research in biochemistry.
A former president of the Red Cross and the first woman director of the National Institutes of Health (NIH), this Vassar graduate has taken on some tough tasks. And the slate ahead doesn’t promise— including preserving post-9/11 Red Cross donations in a Liberty Fund, for exclusive use in terrorist-related response and readiness; championing the efforts of Israel’s Magen David Adom to be included in the International Red Cross movement; and launching the largest-ever study of women’s health issues—that’s never made her popular. But little opposition rarely stops her.

A cardiologist trained at Harvard Med and Johns Hopkins, she’s followed a lofty career path that included decades at the Red Cross and NIH (Healy is head of the Research Institute at the Cleveland Clinic and the coronary care unit at Johns Hopkins, dean of Ohio State University’s College of Medicine and Public Health, and president of the American Heart Association). She’s served, in an advisory capacity, three U.S. presidents (Reagan and both Bushes), and followed her own political instincts when she ran for the U.S. Senate from Ohio. She’s also written hundreds of peer-reviewed manuscripts and authored A New Prescription for Women’s Health: Getting the Best Medical Care in a Man’s World (W. W. Norton, 1993).

Now a columnist and senior writer for U.S. News and World Report (she also wrote the "On Health" column), Healy is somewhat relieved to be out of the limelight. In fact, she’s pleased to be writing, which allows her to offer her opinions and weigh in on policy issues, perhaps on a more personal level. "It’s really just another version of being a doctor," she says. "It’s a way to communicate with people about one of the most important things in their life: their health."

In choosing her topics (recent ones have included teenage depression, the re-importation of prescription drugs from Canada, breast implants, the health risks of air travel, and the dubious demise of "safer" cigarettes), Healy taps her two decades’ worth of patient care, experience in public policy, and extensive work as a researcher and scientist. Always, she abides by one simple rule: "Imagine you’re the patient."

Her work in the media—including six years as a medical assistant and commentator for CBS News, editor of the Journal of Women’s Health, and adviser for Prevention magazine—has made clear to her the necessity of talking to the public about complicated issues in understandable ways. And beyond that, she says, "medicine has moved in the realm of being something that must be, should be, driven and dominated by the needs of patients. What do they need to know? There’s no question that the biggest variable in health care is education—whether or not you’re informed about your health and well-being and use that information in a way to positively affect your life and your family’s life."

The swell of magazine, newspaper, and Internet articles—notes to mention books—that address health issues has grown a long way in getting people involved in their own well-being. "I don’t know any other country that covers health so avidly," Healy says. But that doesn’t mean it’s easy to sift through all the information. Medicine has become more and more complicated, she says, and that shows no sign of letting up.

One notable change in recent years is the attention that’s been given specifically to women’s health issues. Even 10 or 15 years ago, Healy says, "it was a struggle to have people take you seriously when you were talking about the fact that differences between men and women weren't being adequately addressed in the health-care environment, and in the research environment. It was sort of seen as "feminism running" or a distorted vision. Now you pick up a journal, and in virtually every area of medicine, you see studies examining fundamental differences between men and women— in the pathophysiology of disease, and how diseases should be treated."

Healy has played a key role in bringing women’s health-care issues to the fore and changing the mindset. As head of the NIH in the early 1990s, she launched a Women’s Health Initiative (WHI) effort to study the causes, prevention, and cures of diseases affecting
women over 50. “Mystery women,” Healy calls them, because there was so little known about their risk factors for heart disease and cancer, or about dietary concerns or hormone replacement therapy (HRT).

“It was a really bold step,” Healy says. The WHI—at the time, the largest clinical study ever undertaken in the world—teamed up 40 major women’s health centers across the country to examine the health and well-being of women over 50. It came at a time, Healy recalls, when “people were saying it couldn’t be done because you couldn’t get women to enroll in trials, it was too big, too expensive—which, let’s face it, was being done at the time. The world seemed ready to put hormone replacement therapy in drinking water [as if it was] good for everybody.”

Healy’s work at the NIH was cut short when the Clinton administration took office. (She’d been appointed to the directorship by George H. W. Bush in 1991.) While her tenure in the post did allow her to oversee the WHI, time ran out before she could fully launch a similar initiative focused on nutrition. In terms of medical science, she says, “I think nutrition has really fallen through the cracks at every level. It’s time, as it was 10 years ago, to look at it, in part because we now have more insights into genetics. Everyone doesn’t have the same risks. People have different diets; there are reasons for that. A particular diet might be good for some people and not for others.”

Nutrition “is the ultimate biochemical interaction—the human organism reacting with the environment, daily, in a very intimate sense. And it’s been starved for research funding,” Healy says. “If you don’t invest in research in a particular area, you’re not going to have any scientists working there. They might have all the ability and attention to doing it, but if there’s no money, there’s no ability to set up laboratories and train new scientists.”

Nutrition studies, no matter how simplistic they might seem, need to capture funders’ attention, Healy says. “Again, if you focus on interest are necessary companions of science. And, in trademark Healy fashion (she ends all her addresses this way), she concluded with the maxim, “At the end, what really matters is who you loved and who loved you.” It’s a sentiment she holds near and dear.

“I’ve been with many people in the last moments of their lives,” the cardiologist says. “I’ve sat at their bedside and held their hand in the last moments of their life. They’ve shared with me where they are, what’s burdening them, what’s giving them any kind of solace. You never hear anyone talk about the money they did or didn’t make, the jobs they had or didn’t get, the vacations they went on...it’s only about who they love and who loves them. Because in a way, that’s a measure of your life—your family, your friends. That’s the most important thing, and you have to keep it in your heart at all times. It doesn’t mean you don’t enjoy your life and what you’re doing. But ultimately, we all will face that time.”

When Healy had a brain tumor a few years back, she had a life-assessing moment of her own, which only reinforced her view. “You’re there in a very lonely time in your life, and your relationships are the things that define who you are and how you get through that period of time, whether it’s for good or bad.”

In becoming a doctor, Healy “approached medicine as both an intellectual and a spiritual, humanitarian, endeavor. I still feel that way, absolutely,” she says. “I think the moment medicine ceases to be [both those things], it’ll break with what should be an immutable quality in medicine, which is helping a fellow human being in distress.” Throughout her career, Healy says, whatever she’s taken on—“even if it seemed a little off the beaten path”—she’s done it as a doctor. “There are different ways to practice medicine,” she says. “But I’ve never ceased having the heart of a doctor, the mind of a doctor, the perspective of a doctor.”
what does the doctor say?

health-care coverage
It's not going to be an easy issue to solve, as medicine becomes more complex and offers more to virtually everyone. It's sort of an inevitable collision course; people keep expecting that medicine is going to get cheaper, not more expensive. And there's an issue of how to make the fruits of discovery available to the public at large.

diet and nutrition
We haven't tested any of these diets that are out there — cabbage soup, Atkins, South Beach. You can't help but see how woefully absent science is from them. We know so little, and there's no reason for it. Physicians are inadequately educated in the area of nutrition; the whole field is a neglected science. [Nutrition] may not be a drug, but in many ways it's more powerful than a drug — I mean, everyone eats.

obesity
It's public enemy number one. And we don't have a clue. I mean, how much of that is linked to diet? I bet there's a link there! Why aren't we doing research on this? Obesity isn't something that just belongs in the institute that does endocrine disease. It's much more than that. It's mind, it's body, it's cravings, it's a brain issue, a heart issue. In some cases an endocrine issue. It's not just a one-dimensional problem.

the proliferation of health books
In a way it's very positive; it shows that people are interested in learning about their health, in absorbing [the information] and making changes to lead healthier lives. I have no doubt that that puts the stronger burden on the research and education community to listen to that interest and recognize that you have an obligation to do more.

women in medicine
When I started out, you were lucky if seven percent of practicing physicians were women. In medical school, there was a rigid quota for how many women they'd accept in a class. There was sort of an attitude that [women] wouldn't necessarily give back [to the profession] or stick it out. It's now field in which men and women are about equally represented, though not necessarily in the leadership positions. When you have a strong presence of women as well as men, it changes the way you think about disease, and patients.

her personal life
I value my children, my husband, my immediate environment, keeping a sense of humor. I love to curl up and read, whether it's magazines or books... and I'm sort of a junkie for newspapers. And I know this sounds very pedestrian, but I love to shop with my daughters. It's the best time we have together. We talk endlessly.

why she didn't become a nun
I think my father was right — I would not have been a very good nun. But I thought a career in medicine was a way that I could do sort of a nun-equivalent. I guess I had a missionary zeal in me from when I was younger. I had this sort of romantic view of what I would like to do with my life, and I stubbornly and doggedly pursued it. It gave me a good focus for the early part of my life.

the women's health initiative
My hope is that the WHI continues beyond 16 years [it's funded until 2006], because you have this phenomenal human resource of women. In a few years, we'll have one of the largest populations of centenarians ever studied, in an organized way, in the history of the planet. So I think it really should be a resource for women's health and well-being way into the future, as long as those women are with us.

the red cross and 9/11...
Believe it or not, the final plan for responding to an attack by weapons of mass destruction — 'the disaster of tomorrow' — was literally on my desk about two weeks before [9/11] happened. If we'd only had a few more months [to prepare]... But at least we'd been thinking about it. We knew what we had to do. And it was an amazing time in terms of generosity and enthusiasm for the work we were doing.

life's biggest challenge
I think everybody has two lives — a personal life and a public life. I think the hardest thing in the world, and the most rewarding thing, is keeping your head together in all of the pressures that surround you, and making sure that the two [lives] mesh in a reasonable way. I put most value on that inner life, that spiritual life, and making that work. No one ever does it perfectly. You always ask whether you could do it better.

vassar
It was heavenly, one of the most idyllic times in my life. In that sort of pre-women's-lib time, Vassar was known for having women who were forceful and did things in the world. Now it has a different face, but I think it's stayed current, dynamic. It's still an idyllic intellectual environment. It's a great place; it's what college should be.
Risks and Rewards

When Lauren Robinson '86 resigned as a partner from the Chicago law firm of Schiff Hardin LLP, she was lured away by the promise of "doing good and doing well" at the same time.

"I wanted to do something where I could have financial self-sufficiency but also use my skills for social good," she explained. In 2002 Robinson entered the growing field of community development venture capital, working with funds that perform well and have a social mission. Still in Chicago, she is now a managing director of the Inner City Fund at Next Frontier Capital, a subsidiary of Chicago Community Ventures, started in 1999.

Inner City Fund, Robinson said, is the first and only community development venture capital (CDVC) fund in Chicago. There are approximately 68 active CDVC funds in the United States, with $550 million under management, according to the Community Development Venture Capital Fund Alliance, an industry trade association. Like traditional venture capital funds, CDVC funds invest in and provide strategic advice to growing businesses. But CDVC funds, Robinson said, invest in areas that traditional venture capital funds may avoid, such as inner cities and rural areas, to generate a "double bottom line" of economic and social returns.

Robinson's experience in corporate transactional law and in commercial lending give her knowledge she needs to assess a business potential for growth and its "competitive advantage" in its industry. After Vassar, where she was an English major, Robinson worked as a commercial banking officer for Marine Midland Bank in New York City's Garment District. She then earned her J.D. and, later, a master's in public administration (both from NYU).

She put in many hours and much hard work, and soon became Schiff Hardin's first African-American female partner. She gained valuable experience representing public and private companies in corporate transactions, including financings, mergers, and acquisitions. But Robinson was eager to address social problems — particularly urban poverty and unemployment. Which is what brought her to the Inner City Fund.

"It's sophisticated, challenging work that demands a high level of discipline, thought, and analysis," Robinson said of community development venture capital, adding, "It's risky, and it's long-term. You're investing in areas that have been mostly ignored, areas that are economically distressed, whether urban or rural."

Robinson recently saw a slogan she liked on a baseball cap: "A job is homeland security." But as she sees it, creating jobs isn't enough — they should be high-quality, sustainable jobs that provide a living wage, with benefits.

Equally important, Robinson said, is supporting businesses owned or managed by minorities and by people who live in the neighborhoods in which the Inner City Fund invests. "It's vital for people to own and control the production of goods and services in their communities," she said. "When residents own businesses where they live they have an economic stake in the well-being of that community, which motivates them to guard against urban blight."

Robinson and her colleagues are in the process of raising $30 to 50 million for the Inner City Fund — from banks, insurance companies, pension funds, individuals, and foundations. To date, the Fund has commitments of $2.5 million. Inner City Fund will invest in businesses in low- and moderate-income areas in Illinois, and minority-owned or managed or women-owned or managed businesses nationwide.

The Inner City Fund plans to invest from $500,000 to $5 million in each business, in industries ranging from light manufacturing to food production, and expects a net return of 20 percent over a 10-year period.

Robinson believes the presence of successful businesses in economically distressed communities will create new hope among residents. "We believe we can create hope and possibility by creating businesses — and subsequently jobs — where there weren't any before. It all starts with a job. A job is fundamental to participating in the economic mainstream, striving toward bigger goals, supporting one's family, and inspiring their dreams."

For more information about the Inner City Fund and Chicago Community Ventures, visit www.chicventures.org.

— Corinne Militello '98
For the typical Vassar student, spending an inordinate amount of time in the Mug doesn't lead to a fulfilling post-graduation activity; at least, not a paying one. But for several Vassar alumnae/i, late nights spent in the tiny on-campus club paid off. No, they didn't become exotic dancers; they're disk jockeys.

"The immediate goal when I'm playing out is to release people from the stress that builds up working and living in New York City. If I can broaden your musical interests, great, but mostly it's just about motivating you to dance and have fun." — Ayres Haxton '98

Most people at a party don't give a second thought to the person who is mixing the music unless it suddenly stops. Yet the DJs behind the sound booth are always attentive to the pulse of the crowd and the rhythm of each track, trying to keep the momentum high and the party going. Ayres Haxton '98, Eugene Cho '98, Ian Lawrence '99, and Ben Butler '99 are among those who have taken their musical skill into the real world and are now spinning for dollars at clubs, parties, and events in New York City and beyond.

Ayres Haxton, a.k.a. DJ Ayres, started out on the radio in his home state of Mississippi, and continued as a host at Vassar's own radio station, WVVKR. But, inspired by other campus DJs, Haxton began to delve in the art of mixing music tracks. "I learned to blend and scratch and really fell in love with moving a crowd," said Haxton. "Plus my voice was too silly for radio. I was better off) mixing records and keeping my mouth shut." His junior and senior years he got gigs in the Mug, which taught him "how to rock a party for five hours straight and keep it fresh on a shoestring budget." Currently, DJ Ayres can be found in NYC nightclubs several nights a week, spinning "whatever the crowd is into on a given night." Vassar, he said, "is a great incubator for anyone who wants to produce music, play in a band, or spin records."

Eugene Cho agrees. "In retrospect, the Mug was an incredible gig," he said. Cho, who spins at NYC clubs, also has fond memories of his fifth-year reunion. "Everyone was committed to partying harder than they should have, and Ayres and I played the Fugees version of "Killing Me Softly" about 40 times," he remembered. A producer as well as a DJ, his music has recently been featured in ads for South Park (for which he collaborated with Haxton) and the sneaker company AND1. Although he seems to have found success in his career, Cho has one complaint: "I think Mug DJs should get paid more."

Ian Lawrence, a.k.a. Stimulus, also honed his trade at the Mug, where attempting to please "all of the different people, while trying to play what I liked, helped me learn to read and direct crowds," he said. Practical application of this talent has included jobs at Studio 54 and the 2003 Democratic National Committee's presidential gala. Stimulus plays at NYC venues three to four nights a week, and also works in Washington, DC. Additionally, he is a member of the hip-hop/funk band Real Live Show. "DJ-ing keeps my ear to the floor and allows me to have fun and make money while making connections that support my career as a musician," he said.

It was Ben Butler's background as a guitarist that got him into DJ-ing. A music major, he said, "I had been performing for some time [but] liked the freedom and anonymity that DJ-ing offered." He was also drawn to the social aspect of the activity. "It was about being out, playing and promoting music that really moved me," he said. Upon graduation Butler leapt right into the New York City nightlife scene, and continues to spin at one of his first venues, the Soho Grand Hotel's Grand Bar & Lounge. Recently he has also played private events at the Guggenheim Museum, which aptly reflects his personal philosophy about DJ-ing: "Musical trends influence everything — fashion, film, literature, art — and reflect where we are as a culture," he said.

When he's not in the classroom, Leonard Nevarez, assistant professor of sociology, can also be found in the sound booth. A radio disk jockey since high school, Nevarez started "beat matching" (blending two songs together) a few years ago. "I had been getting into electronic dance music for several years by then," he said, "and I finally decided to splurge on the equipment for a real DJ setup."

His current gigs include summer jobs in New York City clubs, corporate parties, and a tour this March in Germany as part of a multimedia ensemble.

Nevarez's musical background includes stints in various bands, but at the moment he's satisfied to keep his day job. As a freelance DJ, he plays house, techno, and 1980s new-wave music as he pleases. This creative control appeals to Nevarez, even if it did prompt a listener to ask if he could "like, play a real song now?" "I'm very happy now to remain an amateur and not to have to compromise what I want to play or do in order to reach a wider audience and make more money," Nevarez said. — R.B.
Advocating Responsible Security

"It’s difficult enough to think about one’s own mortality; it’s overwhelming to think about the mortality of the species. And that’s what we’re talking about.” So said Jonathan Granoff ’70 on the Public Radio International show *Humankind* in 2002.

He’s referring to the consequences of nuclear war. Granoff, an attorney from Pennsylvania, is president of the Global Security Institute (GSI), an organization whose mission is “to achieve incremental steps that enhance security and lead to the global elimination of nuclear weapons.” Founded by former California senator Alan Cranston, the GSI has a board of advisers that includes Jane Goodall, Mikhail Gorbachev, and Rigoberta Menchú. The institute works to educate, and influence policy made by global leaders. Its constituents include Congress, heads of state and government, and parliamentarians.

In a world that is constantly shaken by terrorists, political conflicts, and regime changes, the possibility of nuclear disaster is not an idle threat. On *Humankind*, Granoff stated that “the greatest threat humanity faces is the inevitable — accidental or intentional — use of a nuclear device.” Currently, the nuclear arsenals of Russia and the United States hold enough firepower to literally destroy the planet.

Which is why Granoff devotes his time, scarce as it is, to advocating the elimination of nuclear arms. In addition to the GSI, Granoff is also involved with organizations such as the Lawyers Alliance for World Security, the NGO Committee on Disarmament at the UN, the Lawyers’ Committee on Nuclear Policy, the Temple of Understanding, the Middle Powers Initiative, and the Committee on Arms Control and National Security.

He’s involved in the peace and security movement partly because “it forces us to realize that our fate is interconnected with our alleged adversary, that if we lob nuclear weapons at an adversary, we suffer as well. We cut off the limb we’re sitting on.” He hopes that people can come to an understanding of what he terms “global responsibility,” a sense of accountability that extends beyond patriotism. “We think, ‘Well, I’ll protect my nation, and that will be enough.’ Not now,” said Granoff. “A hydrofluorocarbon molecule...does not care about national boundaries.”

The danger posed by nuclear weapons isn’t limited to an intentional attack by one group or country. With thousands of warheads at the ready, there is also the possibility of accidental detonation. Decreasing stockpiled arms, while increasing the security of remaining nuclear weapons and materials, could reduce accidents.

But as Granoff sees it, reducing the number of nuclear weapons isn’t enough. As long as the potential for mutual destruction exists, everyone in the world is at risk. Granoff holds world leaders accountable for this gamble. “The little boys have got to give up their toys, because the stakes are too high right now.”

— Rachel Beck ’04

To learn more about the Global Security Institute, visit www.gsinstitute.org.
Books Noted

** FICTION **

** THE KILLS **
By Linda Fairstein ’69
Scribner, 2004

** THE BURNING LAND **
By Victoria Straus ’77
HarperCollins, 2004

** POETRY **

** IN ANGLED LIGHT: **
Selected Poems
By Joan Joffe Hall ’56
Antrim House, 2004

** BRUSH WITH REALITY: **
Poems and Drawings
By Kath Howell ’64
College Avenue Press, 2004

** SELAH **
By Joshua Corey ’92
Barrow Street Press, 2003

** MARCH BOOK **
By Jesse Ball ’00
Grove Press, 2004

** NONFICTION **

** THE SECRETS: **
How to Control a Man
By C.E. Cost ’82
The Secrets Publishing Inc., 2002

** GRACE UNDER PRESSURE: **
Passing Dance Through Time
By Barbara Newman ’66
Limelight Editions, 2004

** WELCOME HOME! **
An International and Nontraditional Adoption Reader
Edited by Lita Linzer Schwarz ’50 and Florence W. Kaslow
The Haworth Press, 2003

** REINVENTING ROMANTIC POETRY: **
Russian Women Poets of the Mid-Nineteenth Century
By Diana Greene ’69
University of Wisconsin Press, 2003

** THE EARTH AROUND US: **
Maintaining a Livable Planet
Edited by Jill Schneiderman, professor of geology
Westview Press, 2003

** GUIDE TO NEW YORK CITY LANDMARKS **
By Matthew Postal ’03 and Andrew S. Doikart
John Wiley & Sons, 2003

** WHAT REALLY HAPPENED TO THE CLASS OF ’93: **
Start-Ups, Dropouts and Other Navigations Through an Untidy Decade
By Chris Colin ’97
Broadway Books, 2004

** IN A TIME OF TERROR: **
Dialogues with Jürgen Habermas and Jacques Derrida
By Giovanna Borradori, associate professor of philosophy
University of Chicago Press, 2003

** MILITARIZED MODERNITY AND GENDERED CITIZENSHIP IN SOUTH KOREA, 1963-2002 **
By Seungsook Moon, assistant professor of sociology
Duke University Press, 2004

** THE PRESCRIPTION FOR HAPPINESS **
By M.J. Momot Price ’93
PublishAmerica, 2004

** FOOD LOVERS’ GUIDE TO CONNECTICUT **
By Patricia Brooks ’47 and Lester Brooks
Globe Pequot Press, 2004

** OVER MY HEAD **
By Claudia Osborn ’76
Andrews McMeel Publishing, 2000

** RUN IT LIKE A BUSINESS **
By Richard J. Koreto ’84
Dearborn Trade Publishing, 2004

** CHILDREN/YOUNG ADULT **

** MAMA SAYS, “MONEY DOESN’T GROW ON TREES” **
By Iris Marie Mack ’78
Xlibris, 2004

** ZEYNEP: THE SEAGULL OF GALATA TOWER **
Story and pictures by Julia Townsend ’87
Çitlembik, 2003

** VEGAN, VIRGIN, VALENTINE **
By Carolyn Mackler ’95
Candlewick Press, 2004

** TIME WILL TELL **
By Deb Takes ’72 and Suzanne Bush
Imaging Possibilities, 2004

** DAFFODIL **
By Emily Jenkins ’89
Farrar, Straus & Giroux, 2004
The Glamour of Working in Television

While interning at Poughkeepsie Cablevision, Thomas Paivanas '76, Paul Leslie Kovit '75, and Eric Richard Wassyng '75 (l-r) worked as cameramen for The Sophia Show, a live, local-access talk show. This photo, which originally ran in the Winter '75 VQ, shows the crew and Sophia Paivanas (Tom's mother) herself "on location" in Poughkeepsie. Though The Sophia Show has disappeared from the airwaves, its legacy lives on in the students who still do field work at television stations in Poughkeepsie. — R.B.
A Royal Honor

Queen Elizabeth II bestowed an honorary Officer, Order of the British Empire award upon Rebecca Eaton '69 this past December. Ambassador Sir David Manning presented the medal to Eaton at the Washington, DC, ceremony (pictured right). The OBE, which is one of England’s Orders of Chivalry, recognizes "individuals who have made an important contribution to British interests."

Eaton has been the executive producer of the PBS series Masterpiece Theatre and Mystery! since 1985. Both shows are dedicated to skillfully presenting British drama to an American audience. For her work on the productions, Eaton has won numerous Emmy and Peabody awards, and been nominated for two Oscars (for Mrs. Brown).

As a non-British citizen, Eaton was only eligible for an honorary OBE, but the tribute is no less respected or notable. "One of the joys of my job is the opportunity to present England’s rich culture and history to American audiences through drama," said Eaton. "It’s gratifying to be honored for work which I love."

To read an article on Rebecca Eaton’s work for PBS, which appeared in the Winter '89 Quarterly, visit www.aavc.vassar.edu/vq/summer2004/extras.html. — R.B.
A character in Shakespeare's "As You Like It" proclaims: "I like this place, and willingly could waste my time in it." Many actors would gladly "waste" their time in a theater, yet few get the chance to do so full time. But thespians Caleb Mayo and Timothy Sekk, both class of '03, have been doing just that. For almost a year, the two have been performing with The Shakespeare Theatre of Washington, DC, as acting fellows. The fellowships, which were given to only six actors this year, allow Mayo and Sekk to participate in a full theatrical season while also receiving professional training. "We're doing a lot of furniture moving and spear carrying," said Sekk, "but we get some speaking roles too."

"The fellowship has been, and continues to be, a rich and rewarding experience for me," said Mayo. "It is, indeed, nearly all consuming of my time," he acknowledged, "but the payoff is in the work."

Thus far the two have been onstage in productions of "The Rivals," "A Midsummer Night's Dream," and "Henry IV, Parts 1 and 2." Starting in June, you can catch them in "Cyrano de Bergerac." For more information, contact The Shakespeare Theatre at 202.547.3230, or www.shakespearetheatre.org. — R.B.
When Sylvia Crane McLaughlin ’39 learned that she was the recipient of the Spirit of Vassar Award, she was “overwhelmed.” The award, which recognizes outstanding commitment and service to Vassar or another community, is “such a great honor,” said McLaughlin. “I’m very grateful when people express their thanks.”

Not as grateful as the many people who have benefited from McLaughlin’s infinite altruism. An unintentional activist, McLaughlin’s volunteering history spans more than 40 years and includes a multitude of accomplishments.

In 1960, the city of Berkeley planned to fill in much of the San Francisco Bay to create real estate for hotels, office buildings, even an airport. Around the same time, the Army Corps of Engineers in its “2020 Report” to the U.S. Chamber of Commerce showed that 70 percent of the bay was shallow enough to be filled. Alarmied by the prediction, which had been published in a local paper, McLaughlin joined up with Catherine Kerr and Esther Galick to do whatever they could to protect the bay.

From that simple motivation, the Save San Francisco Bay Association was born. “Sometimes I look out at the bay and wonder how we did it,” said McLaughlin. But they did. With “persistence, determination, and lots of luck,” McLaughlin and her friends fought developers, politicians, and public ignorance. They won.

Now, the Save the Bay organization is a landmark environmental association, and its early accomplishments are regarded as legendary. McLaughlin and the others are highly respected as heroes of the conservation movement, and for being among the first environmental activists in the nation. In 2000, McLaughlin stepped down from Save the Bay, after four decades of hard work and achievements.

Her volunteer work, not limited to Save the Bay, has stretched far and wide. She has been a delegate to the White House Conference on Natural Beauty, former director of the National Audubon Society, and a member of the steering committee for the Governor’s Conference on California Beauty. She also served on the City of Berkeley’s first Advisory Committee on Waterfront Planning.

Somehow, McLaughlin also found time for Vassar volunteer work. She served as president of the East Bay Vassar Club from 1932 to 1956, was a special gifts chair for her 50th reunion, and a scholarship fund chair as well. In 1971, she was one of 39 distinguished alumnae to participate in the AAVC centennial. With so many activities, how does she find the time? “You just make time for what you think is important,” she says.

Currently, McLaughlin is active in the Citizens for Eastshore State Park (CESP), which she helped to found in 1985. This coalition of residents and organizations worked to protect open space along the Bay Area shoreline. In 2002, the organization celebrated the establishment of the Eastshore State Park.

In 1977, McLaughlin was given the prestigious community service Wheeler Award for “Berkeley’s most useful citizen.” In March, the City of Berkeley’s Commission on the Status of Women (COSOW) honored McLaughlin as an Outstanding Berkeley Woman. Recognized for their “contributions to the Berkeley community,” the 14 recipients were given certificates from the California Legislature and COSOW.

Meg Vencek Johnson ’54, chair of the AAVC Awards Selection Committee, noted that McLaughlin’s “decades-long commitment, and her willingness to work for change on every front and in every form available to her, shows the impact that one person can have.”

“It’s been very gratifying,” McLaughlin said of her volunteer activities. Though she sees her extensive work as “almost a career,” she is amazed by the AAVC recognition. “A lot of people must be more worthy,” she said humbly. “I’ll try to live up to it.” — Rachel Beck ’04
**announcements**

**Rhode Island Seaside Home**
Middletown outside Newport, for rent weekly, 5 to 6 bedrooms, 4 bathrooms, fireplace, spectacular views. Contact Margaret (Pat) Jefferys '57 at 01044277225301, fax 010442074831002, email peterjefferys@compuserve.com.

**Bar Harbor, ME**
Oceanview cottage sited high on bluff overlooking Frenchman's Bay. 3 bedrooms, 2 full baths, convertible couch; sleeps 4 to 6. Granite fireplace in greatroom with sweeping views out to large deck across the Bay to Sconic Mountain and distant Sconic Peninsula. Staircase to private oceanside deck and beach. Renting by the day or week from May through October. Sorry, no pets. Contact Susan De Sancis '72 at desanct@fas.harvard.edu.

**Rustic Cabin in Maine**
Large living room, kitchen, 3 sleeping rooms (including 2 screened-in porches) overlooking Androscoggin Lake in Readfield, (about 18 miles east of Augusta); Spectacular view; swimming; canoe and dock; Sleeps 10 of Vassar alumna. Available for rental during summer months. Call 603.536.8926, 212.865.8864, or 718.324.4058.

**Lake Summit**
in the Blue Ridge Mountains of western North Carolina, 30 minutes east of Asheville. Weekly or monthly rental available year round. 4 bedrooms, 3 baths, large living room/dining room, TV, family room, 2 bedrooms, deck, screen porch, boat dock. Contact Katie Barnett '07 at kbarnett@vassar.edu. Sleeps up to 16.

**Rockport, MA**
townhouse on the shore, walking distance to classic NE town of shops, art galleries, beaches, restaurants. 3 bedrooms, 3 baths, sleeps up to 8; oceanfront decks overlook lobster buoys, scuba diving, sailboats, beach and garden. Train to Boston and other coastal towns. Easy daytrips to VT, CT, ME, as well as train to Boston, Gloucester, Salem, and other sites for summer or fall colors. Resident cats (2) included! Available weekly, summer or fall. Contact maryruth@shore.net or Mary Ruth Sole '80 at 978.546.7658.

**Proffessional Writing & Editing Services**
Vassar alumna with experience in nonfiction trade publishing at major lifestyle house offers top-notch writing and editing services to fellow Vassar alumni, students, and faculty. A.B. in classics and M.A. in communications, with vast experience in editing nonfiction, fiction, and screenplays. Let this pro assist with all your wordsmithing needs, as well as advise you on pitching proposals for publication. Will work on theses and academic material. Contact Lisa Drucker '89 at 212.749.3666 or Jacquie36@AOL.com to discuss rates and collaboration details.

**North Carolina Mountain Retreat for Sale**
This 3-story, 4-bedroom, 2-bath house is situated on 4 1/2 acres in Robbinsville, NC. (Graham County is approx. 90% national forests.) Beautiful mountain views, huge wrap-around porch, old barn adds character, stream running through property, minutes to boating and beach on Lake Santeelah, completely furnished! View property at: www.heartsong.com/NC. ONLY $189,000. Call, Karin Hilton Fosse '84 at 904.247.4527 or email kcfosse3@aol.com.

**Shelter Island Summer Rental**
Waterview, 3-bedroom, 2-bath home nestled between North & South Forks of Long Island. Walking distance to beach. Available by month or season. Contact Verna Neilson '74 at 518.821.4440 or vbn3@hotmail.com.

**Buffalo on the Green**
House Rental

**Beautiful Home**
near Vassar for rent. 4-bedroom, one-story modern home on 4 1/2 acres of woods in faculty neighborhood, 5 minutes from the Vassar campus. Back of house has large windows facing the woods. Living room with beamed ceiling, 2 baths, family room, fireplace, skylights, patio, central air, 2-car garage. Available January 15-August 15, 2005. Contact Professor Patricia Wallace at 845.471.0107 or wallacep@optonline.net.

**Santa Fe Pied-a-Terre**
Cozy, beautifully crafted 1-bedroom casita nestled among pinyon/juniper in historic neighborhood. Full kitchen, bathroom with jacuzzi, W/D, kiva fireplace, carved beams, tile floors, portal. Terrace overlooking wooded arroyo. Great privacy, hiking trails, 2 miles from plaza, 1 from Museum Hill. Dog friendly. Time share. Call Deborah Boldt '69 at 505.983.6414 or email DBArtemis@aol.com.

**Planning a Trip to Britain This Year?**
Why not let a Vassar alumna, resident in London since graduation and a qualified Blue Badge tourist guide, plan a memorable day or days for you? Car with capacity for 4 persons, insured to take tourists, and can plan trips tailor-made to your interests. Competitive prices. Sara Offutt Hebblethwaite '64, 18 Redgrave Road, London SW15 1PX, 020.8788.6910, or sara.hebblethwaite@virgin.net.

**Thurston House**
Cattyshack Island, MA. Available for rent in June, early July, and September. The 4-bedroom, 2-bath house is on the water and a short walk to the beach. For information, call David Thurston at 807.56.2159, son of Laura (Frisky) Broekmans-Thurston '49.

**Niagara Frontier-Toronto Region**
Large 4-bedroom house or detached garage apartment for rent, both with Lake Erie view, available spring, summer, or fall. Located minutes from Buffalo on Canadian side of border, close to Toronto, Niagara Falls, and historic Niagara-On-The-Lake. Quiet wooded location, traditional furnishings, wood-burning fireplaces, antique charm and decorations, full kitchens, and laundry. Contact Marian McCord Johnson '58 at 716.882.6365 or anthonjohn@earthlink.net.

**Princeville, Kauai**
Premium ocean bluff condo on Kauai's lush north shore. Spacious and casually elegant, 2 bedrooms, 2 baths, lanai, gourmet kitchen. Unobstructed ocean view, walk to elegant Princeville Hotel. World class golf; from $1,450/week for details visit www.pupoua2002.com or contact Susan Cadick Haney '55 at 831.439.9865 or schurmond@msn.com.

**Tenants Harbor, ME**
Simple, comfortable summer cottage on waterfront parcel available by week; June to September; 4 bedrooms, 2 baths. Tenants Harbor is a charming working harbor town within an easy drive of Camden, Rockland, and other coastal towns. The Monhegan ferry is within a 10-minute drive. Contact Henrietta Kerman '84 at hkerman@pspeducation.edu.

**Martha's Vineyard, MA**
Ideally located in secluded, private community 1 mile from town and shopping. Beautiful, well-appointed, modern, 3-bedroom, 2-full-bath house with decks and extensive plantings. Walk to private beaches and tennis. No pets. Contact Tova Ferro '86 at 212.253.6557 or markkova@nyu.com.

**Connecticut Estate For Sale**
Some 260 acres in Montville offer a private, country setting within minutes to CT and RI beaches and CT casinos. One of the few large tracts remaining in the area, it has a beautiful mix of open meadows and woods as well as road frontage. About 360 feet above sea level, the site offers vernal views of Long Island Sound. Marlene Cole '89, marlene@aya.yale.edu.

Vassar faculty, students, alumnai, and staff are invited to submit items to announcements. There is no charge for this bulletin board service; publication is as space permits. Submissions may be edited for length and style. Deadlines for announcements are June 20 for fall, Sept. 20 for winter, Dec. 20 for spring, and March 20 for summer. Fax: 845.437.7425; email: vc@vassar.edu. More listings can be found or posted to AAVC’s Online Discussion Board at www.aavc.vassar.edu.
Reunions and the Rubberneck Impulse

BY CHRIS COLIN '97

I spent the last two years not making progress or even holding ground so much as backsliding. Under the pretense of book research, I regressed my way back to high school and wallowed there among the dusty gossip and creaky gym class memories. It turns out those memories indeed shimmer in brief excursion, but tend to molder if you stick around (for that reason, Vassar class reunions last just a weekend, and a drunken one at that). But I wallowed nevertheless. The appropriate image here is the man wading into the baby pool for a quick, nostalgic splash, then staying on through the next two summers.

For those two years, I tracked down as many of my former classmates as possible and asked them to tell me about their lives since graduation. They responded with combinations of total dismissal and stunning candor. There was Lesley, who at 16 became the only mother in our class; at 28 she's made it out of the teen-mom thicket, and introduced me proudly to her sweet son, Jacob.

Another classmate, David, spoke to me of a crushing, paralyzing shyness that made high school nearly unbearable; he went on to find meaning as a Mormon missionary, and now he's working toward his dream of a professorship. With Lorraine, my first girlfriend, our reunion got sticky. Rather than excavate happy old memories, we found ourselves hashing out race issues (she's black, I'm white) that at 16 we'd managed to elude. John, a star offensive tackle, was the closest I had to an enemy—the culture wars of the '90s, as I recall, played out entirely between the two of us. Years later, John returned from Kosovo and left his coveted officer post in the Army. When we finally sat down together we were stunned, even moved, to find ourselves having a wonderful time.

The conversations about individual lives—What's your job? What do you do on Friday nights?—became larger conversations over the course of my interviewing: What happened to us? Who are we? What country is this, exactly? My classmates' answers began to flick at something larger, a swath of American history. In the 10 years since our graduation, the country rose and fell, or fell and rose, or simply convulsed along a series of profoundly chaotic moments. From Rodney King to O.J. to Monica to the Boom to butterfly ballots to 9/11 to Iraq, something like a decade started to emerge.

A book's marketing team likes words like decade. I, too, found myself intrigued by this generation putting its own stamp on such a momentous era. But ultimately it was my classmates' simple accounting of ordinary life that grabbed me most—what they cook for dinner, what their kids said to them in the carpool lane. And maybe this in itself was a comment on the decade. Maybe the '90s din of news and theory and infotainment and busyness and gadgets is precisely where tiny, fragile human lives got lost. Or maybe I just like hearing how people tie their shoes in 2004. Anyhow, this isn't exactly new terrain, not even among Vassar alumnae (Mary McCarthy '33 followed her fellow grads well into adulthood in The Group, of course, and Lisa Kudrow '85 conducted a different sort of investigation in Romy and Michelle's High School Reunion). There's good reason for this. In the scratching of great American itches, reconnecting with old classmates ranks up there with presidential inquiries: It's the rubberneck impulse, the province of obituary scanning and secret self-Googleing. And it's why we fly in from all corners to attend the class reunion.

It had been a decade since my high-school classmates and I all stood under the same roof, since we'd filled each other with the same mix of confusion and smallness and lust. In November, toward the end of my interviews, we gathered in Northern Virginia for our 10-year reunion. For 60 dollars you get your ticket, drinks, apprehension, babbling confession, subsequent regret, and a light buffet dinner. And by your last glass of wine, you tend to get the feeling the past isn't a place to linger.

After two years of homecoming, four hours of awkward mingling shouldn't amount to all that much. But something clicked by the end of the reunion, like that last bite of cake, and suddenly I knew it was time to graduate from high school all over again. I wrapped up the last of the interviews and reentered the adult world. Pep rallies don't come up in the adult world, or even all that much locker-room prattle; likewise, there are precious few interview requests from prying old classmates. You just tie your shoes as necessary and only now and then wonder what became of that quiet kid from calculus, or the girl you used to phone all those years ago.

Chris Colin '97 is the author of What Really Happened to the Class of '93, published in May by Broadway Books. He lives in San Francisco with his fiancée, Amy Stanfield '96.
A Place in the Sun

Your gift to the College through the Annual Fund plays a pivotal role in maintaining the unique setting for living and learning that is the Vassar campus. The 2003-2004 Annual Fund year ends June 30. It's not too late to show your support for the College through your Annual Fund gift. You can make your gift by check, credit card or securities, and you can give online, by going to https://admin.vassar.edu/giftform.html and using your credit card at our safe, secure site. If you have any questions or need assistance, please don't hesitate to call us at (800) 443-8196, or e-mail us at annualfund@vassar.edu.

Vassar.
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The Canadian Rockies: a Family Learning Adventure
July 25 – August 1, 2004

Images of the Arctic: Discovering Greenland and the Canadian Arctic
August 4 – 14, 2004

Shakespeare in the Mediterranean
September 27 – October 9, 2004

A Celebration of Mexican Colonial Cities
October 25 – 31, 2004

Treasures and Traditions of Modern Japan
November 4 – 16, 2004

For further information or to make a reservation, contact AAVC Alumnae/i Program Coordinator Kathy Knauss at 800.546.7282. Visit our Website at www.aavc.vassar.edu for our full list of trips in 2005, with destinations including the Caribbean, South Africa, China, France, Libya, Tuscany, Chile, and India.