Multi-cultural-ism

What is it, anyway?
An "all win" situation

Rowena Emery Rogers '43

Vassar has always occupied a special place in the heart of Rowena "Roe" Rogers '43. She recalls the particular intensity of attending Vassar during the wartime years, and the commitment then to excel. This commitment later prompted "Roe" to serve as a College Trustee. With the help of gift planning, she has now been able to make a significant gift to Vassar and to her reunion class.

"I hadn't really thought I could make a sizeable gift like this. But my brother, who is a banker, told me that gift planning might be a way to help out my school while looking out for my family.

"I had a number of stocks that had appreciated over the years. By donating them to a charitable trust managed by Vassar, I was able to avoid capital gains tax, realize a tax deduction, and insure myself of an income greater than what I was getting from the stocks themselves.

"Because I have six children and six grandchildren for whom I want to provide, I've used the income I get from my Vassar trust to pay the annual premiums on a life insurance policy. The proceeds from that policy will pass to my children outside my estate. So my children will get more than they would have received otherwise, and I've been able to make a substantial gift to Vassar as well.

"I would say to anyone in a position to make a gift, that a planned gift is a very wise way to do it. If you have a family, and still want to do something for the College, this allows you to do both. It is truly an 'all win' situation. It certainly worked out well for me. My only regret is that I didn't contribute more when I was still young enough to benefit from the lower life insurance rates."

A planned gift may be right for you. For more information, please call the Gift Planning Office at 914-437-5487.

To date, 16,000 Vassar alumnae/i, parents, and friends have contributed more than $156 million to The Campaign for Vassar through the Annual Fund and other methods of giving:

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Your gift will help Vassar meet its $200 million Campaign goal.
What’s new with you?

For Class Notes, of course
Class Notes

Please use the card at the back of this magazine to send an update about your life and thoughts to the Quarterly.

The Fall edition of Class Notes is now in production. News for the Winter column (November/December issue) must be received in the VQ office by August 1 for mailing to class correspondents by August 4.
FEATURES

SPECIAL SECTION

Multiculturalism

10 What Is It, Anyway?
Searching the campus for definitions.
by Willa Panvini '92

14 Early American Diversity
For historian James Merrell, capturing the multiplicity of voices in the past is essential for a historical sensibility. But the mantle of multiculturalism may not be.
by Georgette Weir

18 Jazz
A student writes of listening for individual players amidst the cacophony of family and cultural heritages in this fictional short story.
by Christine Garcia '95

22 Picture Perfect

A 1958 photograph of 57 jazz greats inspired an Academy Award-nominated film by a neophyte moviemaker from the class of '40.
by Carla De Landri '78

DEPARTMENTS

2 Letters

4 Campus Notebook

24 Omnium Gatherum

31 Person Place & Thing

32 AAVC Network

37 Class Notes

64 The Last Page
The Christopoulos McReed Mihalaps of Virginia
by Hope Christopoulos Mihalap '56
LETTERS

The Quarterly welcomes letters to the editor, preferably typed, double-spaced, and no longer than 350 words. Publication will be as space permits. We reserve the right to edit letters for style and length. Letters reflect the opinions of the writers and not those of the magazine, AAVC, or Vassar College. To be eligible for publication, letters must be signed and include a current address. Addresses: VQ, Alumnae House, 61 Raymond Ave., Poughkeepsie, NY 12601 or, e-mail: GEWElR@vassar.vassar.edu.

Where's the News?

Many congratulations on "Do the Media Limit Political Debate?"—on your publishing the article and the article itself. Recent evidence backing William Hoyne's points occurred March 1: the New York Times [radio] station WQXR all through the afternoon kept announcing that traffic on 5th Avenue was clogged all the way up to Central Park by a giant demonstration by hospital workers against the cuts being planned by the mayor and governor. I didn't go because I had a previous appointment, but when I came home I turned on NBC news to catch a view of the demonstration. NOT ONE WORD! and NO MENTION next day in the Times either. Estimates of attendance ran up to 20,000. Not only does "news help to reproduce the narrow political world," refusal to print news—deliberately—narrows the options people can consider.

Barbara Adler Zeluck '43
New York, New York

Posture Photos: Two Views

Dear me! It has happened! What all of us feared!
The dread posture pictures have now reappeared—
To prove to us only what everyone knows: Most of us really look better in clothes.

Nancy Mann Israel '53
Bethesda, Maryland

Josephine Ulloa Evans '42
Killingworth, Connecticut

Teaching our children to think for themselves, even to the point of bucking authority, is perhaps the most valuable tool we can offer them. The posture picture scandal brings this to the foreground clearly.

I strongly objected to having to pose undressed in front of a bunch of strangers, but did not dare voice my thoughts to the administration for fear of expulsion. Had we been ordered to march nude into the "showers," would we have done that as well? Rumor had it that Yale had access to the photos for picking dates, and it appears now that this may not have been so far from the truth. Some of us may wonder if these photos were responsible for our meeting our Yale husbands! Obviously, turning these photos over to other people beyond the medical staff was a terrible invasion of our privacy. Fortunately, I have lost my modesty with age and I am almost amused that photos of my body may be on exhibit in the Smithsonian.

[Recently], one of my daughters, a high school senior, was listening to a local policeman give a lecture. She was horrified to hear him present blatantly illegal search and seizure procedures as legal to her government class; basing suspicion on a person's attire, issuing threats of possible molestation by male officers of female "perpetrators," and threatening to murder persons responsible for shooting BBs at his horse. On my urging, my daughter spoke to the principal. The lecturer has toned down his subsequent talks, and my daughter plans to invite an attorney to present another view to the class.

Hopefully, this sort of guidance on our part will prevent such a sixty-odd-year-long wide-spread scam as the posture pictures from occurring again.

Barbara Constantine '66
Nantucket, Massachusetts

Editor's note: Posture pictures identified as Vassar '52 were destroyed by the Smithsonian in February under the supervision of College Historian Elizabeth Adams Daniels '41.

About "Rodeo Days"

It was distressing to see in the article in the Quarterly, "Rodeo Days" by Carla De Landri '78, on the life of Louise Larson Serpa '46, no mention of the cruel exploitation of animals that is involved in each and every rodeo. The Humane Society of the U.S. and the American Humane Association in a joint policy statement oppose all rodeos, and every major animal welfare organization in the country condemns them.

While a select few of the roping animals involved are too valuable to abuse, most are easily replaceable and are abused accordingly. Bucking horses and steers are made to do so by the use of bucking straps around their genitals, electric prods, raking spurs as well as whips.

It is true that cowboys are often injured in rodeos, but humans have a choice; animals do not. Humans are rewarded by fat purses; animals endure stressful long-distance shipping and many practice rodeo sessions.

Far from being an American—or western—tradition, modern rodeos exhibit skills almost totally irrelevant to cowboy activities past or present. California has more rodeos than any other state save Texas, so we have some familiarity with the situation, and we have seen the calf slammed against the steel fence, breaking his nose, bleeding, falling down, yet lossoed all the same, then left in the sun for six hours before being hauled off to the slaughterhouse.

My concern and disgust has to do primarily with the abuse of animals, but it is highly
ironic that Vassar, that bastion of women's independence and welfare, should associate itself in any way with this sexist, macho "sport." A quote from a book by Elizabeth Atwood Lawrence (Rodeo: An Anthropologist Looks at the Wild and the Time, University of Tennessee Press, 1982) illustrates a prevailing view of women by rodeo participants:

"Women should not rodeo any more than men can have babies. Women were put on earth to reproduce, and are close to animals. Women's liberation is on an equal to gay liberation—they both are ridiculous."

Thanks for letting me raise a voice of dissent.

Anne Williams Britton '45
San Francisco, California

Carla De Landri thinks that Louise Serpa ("Rodeo Days," Spring '95) is something of a rebel. I don't. While Ms. Serpa is obviously colorful, talented, and energetic, her blind devotion to rodeo, a conventional mainstream icon, would indicate that she is basically quite traditional.

A rebel questions her culture's traditions. Before embracing any activity, a rebel asks herself if said practice objectifies, exploits, and abuses other beings. If the answer is yes, she eschews that behavior, however pleasurable and/or profitable it could be for her. True rebels have gone on to purge their respective cultures of other cruel traditions, such as slavery, the disenfranchisement of women, and foot binding.

If Ms. Serpa were really a rebel, she would recognize that rodeo is nothing but a barbaric ritual of domination designed to feed the egos and wallets of humans. . . . In short, she would find a career that doesn't depend upon the brutalization of her fellow creatures.

Nancy McGara Lindsley
Flagstaff, Arizona

The MacCracken Legacy

I was delighted to see the article "Bridges to the World" by Elizabeth Adams Daniels '41, printed in the Vassar Quarterly of Winter 1994.

I have long wished that someone would make my father and his educational philosophy available to the present generation. Elizabeth Daniels has done it and more with her well written book Bridges to the World: Henry Noble MacCracken and Vassar College. Her research has been incredible and her interpretations most interesting. The chapter quoted in the Quarterly is an excellent introduction.

I wish you had made it more obvious that it was only a chapter and that the book was available from the Vassar Cooperative Bookstore. I find older graduates eager to get reminiscences. From another angle, a friend of mine, finding my father's thinking appropriate for today, gave the book to a young teacher engaged in developing educational reform in his school system.

Writing to my class, 1931, about Fall Council, I said I was delighted to find Vassar now still building bridges he advocated, such as the one between town and gown.

Mairsy MacCraken '31
Poughkeepsie, New York

Editor's note: We are happy to have occasion to repeat an earlier notice: Bridges to the World is available through the Vassar Cooperative Bookshop. Telephone 914/437-5857.

Another Remembrance of Helen Maguire Muller '45-4

I read with great interest the articles on Helen Maguire Muller '45-4 ("An Endearing Cosmopolite," Winter 1994). As one of the first batch of newly baked Vassar graduates to receive a Maguire Scholarship, I got to know Helen well and visited her and her family several times. It was in her flat in New York that my future mate and I planned a meeting between high-level business executives and South African trade unionists at the height of apartheid. She was, in her words, my "spiritual mother." So I felt particularly bereaved upon her demise.

As to the impression I got in the articles in the Quarterly on what was seen as Helen's contradictory strains, I would say that Helen, as I knew her, was a listener, a realist, and consistent. Like her mother, who had a European sense of a socially responsible market economy and cared a lot about underprivileged children in the U.S.A., Helen too cared. She believed that the market economy had a lot to offer to the communist world. She did not accept communism. She believed in talking with them, listening to them, and showing them that without capitalist expertise they would not be able to meet the needs of their people.

As a result of her article that appeared in the New York Times in favor of helping in the reconstruction of Vietnam just after the war, she was attacked as pro-communist. It hurt her that she had been misunderstood. Events, I think, have vindicated her. She stayed pragmatic to the end. In our last phone call late spring of last year, as I told her of my human rights research, she warned me that human rights need preparatory soil (i.e., a solid economic base) to take root in many of the poorer countries.

As for her own wealth, she was very Swiss in this respect. The golden rule for the wealthy, she told me, is modesty and avoiding extravagance. She carried out this rule splendidly.

I miss Helen terribly. For the first time, our young daughter saw me grieving. I shall never forget as I handed Helen a copy of my Ph.D. thesis on Islamic and comparative laws, she said with simple gratitude, "That's the first time anyone has made a gift of this sort to me. I am very grateful." As gratitude to her I am now trying to finance a first-time-ever chair in comparative law and religion to carry the name of Helen and Andre Muller. Anyone with ideas to help realize the project should feel free to communicate.

Christina Jones '68
Beyreuth, Germany

Do You Remember this Frost Poem from Chapel?

Can anyone help me with this? Robert Frost spoke one evening in Vassar Chapel during the winter of '58 or '59. He was 83 (!) at the time, and it was touted as probably his last public appearance. (It wasn't. We must have encouraged him!) His speech was not recorded. I am haunted by a little poem that he tossed off that I cannot find anymore.

The riddle sits in a circle, supposing.
The answer sits in the middle and knows.

Does anyone else remember this?

Jane Sutter '61
St. Louis, Missouri

Telephoning Vassar?

General Information
914/437-7000

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914/437-5445

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914/437-7100

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914/437-5406

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914/437-7300

Vassar Quarterly
914/437-5448

Frances Lehman Loeb Art Center
(Gallery information line)
914/437-5632
Board Chair Goes from James Kautz to Richard Van Demark '77

James C. Kautz, for twelve years a member of the Vassar College Board of Trustees and its chair for the past six years, will complete his tenure on the board effective June 30. He will be succeeded as chair by Richard E. Van Demark '77, who joined the board in 1982. Mr. Van Demark is the first male graduate of Vassar to be named chair of the college’s board of trustees.

Under Mr. Kautz’s leadership, Vassar has undertaken a number of major projects that have substantially enhanced the quality of life on campus for students and faculty as well as for the greater Poughkeepsie area community. Those projects have included the launching of the $200 million Campaign for Vassar; construction of the $15.6 million Frances Lehman Loeb Art Center; the creation of a program in the environmental sciences and the construction of the Priscilla Bullitt Collins Field Station for environmental science research; the establishment of an Intercultural Center for Asian, Black, and Latino students; the creation of a space for student theater productions, the Coal Bin Theater; and the renovation of a number of buildings on campus, including those housing the departments of English, geology and geography, computer science, and studio arts, and the offices of development and computing and information systems.

During Mr. Kautz’s tenure the groundwork also has been laid for the construction of a new observatory and a major addition to Vassar’s library, and a renovation and expansion of office, classroom, and laboratory space for the social sciences. In addition, Mr. Kautz and his wife, Caroline Barnes Miller ’55, have given generously to the college in support of the campaign.

President Frances Fergusson noted that “Jim Kautz has been an exemplary trustee and a superb board chair. He has always been there to guide the board, support the efforts of the campus, and reach out with curiosity and interest to students, faculty, and staff. Vassar has been blessed to have his leadership and I have been personally blessed by his good counsel and warm friendship.”

Mr. Kautz, of Summit, New Jersey, is a limited partner in the investment banking firm of Goldman, Sachs & Company in New York City.

Richard E. Van Demark of Sioux Falls, South Dakota, a Phi Beta Kappa graduate of Vassar in 1977 and a member of the board of trustees from 1982 until 1994, was re-elected to the board in February and will succeed Mr. Kautz as chair. After graduating from Vassar, Mr. Van Demark studied economics at Princeton University before entering the University of Chicago, where he earned an M.B.A. in 1981. He received a law degree from Northwestern University Law School in 1984 and went on to become a partner in the Chicago law firm of Bell, Boyd and Lloyd.

Mr. Van Demark is a national co-chair of the Campaign for Vassar and sits on the campaign cabinet, overseeing some Midwest and East Coast campaign regions. As a trustee of Vassar, he has served as chair of the board’s budget and finance committee.

While a student at Vassar, Mr. Van Demark was elected to Omicron Delta Epsilon, the honorary economics society, and was an officer of the students’ Famine Relief Committee. In 1978 he was a consultant to the senior minister of Riverside Church in New York City, doing research and developing policy on corporate responsibility.

Mr. Van Demark is married to Michelle M. Volin. They are the parents of a son and a daughter.

Student Fellowship Winners

Watson Fellowships

Three seniors have been awarded prestigious fellowships from the Thomas J. Watson Foundation to study and travel outside the United States after graduation. Tasha Gill, Jessica Lawrence, and Eric McGlinchey were chosen, along with 57 other winners, from a pool of nominees from 48 small liberal arts colleges nationwide. Vassar is the only school with three recipients. The fellowships provide a $16,000 stipend for the year.

Ms. Gill plans to study educated Muslim women who choose to wear the veil in Morocco, Senegal, Egypt, and Israel for her project, “The Veil and the Female Elite in Muslim Societies.”

Ms. Lawrence will document education projects on wildlife conservation in Belize, Brazil, and Guatemala, then present innovative methods from these projects to teachers, schoolchildren, conservationists, and local people living near a protected rain forest in Sumatra, Indonesia. Her project is entitled “Conservation, Communication, and Rain Forest Communities.”

Mr. McGlinchey will travel to Russia and China to examine the rerouting of Russian trade following the collapse of Moscow’s central economic control. His project title: “Russia’s Economic Transition: New Traders on Old Trade Routes.”

Other Awards

Maple Raza ’96 has been elected a 1995 Truman Scholar. She is one of 69 students nationwide to receive a $30,000 scholarship—$3,000 for senior year and $27,000 for two or three years of graduate study—from the Harry Truman Scholarship Foundation. The foundation awards scholarships for college students to attend graduate school in preparation for careers in government or public service.

Kia Coleman ’97 has been named a For-
Africana Studies Program Celebrates 25 Years

The 25th anniversary of the college's program in Africana Studies was commemorated by special programming throughout the spring semester. According to figures provided by the registrar's office, Africana Studies has graduated 95 majors since its inception in 1971.

Black History Month (February) was especially busy. Queens College professor Andrew Hacker gave the keynote address, "Bell Curves and Bigger Prisons: White America's Agenda?" In mid-February, Louis Wilson, associate professor of history and chairman of the Department of Afro-American Studies at Smith College, gave a lecture entitled "Forgotten Patriots in the American Revolution: The Case of Rhode Island." At the end of the month, a performance by the ASE (Ah-Shay) Drumming Circle, a women's drumming and percussion group that celebrates the diversity of African cultural expression through music and song, was featured.

Other events planned concurrently during Black History Month by the Black Students' Union included a black speakers series featuring, among others, New York City Chapter Black Panther Party member Janet Cyril. The BSU also sponsored a film series and photo exhibit, conducted seven workshops ranging in topics from "Time Management" to "Coping with Racism," organized trips off campus to museums and cultural events in New York City, and coordinated a discussion group called the Brunch Club, which planned to meet for two hours each Saturday in February "to increase consciousness, solidarity and trust within our community [and] to talk about issues that are affecting our lives such as faith, class, sexuality, self-concepts, body images, color and family."

Dances, parties, and a tribute to black art given by the Ebony Theatre Ensemble in the Coal Bin Theater rounded out the commemorative activities.

Alumnus Shares Business Experiences with Students

Media executive Robert Friedman '78, president of New Line Television, was this year's Executive-in-Residence at Vassar. Before joining New Line Television, Mr. Friedman was president of the Playboy Entertainment Group and a senior vice president and original member of the MTV founding group. He also worked with Warner Amex Satellite Entertainment Company in the development of the Movie Channel. He earned his M.B.A. from Columbia University's Graduate School of Business.

In addition to participating in academic programs, Mr. Friedman gave a public address on the future of television, film, and other entertainment media to members of the Vassar community and also spoke at a breakfast sponsored by President Fergusson for members of the broader Mid-Hudson Valley community.

Among the topics he addressed were product marketing and franchising of feature films, television programming, network and cable television development, pay-per-view markets, and the Internet. He also showed clips from recently released New Line Cinema films and discussed targeted marketing.

Vassar students questioned him sternly about his sense of artistry and the role he felt major production companies such as New Line played or should play in the development, marketing, and support of smaller market films. They also expressed concern about the mass marketing of products that grow out of movies and television shows, such as Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtle dolls, T-shirts, and the like.

The Executive-in-Residence program, established by the office of career development in 1982, brings national leaders to campus to share their knowledge, experience, and ideas with faculty and students.
Coffee Craze Hits Campus

Remember the old information desk and kiosk just inside the back entrance to the College Center near the bookstore? Well, they’re not just serving up information anymore. The former information desk is now a coffee bar where one can quickly pick up cappuccino, espresso, a famous-brand coffee from Seattle, and a variety of other flavored coffees of the day. The old kiosk has been cut in half and transformed into a counter-top. Run by the Retreat, The Kiosk, as the area has been dubbed, also serves a selection of goodies, including freshly baked biscotti, brownies, cookies, and scones, and an express bagged lunch for those on the run. It’s open Monday-Friday, from 8:30 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. and has quickly become one of the most popular campus stops for students, faculty, administrators, and staff.

Hey, Hey, Ho, Ho...

Students protest the GOP "Contract" along Raymond Avenue.

March 29, 1995, was "National Day of Student Protest Against the Contract for America," and a group of Vassar students hand painted signs and took to campus and local streets to shout their opposition to the Republican agenda. Aurora Kushner ’97, co-chair of Vassar’s Student Activist Union, commented, "I really thought that Vassar should participate. There are certain things that we just need to do—and this was one of them."

As a result, in less than 24 hours (students were on spring break until just before the protest date), Ms. Kushner and her SAU colleagues assembled approximately 30 students to make and carry signs in protest. The group began its march in Main Circle and proceeded around campus and along Raymond Avenue before returning to campus to make stops in the library and Rockefeller Hall, where they interrupted a faculty meeting. They then marched out to the intersections of routes 44 and 55, holding signs that read, among other things, "This is a Contract on America" and "Children Are a Collective Responsibility" and chanted, "Racists, sexists, antigays, born-again bigots go away!" and "Hey, hey, ho, ho, the contract’s gotta go!"

The SAU was also busy this spring rallying support— and bodies—for an "all out" protest of the Contract for America scheduled for May 6 in Times Square. W.P.

Psychology Program Planned for September

In conjunction with the 1995 Undergraduate Research Summer Institute fall symposium, a special program devoted to the current psychology program at Vassar is being planned. Topics will include the department’s history and plans for renovations to Blodgett Hall. Activities will include a lecture by a distinguished psychologist, a panel of young alumnae/i, and a roundtable on current issues in psychology. The program is scheduled for September 29-30 and a special mailing will be sent to those who majored in child study. If you would like to be added to the mailing list for this program or would like more information, call 914/437-5492.

1994-95 Winter Sports Highlights

At the conclusion of the men’s basketball season, Dax Kajiwara ’96 ranked fourteenth in the nation (Division III) for assists, contributing an average of 6.6 a game. The team was 5-18 for the season.

Women’s basketball, 14-8 for the season. Scoring 389 points, junior forward Kirsten Vogt moved into second place among Vassar career scoring leaders with 1,063 points. Vogt is the fourth player and the first junior to reach the 1,000-point milestone at Vassar, and she will shoot to knock Nicki King ’92 (1,295 points) out of the top career-scoring spot next winter. In the same game in which she earned her 1,000th point, Vogt set a new school record for most points by a single player in a game; she scored 34 to eclipse the record of 33 held by Sue Galloway ’86 since 1986. During the season, the team allowed opponents an average of only 50.0 points per game to rank fifth in the nation (Division III) for scoring defense.
Men's and women's fencing, with 13-9 and 6-9 dual-match records, respectively, hosted the NCAA Northeast regional championship. Dave Moorman '97 logged Vassar's highest individual finish at 19th (out of 24) in the sabre event. In the women's épée event, Lockett Allbritton '98 placed 16th out of 24. Allbritton also finished in fourth place in the épée event at the National Intercollegiate Women's Fencing Association championships in March.

Men's squash posted a 15-8 dual-match record, which included a second-place finish at the New York State championship and a fourth-place finish (out of eight) in the Summers Division of the national team championship.

Women's squash moved up two notches from last year's end-of-season national team rankings to no. 16, despite a 7-11 dual-match record. Four-time first team All-American Shireen Kaufman '95 won her way to third place at the singles national championship and was honored as one of three nominees for the Betty Richey Trophy—the highest honor bestowed on an individual player, based on sportsmanship, level of play, and contribution to the game. Kaufman wrapped up her brilliant Vassar squash career with a 110-15 overall record (.88 winning percentage) and a sixth or better finish each year at the singles nationals. Pippa Bond '99 and Jen Weiss '93 earned Academic All-American honors from the U.S. Women's Intercollegiate Squash Racquets Association.

Men's and women's swimming and diving earned 5-2 and 3-2 dual-meet records, respectively, posting their first winning seasons in four years and shattering 24 Vassar records. Senior Anya Bailis earned a trip to the NCAA Division III national championship, qualifying in swim in three freestyle events—the 200-meter, 500-meter, and 1,650-meter races, in which she placed 31st, 34th, and 17th, respectively. Bailis, who graduates holding school records in eight individual events and four out of five relay events, is the first Vassar student-athlete to qualify to swim in the NCAA national championship. Both swim teams earned All-Academic honors for the 1994 fall semester.

The New York State Women's Collegiate Athletic Association (NYSWCAA) named Vassar's no. 1 women's tennis singles player Elisa Strauss '98 to the NYSWCAA All-State Singles Second Team and gave no. 5 singles player Heather Cohen '97 honorable mention. Strauss and Cohen also received honorable mention for their play at No. 1 doubles.

Susan Colodny
Sports information director

Men's Volleyball Division III National Champs

The red-hot men's volleyball team captured the 1995 Eastern Intercollegiate Volleyball Association (EIVA) Division III championships—the equivalent of a Division III national championship. And, as hosts of the event, they did it on their home court.

The win put the team into the EIVA Tournament—open to Division I, II, and III schools, where they were matched against top-seeded Division I squad Penn State University. Vassar lost against that powerhouse, 3-0.

Stan Son '97 sets for Eric Boger '96 in the EIVA Division III championship final against New Jersey Institute of Technology. The Brewers won the championship title.

The Brewers, who finished second in the 1994 EIVA championship, joined the Eastern Conference of the EIVA in 1995 after winning the O'Donell Conference title in 1994. The prestigious Eastern Conference includes NCAA Division I teams Rutgers-Newark, Princeton, and Harvard; Division II teams Springfield College and Long Island University (LIU); and Division III NYU. With one conference match yet to be played against Princeton, Vassar is 3-2 in conference play—posting wins over Harvard, LIU, and NYU—and 15-6 overall for the 1995 season.
I f you want to improve your mood, visit the Wimpfheimer Nursery School at Vassar College. Yes, the Wimpfheimer is alive and well—so well, in fact, that the school’s new director, Julie Riess ’82, says they’re overenrolled for the fall, when, in addition to the traditionally offered nursery programming, the school will add full-day kindergarten for twelve children. Fifty-two children from ages three to kindergarten are expected next fall.

“We’re in wonderful shape and we’re not going to close,” says Ms. Riess, speaking enthusiastically about the new and expanded programs at the Wimpfheimer. As many parents will attest, full-day kindergarten is hard to come by, and Ms. Riess happily points out that in addition to providing a needed service to faculty and local parents, the kindergarten program will also enhance the academic experience for both students and faculty by creating opportunities for student teaching and faculty and student research.

As an important part of that process, the school has been renovating parts of its existing space. “We’ve almost finished a new research room,” Ms. Riess says, “and we’re in the process of getting ready to modernize the whole upstairs observation system.”

The Wimpfheimer is also a work-study and internship site for students from Vassar, Marist College, and Dutchess Community College. “In a given week we host 32 college students,” says Ms. Riess. “We have a good working relationship with Marist and Dutchess. I think we’re an important internship site to them, and it’s an opportunity for us as a college to do some of our primary sourcing to another group of students in the community.”

Of course, first and foremost, the Wimpfheimer continues to be a valuable resource to Vassar’s students and faculty in the departments of education and psychology. In addition to directing the nursery school, Ms. Riess, a developmental and social psychologist who earned her Ph.D. at Brandeis University in 1989, will teach a new course on theoretical and research applications in the preschool classroom next fall.

“I’ve always thought of the nursery school as a primary source,” she says. “Not only do the college students make use of it, and will be able to do so even more as we update our research facilities, but the faculty do. There are many researchers here, many psychology professors here, and we all have interests in various aspects of that age. One of the things that I actually hope to do in the next few years, after I’ve become a bit more settled, is to do my own research and develop my own research program again.”
Students in Ms. Riess's class next fall will spend five hours in the preschool classroom and two hours in seminar per week, where they will examine contemporary developmental literature from both theoretical and research perspectives. "Then their job will be to think of ways to take the best of what we know right now about children and figure out how to integrate that into a preschool classroom," she says.

In addition to teaching next year, Ms. Riess will be among the faculty advisers on one senior's project for her independent major, Environmental Studies for Education. "We're going to build a field station in the backyard," she says. "I've always wanted to build a working outdoor environmental field station for the children back there, and that's . . . going to be part of her senior thesis."

Ms. Riess also has hopes of bringing more students from different academic disciplines into the preschool and kindergarten classrooms. "I'd love to have some art history students come down and talk about art with the kids. I'll help them do the translation if they're unsure about working with the children, but I'd sure love them to bring ideas down," she says.

"I'd also like to cultivate relationships with faculty and students who normally wouldn't think about coming down here, folks who love children and just never thought of a less than full commitment." Her enthusiasm is expansive. She would like to add a second three-year-old program, but acknowledges there are space and staffing limitations. "We have this wonderful building, but it's not infinite."

Nevertheless, it seems things couldn't be better for Ms. Riess. "I've wanted this exact job since I came here as a college student," she admits, glowing. "It's like home."

Ms. Riess and her husband, Nicholas de Leeuw '82, have adjusted nicely back into the Vassar community where they met as undergraduates. Their two children, Josh, 9, and Leslie, 3, are adjusting well too. "Most of the children coming into our three-year-old room are from Vassar families," she says excitedly, including her daughter. "I think that says something special about the nature of the nursery school and being integrated into the community again."

As for herself, she says, "Not many people get the chance to get the one job that they really always wanted—that blends all your particular interests and skills into one pocket—and I feel really fortunate to be living that opportunity. There's just nothing like it."

W. P.
Two articles and a student's fictional short story explore aspects of meaning and significance in one controversial word.
What Is It, Anyway?

Searching the campus for definitions.
by Willa Panvini ’92

"I've stopped trying to define what multiculturalism is because it's something different for everybody," says assistant dean of the college and director of the Intercultural Center, Edward Pittman ’82. Nevertheless, he adds: "I think one ingredient is equity in representation. Equity in being able to hear one's voice as events or stories are being taught."

Mr. Pittman's initial words sound like a caution, but the unawary press on.

Dave Dening ’98, cofounder of a new conservative student group on campus, comes close to the dictionary definition of multiculturalism when he suggests that it is "basically attempting to preserve your own culture while living in the American culture." (According to the Random House Dictionary of the English Language, second edition, unabridged, multiculturalism is "the preservation of different cultures or cultural identities within a unified society.")

Interestingly, many on campus who discussed multiculturalism with the Quarterly did so, as did Mr. Dening, in terms of its relevance to American culture.

"I would talk about what it means to make the curriculum inclusive of the range of experiences, both cultural and racial, that have made up the social history of the country," says Luke Harris, political science instructor and director of affirmative action, "from our prehistory to the Constitution to contemporary issues across all disciplines."

Robin Li ’96 sees multiculturalism as "the center between pluralism and individuality in American culture." But she doesn't find the term itself particularly useful. She favors "interculturalism." Her definition of that: "How all these cultures work within one."

Ms. Li, who is majoring in American Culture, continues: "The reality is that we do all live together. We do all associate with each other and so we’re going to affect each other... So many people see multiculturalism as something new... Cultural exchanges are not new—we’ve been doing it for a long time."

Going back, for example, to the classical eras of Greece and Rome. The classics department is in the midst of a very structured review of its introductory history courses that aims to incorporate multicultural perspectives into those courses. The department is one of several active in similar curriculum development projects funded by a $100,000 grant from the Ford Foundation. The other departments that have participated..."
Questions of identity and representation bubble to the surface in any discussion about multiculturalism.

In the project are English, drama and film, women's studies, sociology, and education.

The objective of these reviews is to examine introductory and intermediate-level courses, test their origins and assumptions, and explore the possibilities for reshaping the courses so they include more multicultural perspectives. In each case, the review process involves both faculty and students, but each department has established very different methods by which it reviews its offerings.

In classics, for example, half-credit courses were devised on "Issues of Diversity in Greek History" and "Issues of Diversity in Roman History." Topics in the first included "Foreign Cults in Athens," "Diversity within the Athenian Population," and "Greek Cul-

ture in and out of Egypt." The examination of Roman history included, according to the syllabus, a look at "representations of Romans in the art of Dura-Europus, a city in Syria that contained a remarkable mingling of Semitic, Greek, Parthian, and Roman civilizations," as well as a study of the relationships among pagans, Christians, and Jews in Rome. Along with students, all classics department faculty participate in each of these development courses. The agenda for each includes lectures by visiting faculty and discussions about how to integrate new material into the classics curriculum.

How to integrate new material, is, of course, a key question across the curriculum. Does one add courses? Add whole programs or departments? Add new material to existing courses? All of the above have been done at Vassar over the years, and in response not only to issues connected to multiculturalism but, for instance, to science and technology.

"If multiculturalism were to lead to the fragmentation of curriculum—black studies, Asian studies, Hispanic studies, white studies only—that would be an unfortunate end," says associate professor and chair of Hispanic studies Andrew Bush. "But change takes time. While it would be an unfortunate end, perhaps it's not necessarily a bad intermediate stage."

"The ideal," he continues, "would be to include differing perspectives throughout the curriculum so you don't have to take an Africana studies course to read a black author or a woman's studies course to read women. There is no requirement, however, that all courses be multicultural. I could design a course on nineteenth-century white male authors and have plenty of material—and that course could be part of a multicultural curriculum."

English major Christine Garcia '95 makes a related point. Relegating authors generally not studied in the more "traditional" curriculum to "special" courses creates a problem, she says, because sometimes students—and faculty—treat the work differently.

"In a Shakespeare course, you're looking at the words—what does this sentence mean, what does this phrase mean? You're looking at character development, things like that. When you're in an American ethnic literature class, you're looking at 'How does this character feel as a person of this ethnicity?' I think that's important, but you're always caught up in this tension between focusing on the work itself and focusing on the political impact of that work on society and the world. I think if multicultural [texts] were implemented into the traditional curriculum, it wouldn't be such a big question. It would become more familiar rather than such a 'special' thing."

Robin Li agrees and points out that in addition to incorporating these texts into more traditional classes and looking seriously at them within those contexts, "what really needs to happen now is that people need to be able to critically look at [minority writers], because as it is, if there's one book from a minority writer, everyone feels obliged to like it."

Uma Narayan is an assistant professor of philosophy who studies social and political thought, family theory, and philosophy of law. She notes that she incorporates a multicultural approach into as many of her courses as she appropriately can. Sometimes it means bringing in unfamiliar texts; often it's a matter of rereading traditional texts with a new eye. "Within the [traditional] texts themselves, you'll find [multicultural] issues," she says. "There's just been a certain habit of reading where you skip these passages and chapters. I've been taught these texts and we routinely ignored these things. All you have to be willing to do is read them again."

Scholarship, meanwhile, creates momentum of its own. Leslie Offutt is a historian of the colonial era in Mexico and director of Latin American studies. Much of her focus in both her teaching and research is therefore on populations often considered outside the mainstream of history—including Latin-American and Native American groups. Of multiculturalism, she says: "It's easier to define in contradiction to what has been the canon to this point in time. For too long, we have had a history curriculum that has focused more on the experiences and the circumstances of life of the North or of European populations and has distanced itself, sometimes quite specifically in a denigratory fashion, from the history of nonwhites, non-European populations.

"My task, I feel, is to remind people of the presence of what has been historically considered the 'other' and therefore unworthy of attention and to point out that that 'other' is only such in the eyes of the Europeanized beholder. In fact, there are cultures and peoples whose experiences are tremendously rich, and as we learn about them, our lives are consequently enriched as well. That's my task—to inform
people of those who have been voiceless, who have been invisible historically, and point out the centrality of an understanding of those peoples to a liberal arts education.

There are obstacles, of course. Sweeping dismissal of "multiculturalism" is heard from some quarters. More focused objections can come from anywhere.

"People across these intersecting, subordinated groups are afraid of multiculturalism," says Mr. Harris. "You can find African-Americans who want to be included, but they can't understand what gay and lesbian people are all about, or what the gender issues are all about. You can find first-rate Euro-American feminists who really see the need to integrate the experiences of women in our curriculum, who are deeply hostile to issues that relate to race. So you've got a problem not just of narrow, Euro-American, privileged men, but of black people who feel uptight about Latinos, and Latino people who are uptight about Asians, and working-class people who are uptight about gay people, and all of this. I think it has everything to do with where we are at this particular moment in American history. . . . I think it's a fight that will go on until deep into the twenty-first century, because we have not yet begun to practice [multiculturalism] anywhere."

That last sentiment would probably resonate with Latin American studies major Veronica Castillo '97. Ms. Castillo came to Vassar from south Texas, where, she says, "Everyone is Mexican, everyone speaks Spanish, everyone eats the same food."

"I think the goal of multiculturalism is very idealistic," she says. "[But when] I see things like Proposition 187 in California directed at the Asian and Latino communities, it's very hard for me to say one day this will be an equal and just society—that I will be respected for the person that I am, that everyone will be respected for their color, for their culture, for their language. I just don't see that, so I don't know what multiculturalism is." Even at Vassar "it's been hard," she says, "feeling, not necessarily that I don't belong, but that the system wasn't designed for me or my people."

Questions of identity and representation percolate irressipibly to the forefront of discussions about multiculturalism.

"Personally," says Pantelis Kodogiannis '95, who is majoring in both Latin and political science, "I think [multiculturalism] is not only about respect of different races and creeds, but a respect of different identities—appreciating one's difference rather than [fitting] into a mold. For me, being Greek is very important. It's affected my life in every single way. When someone asks me, 'What are you,' I say, 'I'm Greek.' Then people say, 'No. You're American,' and I'll say, 'Well, I'm Greek-American then.' What it means to be an American [might be] to include everyone's ethnic background in a melting pot, but when you're first generation, it's not always so."

Like Mr. Kodogiannis, English major Carla Ching '96 also summons up the familiar diversity metaphor.

"The United States is a melting pot," she says. "There are a lot of different people, with lots of different backgrounds—so to me, multiculturalism means acknowledging and celebrating those differences while managing to work together in a community effort in the society."

"But, who you are is not just what race you are," she continues. "It's what you do—you like to run cross-country, you're a filmmaker, you're a cartoonist, you're from Maine. . . . So, when I say, 'I'm Carla,' the fact that I'm Asian is important to me and it will come up. But I'm also a woman, I like to make movies, I like to write, I'm from Los Angeles—there are all these different things that comprise me, and as we move forward, the emphasis is less on pinpointing specific facets of people, but allowing people to explore all the different things that comprise them."

But what is the relevance of these issues to the curriculum?

From student Robin Li: "I think the end goal, which I would hope will always be the goal at Vassar, is to have a better education for the students." She continues, "If you're going into a class where you don't deal with any minority writers, you're probably not getting the best education you could get, whether you're white, or black, or whatever. It's not, 'I'm Asian, so I need to read Asian texts.' It's 'I'm a student here, I need to be educated, show me the best that this institution has to offer.'"

From historian Leslie Offutt: "I think those of us who represent a different view need to be mindful of our role in pushing forward with the broadening of the discourse and rethinking of the canon. None of us want to throw out the 'Great Works.' We all cut our teeth on the 'Great Works,' and we recognize their value. What I think we would wish for is a broadening of the picture, adding to and thereby enriching the canon, not doing away with it. 'Dead White Males' had something to say. So, too, did dead African-American men and [so too do] live African-American women.

"I think what we are facing is a situation where we have an opportunity to enrich, not to diminish. The argument has unfortunately been cast in the latter terms—that we're all out there to dismantle what was—and I don't think that's the purpose of any one of us who is committed to multiculturalism or to a multicultural education."

"The canon, overall, is in a process of evolution. Anyone who thinks that canon is, has been, or should be static has no real sense of what culture is all about and what cultural evolution is all about. It's an essentially dynamic entity, and if we forget that, we really lose something of our appreciation of who we are as people, because by implication it makes us static individuals—and stasis is not what we should be striving for."
In considering the concept of multi-culturalism and its relation to the past, James Merrell, professor of history at Vassar, makes the point that history by its nature requires the crossing of cultural borders. "In an important sense, everybody in the past is an other," he says. "Trying to understand a Puritan is as difficult, and in some ways even more difficult, for students today than trying to understand a Native American who is fighting for his people's sovereignty and their freedom to determine their own way in the world. ... That is something that I try to get across: that the past really is a foreign country."

Mr. Merrell is a scholar of the colonial period of North America—particularly of Native Americans in that time and place. In his introductory class on America's colonial and revolutionary periods, European and European-American men and women, Native Americans, Africans, and African-Americans are all actors on the historical stage. He is one of the many scholars of his generation who have explored previously obscure dimensions of the American past and who, in the process, have helped to give provocative vigor to an old question: Is there such a thing as an American experience?

Some might call Mr. Merrell's approach to his specialty "multicultural." He, however, skirts use of the term. "It's not that I'm not a believer in multiculturalism," he says. "I didn't feel that was what was driving me and to adopt it as my mantle now seems a little unnecessary." Also, he observes, it's a word that today seems to set off alarms more than it expands vistas.

Like passengers on a commuter rail line, students of early American history are familiar with the names of certain required stations: Jamestown, Plymouth, Franklin, Adams, Jefferson, Washington ring out on any guided tour of the American past. They still do, though decades of research may have changed the look of the stops.

Consider two of Mr. Merrell's introductory courses: Colonial America, 1500-1750 and Revolutionary America, 1750-1830. For all the unfamiliar players now on the historical platforms, these are not courses in which "great white men" are, in Mr. Merrell's words, "trashed" or "erased." Washington, Jefferson, and John Adams, to list three he names, are, he emphasizes, "important and in many ways admirable men. I don't want to lose them." He does, however, want to consider them in the context of their own environment.

"Washington and Jefferson and John Adams, for example, all grew up in a society in which slavery was the norm, in which Native Americans were part of the everyday landscape—they ran into them all the time. And we know this specifically for all three
of these gentlemen. I don’t think you can talk about [these men] without also talking about the kind of world in which they grew up. What was in Jefferson’s mind when he wrote ‘all men are created equal’? What did he mean by ‘men’ here? Did he truly mean all men? Did he mean all white men? Did he only mean some white men? In order to understand that issue and that great phrase in American history, you need to set the scene and see if you can look at the stage on which he was writing.”

In both Mr. Merrell’s course syllabi and in his class presentations and discussions, the words encounters and conversations come up again and again. “I do talk about conversations a lot,” he acknowledges. “I like the word conversations because it suggests an exchange... presumably both sides are speaking and also listening. And it gets away from the notion that Europeans are coming in and dictating the course of events to those they enslaved or those they were seeking to conquer. I don’t try to hide the tragedy and the destruction of, for example, Indian-European relations. But at the same time, I want [students] to see that there is much more going on than simply killing and extermination. There are diplomatic conversations going on, there are conversations going on in trade, there are sexual conversations going on.”

Similarly, he likes the word encounter because it encourages broader historical observation. He explains: “Thirty years ago, people talked about the European settlement of America, because it was assumed that America was an unsettled land and the people who came over made order out of chaos and tamed the wilderness. These were the common sorts of metaphors. Twenty years ago and fifteen years ago, the popular term was invasion—the European invasion of America. That’s a wonderful term because it immediately sets you in the Indians’ perspective, and in the Indians’ perspective invasion is indeed what happened. Invasion doesn’t fully capture, however, what was going on. It suggests a war all the time.

“What encounter offers us is the chance to get away from the notion that there was just conflict. Instead, what you have is a more neutral term that allows for the possibility of conflict, but also the possibility of other kinds of interaction.”

This very coming together of distinct cultures is crucial, in Mr. Merrell’s view, of what in the end was the creation of a new Anglo-American culture. One of the things Mr. Merrell emphasizes in his Colonial America course is the degree to which the English colonists consider themselves to be, precisely, English. Yet, he points out, “They are having to deal with Native Americans and deal with Africans and come to some kind of accommodation with these people and are influenced in turn [by them]. Even as [the English colonists] are trying to distance themselves from Indians and from Africans and keep that barrier that defines them as Europeans, they are being shaped by their contact with these peoples. That makes them different from Europeans, because they are living in a society that is much more diverse, much more heterogeneous.” The American part of the Anglo-American colonial society stems

Readings in American History

Note: The following lists represent the core required reading for two introductory courses taught during the 1994-95 academic year by James Merrell. Additional readings of journal articles and book chapters were also required.

HISTORY 274
Colonial America, 1500-1750
Salem Possessed: The Social Origins of Witchcraft by Paul Boyer and Stephen Nissenbaum
Of Plymouth Plantation by William Bradford
“Myne Owne Ground”: Race and Freedom on Virginia’s Eastern Shore by T.H. Breen and Stephen Innes
Uncommon Ground: Archaeology and Early African America, 1650-1800 by Leland Ferguson
Autobiography by Benjamin Franklin
The Infortunate: The Voyage and Adventures of William Moraley, an Indentured Servant edited by Susan Kepp and Billy G. Smith
Captain John Smith: A Select Edition of His Writings edited by Karen Kupperman

HISTORY 275
Revolutionary America, 1750-1830
Tobacco Culture: The Mentality of the Tidewater Planters on the Eve of Revolution by T.H. Breen
The Diary of Elizabeth Drinker edited by Elaine Forman Crane
Letters from an American Farmer by Hector St. John de Crévecoeur
The Shawnee Prophet by R. David Edmunds
The Democratization of American Christianity by Nathan Hatch
Federalists and Anti-Federalists: The Debate over the Ratification of the Constitution edited by John P. Kaminski and Richard Leffler
Race and Revolution by Gary Nash
Common Sense by Thomas Paine
The American Revolution: Explorations in the History of American Radicalism edited by Alfred Young
The varied populations on the North American continent after 1492 daily negotiated cultural chasms and influenced one another’s cultural content.
the syllabi of other scholars in the field. At the same time, he feels that the curriculum he offers may not be broad enough. The French and Spanish colonial American experiences beckon for inclusion. An intimidating issue, he acknowledges, is how "to bring it all in and tell a single story in the space of a single semester."

Nevertheless, despite a concern about getting it all in, Mr. Merrell acknowledges that one of his primary objectives is to nurture in students a "historical sensibility."

"To an extent, what I want [students] to take from the course is more an appreciation of how to approach the past than any particular facts and knowledge. Also, I want them to have [an understanding of how to read a book critically or an article or a primary source. How to do their own research and to think for themselves. How to construct not only a paper topic, but a program of research for that paper. . . . I do think that the enduring things that they derive do not necessarily have to do with the exact things that I taught them in terms of what happened in America before 1750, so much as the historical sensibility and understanding."

Recalling the multiplicity of others in American history is, he thinks, key to cultivating that historical sensibility. "[It] allows [students] to see that we didn't march lockstep from 1607—that the Indians had to be conquered and the Africans had to be enslaved." He cites a book he favors, "Myne Owne Ground": Race and Freedom on Virginia's Eastern Shore, that students find compelling. In it, the authors examine a small population of African-Americans who constructed a life in freedom during the early colonial years along the eastern shore of Virginia.

"This is fascinating for students because they assume that slavery arrives fully blown on the American continent," Mr. Merrell notes. "This is one of those roads not traveled that we can talk about. How significant is it that these African-Americans were able to construct a kind of life that had egalitarian roots to it, to an extent? What was it that allowed this window of possibility to appear, and what was it that closed the door to this more or less equal society?"

Some may argue that the brief existence of such a small cultural sample is insignificant, to which Mr. Merrell responds that an examination of it allows students to see the ways in which these societies didn't know how things were going to turn out. "In 1500 you wouldn't have predicted that by 1900 the Europeans would have enslaved millions of Africans or that ultimately they would have conquered the North American continent and placed Indians on reservations. To neither Africans or Indians did it appear that the Europeans were necessarily superior when they came to the West African coast or the eastern coast of North America.

[Students] need to get past this notion of the inevitability of history. There were possibilities to people at the time that don't appear to us now, and we need to go back and find them. I do want to cultivate a sense of possibility."

Recapturing History's Possibilities

An excerpt from The Indians' New World, 1989 by James Merrell

[It] sits to North Carolina planted in native minds the notion that Anglo-America was as weak as it was divided. Even at its best, North Carolina was an unimpressive example of English colonization; in the midst of a war [the Tuscarora War of 1711-12] it was a sorry sight indeed. On the way to Bath, Barnwell's Indian allies passed through one ruined plantation after another. The town itself was not much better, filled with "poor distressed wretches," including some three hundred "miserable" women and children, most of them without food or clothes in the dead of winter.

This was the first glimpse many natives had of Anglo-American settlements. . . . Sugarees, Wateress, Cheraws, and other piedmont warriors who went with Barnwell or Moore carried the information they picked up back to their villages with the slaves and other plunder, related it to their kinfolk, and discussed it in the seasons to come. The knowledge they acquired supplemented rather than supplemented what they had learned from exchange. The "jealousies and heartburnings" of the traders now seemed only a sample of the bitter feelings dividing colonists. Moreover, a trip to North Carolina contradicted any boasts about the power of the English; Indians had seen with their own eyes that it was not so. Courted by two colonies, controlled by none, their confidence soared.

"Our Indian Allies are grown haughty of late," a colonist observed in 1712.
I TOOK A HALF-STEP AWAY from Nick’s side, dropping my grip on his arm as we walked into my house. The foyer was dark. Muted light from the windows in the adjacent rooms formed hazy figures on the walls and ceiling. I blinked my eyes, blind in the sudden darkness. Looking down, I saw Mama next to the statue of the Virgin Mary. Her hands were wrapped around white lilies that she fixed in a careful bouquet. Our sudden appearance startled her and she almost tipped the half-filled vase that held them. Nick and I formed shadowy towers over her small frame. She stood up and smoothed back the black hair that fell into her vision.

“Hi, Ma, I forgot my purse, this is Nick, I’m sorry but we can’t stay,” I said. My heart beat like pistons against my chest. I paid no attention to Nick, hoping that Mama would somehow forget to look at the body next to her daughter’s. He stood there—black leather jacket, white wide-legged trousers, and silver opaque sunglasses on his unshaven face. His outfit complemented the darkness of his skin.

Mama turned her body and focused on Nick. “Nick, Lea, aren’t you supposed to be at the second half of that lecture series? I wasn’t expecting company,” she said. Her lips formed a tight smile as she held her hand out to him, jade bangles clinking in the noiseless hall. “Nice to meet you.”

Nick pulled his sunglasses off, exposing his dark eyes. He shook her hand, and said, “Mrs. Dela Rosa,” smiling a little hard. He shifted his weight, leaning towards her small frame.

She peered at Nick. Her eyes traveled down to his cowboy boots, and up to his African necklace, then focused on his newly shaved head. Mama didn’t say much. Just, “So, you’re Nick.”

I could hear her thinking. My daughter is dating a Black man. I must have done something wrong.

I turned and snatched my purse off the coat rack. “Mama, Nick was saying how much he liked the roses outside. You know, the ones you just finished trimming. Didn’t you say that, Nick?” I spun around to face Nick and Mama. “Anyway, I’m sorry you two have to meet this way. But, really, Mama, we’re late already.” I gripped Nick’s hand in mine, ready to flee.

I should have known that Mama wouldn’t accept such an excuse. Her lips resumed the customary smile as she stretched out her hand and pointed to the Victorian style living room. Mama patted the red velvet sofa, motioning to Nick. I perched on the armrest of a stiff wing chair. We had had the living room set for ten years, but everything still seemed as if it just arrived yesterday. When we first got the furniture, Mama made it clear that this room was for guests.

No dirtying up of the living room. This is for visitors only.

Visitors meant anyone not Filipino—those who didn’t appreciate the hearty tastes of blood soup and tongue. Nick smiled politely as Mama offered us petit-four’s on lace doilies. She sat next to Nick, crossing her feet on the plush carpet. She began her interrogation, asking Nick about his family and his plans for the future. Nick told her of his single, divorced
mother and her live-in boyfriend whom he considered his surrogate father. Mama's back stiffened as she twirled the gold wedding band around her finger. Her brow furrowed slightly as she cleared her throat and nodded. Mama probed into Nick's history with the dexterity of a skilled surgeon. She uncovered an unfinished college degree, an estranged brother, and future plans as a photojournalist. I sat and listened as I sipped my coffee, savoring its heat and bitterness. A thick lump began to form in my throat.

Mama finished with her questions and a mounting silence grew in the room. Nick attempted to keep the conversation going by asking similar questions about our family. Mama obliged with brief, veiled answers, not willing to let him into the confines of our family beyond the one designated for visitors. "You know, Nick," she said, "Lea grew up surrounded by family. Her grandmother has lived with us for twenty years. To us, family means more than mother, father, brother, sister." She reached over to me and patted my hand.

I coughed as I looked back and forth between Nick and Mama. A smile squeezed itself out on my face. The linen shirt that I thought might be comfortable to wear in the summer heat felt scratchy and I longed to change out of it. I tried to change the subject to the lecture that Nick and I were scheduled to attend. The guest always had to come first, Mama had taught me. I wished that she would remember her own rule.

Nick excused himself to find the bathroom. Sunlight streamed into the room, heating me as it hit my chair. Sweat began to form under my arms.

Mama remained silent. She rested her chin on her hand, staring at me from the corners of her eyes. Her breathing was rhythmic and quiet, following the steady silence of the house. I could hear Nick's every move upstairs.

"Mama, I'm really sorry. I know I should've told you I was bringing him here but—can't you just give him a chance?"

"Lea, we will talk of this later," she said in Tagalog.

"Mama—"

"Lea, later. Did you hear me?"

The words dropped solidly on the coffee table between us. I turned my head to look out the window and longed to escape into the tangle of cars and people on the busy street. Mama stared at the pictures propped up on our mantel. She focused particularly on the one taken on our Caribbean vacation with the Augustin family, two years before my father died. She breathed in deeply, like a smoker taking a final drag from a cigarette, then let the air out through closed teeth. Then, "Just be careful with him."

A fire rushed through me. "Mama, stop it!" I stood up, forgetting that I still held a cup of coffee in my hand. It splashed out and the reddish-brown liquid seeped into the cream carpet.

"Ay!" Mama gasped at the stain. Nick came back. She wouldn't let us help clean the mess. She would take care of it. "Don't worry, the stain will come out." She pushed us out the door, telling us that we might be late for the lecture. Mama clicked the door shut after a firm, "Lea will be home early, won't she," to Nick and an "Enjoy" to both of us. We walked down the driveway in silence.

I let out a deep breath as soon as we got into my car. Nick shook his head. "It's over," I said. "Thank God, it's done." Nick turned out of the gravel road that led to our house and into the main one. He shook his head again.

"You should have told me I was going to meet her today," he said. His fingers pulsed at the carved beads that he had gotten as a last gift from his grandfather. I remembered how he had explained their history to me on our first date. The necklace had been handed down from generation to generation as one of the only remains of their African roots. "Damn. Well, at least I didn't go wrong with my hair. At least all she saw was my bald head and not some nappy-haired plantation slave. I can't believe you didn't tell me this about your mother. It's not like a family detail you might have forgotten."

I dug my nails into my flesh, ignoring the red marks on my skin. I stared at the wooden rosary dangling from the rearview mirror. Jesus swung from side to side as I thought of Mama. I knew it would come to this sooner or later. Mama had always said that whoever I fell in love with, as long as I was happy, she would be happy too. I guess she didn't expect Nick. It was always Bobby that everyone counted on as the one for me.

Bobby Augustin. He was mestizo or "light-skinned," Filipino, Catholic, and the son of my parents' oldest friends. What more could any Filipino parent ask for? He asked me on a date the night of the annual Mabuhay Filipino Christmas party. We sat next to each other at one of the kids' tables—kids meaning anyone under the age of thirty. The whole Mabuhay group had purposely put our placecards together. They had been hoping for a match ever since Bobby and I hit puberty. We were both mestizo and we were the same age. We belonged together. His father kept coming over, putting his arms around us, smiling at me, and then whispering something in Bobby's ear. I tried to ignore the bits and pieces I heard, like "Lea" coupled with "date" and "C'mon." I turned my head away, only to see my parents by the fake Christmas tree, looking intently in my direction as my mother winked and gave a thumbs up.

After the party, Bobby asked me to go to an after-hours bar. I had my White Russian while Bobby sipped his Perrier, loosening his Brooks Brothers tie. Okay, I remember thinking. Maybe the Mabuhay group was right. Maybe there was more to Bobby than the typical Asian med-school jock I mistook him for. Maybe we would really hit it off and talk about the problems growing up Filipino in America, caught between the chicken McNuggets and chicken adobo cultures. So what if he couldn't care less about the
cuts in funding for the NEA, if music was nothing to him more than "background," and that he thought my job as intern at Splash Magazine was nothing more than a full-time hobby? It was fun being the center of attention at every Filipino gathering. It was like a true-to-life soap opera. Would Lea and Bobby finally get together?

Bobby and I didn't stay at the bar long. He had to get up early the next day for his job as an orderly at the hospital. He kissed me, bending over at a certain angle so as not to bump his glasses into my nose. We made plans to call each other soon.

I ended up having dinner at his family's house that weekend. His parents beamed with happiness as they smiled at Bobby, and then at me. Bobby brought up the subject of illegal immigrant Filipinos, something most established Filipino families wanted to forget. His father cleared his throat and shifted in his seat. Bobby impressed me as he defended the illegal immigrants against his father, who believed that America had no place for them. Wow, I thought, there really was something to Bobby Augustin. I was so sick of Filipinos ignoring the ones left back or those that didn't have enough money or connections to get an immigration visa.

After dinner, his parents left us for "some time alone." We sat down on their imitation leather sofa, continuing the conversation from dinner. I told Bobby how much I agreed with his views.

He shook his head and touched my cheek. "My father was right about you," Bobby said. "You're so cute! I didn't realize that you'd take me so seriously. I was just arguing with Dad. I don't really care either way about those fresh-off-the-boat immigrants, but seeing Dad's red face sure was interesting. Here, I have something for you." He brought out a single burgundy rose. I bent down to smell it and Bobby started laughing. It turned out to be a gourmet chocolate rose, made so well that it seemed perfect, real.

Bobby continued to call me that summer. But I'd had enough of trying to meet everyone's expectations. I wanted to figure out what I wanted rather than trying to meet what everyone else needed.

Since then, Mama never ceased to bring up her philosophy on love and men—specifically, Bobby.

Lea, love is not like in the movies. It takes time to grow and develop. I know you didn't like Bobby so much, but maybe you get impatient, hmm? I just want you to be happy and have all the beautiful things that an only daughter is worthy of having.

I let her go on and on, figuring she would eventually realize that there were other men out there. I think that was her biggest fear, that I would find an "other." My mind wasn't even on relationships. I figured if a man wanted to get into my life, he'd better have something more to talk about besides what seemed to be Mama's idea of "heritage." I had already had my fill.

So the months rolled by. Instead of a social life, I focused on my work. In two days, Splash Magazine was having a mixed-media party for a fashion issue entitled "Ethnic America." All the big-wigs would be there and it was my responsibility to see that the visual end of it worked. I was surrounded by enlarged shots of models like "Naomi in DKNY's sari" and "Jenny Shimizu wearing a Tibetan necklace." The buzz word was "ethnicity" these days and Splash didn't want to miss out on it.

As I held up Naomi's framed attempt at "India 1993," a voice boomed through the swinging posterboards, hammers, and screaming music. I turned and faced a guy, about 6'1", with skin as dark as the ebony orbs that Jenny Shimizu wore, and dressed like he should be in one of the posters. He introduced himself as Nick McCulliford, an intern from the downtown office. He grinned wryly as he saw the orange, red, and blue trade beads hanging from the black ceiling, the batik scarves covering the Queen Anne chairs, and the vanilla incense burning on the tables.

"Whoa! Looks like one serious Ethnic Attack!" he said, staggering back as an imaginary bullet struck him. "They're getting pretty crazy, those Splash people." He blinked and raised his eyebrows twice at me.

I let out a laugh, hoping it would hide my sudden embarrassment at taking part in the game. "Yeah, I guess they've gotten sick of their Chanel perfume and Barry Manilow records," I said. "Now, it's as if that never existed and all that's out there are drumbeats and frankincense. There's never anything in-between."

"Nope, nothing except a paycheck, hopefully one with my name on it," he said. He helped me nail Naomi to the freestanding wall. Nick then swaggered off, wishing me "luck on the Ethnic Front" as he went to get his check.

The extravaganza went off as planned. It turned out that Splash wanted to really do it up so they had all the interns at the party dress up in random ethnic garb. We picked what costume we had to wear out of someone's Mets baseball cap. I got to wear a kimono. I spent the whole night telling the paparazzi that I couldn't speak Japanese.

I got home that night, tired from saying "Arigato," a word I was told to say to anyone who talked to me. The phone rang. It was Nick. We exchanged some small-talk. I told him about the party and my job being Japanese for one night. He said there was definitely nothing better than trading identities to forget your own problems. We both laughed. He asked me whether I wanted to go to Shep's Paradise, a jazz club, the next night. I agreed, telling him that I would meet him there, not wanting to deal with Mama's reactions if I had him pick me up.

I arrived at Shep's Paradise at 9:30 and entered the small, candle-lit room. The rawness of hard liquor, cigarettes, and burning trumpets filled me, making my body tingle with anticipation. I made my way over to Nick in the back corner. I took a deep
breath and prepared myself for the night ahead. We ordered drinks and talked about our jobs at Splash, commiserating about how management had conveniently forgotten about us again. Apparently, who was best dressed at the Ethnic America party was more important than the problems of integration between minorities. I told him how I had spent weeks trying to contact advocacy groups for interviews—the end result being ten-minute interviews with flabby men interested only in hiding their wedding rings as I was shuttled into the office. Nick told me about endless nights he had spent in cars to get "slice-of-life" photos in Filipino and Koreatowns, only to find out later that the article he was shooting for was passed. We ordered another set of drinks and sat tapping our feet to the music. It felt good to finally be heard beyond the appearances and the façades. I told him that I was glad to be at the club, surrounded by the chaotic saxophones, drums, and basses that somehow made things clearer, better.

He said, "Jazz, it's a mix, and . . . that's where it's at, you know?" Nick furrowed his forehead and chewed on his lip. "My mom always said—the more you put in the pot, the better it's gonna taste. Gumbo's good no matter who or where you are."

I could see Nick looking at me from the side. His stare drilled into my body and I began to twist in my chair, eager to shake off the feeling. I turned my head to look at him. He leaned over and asked me what kind of name Dela Rosa was. I nodded my head, chuckling to myself. Typical, I thought. I knew this guy was too good to be true. His question was one of the eight million ways those men at the offices would phrase their questions, trying to seem like they were above their ethnic fetishes. I gave him the run-down list: that I was Filipina, and that that meant I had Spanish, Chinese, Malaysian, and whatever other blood running through me; and did he have any other questions? A coolness descended upon the room, numbing me. The music stopped and the band took a break. I stared at the lifeless instruments sitting on the stage.

Suddenly, Nick leaned towards me, "Tell me, have you had your wisdom teeth pulled? I mean recently. If you did, can I see them?" His palms lay face up on the table, expecting an answer.

"What?" I said, "Uh, well actually, yes, yes I did. Are you serious?" I shook my head. This was ridiculous. "No, I'm not opening my mouth to show you my wisdom teeth holes!" What did this guy want now?

"I'm just curious about what else goes on beneath that Dela Rosa face. Your mouth has actual holes that no one knows about! No one, I guess, except you and your dentist."

I looked at him. My veins pulsed in a steady rhythmic beat. I saw Nick's not quite smooth skin and a small birthmark on his right temple. I nodded, telling him he was right. There was no getting away from what was actually staring you straight in the face. And it was fine as long as you remembered and got to know all the things that came along with it.

That was probably why it took me so long to introduce Nick and Mama to each other. Mama would be overwhelmed by his appearances. In whatever way I decided to do it, I was sure of one thing—I knew I couldn't plan specifics. The only way I could get enough courage to do it would be through something spontaneous. I knew Nick suspected something. He kept asking me about Mama and when he would meet her. One time he asked me if my family might have some hang-ups about race. I shook my head. No, of course not. How could my family be racist if we were part of the minority, too?

I looked out at the rows of bare-leaved trees that sped past me on the thruway. They looked beautiful as they stretched their arms up to the sky, hoping and searching, it seemed, for something. I took Nick's hand and felt the heat of his skin. I remembered the way he had held me last night. How in the dark hours of the morning, he had taken my hand and guided my touch down the length of his body until I felt a break in his skin. He had been in an accident when he was a little boy. The cut had never healed properly and had instead left a large scar on his thigh. I pressed my hand down on it, wishing to memorize its every mark and winding line. It somehow reminded me of the music in the jazz club. Within its confusing pattern was a calmness that soothed and comforted me. Mama's words reverberated in my ears, but it all seemed distant in my remembrances and in this car with Nick. The car slowed down as we turned into the parking lot and found a space. He turned the car off.

"Well, here we are," Nick said, "The Visual Sciences Lecture. Part two. I wonder if it's going to be any good."

"Well, we already know what some of it's about. I'm sure the rest will probably be just as good, maybe better." I tugged at my shirtsleeves— "Of course, you never know."

"Yeah, these things have a way of turning around. Sometimes you try to follow along as best as you can——"  

"But you still somehow get lost in the middle, trying to figure out what that person in front of you is really saying. Like, you thought you knew, but then you get thrown for a loop."

"Yeah. You know the person tried to prepare for the lecture as best as he could. With what he thought would make the most sense. But that doesn't always work out."

"The only time you'll ever really find out is in the end. They're either going to be clapping or waiting to go home to have a good meal for dinner."

"Uh-huh . . . well, I guess there's only one thing left to do."

"Yeah. Nothing left to do but find out." Nick and I got out of the car and slammed the doors behind us. The fall air whipped our faces. We walked towards the entrance, lit bright from within. I took Nick's hand in mine and clutched it as we made our way inside.
As do many jazz fans, Jean Ensigner Bach ’40 harbors a great affection for a 1958 photograph of fifty-seven jazz greats gathered on the stoop of a Harlem brownstone. The photo, taken one summer morning for Esquire magazine, hangs on a wall in her apartment. “It’s a picture I’ve been in love with for thirty-five years,” she said in an interview in March. For just as long, Ms. Bach has wondered how so many great musicians had come to be together on that Harlem stoop. The picture finally became her muse, leading her to create a film—A Great Day in Harlem—that was one of this year’s Academy Award nominees for best feature documentary.

Following up on a lead that 8mm film footage had been shot that day at the scene by the wife of jazz musician Milt Hinton, and realizing that “my two closest friends in the photo—Roy Eldridge and Lawrence Brown—had died that year (1989),” Ms. Bach decided to produce a documentary about the making of the photograph. Never mind that she had never made a film in her life. She had worked primarily in radio, producing “The Arlene Francis Show” from 1960 to 1984.

She started interviewing the surviving musicians in the photo and the people responsible for it, ultimately shooting forty hours of film for the final one-hour cut. She gathered historic footage. “The archival footage and the interviews and the music—it did make a nice bouquet,” she says. “But believe me, I was flying blind. I thought, here’s how you make a movie. You take one interview and you play it to the end, and you glue it to the top of the next one. . . . and then you play that one. Seemed logical to me.”

Luckily, one of Ms. Bach’s good friends is Katherine Altman, wife of the filmmaker Robert Altman. “She finally saw that I was really getting in over my head.” With the Altman’s advice, Ms. Bach assembled a team that included co-producer Matthew Seig and editor Susan Peehl to help her through the project. They hadn’t presold the film to any company, so “we could take our time,” says Ms. Bach. “Nobody was asking for it. And that’s why it turned out.”
What emerges from the documentary is the story of a most unlikely photograph. Esquire's art director, Robert Benton (today a well-known film director), commissioned the photo, but was not optimistic about a good turnout of musicians. For one thing, the hour—10 A.M.—was thought to be ungodly early for nocturnal jazz men and women. (In one memorable line from the film, a musician notes, "Somebody said it was the first time he realized there were two 10 o'clocks every day.") The commissioned photographer was a young and inexperienced Art Kane, who, lacking a studio, came up with the idea of using the street as a backdrop, the very place from which the musicians and their music came. Ms. Bach's interview subjects recall that when fifty-seven musicians actually showed up—from Count Basie to Sonny Rollins—the scene resembled the woory bedlam of a too successful cocktail party. Art Kane struggled hard to keep order.

Many of the musicians in the photo who are still performing are friends of Ms. Bach. (She has been a jazz fan since her teens and, while married to Shorty Sherock, a trumpeter player in Gene Krupa's band, toured with them for seven years.) Even so, they proved to be tough to track down for interviews. Ms. Bach finally located old friend Dizzy Gillespie at his dentist's. Less well-known people in the photo she found by "ingenuity," she says with a laugh. She placed an ad with a copy of the photograph in the Amsterdam News—a New York City-based newspaper that targets an African-American audience—asking anyone with information about it to call her. From that ad, she even found one of the young boys sitting with Count Basie along the curb.

The editing, which weaves together music, film footage, stills from the original photo shoot, archival footage, and Ms. Bach's interviews, is masterful, and it alone took a year and half. Distribution of the independent film posed another tough challenge. Ms. Bach rented the theater at Planet Hollywood, a restaurant in New York City, for about fifteen private screenings. One of those screenings yielded a distributor, Castle Hill. The film opened in February to rave reviews. Distribution is slow because there are only a few copies of the film, but it has been playing to full houses; ticket sales are at last helping to defray some of her costs, though she's "still shelling" out, she says—$350,000 as of March. "It sounds like a lot of money, but over a long period it didn't seem that much."

From frame to frame, A Great Day in Harlem is a fable of innocents: a story about greatness in a simpler time recorded through the lens of an inexperienced photographer and told by a novice filmmaker. Whether or not the film succeeds commercially, Ms. Bach hopes that it will keep alive the music that has brought her such joy. "They were the inventors of the wheel," she says of the musicians. "Each one of these people [was a] giant, a genius in [his] own right. And each was secure in his own genius." Capturing this enthusiasm for the jazz world and its music is what A Great Day in Harlem does best.

Carla De Landri is a producer at the ABC News magazine "20/20."
OMNIN
GATHERUM

Spotted

SHIPPING NEWS

A news item spotted in the April 1995 edition of the Working Waterfront and sent to the Quarterly by two alumnae reports that "a ship under construction at Bath Iron Works [in Maine] will be the second ship ever named for a female Navy officer."

"The Aegis Destroyer HOPPER will be named for Grace Murray Hopper, who entered the Navy during World War II, rose to the rank of rear admiral and became a pioneer in the standardizing of computer language."

Rear Admiral Hopper was a member of the Vassar class of '28. She died in 1992.

SPORTS

In March 1995, Katherine "Kit" Allabough Knight '68 was inducted into the United States Women's Intercollegiate Squash Racquets Association Hall of Fame in its inaugural class.

White House AIDS Policy Chief Is Fleming '57

Patricia Stubbs Fleming '57, long active in government and public affairs, is the White House director of AIDS policy. Ms. Fleming was formally named to the position by President Clinton last fall.

Ms. Fleming had previously been on the congressional staffs of Representative Augustus Hawkins, Shirley Chisholm, Andrew Young, and Ted Weiss. She has also worked as special assistant to the Secretary of Health, Education and Welfare and, more recently, as a special assistant to Secretary of Health and Human Services Donna E. Shalala.

President Clinton announces his selection of Patricia Stubbs Fleming '57 (at right) as his AIDS policy director during a ceremony at the White House last fall.

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Occasionally, the best human beings have the privilege of being leaders in society. One such leader is Patricia Stubbs Fleming, who has been appointed as the White House director of AIDS policy by President Clinton. Fleming, who served as the White House director of AIDS policy from 1992 to 1993, has been recognized for her commitment to combatting the AIDS epidemic.

Fleming has a strong background in public service, having served as a legislative assistant to Representative Augustus Hawkins, a member of the House of Representatives. She also served as a legislative assistant to Representative Shirley Chisholm, a member of the House of Representatives. Fleming is also a member of the American Bar Association and the New York Bar Association.

Fleming is a native of New York City and a graduate of Vassar College. She received her law degree from New York University School of Law in 1982.

In addition to her work as an AIDS policy director, Fleming is also an accomplished writer and speaker. She has written numerous articles and essays on the subject of AIDS, and has given lectures on the topic at universities and conferences around the world. Fleming is also an avid advocate for the rights of people living with AIDS.

Fleming's appointment as director of AIDS policy is a significant milestone in the fight against AIDS. Her leadership and dedication will be instrumental in continuing the progress that has been made in our efforts to combat this deadly disease.
What Louise Wolf's Father Didn't Know About Her Freshman Year

Louise Wolf Stark Arnold '25 writes:

Nineteen Twenty-One was my first and only year at Vassar. My father disapproved of college and especially as advanced a one as Vassar. I got in on the Honor Roll and my older sister lent me the money for my entrance fee.

I was settled in the main building with two very bright freshmen (both later became professors). They were far beyond me in brains and worldliness, but I learned, among other things, to play a pretty good game of bridge.

I remember a Professor Thallon who taught English. She told us one day in class the derivation of the name "Plantagenet." It comes from a flower that the knights of one family wore on their helmet in battle. The flower was "plante a genet"; it was from the French word for "ginestra," a brilliant yellow flower that blooms in spring. In everyday parlance, Scotch broom.

It stuck in my mind and once at a dinner party at our house in Nantucket, I maneuvered the conversation so I could pull forth this interesting gem, only to be interrupted by a classmate, who was at dinner with us. She finished the story for me. (I was secretly enraged!) She also had been in Professor Thallon's class.

I remember I was advanced in French and landed in a junior French class. This was quite a class. Not about your French pronunciation or your ability to speak the language—that was a foregone conclusion. It was about the history of French literature. I didn't fool around in that class, believe me. I can regale anyone about Chateaubriand, or the mal du siècle of his time, but have yet to corner anyone who is interested.

In 1921 at Vassar, during the week the costume was saddle strap shoes, black and white, or brown and white, tweed skirt, cardigan sweater and a white blouse with Peter Pan collar. On weekends, hopefully one had admirers coming and one dressed accordingly. Or we jazzed off to West Point.

My father did not approve of proms or leaving college (didn't know what I might be up to), so I had too puny an allowance to get me there. Fret not! I sold my bicycle to a girl in the suite next to ours, and she did not know how to ride a bicycle. She was a Mormon from Utah, as I remember. I hope I tried to teach her how—I don't remember. In any case, I was off to West Point and had a marvelous time.

I particularly remember the buttons on the cadets' blouses hurt one's bosom if they held you too tight, and also I remember the gorgeous sound of the West Point Choir singing on Sunday.

My next foray into the world away from Vassar was to Lafayette College, where my future husband, Robert Stark, was a freshman. I must have sold something else to someone as I had enough money to go. No use asking father. Proms were dens of iniquity; there was drunkenness and illicit behavior! In any case, he and mother had gone to Bermuda.

When prom time came I was off to Easton, Pennsylvania, and Lafayette College. Dixie Dinkin, a sophomore, was going also, so we had a pleasant trip on the old Lehigh Valley train. When I arrived at Lafayette in the evening, there were dances at the different fraternity houses. I remember dancing with someone named Ehret; we started to go in one little sitting room and Ehret steered me rapidly away. There was a drunken girl, passed out on the floor. It was quite a weekend but I seemed to sail through it without damage.

My father sent me a clipping from the New York Herald Tribune. "Proms Banned from Lafayette College for Two Years Due to Drunken Behavior of Students and Their Dates." Father wrote: "You see, Louise, your father knows best!"

Yes, indeedy, I wouldn't have missed it for the world! Those were the days! (Or were they?)

Mrs. Arnold now lives in Florida.
Greg Louganis's Autobiographer

Breaking the Surface
by Greg Louganis with Eric Marcus '80
Random House, 1995

Barbara Walters did a show about the controversial new book. So did Oprah. Even Larry King spent an hour on CNN talking about it. It was the cover story in People, and both Time and Newsweek weighed in as well. So how come no one is interviewing Eric Marcus '80, who co-wrote the book—and stirred up so much debate—in the first place?

"I'm behind the scenes," he says, sitting at his desk near a stack of copies of the book that has been the center of all the attention—Breaking the Surface, the autobiography of two-time Olympic gold medalist Greg Louganis. The autobiography?

Ah, it's becoming clear now. Mr. Marcus, you see, whose previous books include Making History: The Struggle for Gay and Lesbian Equal Rights, 1945-1990 and the tongue-in-cheek Expect the Worst and You Won't Be Disappointed, is also a sometime ghostwriter. In addition to the Louganis book, Mr. Marcus wrote the best-selling "autobiography" Straight from the Heart: A Love Story, which told the life of gay rights advocate Bob and Rob Jackson-Paris. Though his name did not appear anywhere but in the acknowledgments of Straight from the Heart, his name is displayed prominently on the cover of Breaking the Surface: "Greg Louganis with Eric Marcus."

In the book, which was published in February, Mr. Louganis reveals that he has AIDS, and that when he hit his head on the diving board during the ninth dive of the springboard preliminaries in 1988, he bled in the pool. That alone has caused a stir. But Mr. Louganis's life, as Mr. Marcus sets it forth, is emotionally stirring as well. "My job is to draw the person out," says ghostwriter Marcus. "It's almost like being a therapist." Mr. Marcus, who met Greg Louganis through a mutual friend, says they "bonded immediately." That, of course, helped the process along. "Greg trusted me. I told him I would do the best book possible and he knew I meant it, so he let me explore whatever terrain I chose, no matter how painful. There was very little that didn't make it into the book." The two had "an ideal working relationship," Mr. Marcus says, though the process of being a ghostwriter was sometimes difficult.

"It was excruciating because so much of his life was so hard to hear. This sort of book isn't interesting if you don't deal with the difficult aspects of a person's life. If you present only the happy stuff it's dull and it's not real. I sat down with Greg and interviewed him for sixty hours on tape. I didn't realize how difficult his life was. For both of us, there were tears at almost every interview. I felt guilty at times probing because I knew how much pain I was causing him."

There were secrets, too. "I couldn't talk to anybody about what we talked about," says

At the Edge of the Board

Excerpt from
Breaking the Surface

As I stood on the board shaking out my legs and arms, they announced my name. To my complete surprise, there was thunderous applause. Then, when they announced the dive, it got eerily quiet. You could feel the tension in the hall, and I was already terrified. I still hadn't figured out what I'd done wrong in the last dive, and here I was about to do a dive that again would put my head within inches of the board. I didn't want to embarrass myself in front of all those people. Millions of people around the world were watching on television. And what if I hit the board again?

In preparation for the dive, I rubbed my right hand through the back of my wet hair to get some water on it. Then I rubbed my hands together to get them equally damp—that was one of my diving rituals—and for a moment I stood there trying to get focused. Then I took a really deep breath and patted my chest so that everyone in the hall could see that my heart felt like it was pounding outside my chest. Then I smiled, and everybody started laughing, and I laughed along with them. The tension broke when they saw that I was more nervous and scared than they were. Their laughter helped me relax. It also made me realize how much support I had. I realized that the audience wanted me to do a good dive.
Mr. Marcus. "Greg told me he was HIV-positive in January 1994, and I had to keep that a secret. He said that he felt guilty telling me because he knew what a burden it would be to know but not to be able to talk about it. He gave me a taste of what that burden was like for him."

Mr. Marcus says that he also learned a lot about the art of the ghostwriter by comparing his previous experience with Rob and Bob Jackson-Paris to the recent one with Mr. Louganis. "I can only write as good a book as what I'm able to extract," he says. "The problem with the Bob and Rob book was that they censored themselves. There was a lot they didn't tell me. That's the frustration for a writer doing this kind of book." With Mr. Louganis, however, there was no such frustration. "Greg's honest and a hard worker. Generally, I was the one who had to say, okay, enough for today."

In fact, today, Mr. Marcus looks back on the experience as a positive one, despite learning and revealing the painful fact of Greg Louganis's positive HIV status. "He really grew into the book," says Mr. Marcus. "For any of us to reveal that much about ourselves is hard, but Greg came to see how helpful it would be for other people to know what he had been through. He really wanted to get it all off his chest. Being a public person, one way to do it is to write this kind of book."

But why wouldn't he just write it himself?

"He's a diver, not a writer," Mr. Marcus says matter-of-factly. "My goal is that when you read this book, that it sound like Greg, not with the ms and uss, but as if you're sitting with him and he's telling you his story. Hopefully, I captured his voice. A ghostwritten book should not be a reflection of the ghostwriter."

Mr. Marcus, who currently is working on a book called Why Suicide: Answers to 200 of the Most Frequently Asked Questions about Suicide, Attempted Suicide, and Assisted Suicide, has no definite plans for his next ghostwriting project other than there definitely will be one. "I don't plan to make this my career," he says, "but I think doing it every other book sounds just about right."

Dan Santow '82

Dani Santow, formerly a staff writer with People magazine, is a writer in New York City.

Iowa Fiction Award Winner

May You Live in Interesting Times by Terezl Glück '67 was named the winner of the 1995 Iowa Short Fiction Award.

Ms. Glück's fiction has appeared in Epoch, The Antioch Review, Story, North American Review, and elsewhere. In 1992 she was a fellow at the Virginia Center for the Creative Arts, and in 1993 she was a fellow at Ragdale. Ms. Glück was also the recipient of a National Endowment for the Arts grant in 1993.

A Dark Vision from Ireland

Walk in a Lost Landscape
Sheila McKee Barrett '65
Poolbeg New Writing, 1994
(Knockesedan House, 123 Baldoyle Industrial Estate, Dublin 13, Ireland)

Gorgeous, mutated flowers. Fish with multiple tails. Flickering lamplight, travel by horse or on foot, news passed by word of mouth. This is life in Ireland in 1994, after a nuclear attack.

In Sheila Barrett's chilling first novel, Walk in a Lost Landscape, the survivors of a nuclear world war are doomed to live. Pregnancy routinely ends in death for the baby, often for the mother as well. Tainted water, food, and soil are deadly daily challenges, and horrifying societal anarchy poisons the population. Eventually Ireland falls under the rule of a sadistic madman.

Which country was the first to push the button? Ms. Barrett leaves the whys and wherefores of the war unexplained, allowing the reader no more information than the characters themselves can piece together.

"When the meltdown at the Chernobyl power plant in the U.S.S.R. occurred [April 1986], the Soviets said nothing for the first few days," Ms. Barrett recalls from Ireland during a telephone interview. "Meanwhile, Sweden, Finland, and other surrounding countries were exposed quite a bit before anything could be done about it. This is the kind of thing that concerns me, because I just think we're stuck with human nature, with our own particular way of doing things, and quite a lot can go wrong. Right now, I feel we're all sort of complacent, and we feel that we're getting on all right, but in fact it's no time to be complacent."

Ms. Barrett credits her residence in Ireland with giving her a continued, heightened awareness of nuclear issues. Originally from Texas, she moved to the country in 1969 with her husband, a Dublin native. "The sense here in Ireland is that you're right on the edge of Europe," she says. "Because of Chernobyl, we are still having trouble with sheep in the north—they must be grazed for two weeks on lower ground before they're considered safe for consumption. And the mutated flowers I describe in the novel can actually be found up in the hills. So all this sort of thing is very real for us. But America's just so far away from everything, and it's protected by the Atlantic and the Pacific. It's really quite isolated, and that seems to be the mentality there, too. Even when I'm back home in Texas, watching the news... there's just this great sense of isolation, that there's enough... with what's going on there."

Ms. Barrett derived the details of her postwar world from both research and imagination. "Some things are accurate, and some things aren't," she says. "I had been working
on the book since the late eighties, yet even when I had it pretty well plotted out and planned, I still had difficulty getting medical evidence from Chernobyl. There’s been quite a lot since then, but at the time there was very little out. I also worked with the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament (CND) people in Cork, and spoke with agriculturists and horticulturists. In the end, I just decided, well, you have to give yourself some poetic license, and God knows what they’ll come up with in the interim.”

At Vassar, Ms. Barrett, an English major, studied biology, chemistry, and other “unpleasant” required courses. She managed, she says, to squeeze in one writing class, taught by Susan Jane Turner, whom she remembers as “marvelous. . . . She didn’t tell you too much or say very much. She just sort of stood back and let you get on with it. . . . Vassar is one of the very few things I would like to be able to revisit and do again more intensively.”

Today, Ms. Barrett conducts writing workshops at the University College, Dublin, for full-time and adult education students. She is currently at work on a mystery novel.

One might expect the author of a novel about the abuses of nuclear power and the weaknesses of human nature to place little faith in the future. Yet Ms. Barrett’s six children, who range in age from 12 to 25, personalize her firm commitment to life. “I don’t think I would have cared a fig about nuclear issues had I not had children. . . . I would surely have just stuck my nose in a book, quite happily, if it were only me. Children made me look outward in a way it wasn’t much in my character to do.”

Laurel Cardone ’88

Ms. Cardone is on staff at Modern Bride and is a frequent contributor to the Quarterly.

One Year Yields Two Books by Paul Russell

Sea of Tranquility
Dutton, 1994

The 100
A Ranking of the Most Influential Gay Men and Lesbians, Past and Present
Caroll Publishing Group, 1994

both by Paul Russell
Associate professor of English at Vassar

Fiction
Ask Associate Professor of English Paul Russell how he came to be a writer and his reply might be the same as the punch line to the old musicians’ joke about how to get to Carnegie Hall—but in his case there were times when even practice didn’t seem very promising. He completed four novels he characterizes as “wrecks” and was rejected by eleven agents before his first novel, The Salt Point, was sold to Dutton in 1989.

Now, with three published novels hailed by Booklist as “brilliant, unsettling . . . original and compellingly complex,” his most recent novel, Sea of Tranquility, praised by Kirkus Reviews for its “breathtaking writing,” and his first foray into nonfiction, The Gay 100: A Ranking of the Most Influential Gay Men and Lesbians, Past and Present, bringing him attention in the popular press, success has the appearance of a foregone conclusion.

Mr. Russell characterizes his fiction-writing method as laborious and slow; he often follows alleys all the way to their dead ends in search of the right approach. In Sea of Tranquility, for example, a novel about an American family’s slow disintegration during the idealism that spawned the moon shots in the ’60s and continuing through the ravages of AIDS in the ’90s, the action is seen from the points of view of four characters. The narrative gathers force and symbolic power as thoughts and experiences common to the characters are revealed to the reader—though not to the characters themselves—through each character’s testimony, yet the characters remain largely unable to connect despite their similarities. “The sorrow of life is that we all know the same things but we somehow can’t communicate that to one another,” Mr. Russell says.

But he arrived at this discovery only after months spent writing the novel from one character’s point of view. “I wrote 250 pages . . . and threw them away. It was the worst afternoon of my life when I realized what I had sort of known the last couple of months: It was not working and I had to start over from page one. . . . There are no short cuts.”

Nonfiction
Because he completed Sea of Tranquility later than he expected, Mr. Russell had to revamp his writing methods radically to meet his publishing deadline for The Gay 100. “I literally mailed Sea of Tranquility [to the publisher] on Monday and started The Gay 100 on Tuesday. The novel took me three years to write,” Mr. Russell notes. “The Gay 100 took me three months. I’d wake up in the middle of the night and think, ‘I have to write 100 biographies! This might be interesting for twenty of forty. But I’ve got to turn this into an assembly line.’ ”

The public library near his home in Ulster County proved a godsend. “I’d go there first thing in the morning and research two people. I’d come home, have dinner, write the two biographies that night and I’d never look back. If you were scheduled to be written on Thursday, that was it. There was something very satisfying about seeing them nailed up two a day and [realizing] that I could write assembly line prose, if I had to.”

Mr. Russell acknowledges that he has received “all sorts of flak, from both the right and the left,” about his selections of the 100. How, for example, did he decide to include such disparate individuals as Socrates, Emily Dickinson, and Larry Kramer? “It’s a book
of the most influential [individuals]—which is not the same as the most famous, well known, nicest, or the most interesting," Mr. Russell responds. "Their accomplishment had to resonate on the world scene. They also had to have contributed to a sense of gay and lesbian identity."

As for what constitutes "gay," that, says Mr. Russell, is culturally relative. In seeking out female candidates, for instance, he looked for "women who resisted marriage, whose primary emotional relationships seemed to be with other women. What matters is that in their particular society, they resisted heterosexual norms and led some kind of alternative, rebellious life. Is that lesbian by our late-twentieth-century clinical definition? Maybe, maybe not. But that's beside the point."

Mr. Russell is now at work on his next novel, which he says is in the "agonizing early thrones" of creation. He takes the advice he gives his creative writing students for keeping the words flowing: "I try to do it every day, even if only for half an hour. I can't write in spurts. Even during the week, when I'm teaching, I wake up at 7:30 and go into my study and all I have time to do is reread and edit three to four pages. But that's enough to keep all the stuff fresh in my mind and ideas are percolating all through the day. I may go a whole semester unable to do more than thirty minutes a day. But then when summer or winter break comes, I can hit the ground running. This is what I tell my students: anybody can budget fifteen minutes out of the day to write. If that's all you can do, that's fine. But just touch base with your writing once a day, and you'll be a writer."

Toni Sciarra Poynter '81

Ms. Poynter is a senior editor in book publishing and a writer living in New York City.

Looking for the Goddess

Habitations of the Great Goddess
Cristina Biaggi '59
KIT, 1994

In Habitations of the Great Goddess, author Cristina Biaggi documents the evidence of early goddess-worshiping societies found in the archaeological remains of two remote regions: the arid Mediterranean island of Malta and the Orkney and Shetland islands of Scotland. From such clues as temple ruins, goddess and priestess figurines, tombs, and carvings, the author has pieced together a rough portrait of cultures whose values seemed to center around birth, death, rebirth, and the continued fertility of the earth.

Ms. Biaggi believes that the goddess was universally worshipped from the Paleolithic to the late Neolithic periods in Europe, Asia, and the Middle East. Although it is likely that each of these preliterate cultures had different concepts of the goddess—Queen of Heaven, Fire Mother, Goddess of Earth—evidence in the form of sculptures and figurines suggests, says Ms. Biaggi, that diverse cultures were worshipping the same being. In addition, the societies in which the goddess was worshipped have similar characteristics.

"From archaeological remains, you can tell that these cultures were peace-loving and agricultural," Ms. Biaggi says in an interview. "People were buried in an egalitarian fashion, with no question of rank, sex, or age. But as waves of sky-god worshipers from the Black Sea area invaded, the theocratic—that is, goddess-worshipping—societies changed, a fact that Ms. Biaggi says is apparent in their remains. "Suddenly you see burial mounds built for chieftains, with slaves buried around him. And with the advent of metal and bronze, you see weapons."

Influence, intermarriage, and force gradually wiped out the matrilineal cultures. Today, though, there is a growing interest in goddess worship, as well as an effort to learn from preliterate cultures. Ms. Biaggi speculates that this interest is related to anxiety that we as a society feel as we face the millennium. "We're speeding up at a tremendous rate, and we're recognizing a need for change. We're searching for meaning in our lives, searching for the spiritual. These cultures—which are a part of our psychic selves and our collective unconscious—can teach us an alternative way of dealing with the world."

Although Ms. Biaggi's book grew out of her doctoral dissertation (in philosophy of art at New York University), Habitations of the Great Goddess is more than a scholarly exercise; it is a journey in pursuit of a personal experience as well. Consider, for example, the author's account of a solitary nocturnal visit to the ruins of a Maltese temple in which the goddess was worshipped:

"There was no moon and the site was deserted. I had to grope my way along the straight path...as I approached the site, the outline of the temple stood out like a ghostly sculpture against the dark hollow in which it nested...The only sounds were the wind, the sea, and my breathing. The feeling that this was a sacred place inhabited by some powerful force was absolutely palpable..."

Now that the book is finished, Ms. Biaggi—who is also an artist, sculptor, environmental activist, and possessor of a third-degree tae kwon do black belt—is again switching gears. She's moving back toward art, building goddess images and weaving "lots of webs and nests" from twine and rope. A show of her (and her five-year-old granddaughter's) painting was scheduled for May, with proceeds to benefit homeless children. Meanwhile, the research launched by her dissertation has led her to try to build a network of people studying or worshipping the goddess. She remains hopeful that society will evolve to be more like the cohesive, peace-
ful, and caring cultures that she and others think once existed. For Ms. Biaggi, study and worship of the Great Goddess is one way of achieving that end.

Amy Arner Sgarro

Ms. Sgarro is a writer and frequent contributor to the Quarterly.

Zen Golf

Beyond the Fairway
Zen Lessons, Insights, and Inner Attitudes of Golf
by Jeff Walch '82
Bantam Books, 1995

Golf, from Scotland to Nepal, with a brief stop at Vassar in the chapter "Because the Night." An excerpt:

When I was a senior in college, my friends and I achieved absolute mastery over one small aspect of golf. Regardless of the season, we knew at precisely what time we needed to tee off on the Vassar Golf Course to be the last group out on any given day, and still hit into the final green with enough daylight to watch our approach shots flying toward the pin. As the last foursome, we captured a mild sense of moral superiority that remained hidden in shadows during the heat of the crowded day, emerging only close to darkness. We also enjoyed an unhurried freedom, a sense that the golf course belonged solely to us... Golfing at that mystical hour of transition, coming in after all other players have finished and gone home, cutting as close to darkness as possible, is a way of stepping into the fringe beyond the fairway where light and shadows meld, where emerald grass and blue sky and lavender sun set blend together toward the indistinguishable color of the night, where everything merges into an encompassing Oneness; but the process of merging, and not yet the Oneness itself, defines the moment.

Noted

BOOKS

FICTION

Moo
by Jane Smiley '71
Alfred A. Knopf, 1995

Wild Game
by Frank Bergon
Vassar College Professor of English
University of Nevada Press, 1995

Late Summer Break
by Ann Breuester Knox '46
Papier-Mache Press, 1995
(Watsonville, CA)
Short stories

The Intersection of Law and Desire
by J.M. Redmann '77
W.W. Norton & Co., 1995
A mystery.

NONFICTION

Minerva and the Muse
A Life of Margaret Fuller
by Joan Moore von Mehren '45-4
University of Massachusetts Press, 1995

Model
by Michael Gross '74
Morrow, 1995

Dancing in the Rain
Stories of Exceptional Progress by Parents of Children with Special Needs
edited by Annabel Stearns Stehli '61
The Georgiana Organization, Inc.
(PO Box 2607, Westport, CT 06880)

Hausaland Divided
Colonialism and Independence in Nigeria and Niger
by William F. S. Miles '77
Cornell University Press, 1994

COOKBOOK

Cooking Up the Creek
Recipes from a Rural New York Valley
edited by Janet Whitney Bowers '56
Bouwer's Corners Press, 1994
(51 Nanticoke Road, Maine, NY 13802)

INSPIRATION

What If
Barbara Baylis Luchting '65
Signpost Publishing, 1994
(6355 Singletree Lane, Sarasota, FL 34241)

POETRY

Green Notebook, Winter Road
by Jane Cooper '45
Tilbury House, 1994

voiceunders
by H.T. '73
Texture Press, 1993

FOR YOUNG READERS

May Chinn
The Best Medicine
by Ellen R. Butts and Joyce Rubin Schwart '71
W. H. Freeman and Co., 1995

Music

Chuck and Danny
by Chuck Lewis '81 and Danny Nunez
Show and Tell Records
(370 Court St., Suite 48, Brooklyn, NY 11231)
Golf balls with VC logo are available from the Cleveland Vassar Club. Twelve Pinnacle Gold golf balls are $30 plus shipping. Single sleeves (three balls) are also available. To order, call 216/751-1030 or write: Amy Dubanevicz '74, 20475 Farnsleigh Rd., Shaker Heights, OH 44122. Proceeds go to the club's scholarship fund.

Limited, signed editions of two books: Do Not Open Until After I Am Dead (1994) and Ice Cream (1995) by Marcia Sandmeyer Wilson '58. Ice Cream includes original silk-screen prints by the author. Prices: Do Not Open is $15; Ice Cream, $35. Both are limited to signed editions of 100 copies. Classmates, dealers, and friends will get 20 percent off above prices. Contact: MSW, 259 Leonia Ave., Leonia, NJ 07605.

Investors sought for a new magazine that will publish the work of aspiring artists and promote the arts and their appreciation in everyday life. For more information and a business plan, please contact Lee Evan Zalben '95 at 215/745-6224, or write: 1814 Danforth St., Philadelphia, PA 19152.

Charming, year-round cottage: Madison, CT; three/four-bedroom cape, beach association, private fenced yard with perennial garden and flowering shrubs; twenty minutes to New Haven, two hours to New York: $132,000. Call True Fezer Wolff '68 at 203/245-7848.


Vermont, 120 acres, view of Mt. Mansfield; brook, hayfield, wood forest, buildings; showing available. Contact: 412/363-3336 [Judith Getty Treadwell '63]

Crete: Beautiful, modern home overlooking miles of Cretan Sea, unhindered view of Mt. Ida, olive/orange groves; in small village overlooking Rethymno, a Venetian town with sandy beaches. Three bedrooms, two baths, solar-heated water, fully furnished (TV, VCR, CD player), AC/heating, fireplace, dream balconies; available for year-round occupancy, summer/winter vacation; minimum stay two weeks. Perfect base for exploring classical Crete. Photos, information: Zoe Nakos Canellakis '47 at 203/497-9572.

Wanted: old comic books. I am a Vassar alum who collects comics. Turn those dusty boxes in your attic into cash. Call Steve Levine '81 at 310/458-1808. I will pay for any postage and handling.

Wonderful, panoramic New York City views from top floor, straight-line studio in luxury co-op building. Excellent closet space, built-in air conditioner, dishwasher. Building has marble lobby, 24-hour doorman, concierge, garage. Would be an ideal apartment for a graduate student or young professional starting out in the Big Apple. Asking price: $70,000. Maintenance: $425 per month. If interested, call Jill Johnson Giovan '78 at 212/795-9290.

Miami, Florida: Fran Hines '38 of Memphis, TN, is looking for occasional access to a furnished room and bath in North Miami. Purpose: to facilitate short visits with her Miami family. Should be within walking distance of 143rd St. and NE 10th Ave. Rate negotiable. In Miami call 945-1855.

Summer on the coast of Maine. It's not too late to arrange a week or two at our guest cottage. On the shore, overlooking the mountains of Acadia National Park, at Southwest Harbor, Maine. Perfect for two couples or family of five. Call Polly Lawrence '55 at 301/652-2356.

Vassar alum seeks publications in the following languages: Afrikaans, Catalan, and Romanian. If you can obtain publications in these languages for me, I will gladly reimburse your expenses. Call, write, or fax: Stephen Joseph Willig '78, MD, JD, 4203 Saltwater Blvd., Tampa, FL 33615-5630; telephone 813/884-1668; fax 813/884-1723.

Gloucester, Massachusetts. Large family house on ocean for summer rental. Sleeps 14. Seven bedrooms, three baths, large porch. Located near beach. Fireplace, washer/dryer, dishwasher. $1,000 a week. Call Eleanor Green '61 at 419/634-9446.

Stanley, Idaho. For sale or summer rent: log home, sleeps eight. All conveniences. Pet horse on 17 acres. Heart of Sawtooth Recreation Area. Call Peggy Plunkett Lord '51 at 203/255-0808 (May to October) or her son at 401/783-6699.


Bridges to the World: Henry Noble MacCracken and Vassar College by Elizabeth A. Daniels '41, Vassar College Historian. Price: $18.50. Henry Noble MacCracken's presidency of Vassar College, which began in 1915, far exceeded the confines of the campus. When he died in 1970, the New York Times noted his pioneering efforts in the fight to abolish academic formalism. Order from Bookmasters, 1/800/247-6553, or from Vassar Cooperative Bookshop, Box 16, Vassar College, Poughkeepsie, NY 12601; telephone, 914/454-2663.

Washington, DC, area. Furnished, four-bedroom, three-and-a-half-bath house for rent in suburban Maryland. Charming, quiet neighborhood. Close to excellent schools, public transportation, shopping. Fifteen minutes to downtown D.C. Available Jan. 1, 1996, for three to six months. Write Christine B. Garo '46 at 5106 Worthington Dr., Bethesda, MD 20816 or telephone: 301/229-7763.

Attention authors, writers, illustrators, cartoonists: If you would like to put your name on file for possible assignments for the Vassar Quarterly, please contact Georgette Weir, editor, Vassar Quarterly, Alumnae House, 61 Raymond Ave., Poughkeepsie, NY 12601.

Authors: If you want your forthcoming book to be mentioned in the pages of the VQ, please send bound galleys or completed books to the above address.

If you are a writer and are interested in writing about books, please contact books editor Yona Zeldis McDonough, 606 Carroll St., Brooklyn, NY 11215.

Manhattan furnished sublet for two to three months. One-bedroom preferred for June, July, and August. Call Claudia Archimede '91 at 914/452-7752 (home) or 212/242-1968 (work).

Alumna working on Ph.D. seeks house-sitting job in Poughkeepsie area for summer months. Will care for pets, plants, etc. I'm also looking for part-time employment. Please contact Lisa Schwartz '85 at 703/256-0019.

Nile cruise and Kenya safari, October 11-29, 1995. $6,048 twin (includes air fare). Tour Cairo before taking Nile cruise (Aswan, Valley of the Kings, Temple of King Tut, Temples of Karmak, Luxor). In Kenya, visit Amboseli National Park, Treetops Lodge, Safari Club, Masai Mara Game Reserve, Serengeti Plain. Reservations by August 8; Elinor Oswald '42, L.A. Today Custom Tours, 14964 Camarosa Dr., Pacific Palisades, CA 90272. Phone or fax: 310/454-5730.
Since assuming the obligations of AAVC president nearly one year ago, I have had the joyful realization that this responsibility brings with it many happy returns.

One of the most recent of these happy events was AAVC's regional symposium in Seattle—Vassar in the Northwest—in March, where I enjoyed the great pleasure of meeting dynamic Vassar people who together span eight decades of Vassar experiences and who individually are inspiring examples of commitment to Vassar, community, family, and friends. I also was privileged to witness the vitality, enthusiasm, and effectiveness of the members of the Washington State Vassar Club in supporting the AAVC effort in their area and in adding to the program educational and fun elements of their own.

AAVC's regional programs are a mix of classroom-style lectures by members of the faculty, presentations and question-and-answer sessions with current students and administrators, and opportunities for alumnae/i from a range of classes and clubs to come together to exchange ideas and recharge Vassar batteries through formal and informal discussions. Each of the day-long symposia—previous programs have been held in Chicago, Los Angeles, and Atlanta—has been preceded by a one-day workshop for club leaders in the region.

In Seattle, representatives came from nine club areas and six states plus British Columbia. The workshop for club leaders—most of whom were recent graduates, many in '90s classes—included concise and informative presentations on young alumnae/i and class activity programming from AAVC staff; career development information from Clare Downey Graham, M.S. '68, director of Career Development; and "Facts, Figures, and Trends in Admission and Financial Aid" from Nancy Quackenbush Rubsam '64, associate director of admission. There was also excellent brainstorming and a true exchange of ideas among all the volunteer and staff participants in the workshop.

During the formal regional symposium the next day, participants reported that they had a sense of having been transported to the Vassar campus during the academic presentations by Associate
Professor of Psychology Janet M. Gray and Professor of Religion and Africana Studies Lawrence H. Mamiya. A discussion of “What’s New on Campus?” included observations by students Saskia M. de Boer ’97 and David Lee ’97 as well as by Nancy Rubsam, Clare Graham, and Kristina Chandler, director of development. Dean of Students David H. “D.B.” Brown ably moderated the discussions.

President Frances D. Fergusson gave a comprehensive account of the state of the college that both entertained the audience and confirmed alumnae/i in their dedication to efforts in its behalf.

As an alumna who lives just a few hours’ drive from campus, for me the Seattle program brought home the importance of bringing Vassar to our more distant alumnae/i. The comments by Washington State club member and on-site program chair for Vassar in the Northwest Christopher Martin ’90 support this sentiment: “Vassar in the Northwest has given the club a much-needed infusion. We proved to ourselves, and we hope the general membership, that Washington State can maintain a viable club dedicated to supporting the long-term needs of the college. We hope to build on the equity this event has provided with a series of gatherings and events for the entire Vassar community. The club is grateful to all at Vassar who made this weekend in Seattle such a smashing success.”

We at AAVC and the college are equally grateful to the Washington State Vassar Club for its support and enthusiasm in putting this program together and for its continuing efforts in admission, publicity, and alumnae/i development on behalf of the college.

To our other members around the country, I want to say that those of us back “home” are committed to transporting Vassar more vividly and frequently to our constituents around the country. We look forward to bringing Vassar to other locales in the future and to providing strong support for our volunteers’ efforts, whether they be near the campus or far away from home.

Joan Strashinsky Kjelleren ’71
AAVC President
AAVC TRAVEL
Plan Now for 1996 Travel to Antarctica and Alaska

AAVC is proud to announce two unusual opportunities for adventure and discovery—one trip to Antarctica and the other to Alaska. Each one promises our travelers an easy way to explore the unique wonders of a part of the world that is not on the beaten path of tourism.

Academic Arrangements Abroad is the agent for our trip to Antarctica, which starts on January 21, 1996, with a flight to lively, handsome Buenos Aires. Our three-night stay there includes a side trip to Iguazu Falls, one of the world’s most dramatic natural splendors. From Buenos Aires we fly to the world’s southernmost town, Ushuaia, where we board the elegant, exceptionally comfortable M/S Hanseatic.

The timing of the cruise coincides with the long days and short nights of the austral summer. It is the ideal time to see the surprisingly abundant wildflowers and other vegetation. It is also birthing time for the many species of wildlife that inhabit the region, including almost the full panoply of penguins and a wide variety of other seabirds, seals, sea lions, and whales. And finally, it is the most comfortable time for enjoying the scenery, which is so difficult to describe, since it far surpasses all the clichéd words such as breathtaking, awe-inspiring, and incredible.

The ship’s itinerary takes us the full length of the famous Beagle Channel, past the islands off the Strait of Magellan, and then to the Falkland Islands, where we have time to explore this outpost of the British Empire that seems to have been frozen in time. We sail the Scotia Sea and then cruise the waters around the continent of Antarctica, including the famous Lemaire Channel, making zodiac landings on the continent itself, as well as on Elephant, Paulet, and Deception islands. Finally, we sail through the Drake Passage to Cape Horn, where we may be able to land, and then back to Ushuaia for our flight home.

The trip to Alaska will be described more fully in the next issue of the Vassar Quarterly. Under the direction of Special Expeditions we cruise from Juneau to Sitka on the 70-passenger Sea Lion from July 6-13, 1996, using zodiacs to explore the coves and shoreline. The program will be enriched by Professor Lucy Lewis Johnson of Vassar’s anthropology department, as well as Special Expeditions’ own naturalists.

Our trips have been filling up so quickly that we recommend early booking for all AAVC trips to avoid disappointment. For more information, please write or phone the AAVC office.

Ann Distler Brown ’47-’48
Kathleen Holman Langan ’46
Co-coordinators, AAVC Travel Program

CLASS EVENTS
Turning 50 with Friends

The class of ‘66 held a mass 50th birthday party last fall, and it was not, as some might suppose, a case of misery loving company.

“The organizing committee decided to dwell on the positive,” writes class member April Klimley, who, with Kathy Hubbs, Abigail Sturges, Lauree McMahon Hickok, Gaylen Moore, Sheila Ginzberg, Pam Schumacher, and Melinda Guttman, helped put the daylong bash together.

“The theme of our all-day birthday party was the ‘Wit and Wisdom’ of ‘66 at 50.’

More than 40 members of ‘66 joined in the special mini-reunion in New York City—a record number for the class for such affairs. Participants—many of whom had never previously attended any Vassar reunion—came from as far as Boston in the north, Michigan in the west, and Virginia in the south. They dropped in and out of a series of five events in venues scattered about Manhattan.

“Our starting point,” writes Ms. Klimley, “was coffee and bagels in the Greenwich Village studio of artist Pam Schumacher. Her evocative ink drawings and paintings on the stark white walls surrounded us and made a perfect setting for 25 enthusiastic women who never stopped chatting with each other, exchanging news, and making new friends for two hours.”

After breakfast, some moved on to private explorations of the city; others moved right on to lunch and more talk with classmates at a restaurant on New York’s Upper West Side. “The action moved to the nearby apartment of Sheila Ginzberg, where the large group divided into smaller clusters for focused conversations on ‘How we perceived ourselves at Vassar versus how we perceive ourselves today.’ ”

“It was fun,” reports Ms. Klimley, “to see how people had grown into their own skin . . . gone beyond the trembling teenagers we all started out as.”

After the formal discussions, the reuners took a two-hour rest stop, enjoying casual breaks hosted by various of the class’s West Side apartment dwellers. “Everything was relaxed,” says Ms. Klimley. “Everyone
leaned back sipping wine or soda and began reminiscing in a low-key way."

At 7 P.M., '66 reconvened for a catered meal in a "magnificent, two-story apartment" loaned to the class for the occasion. "Abigail Sturges passed out individually painted scrolls for everyone. Each scroll contained a 'compliment' for the woman that summed up some of her essence. And each woman had to read the compliment out loud."

"Those compliments brought everyone together" continues Ms. Klimley. "They gave us a chance to look around at our friends, acquaintances, and people we had seen many times before but perhaps never met. We could nod 'yes' when a compliment hit the spot, or laugh if the comment was humorous.

"By 11 P.M. everyone was saying goodbye. Why so early? Had we all become 'short-hitters'? No, everyone was just stuffed full of experiences and fellowship."

**Limited Edition Lithograph to Benefit New York Club**

The Vassar Club of New York is selling a limited-edition lithograph titled "Vassar Perspectives 1994," produced by computer artist Leslie Pappas '80. Ms. Pappas used photographs she took at Vassar during 1994. Additional images came from the 1980 Vassar yearbook. This 22" x 30" collage of photography and computer art was created using digitized images.

This limited edition of 1,000 signed prints includes 800 numbered prints and 200 artist proofs. The master original has been destroyed. The cost is $150 plus shipping and handling. Proceeds will benefit the Vassar Club of New York.

If you are interested in supporting the club by purchasing one of these prints, please contact Mona Lober at 212/697-7499 or Ms. Pappas at 415/206-0404.

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"Vassar Perspectives 1994" by Leslie Pappas '80; available for purchase through the Vassar Club of New York.
AAVC Calendar

OF GENERAL INTEREST

June 9, 10, 11
Reunion

October 6-7
AAVC Fall Council
On Campus

October 7-8
Reunion and Leadership Workshop
Alumnae House/Campus
Contact: AAVC office, 914/437-5439

CLASS DATES
Contact: 914/437-5439

September 19-21
Class of 1932 Informal Reunion
At Alumnae House

October 3-5
Class of 1937 Informal Reunion
At Alumnae House

October 11-13
Class of 1943 Informal Reunion
At Alumnae House

October 20-22
Class of 1958 Informal Reunion
At Alumnae House

CLUB DATES
Contact: 914/437-5440

June 11
Oregon Club
Annual meeting and
Miss Saigon theater evening

June 16
Westchester, New York, Club
Annual Book Sale

June 24
Fairfield, Connecticut, Club
Trip to Kykuit, Rockefeller estate

TRAVEL
Contact AAVC office, 914/437-5436

May 19-June 3, 1995
AAVC Trip to Turkey
Faculty: Christine Mitchell Havelock,
professor emerita of art

September 26-October 9, 1995
AAVC Trip to Russia
Travel from Moscow to St. Petersburg
on the waterways of the czars.

January 21, 1996
AAVC Trip to Antarctica
See travel details in this issue.

Advance Announcement
July 7 - 14, 1996
AAVC Trip to Alaska
Explore Alaska's coastal wilderness
with Professor of Anthropology Lucy
Johnson.

Class of '95

It's Coming

100 Nights After

Details to be mailed in August.
Make sure AAVC has your up-to-date address.
(You can use the postcard enclosed in the magazine for Class Notes.)

Your Class Notes column should commence with the next issue of
the magazine. At any time, you can use the postcard enclosed in
the magazine to send word of your plans and activities or just to
update your address and stay on the VQ's mailing list.
Can a child with moussaka in her lunch box find happiness in a Virginia kindergarten?

In the early '40s it wasn't easy, especially with a last name like Christopoulos. I was the only kid in kindergarten who didn't have an Anglo-Saxon name and peanut butter, and for the first few days I felt tense.

But it only took that long for the natural camaraderie of the young to overcome ethnic barriers, especially when they learned I could spell all the brand names of beers, a skill taught me by my Uncle Kallimachos, who was an expert on beer and unorthodox curricula.

Still, at age five I could tell that the old U.S.A. wasn't such a melting pot after all. Where were all those huddled masses yearning to breathe free? It was clear that Tidewater Virginia hadn't heard much about them and wasn't eager to have them breathing free.

Grandmother—or Yaya, as we call grandmothers in Greek—was the first female Greek immigrant to settle in Norfolk, Virginia, in 1900. Benet of the opportunity to show off her skill in the kitchen at tea-time to other Greek wives (there weren't any), she bided her time and had children until 1910.

Connie, her second daughter, had a fight in school. The teacher, Miz Wells, took her aside. "Dawlin', what's your name again?"

"Connie Christopoulos."

"You're the Grecian child, ain't ye? Run home and tell your mama I'm coming to see her this afternoon."

Aunt Connie raced home with this harrowing news. Yaya received it with a mixture of joy and terror. Here was her chance to offer true Greek hospitality, i.e., to stuff someone to death.

In two hours' preparation time, Yaya threw a baklava into the oven, sliced a ham, cut cheese, and dipped thirty olives out of a tub of brine. This was the Main Serving. For the preliminary serving, which is presented the moment a guest enters the door, she prepared the traditional preserve tray. A bowl was filled to the brim with Yaya's best homemade preserves, in this case green walnuts, plucked from the trees while still young and soft, parboiled and steamed for months in a rich, thick, heavy, powerful syrup. One of them lasts two weeks after you eat it.

A fork was placed on a daily next to the bowl so that the guest might spear a walnut and eat it over a glass of water. Despite the show-off amount in the bowl, you only take one. Who could handle a second? On the rear of the tray were eight small glasses containing a choice of home-brewed cordials and wines.

Miz Wells arrived at 4:30. "SEET DOWN," Yaya yelled, because you speak louder to foreigners. Miz Wells sat, keeping on her hat and coat for an emergency getaway. Yaya brought the preserve tray.

"EAT."

Like a good Virginian, Miz Wells simpered, "Well, now, ah doan know if ah can eat all this, but ah certainly will try." And, unaware of proper procedure, she lifted the heavy bowl off the tray, picked up her fork, and ate all eighteen of the preserved green walnuts. Yaya watched the orgy in stunned silence, even when her guest got to the little glasses. Down went the ouzo, the seven-star Metaxa brandy, and six more household firewaters. After the last one, Miz Wells walked stiff-legged to the door. She never visited again.

To my relief, when I came to Vassar in 1952 nobody stumbled over "Christopoulos"; I could just as well have been Jones for all the stir it caused. No doubt my classmates had come from more international or cosmopolitan milieux.

When I married a Russian in 1964, believe it or not the balm of an easy American name was mine for three years. Fearing that Stalin might come personally to assassinate him, my husband had changed his name after immigration to an Anglo-Saxon composite gleaned from various movies: Larry Harold McReed. For three years I was Hope McReed.

When our daughter Tamara was an infant, Larry and I had a discussion.

"You're a Russian and I'm a Greek," I told him. "How can we justify naming our children 'McReed'?"

We decided to take back his real Russian name. This was an interesting and complex matter, involving wedding certificates, social security cards, bank accounts, naturalization papers, and—finally—the two girls' birth certificates. Living as we were in Chapel Hill at the time, we went to the courthouse in Hillsborough, North Carolina, to change the children's names. A woman in tight white curls and rimless glasses regarded us from behind the counter. "Kin ah hep yew?" she said.

"Yes," I said slowly. "We want to change our children's birth certificates to new names." I was holding Tamara, whom my mother had temporarily nicknamed 'Tammy.' "I nodded toward the baby in my arms. "We want to change this one from Tammy McReed to Tamara Leonidovna Mihalap."

There was a moment of silence and then the woman turned her head to a back door and yelled, "Bill, come in here and HEP me with these people!" They regarded us as certifiably insane.

When our son was born two years later, we named him from the start Nicolai Leonidovich Mihalap and printed his birth announcement in the Virginia newspapers. My mother, whose name was Penelope Christopoulos Christopoulos, murmured, "That poor baby has a foreign name." Clearly, cultural diversity is a complex matter, even in households that are already polyglot.

Hope Mihalap is a professional humorist and author of the memoir Where There's Hope, HM Books, 1994
Name

Name in college

Date

Update:

Class

Above: New address (or second address with dates of residence)
Be a Friend

The Friends of the Frances Lehman Loeb Art Center have provided funding for:

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- student activities

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Farm markets
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Frances Lehman Loeb Art Center

Alumnae House

Early reservations are recommended for autumn; call 914/437-7100.
Open to anyone with a Vassar connection.