A Playwright and a Filmmaker
Determinedly Seeking Stardust

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Toot your own horn if you read Class Notes!

You can use the postcard at the back of this magazine.
Deadlines for submission of Class Notes to the Quarterly.

The cards, etc., received by the VQ are sent to correspondents three weeks in advance of their deadlines. The news in this issue was sent to correspondents about May 1. News for the Winter issue was sent July 28. News for the Spring edition will be sent November 1, and for Summer, February 1.

The long lead times are to permit the writing, editing, checking of all names, typesetting, proofreading, and layout of the longest section of the magazine.
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Evan Smith ’90 attended military school in the South, came to Vassar at the urging of Wendy Wasserstein, still works with a community theater in his home town of Savannah, and this summer saw his first feature-length play on stage at the Powerhouse with Equity actors.

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Mohonk Mountain House, a National Historic Landmark located in the Shawangunk Mountains in Ulster County, was once a favorite destination for Vassar student outings. Today, a Vassar alumna of a later generation is helping to run the institution that is also her family business.

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Think Presents
Do your holiday shopping through this Vassar Club Gift Catalogue and help support Vassar scholarship students at the same time.

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by Edith Rosenfels Nash ’34

Cover: Playwright Evan Smith ’90
Photo by Dixie Sheridan ’65 (sans computer)
LETTERS

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

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

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

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

Send letters to:
VQ, Alumnae House
61 Raymond Ave.
Poughkeepsie, NY 12603
or, e-mail: gev@vassar.edu

Still “Growing Older”

Re the Summer 1997 Vassar Quarterly special section on growing older:

I am still alive and alert. I will be 102 on August 7, 1997. Where is my picture in the Summer 1997 Quarterly? Why not 1917-1997?

Doris Bullard Duncan ’17
New York, New York

Editor’s note: The Vassar mailing list includes twenty-three alumnae from the classes of 1906 through 1917. The bracketing of the VQ’s “Growing Older” section in the last edition was intended to refer only to the span of the contributors to that issue, and we are delighted that Mrs. Duncan has written in to extend that span. Thank you.

Hats off to the Quarterly for featuring in its summer edition the thoughtful section “Growing Older”—particularly the poignant “Shades of Seeing,” by Priscilla Luke Vail ’53.

May each of us come to appreciate the grace and fragility of life while we have it—and count ourselves blessed for the education with which we can aspire to Mrs. Vail’s wisdom in expression of that appreciation.

Alexander Steinberg ’93
White Plains, New York

The Summer ’97 issue of the Quarterly had an article that began: “You know you’re growing older when . . .” A few additions:

You know you’re growing older when . . .
• You have to search for your Class Notes; they’re not conveniently located at the end like they used to be.
• Friends who once sent you the help wanteds are now sending you the name of their accountant.
• “Points” are no longer something you want in a rugby match; they’re something you want to avoid in a mortgage.
• The “Retreat” is no longer just a cafeteria, but something you go on with colleagues.
• Your old local dives still play music you remember first hearing in the Aula.
• Your new mantra becomes “Thirty’s not really that old.”

Christopher White ’90
Wethersfield, Connecticut

Women Who Love Horses

In the [Spring] issue of the Quarterly, I placed what I believed to be an innocent, even vague, request to hear from women who love horses (Person, Place & Thing). I was not sure if I would receive any response.

O ye of little faith! Given what I know of the tightness and generous inclinations of the Vassar family, I should have been better prepared for the outpouring of phone calls and letters from across the country, as well as across the sea. The stories I’ve been told have moved and educated me, and will enrich my book in a way it never could be without them. So to everyone who took the time to call and to write, a very deeply felt thank-you. I am looking forward to meeting some of you in person whenever I get the opportunity to travel; all your letters and stories are like treasures to me.

Melissa Pierson ’80
Brooklyn, New York

Thanks for the Memories

Many thanks to Mindy Aloft ’69 for her wonderful article about Bill Gifford in the Spring Quarterly (“A Reader of Influence”). She evoked what Mr. Gifford has meant to three generations of Vassar students, many of whom, like me, still hear his voice every time we sit down to write or edit something important. A committee of his former students helped Anne Alexander Marshall ’67 and me to create the Gifford Fund for Visiting Writers. Their efforts should be recognized here: Jane Kramer ’59, Christine Whipple Farrington ’67, Lucinda Franks Mongenthalu ’68, Jane Smiley ’71, Elizabeth Spires ’74, Heinz Insu Fenkl ’82, and Mindy herself.

The first Gifford reading, by Ann Christie ’85, a former student of Bill’s, took place on April 21. It was wonderful, but the fund will not always have the luxury of bringing Bill’s former students to campus for that it needs to be larger. We are still $20,000 short of our $100,000 goal. We hope that those of you who have contributed will consider another gift, and those who haven’t will join our effort. We are driven by our commitment to Bill’s model of caring and compassionate teaching.

An excerpt from the charge to the fund is reproduced below. I hope you will agree that it is an appropriate expression of gratitude to one of the finest teachers to bless our college:

Visiting writers will be chosen for their craftsmanship, their honesty of vision, their range of style and subject matter. In this way, future generations of Vassar undergraduates may continue to benefit from William Gifford’s commitment to the English Department’s belief that honest writing is an art important in itself and one which leads all who engage in it toward self-knowledge and a deeper appreciation of literature.

Benna Brecher Wilde ’67
Naperville, Illinois
Commencement '97

Josiah Trager, senior class president:

"We are leaving our home behind us, and it is no less difficult than it was four years ago. Today is not just the happiest day of our lives, it is the happiest sad day of our lives."

Rachel Weimerskirch '97, announcing the senior class gift of $3,777 to be put toward refurbishment of the bridge to the Terrace Apartments and to financial aid and scholarships:

"As a class, we are concerned about the availability of a Vassar education for all students."

Top Ten

Top 10 majors of this year's senior class:

English 75  Sociology 33
Psychology 63  Biology 30
Film 37  History 30
Art 34  Economics 23
Political Science 33  Drama 22

(Provided by the Office of the Registrar)

Norman Fainstein, dean of the faculty, on the one member of the faculty whose retirement was noted this year:

"I salute Frederick Bunnell, who is stepping down from thirty years of service in the Department of Political Science and in the Program for Asian Studies. . . . May this be a happy rite of passage for him, as it is for you: the class of 1997."

Commencement speaker

Film director and producer

ALAN PAKULA
(Sophie's Choice, All the President's Men)

"I consider myself lucky; I earn a living doing something I would do for no money and no credit. Film is my life." Recalling how his own father questioned his son's career choice, finding the idea of "starting over every year" terrifying: "It was that very thing that made me feel alive. . . . With each film, I enter and explore a different world."
Images of War Coming to the Loeb Center

In addition to the permanent collection on view in the main gallery, the following exhibits are scheduled for the prints and drawings gallery this year.

26 September - 14 December
The Lines of Battle
Images of War from the Fifteenth to Twentieth Centuries
This exhibition follows changing trends in the representation of war, as well as inno-

vations on the battlefield, as depicted by such artists as Albrecht Dürer, Jacques Callot, Francisco Goya, George Bellows, and Pablo Picasso.

This exhibit will complement the interests of this year's Delmas Visiting Scholar, Professor John Keegan. Professor Keegan is an eminent war historian and has written on everything from Stone Age combat to the Persian Gulf War.

The exhibition is supported by the Smart Family Foundation, Inc.

16 January - 15 March 1998
Renaissance and Baroque Drawings from the Suida Manning Collection
Over the past fifty years, Bertina Suida Manning and Robert Manning have compiled one of the finest collections of Old Master drawings in private hands. This exhibition represents the scope of the collection through a selection of about seventy works, many on view for the first time for appreciation and study.

Although the Suida Manning collection is predominantly Italian (Castiglione, Guercino, Polidoro da Caravaggio, Strozzi, and Tiepolo are among the artists), it also includes drawings by French, Dutch, and German artists (François Boucher, Charles-Joseph Natoire, Stradanus, and Martin de Vos). The exhibit is supported by the Smart Family Foundation, Inc.

3 April - 7 June 1998
James Daugherty's Mural Drawings from the 1930s
James Daugherty (1887-1974) is best known as an author and illustrator of children's books, but between 1920 and 1939 he also completed over fourteen mural projects for public and private buildings in
Thirty years ago, recalled Winifred Asprey at a symposium in her honor, there were worries at Vassar that computers would “destroy all liberal arts thought.” Then Yale came courting . . .

The Annual Angst of Room Draw

Is room draw stressful?

“Ugh, yes!” says Amber Close ’99, who stood with several friends in a crowded Davison multipurpose room in May during one of the most tension-filled of Vassar rituals. Around her, students lounged in front of the TV, checked out bowls of snacks, or, like her, studied a long list of hand-scrivelled room numbers taped to a wall.

The list on the wall showed which rooms had been claimed and by whom. Ms. Close explained she would prefer quiet neighbors and would take a small room over a larger one if it meant peace and quiet. “It’s hard because I can’t pick the room I want until I know who is around me,” she said.

According to the Office of Residential Life, 1,069 students participated in dorm room draw this past spring. Director of Residential Life Faith Nichols said for many students, room draw is a big deal—they comparison shop and stop by her office to ask, “What are my chances?” “They carry around lists [of room numbers] for days,” she said.

Ms. Close agrees—some students agonize over room draw. It’s important, she said. “I’m in my dorm room for a bigger part of the year than I’m at home.”

Mauricio Pajon ’99, who stood among Ms. Close’s circle of friends, made a list that showed room numbers, the size of each
room, and the order of his preference. Both he and Ms. Close expected to draw rooms on a wellness corridor. Wellness corridors are smoke- and alcohol-free, and students may vote to have rules about noise.

"We forgot to sign up for wellness... but we investigated and found two people weren't coming back, and it opened up two places for us," Ms. Close said.

In Main Building, room draw was held in a second-floor lounge, and a crowd of students waited outside in the corridor. As the evening progressed and students were called to the lounge to make their choices, many returned with a bounce in their step. "I'm next door to Carolyn!" one woman announced, doing a little dance. Lauren Bell '00, who earlier had said room draw "felt like a race," reported she got a two-room double with a friend. Happy! "Yes, it has a bathtub and a toilet and a sink," and the privacy of her own room, she said.

The crowd eventually thinned, and the list of available rooms dwindled to include four two-room triples and several doubles. "Please don't take our triple," a young woman pleaded with several peers studying the list of rooms.

A young man with short-cropped hair and overalls, who earlier had stood by himself, nervously bouncing on the balls of his feet, emerged from choosing his room with a smile on his face and now a different sort of energy. "I need a cigarette," he announced to no one in particular.

Although room draw can be stressful, more than one student who spoke with the Quarterly acknowledged that Vassar students have it better than students at other colleges.

"I have friends at other schools who have to share a room with another person all four years," Ms. Close said. "Here, after the first year, I'm alone."

According to Ms. Nichols, students who aren't happy with the room they get will have opportunities to change both before and after the fall semester begins. She noted there is no guarantee that students will get single rooms their sophomore year.

**Phishing, etc.: The Noncredit Curriculum**

Each semester, the Office of Campus Activities offers a host of mini-courses that have nothing to do with academics. Probably the best-known and most sought-after offering among these classes is Professor of Physics Mort Tavel's introduction to wine tasting. Wine Tasting is to the mini-course curriculum what Art 105 is to Vassar's academic curriculum—a "must-take."

But the list of courses offered each semester varies and is varied. Teresa Quinn, associate director of campus activities, says that when considering a course for the program, she looks at whether it will be fun and whether it will be something different—something one can't find in an academic program.

That was certainly the case with a course taught this past semester by Michael Cohen and David Berg, both class of 2000. (Mini-courses can be taught by any member of the Vassar community.) In "A Phish Called Wonder" the two led an exploration of the music of the band Phish, provided concert tapes and the stereo, and made sure each session included time for discussion.

What kind of music does Phish play?

"Jazz-influenced rock," Mr. Berg said. "But that doesn't cover it—that's a good quarter of their songs."

Mr. Cohen, sitting on the steps of ACDC with a glass of milk, offered a different kind of explanation.

"Your imagination is the white," he said, tilting his glass slightly so the milk moved up the side. A reflection from the sun created a red circle near the glass bottom. "There they are in there," he said, referring to the circle. "They mix it up and play on different sides of your imagination."

Hmmm.

Phish, a band that tours a great deal, has gained a steady following of fans who travel from concert to concert. Much like the Grateful Dead, the band is almost as well known for its following as for its music. (Newsweek called them "crunch youngsters.") They call themselves "phans" and on their Web pages (where all j sounds are spelled with ph) they speak of such things as the band's "spiritual and musical creaminess."

Mr. Berg and Mr. Cohen urge newcomers to the group to evaluate Phish's music for itself and not on the basis of one's opinion of its fans.

"It's silly to be turned off by a band based on its following. If, say, all the people you know who like Van Gogh paintings are real pretentious, artsy types who irritate the hell out of you, I think that's the worst reason in the world to never look at a Van Gogh painting," Mr. Berg said.

Mr. Berg and Mr. Cohen's mini-course initially had a registration fee of $2 for a field trip to Ben and Jerry's for ice cream. (Both the band and the ice cream chain are based in Vermont and the latter offers a flavor called Phish Food.) In the end, however, the course was given for free.
Other mini-courses offered this past spring semester included:

- American Sign Language for Beginners
- Australian Aboriginal Instruments: Playing the Digeridoo
- Ballroom Dancing
- Bartending
- Basic Blues Harmonica Jam Seminar
- Buying Foreclosure Homes and How to Fix Bad Credit
- Cartooning for Pleasure and Profit
- Ceramic Workshops
- Cranks, Chains, and the Saddle: Introduction to Bicycle Maintenance
- The Essence of Fabio
- Handbuilding with Kai II
- An Introduction to the Baha’i Faith
- An Introduction to Swedish Massage
- Irish Polka and Ceili Dancing
- Knitting for Beginners
- Numerology
- Oriental Brush Painting
- Polymer Clay Techniques
- Photography/Portraitist Developing and Printing
- The Revolutionary James Bond Film: Plus Raiders of the Lost Ark and Die Hard
- Salsa, Cumbias, and Merengue
- Training for Intervention Procedures by Servers of Alcohol
- Wine Tasting

Coach Andrew Carter, who joined Vassar athletics in September 1996, reported that, for the first time, the crew team has boats of eight sweep oars. (Those familiar with crew simply call them “eights.”) One eight, given by an anonymous donor, is named the Frances Daly Ferguson after Vassar’s president. The other, purchased by college trustee Jim Benkard, is named for his son Andrew Benkard ’88, a former Vassar coxswain. Two new “fours” also join the fleet—one is the Spirit of ’93, named for a women’s boat that went undefeated in 1993, and the other, purchased by the same anonymous donor, is the Vassar ’63 and ’95.

For the first time Vassar crew also will have two “pairs,” which Mr. Carter says will allow the team a small-boat approach to training.

Mr. Carter said the 1996 fall season, his first season with the team, was “promising.” The team competed in the Head of the Connecticut as well as the Head of the Fish, at which Vassar won medals in five out of seven events. In the spring, poor weather led to the cancellation of several competitions, including the New York State Championships. The team, however, still managed to compete at both the LaSalle and Skidmore invitational.

Mr. Carter said the women’s schedule for this fall shows five regattas, including the Head of the Charles and, for the first time, the Seven Sisters regatta. Traditionally, the Seven Sisters format has been “eights oriented,” Mr. Carter said; now that the team has eights in its fleet, Vassar will be able to compete with its sister schools. The men will compete in four fall regattas, and both the men and the women will be competing in indoor competitions (on rowing machines) in the winter and five or six regattas in the spring.

Moving from club to varsity status will take some of the pressure off the student athletes, Mr. Carter said. “A lot of the worries that once distracted the students will now be handled by a full-time coach and the administration,” he noted.

Sports Highlights

Awards

Outstanding Senior Athlete awards
Molly Moran, lacrosse and field hockey
Caleb Wilkinson, basketball

Coaches Award: Heather Cohen ’97, a member of the women’s tennis

Betty Richey Award: Kelley Walsh ’99, basketball, field hockey, and lacrosse

Wins/Losses/Ties

Spring Team Results

Men’s Baseball: 6-17
Women’s Rugby: 9-7-1
Men’s Rugby: 9-6-1
Women’s Lacrosse: 12-3
Men’s Lacrosse: 3-10
Women’s Tennis: 15-5
Men’s Tennis: 14-6

Crew Goes Varsity

Crew is going varsity this fall, and it is starting strong with a new coach and several new boats.

Athletics Hotline: 914/437-7109
Fax: 914/437-7033
Web site: http://vassun.vassar.edu/~physed/
What the College Is Doing on the Financial Aid Front

by David M. Borus
Dean of Admission and Financial Aid

Vassar's first scholarship fund was bequeathed to the college by its founder, Matthew Vassar. Ever since that initial act of philanthropy, Vassar has provided financial support to promising students who need assistance to meet the costs of a college education. Through the years, thousands of women and men have been the beneficiaries of that support and have gone on to lead productive and satisfying lives, in large part due to their Vassar experiences.

The college is proud of its long history of providing financial help to deserving students, and that historic commitment remains undiminished today, with more students receiving more Vassar dollars than ever before. But given the current climate of cutbacks in governmental support, rising college costs, and a growing need for financial assistance, just what is happening at Vassar on the financial aid front, and what are the prospects for the future?

Answering those important questions requires a look backward—not to Matthew Vassar’s era, but to the early 1970s. Prior to 1971, all of the financial aid needs of Vassar’s student body could be met without the use of funds from the general operating budget. Endowment income, targeted gifts, and state and federal funds covered the entire aid budget of $1,117,000, an amount that supported 530 students, or about 30 percent of those enrolled. Governmental support made up some 28 percent of the total spending on aid.

A decade later, in 1980/81, the aid budget had grown to nearly $4 million, but almost a third of that amount came from the college’s general fund, and over 900 students were receiving assistance. By the 1990/91 academic year, Vassar was giving out nearly $11 million in financial aid to 987, or about 42 percent, of its students, with fully 60 percent of the total cost covered by operating revenues and only 11 percent by state and federal funds. Obviously, the increased demand for aid placed an ever-growing burden on the college’s finances and began to limit its fiscal flexibility in other areas.

By 1996/97, however, the growth in the aid budget had escalated even more dramatically, with over 1,200 students, or 54 percent of those enrolled, receiving college scholarship funds. Fully 2/3 of the $17.7 million budget for aid came from the college’s general funds, with governmental assistance accounting for only 8 percent of the total. In just a few years, financial aid had passed faculty salaries as the largest single component in the overall operating budget, claiming nearly 20 percent of the total. What had happened to cause this drastic increase in spending for financial aid at Vassar?

A number of concurrent external factors have been at least partially responsible for the steep rise in demand for aid dollars. First, federal and state funding for this purpose has been largely static since the early 1980s, and the share of the aid burden covered by this source of funding has dwindled until it is relatively insignificant today. Although endowment income and restricted gifts have grown considerably in actual dollars in the past twenty-five years, they too now cover a declining share of the overall costs of financial assistance. Consequently, an ever-larger portion of the load has fallen on the college’s operating funds. Finally, increased public attention on the cost of a college education has prompted more families than ever before to apply and qualify for assistance.

Although highly selective colleges like Vassar generally have done an excellent job in the 1990s in slowing the rate of increase in their fees, they have still seen the costs of financial aid rise at a much quicker rate. For example, while the college’s comprehensive fee rose only 4 percent last year, the scholarship budget increased 15.4 percent. Over 55 percent of last fall’s freshman class received Vassar aid funding, replacing a senior class in which only 49 percent were aid recipients. As the number of students on aid and the level of spending necessary to support them continue to rise, it becomes increasingly more apparent that options must be explored that can at least help slow the rate of growth in the aid budget without sacrificing either the quality or the diversity of the college’s student body.

Of course, Vassar is not alone in this dilemma. But the college seems to have been hit somewhat harder by this phenomenon than most of its peer institutions. Among a group of twenty-one highly selective liberal arts colleges, only one other institution devotes more of its annual budget to finan-
The government is cutting back; costs are still going up; and the need for financial aid continues to grow. How is Vassar coping, and what are the prospects for the future?

Of course, this means that Vassar thereby has less to spend on faculty salaries, technology, facilities, and all the other expenditures through which institutions invest in their own futures. At the same time, Vassar is attracting more applications from more highly qualified students than ever before, and the academic credentials of the students who enroll here today rank them among the best in the college's long history. Such students hold high expectations concerning the quality of instruction, facilities, and services at the colleges they choose to attend.

The recently completed capital campaign raised nearly $20 million for the scholarship endowment, but that increase generates only an additional $1 million annually to our financial aid resources during a period when the demand for aid has risen by a staggering $6 million in six years. Despite the success of the campaign, which funded a large number of physical improvements as well as adding to the endowment, the college's needs continue to outstrip its resources, especially in the area of financial aid support.

In recent years, other colleges have tried to solve their own financial aid woes through a variety of questionable strategies. Some have adopted the practice of gapping—or intentionally underfunding—needy students, awarding an aid package sometimes several thousand dollars less than the actual level of need, leaving individuals to come up with the remaining funds, often through excessive work commitments. Many colleges pile enormous loan burdens on students, while others practice a version of the "bait-and-switch" game, handing new students very attractive aid awards that are then severely reduced as an individual progresses through school. Still others have refused to provide institutional aid funding for international or transfer students, or have cut back on expenditures that support study abroad programs, making that opportunity an option only for the affluent. And many colleges have embarked upon significant merit scholarship programs, often devoting a large portion of the institutional aid budget to scholarships for students who may not even need assistance, in an effort to attract a greater number of academically able candidates.

More than half of all Vassar students now receive Vassar College scholarships.
Vassar has resisted all of these tactics, leading in part to its more rapid increase in aid spending. The college does not use "gapping" in its aid awards, proudly continuing to meet 100 percent of the demonstrated need of admitted applicants. Our standard freshman aid packages contain smaller loans than those of virtually any of our primary competitors. We promise our students that we will continue to meet their demonstrated need throughout their college years, rather than paring away their awards. Junior Year Abroad is well funded, affording many Vassar students substantial assistance to study abroad. We maintain a generous aid budget for both new international and transfer students, thereby adding to the diversity and strength of the student body. Finally, all of Vassar's aid dollars go to students who need them—we have no merit-based awards, believing that we can continue to attract a first-rate student body without entering a bidding war for the most academically talented applicants.

A major contributor to the boom in aid spending at Vassar over the past twenty years has been the practice of separating the admission and financial aid processes, or as it has come to be commonly called, "need-blind" admissions. Although many assume that this practice has always been in place, it is actually a product of the mid- to late 1970s, a time when a far smaller percentage of each incoming class needed financial support and governmental aid covered much more of the total cost of college attendance. Although admirably egalitarian in its lack of concern for individual need in admission decisions, the process of choosing a freshman class strictly without regard to its potential claims on institutional resources makes the aid budget virtually a blank check each year, exposing the college to an annual danger of dramatic overspending, a game of fiscal Russian roulette that can have dire consequences for the health of the institution.

Of course, Vassar, like its sister institutions, has always considered need in the selection process for many of its applicants. In selecting transfer students, non-U.S. citizens, and students on the waiting list, individual need has consistently been a factor in admission decisions. Additionally, even in the 1980s and early 1990s, there were some years when, late in the admission process as available funds ran out, students had to be placed on financial aid wait lists or were admitted but denied financial aid, efforts that in retrospect seem cruel to students who saw their goal of admission to Vassar being offered to them but who lacked the financial capacity to reach it. Needless to say, the yield on such students, except for the rare intervention of a wealthy grandparent, was effectively nil.

For several years, a number of Vassar's peer institutions, including Brown, Smith, Bowdoin, Trinity, Johns Hopkins, Carleton, and numerous others, have departed from a strictly need-blind process for admitting their freshman classes, and the list of highly selective colleges realizing that they need to have some control over the growth in their levels of aid spending is increasing rapidly. In 1996/97, Vassar, Mount Holyoke, Tufts, and Bryn Mawr, among others, publicly adopted such a strategy. These institutions still subscribe to the philosophy that it is desirable to separate the aid and admission processes to the fullest extent possible, but they also recognize the hard reality that colleges, like individuals and families, simply cannot spend resources they do not have.

At colleges like Vassar and those listed above,
"Vassar has no intention of cutting back on its historic commitment to assisting needy students."

the admission process proceeds as it traditionally has, with those candidates who are deemed the most academically and personally attractive being admitted without regard to individual financial need. Using historical data as the basis for their projections, the colleges constantly monitor the amount of potential aid spending as this process continues. Because applicant pools vary in terms of collective need from year to year, there may well be years when available aid funding will last through the entire selection process, and the whole class will be selected on a need-blind basis. If, however, the allotted financial aid funds are exhausted before the end of the admission process, after almost all of the class has been selected and shaped with regard to academic excellence, diversity of all kinds, and special talents, then need would become a factor in choosing the last few percent of the admit pool—solid students all, but without the distinguishing characteristics of those admitted earlier.

Even if the need of a small number of candidates at the margins of the admitted applicant pool must be taken into account in a given year, it is important to note that this will take place only after, say, 95 percent or more (in Vassar's case, over 1,800 students) have already been chosen on a need-blind basis, based on all the college's traditional values. In other words, those qualities that make the Vassar student body so special—academic ability, ethnic, socioeconomic, and geographical diversity, leadership skills, variety of academic and personal interests, special talents, etc.—will figure as prominently as ever in shaping the incoming class. Colleges that have utilized this practice for several years report no decline in the diversity or overall academic quality of their student bodies.

Of course, the proof of any strategy is in its implementation. Because of an enormous 18 percent rise in applications, Vassar hit an all-time record for freshman applicants this year, with over 700 more candidates to consider for the incoming class than it had a year before. As it turned out, the collective need of this record-setting group was such that those offered admission were selected largely without regard to their ability to finance college costs, although individual need was a secondary factor used in deciding which last few students to place on the waiting list. Even this limited use of need was clearly a rather muted factor, since those placed on the waiting list at the end of the selection process were, overall, less likely to need aid than those who were admitted to the class.

Early indications are that over 50 percent of the class of 2001 will receive college-funded financial aid and that the level of both academic achievement and diversity among the group will be at least equal to, and likely even greater than, that of the preceding classes.

By monitoring our aid expenditures, Vassar is following a common practice among many of America's most prestigious institutions, while still preserving our traditional desire to give our students adequate and equitable financial aid. All the college's financial models show sizable increases in aid budgets in future years—Vassar has no intention of cutting back on its historic commitment to assisting needy students—but being need-aware at the edges of the selection process will allow Vassar to better control the rate of growth in those funds, while still continuing to be at the top of the list of our peer colleges in the extent of financial help that we give to our students.

Initiatives aimed at increasing funding for higher education are under discussion in both Washington and Albany as this article is written. We hope such proposals will gain approval in the legislative process and give institutions like Vassar a bit more fiscal flexibility in a time when worthy but competing claims on institutional resources make financial choices difficult.

Vassar has long been an institution in which a talented and diverse student body has been at the very heart of our excellence, and this basic operating principle will remain in place whatever the challenges that face us in the future. The financial aid policies that we have in place are honest and effective, and should allow us to continue to bring to Poughkeepsie the very best and most interesting students. They will also permit us to preserve our commitments to the students who are already here and will be here in the future by guaranteeing, through adequate funding, that the educational and residential experiences they have at Vassar are the finest available.
Playwright Evan Smith '90 came to Vassar from a military high school in Savannah, Georgia. He enjoys screwball film comedies of the '30s and '40s, 19th-century English prose fiction, and contemporary American plays. He has honed his craft in community theater and at the Yale Drama School. This past summer, Equity actors rehearsed and performed his first full-length play, and he labored on a new work commissioned by the New York-based Playwrights Horizons. It was a promising season for this restless spirit.

by GEORGETTE WEIR
The play in production, Servicemen, had been selected by New York Stage and Film as one of its three "main stage" works for the thirteenth Vassar/New York Stage and Film Powerhouse Theater season.

"It's about two best friends," Mr. Smith wrote of it. A man and a woman, "drunks who imagine themselves pacifists who spend the years of World War II picking up sailors and staging their own private little blackouts. An encounter with a pretty teenage sailor brings the party to a screeching halt and sets the hero and heroine adrift in a leaky lifeboat on a sea of moral ambivalence, with somewhat noble, somewhat pathetic consequences.

"I began mulling over the issues brought up in this play when I was a cadet in military high school. The problems as I saw them remained unfocused until early in '92 when two things happened to inspire me: the Pentagon refused to admit gays into the armed forces, and I discovered Barbara Stanwyck. My first attempt to write Servicemen failed, but in '94, with the 50th anniversary of D-day looming, I saw a movie in which Brad Pitt watched his brother get shot to death in World War I [Legends of the Fall]. I was reminded that I, too, had a war story, and within a few months after that, I had a first draft."

Back on campus for the Powerhouse summer season, Mr. Smith sat in the Retreat in June and talked more about the play.

- Learning to write, and rewrite

Servicemen first went public in the summer of 1996, when it was given a reading during last year's Powerhouse program. It is, says Mr. Smith, the first of his works to improve in rewrite.

In the past, he explains, he has been too impatient to rework his first drafts, eager to explore new ground and new skills with each effort. "I wanted to get as many tools under my belt as I could. I'd write a play and think, 'Oh, this is earnest, maudlin. I'll do a comedy next.' Then I'd look at that and say, 'Oh, this is shallow. The next one is going to be full of wonder.' I would so quickly be out of the moment [of the play] that I couldn't rework it."

He confesses that with Servicemen, his motivation to hone the work into a finished product was fed by the fact that there was outside interest in the
Two things inspired *Servicemen*: Barbara Stanwyck and the Pentagon's refusal to admit gays to the military.

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piece. "It's close to where I want it to be," he said in conversation while *Servicemen* was in rehearsals. "I know I like it, and you write for yourself and hope you are able to convey your enthusiasm."

"Oh, there are my stars." He gives a quick wave as a man and woman walk past toward food service.

### What Barbara Stanwyck has to do with it

Mr. Smith credits screwball comedies of the '30s and '40s for suggesting the tone and techniques he employs in *Servicemen*. "There's a big mystique about screwball comedies," he says. *The Lady Eve, His Girl Friday*—I love these movies. I watched them, listened to the language, and wondered what it is about them that makes them work. About 50 percent of the way people talk [in *Servicemen*] was inspired by those movies."

They also provoked his notion to explore how such screwball characters might cope with issues arising as a consequence of World War II. Imagine Nick and Nora of the Thin Man series competing for the attentions of a shy sailor or coping with a military draft.

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### The first play he remembers seeing

Mr. Smith recalls that his enchantment with theater began early. "Blithe Spirit, in a community theater. I was 9. It made a bigger impression on me than any movie had at the time. There was the unreality and reality of it at the same time. Women were ghosts just because they were wearing silver dresses."

He started writing plays—one-acts—while in high school (Benedictine Military School) and got involved with the community theater in Savannah. He learned about the Young Playwrights Festival—a competition once based at Playwrights Horizon, the theater school affiliated with New York University—and started submitting his work. "Here was something you could win," he says, giving a quick, competitive shake of his fist. And he did win, in the fall of 1986, with his one-act *Remedial English*. "It's about a lazy underachiever who is forced into teaching a younger student, who has a crush on him."
How he got from a military school in Georgia to Vassar

"One name—Wendy Wasserstein!

"She was my dramaturge at the Young Playwrights Festival, and she said, ‘We’ve got to get you out of Georgia. I’ve got a friend who goes to Vassar and he loves it. You should talk to him.’"

At Vassar Mr. Smith did not study drama or get involved in any of the many student theater productions. "I knew I wanted to go to drama school after Vassar, so I wanted to study things nondramatic." He focused instead on general English literature and majored in English. He admits he was a lazy student. "When I was gone, I did all the reading I should have done here."

Influences

Wendy Wasserstein, Christopher Durang, Tennessee Williams, and Edward Albee. Movies. And nineteenth-century English prose fiction. Recently, he has become enamored of the latter. "It's all about finding what's good as opposed to describing horrors," he says with wonderment.

After Vassar

Mr. Smith enrolled as a Powerhouse playwriting apprentice during the summer of 1990. He graduated from the Yale School of Drama. His one-act works have been produced in Savannah, at Vassar, Yale Drama, the Yale Cabaret, the Young Playwrights Festival (when it was at Playwrights Horizons), and the Home for Contemporary Theater, among others. His newest play, The Uneasy Chair, was commissioned by Playwrights Horizons. He worked on it this summer, as Servicemen was on stage at the Powerhouse.

The life is not a living

Is scriptwriting a living yet for him? Mr. Smith straightens his arms across the tabletop, rolls his eyes skyward, shakes his head, and dons a weary smile. "Nooooo!!"

"I still spend quite a bit of time at home in Savannah, trying to convince my community theater that they should do what I say because I'm a professional. But . . ." He flings his arms up and out to shoulder height in a big shrug.

Someday, perhaps, Evan Smith's expanding list of credits may convince even the folks back home. Q
Film Fest Frenzy

by FRITZI HORSTMAN '84
My debut feature film, *Take a Number*, took twelve days and six years to make. Six years to write it (eighteen drafts), cast it (fifteen-plus readings and months of auditions), and raise the money (beg, borrow, steal, Mastercard, and a couple of Vassar buddies).

April 6, 1996, was the first day of shooting. Four days before we shot, we didn’t have a camera package, a lighting truck, a permit, or Screen Actors Guild signatory status. There was that moment when it seemed that everything was not going to happen. And then at 5:30 that morning, I found myself on Venice Beach yelling “cut.”

Twelve days later, *Take a Number* was “in the can.” It took another two months and a handful of favors to get it out of the lab and onto the Avid for editing. By the end of August we had a final cut and a lawyer who wanted to take 7 percent off the top. He suggested we apply to all the festivals and not hold out for Sundance. (If my film screened at another American festival, I would not be accepted for the dramatic competition at Sundance.) I sent Sundance my video copy of *Take a Number* along with a $50 check and crossed my fingers. I also applied to Slamdance, the fringe festival of Sundance: same time (January 17-23) and same place (Park City, Utah). Announcements would be made for both festivals in early December.

Over the Thanksgiving holiday, on November 23, while visiting my mom in New York, I checked my messages (which I tend to do on an hourly basis). There were several messages from the various credit card companies wondering why I hadn’t paid my bill in the past few months, and one phone call from Jon Fitzgerald, the executive director of Slamdance: they loved *Take a Number* and I was “all but officially in.” One other guy had to see the film and approve it.

I returned home to Santa Monica to find out that I had not been accepted into Sundance. I called Slamdance. “We’re not sure,” was the response. “We have to give everyone a fair shot.” I asked them what “all but officially in” meant. “We’ll let you know on Monday.” Monday came and they never called. So I called. “We’re having a tough time making our final decisions. There are three spots, and you are one of the ten films that are in contention for them.” Then they narrowed it down some more. “There is one spot, and your film is one of the three that we’re considering.”

On December 11, at my 34th birthday party, I still did not know if I would be going to Utah in January. All my friends were gathered and were actively engaged in party activity. The phone rang. It was Jon Fitzgerald. He had a couple of questions:

“Is your negative cut?”
"We're finishing that up right now," I lied.

"And what about the music? Do you have the rights to any of those songs?"

"Funny you should mention that; we're seeking alternative music at this very moment," I further lied.

"We'll call you back," Jon told me.

An hour later, the phone rang. Next thing I knew, I was surrounded by my friends making an announcement: "Take a Number has just been accepted into the Slamdance Film Festival!"

Phew.

Of course, in order to present the film at the fest-ival, I needed a print. I had to cut negative, I had to find eight to ten original songs, I had to do a sound mix, I had to raise another 25 grand—in little more than a month. I called a Vassar friend who had already invested substantially. "You told me the last money I sent you was all you needed." But he came through. In such a huge way. Another Vassar friend fronted me some money to get me through a couple of tough spots.

One month later, I had done what is mostly impossible. I had cut negative; I had recorded an original soundtrack and score; I had shot main and end titles; I had mixed all the sound, made an optical track, timed most of the print, and with an hour to spare, got on the plane to Utah.

When I arrived at Slamdance, I had missed the opening night ceremonies and found myself scrambling for the three remaining pigs-in-a-blanket, two cold nacho cheese things, and the slice of melon that lingered on the buffet table. It was like the Mug filled with tortured filmmakers. Minutes later I was thrown into an interview for Bravo and the Independent Film Channel. Disoriented and exhausted, I think I uttered something relatively coherent about my film: "Blah, blah, love and sex in the '90s, romantic comedy where the woman falls in love with herself, blah, blah . . ."

The next morning I was out on the street with Robert Hochberg '84, handing out publicity postcards. "Come see my film," I told everyone I met. I gave one to Jodie Foster, who seemed less than enthusiastic at my urgings. "I'm leaving tonight," she told me. Emilio Estevez promised to see it, all but officially.

Take a Number premiered that evening, and it was sold out. The room was stuffy and hot—not a good environment for a comedy. Laughter generates heat. Too much heat creates discomfort. Discomfort creates the desire to leave as soon as possible. The sound system was really bad and when screening a sixteen-millimeter mono sound print, only state-of-the-art sound systems will provide a reasonable representation of your work.

At Slamdance, nothing was state of the art. As the film screened, I sat in the back and cringed as people sweated and struggled to hear the lines that were muffled in the speakers. As the credits rolled, people ran out of the theater, gasping for air. A few people stayed for questions. And then they talked to me in the lobby.

"At first I thought it was really amateurish, and then I got caught up in the story and I really liked it."

"Hey, great job. I'm an actor and I would really like you to consider putting me in your next film. Here's my card." He gives me a business card with a photo of himself on it.

"The next morning I was out on the street handing out publicity postcards. 'Come see my film,' I told everyone I met."
“Too bad it’s in sixteen millimeter.”

A distributor’s scout came up to me: “I really liked it. I’m going to recommend it to my boss in Los Angeles.”

“Hey, kid,” my lawyer said to me, “it went pretty well. But what are we going to do about the sound?” Back to the womb. That’s where I want to go. Just let me curl up in a fetal position and let everyone go away.

My second and final screening went much better. At least the vertigo sensations went away and most of the nausea. They fixed the sound system—for the most part. A few more distributors gave me their cards and told me to call.

“How’d it go?” one of the other Slamdance dramatic competition filmmakers asked me. Her film had been doing the festival circuit for a while, and she was expecting to win best film at Slamdance. She had already directed another feature and was getting ready to do her third. She was flying off to Toronto to shoot some commercials. “I really wanted to come see your screening but I had to do an interview.” I saw her film and it was good. Shot in thirty-five millimeter with good sound. I felt very small. Very, very small.

I was suddenly surrounded by Vassar people. Twenty-one-year-old Alexander Kane ’97 was also premiering his feature at Slamdance, and Jason Hernandez-Rosenblatt ’93 had made a sixteen-minute short that won best short at the festival and starred Leah Foster ’99. Gabriel Wardell ’93 was the Slamdance projectionist and a juror.

Down the block, yet another Sundance fringe festival was in its germinal stages: Slamdance. Of course two Vassar alums were heading it up: Doug Glazer ’92 and Jacob Craycroft ’92. Everyone at Slamdance wore orange hats with smiley faces on them. Douglas and Jacob’s films didn’t get into Sundance or Slamdance so they created their own festival. Slamdance had no selection policy. If you if you had a film, you could screen it. They took over the basement of a restaurant, painted it wacky colors, supplied crayons for insta-art inspirations, and had sleepovers. It was like nursery school for adults. Films were screened on projectors, and you could see tapes of any project in their library. One of the films, Don’s Plan, starred Leonardo Di Caprio. I danced with Spike Lee’s brother Cinque at their opening. We had a snowball fight with Jon Tenney ’84 just outside.

At Sundance, Lisa Kudrow ’85 was promoting her film The Clockwatchers, and I spent an entire night with my classmate Jon Tenney, who was there to promote his film The Twilight of the Golds. Leighton Powell ’85, was working at the Sundance Channel, which was located at the place they were giving away free Starbucks. Other Vassar people who crossed my path were Christian Gaines ’87, Bill Weir ’87, Alison Dickey ’85, and I know I’m forgetting someone but I lost my notes.

I stayed until the end of the festival. I watched the Sundance filmmakers get all the attention. I watched other Slamdance filmmakers get more press and more offers. Roger Ebert came to Slamdance and saw another film. I talked to him for a moment, and he looked at my publicity postcard. He said thank you and then walked away. Spike Lee’s brother Cinque saw my film. I also ran into Dick Clark’s son and Meg Tilly’s sister.

By the time of the awards ceremony, I was exhausted from a week of talking, smiling, and promoting. The woman filmmaker who thought she was going to win, didn’t. She cried. I knew I wasn’t going to win, but I felt pretty good with how far I’d gone. One of ten films chosen out of 1,000. I applauded for all the winners, including Jason Hernandez-Rosenblatt ’93. I went to my lawyer’s party and heard of some film that had just sold for seven figures.

On my way to the airport, visions of Miramax and the three-picture deal melted.

Since Slamdance, Take a Number has appeared in the Santa Barbara International Film Festival, the Sedona Film Festival, won an award at the Saguro Film Festival, and will screen at the Wine Country Film Festival. The Bakery, a sound company that liked the film, remixed the sound in exchange for an equity position in the film.

As I write this, Take a Number is scheduled to be screened at the Lamella Theaters in Los Angeles with a new sound mix and a brand-new print. Disney and DreamWorks and a bunch of other distributors are lined up to see the film.

It’s not over yet. It’s all but official.

*VQ*

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Vassar people everywhere: filmmakers

Jason Hernandez-Rosenblatt ’93 (left), the author, and Alexander Kane ’97 all had films at Slamdance.

Fritz Horstman recently published "Bitchin’ in the Kitchen: The PMS Survival Cookbook published by Kensington Press; she is currently negotiating with distributors and agents, packaging her next screenplay, "Boot Up," writing another screenplay, and screening her calls from creditors.
Marketing a Landmark

When Nina Feldman was a Vassar senior in 1973, her roommate was dating John Daniels, the son of English professor and Dean of Students Elizabeth Adams Daniels '41. One night, John brought his roommate in New Paltz, Bert, over to dinner at Terrace Apartment 38. Nina made chicken curry. Bert offered to help Nina fix her broken down VW Bug. Love blossomed.

Bert said that his parents lived across the river, and he'd like Nina to meet them. In the course of dating, Nina discovered that home was a 276-room National Historic Landmark called Mohonk Mountain House. And it was populated by three generations of Smileys.

After their marriage at Mohonk, both Nina and Bert earned their doctoral degrees at Princeton—she in social psychology, he in economics. After graduating, they moved to Washington, DC, where Nina taught psychology at the University of Maryland and also worked as a marketing consultant; Bert worked for the U.S. Department of Justice.

While the young Smileys were happily ensconced in Washington, a shifting of the guard was happening back at Mohonk. The third-generation Smileys were in their 70s and 80s, and it was clear that it was time for the fourth generation to step in. "While jogging in Washington one day," Nina recalls, "we realized that Mohonk meant so much to so many people, we couldn't do anything but continue to nourish it.

"I realized, too, that I wasn't just moving or taking a new job: I was coming back to the Hudson Valley to be part of a family business," Nina adds. "I really did a lot of soul-searching, knowing that I was leaving behind an independent identity and professional life to become part of this huge, Victorian castle that has an identity all its own."

In March of 1990, Bert and Nina took up residence in a cozy house on the property that sits on a cliff overlooking the Catskills. Bert became Mohonk's president; Nina took over as head of marketing.

"We came in with a mission," Nina says. "From the first we defined our goal—which was to keep the heart and soul of Mohonk untouched, but to work on the details that needed to be changed.

"My degree is in social and developmental psychology, and I am fascinated by how people interact in groups and how individuals unfold and develop," Nina explains. "Bert has a depth of experience—from having grown up at Mohonk and having served on the board for twenty years—as well as strong analytic skills from his professional training as an economist. Remarkably, our backgrounds were ideal for this kind of 'Mom and Pop' operation."

Under Bert and Nina's leadership, the Smileys have refurbished all the rooms, hired a new executive chef (Brent Wertz, a graduate of the Culinary Institute), and nurtured the peaceful coexistence of an excellent wine list with their Quaker heritage.
“Nina and Bert have not only done a great job in using their education and former careers to benefit Mohonk right now, but they’ve also done a great job in positioning Mohonk for the future,” says Elizabeth Hill Carson ’50, whose husband, John, has been the Mohonk doctor every summer for thirty-five years. “I’ve met many adults here who came to Mohonk as children. And there are hundreds of kids who have visited Mohonk several times and view it as a second home. Undoubtedly, they will return as adults.”

During her Washington years, Nina teamed up with her twin brother David to write The Three Minute Meditator for people like herself who were constantly on the go. More recently, she and David have coauthored another book called Metaphysical Fitness, which, Nina says, “offers thirty different forms of meditation.” One form that is particularly appropriate to Mohonk is her daily “walking meditation.”

Indeed, at Mohonk, the lines between work and leisure are blurred. “As part of my job as marketing director, I am constantly meeting interesting people; and playtime often brings me back to the mountain to hike and swim,” says Nina. “Sunsets and bird songs are increasingly vital to my well-being. My passion for national politics is ebbing; community events are now priorities.”

Nina occasionally leads meditation walks with hotel guests, frequently does focus group research to determine what activities and programs are most successful, but more than anything, she enjoys simply talking to the guests. “Bert and I have a 500-person family named Mohonk,” she says. “While we don’t have children of our own, we do a lot of things proud parents do—like showing pictures and sketching out the family tree.”

The Smiley family is now in its sixth generation. Nina is asked frequently about who will be running Mohonk in the future. “I truly believe in the ‘Mohonk magic’—things that were meant to happen, happen,” she says, her blue eyes sparkling. “In the same way that the Smiley twins, Albert and Alfred, first climbed up to Sky Top and felt compelled to buy the property in 1869, Bert and I and so many other relatives have felt the desire to devote our energies to it. I’m convinced that other Smileys will come forward when the time is right. I tell people who worry about the future—‘Don’t worry, it will happen.’”

As Brendan Gill wrote in Architectural Digest:

Homage, then to the indefatigable, indestructible Smiles, who will be, as their name implies, cheerfully carrying forward into the twenty-first century the ideals of the nineteenth. Their mountain kingdom doesn’t defy age; rather, it embraces it, fulfilling the dictum of a writer whose works are easily to be found upon the shelves of the Mohonk Mountain House library: “Ripeness is all.”

Emily Kelting is a freelance writer living in Connecticut.
Protesting a Reunion?

The placard-carrying protesters outside an elegant townhouse on West 20th Street in Manhattan were no doubt an unusual beginning to a class mini-reunion. (Though for some classes it might have cultivated a sense of nostalgia.) The protesters weren’t objecting to the event, just sending a message to one of the attendees and featured guests: Republican Congressman Rick Lazio ’80. (The group was protesting a bill sponsored by Lazio that aims to overhaul U.S. housing policies.) The congressman spoke with the protesters for some time before joining his classmates inside and engaging in a conversation with author and gay rights activist (and event host) Eric Marcus ’80 about the course of their lives since Vassar.

A classmate asked the two speakers about the relevance of their Vassar education:

Congressman Lazio: “I came from a lily-white, middle-class background. [Vassar] was an experience that allowed me to accept people for who they are. It allows me to deal with the variety of people in Congress.”

Mr. Marcus, who had spoken about the ethical dilemmas of identifying and reporting truths as a writer of other people’s autobiographies, said: “The agony is from Vassar. It is the Vassar legacy as an albatross, but not a bad albatross. It should weigh heavily.”

At the White House

Emily Malino ’46 was selected by President Clinton for appointment to the Commission of Fine Arts, an independent agency comprising seven members, which advises on the location of statues, fountains, and monuments in the public squares, streets, and parks of the District of Columbia (excepting the Capitol Building and the Library of Congress).

Ms. Malino is a member of the Architectural League of New York and the American Institute of Architects. She serves as a member of the board of directors of the Queens Symphony Orchestra, the Queens Botanical Garden, and the Shakespeare Theatre, and is a member of the governing council of Woodrow Wilson House Museum. She previously served as chair of the Gracie Mansion Conservancy and as Fellow of the Aspen International Design Conference. She also chaired the legislative and education committees of the American Society of Interior Designers.

Susan Neuberger Wilson ’51, executive director of the Network for Family Life Education at Rutgers’ School of Social Work, and four New Jersey high school students were honored at a White House reception for their publication of a national newsletter on health and sexuality written by and for teenagers. The occasion was an award to the newsletter, Sex, etc., from the National Campaign to Prevent Teen Pregnancy. It was noted for its efforts toward “involving youth in the discussion about teen pregnancy.”

The newsletter is produced three times a year by an editorial board of high school students from across New Jersey with the assistance of a journalist and health professionals. Rutgers’ Network for Family Life Education distributes the newsletter free to schools, colleges, community health departments, libraries, and youth organizations. It has a national distribution of nearly 300,000.

Battleship Update

An update on the USS Hopper, an Arleigh Burke Class Aegis Destroyer named for the late Rear Admiral Grace Murray Hopper ’28, known to many as “the mother of computing”: It took on crew for the first time on June 6 (in Maine) and was to set sail for San Francisco in August. Official commissioning was to occur on September 6 in San Francisco, at which time it will be the U.S. Navy’s newest and most sophisticated guided missile destroyer.

The Amazing Grace, as the ship is familiarly called, is 465.9 feet long and moves at a maximum speed of 31 knots, or 35.7 miles per hour. It is represented by a coat of arms that includes numerous references to Grace Hopper: a single white star represents her distinction as the first woman to achieve the rank of rear admiral; a golden lion refers to her Scottish heritage as well as to the ship’s motto, “Aude et effici,” which translates to “Dare and do.”

“RADM Hopper was frequently quoted using this phrase when issuing advice,” says a navy Web site dedicated to the new ship. “The phrase captures the spirit of RADM Hopper in her quest for pushing the limits of conventional thinking and looking beyond the norm for innovative solutions and approaches to problem solving.”
Always Starry-Eyed

Bright Galaxies, Dark Matters
by Vera Cooper Rubin '48
American Institute of Physics Press, 1997

Vera Cooper Rubin '48 is a very bright star in the Vassar galaxy. She is an astronomer long affiliated with the Department of Terrestrial Magnetism, Carnegie Institution of Washington, DC. Most recent among her many awards for discoveries and explanations about galaxies are the Gold Medal of the Royal Astronomical Society (London, 1996) and the National Medal of Science (1993). She is a member of the National Science Board and was elected to membership in the National Academy of Science in 1981. In 1986, Vassar bestowed on her its highest award: President's Distinguished Visitor.

This year, the American Institute of Physics has published a collection of thirty-five of Ms. Rubin's papers, essays, and talks under the title Bright Galaxies, Dark Matters in its Masters of Modern Physics series. The selections cover a variety of her scientific journeys and are intended for general audiences. They communicate astronomical information (“The Local Supercluster and Anisotropy of the Redshifts”), women's history in science (“Sofia Kovalevskaya: Scientist, Writer, Revolutionary”), and the excitement she gets from doing science (see her response to a letter from a fifth-grader, under the heading, “Difficult Questions”), a passion that was born in her early teens, when she built a telescope.

Vera Rubin has always risen to the challenge of being a pioneer for women in astronomy and in the broader area of science, both still in need of pioneers and propagandists. She takes the time to research the scientific achievements and accomplishments of little-known women and to publicize them whenever possible. When she received the Gold Medal from the London Royal Astronomical Society last year, she noted in her acceptance speech that the last time a woman had received an award from the society was one hundred years earlier—in 1896.

Vera Cooper chose Vassar as her undergraduate college because it was one of the few institutions where a young woman could study astronomy and aspire to join the scientific community. (Equally important, she says, it offered the needed scholarship.) She was a serious science student and astronomy lab assistant, but she took full advantage of the range of a Vassar education. She attended not only the science lectures, but the literary and political ones as well. She took the famous Art History 105 and Music Appreciation 105 courses. She played the piano and was assigned a practice room in her freshman year. “I don’t think that wide range of knowledge would have been so available to me as an undergraduate at an MIT or a Cal Tech,” she says, over an English-style tea at a Washington, DC, restaurant. This breadth is often reflected in her talks, which, as she notes in this book's preface, often include references to poems, songs, or paintings.

Her lifelong interest in the history of science also took root at Vassar, in studies with Professor of Astronomy Maud Makemson and Professor of Philosophy Lewis Feuer. A science conference held on the Vassar campus in 1946/47 brought together astronomers, geologists, mathematicians, and physicists from throughout the Northeast—including Richard Feynman of Cornell, with whom she later studied. She gave a paper—probably her first scientific presentation—based on the work of others, concerning Mira, a variable star, and it was published in a magazine at Yale. After Vassar, her vision expanded beyond single stars to the galaxies, and indeed, the universe.

She smiles as she says that the major question she asked herself throughout her years at Vassar, from the very first day, was, “Will I ever really be an astronomer?”

Now, we can read her marvelous book to learn how it happened.

—Molly Geiger Schuchat '48

Ms. Schuchat studied economics at Vassar and, after marrying and raising five children, returned to school and received a Ph.D. in anthropology from Catholic University in 1971. She has known Vera Cooper Rubin since fifth grade.

The Excitement of the Question

“Why is the moon going where we are going?” asked a very young Vera Cooper when she noticed the moon's constant presence outside her window during a night drive. That question, she writes years later as Vera Rubin, is her earliest memory. It is clear that her questions never ceased. Here are others she has asked, drawn from her new book Bright Galaxies, Dark Matters.

• Why do galaxies come in different forms?
• What is the distribution of matter in galaxies?
• Are there coherent motions of large groups of galaxies?
• What is the dark matter?
• How much dark matter is there?
• How many gifted scientists and mathematicians have we lost through the ages because theirs was the gender that was denied permission to do science?
• Do other stars in our galaxy have planets?
• Do some of these planets support life?
• Will those life forms resemble ours?
• If the Big Bang is disproved, what will take its place?
• What is the future history of the universe?
Fending Off Sentimentality

Nine Skies
by A. V. Christie '85
U. of Illinois Press, 1997

We will take him out and burn him
with the paper ladder I cut for his climb.
And we will watch him rise with our fortune
toward a new year, a pale smoke
I'll watch into the sky... from the title poem of Nine Skies

Sitting in sunlight in my fourth-floor
Baltimore apartment, within sight of the
Masons' temple and sound of a Lutheran
church's bells, I ask Ann Christie how she
came to write "Nine Skies," the title poem
of a collection that is Sandra McPherson's
choice for the 1996 National Poetry Series.

"I was reading about the Chinese New
Year," Ms. Christie replies, "then went
back and did some reading in Chinese
mythology. I found that 'nine skies' is a
way of ordering the cosmos. But even
more interesting, I thought, was that in
this ancient cosmology 'nine skies' did not
represent some movement toward a goal.
Each sky had its gate into the next one,
and the next, but proceeding through each
layer was by no means a kind of progress.
I liked the idea a lot: life doesn't exactly
present some linear movement forward."

Still, Ms. Christie's sequencing of poems
in Nine Skies does suggest a clear progression—"from darkness into light, an
attempt to cut through the grief, let's say"—a movement her book enacts with
skill and subtlety.

The grief she mentions is over her
brother Andrew's suicide, but for Ms.
Christie—married to John Fattibene '85
and the new mother of a daughter,
Gabriella—light and darkness are carefully
balanced. At times, Ms. Christie finds her
brother's presence in possessions left
behind, such as "the few glittering feathers"
of unfinished fishing lures
("Belongings"), but most of all he exists in
memory and in poems powerfully shad-
owed by his loss. "I go in fear of being
sentimental," Ms. Christie explains, "but
images always tend to ground me, I hope,
balancing strong emotion. Having thought
about my brother's harmonica, for example,
I couldn't go very far in that poem
before I had to put my emotional cards on
the table."

The poem, "Your harmonica," does begin
subtly, with descriptions of young poetry
students who compare the harmonica's
sound to "hearing San Francisco; / its
brash glissando, the stirring / in a puddle
the last rainy day / they remember." But
when Ms. Christie reveals the instrument's
connection to her brother, she does so
with remarkable understatement and
descriptive precision:

...The harmonica, flat
and cool now in my hand,
is like a rock you'd skip past
the sunken barge and out toward
Penticton,
a barge gone down
through dark legend: sea serpents, horses
lost swimming in from the island.

Though more directly autobiographical
than Elizabeth Bishop '34 ever was in
poems she published, in lines like these
Ms. Christie shows herself equally able to
"look at something and be descriptive
while keeping an energy of mind that res-
onates through the entire poem," as Ms.
Christie put it when describing what she
admires most in Bishop's work.

Ms. Christie credits the late Vassar
English professor John Christie (no rela-
tion) and his American Transcendentalist
Writers course with introducing her to a
poetic influence less well traveled than
Bishop: Emily Dickinson. "I was so struck
by the reach of her poems, the way that
words kept opening up in all their mean-
ings. I'd never before seen language used
this way, and it was absolutely the richest
experience."

Ms. Christie's voice rises with enthu-
iasm as she recalls the courses and poems
she loved. "Not long after, Barbara Page's
class came along, with Bishop, Marianne
Moore, Hart Crane, and William Carlos
Williams... Those Vassar English depart-
ment courses made poetry central for me."

On April 14, a week before she was to
return to Vassar to give the first annual
reading sponsored by the William Gifford
Fund for Visiting Writers, Ms. Christie
read at the Borders bookstore in Towson,
Maryland. She planned a move to the
Philadelphia area within a month, and the
occasion marked a public farewell to the
Baltimore area and to a time marked by
achievement: an M.F.A. from the
University of Maryland, grants from the
Maryland State Arts Council, Vassar's
Rose Fellowship in the Creative Arts,
teaching in the English department at
Goucher College and at the elementary
and middle school level in Maryland's
Poets-in-the-School program, many presti-
gious publications, and the publication of
her manuscript.

Standing beneath walls crowded with
brightly painted watercolors, before win-
dows that frame the passing traffic, Ms.
Christie listened politely to the evening's
host, the tables occupied by friends, for-
mer students, poetry lovers, and curious
listeners. Poet Elizabeth Spires '74 sat at
one table; her daughter Celia, the muse of
A House That Poets Built

“Running Paris Press is as close to a religious calling as anything I’ve ever experienced in my life,” says Jan Freeman ’79 of her two years at the helm of a nonprofit feminist literary press based in western Massachusetts. In its short life, the Paris Press has published five books, most recently The Orgy (1997), a lost treasure by Muriel Rukeyser ’34 (she attended Vassar from 1930-32), poet, playwright, essayist, and teacher. The Orgy is an unusual combination of fiction, memoir, and travelogue that chronicles the pagan Irish festival of Puck. It was originally published in 1965 but has been out of print since 1966. The Paris Press edition includes a new preface by poet Sharon Olds and an introduction by Grace Paley.

Paris Press began in 1993 as the private effort of poet Adrian Oktenberg. (She named it in honor of her mother, Roma Florence Paris.) When Ms. Oktenberg could no longer continue to finance it, Ms. Freeman restarted the press as a nonprofit enterprise. Her mission: publish daring and beautiful feminist books. Her motivation came from her passion for Muriel Rukeyser’s writing. Since taking the helm of Paris Press, Ms. Freeman has brought out two previously published works by Rukeyser: in addition to The Orgy in 1997, she published The Life of Poetry in 1996, with an introduction by poet Jane Cooper ’45 (New York State Poet, 1995-97).

Originally published in 1947, but out of print for many years, The Life of Poetry is a collection of essays on poetry and its place in society that began as lectures at Vassar in 1940, at the California Labor School in 1945 and 1948, at Columbia University in 1946, and in other lectures and broadcasts. “The Life of Poetry is the most inspiring book I’ve ever read,” says Ms. Freeman. “It’s an absolutely essential book. Rukeyser is among the most important writers of the century, and she’s been neglected. I wanted to make sure her work was available again.”

“I never envisioned myself a publisher,” says Ms. Freeman. “But I saw a need for these women writers to be recognized. The intent of the press is to publish work of very important women writers who have been undervalued by the literary and publishing establishments.” A poet herself (her volume Autumn Sequence was published by the press in 1993), Ms. Freeman has been running Paris Press almost single-handedly, aided only by a small board of directors and a cadre of hardworking interns. Her duties range from conceiving book projects and writing grant proposals to fund them, to proofreading volumes and planning and executing all the marketing and public relations. The press has received grants from the Academy of American Poets and the Massachusetts Foundation for the Humanities, and contributions from individual donors. The Paris Press’s other authors include Ruth Stone, a poet now in her 80s whose collection Simplicity was issued in 1995, and founder Oktenberg, whose Bosnia Elegies was released in 1997.

Ms. Freeman, who grew up in suburban Philadelphia, majored in English and completed a creative thesis at Vassar. Poets Philip Levine, Carolyn Forche, and Elizabeth Bishop visited campus during her senior year and were inspirational. Aspiring to be like Lillian Hellman, Ms. Freeman moved to New York City, where she worked in book publishing and at Cosmopolitan magazine, jobs she says provided excellent training for the duties she performs as publisher of the Paris Press. After receiving an M.A. from New York University in 1986, Ms. Freeman supported herself as a poet by writing literature and segments for school textbooks.

Besides working to create a stable financial base for the press, Ms. Freeman’s current objective is to raise the funds necessary (about $75,000) to reprint yet another Rukeyser work: The Collected Poems. “It all hinges on people helping to support the press.”

Paris Press books are distributed by Consortium; for more information, contact the press at PO Box 487, Ashfield, MA 01330 or visit the press’s Web site at <http://www.westmass.com/Paris-Press/>.

—Abby Tannenbaum ’86

Recalling Rukeyser, on The Last Page.
Wires were run into the bathroom so percussionists could be taped playing salad bowls, dustpans, and rocks in a bathtub full of water.

"Give Me a Grating Waltz for Alligators!"

The story behind one project for children

Bears Beat Bowls in the Bathtub by Kathy Weintz Teck '60
Hit-It Kits, 1997
Includes 32-page picture book, full hour stereo tape cassette, and 16-page activity guide with directions for making and playing over 60 percussion instruments using familiar objects.

Kathy Teck, a music major at Vassar, writes:

In case anyone wonders who a grown-up trained musician would turn to playing on junk, here is the story behind Bears Beat Bowls in the Bathtub.

"The first instrument I ever built was rather ambitious: a harpsichord, which my husband and brother helped me with in a New York apartment while I was pregnant with my daughter Rachel. When Rachel and Daniel reached school age, I gave several original story programs using horns made out of hula hoops, curtain rods, garden hoses, and other "stuff." At a reunion of Vassar music majors, I fashioned a program ostensibly accompanying a day at Vassar with the sounds of various horns—including professionally made instruments as well as some that I concocted from junk. The audience laughed a lot.

Horns are not instruments that most people can play easily. Drums, on the other hand, are—as I discovered during my years as a musician for dance and creative movement.

The idea of making a book for children about how to play "found" instruments was first suggested to me by Roy Doty. This artist had drawn a number of illustrations for my first two books: Music for the Dance: Reflections on a Collaborative Art, and Movement to Music: Musicians in the Dance Studio. (My third book, Ear Training for the Body: A Dancer's Guide to Music, had no pictures.)

I began building instruments, following available directions, but also inventing percussion equipment that was unique. Soon our basement looked so much like an exhibit hall that the director of the Hudson River Museum invited me to mount a three-month gallery display called "Hit-It," and to lead workshops in making and playing homemade instruments. Simultaneously, I continued writing what I thought was going to be a very long recipe book for making drums, shakers, scrapers, clappers, clackers, and many other kinds of percussion instruments.

One day I was surprised to hear myself say the words "bears beat bowls in the bathtub." It seemed like a case of the proverbial inspiration that writers are supposed to experience. Once that title presented itself full-blown, I spent weeks working on words. Roy Doty read them, and we immediately agreed that our project would be a picture book for young children. The text would be not only onomatopoeic, but also rhythmic and full of funny tongue twisters. The illustrations would be of fanciful animals using everyday objects as percussion instruments. We would also produce a tape of musicians playing original music on precisely the same objects pictured in the book.

I assembled four percussionists whom I admired for their improvisations for dance. Grammy-award winning sound engineer Gregory Squires came "on location," which in this case meant setting up his fancy equipment on my dining room table and running wires into the bathroom so that the first-class percussionists could really play the salad bowls, dustpans, rocks, and other found instruments in a bathtub full of water.

The musicians needed very little direction; I simply showed them the preliminary sketches by Roy Doty and played a few excerpts from the unedited recording.
session with narrator Geoffrey Holder. I would say something as brief as “Give me a little grating wait for alligators.” The four percussionists (who had never played together before) improvised all the music on the spot, using kitchen pots and pans, horseshoes, grocery boxes, mailing tubes, coconuts, barrels, and all the other odds and ends that are seen in the pictures and described in the activity guide. They had such fun that they insisted on improvising many more little pieces than could be used in the final tape.

What Pets Tell Us

And the Animals Will Teach You
Discovering Ourselves through Our Relationships with Animals
by Margot Lasher ’60
Berkeley Publishing Group, 1996

A number of years ago, psychologist Margot Lasher realized that she was living in an odd and paradoxical situation: Although her work focused on interactions between people, her closest companion was Hogahn, her dog. As she pondered why her connection to this creature was so deep, she came to understand that animals played a lifelong role in her spiritual development. Thus treading into a virtually unexplored area of psychology, Ms. Lasher wrote And the Animals Will Teach You, an intensely personal meditation on what we can discover about ourselves through our relationships with animals.

If you’ve never had a pet, the idea of an animal as a beloved companion, no less a spiritual guide, may sound somewhat bizarre. Ms. Lasher herself acknowledges that our culture has a strong bias against such reverence of animals. The reason, she speculates, is that animals embody the parts of the self—the intuitive, emotional, preverbal core—that our hierarchical culture values less than other, more cerebral, qualities. Yet it is these “lower” qualities that Ms. Lasher says lie closest to our innermost selves and that we can more fully experience when we open ourselves to the animal world.

Ms. Lasher has a small private practice in New York; in addition to more conventional therapeutic methods, she encourages people who are already animal lovers to draw on the human-animal connection, helping them experience the comfort and calm that other creatures can provide. “When you are walking your dog at the end of a horrible day,” Ms. Lasher notes, “seeing him take pleasure in a simple walk can help you become fully present in that moment and really appreciate what’s around you.” Whether by swimming with dolphins, training horses, or simply living with pets, expanding our awareness of animals, this author asserts, can help us reconnect with an essential part of ourselves and with the natural world.

—Amy Arner Sgarro ’83

Ms. Sgarro is a freelance writer and editor.

Books

NONFICTION
A History of Dogs in the Early Americas
by Marion Hamlin Schwartz ’66
Yale University Press, 1997

Portals, Pilgrimage, and Crusade in Western Tuscany
by Dorothy F. Glass ’64
Princeton University Press, 1997

Naked to the Bone
Medical Imaging in the Twentieth Century
by Bettyann Holtzmann Kevles ’59
Rutgers University Press, 1997

Asset Protection Planning
by Patricia Donley-Rosen ’72
Research Institute of America, 1996

Writing for Multimedia
A Guide and Sourcebook for the Digital Writer
by Michael Kozolenko ’76
ITP/Wadsworth Books, 1996

FICTION
What Girls Learn
by Karin Cook ’90
Pantheon Books, 1997

Aurcole
by Carole Maso ’77
Ecco, 1997

Rosemary for Remembrance
by Yvonne Barnett West ’47
Fantham Press, 1997

COOKBOOK
The Buffet Book
by Carol Peck
with Carolyn Hart Bryant ’72
Viking Press, 1997

FOR YOUNG READERS
God Sent a Rainbow and Other Bible Stories
Paintings by Malcah Zeldis
Text by Yona Zeldis ’79
Jewish Publication Society, 1997

TEXTBOOKS
¡Acción!
by Dorothy Joba ’66, Vicki Galloway, and
Angela Labanca

Spanish lessons for levels 1-3 in junior high
and high school

America as Story
Historical Fiction for Middle and
Secondary Schools
by Rosemary Klusenberg Coffey ’57 and
Elizabeth F. Howard
American Library Association, 1997
PERSON, PLACE AND THING

Vassar faculty, students, alumnae/i, and staff are invited to submit items to PP&T. There is no charge for this bulletin board service; publication is as space permits. Submissions should be typed and 75 words or less; they may be edited for length and style. The deadline for the Winter issue is December 1. Please note that AAVC cannot verify the terms of ads that are unrelated to AAVC activities.

Winter in Arizona: Lovely, tranquil, one-bedroom patio home in central Scottsdale available for winter rental (Oct.-April, three-month minimum). $1,700/month. Call 212/686-8934. [Susanna Turman '74]

Vassar College Choir and Madrigal Singers plan to visit cities from Boston to Washington, DC. If you are interested in scheduling a concert, or for more information, call Vassar College Choir conductor Charles Kamm at 914/437-5552. Monetary contributions to the success of this tour would be greatly appreciated. Checks can be made out to Vassar College and can be sent to: Vassar College Choir Tour, Development Office, Mail Drop 14, Vassar College, Poughkeepsie, NY 12604-0014.

Hawaii—Maui oceanfront—luxury condos, one-bedroom, West Maui between Kaanapali and Kapalua, $90-$100 a night for two. Call 1-800/446-7307 for brochure.

For information on renting our one-bedroom apartment, 15 yards from the water, with ocean views from both living room and bathroom, plus cathedral ceilings, 1½ baths, fully equipped kitchen, etc. for $567 a week during the summer and fall, call me at 212/673-4435. Web page: <www.ndhi.com/sara>. [Sara Widdicombe '68].

Minneapolis-based freelance copywriter/editor provides clear, crisp copy for ads, brochures, newsletters, direct mail, and more. Words arrive by fax, e-mail, or FedEx. Hourly or project rates available. For information and samples, contact Christine Anamee '91 at 612/823-2562 or by e-mail at <anam91@sc.net>.

Sublet/buy: beautiful one-bedroom apartment in Riverdale. Twenty-minute ride to Grand Central Station, 20-minute car ride to Columbia U. Ideal for one person/couple. Close to transportation and shopping. Large bedroom and living room, hardwood floors, high ceilings, fifth floor, western exposure, quiet neighborhood in residential area of Riverdale. Fully furnished, for sublet. Please call/leave message: 718/549-3624 or 415/221-3132 or e-mail: <meier@glas.apc.org>. [Jacqueline Mia Foster '88].

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

Freelance editing by university professor emerita with 20+ years experience in publishing/editing. Any kind of writing welcome: journalistic, scholarly, technical, commercial, fiction, kid's lit. Reasonable rates, prompt service. VC references available. E-mail inquiries: <nritter@indiana.edu>. Fax: 812/855-0886. Phone: 812/334-2390. Naomi Ritter '59.


Great gifts in home furnishings from Julia Bayar '71; special discount to Vassar alumnae/i. Julia is a custom furniture designer and ASID interior designer who can style a unique piece for your home or office. One specialty is custom children's furniture, created in every look from Mission to French country. Furniture has wood construction and can be shipped anywhere. Turnaround time is usually 4-6 weeks. Major credit cards are accepted. Brochures available upon request. Call 914/472-7942 or 212/867-0025 or fax 212/867-0026.

To all alumnae/i, especially those in the entertainment industry, interested in helping up to thirty young alumnae (91-'97) officially launch their own independent record label in Poughkeepsie. Due to the overwhelmingly positive response generated by our ad in last summer's Quarterly, Transcendent Recordings (formerly Pieut Records) has become a viable force in the Mid-Hudson Valley and at Vassar (we even had six interns earning field work units). We are now booking four bands on a fall tour of the NE college circuit and are seeking distribution for our September releases. For more information, call Nick Poph '96 at 914/883-5157.

Fellowships Available to Alumnae/i

Vassar alumnae/i are eligible for many fellowships to pursue post-Vassar study. Susan L. Davis, director of the Office for Fellowships at Vassar, welcomes inquiries by Vassar alumnae/i about them: Box 122, Vassar College, Poughkeepsie, NY 12604; telephone 914/437-5263; e-mail: <Davissa@Vassar.edu>. She highlights the following fellowships for which Vassar alumnae/i may be eligible.

Vassar Fellowships: About 35 fellowships, including the Vassar Maguire Fellowships for study abroad. Most are for full-time graduate study. Open to graduating seniors and recent Vassar graduates, as specified under each fellowship. Applications are due by Jan. 31, 1998, to the Committee on Fellowships.

W.K. Rose Fellowship: Provides a worthy young artist with a chance to be free after college to pursue his/her work as an artist. Open to all graduating seniors and Vassar alumnae/i under the age of 36 who demonstrated a creative talent in their years of undergraduate study, who are not employed by the college, and who have not already attained substantial recognition in their field. Applications due by Jan. 15, 1998.

Mellon Fellowships: May only be applied to Ph.D. work in a humanistic discipline and are designed for those interested in college teaching/research. December deadline.

"echoing green": Open to graduating seniors and those who graduated no more than 10 years ago. Fellowship is $15,000 to initiate an innovative public service project. January deadline.

The Michael W. Percopo and Catharine W. Percopo '46 Fellowship at the Harvard Business School.
Board of Directors
* Elected in June 1997 to four-year term
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Agreement Signed on Running of Alumnae House

An agreement between the college and AAVC that formally vests AAVC with responsibility for operating Alumnae House was approved and signed by both parties in May.

The agreement establishes the fiscal and operating guidelines for the house, and it provides for joint reevaluation of the manner in which the agreement is working every seven years.

The agreement also formalizes continued joint efforts by AAVC and the Vassar Development Office to raise funds for capital improvements to the house. A fundraising committee chaired by Fay Gambee '62 seeks to raise nearly $3 million by 1999—the 75th anniversary of the opening of Alumnae House—for improvements and repairs to the building that will include, but are not limited to, installation of an elevator and air conditioning, and renovation of the front and back terraces and the third floor.

A special subcommittee of the AAVC House Committee is planning the commemoration of the house’s 75th birthday. It is chaired by former AAVC House Committee Chair Barbara Muhs Walker ‘48.

Alumnae House

Alumnae House

Trips
MUSIC CRUISE
(See back cover)

MISSISSIPPI RIVER
AND THE CIVIL WAR,
ON DELTA QUEEN
April 15-25, 1998
With historian Shelby Foote

SICILY
October 16-25, 1998
“Footprints in Time”
Watch for information.

For travel information, call 914/437-5438.
Reunion '97

Reunion Factbite

The class of '22 celebrated its 75th Reunion—the first 75th ever marked at Vassar.
Reunion Factbite
The class of 1947 turned out the greatest numbers ever for a 50th reunion: 171.

Reunion Factbite
Attending were 1,076 reuniting alumnae/i, 283 non-alum spouses, 24 alum spouses, 116 children, and 84 other guests.
Think Presents Minnesota Wild Rice

Whether you are contemplating an elegant wild rice pilaf for a party or a hearty soup for your family, Minnesota-grown long-grain wild rice appeals to the educated palate. Recipes are included. One-pound packages. Price: $10.50 per pound or $10.00 per pound for orders of two or more pounds to the same address. Available October 15.

Please make check payable to: Minnesota/Dakotas Vassar Club c/o Mrs. Albert Dorris 5721 View Lane Edina, MN 55436 612/938-2339

Proceeds from the sale of these products benefit Vassar Club Scholarship Funds. Last year 92 students received $506,318 in aid from 34 clubs.
Children's Book

Hawaii is a Rainbow: a stunning view of the people, places, plants, and animals of the Hawaiian Islands. Designed by Jill Chen Loui ’76, the book begins with Jeff Reese's photographs, displayed brilliantly in various sizes, uncaptioned, in rainbow order by color-in-common. Concludes with Stephanie Feeley's words, setting them among smaller photographs. Photographs are for everyone; descriptive text is written for older readers and includes suggestions on how to use the book with preschool to school-age children. Superlative example of how book design can make excellent material better.

Price: $16.00 (includes airmail shipping)

Please make check payable to: Hawaii Vassar Club c/o Ms. Martha D. McDaniel 45-142 Mikihilina Kaneohe, HI 96744-2330 808/235-1076

Enamel Boxes

Two unique mementos of Vassar, commissioned by the Vassar Club of London. Handcrafted in Bilston, England, by Halcyon Days artists using 18th-century Georgian enameling techniques. Decorative to look at and useful for all kinds of things, from earrings to cuff links and paper clips.

The box depicting Main Building reproduces the well-known 19th-century print and adds a daisy chain border and claret base. The box is two inches wide and costs $150.

The box depicting Matthew Vassar is from a silhouette done by the famous French artist August Edouard. It has been carefully copied from the original and has a hand-painted border of gold. The Matthew Vassar box is available in a two-inch size ($150) and a three-inch size ($225).

Price includes postage, handling, and insurance. Full-color photographs are available from AAVC.

Please make check payable to: Vassar Club of London c/o AAVC, Willa Panvini Alumnae House 61 Raymond Avenue Poughkeepsie, NY 12603-3116 914/437-5441

Boston Rocker, Captain's Chair

Classic chairs made of selected northern hardwoods, available in several finishes.

1. Satiny black finish, with gold striping and Vassar College seal. (Captain's armchair has natural cherry arms.)

2. All cherry

3. Black with cherry crown. Chairs with cherry crown have a black, laser-engraved seal.

Perfect as a graduation gift or for the home or office.

Personalization available:

1. Solid brass plaque, engraved with up to three lines of 17 characters, mounted on chair back; $15.00 additional.

2. One line of up to 32 characters, laser-engraved under college seal; $10.00 additional.

For Christmas delivery, orders must be placed by November 10.

Prices include the freight charges. Chairs are sent UPS. Delivery may be made to home or business.

Captain's Chair $255
Adult Rocker $255
Side Chair $175
Child's Rocker $150

Please send check (plus 5 percent sales tax if delivered in Massachusetts) payable to:

Vassar Club of Boston c/o Sherrell Bingham Downes 381 Hammond Street Chestnut Hill, MA 02167

Golf Balls

Golf balls with VC logo, available from the Cleveland Vassar Club.

Twelve Pinnacle Gold golf balls in a box are $30.00, plus $3.00 shipping. Single sleeves (three balls) are also available.

Please make check payable to:

Cleveland Vassar Club
Amy Dubaniewicz
20475 Farnsleigh Rd.
Shaker Hts., OH 44122
216/751-1030
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Finest-quality fruit, shipped direct from the grove.

Navel Oranges
White and Pink Grapefruit
(All ready late November)

Prices available after October 1.
Please write for brochure on these delicious fruits as well as candies, nuts, preserves, and honey to:

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Excellent Woodstock Sugarbush Farm Cheese: not processed, not colored, not pasteurized. You have five choices: Sharp Cheddar (whole milk cheese aged two years); Sage (same aged cheddar with sage); Smoked (cured for five days over a slow-burning, maple-hickory fire); Green Mountain Jack (milk variation of Monterey Jack); and Vermont Light (similar flavor to Jack with half the fat, half the cholesterol, and 30% fewer calories than regular cheddar).

Please contact the Vermont/New Hampshire Vassar Club (10 Gilson Road, West Lebanon, NH 03784) after October 15th for a brochure.

Mammoth Pecan Halves

“Best of the crop” from Albany, Georgia, in one-pound packages attractively marked “Vassar College Scholarship Fund” in rose and gray. Gift ribbon on request ($1.00).

$6.00 per pound package (2 lb. minimum) plus shipping. Case lots (24 lb.) $144.00 per case plus shipping (UPS). Order early!

Check payable to:
Maryland Vassar Club
c/o Meta Packard Barton ’50
6507 Montrose Avenue
Baltimore, MD 21212
410/377-6622

Taste of the South

The Vassar Club of Atlanta invites you to sample a taste of the South: the fine fruit and vegetable products of McGutchon’s, producers of homestyle fruit butters, preserves, mustards, and relishes since 1938. These are high-quality products that are made from the finest ingredients (no added preservatives or artificial flavors).

We are offering two three-pack choices. Each pack includes an assortment of three pint jars. Sample Pack A contains Apple Butter (no sugar, all natural fruit sweeteners), Peach Preserves, and Vidalia Onion Mustard; Sample Pack B contains Vidalia Onion Relish, Peach Preserves, and Vidalia Onion Mustard.

Price per pack: $22.50; order three packs or more, and the price is only $20.00 each. Price includes taxes, shipping, and handling. Delivery will be completed within three to four weeks.

Please make check payable to:
Vassar Club of Atlanta
c/o Ellen O’Neill
217 Valley View Drive
Peachtree City, GA 30269

Year-Round Gift and Holiday Baskets

The San Diego Vassar Club presents exquisitely packaged gift and holiday baskets with California panache. Stuffed with sumptuous Epicuren treats by Southern California’s finest gourmet bakers, chocolatiers, cheese makers, and coffee blenders.

Each Elegant Basket contains:

• Stella Bella Ground Coffees:
  Vanilla Nut & Decaf Colombian
• Chocolate & Hazelnut Dipping Spoons
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• Selma’s Jumbo Cookies: Raspberry White Chocolate & Chocolate Crunch
• Bobbi’s Sweet Surrender Key Lime Drop Cookie Package
• Almond Florentine & Venetian Chocolate Biscotti
• Bushmills Irish Whiskey Holiday Cake
• Lavosh Classic Hawaiian Island Crackers
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• California Cheddar-filled Truffles

Select custom gift wraps when you place your order. Over 100 styles of wrapping, ribbons, and more.

$63.00 complete with UPS shipping and tax*
*Hawaii and overseas extra - CA residents add 7.75% tax.
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Tennis Racquet Shaped Pasta

Lined recycled tennis ball containers filled with quality racquet shaped pasta. Makes a perfect gift year round for your tennis aficionados. 10% to the Associated Vassar Clubs of Fairfield County.

2 11 oz. containers $ 17.50 ppd.
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Please make check payable to: June Marks ('49) Tennis Fashions 33 Nutmeg Drive Greenwich, CT 06831 Inquiries 203/531-7159.

Gift Chocolates from Harbor Sweets

The result of our hobby to make the best chocolates in the world. All pieces are individually wrapped in gold foil, gift-packed in shiny red boxes, and tied with gold cords.

Sweet Sloops: Sailboat-shaped chocolate-covered almond butter crunch; 38 pieces (#4000A-VC) $21.00.

Gift Assortment: An assortment of all of our nautically oriented chocolates, including Sweet Sloops. 23 pieces (#4860-VC) $14.50.

Note message for gift card, date to arrive, and enclose check made out to Harbor Sweets. Please add $5.00 for each address to cover postage and handling. Or ask for free catalogue of other unique Harbor Sweets gifts. Please specify that your gift is to benefit the Vassar Club of Atlanta when placing your order. Prices effective through December 31, 1997.

Send requests to: Harbor Sweets 85 Leavitt Street Salem, MA 01970 1-800/243-2115

Vassarions 1890-1965

A wonderful resource for looking back through Vassar's years; reviewing what Vassar life was like in the older years.

The Poughkeepsie Area Vassar Club is selling Vassarions dating 1890-1965 (these yearbooks were donated to Vassar by their owners; not every year is available). The price on all yearbooks is $28 per book (includes shipping and handling). Sale proceeds support the club's scholarship efforts. Please make request by year and provide addressing information.

Please make check payable to: Poughkeepsie Area Vassar Club Send requests to: Rosemarie Grosskamp 104 Cross Road LaGrangeville, NY 12540

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Order Form

(Please use similar format for additional orders.)

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*Professor of art 1949-51, 1954-55, April 1956-1985*

Donald J. Olsen  
*Professor of history 1955-1994*

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**Young Alums**

**Party for the ’90s**

**November 8**

*Watch your mail for details about the party nearest you.*
I cannot remember the first time I met Muriel—I know it was at Vassar, and we were both new there in 1930. Muriel kept little bottles of liqueurs in her room, and sometimes we drank some after a dull dinner in the gray dormitory dining hall. One day we went walking in a gentle snowstorm. We are some snow off the low branches, reciting “What Can Ail Thee, Knight at Arms?” for some reason that now escapes me, but it seemed very warming and fitting at the time.

We hitchhiked from Vassar to New York one weekend—Muriel, Nancy Naumburg, and I. (In other words, we went AWOL.) We each took a suitcase and got ourselves onto a corner in Poughkeepsie where some other student had said we would get a lonely salesman to pick us up quickly and drive us straight to wherever we wanted to go in Manhattan. A truck stopped and we got in back with one man who had been the driver’s only passenger. We talked and laughed and sat on our suitcases. It felt threatening, as though we were being kidnapped or molested in some unspecified way. Nothing happened that I can remember.

We were dropped off in midtown with our virginal luggage. We went to a play and then to a late movie. Then it was very late, and we went to Muriel’s house to go to bed. Her mother came to the door in a long white nightgown; she was very alarmed at seeing us in the hall. She began to scream, and Nancy and I left, leaving Muriel to explain to her mother. Muriel told us later that her mother had thought, when she visited Vassar, that the low ornamental stone wall that surrounded the college was meant to keep the girls in; that we were not allowed out.

I remember understanding everything Muriel talked about that strange faraway year at Vassar. I was from Chicago (the dean with the little dog said, “Jewish girls from Chicago never stay long.”) and transferred to the university there the following year. Muriel visited me in Oak Park, where my parents lived, and met my family and friends.

A lifetime later, when Muriel’s Collected Poems was published, I was congratulating her on such a fat book and mentioned that as I read her poems in the individual books as they were published (she often sent them to us), I frequently felt I was not understanding them. But when I re-read them in the Collected Poems, and recognized them as old friends, I understood them all. Muriel looked at me very intently and said, “You always understood them all.”

One time we were visiting in New York and Muriel came to see us at a hotel. She brought a New Yorker to mark the plays through Washington on a bus—his first trip alone to see the country. He phoned us, and we spent a communicative evening together. He looked more like Muriel than one would have thought possible—her calm beauty and piercing eyes perfectly preserved in his face.

One time in New York when Muriel took me to lunch at a cozy restaurant near her beautiful apartment at Westbeth she told me that one of her numerous literary friends had asked her how she was faring during a New York summer heat wave. Muriel replied, “I’m lying on the floor naked looking at television.” The friend said, “Oh, Muriel, you speak in such marvelous images!” Muriel said to me, “What did that mean, images? I was lying on the floor naked looking at television.”

One of the last times I saw Muriel was at a friend’s apartment; she was recovering from one of her several strokes and hemming crib sheets for an approaching grandson. She was to be elected president of PEN and was rather nervous about it. Her productivity overwhelmed me—in poems, in recovery, in travel, in raising her son, in her loving grandchildren, in friendship, and in caring and working for all the disenfranchised.

One of my favorite poems of Muriel’s is “To Be a Jew in the Twentieth Century.” I’ve taken it to share at many seders at friends’ houses, and once to a Catholic mass, celebrated at a cousin’s home, where it was incorporated into the homily. It is still orienting and identifying for me, like a Nansen passport for stateless persons. We felt very fortunate having been able to attend the memorial service for Muriel in New York that Bill so capably put together. [Rukeyser died in 1980.] It was a model of what a memorial can be, full of meaning for Muriel, her life, her poems, her support of so many others.

Just now I am reading The Life of Poetry. I am rereading Gibbs [Rukeyser wrote a biography of Willard Gibbs, a scientist]. I am reading her poems. As long as I can see to read I will never be out of touch with Muriel. After that, someone will have to read them to me.
Name

Date

Name in college

Class

Update

New address (or second address with dates of residence)
“Vassar has always been a part of my family’s life. I am delighted to make a gift that will sustain the College in perpetuity while also meeting our family’s financial needs.”

Barbara Bentley Lane ’33 and Frederick Lane (Amherst ’36) established a charitable remainder trust that will provide income to them for life. The principal will ultimately come to Vassar to establish an endowment for faculty salaries, scholarships, and maintenance of Vassar’s distinctive buildings. Barbara’s grandmother, Harriet Drown Benton (1871), mother, Harriet Benton Bentley ’07, and granddaughter, Elizabeth ’94, attended Vassar. Her other two granddaughters, Katherine ’99 and Heather ’98 are currently at Vassar.

Contact Cindy Sterling or Joan Kenna at the Gift Planning Office at (914) 437-5487 for a gift plan to address your philanthropic and financial goals.
Music Cruise

30 May 1998 - 6 June 1998
Nuremberg, Germany, to Amsterdam, Netherlands

Cruise along the Main and Rhine rivers with Richard Wilson, Mary Conover Mellon Professor of Music at Vassar.

AAVC will be traveling on the luxurious new River Cloud (launched in 1996). The ship accommodates a maximum of ninety-eight passengers in fifty cabins and is equipped with a lounge, a library, a fitness center, and even a putting green. One of the highlights of the cruise ship is a specially built seven-foot Steinway piano available for concert programs on board.

Our accompanying lecturer and faculty member will be Richard Wilson, an accomplished pianist and composer. Professor Wilson received his undergraduate degree from Harvard, then studied piano in Munich and composition in Rome. He has composed over seventy works, which have been performed by major artists and orchestras in New York, Washington, Boston, Cleveland, San Francisco, London, Berlin, and many other music centers all over the world.

Prior to the cruise there will be an optional two-day visit to Munich with opportunities for opera or concerts. There will be a tour of Nuremberg before boarding that will include the home of Albrecht Dürer and medieval shops in the Old Town. During the cruise we will visit Bamberg, a medieval jewel that was spared war damages; Würzburg, including the world famous baroque palace built soon after 1720 and featuring a ceiling fresco by Tiepolo; and Mainz, Wiesbaden (where we may be able to attend a concert), Koblenz, and Cologne, before arriving in Amsterdam, where there will be a two-day optional postcruise stay.

Contact AAVC to receive more information; call 914/437-4538.

Board the River Cloud and enjoy a musical tour of the rivers and cities of Europe.