

BENNINGTON

spring/summer 2004



the alumni magazine



ON THE COVER: Doris Humphrey (in red) and others dancing at Bennington in a film shot by Doris Ewing, a student at the Bennington School of the Dance. This rare footage from 1938 was recently discovered in the College's library. To learn more about the role Bennington played in the birth of modern dance—and in training some of the luminaries of the contemporary scene—see pages 18–25.

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*Bennington is
published twice a year
for alumni and friends of
Bennington College.*

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Steven Bach, a faculty member in film and literature, addressed the Class of 2007 at a convocation ceremony held in September. The following is an excerpt of his remarks.

CONVOCAATION 2003

Many of you will come to love Bennington, as I do, as a kind of ivory tower, a refuge of higher learning and self-realization that is sheltered from the chaos of what we call civilization in laughter or in tears. Vermont is, of course, the perfect cliché for the rural, green, untrammelled, unspoiled landscape in which self-realization becomes a reality rather than a dream, whether you're a farmer, a painter, a writer, a sculptor, a dancer, an environmentalist, a Ben or a Jerry, or a cow. And it's all true. But don't get too settled or too sheltered. I have noticed in the 10 years I have lived here—after living a few other places less removed and rural—that it is all too easy to relax into seclusion, to wallow in it.

Seclusion is something to be cherished but *used*, and isolation is to be avoided like the plague, which won't be hard to do if you just get up in the morning. I'm thinking of the advisee who told me last year that there was "nothing to do" at Bennington on a day when I was desperately trying to figure out how to attend the experimental play one of my students had directed, the concert of Sondheim songs another had mounted, and the art installation opening by a third—all in one not particularly unusual Bennington College evening.

An important caveat, however, is to keep the ivory tower in perspective with what Bennington is not and which—let's be honest—some of you will miss. This is plainly not New York City or Chicago or Los Angeles. Some of you will find that comforting in this post-9/11 world, and some of you will be tempted to grow remote and isolated, but don't get too snug or too smug, too settled or too self-contemplative. Your navel may indeed be the most fascinating thing on earth, but looking up from it once in a while can be instructive, especially if you're worried about things—as I am—like Iraq, the environment, the Patriot Act, and the future of democracy and learning and social justice. Ask your teachers. It is unlikely that they'll give you answers and they certainly won't tell you *what* to think, but they will help you learn how to learn whatever it is you need to know.

If there is one thing truly unique about Bennington, it is the shared responsibility you accept for your education on coming here. There are no requirements, as you know, unless being bright, creative, industrious, and caring form a kind of Bennington template.... The lives you are learning to live are yours and so should be the choices that guide them. Don't worry; no one will let you go into free fall, and your advisors and Plan Committee members will try to keep you on the most productive and enriching paths. But, to quote Garrison Keillor, you no longer have to do stupid things—you know what they are—just to annoy your parents. Now, if you do them, you'll be doing them just because they're stupid. Or you'll set your sights higher than that.

How high? Well, how about this? Ralph Waldo Emerson wrote that "the scholar is that man who must take up into himself [or herself] all the ability of the time, all the contributions of the past, all the hopes of the future.... This confidence in the unsearched might of man belongs, by all motives, by all prophecy, by all preparation, to the American Scholar." In other words, to *you*.



david **Anderegg**'s op-ed piece "The 'Last Chance' Teen Dance" was published in the *Los Angeles Times* last June. He was also invited by the American Psychological Association to join the editorial board of *Psychoanalytic Psychology*, the journal of the Division of Psychoanalysis. Last fall he presented talks at the Lenox/Pittsfield (MA) Pre-School Mental Health Consortium.

Joel Chadabe was chosen as a 2003–04 recipient of the American Society of Composers, Authors and Publishers (ASCAP) Award.

Ron Cohen gave the keynote address at last summer's commencement for the graduate programs in Dispute Resolution at the University of Massachusetts in Boston.

Marguerite Feitlowitz spoke on the role of literary translators during times of political repression at the annual conference of the American Literary Translation Association, held in November in Cambridge, MA. Her translation of the play *Strip*, by Griselda Gambaro, is included in *Holy Terrors: Latin American Women Perform*, published in January by Duke University Press.

Last fall **Michael Giannitti** designed lighting for *Galileo* at the Studio Theatre in Washington, DC and for the Sean Curran Dance Company in Providence, RI. In February he designed lighting for **Susan Rethorst '74** at Dance Theater Workshop in New York City.

Edward Hoagland's essay "The American Dissident" appeared in the August issue of *Harper's Magazine*. "Immersion Teaching," a reflection on teaching literature and writing to college students, appeared in the February issue of *The Chronicle of Higher Education*.

Last summer **Kirk Jackson** appeared in a production of *The Merchant of Venice* for Shakespeare on the Sound, a not-for-profit organization in southern Connecticut. He also participated in a retreat at the Eugene O'Neill Theatre Center in Waterford, CT.

Scott Lehrer did the sound design for *Franny's Way* at the Gefen Playhouse in Los Angeles and for a new tour of *Chicago*, which opened in Washington, DC last summer. He recorded a

CD of Puerto Rican Plenas and Bombas with the percussion group Vento De Agua for Smithsonian Folkways Records. Lehrer also oversaw the installation of a sound system at New York University's Kimmel Center.

Over Field Work Term (Non-Resident Term), **Jonathan Kline** was an artist-in-residence at Anderson Ranch Arts Center in Snowmass Village, CO.

Mark Poirier has written a screenplay for his novel *Goats*, which was optioned and commissioned by American Zoetrope (Francis Ford Coppola's production company).

An exhibition at the Fleming Museum in Burlington, VT featured the work of **Sue Rees**. Through her inclusion in *Ten Vermont Women: Sculpture, Painting, and Craft*, Rees is a finalist in the National Museum of Women in the Arts' *From the States* program. She also designed the set for the Roxbury Arts Group's production of *Kraken*, which was directed by **Jean Randich**. **Garin Marschall '00** and **Adam Sussman '04** provided lighting design and assistant direction, respectively.

Last fall **Isabel Roche** presented a paper entitled "The Inscription of the Historical Figure in the Novels of Victor Hugo" at the 29th annual 19th-Century French Studies Colloquium in Tuscon, AZ. She also wrote the introduction and notes to a translation of Victor Hugo's *Notre Dame de Paris* published in January by the Barnes & Noble Classics Series.

Stephen Sandy's work recently appeared in *Green Mountains Review*, *Hunger Mountain*, *The Paris Review*, *Pequod*, *TSAR*, *The St. Ann's Review*, *Salamander*, and *The Yale Review*. His new poetry collection, *Weather Permitting*, will be published this year. In October Sandy was the featured speaker at the Calvin Coolidge Memorial Foundation's annual banquet.

Susan Sgorbati has an ongoing residency with an improvisation ensemble of dancers and musicians at the Flynn Theatre in Burlington, VT. Quantum Leap, the program she founded with **Danny Michaelson** for at-risk adolescents, was named a "best practice" by the Vermont Agency of Human Services. Quantum Leap is a model for the entire southern Vermont region; interest in the program has also spread to schools in New York City, Rochester, NY, and Bellefontaine, OH.

CYNTHIA LOCKLIN



Ruth Dreifuss, the former President of Switzerland, spoke at the College in October. She is the second woman ever to be elected to the Swiss Federal Council, the seven-member executive council that collectively assumes Switzerland's office of head of state, and the only woman ever elected President of Switzerland.

The American Society of Composers, Authors and Publishers (ASCAP) honored **Allen Shawn** with a Deems Taylor Award for his highly acclaimed book, *Arnold Schoenberg's Journey*. The annual award honors "outstanding print, broadcast, and new media coverage of music."

The October issue of the *Journal of Thermal Biology* included a paper coauthored by **Betsy Sherman** and **Daniel Levitis '99**.

John Van Buskirk spent two weeks as a faculty artist at Summertrios, a residency at Wilson College. As keyboard player of the Mostly Mozart Festival Orchestra, he performed works of Handel and Haydn on harpsichord and fortepiano at Lincoln Center in New York City.

Bruce Weber gave the keynote speech at a Cambridge University symposium in January 2003 on the history of the Department of Biochemistry. Weber's essay "Life" is now available in the online *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*. "The Fact of

Evolution: Implications for Science Education" appeared in the December issue of *Science and Education*.

Since 1989, **Kerry Woods** has conducted ongoing research on two stands of old-growth forests in northern Michigan. In August 2002 Woods and a student field crew collected data from one of the stands, which was hit by a severe thunderstorm during the previous month. Their data, assessing the immediate impact of the storm and providing baseline measurements for following the stand's response, could prove important in understanding the structure of these forests. In June 2003 Woods presented initial results of the research at the national meetings of the Society for Conservation Biology. He has also given seminars on this and related work at the University of Toronto and the University of Quebec at Montreal. A report on the effects of the storm will be published in June in *The Journal of Ecology*. Woods' work on this project is supported by grants from the U.S. Forest Service and the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation.

MFA FACULTY NOTES

Sven Birkerts weighed in on book reviewing in "Critics on Reviews," an article in the September/October issue of *Poets & Writers* magazine. "You're playing the culture sport, and there's a lot of satisfaction in doing that," he said.

Henri Cole's book of poems, *Middle Earth*, has been awarded the Kingsley Tufts Award for 2004. The Kingsley Tufts carries with it an award of \$100,000. Judges were Robert Wrigley, Carol Muske-Dukes, Robert Pinsky, Alice Quinn, and Charles Rowell.

"Taming the Gorgon: My Mother into Fiction," a lecture **Lynn Freed** gave at the College during the June 2003 residency, was included in the winter issue of *The Georgia Review*.

Poems by **Jane Hirshfield** appeared this spring in *The Atlantic Monthly*, *Orion*, *The Kenyon Review*, *The American Scholar*, and *Tin House*. "Poe" appeared in both *The Threepenny Review* and *Poetry Daily*, and was included in *The Best American Poetry 2004*.

Sheila Kohler was recently awarded the The Dorothy and Lewis B. Cullman Center for Scholars and Writers Fellowship of the New York City Public Library.

David Lehman has new work in *The Paris Review*, *Open City*, *Lyric*, *Tin House*, and *The Antioch Review*.

In January **Phillip Lopate** took part in Martin Scorsese's *Lady By the Sea: The Statue of Liberty*, a one-hour documentary that aired on The History Channel. [See Faculty Bookshelf.]

continued on page 7

faculty bookshelf

My Name is Bill (Simon & Schuster) by **Susan Cheever** is a comprehensive new biography of Bill Wilson, the founder of Alcoholics Anonymous. Cheever wrote of her subject: "Although his name is not famous, his ideas are amongst the most influential of the 20th century. His writing has changed the way we think about addiction and, in turn, the way we think about human nature."

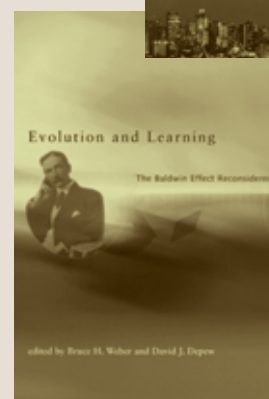
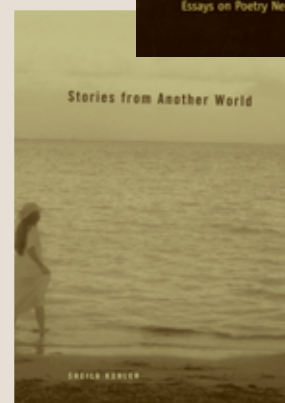
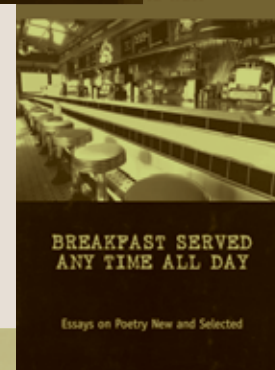
Donald Hall's *Breakfast Served Any Time All Day* (The University of Michigan Press), a collection of essays on poetry, was published last fall. His focus is on the pleasures, rather than the content, of poetry. "We absorb poetry not with our eyes only nor with our ears. We read with our mouths that cherish vowel and consonant; we read with our limbed muscles that enact the dance of the poetry's rhythm."

Sheila Kohler's latest collection, *Stories from Another World* (Ontario Review Press), was published in October. "There is a territory—fictional and psychological—that Sheila Kohler has now marked as her own. It is a real achievement," said J.M. Coetzee.

In *Waterfront: A Journey Around Manhattan* (Crown Publishers), **Phillip Lopate** explores New York's landscape, history, and ever-changing character through a series of walks along the banks of the Hudson and East Rivers. In his introduction, Lopate calls the book "a mixture of history, guidebook, architectural critique, reportage, personal memoir, literary criticism, nature writing, reverie, and who knows what else."

How We Sleep on the Nights We Don't Make Love (Curbstone Press) is a new book of poetry by **E. Ethelbert Miller**. In his introduction, poet **Anastasios Kozaitis MFA '02** writes, "The reader will find epic topics, historical allusions, musical references, love poems, Katharine Dunham and dance, tragic consequences of human behavior, life's comedies, songs of Bird, and even astronomical observations."

Evolution and Learning: The Baldwin Effect Reconsidered, edited by **Bruce Weber** and David Depew, was published by MIT Press last June. *Nature* magazine called it "a readable and challenging volume." The collected essays—by philosophers, psychologists, and developmental biologists—explore the Baldwin Effect, the theory that learned behaviors can affect the direction and rate of evolutionary change. The book grew out of the Bennington International Conference on Mind and Brain held in November 1999.





Corpus, Ann Hamilton, 2003, pneumatic mechanisms, onionskin paper, silk organza, horn speakers; spinning speakers; wood benches and spinning video.

macArthur “Genius” award-winning installation artist Ann Hamilton visited Bennington in November to give a lecture and to record the voices of students, staff, and faculty for *Corpus*, a new work at MASS MoCA in North Adams, MA. Those voices are an element of the installation, and emerge from 24 horn-shaped speakers that slowly descend and ascend from the ceiling.

Corpus, which fills a football field-sized gallery, also includes 40 pneumatic machines that drop sheets of white paper. The windows of the gallery have a pinkish cast; 11 Bennington students spent three weeks assisting the artist in cutting and gluing silk organza to each of the 3,380 panes of glass.

Hamilton said of the work: “It’s not something to consume but something you have to wait for.” As *The New York Times* noted, visitors to the gallery spend 20 minutes in the installation—“19 minutes longer than people typically spend with one work of art.”

Corpus will be on view at MASS MoCA through fall 2004.

Alice Mattison's essay "Fever" recently appeared in *Agni*.

E. Ethelbert Miller's poetry has been heard on HBO's Def Jam Poetry program and on National Public Radio. He was recently elected to the board of the Writer's Center in Bethesda, MD.

"What the Frost Casts Up" from **Ed Ochester's** *The Land of Cockaigne* was selected by the Pennsylvania Center for the Book as one of four poems to be displayed this year on posters on buses, libraries, and bookstores throughout the state.

Two essays by **George Packer** appeared in *The New Yorker*: "War After the War," in November, and "A Democratic World: Can Liberals take Foreign Policy back from the Republicans?" in February. On February 10 he was a guest on C-SPAN's *Washington Journal*.

In March **Liam Rector**, **Robin Neidorf MFA '96**, and **Anne Jarrell MFA '98**, along with representatives of other low-residency programs, sat on a panel at the Association of Writers and Writing Programs annual conference in Chicago. The event was chaired by **Victoria Clausi MFA '96**. In April Rector read Dante at the Maundy Thursday ceremony at the Cathedral of St. John the Divine in New York City.

Bob Shacochis' op-ed piece "Our Military, Haiti's Hope" ran in *The Washington Post* on March 4.

In December *The Writer's Chronicle* published an interview with **Virgil Suárez** entitled "Virgil Suárez and the Duende of Memory." His poem "La Florida" from *New England Review* was included in *The Best American Poetry 2004*.

OTHER NOTES

In February Bennington trustee **John W. Barr** was named president of the Poetry Foundation. "This is a chance for me to combine and create a point of conjunction with what have been the two principal paths of my life, writing poetry and being a businessman," Barr told *The New York Times*.

Gertrude Carter, MSW, director of Psychological Services, and **Jeffrey Winseman**, MD, medical director, participated in the Second Working Conference of the Erikson Institute and Bennington College. At the first conference, small delegations from nine college and university counseling centers explored the escalating use of psychoactive medications by students.

The second conference, held in September, extended and deepened this discussion by exploring issues of treatment.

In February **Mary DeBey**, director of the Center for Creative Teaching (CCT), and **Jennifer Hyatt**, associate director of the CCT, spent two weeks in Huaraz, Peru, conducting a language immersion retreat for Peruvian teachers of English. This marks the fourth year that an educational exchange took place between Bennington students and faculty and K-12 teachers in Peru. DeBey, **Katherine Hunter**, former director of the Early Childhood Center (ECC), and **Paulina Borja '06**, discussed the "Knowing the World in Two Languages" initiative on WAMC, the Albany, NY, public radio station.

As the *Library Journal* noted, *The Rope Eater* (Doubleday) by **Ben Jones**, dean of Admissions and Financial Aid, has been generating buzz since its publication in December. *The Washington Post* raved: "Ben Jones's extraordinary first novel is a gripping arctic adventure that is transformed by his dazzling prose into something much more.... It deserves to be one of the most admired novels of the new year."

Ballet San Jose Silicon Valley closed its 2003 season at the Performing Arts Center with a tribute to **Donald McKayle**, acclaimed choreographer and former faculty member. Ballet San Jose presented three of McKayle's works: *House of Tears*, *Death and Eros*, and *District Storyville*. After the performance, McKayle and his wife joined a dozen Bennington alumni for dinner. **Carolyn Gannon '67** gave an enthusiastic report: "We had representation from **Dort Cousins '39** to **Nissa Howard '00**. Two of McKayle's former students attended the function, **Ellen Murray '62** and **Jane Lapiner '61**. It was a super evening!" In an article in the December issue of *Dance Teacher* magazine McKayle reflected back on more than five decades of teaching. "When you teach, you learn again," he said. "Students provoke you, and then you have to reexamine some of the things you think you know." McKayle has been a professor of dance at University of California-Irvine since 1989.

Sidney Tillim, who taught at Bennington 1969-93, was the subject of an extended piece in the September issue of *Artforum*. "It was his denial of the very notion of a mainstream that set him apart from other critics," wrote Katy Siegel.

Last fall former faculty member **Anne Winters** received an Academy Award from the American Academy of Arts and Letters in recognition of her poetry.



ELIZABETH COX

BARGAINS IN THE REAL WORLD

TUMBLER HOME

swan electric

BERNARD

sven birkerts

my sky blue trades

GROWING UP COUNTS IN A CONTROLLED TIME

BILL WILSON—HIS LIFE
AND THE CREATION OF
ALCOHOLICS ANONYMOUS

My Name Is Bill

GEORGE PACKER

PS 1566
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2000

WATERFRONT

PHILLIP LOPATI

KOHLER

Stories from Another World

LATIN JAZZ

the last avant-garde:
Ambassador of the Dead

David Lehman

Arkold Molnyezuk

THE BOOK-BORROWER

BOB SHACCHIS

IMMACULATE
INVASION

AMERICAN PROBABILITIES

GRAYWOLF

FATHERING WORDS

C. C. Chebbert-Killian

SERVED ANY TIME ALL DAY

Famous Novels

GIVEN SUGAR, GIVEN SALT

ROBERT DIX

EATING THE WORDS OF WORDS

Y N

BY JENNIFER WHITE '02

Making a Writer's Life

Bennington's MFA in Writing Program Turns 10

"I was always fascinated by the philosophical puzzle of the ship that leaves its home port, and every time it lands in another port, parts of it are replaced—until finally when it returns, every single element and every screw has been exchanged. And yet, in the very deepest sense, it is the same ship. Every element of this program, from the time I was up at the first residency to the present, has been retooled, changed, expanded, altered, but I feel it's a complete continuum. The way an organism accepts change and keeps its identity is fascinating. And the great triumph of this place is that it established from the outset a very particular personality...."

—Sven Birkerts, associate faculty member at the first residency,
core nonfiction faculty member since 1995

"IT'S SOLITUDE PUNCTUATED BY HYSTERIA," says Liam Rector.

Rector is the founder and director of the Bennington Writing Seminars, the College's low-residency Masters of Fine Arts program in Writing. He also teaches poetry in the program. And he is also the one who, at the beginning of each new-student orientation, writes the following phrase on the chalkboard:

"Vortex: a radiant node or cluster."

What does that mean?

"My advice has always been to find those with whom you have rapport and proceed," Rector says. "Our ideal student is much like the ideal Bennington undergraduate student: self-directed, already in the midst of things, up-and-at-'em.... We bring together not the like-minded, but the similarly obsessed."

The vortex is most visible each January and June, when approximately 150 people—students, faculty, and staff—converge on the Bennington campus for 10-day residencies. This is the "hysteria" part of Rector's formula. Between the workshops, lectures, readings, and various seminars, upwards of 80 events are packed into a carefully orchestrated week-and-a-half.

The “solitude” lies in the six-month semesters between residencies. A Writing Seminars student does the bulk of her coursework from her own home, putting at least 25 hours a week into writing in her genre (poetry, fiction, or nonfiction); reading widely; and reflecting on that reading in short essays. The resulting work goes into a monthly packet the student sends to her teacher, which is returned with a “packet letter” offering suggestions and critique. Some alumni say that months and years after graduation, they still refer to these letters for guidance.

“The format wouldn’t be good for a football team or a symphony orchestra,” Rector says, “but for the sound of one-hand clapping, it’s ideal.”

BUILDING THE PROGRAM: **Conversation and the writing life**

“Twenty-five students came from 12 states and one from County Tipperary, Ireland. Somewhere under those hats and mufflers were a lawyer from New Jersey, a court reporter from Florida, a critical care nurse, a union organizer, a teacher, a freelance writer, and a psychotherapist, among others....”

—Priscilla Hodgkins, associate director

The first residency was christened by what Rector calls “one of the great snowstorms of the century.” “We were like monks skittering from hearth to hearth, flame to flame,” he says. “[Those students and faculty] were the pioneers of the winter of ’94 as much as the pioneers of the early College were.”

Within a few years, the Writing Seminars built its enrollment from 25 students and five core faculty to roughly 100 students and 20 faculty, who are nationally renowned. “It was kind of like a teenage boy,” says Sven Birkerts. “Every time you turned around, there he was, three inches taller. You knew him, recognized him, but he was changing.”

The growth was not only in the numbers. Faculty members who have been with the Writing Seminars since those early days say the program has evolved without losing its original spirit—and retained its format without growing stale. The mélange of professions, ages, and backgrounds continues to spark a lively exchange of ideas. And Jill McCorkle, fiction faculty member since 1994, especially praises the variety of voices brought in to lecture and teach (and occasionally to give concerts)—from perennial visitors Robert Bly and Donald Hall to musician/writers like Marshall Chapman. “Liam has always kept it sort of edgy and interesting enough so that there’s a lot of conversation going on.”

“A sustained, relaxed, but very serious kind of constant conversation happens across and through a whole community. The feeling is that you’ve had one great conversation, when in fact you’ve had 60 conversations in workshops and on lunch lines and walking out of Tishman (Lecture Hall).”

—Sven Birkerts

RESIDENCIES: Connections between writers’ lives

“There’s this wonderful camaraderie that may be the result of being thrown together for these brief periods of time. And yet we know we’re there for each other, we have a sense of unity, throughout the year.”

—Jill McCorkle

“Residencies are a combination of summer camp and boot camp.”

—David Lehman, poetry faculty member since 1994

Two days into the residency, Tishman Lecture Hall does begin to look like a campground. Writers settle in with tote bags and jackets. Coffee cups dot the planks that run along the bench seating. If you walk the aisles, you can still pick up handouts from the morning lectures: excerpts from Virginia Woolf’s diaries, poems by Charles Simic. The auditorium itself is a staple of the residency experience.

Each day begins here, with lectures by graduating students starting at 8:20. The events spread out across the campus and keep on rolling straight through to the evening faculty readings, often continuing into the night with more open readings organized by students. Endurance is challenged. Mettle is tested: in five workshop sessions throughout the residency, students critique each other’s work and get to know their new teachers.

“The students arrive, and everywhere before them are examples of people who take their work seriously, but not themselves too seriously. It’s also a damn good time. It’s fun and meant to be fun, what I think of as that early Bennington spirit: Nemerov, Gardner, Malamud, getting together and playing poker.”

—Liam Rector

APPRENTICESHIP TO LITERATURE: **Mirroring a writing life**

Item #5 on the application checklist: “A two- or three-page essay discussing your reading life, your engagement with the literature of other writers.”

“We encourage students to do an awful lot of reading to discover who they are. Part of our credo in the seminars is that the proper way to go about becoming a writer is to acquaint yourself with what’s been done in your genre and others historically, not just in the past 25 or 40 years.”

—David Lehman

In 1993, when Rector proposed the program at Bennington, only three others like it existed. Nearly a dozen other low-residency programs have sprung up since then, but this one seems particularly suited to Bennington. “Given Bennington’s history of writers in residence and the tutorial tradition,” Rector says, “it occurred to me what a splendid marriage the College and a graduate program would be. It would emphasize all the best things about the College, pedagogically and philosophically.”

A good deal of this emphasis falls on Bennington’s respect for apprenticeship—as Rector describes it: “One person sitting on one side of a log and one person on the other, going back and forth in mentor/apprentice tradition.” All of the MFA faculty are accomplished practicing writers, but the apprenticeship is not only to these flesh-and-blood teachers. The program is grounded in the notion that *good writers are good readers*, and each student reads anywhere from 80 to 120 books during the two years. Something found among all those pages usually serves as inspiration for the student’s parting gift to the community: a 25- to 30-minute lecture.

“We live in a sort of yammering therapeutic workshop culture, and I’m most impressed that in this program we’ve created a rigorous culture of lecturing. Students have set a high bar and egged each other on with peer pressure to develop brilliant parting presentations. It’s what Keith Richards called ‘one man, one guitar’—being able to stand and deliver in an intellectually credible, emotionally moving way.”

—Liam Rector

PASSION PLUS PRACTICALITY: Creating a writer’s life

“Students are asked to always be engaged in what they’re doing and why they’re doing it. Most students who come in are already reading and writing quite a bit, but have to do it now in a very concentrated way. It does mirror the writing life, and after graduation it’s up to the students to imitate it on their own.”

—Priscilla Hodgkins

“The idea of the pure vocation of writing—which is what you really want to foster in the student—is to do it for the love of the thing, to be as inventive and to tap as much of their own private energies as they can. But all of us who teach are also seasoned old hands at knowing what it’s like to try to publish our work, and how difficult it can be. So you’re juggling two tasks: on the one hand encouraging them, on the other hand inoculating them against the extreme difficulty.”

—Sven Birkerts

When asked what questions he challenges his students with, poetry faculty member David Lehman immediately names “the economic question of how to support yourself.” He elaborates: “For the students in their 20s, it’s the problem of earning a living in a way you will enjoy, that will pay the bills, and will not put pressure on your poetry. There’s enough pressure in writing poetry—you don’t want to depend on it for a living, too.” Students who have already established other careers face another challenge: finally making the time and the space to write. Their question, Lehman says, is “how to be a writer now that they’ve done everything else.”

An understanding of these and other practical matters is built into the program. Each residency offers two “publishing modules,” seminars with editors and other figures in publishing (a feature founded at the first residency by Tree Swenson, now executive director of the Academy of American Poets). But these are not meant to be networking sessions, Rector says: “We established them not to aid students in getting published, but so that they won’t be too romantic or ignorant about it, so that they can better effect the communion between writer and reader.”

All students and faculty, however long or short their list of publication credits, share one challenge in common: maintaining a life of letters while attending to life in general.

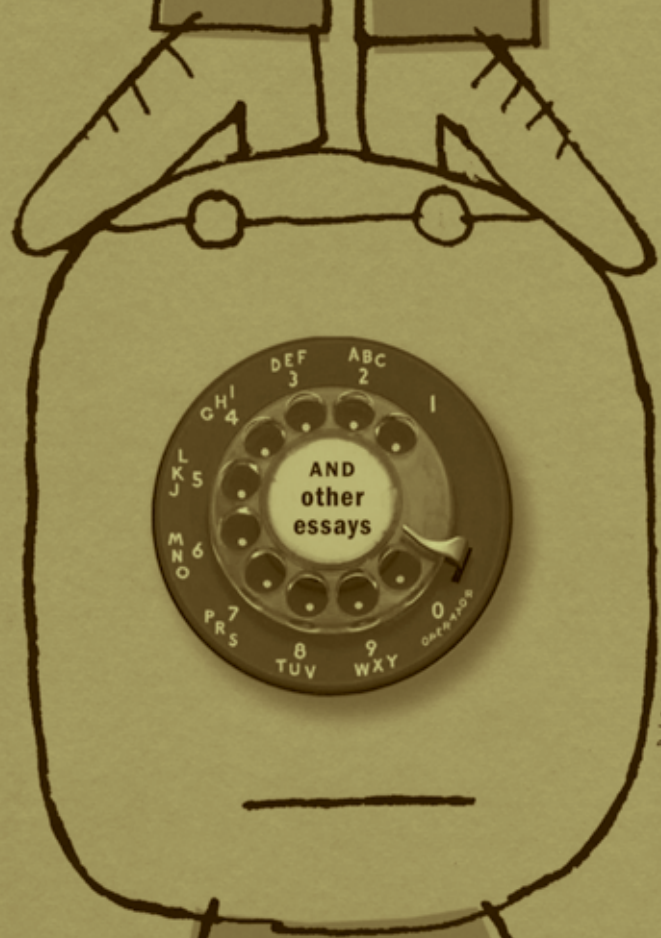
“It is a constant juggling act, and it’s hard for me to even separate one part of my life from the others. I drive around in the car with the [student] manuscript I’m reading in the passenger seat, and the story I’m working on in a pad in the visor over the steering wheel.... Yet I find so much inspiration comes from the students and the time of the residency. I leave pumped up and ready to write. As a writer, feeling that you’re a part of this wonderful literary community puts it all in perspective.”

—Jill McCorkle

The program’s greatest gift to students may be helping them decide for themselves what makes the juggling act so worthwhile. That, and the company of 150 other jugglers.



MR \equiv APOLOGY



Alec WILKINSON

Mr. Apology and Other Essays by **Alec Wilkinson '74** is a wide-ranging collection of pieces, many of which originally appeared in *The New Yorker*. Written over the span of two decades, the essays explore “a miscellany of misfits, cranks, daredevils, nuts, eccentrics, and lone wolves.”

“Wilkinson’s ear for voices is fine and precise and his perceptions of and compassion for his [subjects] are profound,” writes *The New York Times Review of Books*. “Never patronizing, never amused at their expense, he portrays them as they are.”

The following are excerpts from the essay “Spy.”



“SPY”

if Jim Dunne were a figure in a certain sort of fiction, he would have an office in a neighborhood of pawnshops and stores selling rebuilt and secondhand car parts. A stairway (not an elevator) would take you to his place—this is not street-level activity he’s engaged in. At the end of a dimly lit hallway would be a door with a panel of frosted glass, and on the glass would be written JIM DUNNE, C.S.P.

Dunne takes photographs of cars that are two or three years from being brought to the market and in the meantime are being kept hidden. He will not say where he finds them. I asked him once where he had taken a photograph of a car that had snow on it. We were in a restaurant. He said, “Canada.” I said, “Yeah, but where?” and he started tapping the fingers of his right hand on the table and said, “Northern Canada.” I said, “I know, but I mean, where?” He picked up his fork, examined it, put it back beside his plate, looked across the room, and said, “There’s a road up there that crosses the country east to west, and there’s civilization along it for about half a mile on either side. Why don’t we talk about something else.”

Some of the cars in Dunne’s photographs are being developed for the future, and some are cars already for sale—the new Mustang, say—to which changes are being made. The manufacturers call the cars prototypes. They are assembled mainly in small shops around Detroit; there may be only a few in existence; each may have cost several hundred thousand dollars; and all are dismantled after undergoing a series of tests. Dunne’s pictures of them appear each month in *Popular Mechanics*; they illustrate his column, Detroit Spy Report. Dunne will not trespass to take a picture, and he does not wear any disguise more complicated than a hat, but he works surreptitiously. Often, the first time an automaker knows that a picture has been taken of his years-in-the-making, totally sequestered, if-this-works-we-all-become-millionaires car is when he sees it in Dunne’s column.

Dunne is sixty-six. In a hotel lobby, he is likely to pick up a newspaper and peer around the edges of it at the rest of the room. He is about five foot ten, with narrow, sloping shoulders, big forearms, and thick hands. The expression on his face is solemn, slack, and opaque, and it hardly ever changes. It is as if as a younger man he had tried out a variety of expressions and settled on this one. He has chalky blue eyes and hair that is short, white, and as thin as string on top. In moments of abstraction, he sometimes runs a palm across the top of his

head. He does this so deliberately that it looks like a mannerism from the kind of Japanese theater in which an actor takes fifteen minutes to rise from a seat on the floor. It is the slowest gesture I have ever seen anyone perform. Once, I stepped on an escalator as his hand began crossing his pate, and I rode to the top before it reached the far side.

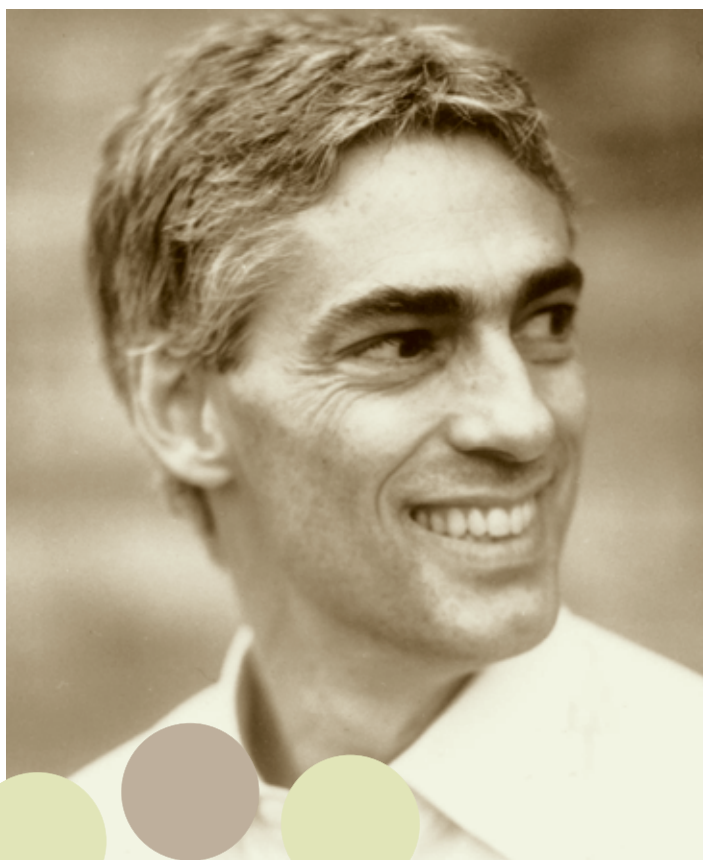
Dunne is divorced. He has two grown sons and five grown daughters, and he lives by himself in a brick house with a yard, in a suburb of Detroit. He keeps the house very clean. There are more rooms than he can use, and there is a composed and orderly feeling of solitude to the place, as if no one had been in any of the rooms for a while. In the basement is a television with a chair in front of it.

For a week each fall, Dunne takes a cottage on Cape Cod, and every day he goes bluefishing. His manner is genial but reserved. He falls into conversation easily with waitresses and barmaids. As an icebreaker, he offers to read their palms. I spent a day with him once in Detroit, and we had lunch in a Polish bar. I got up to go to the bathroom, and when I came back the barmaid was in my seat. Her palm was in Dunne's hand and he was saying, "You're too focused. People ever tell you that?" "All the time," she said. "What are you so focused on?" he asked. "I just wish I knew," she said.

Dunne invented the occupation of car-spy photographer about thirty years ago, when he was writing about cars for *Popular Science*. He had beforehand been in the army, then attended the University of Detroit, then been a parts runner for a secondhand-car lot, then sold construction equipment, then become a writer at a trade magazine called *Automotive Industries*. He realized that if he waited for the press conferences the automobile manufacturers held to announce new cars and used the photographs they gave him, the cars would already be on the market by the time he was able to publish the pictures. He borrowed a camera from his sister-in-law and managed to take pictures of the styling changes being made to the 1966 Corvair. His editor published the pictures without saying anything about them. Dunne wrote the editor that he had hoped for a response, and the editor wrote back, "The pictures were electrifying. Get more."

Perhaps two or three other people in America devote themselves to taking car-spy pictures. In addition, there is a small collection of people who every once in awhile see something peculiar and happen to have a camera with them. A classic shot of this kind is of a sporty future car by the side of the road, with a highway patrolman next to it, writing a ticket. Sometimes these photographers send the picture to Dunne and ask him to sell it for them. Dunne refers to them as one-timers. He gets a few hundred dollars for most pictures, but every so often he gets a great shot of something

SARA BARRETT



Alec Wilkinson '74 is the author of six other books, including *My Mentor*, *Big Sugar*, *The Riverkeeper*, and *A Violent Act*. He has been a Guggenheim Fellow and has won a Lyndhurst Prize, a Pushcart Prize, and a Robert F. Kennedy Book Award. Since 1980 he has been a writer at *The New Yorker*, and he also contributes to *Esquire*, *DoubleTake*, *Sports Illustrated*, *Vogue*, and *Rolling Stone*.

desirable and it ends up on the cover of a car-buff magazine such as *Road & Track* or *Car and Driver*. This happened, for example, in 1981, when Dunne was the first to photograph the 1984 Corvette and sold the photo to *Car and Driver*. Dunne tells people that the check went a long way toward paying a year's tuition at the University of Michigan for one of his daughters.

A typical Dunne photograph is of a car by itself with a snow-bank or a guardrail or a piece of pavement behind it. The car is not always in focus. Dunne may be the highest-paid photographer in America who isn't good at focusing his camera. Often he can get no closer to the car than a few hundred yards, so the texture of many of his photographs is grainy. Obstacles sometimes intervene. A faint gray crosshatching occasionally appears in the foreground, and this is the chainlink fence that Dunne took the photograph through. Dunne's manner of working is sometimes described as grab shooting. Grab shooting involves taking a picture of a car from the roadside or from another car. One or both of the cars might be moving. Dunne's favorite grab-shooting maneuver is the billiard shot, which requires two moving cars and, for fun, some traffic. Driving with one hand, Dunne trains the lens on the image of the car in his side-view mirror. Speed blurs the background, which he likes because then no one can tell where the picture was taken.

People often think Dunne has confidants at the carmakers who tell him where a car will be at a certain time and that this is how he gets his pictures. This is not the case. Dunne is simply methodical. He goes where he believes the cars will be and by means of persistence finally crosses paths with one. In years past, he would trespass on the carmakers' premises, but he has reformed and now considers the suggestion that he would trespass in order to take a picture an insult to his resourcefulness and integrity.

"Number one," he says, "I don't have to do that; number two, it's like going into someone's house when you're not invited; and number three, it's against the law. Well, maybe number one, it's against the law."

Dunne will not sell his photographs to a carmaker. When one calls asking for a picture of a rival's car, Dunne tells him where the picture was published. Sometimes the carmakers enlarge their competitors' pictures and put them up on the walls in their war rooms.

Dunne's favorite professional maxim is "Never tell a lie," by which he does not mean "Always tell the truth." Dunne is proficient at isolating a facet of the truth and guilelessly presenting it as a full confession. I once listened to him talking on the phone to someone at a Volkswagen factory. He had called to find out the location of a secret testing facility. At the end of a

silence during which I assume he was asked why he wanted the address, I heard him say, "I need to know for my job."

Twenty years ago and more, Dunne used occasionally to trespass on the carmakers' premises. He says that he hated doing it, and that anxiety over being caught made him so nervous he couldn't sleep for nights beforehand. He never tried to conceal his appearance, but he used props. "Nowadays, people walk around with nametags, and you have coded door locks, and it's impossible to get in anyway," he says. "But back then, all you needed was a white dress shirt with the sleeves rolled up, a tie, some dress pants and dress shoes, a plastic penholder in your shirt pocket, and a clipboard."

In the early seventies, Dunne worked often with Jerry Flint, a columnist at *Forbes* who was Detroit bureau chief for *The New York Times* from 1967 to 1973. In bowling alleys, Flint met people who worked in the car business, and from one of them he learned the route to the secret research facility at the Chrysler factory. "Dunne and I would go in around lunch-time," Flint says, "and Dunne would have his camera under his coat. We got the clipboard, the sleeves rolled up, we're talking to each other, and past the guard you go. To get to the secret plant, you went through the factory and the rail yards next to it. You came to a door and opened it and there you were. We'd been several times before and had got great pictures—I'd block and Dunne would shoot. I mean, I'd stand so that someone couldn't see him, and he'd take his picture. I suppose we should've figured out that Chrysler would see the photographs and sooner or later guess what was up, but we didn't, and so one day we're in the secret plant and we go through the door and bang, we're surrounded by six guys. Everyone had a badge. We didn't have a badge. It's embarrassing, and, more than that, I'm thinking, I'll lose my job. I mean, when they hire you at the *Times*, they tell you to get the story but they don't tell you to go into someone's factory and take pictures of their secret designs. So this is it, there goes the job. It's really only a formality now. And maybe there's jail involved, too. One of the six guys looks at me and says, 'Who are you?' My feet are stuck in place and I can't move my jaws. Without a second's hesitation, though, Dunne looks right at them and says, 'We're from publications.' I turn and look at him, and he says, 'Downtown.' Which was true! We both had our offices downtown in those days. And you could see these guys look at our clipboards and sleeves rolled up and Dunne's poker face, then look at each other and relax, and one of them says, 'Well, jeez, publications, you guys should have your badges, because we've been having a lot of trouble here with people getting in and taking pictures.'"

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A NEW LEADING MAN

Reprinted from the October 18, 2003 issue of The Washington Post

Peter Dinklage '91

by Desson Howe

for Peter Dinklage, whose height is 4 feet 6 inches, the incident was the kind that happens all the time. He was riding the subway in New York when he felt someone touch his shoulder. "I turned around," Dinklage recalls, "and this old woman was standing there. She goes: 'Oh, sorry, I just needed luck today.' She kind of rubbed my shoulder like I was some sort of leprechaun or little Buddha, to give her luck.

"And of course, I'm a pushover. She was an elderly woman. And I was fine with it. I've dealt with weirdness before. And I went: 'Okay, well, good luck,' and I got off the subway. But it caught up to me later. That was kind of violating. That felt...ugh."

That was about a year ago, when Dinklage, an actor with dwarfism, seemed doomed to stupid encounters on the street and, in his career, marginalized roles for freaks, magical figures and oddballs. But along came a dream role in

The Station Agent, an independent film written and directed by Thomas McCarthy, that puts Dinklage in the center of the story.

In the film, which opened October 17 in Washington, Dinklage plays Finbar McBride, a train enthusiast who has inherited an old-fashioned train depot in rural New Jersey. Socially embittered from a life of cruel, ignorant treatment from society, Finbar moves into the depot, intending to avoid people as much as possible. But two other lonely souls, a food vendor (Bobby Cannavale) and an artist (Patricia Clarkson) who has lost a child, adopt him as a friend. And Finbar finds himself practically goosed to rediscovering his humanity.

"He's managed to be very skilled at shutting out the rest of the world," says Dinklage of his character. "But it's not until he goes to the small town and finds a set of people that he realizes what has been missing."

Dinklage, Clarkson, Cannavale and McCarthy—who knew one another from theatrical acting circles in New York—had worked closely on the script over a few years. They rehearsed together. They performed readings in people’s living rooms. And Dinklage supplied McCarthy with anecdotes about his life.

“Because of my size, Tom would ask questions, and I told him some personal things that have happened,” Dinklage recalls. “I’m very different from my character, but I understand that sort of need to isolate oneself from people because of all the [expletive] and weirdness out there.

“Like the way children react to me—that sort of curiosity and openness that they have. I walk down the street and pass by kids. And they’ll say things like, ‘What grade are you in?’ But that’s cool. It’s direct and innocent.”

The Station Agent—whose budget, according to Dinklage, was “way, way under a million”—wowed crowds at Sundance in January (it won the audience award) as well as Miramax head Harvey Weinstein. Dinklage’s mother, who attended the Sundance screenings, liked it, too.

“She was crying so hard she couldn’t get out of her chair at the end of the movie,” says Dinklage. “It was great. People were really moved by it. They started coming up to me, people I didn’t know, and, unlike the woman who touched me on the shoulder, these people just wanted to give me a hug. They felt so connected to us, so moved by this movie. It’s lovely. It’s really nice.”

With the early success of *The Station Agent*—it also did well at the Toronto Film Festival—Dinklage, 34, finds himself in the unexpected position of leading man, critically acclaimed not only for his acting but his sensuality. No doubt about it: Dinklage is one good-looking guy. Speaking in a seductive bass, he’s a prince of a conversationalist, too, who tunes in to what people are saying, rewarding them with rapt attention and easy laughter. Women are drawn to him—in impressive numbers, according to anecdotes. (“He’s been doing very well,” whispers one woman in the movie business who worked with him recently.)

Dinklage, who has three other films coming out soon, is happy to be getting the work—and good work at that. And he acknowledges he’s uniquely placed to help change society’s perceptions about little people. But he’s wary about being perceived as a cultural ambassador.

“It’s a little tricky,” he says. “I’m just an actor. I like good roles. It’s hard to be, like, a spokesperson or be up on a soap-box. But whatever *Station Agent* does personally for people sitting in the audience, if it opens their eyes a little bit wider and makes them a little more tolerant, that would be great, you know? Then we’ve done some good.”

Dinklage, whose mother was a music teacher and whose brother is a violinist, wanted to be an actor from an early age, he says. From his home town of Morristown, NJ, he went to study

drama at Bennington College in Vermont. He spent about eight months studying drama at the Royal Academy of Dramatic Arts in London and the Welsh School of Music and Drama in Cardiff, Wales. Dinklage first worked in theater in New York, appearing in such productions as Patrick Breen’s *Marking*, Brandon Cole’s *Imperfect Love* and Marc Spitz’s *I Wanna Be Adored*.

And in his first screen role, in the 1995 art house hit *Living in Oblivion*, Dinklage got to address the subject of dwarves in movies. He plays Tito, a dwarf actor hired to appear in a dream sequence for an independent movie. But Tito becomes incensed when he’s told to walk through a haze of smoke, make circles around the lead actress and hold an apple tantalizingly out of her reach.

“Why does my character have to be a dwarf?” Tito rails. “Is that the only way you can make this a dream—put a dwarf in it? Have you ever had a dream with a dwarf in it? Do you know anyone who’s had a dream with a dwarf in it? No! I don’t even have dreams with dwarves in them. The only place I’ve seen dwarves in dreams is in stupid movies like this.”

Dinklage doubts that the days of dwarves in dream sequences are numbered. (Are you listening, David Lynch?) But he’s hopeful that *Station Agent* will yield better opportunities for himself and actors like him.

The immediate future certainly looks good. Dinklage has roles in *Human Nature*, written by *Adaptation* writer Charlie Kaufman; and Alexander Rockwell’s *13 Moons*. And he’s got a cameo in Jon Favreau’s *Elf*, a comedy in which he plays a children’s-book author who attacks Will Ferrell when he refers to Dinklage as one of Santa’s elves.

But Dinklage is most excited about next year’s *Tiptoes*, which is even more specifically about dwarves than *The Station Agent*. The film, directed by Matthew Bright, stars Gary Oldman (walking on his knees and using a double) as a dwarf, with Dinklage playing his close friend. “I’m a bad influence,” says Dinklage. “I’m his drug-addicted, motorcycle-riding best friend. I’m a French guy called Maurice. French accent. Tattoos. Gets the girl—Patricia Arquette.

“It’s a really romantic movie. There’s a lot of dwarf actors in the movie. It deals with their love lives, their friendships with each other. It’s really cool.” The leading man is smiling at the memory, an unmistakable glint in his eye.

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For his performance in last year’s film *The Station Agent*, **Peter Dinklage '91** was awarded the New York Film Critics Online Breakthrough Performance Award, the Aspen Filmfest Emerging Actor Award, and the Ourense International Film Festival Best Actor Award. He was also nominated for the Best Actor Screen Actors Guild Award and the Best Actor IFP Independent Spirit Award.



dance at Bernington





More than 60 years ago, a new American art was born on the campus of Bennington College. Over the course of nine summers (1934–42), hundreds of dance students came here to study with the “Big Four” of modern dance: Martha Graham, Doris Humphrey, Hanya Holm, and Charles Weidman. The Bennington School of the Dance—recently named one of America’s Irreplaceable Dance Treasures by the Dance Heritage Coalition—was a creative laboratory for new and experimental work.

From those first heady days, Bennington has remained a vital force in dance. Following are the stories of just a few of the alumni who have made their mark in the field.

Rare Footage Found

by **Wendy Perron '69**

The summer of 1938 at the legendary Bennington School of the Dance might have gone the way of all memories. But Oceana Wilson, a reference librarian at Bennington College, recently unearthed an unmarked film from that summer. She slogged through it for hours, frame by frame, in order to identify thirteen minutes of precious footage of modern dance pioneers.

Included are fleeting moments of Doris Humphrey, Martha Graham, Hanya Holm, Charles Weidman, Erick Hawkins, John Martin, and Ted Shawn, hanging out on the Bennington campus. But the actual dance sequences, all taken outdoors, are revelatory. Doris Humphrey, wearing a red dress, skips and skitters with a windblown lightness. José Limón, so young that he looks unsure of himself, is already using his shoulders with the deep axial twist that gave him such emotional sensitivity later on. A dancer in white demonstrates the oppositional pull of Hanya Holm’s technique, one arm pressing down as she springs off the ground. Jane Dudley demonstrates Graham technique, including the “pleading.” In what seems like the mother of all contradictions, her movements erupt from the center of the body and pour outward, thick as lava. The contrasting styles might lead one to observe that Humphrey’s element is air, while Graham’s is earth.

The film was shot by Doris Ewing, a student in 1938 who later taught modern dance at Hillsdale College in Michigan. Her nephew, Wallace Ewing, donated the film to Bennington in 1997. It lay in a locked cabinet in the Crossett Library until Wilson discovered it in 2002 and got curious. Sali Ann Kriegsman, Don Redlich, Mary Ann Santos Newhall, Ann Vachon, and Humphrey’s son, Charles Woodford, helped identify the dancers.

Kriegsman, author of *Modern Dance in America: The Bennington Years* (unfortunately out of print), says this home movie “gives a sense of the vitality, the original impulse and the bursting forth of this [then] new dance.” Very few other films exist from the Bennington School of the Dance, which was a precursor to the American Dance Festival. “Seeing these images now, in light of all the revivals and changes,” continued Kriegsman, “is a potent reminder of how difficult it is to recapture the original intent and spirit of these dances, those times.”

A copy has been lodged with the Dance Division of the New York Public Library of the Performing Arts. For information contact Oceana Wilson at 802-440-4606 or library@bennington.edu.

Wendy Perron '69 was on the Bennington dance faculty from 1978 to 1984. After a 30-year career as a dancer/choreographer/teacher/writer, she is now editor-in-chief at Dance Magazine.

Reprinted with permission from Dance Magazine.

“No other dance company has survived its founding directors—why should you?” **Carla Maxwell ’67** faced down this question not long after her mentor José Limón passed away in 1972.

The Limón Dance Company had its own doubts, says Maxwell. “We went through this incredible struggle of why we should continue and how to define ourselves,” she said. “What hit us was that if we didn’t, this incredible lifetime of work would disappear.”

Preserving Limón’s legacy—a “strong, organic technique and masterwork that I equate with that of Shakespeare and Mozart”—gave the company a profound sense of mission. Along with performing the work of Limón and cofounder Doris Humphrey, the company also carries that line forward; the Limón Dance Company offers training and supports new work that ties into their heritage. “When I commission, I look for the best contemporary work that complements our aesthetic,” Maxwell says.

The Limón technique grew out of a desire to harness and to communicate human emotions and experience; the ideas behind the work of two masters of early modern dance—and its passionate, theatrical nature—are what make it timeless, says Maxwell. “These dances speak to generations.”

Maxwell, who was named artistic director in 1978, received the prestigious New York Dance and Performance (Bessie) Award in 1998 for “finding a creative present in the context of a revered past, and thereby offering choreographic opportunity to multiple generations of artists; for inspired leadership and artistic accomplishment.”

Maxwell was an “electrified” teenager when she first saw Limón perform at the American Dance Festival. Another pivotal moment in her adolescence occurred at Manhattan’s New Dance Group where she studied with Bill Bales, a faculty member at Bennington. “That was it: I wanted to go to Bennington,” she laughs.

“At Bennington, you could find your way by a different path. The emphasis was on becoming educated in as many aspects of your field as possible,” she says. Dance students worked at a professional level but there were no assumptions about what they would do after graduation—though, she adds, “Bill Bales certainly had me pegged.”

In pursuit of a professional career, she enrolled at Juilliard and began her fruitful collaboration with José Limón. She joined the Limón Dance Company in 1965 and soon became a principal dancer under his direction. Limón choreographed his final ballet, *Carlota*, for Maxwell.

For the upcoming season at the Joyce Theater in New York City, Maxwell has commissioned a work from German choreographer Suanne Linke. *Extreme Beauty* celebrates women’s strength and serves as a companion piece to Limón’s *The Unsung*, a tribute to both American Indians and the power of the male dancer. In anticipation of their 60th anniversary in 2006–07, the company is also launching a project to commission works that link directly to Limón’s.

“I wouldn’t be doing this if I wasn’t so inspired,” says Maxwell. “The work becomes really wonderful and interesting when you’ve lived in it and made it your own. That’s when the dividing line between the work and the performer disappears.”

To learn more about the Limón Dance Company, visit www.limon.org.



BEATRIZ SCHILLER



“It was really the only thing I could do at the time,” says **Liz Lerman ’69**. When her mother died in 1975, Lerman put her grief to work, choreographing a piece that featured residents of a seniors’ center performing alongside professional dancers. “After I did it, I saw how powerful it was for me and for my art form. I saw that dance could be a bridge to break down isolation.” The title of that dance? *Woman of the Clear Vision*.

Her vision was a new definition of dance—who does it, where it happens, what it’s about, and why it matters. In 1976, when she founded a school and performing group that included programming for older people and special populations, “people thought I was a social worker,” she laughs. “I knew something different was afoot—and I was hungry for what was different.”

Today, the Liz Lerman Dance Exchange is made up of nine dancers who range in age from 20- to 70-something. On its tours, the company performs and offers custom-designed residencies that use dance to connect communities with their history and culture. They hold workshops that explore artmaking tools and the benefits of dance in schools, senior centers, hospitals, prisons, and corporate offices. The Dance Exchange also provides extensive training for dance professionals.

Last fall after the Dance Exchange performed in the galleries of the Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden in Washington, DC, *DanceView Times* noted: “Lerman has democratized the body and erased barriers of age; she’s welcomed, urged, ordinary people into the rarefied experiences of art-making. She’s taught us that dance is for everyone.”

Lerman’s innovative use of dance as a tool for connecting people with each other and with art-making has earned her numerous awards, including an American Choreographer Award, the American Jewish Congress Golda Award, and a 2002 MacArthur “Genius Grant” Fellowship. In 2003 *Worth* magazine named the Liz Lerman Dance Exchange one of the nation’s top 100 charities. “I’m at a point in my life now where I’m a little more aware of what I’ve accomplished,” says Lerman.

“Working with [company member] Martha Wittman is one of the great joys of my life.” Wittman—who taught ballet, modern technique, and choreography while Lerman was at Bennington—“is the future; she’s always learning and changing.” Rush Welter, with whom she studied history, also had a profound influence. “He taught me more about choreography than anyone else. It was in his class that I learned how to formulate my own ideas and bounce off of things.”

Lerman’s latest subject of inquiry is the laboratories of genetic science. To create *Ferocious Beauty, Tiny Monstrosities*, a multimedia work, Lerman has been talking with a national group of scientists, bioethicists, researchers, clergy, and artists. “The scientists are excited that we have a way to make the public see and feel this in a way they can’t,” she says.

As she explores what the future might look like, Lerman’s vision and sense of mission remains clear: “We live in a time when it seems necessary to mess up the gene pool, to fertilize it—so Reform Jews talk to liberal arts students who talk to scientists....”

To learn more about the Liz Lerman Dance Exchange, visit www.danceexchange.org.



“I remember riding my bike down the hill from Jennings [Music Building],” says **Kathryn Posin ’65**. “It was late at night and I’d been choreographing. The wind was whistling by, the stars were out. I remember thinking, *I am a god! I have just created!*”

Laughing at that memory of her youthful self, Posin said those revelations came with time. When she first arrived at Bennington, all she could think about was ballet. “I pointed and flexed my toes under the table in class” and longed to be at Juilliard, she admits.

Then she started to have ecstatic moments like the one on her bicycle—moments when other subjects, especially literature, nourished her choreography. Likewise, movement studies fed her academic work. “I’d go to class, sweaty in my leotard, to study Rilke and Blake. I thought I understood things better because my body was warmed up; I was more intellectually free.”

Though her passion for ballet endured, Posin’s training and body type marked her a modern dancer. After graduation, she was a member of the Anna Sokolow and the Valerie Bettis Dance Companies in New York City. Then, in 1972, she formed the Kathryn Posin Dance Company.

She hired ballet dancers and folded ballet technique into her choreography. Posin found an audience for her merging of two distinct worlds; the Company toured nationally and received awards from the Guggenheim Foundation and the National Endowment for the Arts.

In 1991, facing an injury and cuts to the NEA, Posin disbanded the company to focus on her first love: ballet. She has choreographed work for Ballet West, the Netherlands Dance Theater, Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater, Eliot Feld Ballet, and the Ohio, Milwaukee, Cincinnati, and Hartford Ballets. In 1992 she was the first international choreographer to stage a work for Cloud Gate Dance Theater, the national company of Taiwan.

“With my work, nothing is left to chance except for the final touches—the inspiration of the dancers and the audience,” she said. Music plays a key role; with a great composer, “I know it will be more than just me.” Posin plots her dances out on graph paper, drawing on physics and mathematics for structure. Most important, “I have 300 years of ballet standing under my dance,” she said.

Reflecting back on the days when she longed to study only ballet, she admits that her education was a case of father knows best. It was her father, a nuclear physicist, who insisted she get a liberal arts education. In recognition of the powerful role that broad learning played in her development as a choreographer, Posin founded the Joffrey Ballet School/New School University BFA program in Dance in New York City. The now defunct program integrated art, technology, law, music, literature, and design into training for a career as a professional dancer.

Not surprisingly, the quality Posin most appreciated about her education best describes what she’s done throughout her varied career: “Bennington encouraged multidimensional thinking—linking up things that people don’t usually see as connected.”

Scheherazade, which Posin choreographed for the Milwaukee Ballet last year, sold out its four-performance run before the curtain opened. It was the first show to do so in the Ballet’s 32-year history.





“I felt at home, welcomed and encouraged at Bennington. I’ve looked at many dance programs but the Bennington model stuck with me. It’s about values—a conscious aim toward artistic integrity. As a teacher, I always try to challenge my own assumptions. I also try to encourage people to study broadly and to do what interests them, to not be limited by previous practices.”

Sara Rudner MFA '99 is the director of dance at Sarah Lawrence College. She was a principal dancer with the Twyla Tharp Company from 1965–74, and founded and directed the Sara Rudner Performance Ensemble from 1976–82. Her work includes *Dancing-on-View* (1975), a quartet with **Wendy Perron '69**, **Risa Jaroslow '69**, and Wendy Rogers, and *Heartbeat/mb* with Mikhail Baryshnikov. She has also produced works for theater and opera, such as Caryl Churchill’s *The Striker* at the Public Theater in New York City and Peter Sellar’s production of Messiaen’s opera *St. Francis D’Assise*, which was coproduced by the Salzburg Festival and the Paris Opera Bastille. She is the recipient of a New York Dance and Performance Award (Bessie) and grants from the NEA, the John Simon Guggenheim Foundation, and the New York State Council on the Arts.

“We want students to find their own voices. It’s also extremely important as a choreographer to understand things beyond dancing; dancers can’t afford to be naive. Students here gain experience in producing their own work, and consider the practical issues of making art out in the world. To be a full artist, you need to know so many things; hands-on learning—action, observation, and investigation—is the only way to go.”

Choreographer, dancer, and visual artist **Dana Reitz MFA '94** started teaching at Bennington in 1994. Along with choreography and dance courses, she teaches Critical Writing for the Arts and Producing Your Own Work. In *Light, Movement, and Clothes*, a course she co-teaches with lighting designer Michael Giannitti and costume designer Danny Michaelson, students explore interrelationships of the three elements. Since the early 1980s, Reitz has pioneered work that treats light as an equal partner of dance, including *Unspoken Territory*, a solo for Mikhail Baryshnikov. In 1994 she collaborated with lighting designer Jennifer Tipton and dancer **Sara Rudner MFA '99** on the critically lauded light/movement piece *Necessary Weather*. In 1998 a work Reitz created for Baryshnikov and Tamasaburo Bando, a leading figure in Kabuki, was performed in Tokyo. Her work has been commissioned and produced by, among others, the Festival d’Automne in Paris, the Hebbeltheater in Berlin, the New Wave Festival at the Brooklyn Academy of Music, and *The Kitchen*. She is the recipient of two New York Dance and Performance Awards (Bessies) and numerous grants, including from the John Simon Guggenheim Memorial Foundation, the Foundation for Contemporary Performance Arts, and the NEA. Reitz has toured as a teacher and a performer throughout the United States, Europe, Australia, and Japan.

CYNTHIA LOCKLIN



Erica Carson '00 and Dana Reitz

Dance Alumni: A Brief List

Patricia (Newman) Nanon '44

founder, The Yard, Martha's Vineyard, MA

Joan Skinner '46

former member of the Martha Graham and Merce Cunningham Companies; work evolved into the Skinner Releasing Technique

Linda (Tolbert) Tarnay '64

chair, dance department, Tisch School of the Arts, New York University

Tina Croll '65

founding member, Dance Theater Workshop

Elizabeth (Richter) Zimmer '66

dance editor, *Village Voice*

Penny Campbell '70

director of dance, Middlebury College

Catherine Weis '70, MFA '98

works performed at Dance Theater Workshop, Danspace Project; Bessie Award

Lisa Nelson '71

editor, *Contact Quarterly*

Susan Rethorst '74

grants from Guggenheim Foundation, Foundation for Contemporary Performance

Caitlin Corbett '79

work shown in Boston, Los Angeles, the Kitchen and Movement Research; Boston Moves commission from Dance Umbrella

Dan Froot '82

dancer, musician, theater artist; professor, UCLA Dept. of World Art and Cultures

Hope Clark '87

founding director, Danspace Project's Kid Action Program

DD Dorvillier '89

artistic director, human future dance corps; 2003 Bessie Award for choreography

What does a group of improvisation dancers have in common with a flock of birds or a swarm of bees? The answer to that riddle-like question might be more than you think.

Without a director, birds and bees self-organize into the patterns that most effectively ensure survival. A school of fish uses this unpremeditated “swarm intelligence” to elude predators. **Susan Sgorbati '72, MFA '86**, who has taught at Bennington since 1983, says instinct also plays a role in the movement patterns of advanced improvisation dancers.

Sgorbati is collaborating with scientists to research the link between the forms that emerge in the dance studio and those of the natural world. “I can bring scientists in and they understand what I’m doing.” Putting what she learns into her choreography is a process of constant discovery: “I think I have something to teach them too—this work is so exciting.”

At the heart of her research are serious questions about the interrelationship of art and nature. In spite of a misconception in the dance world, improvisation is a technique, says Sgorbati—it’s not “noodling around out in space.” An improvisation performance may emerge from unchoreographed movement, but a successful piece has an overriding structure. Too much structure in a piece doesn’t work; and, if there’s not enough structure, “it’s chaos and there’s no form,” she explains.

Along with that balancing act, Sgorbati is fascinated by aesthetic connections between movement forms that emerge and the beautiful forms created by nature. “When a flock of birds shifts into a V, it may be the most effective and efficient way to get south...but there’s something else they’re doing.”

“Bennington has prepared me to surrender to the mystery, to turn corners without fear—as a person and as a performer.”
—**Katie Martin '04**

Katie Martin learned about Bennington from a high school dance teacher who attended *Work in the Performance of Improvisation*, a summer workshop led by Susan Sgorbati, **Penny Campbell '70**, and faculty member **Terry Creach**.

After taking Creach’s course, *Producing Your First Work*, Martin submitted *Waters of Disarm* to the D.U.M.B.O. Dance Festival in Brooklyn, NY. The piece was performed at the festival last fall and at the Gala Festival that closed out the American College Dance Festival’s New England competition in February at Smith College in Northampton, MA. Both of the works submitted by Bennington—Martin’s and a solo by **Carson Efird '05**—were chosen for performance.

—by Becca MacLaren



Susan Sgorbati and Katie Martin exploring links between natural forms and those of dance improvisation.

A. BLAKE GARDNER



A GREEN MOUNTAIN RETURN

Ellen McCulloch-Lovell '69,
the new president of Marlboro College

by Becca MacLaren

Ellen McCulloch-Lovell '69 recalls an extraordinary evening she spent at the White House in 1998.

She rubbed shoulders with no world leaders that night; in fact, the room was filled with poets—about 75 poets—who joined President and Mrs. Clinton in reading some of their favorite verse. Beyond poet laureates and lively discussion, what made the reading so special for McCulloch-Lovell was the audience. *The American Voice in Poetry* was broadcast live on C-SPAN; it aired on public radio and was cybercast over the Internet to allow viewers to participate via e-mail.

Opened up to the world, this old-fashioned form of entertainment took on a decidedly modern caste. The poetry reading, one in a series of lectures and presentations by artists, scholars, and scientists, also sent a powerful message. As Advisor on the Millennium to First Lady Hillary Rodham Clinton, McCulloch-Lovell was deeply involved in shaping that message.

“The Millennium Evenings were a way of saying that the arts, humanities, and sciences—and the people who excel in them—are so important to our country that we’ll put them right *in* the White House. “It made a statement of value at the highest level: *We want the most creative, innovative people talking to the rest of the world.*”

“Honor the Past—Imagine the Future,” the theme of the Millennium Project’s historic preservation, educational, cultural, and environmental initiatives, could very well describe McCulloch-Lovell’s remarkable career. From her work at the Vermont Arts Council to the seven years she spent in the Clinton Administration, she has remained deeply committed to building an engaged and creative citizenry.

In April she returned to Vermont, to the beautiful campus of a progressive liberal arts college. As the new president of Marlboro College, McCulloch-Lovell has made a homecoming of particular poignancy.

many dance performances and readings as possible. “I remember the joy of hearing [former faculty member] Bernard Malamud read his own stories. I thought I’d died and gone to heaven!”

After graduation, she spent six months as a student teacher in a two-room schoolhouse in Fayston, Vermont. In her first job as program director at the Vermont Council on the Arts, she created the statewide Artists-in-the-Schools program. With a goal of integrating arts education into classroom studies, she fostered partnerships between teachers, administrators, and artists.

In just five years, McCulloch-Lovell’s vision, as well as her collaborative and fund-raising skills, landed her in the position of executive director of the Arts Council. Under her leadership, the Council more than tripled its budget. She started the state’s first folklife program, and, along with other state arts agency directors, the New England Foundation for the Arts.

In 1983 McCulloch-Lovell and **Christine Graham ’69**, a member of the Arts Council board, began the Governor’s

“One of our great American qualities, I believe, is creativity, forged from our amalgam of many peoples, and our fervent belief in freedom of expression. It is our creativity, our ingenuity, our sense of discovery that have allowed us to face and solve devilish problems—from building the machinery of

“I’m very committed to what Marlboro College stands for. Marlboro and Bennington should be shining examples of a good education. They offer a song of the liberal arts—a song about the importance of a broad, humanistic education.”

Mcculloch-Lovell began her own undergraduate studies at the Connecticut College for Women. But after two years, she felt something was missing. “I was chafing under the restrictions of what courses you could take. I knew I needed to break out of it.” When her aunt **Elizabeth (Mills) Brown ’39** suggested a move to Vermont, McCulloch-Lovell could not have guessed the profound role that the state—and a Bennington education—would play in her career.

Certainly, she knew the College was a fit. “I lapped it up. It was a wonder for me,” she said. Along with philosophy courses, she took pottery and music composition. She also attended as

Institutes. Based directly on Bennington’s philosophy of learning by doing, the summer program gives high school students the opportunity to work with artists, scientists, and international experts.

The Governor’s Institutes were also based on what McCulloch-Lovell learned in 13 years of placing artists in classrooms. “Often kids without advantages have no outlet for artistic expression, and no idea that they can go to college. I imagined engaging these kids and paying attention to their interests, stretching their aspirations.”

Just four months after she and Graham presented this vision to Vermont’s then Commissioner of Education, Steve Kaagan, the first Institute opened with **Susan Sgorbati ’72** as director. “I’m proud to say that what we imagined 20 years ago is still going strong.” Today there are seven separate institutes, which have served 5,000 Vermont students to date.

McCulloch-Lovell's ability to imagine a better future is well matched by her skill at making a case for support. Another aspect of her work that she enjoyed was appearing before the State Legislature. "I woke early at the Arts Council to my natural instinct for "politics with a small 'p.' I threw myself into the process in a completely bipartisan way."

"I imagined mastering the U.S. Senate would be like my work for the Vermont Arts Council but on a larger scale," she says of her decision to enter national politics. "I can laugh at myself now; it gave me the boldness to make that leap."

In 1983 she made the leap to Washington, DC to work for U.S. Senator Patrick Leahy. As Senator Leahy's chief-of-staff, she oversaw policy planning and implementation, and the senator's annual agenda, budget, and schedule.

In 1994 President Clinton offered McCulloch-Lovell a position she couldn't refuse: executive director of his Committee on the Arts and the Humanities. Made up of 33 presidential

was also appointed the first director of the Veteran's History Project at the Library of Congress, American Folklife Center.

The latest chapter in McCulloch-Lovell's career unfolds at an institution with values of deep resonance. Like Bennington, students at Marlboro College take responsibility for their education by developing a Plan of Concentration. Marlboro students also govern the campus in Monthly Town Meetings.

"When I got to Marlboro, I heard people talking so seriously and earnestly about community; I realized that this is a community of learners," she said. She intends, after internalizing the place, to set about making new friends and finding new supporters. "Marlboro does an awful lot very well. But, like all colleges, it needs financial stability and it needs attention; more people need to know about the unique education that it offers."

Marlboro aims to "help students think clearly, learn independently, strive for academic excellence and take part in a community that values democratic participation." In class-

exploration, to curing disease, to landing the Mars Pathfinder, to creating whole new art forms: modern dance, jazz, and the movies. I believe our American faith in the future is based on this creativity; on our ability, as Thomas Paine said, 'to begin the world all over again.' "

—Ellen McCulloch-Lovell, *Bennington*, the alumni magazine, Spring 1999

appointees and 13 heads of federal agencies, the advisory committee recommended public policies to strengthen American cultural life and worked to raise public awareness of the value of the arts and humanities.

In 1997, after a brief stint as deputy chief-of-staff to First Lady Hillary Rodham Clinton, McCulloch-Lovell became her advisor on the White House Millennium Council. Together they created Save America's Treasures, a national preservation program now in its sixth year. The program has given grants to a number of historic "sites of conscience," including Manzanar Japanese-American internment camp, and the African Meeting House in Boston. For the final four years of his administration, she was also deputy assistant to President Clinton.

Since 2001 she has been president of the Center for Arts and Culture, an independent policy center in Washington. She

rooms across Vermont, McCulloch-Lovell advanced those values by connecting young people with artists. Years later she was able to offer proof of that transformative power with Coming Up Taller, a national study by Judith Weitz on the effectiveness of arts and humanities programs for at-risk youth issued by the President's Committee on the Arts and Humanities.

Considering her deep commitment to learning and creativity ("the core of our democracy"), McCulloch-Lovell notes that everything she's done seems to have built to Marlboro College.

Bennington's President Coleman said of McCulloch-Lovell's appointment, "We're enormously excited for Ellen, for Marlboro, and for higher education in general. Ellen's intellect, grace, and vision have never been more needed in our field. We're proud beyond measure."

For her part, McCulloch-Lovell says she's thrilled to be back in Vermont—and just over the mountain from Bennington.

LONG WAY BACK TO THE RIVER KWAI

memories of world war II

by Loet Velmans, Bennington College trustee

“I wanted to find Spring Camp, where, fifty-seven years ago, I nearly died,” writes Loet Velmans in the prologue to *Long Way Back to the River Kwai: Memories of World War II*.

Velmans wrote his memoir after visiting the Japanese slave-labor camp in Thailand where he worked with fellow Allied POWs on the “Railway of Death.” Approximately 200,000 POWs died building this track along the impossibly dense jungle of the Thai-Burmese border.

Velmans, who was 17 years old when the Germans invaded his native Holland in 1940, escaped with his family to London. The Velmans then sailed for the Dutch East Indies (now Indonesia), where Loet joined the army and was taken captive by the Japanese in 1942. After the war, he came to the United States and worked for Hill and Knowlton, an influential public relations firm. His wife, Edith Velmans, is the acclaimed author of *Edith’s Story*.

In his review in *The Washington Post*, Jonathan Yardley wrote: “[Velmans] has the honesty to say, ‘I never lost my compulsion to keep a wary eye on [the Japanese].’ To harbor such feelings has nothing to do with racism and everything to do with the brutal legacy of war. This candid, understated book is a useful contribution to our understanding of that essential truth.”



Velmans (left) with Chaplain Chaim Nussbaum and Eddie Rappaport, Singapore, 1945.

“When we finally arrived at the camp that was to be our home for the next six months, we found it empty and far from finished. We gathered in front of two rows of identical, skeletal, and desolate-looking huts. Our own commanding officer asked us to stand in a half-circle around a Dutch Roman Catholic army chaplain who began a prayer. His words meant nothing to me; in my own way I tried to think of something positive. I looked for any sign of hope I might find in the pinched faces of my fellow POWs, in the trees and branches surrounding us, or up above, high in the leafy ceiling hovering over the narrow clearing. We were a group of exhausted men huddled together around the chaplain. The sunlight broke through in uneven shafts.

“For some never-explained reason, this new prison without walls was the only camp along the railroad that did not have a Thai name. It was called, ironically, Spring Camp.”

“We had walked eighty-six miles but were put to work as soon as we arrived. First, we finished the construction of our huts, made of bamboo and roofed with *atap* palm leaves. The interior of the huts was divided into two low platforms made of split bamboo. We had practically no space on either side. Then we were ordered to clear the jungle from the muddy overgrown path that was used as a service road for the railroad under construction. On this badly potholed road, burlap bags of rice for the prisoners, food and other supplies for the Japanese guards, and rails and railroad ties could be delivered by truck.

“The hardest and most dangerous part of the job, which kept us busy for several weeks, was cutting down trees. The Japanese in charge kept giving contradictory orders. At one time we were ordered to pull the ropes on a tree that was to fall in a certain direction; then our guards yelled at us to run back through thick underbrush to the other side, and pull hard in the opposite direction. No one actually got crushed, but there were several close calls....

“After the access road had reached a passable stage, I was assigned to a unit that chiseled and hammered away at rocks that obstructed the railroad bed. We slaved nine hours a day, with just three short breaks. We were allowed less than an hour of free time, in the late afternoon, after work, and before supper....

“Our food consisted of three small bowls of rice a day, a thimbleful of overcooked stringy vegetables, an occasional sweet potato, and sporadically, a soup of onions with, even more rarely, a few slivers of meat. The rice that had rotted away (on the open trucks that carried supplies to the camps) further reduced our rations. I soon came down with dysentery....”

“After the war I learned that 41 percent of H-Force died while in camp or within a year or two after the war. We, for our part, weren’t counting. Somewhat miraculously, over half of us were to survive, and I was to be one of that number.

“Spring Camp was my school of death. It taught me that dying is the ultimate moment of loneliness. Well before their final spasms, my friends had detached themselves from the routine around them. Then I, the survivor, would live my own private moment of desolate loneliness.

“Paradoxically, at each death the ties that bound me to those others who were still alive seemed to grow weaker. By this time the idea that friendship could bring a measure of comfort seemed ludicrous. No one could remember what it had been like to be well or how a friend’s gesture or kind word might make one feel. Most of the time I lived as if I had no feelings left. I was doing my job as best as I could, but in a mood of utter detachment.

“Only George’s death interrupted my apathy. It made me feel even weaker than before, a feeling accompanied by a sense of real mental anguish. I do not recall whether my spell of despair following George’s death lasted a day, a week, a month. But I have a memory of days passed in a mood of senseless survival and nights made restless by the realization that the next day would bring more of the same. Once I had lost my stamina, there was no further hope. My body was heavy with exhaustion, my mind empty. The images of earlier days, of Scheveningen, London, Bandung, and all that had taken place there—images that used to work on me like a tonic, that restored hope after a beating or some other gross humiliation, had gone. Whatever had been in my brain before had been emptied out. I felt no fear and no anger, only the most debilitating listlessness I had ever experienced. Fortunately, the depression (if that is what it was) did not last long.

“The despair was gradually replaced by a determination: one way or another, I was going to beat the horrors of this living hell. I grimly decided that I was going to survive. To achieve this goal I decided on a tactic that I believed might work: I would take life one week at a time. From Sunday to Sunday. If I could just get through the week without a beating, a prolonged bout of malaria or other illness, I would have reached another milestone. I played my strategy as an exercise in self-discipline. Every Sunday I would make myself stand rigid in front of our hut. I would stay there for an hour, feet firmly planted in the mud, concentrating on how best to get through the next seven days—how I would chew my food carefully to press every vitamin out of it and into my system, how I would try to get as much sleep as possible to retain the maximum strength, how I would try to joke with and find stimulation in the company of my fellow prisoners. In other words, I tried to separate and then bring together the few positive elements of life in Spring Camp. Accomplishing a week’s goal would get me to the next Sunday. And then we would see.”

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30s Work by **Mary Gregory '36** was included in "The Maker's Hand: American Studio Furniture, 1940 to 1990," an exhibition held last fall at the Museum of Fine Arts in Boston.

40s **Priscilla Porter '40** writes, "After 40+ years I have closed the Plumb Hill Studio (Washington, CT). It was fun while it lasted. All the best to you all!"

Last fall **Carol Channing '42** kicked off "Singular Sensations," a series of interviews with musical theater figures held at the Village Theatre in New York City.

Amulet Songs: Poems New and Selected (University of New Mexico Press) by **Lucile (Bloch) Adler '43** includes poems from her first four books, as well as newer work.

Last summer **Patricia (Newman) Nanon '44** stepped down as artistic director of The Yard, the colony for performing artists that she founded on Martha's Vineyard in 1973. Nanon told the *Vineyard Gazette* she plans to choreograph new pieces and to do "the things I've never had time to do."

Mary Lou (Chapman) Ingwersen '47 showed oil paintings of Provence landscapes last fall at the Anne Loucks Gallery in Glencoe, IL.

Nancy (Gregg) Sippel '48 continues to work on her art in Ann Arbor, MI. She recently received a local "Critics Choice" award for two landscapes done in pencil.

"I volunteer for the Animal Welfare Society," writes **Mary (Rickard) Paul '49** from Kennebunk, ME. "I also teach painting in my home once a week and continue to exhibit my own work locally."

50s In February 2003 the Jewish Publication Society released *The JPS Guide to Jewish Women*, coauthored by **Sondra (Parkoff) Henry '50**. The comprehensive, user-friendly sourcebook was a National Jewish Book Award finalist.

Ruth (Lyford) Sussler '50 had a one-woman show last fall at the Mystic Art Association in Mystic, CT. She won the exhibition by placing first in the Association's 46th Regional Show.

Last summer **Gail Gardner Newman '51** participated in a mother/daughter exhibition at the Atrium Gallery, University Hospitals of Cleveland, OH.

Elizabeth (Larsen) Lauer '53 is a recent recipient of the Ruth Steinkraus-Cohen Memorial Outstanding Women of Connecticut Award. "L'Aube," her latest work for wind quintet, premiered in London and was included in a competition sponsored by the London Chamber Group.

"I continue to work as a psychotherapist specializing in individuals as well as couples," reports **Dr. Jane (Eisner) Bram '58**. "In the year 2000 I got my PhD in Social Work at New York University, where I am an associate trustee."

Trish Beatty '59 recently cofounded the Toronto Heritage Dance, an organization dedicated to the preservation of

modern dance choreography in her area of Canada. Twenty-five years ago, she cofounded the Toronto Dance Theatre. Beatty was also happy to report that her new coastal home in the Yucatan State of Mexico was near completion; "Hallelujah!"

The Memorial Sloan-Kettering Cancer Center (MSKCC) has established the Laurance S. Rockefeller Chair in Integrative Medicine with **Barrie (Rabinowitz) Cassileth '59** as its first incumbent. Cassileth joined MSKCC in 1999 as chief of the newly established Integrative Medicine Service. Under her guidance, the Service has developed into a multifaceted program of clinical care, research, education, and training.

"I am about to go on a photographic walking tour in Bhutan," wrote **Sally Foster '59** in October. "I've also been doing some photography and writing."

Since retiring from her 28-year career with the United Nations Development Programme, **Mary Lynn Hanley '59** has done freelance writing/editing. She also performs 100 shows a year for seniors in New York City and its suburbs as a member of the Seasoned Citizens Theatre Company.

How I Became a Bennington Girl, a new play by **Sidra (Levine) Rausch '59**, was produced last summer at the National Museum for Women in the Arts in Washington, DC.

60s **Myrna Blyth '60** has a new book entitled *Spin Sisters: How the*

Bennington's MFA in Writing Turns 10

CREATING A LIFE OF LETTERS: LIFE AFTER GRADUATION

by Jennifer White '02

Amy Gerstler MFA '01 graduated in nonfiction and now teaches poetry in the program. She is the first (and only) alumna to be invited to return as core faculty. In addition to her newest collection, *Ghost Girl*, she has published 12 other books of poetry, including *Bitter Angel*, which won the National Book Critics Circle Award for Poetry.

"Phillip Lopate was my teacher, and one day we were having a lunch meeting in the cafeteria. When he asked me how I liked the program, being brand new, I said 'Wonderful, but socially it's a little tough. Not because people aren't nice, but I'm shy.'

"He said, 'Amy, these are all writers. They're all introverts. I feel that way, everybody's that way.' Then he moved on to talking about Hazlitt or some other great essayist and that was that. I tell this story to a lot of my students now....

"Sometimes my 'life of letters' is kind of a fight to protect my life of letters. My policy used to be to say yes to everything, balancing four or five different part-time jobs. One of my former students, **Sally Ashton MFA '03**, said to me, 'I have one word for you, and it's spelled N-O, so stand in front of the mirror and practice saying it with conviction.' Students often give very good advice too...."

After graduation, Jaime Clarke MFA '97 went on to cofound and edit the multifaceted literary journal *Post Road*. The all-volunteer staff includes several program alumni, including fiction editor **Mike Rosovsky MFA '98**, who is about to finish his first book. Clarke's novel, *We're So Famous*, was published in 2001.

"Some of us remember sitting at dinner with Askold Melnyczuk [fiction faculty member and founder of *Agni*], talking about starting a literary magazine. It was painfully clear that the only thing any of us knew about literary magazines was that we wanted to be published in them, but without even being asked,

Askold whipped out his checkbook and wrote a hundred dollar check as seed money for the enterprise that, one meal earlier, didn't even exist. It wasn't the money that impressed, but Askold's passion for those students' idea, a passion he's shared with *Post Road* over these last few years."

—Jaime Clarke

"*Post Road* has been a great gift.... Being an editor has been a look behind the curtain at, for example, the submission process. All of a sudden, instead of taking the shots on goal, as a writer, I'm playing goalie, forced to turn away often beautiful and substantive prose."

—Mike Rosovsky

Wendy Button MFA '96 graduated in fiction and went on to work as a speechwriter: first for Boston Mayor Thomas Menino, then for Senator Hillary Clinton, and most recently for Democratic primary presidential candidate Senator John Edwards.

"I never thought that I would be a speechwriter but even though it's centered around politics, I give him poems and he doesn't know it. I use everything I learned. I'll pull down paragraphs from [fiction writer] Barry Hannah and look at how well he moves his story and gives background information, and I'll use that in a speech. It's that age-old art of conveying information. I write in character all day long....

"You can't have a writing life without a real life, however long it takes to find that balance. Some of us are lucky and find it in a couple of months after graduation; others take a few years. But you remember the great pieces of advice, and if you need to, you do it the way Jill McCorkle wrote *Carolina Moon*—scribble it on scrap paper here and there, and put it together at the end."



Women of the Media Sell Unhappiness and Liberalism to the Women of America (St. Martin's Press). Blyth, the former editor-in-chief of *Ladies Home Journal*, argues that today's media bombards women with messages of victimization, thereby promoting a liberal political agenda.

Wilma Kantrowich Chandler '60 retired from Cabrillo College in Santa Cruz, CA, and is directing and producing theater in the Monterey Bay Area. *The Grate*, her first full-length play, won first prize in a festival recently. She also has

three theater textbooks in print with Smith & Kraus Publishers.

"My Italian dealer opened a beautiful new gallery in Torino in November," writes **Ruth Ann Fredenthal '60**. "Other major Italian collectors of mine were here around Thanksgiving; I give great thanks for the Italian interest in my work."

Ruth Mordecai '60 sent word of an exhibition this spring at Nesto Gallery, Milton Academy in Milton, MA. On a personal note, "Ed Powers and I were married on October 8, 2001."

"This year ends and another begins crammed to overflowing with no rest for the weary!" wrote **K.D. (Kaye Donoho) Benton '61**. In December she had a solo exhibition of large pastels, *Body or Soul*, at the San Diego Art Institute.

Gail Rodier Schonbeck '61 writes: "I'm retired from teaching music and ESL and now spend lots of time at home with my husband, Gunnar, who gradually retired after teaching for more than 50 years at Bennington. I'm participating in the AAUW Bennington Branch, playing tennis, and dancing with the

BENNINGTON'S ALUMNI AND FAMILY WEEKEND 2003

CYNTHIA LOCKLIN



More alumni than have returned in a decade and 250 parents of current students came to Bennington last October to reconnect, to celebrate and to explore. The Class of 1953 presented President Coleman with a 50th reunion class gift of more than \$100,000. This generous gift establishes the Class of 1953 Fund for Faculty Excellence, a fund that will support dynamic initiatives across the disciplines.

[Top Row L-R]: Barbara (Schwanda) Weedon, Marcia (MacNeil) Chapman, Yvonne (Franz) Herz, Caroline (Wolferth) Amidon, Olivia (Hirsch) Altschuler, Lorraine (Lubart) Becker, Lucretia (McPherson) Durrett, Barbara (Nahin) Rubinstein; [Bottom Row L-R]: Dorothy (Whittier) Grillo, Janet (Gay) Newman, Esther (Abraham) Abrams, Solveig (Peterson) Cox, Joan (Stahl) Miloradovitch, and Carol Bondy.

Shape Shifters, an improvisation modern dance group begun several years ago by **Joanna Rotkin MFA '02**.”

Susan (Pickering) Dumond '63 lives in Ashland, OR, where she has a design firm (www.northernconnections.com). “We’re a virtual company—freelancers working on technical and marketing materials for businesses.” She writes further of “an approaching marriage with my partner of five years, Bob.”

Kaye (Grossman) Shackford '64 wrote a book entitled *Charting a Wiser Course: How Aviation Can Address the Human Side of Change*, which is available through www.chartingawisercourse.com.

Folk singer and songwriter **Julie Snow '65** was profiled last October in the *Keene Sentinel* (Keene, NH). Snow, a counselor at Landmark College in Putney, VT, recently released *If Words Were Stones*, her first solo CD.

“I retired from the University of Michigan and am now living near my granddaughters in Bloomington, IL,” writes **Elaine Buxbaum Cousins '66**. “I’m enjoying bike riding, playing the piano, learning Spanish, and teaching at our local junior college. Life after retirement is great!”

Jean (McMahon) Humez '66 has written the first major biography of Harriet Tubman since 1943. *Harriet Tubman: The Life and the Life Stories* (University of Wisconsin Press) is based on extensive new research and the complete texts of the stories Tubman told about her life.

Pamela Acheson '67 and her husband, Richard Myers, have released two more installments in their “Best Of” travel series: *The Best of St. Thomas* and *The Best of St. John*.

“In November I showed paintings at the Absolute Gallery, a new space in San Marino, CA,” wrote **Shelley Herman '67**. “In March I’m showing at Transport Gallery in Los Angeles. I’ve also started a jewelry design business, which is doing quite well, much to my surprise!”

Victoria (Kirsch) Houston '67, author of the Loon Lake Mystery series, was featured in a recent article in *The Wall Street Journal* on a genre known in the book industry as “cozies.” A cozy typically features “eccentric sleuths, off-stage murders and very little sex.” The fifth book in Houston’s series, *Dead Hot Mama* (Berkley Prime Crime), appeared in March. “Most surprisingly, the acquiring editor of my series is **Sara Carder '92**, senior editor at Tarcher-Penguin,” wrote Houston.

Laura Furman '68 is the new series editor of the O. Henry Awards. Her first volume, *The O. Henry Prize Stories 2003*, was published by Anchor in November.

For the fourth time, **Roxana (Barry) Robinson '68** has a *New York Times* Notable Book of the Year. Her latest novel, *Sweetwater* (excerpted in the Fall 2003 issue of *Bennington*), made the list in December.

Leslie Berg '69 writes, “A painting I modeled for was shown in New York

City at the Forum Gallery, and is being sent to a gallery in Chicago.”

Early this spring **Virginia Creighton '69** had an exhibition of paintings at the Tatistcheff Gallery in New York City.

70s “I’m still happily married to Ben DeVan,” reports **Reverend Beth (Horton) DeVan '70**. “Our four children are grown (ages 23–30) and our first grandchild, Thomas Benjamin DeVan, was born in September. I am a full-time Hospice Chaplain at Mercy Medical Home Health in Mobile, AL, and assist part-time at Grace Lutheran Church in Gulf Shores, AL (a beach community—come on down!).”

Victoria English Ellington '70 was recently appointed editor of *The Regulatory Affairs Journals*, two professional journals relating to the global regulation of medicines. She lives in London with her husband and daughter.

Elaine (Gismondi) Serrato '70 sends greetings to friends from Booth House—“**Chris(tine) Decker '72**, **Rashid Silvera '72**, **Christopher Johnstone '71**, **Sarah Wright '73**, **Susan Unger '71**, and so many others. I just had four ceramic pieces in a show at LA Harbor College Gallery and am a recently licensed California real estate salesperson. I’m also coping with interstitial cystitis—and reaching out to all alums suffering through this.”

“I’m back in the Northwest, where I’ve started a home renovation business with my husband, Craig Hammond,”

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Business at the Crossroads

JOHN SHELDON '77

“Bennington Means Business,” muses **John Sheldon '77**. “I presume that’s meant to be somewhat provocative and attention-getting, because people don’t think of going into business as a traditional choice out of Bennington.” When his suspicions are confirmed, he begins taking the idea apart piece by piece. “[What Bennington offers] actually contributes to the business world more than one would think. A lot more....”

Analysis is one of Sheldon’s specialties. As managing director at the global investment firm Lazard (“the last remaining private partnership on Wall Street”), he advises the CEOs and boards of “a whole host of companies—consumer products, retail, financial institutions, technology, transportation, natural resources—from very large widely held companies all the way down to start-ups.”

The chance to offer analysis was part of what drew Sheldon to business in the first place. He knew he wanted to follow up his liberal arts education with a professional degree, and decided that business—as opposed to law or other fields—would put him “on the firing line, dealing directly with clients” soonest.

He was right: not long after earning his MBA in Finance from Harvard Business School, Sheldon was in the thick of things as a Wall Street investment banker. “It was a way to put a lot of analytical skills to work immediately and make a big contribution,” he says. “It allowed me, at a very young age, to give critical advice to executives and boards, where I was often half the age of the people taking that advice. I’m not quite half their age anymore,” he adds. “But that was the attraction then.” His career now spans more than 20 years, and includes work at Goldman Sachs and J.P. Morgan, as well as Lazard.

Sheldon sees many points of intersection between his current work and his Bennington education. Creative strategizing figures into his job every day. He gives the example of a com-

pany at a crossroads: “They conclude that if they don’t change in a dramatic way, they’re going to lose.” Sheldon ticks off some possibilities that he might present to the board of this hypothetical company: they can merge with their strongest competitor; sell the business; completely transform the business; raise more capital; go from a publicly held company to a privately held one. “More often than not there’s a similar set of paths you can choose,” he says, “but the right and wrong ones are going to be very different depending on the circumstances.” There are no one-size-fits-all solutions.

Another intersection: the ability to work using many different modes and methods. “Bennington had the broadest range of individuals and individual styles that I’ve ever encountered, in education or in business,” he says. “You couldn’t help but be mindful of what it takes to interact effectively with all the individuals around you.” This has proved useful in dealing with companies across the United States and Europe, where approaches differ not only between industries, but between cultures. “Even though this is viewed as a kind of cold commercial business, representing corporations,” Sheldon says, “at the end of the day it’s a very personal business.... That’s one reason why the travel is very significant. You need to be with people.”

All this contributes to Sheldon’s conviction that the Bennington-educated businessperson is not “the strange exception to prove the rule.”

“It’s actually a logical extension of what Bennington is all about, as it relates to creating ideas and opportunities,” he says. “I think there’s a lot of connectivity between what Bennington stands for and what ultimately causes business to tick. In reality, it’s just a different field in which people’s ability to create gets applied.”

—Jennifer White '02

writes **Elizabeth Vick '70**. "Look me up in Portland!" Her e-mail address is evch85@hotmail.com.

Marilyn Arnold '71 is a lecturer in Social and Behavioral Science at Boston University and a research associate in Health, Human Development and Society at the Harvard School of Public Health. She received her Doctor of Science degree from Harvard in 2001 and completed her postdoctoral training at the Dana-Farber Cancer Institute, where she was a National Cancer Institute Fellow in Cancer Prevention. Her research is in web-based health communication.

Last spring **Jo Ann Rothschild '71** exhibited her prints and paintings at the Experimental Graphic Workshop in Havana, Cuba.

In October **David Appel '72** performed his dance cycle *Every Little River* in the D.U.M.B.O. Dance Festival in Brooklyn, NY, and the HATCH Presenting Series at The Works Studio in New York City.

Elizabeth Ayer '72 writes, "I had the pleasure of reconnecting with my freshman roommate **Polly Hewitt '72** last spring. She is terrific and as lively as ever. She has a son in high school, while I have a daughter teaching in New York City and a son in college. Whew!"

Muhlenberg College in Allentown, PA, has named **James Bloom '72** chair of the English department. He has taught at Muhlenberg since 1982. Bloom's

fourth book, *Gravity Fails: The Comic Jewish Shaping of Modern America*, was published by Praeger last June.

"I'm enrolled in the MFA in Writing and Consciousness program at the New College of California. It's great," writes **Denise Bostrom '73**. "I continue to work freelance as a screenwriter, script doctor, and screenwriting teacher. Life is good—and will get better when we change the regime."

What Remains, the new book of photography by **Sally Mann '73**, explores mortality and death. For one series, she photographed battlefields of the Civil War, using a 19th-century camera and photographic process. "I'm not mystical in any way, but I think there just are places which have some kind of power," Mann told *Newsweek* magazine.

"It's been a busy year for me artistically," writes **Mara Purl '73**. Her short story collection, *Christmas Angels* (Haven Books), was published in December. "While my primary focus is in writing and theatre, I did have the great joy of collaborating on two music CDs this year. I play koto (Japanese harp) and worked with pianist Marilyn Harris. Our CDs are *Koto Keys* and *A Koto Keys Christmas*." For more info, visit www.marapurl.com.

A former professor of Theatre and Choreography at Dartington College of Arts in Devon, England, **Diana Theodores '73** directs an art and business consulting firm. Theatre 4 Business works within the corporate sector on creative collaboration. She is also

writer-in-residence at the Institute for Choreography and Dance in Cork, Ireland, and author of several books on dance criticism and choreography.

Susan Still '74 and **Peter Bergstrom '74** recently celebrated their 31st wedding anniversary. "We met in Booth House and were married while we were both students. Our oldest child, Madeline, was married to Paul Hopkins last October, and they bought a house in Saxtons River, VT."

Mary Hambleton '75 received a Pollock-Krasner grant in recognition of her painting. Earlier this year she exhibited new paintings at Littlejohn Contemporary Gallery in New York City.

Last January "Celestial Turnings," a work for string orchestra by **Tina Davidson '76**, premiered at the Kimmel Center in Philadelphia, PA. Her new string sextet, "A Bright Flash of Wings," was performed in February by the Concertante Chamber Ensemble in Harrisburg, PA, Baltimore, MD, and at Merkin Hall in New York City. For more information, visit www.tinadavidson.com.

Amelia Sawelson '76 reports: "After 17 years as creative director for the Food Group, I have left to start ASL Creative Marketing Services, an independent consultancy specializing in the food industry. Still living and working in Tarzana, CA. Contact me by e-mail at ASLcreative@earthlink.net."

Richard Dailey '78 recently directed a pilot for a French sitcom. He lives in

Paris with his wife and 11-year-old daughter and can be reached at www.afterart.com.

John Diebboll '78 had two exhibitions of his piano designs in 2003: "66 Pianos: Art-Case Drawings" at the Brevard Museum of Art and Science in Melbourne, FL, and a show at the Piano Festival Northwest in Portland, OR. This spring "John Diebboll: The Jazz-Case Drawings" was at The John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts in Washington, DC.

Jeff Harrington '78 has released *Blues Improvisation Complete* (Berklee Press), a guide and play-along CD with step-by-step instructions for playing the blues in a variety of styles, including jazz, Latin, fusion, rock, and funk.

"We have finally finished the renovation of our 1905 one-room schoolhouse on the Otter Tail River in western Minnesota," writes **Max MacKenzie '78**. To complete their overhaul of the historic building, Max and his family moved it nine miles from its original location and replaced the windows and roof.

Last year **Priscilla Brown Vesce '78** exhibited her paintings in a group show at the Arts Depot in Arlington, VA, and in a one-woman exhibition at the Art Place in Chilhowie, VA.

Edges of America, produced by and starring **Tim Daly '79**, opened at the Sundance Film Festival in January. Other projects are in the works, too: "I am also in the final stages of mixing the film *Bereft*, which I directed, produced, and acted

in," wrote Daly in January. "The film, shot last August in Vermont, stars Vinessa Shaw, Tim Blake Nelson, Edward Herrmann, Marsha Mason, and Michael C. Hall." Daly can also be seen in the film *Against the Ropes* and in *The Sopranos*.

80s *Miranda's Vines* (Dutton) by **Kimberly Kafka '80** is the story of Miranda, a single mother whose life as a chef in San Francisco is interrupted when her father dies, leaving her the family vineyard. *Booklist* calls the novel "a lustrous tale of loyalty and devotion."

"Life is good to me," reports **Elizabeth B. Marshall '80**. She currently divides her time between two photography operations. She summers in Lake George, NY, with the Lake George Steamboat Company. In November she returns to Vermont, where she works as the head of photography for guests at the Mount Snow Ski Resort.

"Our toy and gift store, the Wharf Shop, in Sag Harbor, NY, celebrated its 35th anniversary this year," writes **Gwen (Ebeling-Koning) Waddington '80**. "Quite a feat in a country that's losing its Main Streets! We share business ideas with Tom Levin of Tom's Toys in Great Barrington, MA. His wife, Susan Engel, was my childhood friend and taught at Bennington."

Nina Winthrop '80 is a 2004 recipient of the Bessie Schonberg Choreographers Residency at The Yard in Martha's Vineyard, MA. Her company, Nina Winthrop and Dancers, recently

performed at Dancenow at the Joyce SoHo and at White Wave's Cool New York Dance Festival in Brooklyn, NY. To learn more, visit www.nwandd.com.

In his new book, **Thomas Connors '81** focuses on "the great city hotels of the past—marble palaces with richly ornamented lobbies, dining rooms that make one want to sit up straight, and proper bars." *Meet Me in the Bar: Classic Drinks from America's Historic Hotels* (Stewart, Tabori & Chang) examines 36 hotels and their signature drinks, with recipes included.

"I am working as a technical writer for Universal Music Group, raising my two boys, and squeezing in as much time as possible for writing essays and working on a book," writes **Katherine (Shirek) Doughtie '81**. She is also engaged in several writing projects with **Mara Purl '73**.

Sue Fineman-Keitelman '82 writes: "I recently had the unique privilege of participating in a [dance] workshop by **Liz Lerman '69**. If you ever get a chance to participate in any of Liz's workshops, do it! You'll feel like you are back at Bennington again!" She continues: "I have a new career (other than Mom-ing): I just started teaching at a preschool." She's also busy organizing a Bar Mitzvah for the oldest of her four children. "All in all, things are moving right along. Hope all is well for my fellow '82-ers!"

In December **Caren Glatt '82** had a solo exhibition of her acrylic paintings at Miss Porter's School in Farmington, CT.

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alumni bookshelf

In *Already Home: A Topology of Spirit and Place* (Shambhala), **Barbara Gates '67** explores the connections between local history, the environment, the body, and the spirit. Author Sharon Salzberg calls the memoir “an honest look at how we might more fully inhabit our lives.”

Last spring **Deborah (Shapiro) Krasner '69** won the prestigious James Beard Award for Excellence for her fifth book *The Flavors of Olive Oil: A Tasting Guide and Cookbook* (Simon & Schuster). The comprehensive cookbook and tasting guide contains more than 165 recipes using olive oil, from appetizers to desserts.

The Bride of Catastrophe (Picador), the first novel by **Heidi Jon Schmidt '77**, is about a naive Connecticut farm girl who attempts to escape her eccentric family through a series of ill-fated love affairs.

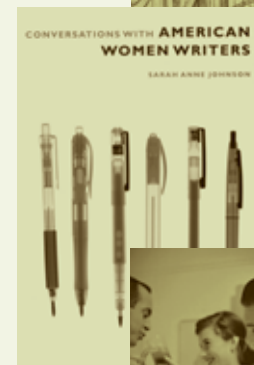
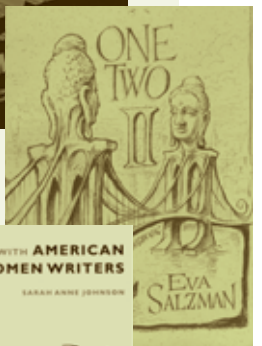
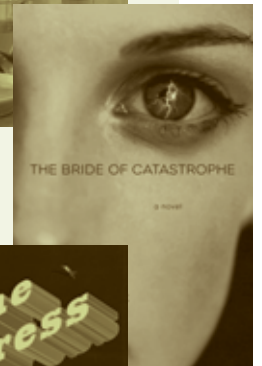
One Two II (Wrecking Ball Press), the new poetry collection by **Eva Salzman '81**, was awarded a Poetry Book Society Special Commendation and a writer's award from the Arts Council of England.

National Book Critics Circle Award winner **Jonathan Lethem '86** has published his sixth book, *The Fortress of Solitude* (Doubleday). Set in Brooklyn in the '70s, the novel explores the friendship of two boys, one white, one black. “Lethem has done a number of things here, any one of which is impossible for any but the very finest novelists,” raved author Michael Chabon. “He has vividly and lovingly and truthfully...recreated a world, a moment in history that I would have thought lost and irrecoverable.... He has reinvented and reinvigorated the myths of the superhero, of black-white relations, of New York City itself.”

The Family Wound by **Jade Ngoc Quang Huynh '88** was published in April by Starborn Books. His best-selling memoir, *South Wind Changing*, dealt with his escape from the Vietcong in the 1970s. *The Family Wound* fictionalizes some of these same experiences through the story of Mai, a young Vietnamese woman.

Conversations with American Women Writers (University Press of New England) by **Sarah Ann Johnson MFA '00** includes interviews with current and former Writing Seminars faculty members Elizabeth Cox, Maria Flook, Lynn Freed, and Jill McCorkle. *Publisher's Weekly* calls the collection “17 miniature instruction books on craft” that delve into “the more mysterious regions of the creative process.”

John Rowell MFA '03 has published *The Music of Your Life* (Simon & Schuster), a collection of short stories. According to Jill McCorkle, Rowell's stories “hold the reader perfectly suspended between hysterical laughter and unshakeable heartbreak.... If Dorothy Parker and Truman Capote ever had a love child, his name would be John Rowell.”



Peter Janis '82 was recognized for his leadership in revitalizing Plainfield, NJ, in an article on gay and lesbian leadership in urban and suburban revitalization that appeared in the *Courier News* (Plainfield, NJ) in September.

“**Bette Goldberg '83** and I will be celebrating our 16th anniversary in May,” wrote **Stuart Denniston '83**. “Our two boys, Torin, 15, and Jared, 13, are both great. I’ve passed the Lead Auditor certification test and am auditing for the National Association of Home Builder’s Research Center (NAHBRC). Bette is completing coursework in anticipation of passing the Certified Public Accountant exam in November. Hope to hear from some of the former ‘coneheads’ that came out of Drama in the ‘80s.”

“Five Minute Hearts” by **Mary Otis '83** was included in *Best New American Voices 2004* (Harcourt). Her work has also appeared in *Tin House*, the *Berkeley Literary Journal*, and the *Santa Monica Review*. A recent recipient of a Vermont Studio Writer’s Grant, Otis was a finalist in both the Glimmer Train and Julia Peterkin short story competitions. She’s “delighted to live only minutes from **Jenny Burman '83** and would love to hear from any other Bennington people in the Los Angeles area.” Her e-mail address is motis88@aol.com.

Sallie Stadlen '83 lives in Bryn Mawr, PA, with her husband, Eric Schwartz, and three daughters, and runs a women’s health medical practice and a weight management clinic. She is eager to hear from old friends, especially **Kathy Gill-Hagopian '83**, **Geri Baskind**

'83, **Carole Woodworth-Perry '85**, and **Brigid Capra '84**. E-mail her at SEMLG@comcast.net.

Charles Fuller Cowles '84 tells us that, with **John Hock '82** and faculty member Jon Isherwood, he’s been hard at work on sculpture and public art projects at the Franconia Sculpture Park in the St. Croix River Valley, MN.

Robin Flicker '84 tells us that she is an attorney and a mother to Daniel, 13, Ariel, 9, and Gabriel, 3. For the past seven years, she’s worked at the Capital Defenders Office in Manhattan, representing people who face the death penalty in New York State.

A recent article in *The Republican* (Springfield, MA) noted that the Hosmer Gallery at Forbes Library in Northampton, MA—under the management of **Faith Kaufmann '84**—has become “one of the reliable venues for good art in Northampton.”

The Vows section of *The New York Times* featured the October wedding of **Charles Miller '84** and Amy Sohn on a wooded hilltop in the Berkshires. Miller also sent word of his two websites: www.sixmoremiles.com and www.jewishboxers.com.

Eve Sussman '84 premiered *89 Seconds at Alcazar* at the Whitney Museum of American Art’s 2004 Biennial. The film is set in the moments surrounding the one depicted in Velazquez’s 1658 painting *Las Meninas*. **Jonathan Bepler '86** composed the music, and **Peter Dinklage '91** plays a supporting role.

Jo Prockop '85 has been appointed director of the Center for Learning at Pennington School in Pennington, NJ. She’s currently completing her doctorate in curriculum, instruction, and technology in education at Temple University.

Eric Ramirez '85 is a University of Michigan Population Fellow with HealthScope Tanzania, a local NGO in Dar es Salaam, working on adolescent and young adult HIV prevention.

“This year has been an exciting one,” writes **Lincoln Schatz '86**. In February Bitforms Gallery showed his work at ARCO, an international contemporary art fair held in Madrid, Spain. Schatz also had a solo exhibition at Bitforms in April.

Jason Wulkowicz '86 and his wife **Molly Sackler '85** are working on a documentary about the unsung women who helped to invent television in postwar New York City. *Missing in Action: the Women Behind Television’s Golden Age* won a Women in Film Finishing Fund grant. “To learn more about the project or to get involved, please visit www.womenbehindtv.com. P.S. Does anyone know where to find **John Getchell '86**?”

Last November **Elizabeth Hipwell '87** read the part of Joyce in Jean Gottlieb’s play, *Entanglements*, at the Victory Gardens Theater in Chicago as part of the theater’s New Playwrights Reading Series.

Chivas Sandage '87 is pursuing a MFA in writing at Vermont College. Her

poetry recently appeared in *The Berkshire Review* and she contributes essays, poetry, and a column entitled "Love v. Straight Supremacy" to *GLBT Community News* (Northampton, MA). She recently completed *Great Wave*, a book-length manuscript of poetry, and is hard at work on a solo dance/theater performance. She lives in Northampton with her wife and 8-year-old daughter. E-mail her at chivassandage@juno.com.

Maureen Ellenhorn '88, MFA '00 and **Genshu Chris Ro '86** were married in January 2003. For 15 years, Chris has resided at the Bodhi Manda Zen Center in New Mexico. He recently established the New York Zen Center in Williamsburg, Brooklyn. Maureen continues to choreograph, perform, and teach. Her most recent concert at the Williamsburg Art Nexus, *American Floral*, included a performance by **Erin Fitzgerald '86** and visual designs by **Lisa Conrad '85**. Chris and Maureen are enjoying a new life as a family with their son, Genyu Jasper Ro, born April 17, 2003. They would love to hear from friends; their e-mail addresses are, respectively, genshu@earthlink.net and mlnhorn@hotmail.com.

Sarah Troderman Clarkson '89 writes, "We have finally settled in Bonny Doon, CA. We are running a small home pottery called Clarkson Pottery. I am also the librarian for our local public school where I work with 150 K-6th graders. Sam and I are keeping busy with Maya Sipporah, born in 2000 and Noah Elijah, born in May 2003. Life is treating us well with two kids, two cats, a dog, and a nourishing garden."

DD Dorvillier '89 received a Bessie Award in 2003 as the choreographer/ creator of *Dressed for Floating*. DD Dorvillier/ human future dance corps's *Coming Out of the Night With Names*, premiered in April at PS 122 in New York City.

Last spring **Carla (Klein) Moriarty '89** informed us that she was expecting a son in September. Her daughter, Ella, was "very excited to be a big sister." Moriarty is still close with **Michael Robinson '89** and **Valerie Marcus-Ramsttur '89**.

In April **Rebecca Wolff's '89** second book of poems, *Figment*, was published by W.W. Norton. Her son, Asher Wolff, was born August 27, 2003. Her magazine, *Fence*, will publish its 13th issue this spring, and its imprint, Fence Books, will publish its 10th and 11th books of poetry. Visit her websites www.fencemag.com and www.fencebooks.com.

90s "Hello to all!" writes **Kim (Pitt-Foster) Bjorge '90**. "We are doing fine and well in Westchester, NY. We have a new limb to our family tree with the addition of our daughter. Her 3-year-old brother is doing wonderfully well adjusting to big brotherhood. My husband and I just need sleep!"

Gabby Leff '90 and her husband, Michael Gerdis, welcomed their second daughter, Rebecca Juliette, on July 24, 2003.

Evan Sornstein '90 and **Fonta Hadley '00** were married last spring in a small family ceremony in Larkspur, CA.

Bennington attendees included the groom's sister, **Joy Johnson '88**, best man **Patrick O'Connor '90**, and the recently ordained Reverend **Jen Laskey '96**, who performed the ceremony (and who introduced the newlyweds in Brooklyn a few years ago). The newlyweds live and work in San Francisco, where Evan is an art director for Grey Advertising and Fonta is the illustration department manager at the Academy of Art College. They continue to make music independently and together. Write to them at fonta_h@yahoo.com or evan@curiumlab.com.

Work by visual artist **Roy Kortick '91** was featured on the playbill for the Brooklyn Academy of Music's 2003 Next Wave Festival. He has had recent solo exhibitions in Stockholm, San Francisco, New York City, and Rome.

"On December 17, 2003, my husband, Walker Woods, and I welcomed a new baby son to our family. His name is Chapin Paxton Woods," writes **Jennifer Chapin '92**. "I am in touch with **Ellen (Voll) Atkins '92** and **Sarah (McFarlane) Polly '91**, both of whom welcomed new baby daughters to their families in 2003."

Matt Bibbo '93 writes, "I still have the car dealerships down in New Jersey. My wife, Robin, and I are proud to announce Jack Matthew Bibbo, born November 3. Eight pounds, 15 ounces. He's perfect! Anyone can contact me at mbibbo@aol.com."

Lizette (Nilsson) Gradén '93 recently received her PhD in ethnology at

Stockholm University. Gradén teaches in the Department of Ethnology at Stockholm University, participates in conferences, and continues to write. She has published several articles on cultural heritage politics among Swedish descendants in the U.S. In the 1990s she worked on traveling exhibitions such as *Swedish Folk Art*, shown at the Museum of International Folk Art in Santa Fe, NM, and *To the Promised Land*, at the Ellis Island Museum. Gradén is the mother of 1-year-old Måns.

The Long Haul by **Amanda Stern '93** was published by Soft Skull Press last fall. Stern's Happy Ending Reading Series—Wednesdays at 8:00 pm at the Happy Ending bar in lower Manhattan—has included readings by A.M. Homes, Mary Gaitskill, Rick Moody, Dan Zanes, Jonathan Ames, Honor Moore, Neal Pollack, Hannah Tinti, and Cintra Wilson. For more info, visit www.amandastern.com or e-mail amanda@amandastern.com.

Ben Mack '94 hosts a monthly philosophical discussion group in Atlanta, GA. "If anybody is in town and would like to attend, they should e-mail me at bengsmack@hotmail.com."

Manju Shandler's '95 *Gesture*, a grid of more than 1,000 brick-sized illustrations honoring the victims of 9/11, was displayed in the window of Bergdorf Goodman's 58th Street store on the second anniversary of the events.

David Choi '96, a partner at the architectural firm CDP/TWC in Boston, won a competition to design a \$200

million church project in Toronto. A jury of architects and priests selected his design for the 15-year project, which includes a cathedral, a community center, and housing for the elderly.

Last fall dancer/choreographer **Eva Lawrence '96** performed *After Nostalgia* at the Bowery Poetry Club and the D.U.M.B.O. Dance Festival. In January *end_movie*, the film component of *Resurface*, was included in the 32nd Annual Dance on Camera Festival at the Walter Reade Theater at Lincoln Center. **Edmund Mooney '93** composed the music for the piece, while **Thomas Dunn '96** worked on video design and editing.

Michelle Dorvillier-Nagai '97 was awarded a commission from the American Composers Forum's 2003 Jerome Composers Commissioning Program. In February she premiered a piece based on sounds collected from a tour of four communities in Vermont and Canada at Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute's iEAR Presents! series at the Art Center of the Capitol Region in Troy, NY.

"I have finished my graduate business studies at Harvard," reports **Kim Hottenstein '97**. "I entered Columbia University this fall in their Graduate School of Social Work-Masters of Social Work Program. I hope that this will help me as I continue to work in social justice organizations. Any alums who would like to connect can reach me at khottenstein@hotmail.com."

Cynthia F. Primmerman-Petratis '97 and her husband, Gerald, wrote to announce the birth of their first child,

Charlotte Elisabeth. "She was born on January 8 and is absolutely beautiful, the mirror image of her maternal grandmother. We could not have asked for a more wonderful and good-natured child. Parenthood is truly a blessing."

Last fall **Paul Douglas Olmer '98** exhibited his paintings at Wax Music and Sound Design in New York City.

In November **Nina Tucciarelli '98** wrote, produced, and directed *Carnival Exotique* at the Hudson River Theater in Hudson, NY. The burlesque review featured the Lipstick Lovelies, who sang and danced in "a whirlwind of colored lights and flirtatious costumes."

Leah Rainy '99 writes with an update: "I got married, had a baby girl named Willa, and my husband and I made a CD called *Firefly*." Rainy wrote all the tracks but two, which are in Portuguese and were written by her husband. *Firefly* is available online at www.cdbaby.com/LeahRainy.

OOs Asad Ayaz '00 writes, "I completed my MS in economics from the University of Southern California and started work as a senior analyst/writer with Stoner, Clingman, Santiago and Kaplan in Los Angeles."

In May **Jenna White '00** resigned from Bennington's Board of Trustees to become Manager of Alumni Relations for the College.

Narayani Sharp '01 recently performed *Carmina Burana* at Carnegie Hall. "The

performance went very well. We received a standing ovation as soon as the last note finished ringing through the hall."

Last summer **Garth Silberstein '01**, **Dina Emerson '88**, and **Rick Little '01** appeared in a revival of Meredith Monk's 1976 opera, *Quarry*, at the Spoleto Festival in Charleston, SC.

Alice Van Ness '01 writes: "I finally got a haircut and a real job! I'm working at Washington Mutual in Bothell, WA—I know, me, at a bank?! I've also applied to the College of Education at the University of Washington. This summer I'll finish yoga teacher training. Overall life is busy, but good. Write to me at alicevanness@earthlink.net."

"I have accepted a job assistant teaching English in Celje, Slovenia," wrote **Benjamin White '01**. He can be reached at antisolipsism@yahoo.com.

Carrie Braman '03 writes, "I'm living in Santa Fe, NM, with **Becky LoDolce '00** and another friend. I've been teaching third grade in an integrated (deaf/hearing) 'voices-off' program at New Mexico School for the Deaf. It's a big adventure as a first-year teacher still learning sign language."

Anatte Kormendi '03 is studying medicine at Ben-Gurion University in Israel. The MD program, a collaboration with Columbia University's Health Sciences

Division, is the first designed to train doctors with specific skills in international medicine.

Ryan Nealon '03 and **Lindsay MacHose '02** recently got engaged and moved out west to give Portland, OR, a try.

Hannah Strom-Martin '03 writes, "After graduation I participated in the Odyssey Fantasy Writers' Workshop at Southern New Hampshire University—a six-week writing intensive (read: boot camp)." Hannah is working on a novel and sending short stories to dozens of magazines. "I auditioned for the Santa Rose Players' production of Gilbert and Sullivan's opera, *The Mikado*, and was cast as the leading lady."

MASTERs **Chungliang Al Huang MFA '63** encourages alumni to contact him at info@livingtao.org or to visit his website at www.livingtao.org.

Clyde Forth MFA '96 performed her improvisational work, *Mouthful/Score*, at the Edinburgh Festival Fringe in Scotland and at the Williamsburg Art Nexus in Brooklyn, NY.

Last fall **Susan O'Neil MALS '96**, founder and CEO of @Web Site Publicity, Inc., was awarded the New Hampshire Business Excellence Award.

Yoga may be an effective alternative to antidepressants, **Amy Weintraub MFA**

'00 argues in her new book *Yoga for Depression*. *Publisher's Weekly* praised her "enthusiasm and well-researched material."

Heather Hutton MFA '01 wrote to tell us that she married Dirk Kuyk in York Harbor, ME, in June 2003. Her honor attendants were **Catherine Hamilton MFA '01**, **Alina Holladay MFA '01**, and **Mark Bouthilette MFA '01**. Bennington guests at the happy event included **Bill Macholdt MFA '02**, **Melinda Buckwalter MFA '02**, **Melinda Ring MFA '01**, **Maria Tripodi MAT '02**, **Corrina Kalisz MFA '00**, **Estelle Woodward MFA '00**, **Jeff Arnal MFA '00**, Michael Giannitti, Wendy Hirsch, and Frank LaFrazia. Heather and Dirk, both lighting designers, live in Eliot, ME.

notes on class notes

Your news—about work, travels, family—is essential to the life of Class Notes, the alumni magazine's most-read section. To send a note, mail it to Jenna White, manager of alumni relations, or e-mail it to alumlett@bennington.edu. Visit our website at www.bennington.edu.



obituaries

30s Mary (Swan) Brown '37 died January 17. She lived in the Washington, DC area for years and taught at Greenbelt High School. She was active as a Camp Fire Girl group leader, and as a tutor of adults and children with learning disabilities. She is survived by 3 daughters, 6 grandchildren and 4 great-grandchildren.

After receiving a MS in French from Columbia, **June (Parker) Wilson '37** translated more than 10 books from French into English. June was also a freelance writer whose work regularly appeared in *The New York Times* travel section. In the 1980s she wrote a humorous column for that paper entitled "Hers." In a piece on growing more irritable with every passing year, she wrote: "The consoling part, for me if not for others, is that this vulnerability works both ways. The eye may recoil at a strip of shopping malls, motels and filling stations, but it still revels in an October sunset over Central Park." She died March 6 at the age of 87. She is survived by 3 daughters, 9 grandchildren, and 5 great-grandchildren.

Charlotte (Goodwin) Craig '39 died August 24 at home in Canton, CT. She received her MA in Social Work from the University of Connecticut in 1948 and worked with the Experiment in International Living, the CT Welfare Dept., the Children's Village, and the Northwest Center for Family Services and Mental Health. From 1980 until her retirement in 1994 at the age of 78, she worked with the Foothills VNA Home Care. She was also cofounder of the Canton Food Bank, which she ran until 2000.

Honora (Kammerer) Gifford '39 died November 19 in Williamstown, MA. She is survived by 4 daughters.

The College has learned that **Ann Poor '39** died last year. She was an artist who exhibited her work at the Art Institute of Chicago and the Brooklyn Museum of Art, among other places.

40s Patricia (Clement) Wreden '40 died last year.

Helen (Steffen) Oliver '41 died December 7 at home on Shelter Island, NY. She is survived by 2 daughters and 2 grandchildren. Her daughter Steffenie (Oliver) Kirkpatrick writes: "I know that Mom thoroughly enjoyed her four years at Bennington and always had very high praise for the art faculty. 'Steff,' as she was known to her friends, was an art major. She married my father, Thomas C. Oliver, Jr. in 1943. He predeceased her in 2001."

After Bennington, **Margaret (Dudley) Thurber '41** worked as executive assistant for the managing director of the American Book Publishers Council. In 1955 she participated in the White House Conference on Education, representing the National Book Committee. She died early this spring.

Eleanor (Kammerer) Spence '42 died November 15, just four days before her sister **Honora (Kammerer) Gifford '39**. Spence is survived by 4 children.

Nancy (Dennis) Burrows '43 died November 17 in Santa Barbara, CA. She is survived by 4 children.

Rosamund (Reed) Bodman '44 died December 15 at the age of 83. She was active as a volunteer teacher of children with learning disabilities. She is survived by 2 children and 4 grandchildren; her family requests that donations in her honor be made to the College's Elizabeth Reed Keller Fund.

Joan (Cummings) Franzen '44 died November 13. She served as the assistant alumni director and secretary of the board of trustees at The Skowhegan School of Painting and Sculpture in Maine. She is survived by 3 children, her sister **Muriel (Cummings) Palmer '43**, her niece **Rebecca Cook '69**, and several other nieces and nephews.

Sally (Litchfield) Pabst Hein '44 died on December 3. After graduation, she worked for an advertising agency in New York City and for the Union Pacific Railroad Company in Sun Valley, ID. An avid skier, she assisted first husband, Frederick Pabst, Jr., in developing the Bromley Ski Resort in Manchester, VT. Jack Hein, her second husband and the first director of NBC's *Today Show*, died in 1989. She is survived by a brother, a stepdaughter, 3 children, and 6 grandchildren.

Susan (Bailey) Morey '44 was employed by the Raritan School District in Brunswick, NJ, until her retirement in the early 1980s. She died last August and is survived by a son, 2 daughters, and 10 grandchildren.

After Bennington, **Cassandra (Bristow) Wolfe '44** worked as a high school social studies teacher. She died last year in Paris, IL, survived by 4 children.

The College has recently learned that **Evelyn (Johnson) Parry '45** died September 12, 2001.

Betty (Long) Rader '47, an artist and longtime resident of San Francisco, died last summer. Her neighbor, **Suzanne (Heller) Harris '41**, sent word. According to a publication for residents of their Telegraph Hill neighborhood, a group of Rader's friends have joined forces to photograph, catalogue, and store her Cubist paintings and the photographs of her late husband, architect Morton Rader.

Elizabeth Dreher Bowler '49 was a school-teacher who also enjoyed acting. She died August 19, survived by 8 children.

Joyce (Skelton) McDonnell '49 died February 20 in Amelia Island, FL. Her daughter, Lise G. Moran, writes: "She loved the area so much that she returned, starting in 1990, to Dorset, VT every summer." McDonnell is survived by her daughter and a son.

After Bennington, **Gina (Raffetto) White '49** earned a MS in literature from Brandeis. She worked in publishing at A.A. Knopf and Viking Press. She was also a poet. She died last year, survived by her husband and 3 children.

50s Maureen (Mahoney) Murphy '53 died March 9 at the age of 72. She worked as associate director of community and state relations at Yale University and was deeply committed to serving her community. Before retiring to Martha's Vineyard, she spearheaded the building of a new public library in Milford, CT. She is survived by her

husband, 4 children, and 8 grandchildren. **Barbara (Schwanda) Weedon '53** and **Marcia (MacNeil) Chapman '53** visited Maureen briefly in her last weeks and were joined by **Lucretia (McPherson) Durrett '53** and **Dorothy (Whittier) Grillo '53** at her service. "We celebrate a life beautifully and bountifully lived," wrote Durrett.

Pamela (Gordon) Wedner '58 was a dedicated actress who worked in theater, TV, and film. Last year she received the *L.A. Weekly's* Queen of Angels kudos for longtime achievement. She died September 21, survived by her husband, 2 children, and 4 grandchildren.

60s Nancy Ann Pettis '61 was the founder, president, and CEO of VOICE International (Voluntary Organizations Initiative in Central and Eastern Europe/Eurasia) and author of *Funding for Civil Society* and *To Protect Women's Human Rights: A Handbook of Mobilization Strategies*. Pettis, who died November 18, is survived by her husband, a daughter, 3 stepchildren, and 5 grandchildren.

Karen (Egeberg) Warmer '61 died at home last June, and is survived by her 2 sons.

70s Doug Houston '73 died of cancer on June 29 at his home in Portland, OR. He founded Houston Effler Herstek Favat, a cutting-edge advertising agency and major force in Boston advertising during the 1990s. In his *Boston Globe* obituary, Houston is described as having a "brash charisma and a go-for-broke drive"; one colleague called him a "meteor." He is survived by his wife and 4 children. **Alice**

Wilmer Erickson '73 officiated at the memorial service last summer in Marblehead, MA, which she described as "an honor."

The College recently learned of the death of **Tamara Danos '78**.

80s Cynthia H. Kravitz '82 died October 17 at the age of 43. She is survived by her father, stepmother, and 2 brothers.

OTHER OBITUARIES

Richard C. Blake, a faculty member and dean of the College in the late 1950s, died December 2. Born in Vienna, Austria, he gained American citizenship by serving with the Army during WWII. He was an avid reader, conservationist, naturalist, and member of the Bat Conservatory International. Blake was married to the late **Joan Waltrich '59**. He is survived by a daughter.

The College has recently learned that **Caryl Parker Haskins**, a prominent scientist and Bennington trustee from 1950–55 died October 8, 2001. After 1945, Haskins served on several presidential, Army, Navy, or State Department advisory committees.

Vera M. Hedding, a housekeeper at Bennington (1933–53), died at age 100.

Former faculty member **Milton B. Howarth** died October 26 in St. Petersburg, FL. As a POW during WWII, Milton sketched and kept a diary. "I did sketches in the dark and hid them under my shirt, so the Germans wouldn't find them," he recalled in 1999.

REMEMBERING BEN BELITT

(1911–2003)

Bennington College mourns the passing of **Ben Belitt**, a respected poet, critic, and translator who taught at the College for more than 50 years. He died August 17 following a long illness. He was 92.

Ben was born in New York City on May 2, 1911. He graduated in 1932 from the University of Virginia, where he went on to earn his master's and doctorate degrees. In 1938 he joined the Bennington faculty to teach literature. He was the recipient of numerous awards for his creative and scholarly work, including the Shelley Memorial Award for Poetry, the Oscar Blumenthal

Award for Poetry, the Chicago Civic Arts Award, the Brandeis Creative Arts Award, the National Institute of Arts and Letters Award in Poetry, and a Guggenheim Fellowship.

In 1977 a generous gift from **Edith (Barbour) Andrews '41** established the Ben Belitt Lecture Series, an annual forum for world-class authors and critics to lecture at Bennington. Former lecturers include Nobel Laureates Saul Bellow, Nadine Gordimer, Seamus Heaney, and J.M. Coetzee; as well as Pulitzer Prize winners Richard Ellmann, Bernard Malamud, and Richard Howard.

THE ORANGE TREE *by Ben Belitt*

To be
intact and unseen,
like the orange's scent
in the orange tree:

a pod of aroma
on the orange's ogive of green
or a phosphorous voice
in the storm of the forge and the hammer:

to climb up a ladder of leaven
and salt, and work in the lump
of the mass, upward and down
in the volatile oils of a wilderness heaven:

to sleep, like the karat,
in the void of the jeweler's glass,
yet strike with the weight of the diamond—
perhaps that is to live in the spirit.

So the orange tree
waits on its stump as the wood of its armature
multiplies: first, the branch, then the twig in the thicket
of leafage, then the sunburst of white in the leaves, the odor's epiphany.

All burns with a mineral
heat, all hones an invisible edge on the noonday, while the orange's scent
speaks from the tree in the tree to declare what the holocaust meant:
to be minimal,

minimal: to diminish excess, to pare it
as a child pares an orange, moving the knife through the peel
in a spiral's unbroken descent, till only the orange's sweat,
a bead of acidulous essence, divides the rind from the steel:

perhaps that is to live in the spirit.



KEVIN BURRISKI MFA '97

Those of us who had the good fortune to study with Ben Belitt may still feel a mixture of gratitude and awe at what we learned from him, as well as remembered fear at that magisterial presence, his stern pronouncement on various authors and on our own attempts at interpretation.

I knew after five minutes in my first literature class in Booth in 1947, that I had really been transported to college, that dreamed of place where learning was profoundly challenging and exciting. Ben's insights into Joyce's *Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* were thrilling even when opaque. I wanted desperately to please him, to have a paper read aloud in class or to receive some sign of approbation. That was not to happen soon.

I stayed in touch with Ben over the next 20 years, and came back to Bennington when my husband accepted a job in development. I had just finished an interview with Richard Wilbur when Ben suggested that we should try one. The process of preparing for this interview entailed total immersion in his poetry, translations, and essays. One new bond was our mutual fascination with "place." We talked for hours about the way that concept could structure a poem, a whole book of poems, an actual life. The interview, which I titled "Antipodal Man: An Interview with Ben Belitt," was published in *Midway*; Ben's delight was ample pay.

In spite of many prizes and publications, Ben felt profoundly and mysteriously ignored. In later years, he became obsessive about his reputation, the future of his whole endeavor. He would complain, outline new projects to be written on his work, then laugh at himself. His is, admittedly, difficult poetry. Given his own erudition and complexity, how could it not be? For those wanting to acquaint, or reacquaint themselves with it, I recommend his complete poems, *This Scribe, My Hand*.

Ben never anointed my writing with full approval. But by then, I knew that his critical acumen bore no apparent relation to his affection—or maybe, the more he liked you the higher the bar was set. I loved him dearly and can only be grateful for his tutelage, friendship, continuous revelations about poetry, and his poems themselves. I remember him, too, for the high standards he set; still daunting, still infuriating, still worth attempting.

—Joan Hutton Landis '51

SAVE THE DATE OCTOBER 8-10, 2004

Bennington College Alumni and Family Weekend

Mark your calendars now for Alumni and Family Weekend. The weekend's events and activities will showcase the work of current students and faculty, offer chances for alumni to catch up with one another, and celebrate the 50th Reunion of the Class of 1954.

Get together with old friends, make some new friends, enjoy the fall foliage, sit in on classes and workshops, and experience for yourself all the vibrancy of the College today.

This year, in addition to a full schedule of campus activities for all graduating classes, we are planning special events and programs just for graduates of the classes 1999, 2000, 2001, 2002, and 2003. If you graduated within the last five years, make a gift to the Annual Fund and we'll waive the weekend's registration fee.

for more information or to find out how you can make a gift to the Annual Fund, contact Jenna White, manager of alumni relations, at jennawhite@bennington.edu or 802-440-4345.

[L-R] Ben Mayock '04, Rachel Shirk '04, Paul Vargas '04, and James Bentley '05 from the November production of Monteverdi's 1607 opera *Orfeo*. More than 60 students—actors, dancers, musicians, vocalists, and technical designers—contributed to *Orfeo*. The interdisciplinary production brought together work from courses led by Tom Bogdan, Kitty Brazelton, Terry Creach, Michael Giannitti, and Sue Rees.



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