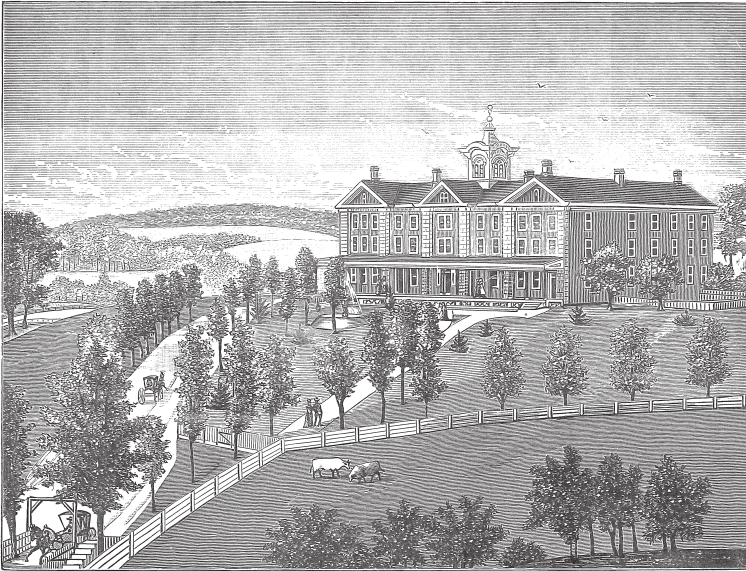


# THE BLAIR REVIEW

FROM HIGH SCHOOL  
TO COLLEGE



BLAIR HALL, BLAIRSTOWN, N. J.

*College is a refuge from hasty judgement.*

– Robert Frost

Winter 2019

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# The Blair Review

The last edition of the *Review* featured the writing of faculty and students reaching back into childhood to dwell on their initial immersion in the world athletics, their field of dreams. And now we move on to another resonant juncture in life: the often anxiety-ridden journey from high school to college, a trek that sort of introduced us to adulthood. In these pages, alumni, former faculty members and current teachers muse about a shared experience that shaped their lives in profound ways.

A varied group of authors is separated by generation, class, gender, geography and outlook, but a few common themes emerge from these articles that are worth noting. First, the distance from the current Blair experience is simply stunning in terms of the intensity of counseling and the expectations of prospective collegians. We now routinely begin the advising process in the junior year and continue through the coveted letter of acceptance, a touted strength of prep school. But our authors' decision-making was often a hodge-podge of guesswork, the tossing of darts at the map of higher education. It usually worked out rather well, by the way, especially for those of a certain age.

Finely tuned revisit days and repetitive orientation hoopla, integral to the current admission process, were largely unknown "back then." Not all has changed. Aspirations remain largely the same over the decades, with perhaps a greater emphasis on practical majors as a reaction to today's job market. In any case, we were all fledgling pledges in the fraternity of strivers (or muddlers), who traversed a well-worn path toward the college ranks. May it continue to be so.

Martin Miller, Ph.D.  
Editor  
Blair Academy History Department

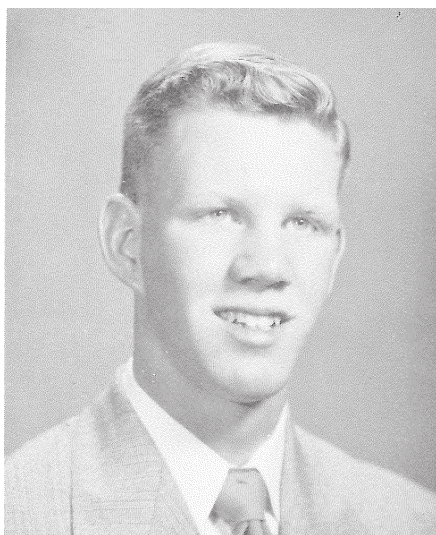
Ann Williams  
Director, Timken Library  
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**Robert Arthur Neff '49** studied at Cornell University and the Cornell Law School and, after graduation, served overseas as a JAG Captain in the United States Air Force. Upon completion of his military service, Mr. Neff joined Rockefeller Brothers & Associates in New York, which lead to several years of resident assignments in Europe and South America. He returned to the United States in 1964 to become chief administrative officer of Seaboard&Western, a major international air cargo carrier which, as Seaboard World Airlines, served both international shippers and the U.S. Department of Defense; in the 1980s, that company became an integral part of Federal Express Corporation.

Mr. Neff subsequently worked in investment banking and, since 2016, has devoted himself to writing historical fiction. He lectures frequently on his 2017 award-winning novel *Uber Alles* and plans to release its sequel, *After All*, before the end of 2018.

Mr. Neff's sons, **Robert Jr. '82 Phillip '83 and William '08**, all attended Blair. He and his wife, Julie Ebers, live in Pinehurst, North Carolina, and have a summer residence on Beaver Island, Michigan.





# First Love

When I was sixteen I first fell hopelessly in love. I won't kid you; my friends laughed until they ached when I revealed that the object of my affection had just turned 100. One of my detractors had tears streaming down his cheeks as he blurted to the others, "He can't even buy her green bananas!"

Well, seventy years later we are still going strong--Blair and I. Of course, it is I who is now long of tooth and, when walking across the verdant campus, I sometimes feel the need to apologize for being slightly out of step with the new Blair. But she always embraces me and says, "Come, let me show you what I'm doing now."

Most of my Blair '49 classmates had chosen the school carefully and planned their time here with ample forethought. But, for me, Blair was "an accident." I lived and attended high school in a small industrial town dominated by a massive oil refinery which contributed materially to World War II military needs. Conscription had pulled many young men from our community and, during the War's final years, we early teenagers were introduced to basic refinery work, mostly after school and throughout the summers.

My combination of schoolwork, refinery work, sports, and piano playing with a dissonant band at the

local USO earned the attention of our Superintendent of Schools, a West Point alumnus. He wanted to send a graduate from his system to his alma mater that year, and wrangled a senatorial appointment for me. I was delighted, and went off in July of 1948 to begin my college years at The United States Military Academy. But wait--within two weeks, someone noted that I would be only age 20 on our projected 1952 graduation date and, consequently, I couldn't accept a commission. That made me ineligible to matriculate in 1948 and I was dismissed with a hearty, "Come back next year!" Sure. I had no plan as I headed home.

My mother regularly played bridge with a Mrs. Wagner, to whom she related my plight. Mrs. Wagner had a son named Chester who coached and taught in a private school in Lawrenceville, New Jersey and Chester was currently at home enjoying a part of his summer vacation. Next day I sat with "Chet" Wagner who patiently disabused my notion that prep schools were like reform schools for rich kids. He also shared that these schools sometimes included "postgraduates," students filling a hiatus before college. In answer to my next question, "Chet" told me that he did not believe that Lawrenceville would consider me, but he brightened and said that his former employer, Blair Academy, might be more flexible.

He called his friend, Mr. Harold Walker, at Blair and, shortly after, Mr. Walker and I sat in his office where he invited me to become a part of Blair. That was the moment when I began to fall in love!

The scenery at Blair was decidedly different for me, and the Kit-tatinny Mountain air didn't smell at all like methyl ethyl ketone. (We're not in Kansas now, Toto!) At Blair, good exam grades were happily acknowledged by the other guys at our lunch and dinner tables, and the Masters who taught our classes were nearby throughout the day and evening; always ready to add a layer of understanding to new material or issue some challenge we'd all accept. My roommate was from Hyannis, Massachusetts and he spoke familiarly about the already-famous Kennedy family; the guy in the next room was from Patras, Greece and he liked to eat peas off a ketchup-smeared knife. In no time at all I knew 20 or 30 denizens of East Hall and was swapping stories about provisioning Russian tankers (my contribution) and racing sloops off "The Cape" (theirs).

In 1948, there was a piano in the lounge in Locke Hall and I decided to have a go with it after dinner one evening. Before long, it became my early evening routine and I acquired a coterie of students and faculty who would drop by regularly for a few minutes before study hours began--sometimes to sip a coffee or

suggest a song I should learn. (A decade later, when I had my first post-military job at 30 Rockefeller Plaza, I augmented my entry-level salary by doing nearly the same thing with Harry Salter's NBC house band--testing contestants for his TV hit, "Name That Tune." But, I digress.

The Blair faculty and advisors never lost sight of my woeful first attempt at college selection and they helped me to apply to a handful of universities I hadn't dared to consider previously. Soon I had some real choices and, culled to two finalists, my list consisted of Princeton and Cornell. When I opted for Cornell, my choice was guided by (a) its excellent 5-year engineering program, and (b) the fact that it was coeducational. Without intending to do so, all-male Blair had made me realize that learning was better when shared with young women.

At graduation, I was pleased to receive prizes in history and English, but it meant more to me that my classmates named me their favorite musician. Peer group approval has no equal for an outsider. I had an exciting new job that summer--no longer in the great refinery, but now in the great outdoors with the same company's pipelines' division. By summer's end, I had passed my tests as a welder and as a D-8 bulldozer operator. It was the first of seven summers I would spend being an outsider working in the company of traveling construction crews. Again,

at my new school I had no tales to share of “lifeguarding at the club” or “exploring Europe’s treasures.” I was the outsider there too, with a badly sunburned neck. No matter-fraternity and sorority rush parties always needed a piano player, and I had acquired a repertoire of bawdy songs over the summer.

My years at Cornell contrasted starkly with my ongoing activity to pay for them. At school I lived in an elegant fraternity house and studied with some of the brightest and best-prepared young people I had ever encountered. Each year I raced from my final exam to join a pipeline crew, live in a series of boarding houses, eat blue-plate specials in roadside diners, and teach hard-scrabble guys from Arkansas and Texas the joys of playing Scrabble on a board--with an Ivy-league kid! Back at school, I added a music course at nearby Ithaca College to improve my piano technique and, in my junior Cornell undergrad year, also took on the part-time responsibility of overseeing the Mobil Oil Pump Station just outside Ithaca. My fraternity brothers seemed awed by the fact that my new ‘52 Ford was actually a “company car.” I was pret-

ty full of myself, too. Life was good! Cornell’s five-year engineering curriculum was precipitated by the school’s requirement that engineering students also study disciplines totally outside their major and I did nearly all of my liberal arts’ study in the ‘Government Department’. This brought me into contact with some of the big hitters on that faculty, one of whom encouraged me to take the Law School’s entry exam which, of course, implied a continuation of the summer pipelining and winter piano-playing.

In the summer of 1956, I finally set aside all those years of non-matching lifestyles and became just a JAG Officer in The United States Air Force. I hadn’t been the usual Blair student and certainly wasn’t a prototypical Ivy Leaguer. However, the excellence of both those academic environments had rubbed off enough to permit me to undertake just about anything, with confidence in my chances for success. I look back upon the fortuitous circumstances which first took me to Blair, and have no apologies for the advantage I’ve taken of my “first love” during the ensuing 70 years. She certainly changed life for me.



**Elliott Trommald (H'65)** taught at Blair 1962-1968 and 1977-1985. During the last stretch, he created the Society of Skeptics and later received the most meaningful diploma of his career when he was inducted into the Blair class of 1965 as an honorary member. Here is what he has to say by way of biographical information:

I am in my 80th year, still trying to figure out what my life is and has been about. Family, friends, conversation, laughter and the joy of teaching are right up there. Since high school and college, I have spent my life in some form of education, still do; and I still walk, bike and travel, trying to catch up with something still undefined. A wife, two daughters and five grandchildren are crucial to how I see my world. The trajectory of life is an arc—my journey has been and is exciting; it has never been boring; and I am blessed by some unknowable force or just plain luck with the good fortune of mental, physical and financial independence. I don't expect it to continue; the arc is finite. But I do expect to continue embracing family, friends, conversation and laughter.



*Trommald (foreground, center, with hat) in his element*

# Remembrance of Things Past

**B**ecause of my love of trains, I ended up going to a boarding school 1,000 miles away. My dad and I had bonded in our basement, sharing a love for Lionel trains. I knew nothing about boarding schools except that I had heard they were 3,000 miles east of Portland, Oregon—and the possibility of three nights on a train moved me to beg to go away to school. When my Dad said, “Would you like to go to Webb?” I said, “How far away is it?” “1,000 miles,” he replied. That was two nights on a train, then, and I jumped at it. Little did I suspect the impact of that leap.

A quick reflection of my high-school experience at Webb is jumbled, and no doubt messed up by the passing of years. My first year (1951) involved getting over unexpected homesickness, playing three seasons of sports, acting, building model airplanes in the model club, developing a serious interest in photography and enjoying meaningless fun with classmates doing what teenagers in the 1950s did. I had little interest in academic aspects of school, but the school’s emphasis on honor and character got my attention. I discovered girls my junior year, but my involvement with the “fair sex” was shaped partly by the atmosphere of a boys’ boarding school. In today’s language, I guess I was a budding young, unknowing

chauvinist.

In my second year, I began wrestling with questions of meaning, a wrestling match fueled by an unforgettable teacher—Ray Alf, my teacher of biology and advanced math. He was a paleontologist who took students on “Peccary trips” to the Grand Canyon, Dakotas, Arizona and Utah and shorter weekend trips to Barstow, California, in search of what he called “documents of life.” I have not used the word “fossil” since my first exposure to this man. For me, these bare-boned camping experiences were more than trips. We would sit around the campfire in the Mojave Desert, at the bottom of the Grand Canyon or on the fringes of an Indian reservation, usually clear, starlit nights, occasionally in wet, drenching rain, looking up at the stars and wondering. I listened to him recall stories of his youth in China (his parents were missionaries), his unlikely college life at Doane in Nebraska, his curiosity about our planet, what had lived on it, and his interest in our lives, the lives we were living.

He awakened in me the wonder of creation; on those nights, I considered the evolution of man, of our planet in relation to 15-million-year-old “documents of life” found that afternoon. The question of the meaning of life almost always found its way into our teenage musings—

and he pushed me to take my mind to places I had never known, never considered. And there were physical challenges that were life-changing: I did run up and out of the Grand Canyon, nonstop; at times, it was a slow jog. But it was a life-changing experience for me, a moment of exhilarating triumph and the discovery of a self-confidence I needed. I even beat one of the seniors.

While I had little interest in paleontology, I developed an enduring interest in and respect for the man. There was no gap between what he said and how he lived life; he lived the values he preached; his very being challenged me, made me examine myself in relationship to the way I understood him. For Ray Alf, it was about wondering and the challenges of knowing, not about answers. As students, we were always worried about tests. "Is there a test today?" I would ask. He would always respond, "Trommald, every day is a test—a test of a man's character." By my senior year, Ray Alf had become for me an unforgettable model. In him was an infectious enthusiasm, an energy and passion for life, and a deep faith in what he called the fighting heart. He made me consider the big questions of life.

The class I still remember most in eight years of high school and college was sophomore year of high school. Alf showed us a huge time spiral representing four billion years. I can still see and hear him telling us

that "our view of the human scene becomes narrow and unilluminated" unless we rise above it and see it in its cosmic roots and backgrounds. He spoke of the planets, the sun and other galaxies, more galaxies than there are grains of sand on all the beaches of the world. (I memorized the gist of what he said.) And so, in regard to space, he went on, we are nothing; but we can transcend this and consider ourselves in regard to time. Then, pointing at the tip of the spiral, he noted in a voice I still hear, "This dust on the end represents all of recorded human history. So, as you can see, we have but a moment. The question, gentlemen, is what will you do with your moment?" I carry that question with me today.

My senior year, I was told to think about where I wanted to go to college—I applied to two schools—Stanford, where three of my classmates applied, and University of Washington. College was not a big deal to me; I did not think much about the process of applying, I just knew that college is what you did after your senior year—pack your bags and become a freshman again. I didn't get into Stanford, so I accepted U of Washington. I don't remember applying to Yale and think the school filled out the application for me to sign. When I got in, I was encouraged to go. I didn't give it much thought other than to say I wanted to stay on the West Coast, but with less-than-gentle urging

from school and parents ended up going East. When I left for the East Coast, I was mostly excited about the three-night train ride to New York City. But I took with me the experiences, memories, those unanswered “big questions” raised under the stars on “Peccary trips,” and a Webb sense of what it was to live honorably and ethically. Admittedly, there was a significant gap between that “Webb sense” and my daily practices. But that sense never left me.

I had, for years, been told that college would be the best years of my life. I thought that meant life was going to imitate the 1920s. I was prepared to party, enjoy the college scene, do a sport and study a little—but can’t truly remember if these were actually my expectations. If I arrived at Yale as an unknowing chauvinist, by the end of my first year, I must have recognized I was one. The social life was unreal—constant study and sport during the week, high jinx, mixers with all-girl schools and drinking during the weekend. The dormitory I was in was put on social probation most of the spring term—I and my two roommates were on the fifth floor, and it was from our window that a burning couch was tossed, fueling a college riot on the streets below. I did not toss it. But it was exciting.

During the first week of college orientation, I had been advised into a heavy academic premed sched-

ule—28 hours, which included two lab sciences and an advanced French course, English and a psychology course. I had never rowed before, but my father had been a nationally recognized oarsman, so I went out for crew. I had no idea of the time commitment involved. It was the only freshman sport with a training table—we bused out to the Housatonic River in the afternoon, two hours on the water, shower and bus back for a late dinner (excellent high-carb); in the winter, we rowed in the tanks two days per week, and three days per week ran 10 flights of stairs twice, one step at a time and endured Coach Kiputh’s famous inhumane hour workouts. Weekends we were on our own. But the Monday-to-Friday schedule exhausted me—up until 2 a.m. studying, locked into early morning classes five days a week, rowing. And then, trying to fit in a social life on the weekend. During the three-week spring vacation, we remained at school for two-a-days on the river, our hair frozen and sweat forming icicles on our shirts. We called it “fun.” At least the morning practice did not start until 10 a.m.

Freshman year was by no means the best year of my life—but it was an interesting one and, oddly, I actually enjoyed much of it, probably because I did not have to make any decisions about organizing my life. Decisions were made by my class schedule and rowing. I learned a

little more about myself, my weaknesses and my desires. I came to know just how sheltered a life I had lived and that I did not know as much as I thought I knew. I was not particularly comfortable in Yale's all-male social environment—but I lacked the strength of character to find different social avenues. So I joined in and raised hell when I could, studied hard and wondered about the future. But college was by no means feeling like the best years of my life.

Sophomore year, I decided not to row on the varsity team. Instead, I rowed and played football on the Trumbull College team (Yale undergraduates lived in one of 10 colleges). That required only one or two practices a week and then a game or race every other week. Injuries were a constant due to lack of practice, but I celebrated the free time and the camaraderie. More importantly, two unanticipated experiences and a decision that year memorably impacted my life.

Billy Graham brought his four-day University Evangelical Crusade to Yale. I had been imitating and making fun of him and his style since I was around 10 and couldn't wait to hear him—and laugh. For four nights, he filled one of the largest auditoriums at Yale. The first night, I was dumbstruck when he invited students to come forward to receive his blessing if they wished to be saved and lead a new life in

faith—and some actually walked to the front to receive. The third night, I responded unbelievably to his invitation, joining 30 or so taking that same walk and receiving the blessing. I was saved. What a powerful feeling! For hours in the quiet of my room that night, I thought about what I had done, questioned whether I was in need of something I couldn't define, wondered how impressionable I must be. Still, that good feeling lingered, tasted good. The Crusade ended; Graham departed. Woe unto me, I started to backslide and within days, I was again a fallen man, susceptible to the debauchery I had enjoyed before Graham. But that experience was a meaningful one, I wondered about myself, wrote home about it, and hungered for discussion about religion, morality, even history—and my place in it. The old questions I had played with on starlit nights at the bottom of the Grand Canyon were alive and thriving.

A second experience close on the heels of Graham: Allen Ginsberg appeared at Yale to visit a friend. I knew next to nothing about him, but joined a small group of friends to hear him read a poem he wrote, "Howl." He brought a sizeable cache of pot to share; we lit candles, sat in a circle and he read. My God how he read. He screamed. I was excited. His reading thoroughly hooked me on the feelings/passions of his poem.

For the first time, I think I understood what was then called the Beat Generation. And I liked it. Billy Graham could not touch the excitement of Allen Ginsburg's hyped-up voice hurling words and images at me. I remember clearly, his head thrown back, howling about throwing watches off roof tops to cast a ballot for "eternity outside of time" and then the ending, which, at the time, I memorized and loved reciting to myself when driving.

I don't even know that I understood his poem or what I was understanding (I still wonder why I was, and still am, so taken with the idea of casting ballots for eternity outside of time)—but it helped fashion a new me. I knew as I had not known how sheltered a life I led, how inexperienced I was, how impressionable I was. I wondered if I had really lived. On my mother's 45th birthday, I gave her Kerouac's *On the Road*. We never talked about it, but I still wonder if she ever read it. She never saw me contemplating a hair on my arm, but I was happy with my new world.

Then came a weird decision, perhaps the weirdest decision of my life. It emerged during or just after a poker game the first night of our three-week spring vacation. Freed from rowing, I decided with five friends to go to Florida to join what then was the traditional college Spring Bacchanal. The plan was to stop playing poker around mid-

night, pile in to my roommate's car, take off and get through New York before the morning commute. As we headed to the car, for reasons I still don't understand, I stopped and said, "I'm not going." I had, at some point, decided to stay and write a paper I would submit for the annual Andrew White Essay Prize. That decision was unlike a decision I imagined myself making. A few minutes of queries, head scratching by all of us, and I repeated I was serious.

That night, I wondered what the hell I had done and why. I still have no answer, still wonder. I remember clearly eating a "pig in a blanket" (egg, cheese and wiener in a bun) at the Yankee Doodle greasy spoon the next morning and then wandering over to the Sterling Library with no idea of what I was going to do—other than look for books on guerrilla warfare. The topic had long interested me even though most of what I knew about guerrilla warfare was from watching triple-feature westerns about Quantrill's Civil War raiders and reading stories about guerrilla warfare in Spain during the Napoleonic Wars.

By late afternoon, I walked out of the library with an armful of books. By the end of the first week I was thoroughly embedded in the subject, absorbed in the richness of the subject. I took out more books, met a graduate student peripherally interested in my topic who intro-



duced me to the Rare Book Room. That rocked. I spent four or five days immersed in the original papers of General Winfield Scott and Francis Lieber who had advised President Lincoln on the treatment of “irregular fighters” in war—a complicated topic. And that led me back to the 16th and 17th centuries, particularly to Samuel von Pufendorf’s *On The Duty of Man and Citizen According to the Natural Law*. Everything I read raised more questions—I was excited by the wonders of my confusion. By the end of three weeks, I had put together a piece I proudly titled “The Treatment of Irregular Fighters as Reflected in the History of International Law.” It spanned some 400 years. I had never experienced such all-consuming interest before or embraced the complexities and consequences of written law as I did that spring. All of which made me think I might want to be an international lawyer.

The next year, I discovered the practice of international law was primarily about maritime law so I gave up the idea of law but seriously questioned whether I wanted to be a doctor. Bouncing from interest to interest, falling in love with Proust’s *Time Regained* and Twain’s *Huckleberry Finn* (I read it in three different classes), I finally decided that, after graduation, I would take a few years and try to write the great American novel. How to do this? Oh, I can teach. I would finish my

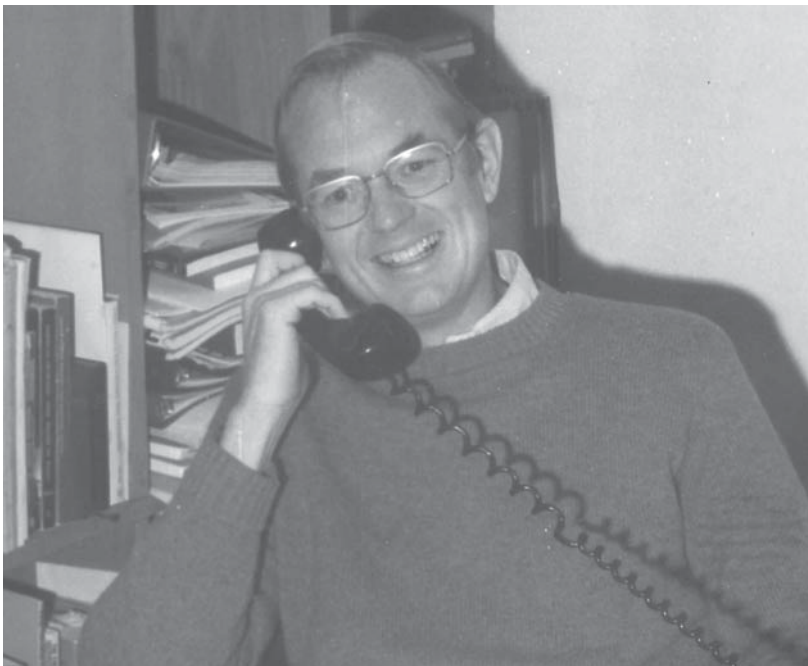
day by 2 p.m., debauch during the afternoon and then drink and write into the wee hours of the morning. That excited me. I went to the placement office and put my name in for teaching. Early my senior year, I got a call from someone in the chemistry department asking if I would be interested in being a lab instructor in chem 10, the freshman course, and teaching a review class or two before examinations. Why not, I thought—a \$900 paycheck and free tuition my senior year sounded good. The cost of Yale had doubled since my freshman year, from \$1,500 to \$3,000.

I had no direction, no real sense of the future during my senior year, no real memories of anything significant. The courses I took were interesting and challenging, but I was just anxious for the year to end. The week of traditional graduation activities was supposed to be a big deal, but for me and a number of my best friends, it held no interest. After our last classes, we left campus and our diplomas were mailed to us a couple of weeks later. My college experience turned me on to the life of the mind, and, for that, I will be forever grateful. It has enriched my life beyond anything I could have imagined. But, on a personal level, regarding issues of character, the type of person I would become, college had little impact. At the time, I knew I had a lot of growing to do; I just didn’t know how much.

What happened after I graduated was one unexpected event after another. I never wrote the great American novel. I did teach. And I fell in love with it—but had the time wrong. The teaching day did not end at 2 p.m.; it ended at 2:00 a.m., and that was just to stay one day ahead of the class. Habits changed. And I came to understand that what was driving me came largely from my high school days and the influence of a teacher. If I did not become a teacher due to Alf's influence, I remained in teaching because of his example. And I grew as a person largely because of what he probably unknowingly had given me. I tried to impart to every student I taught a little bit of what he had given to

me. He is, for me, the most dynamic example of why education can be a life-changing activity.

In 1997, some 50 years after that memorable class described above, and two years before he died, I flew out to California to have lunch with him—to tell him once more how I think he shaped me, my college life and the life that followed. I told him I never wrote that novel. We chuckled. And here I am at 80, still pursuing the meaning of life. It is not what I thought it was 50 years ago, or 15 years ago when I retired. But I am still living the question Ray Alf asked in biology 65 years ago: “The question, gentlemen, is what are you going to do with your moment?”



**Peter Hahn** deliberately got all his traveling out of the way so he could relax in retirement. It was not to be so relaxing. He is serving his parish at St. David's Episcopal Church as administrative assistant, mentoring a section of Education for Ministry, and sharing his love for medieval history with parishioners in various classes called Journey Groups. A graduate of Hobart College and the University of St. Andrews in Scotland, his career followed a course from Hobart admissions to a 24-year tenure at Blair Academy and six years as a guidance counselor in Taipei American School before moving to Austin, Texas in 2001. He has never been without a rescue dog and the current one is a rascally Australian Cattle Dog named Sheila. Peter believes his time at Blair allowed him to learn from great teachers and headmasters and to enjoy the company of some very fine students.



# Late But in Earnest

## Before the War

Many people think of 1938 as the year of the Munich Agreement between Hitler and the British. "Peace in our time." They have forgotten that Seabiscuit ran to win against War Admiral, the "Great New England Hurricane" brought death and destruction and Orson Welles created near panic with his radio production of *The War of the Worlds*. That was also the year that the Benny Goodman Orchestra brought jazz to Carnegie Hall and Gene Krupa banged away that fantastic drum solo in "Sing, Sing, Sing." The most popular song that year was Artie Shaw's rendition of "Begin the Beguine." And I was born shortly before midnight in Newton Wellesley Hospital on Easter Day, an event that has been ignored by historians. Two years later, my brother Tim arrived in Jackson Heights, New York, followed by our parents' divorce. It would be nearly 60 years before I saw my father again and I had to live with my mother's resentments.

Shortly thereafter, my mother Marion met and married Bob Hahn, a young ensign, graduate of Dartmouth's Amos Tuck School of Business. He had been with a prominent Wall Street insurance company when the war broke out. Bob entered the Navy's "90-day wonder school" and emerged with grades

and leadership evaluations that were enough to give him command of a small ship right away and, later, an LST that helped bring MacArthur back to the Philippines. That an officer who had never been to sea should acquire a command was a sign of desperate times. Today, it reminds me of the Admiralty Lord's song "Ruler of the Queen's Navee!" rise to prominence in "HMS Pin-afore."

My memory is a little cloudy, but I know we moved to a sort of a "beach house" on Sullivan's Island, Charleston, South Carolina. Bob's sub-chaser patrolled off-shore and sent us signals occasionally. My mother, trained by Katy Gibbs, and a former Powers model, worked. My brother, Tim, and I were looked after by a large black woman who played the guitar for us. I remember liking her a lot because she made us laugh and feel comfortable.

Then, the odyssey began as mother followed Bob from one port to another—Boca Raton, Long Beach, San Diego, San Francisco and back to Florida. I remember spending Christmas in a hotel with a wreath and a couple of presents. While waiting for a connecting train in Chicago, the three of us went to a movie where I swallowed a marble, causing my mother unnecessary anxiety as the marble reappeared later. Train travel meant

a compartment. We could put our shoes outside, and they would be polished overnight. After several train trips, including the famous "Atchison, Topeka and the Santa Fe" Super Chief, "The Train of the Stars," I acquired a love of trains that continues to this day.

When Bob left for the Pacific, I remember tears at the train station and on Christmas as my mother carried on with two young children by herself. We wouldn't see him for nearly two years. I had been in kindergarten in San Francisco. After, we moved to Miami Beach, where we lived until the end of the war, and I was in the first grade. One day, my teacher was sobbing uncontrollably and muttering something about the war. I learned cursive writing in the first grade but not printing. There was the threat of a hurricane and mother took us to the beach to see the ocean boiling up. I lost a ration book on my way home from the store. What a six-year-old was doing with a ration book, I'll never know. A plane crashed into the Empire State Building. I don't recall learning to swim but I did. I spent some time in the emergency room after my legs became entangled in a Portuguese Man of War. I tried to ride a bike. But most of all, I remember tears of loneliness and mother's drinking.

In 1945, we moved to a small house in Rumson, New Jersey. I went to second grade where my fel-

low pupils were printing not writing. The songs I remember are "Let it Snow," "Baby, it's Cold Outside" and my favorite, "It might as well be Spring" from the movie State Fair. Later, Stan Getz would record a jazz version which I love to this day. I still hadn't learned to ride a bike. At Christmas in 1945, Bob was on his way home from the Pacific, and Nicky, a rascally mutt, came into our lives. Then, the Christmas tree shedding its needles after 10 days, LT Hahn returned from the war. My mother met him in New York and brought him home on the train. I remember jumping up and down as he walked in the door. Later, I remember my brother and me with measles at the same time and an attempt by our landlords to throw us out of the little house in Rumson. In my mind, they didn't seem to care about Bob's return from the war. And then we moved to the bungalow in Little Silver where my sister and brother were born, I learned to ride a bike, and started school in the third grade. By that time, I had learned to print. In 1954, our enlarged family moved to Fair Haven, New Jersey.

### High School and College

I was sent to the barber in 1955 with the instructions "short on top and long on the sides" from my mother. The barber was male and usually named Tony. He charged kids 50 cents during the week and

75 cents on Saturdays. Tony took Sunday and Monday off. Only “men” got their haircut on Saturday because our town was home to large numbers of commuters to New York who were not around during Tony’s weekday hours. Gas was 35 cents, which was a lot for our gas-guzzling Buick Roadmaster Station Wagon. There was just one car and never the thought of two. When my father returned from the Pacific theater at the end of World War II, we lived in a small house on Sycamore Avenue in Little Silver, New Jersey, on the North Jersey shore, as it was called. After changing schools a lot during the war, I finished elementary school at the small public school there. As our little family grew larger, we moved to a Victorian house on an acre of land in Fair Haven with a barn in the back. I had, at the age of 8, become an acolyte in the local Episcopal church (founded 1702 by the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel in Foreign Parts).

When high school came along, I wore khakis to school and a white broadcloth shirt with the sleeves rolled up and “bucks” shoes. My dungarees were for weekends. The music we listened to was “Ghost Riders in the Sky” by Vaughn Monroe and, later, Bill Haley and the Comets or the Crewcuts with “Shh-hboom.” Dad took the Jersey Central Railroad to Jersey City, the Liberty Street Ferry across the Hudson and walked to John Street where he

put in a day’s work in Marine Insurance and came home by quarter to seven. Since my parents liked to relax before dinner, we kids, there were four of us, ate earlier.

The local high school was in Red Bank and to get there every day, I took the Boro Bus with a lot of other kids from Little Silver. Red Bank High was a shock. It was, to me, huge! All the black kids lived in Red Bank, and I had never gone to school with anyone who didn’t look like me. It seemed “tough” in the sense I was on my own without the intimacy of our cozy classrooms in Little Silver. The whole place was scary. My only “fight” was in the ninth grade, and it didn’t last very long since I was neither a fighter nor a lover. There were three of us in my Latin class taught by an aged, imperious, yet sometimes humorous pundit, Miss Rice. She and Bob Gruden traded barbs, and Miss Rice liked to call our only girl “Clowdia” in Latin. Miss Chateaufneuf taught us algebra formulas using the law “Do unto one side what thou doest unto the other.” Very soon the boys in the class created a sexual innuendo around that rule that sent us into hysterics. We had an English teacher who wore the same black dress to class every day prompting “Clowdia” to compliment her on her wardrobe. I was a failure at producing articles for the school newspaper. I was lost in the size and atmosphere of Red Bank High and took comfort



in my involvement at Old Christ Episcopal Church in Shrewsbury. The move to Fair Haven included a move to Rumson High School, a comforting cultural contrast to what I remember as a frightening factory. Fair Haven was a middle-class commuter town that sent its high school students to Rumson, affluent and dotted with mansions and a *de rigueur* “restricted” country club. I would not know black students (there were two—very smart), Jews or Catholics until much later in my life. My friends included the popular, the toughs (I had a friend named “Rope”), the quiet kids who built woofers and tweeters and those with no special classification except they were fun. I loved rock n roll and Bach’s Mass in B Minor equally. Soon, I took up smoking and beer.

My grades in Rumson High School left a lot to be desired but, worse, I had no direction and no clue about the future. There was a guidance counselor, but we never spent any time together. I was not subject to any pressure from home about planning, making decisions or filing college applications. I liked English, not math, and scraped through algebra II, the minimum requirement for a diploma in the academic program at RHS. I had another year of Latin and finished French at the second level. While I looked down on the typing class as “business” and beneath me, to this

day I wish I had learned to type.

As for career ambitions, I had the gift of gab and thought I would be a great lawyer and, perhaps, because I was active in the Episcopal Church, a priest and of course, eventually a bishop. All of this was fantasy as I never considered that my five greatest summers were spent at YMCA Camp Ockanickon in Medford Lakes, New Jersey, near Philadelphia. (It was there my name changed to “YO PETE!” And I discovered Philly cheese steaks.) It never occurred to me I that I could make a career working with young people and, besides, I was in that “please-my-parents” mode. Since my father was Amos Tuck School at Dartmouth, a 90-day wonder in the Navy commanding a couple of ships during the war and moving quickly up the corporate ladder in an international company, there was, in my own mind, a lot to live up to. It was only several years later when I met him for lunch (two martinis) in New York at the Drug and Chemical Club that he confessed he followed his father’s career direction without question. In my case, due in part to my father’s busy career and to a dysfunctional family situation fueled by alcohol, I was, as the saying goes, “like a deer in the headlights.”

My father came through with an extra year in a private day school, Newark Academy, an hour on the train from Red Bank. I was incred-

ibly relieved and grateful that I had been given the extra time. Newark Academy was in a residential part of Newark in those days and the trip required a ride on the Pennsylvania Railroad and city subway. There were 28 boys in the senior class, 20 of whom were Jewish which meant that my first encounter with Judaism put me in the minority of my classmates. Our senior study hall was unsupervised and where we went when not in class. At the end of the class day, we could smoke in there. Jackets and ties were required, and I, like the other guys, kept one in my locker for weeks at a time. Two important things happened during my time there: I made friends with and came to understand people who were not white Anglo-Saxon protestants, and, in small classes and a challenging program, I found out I was not so dumb after all. For the first time since grade school, I was achieving with confidence.

Applying to college was not what it is today. Once again, I recall no counselor advising my course. My SATs (saw them years later as only the colleges knew what they were) were skewed toward verbal and the math was predictably low. My father, at the suggestion of my priest who had consulted the bishop, decided to point me in the direction of Episcopal colleges. So, I applied to Hobart College in Geneva, New York, and Trinity College in Hartford, Connecticut. For

a third (the normal route), I picked the College of William and Mary in Williamsburg, Virginia, in my mind, a beautiful and historical campus. I fell in love with Trinity's gothic architecture and Hobart's campus situated on beautiful Seneca Lake. I don't recall reading the catalogues. I can't remember the interview at Trinity, there might not have been one. My friend, Steve Perkins and I saw all these schools

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**My interaction with teachers and fellow students helped develop not only study habits but real interest in learning everything but math!**

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together. And at William and Mary, we were ushered in to some dean's office, where the dean, in that soft Virginia tone, challenged us to respond to why the majority of his discipline problems were with "prep school boys." Hobart was the best as far as friendliness of the staff and students. Hobart and William Smith accepted my application and Trinity did not. And they told me why: my math skills were "wanting." Indeed, they were. I suspect that my father checked around the office for Hobart graduates, met some he liked and that's where I went.

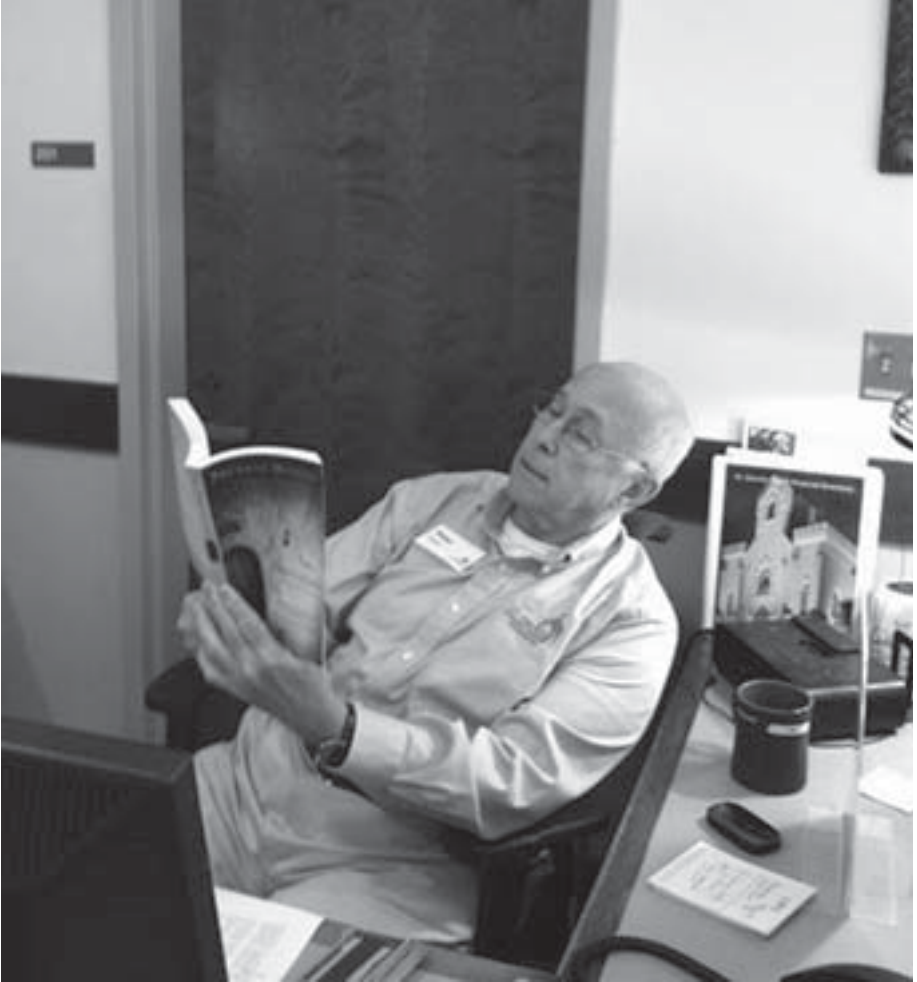
I loved Hobart. In the fall, the

leaves were gold and red and squalls of snow appeared periodically. Seneca Lake's personality could be dark and forbidding one day and bright and sparkling the next. South Main Street was lined with sycamores, and I decided that I was in the perfect setting. Oddly, however, I experienced bouts of homesickness in the fall. On those occasions, I found solace in Grieg and Rachmaninoff. I was in three shows and joined a fraternity in the first year. I was a tour guide for the admission office and was elected to the Orange Key non-academic honor society at the end of the year. I look back on my first year as the way college should be. The curriculum consisted of one-third each diploma requirements, the area of concentration and electives. There was a physical education requirement, and we attended chapel once a week for two years. Life was structured.

I'm not sure how things would have turned out were there no Newark Academy. That year was a great gift. My interaction with teachers and fellow students helped develop

not only study habits but real interest in learning everything but math! Even Newark Academy couldn't change that attitude. In retrospect, I have decided that my positive response to challenges, teacher interest and support along with the structure of a small school might have made me a perfect boarding school student, though not an option at the time.

In my first year at Hobart, I developed an interest in their coordinated program called Western Civilization. My music tastes changed from rock to folk to the Kingston Trio, and I laughed with Shelly Berman and Victor Borge. My course at Hobart would be bumpy but, following my military service, I came back to spend five years in the admission office. Those four undergraduate years formed indelible patterns. "Sero sed Serio," my family motto meaning, "late but in earnest," I discovered boarding school and the opportunity to offer the same care and support I had received at Newark Academy and Hobart.



*Modeling a love of reading at St. David's*

**Joanne Brandwood** joined Blair's faculty as a history teacher in 2013, having originally come to the School in 1985 with her husband, English teacher Bob Brandwood. Joanne and Bob met in Botswana, where she served as a Peace Corps volunteer following her graduation from Yale College in 1981. When they first arrived on campus, their first child, Liz '03, was an infant, and they had four more children over the next few years: Kath '05, Steve '06, Dave '08 and Sarah '09. In 2000, Joanne graduated from New York University School of Law, then she clerked for a federal judge in New York City for a year. She later spent 12 years as a Legal Services attorney, providing representation to low-income residents of Sussex and Warren counties. At Blair, Joanne teaches western civilization and American history courses, along with an interdisciplinary course entitled "America at War." In 2018-2019, she introduced a course examining the history of the Women's movement. She serves dorm duty in West Hall, assists with the community service program and serves as a monitor for the sophomore class. Joanne and Bob live on campus in Carriage House.



*Joanne at graduation: back row 7th from right*

# Hidden Lesson

When I arrived in New Haven as a college freshman 40 years ago, I was a bit nervous, but I felt ready. A child of suburbia, I had nevertheless enjoyed a variety of experiences that I felt had broadened my world view, including summer jobs on a political campaign, in the Manhattan District Attorney's Office, at a television news show and at a Colorado horse ranch. My high school, the School of the Holy Child, was small but rigorous, and I had worked hard. Despite the fact that Holy Child was extremely homogeneous—there was not a single person of color in my graduating class of 60—I learned to value diversity and was ready to embrace all sorts of experiences when I left my sheltered high school world behind and headed for the adventures I would find at Yale. I felt ready, and, despite a very shaky first-semester transcript, I had learned the skills necessary to thrive at Yale. Little did I know that the high school lessons that would ultimately prove most valuable during my college career and beyond were not those learned in my academic classes, but those I wasn't even aware I had learned.

One of those background lessons was about the power of forgiveness and redemption. Back in 1974, no member of the class of '77 would ever have believed that, as a group, we would be welcomed back with

open arms in years to come. Holy Child was a conservative, all-girls Catholic day school located on a beautiful campus in Rye, New York. Teachers were strict, and, naturally, many of the students challenged the rules whenever they could. There was no serious wrongdoing (unlike at a friend's school, where once a student wired the public phone booth so that the next user would get an electric shock), but students constantly tested school-imposed boundaries. The most dramatic confrontation came when several girls brought alcohol to the "Freshman Sleepover," a 1950s-style overnight bonding ritual which was open to all 60-plus freshmen. One third of the members of our class were suspended. After that, we were certain that the teachers and administrators thought we were the worst class in the history of the school.

However, as time went on, it became clear that our teachers didn't hate us. Offenses (when discovered) were punished, but that was the end of it. By the time we were seniors, we could even laugh with administrators about that infamous sleepover. Our redemption became official when, in 2006, almost 20 class members returned to Holy Child, with air mattresses in-tow, for a "Sleepover Reunion," joined by our old principal! I did not attend the original sleepover, and, as a very straight-laced student, I was never



exactly a rebel, but I learned much from the Holy Child approach: set high standards, demand apologies following transgressions, but then forgive and move on. This principle has served me well as both a parent and teacher. Most importantly, it has offered invaluable perspective as I have confronted my own shortcomings since I left high school.

Holy Child also reinforced values I had learned at home, teaching me to be grateful for my good fortune and to prioritize community service. The school was located in an affluent New York suburb and our student body was almost entirely white, yet our teachers regularly challenged us to be a part of the broader community, and it was assumed that our lives (both during and after high school) would include some form of service. Each year, the school shut down for an entire week while every student in the school volunteered in an extended service activity. Students were responsible for finding their own placements, but the school helped girls find activities that would match their interests. We worked in a wide variety of sites, including hospitals, nursery schools, soup kitchens, farms and animal shelters. Of course, some projects were more successful than others, but students accepted the importance of service for its own sake.

Seniors were also required to complete a yearlong service proj-

ect, which usually involved a weekly volunteer commitment. My senior project was built into my Spanish class, as we studied a series of units designed to put our language skills to work in the community. One unit involved assisting a researcher conduct a poll of Spanish-speaking litigants in the White Plains courthouse, in order to determine whether they felt disadvantaged because of their lack of fluency in English. I have long since forgotten most of my Spanish, but I never forgot the importance of using my skills to give back to others. In college, my chief extracurricular activities were run out of the campus service organization, Dwight Hall. I worked with little kids, alcoholics and as a political activist, and, upon graduation, I joined the Peace Corps. Of course, my family had always valued public service, but I wonder whether I would have chosen careers in public interest law and teaching had service not been such an important part of my high school education.

Holy Child also helped nurture what has become an essential part of my adult life: faith. Ironically, I was a devout atheist when I was a student at Holy Child. I enrolled in Catholic school in order to be with friends, not because I was religious. Both my sisters attended the local public school, and I'm sure my parents would not have objected had I chosen that tuition-free, if secular, option. Perhaps the nuns suspected

that I didn't believe in God, even though I dutifully sang and played guitar at school masses, but no one ever challenged me. Instead, they taught about the Catholic religion and modeled lives of tolerant faith, and their example ultimately proved extremely powerful.

One of my most influential teachers was Rabbi Dan Wolk, who taught Old Testament. The Rabbi is now the most senior member of the Holy Child faculty, and the very fact that he worked at Holy Child demonstrated the school's commitment to tolerance and respect. He shared a different view of religion than I had previously known and provided an ecumenical framework within which to analyze existential puzzles. Many teachers at Holy Child encouraged students to wrestle with theological issues and challenged us to develop our own responses to age-old questions of faith. When I studied philosophy at Yale, I began to explore spirituality again; eventually, inspired by remarkable friends and family (including my Aunt Bea, a Roman Catholic nun) and reinforced by lessons learned in high school, I rediscovered my long-abandoned faith. I am sure the Holy Child faculty hoped that their demonstration of a faith-filled life would eventually bear fruit, even among atheists like me. In my case, at least, their patience was rewarded.

My teachers weren't simply patient; they taught me to be patient,

too. I was a good student, but I easily grew frustrated when I didn't understand something. For example, in my junior year, I took physics instead of chemistry, and the resulting gaps in my knowledge caused repeated problems when I took AP biology as a senior. Poor Mrs. Worthing had to work overtime to get me to use moles in calculations, even though I didn't fully grasp what they were. For both our sakes, she forced me to move on in spite of my discomfort. Similarly, I was completely baffled when I first studied the poetry of Wallace Stevens. Nevertheless, that didn't stop me from arguing with my teacher about the meaning of *Thirteen Ways of Looking at a Blackbird*, even while certain that I was doomed never to understand any but the simplest poems. Miss Perrotta sensed my fear and urged me to relax and let time be my instructor. When, a year later, I wrote to her from college to say I had written an entire paper on Stevens, she invited me to come back to Holy Child to teach a class on the poem that had once given me such trouble. That was the first class I ever taught; now I find that she is the teacher I most try to emulate.

Sister Helen Mary, who taught me math all four years at Holy Child, was especially patient, and she taught me the perils of cutting corners. As a freshman, I bristled when she insisted that I use pencil (instead of pen) to do my geometry

homework and complained when she forced me to spell out the fact that “A equals A” in proofs (even though that seemed absurdly obvious to me). When, as a senior, I handed in elaborately colored and meticulously laid out calculus homework, she only allowed herself a bit of a smirk, and she never said: “I told you so!” She started out as my enemy and, as I grew up, she became an ally.

Arguably the most important lesson I learned at Holy Child, and the one that led both of my sisters to transfer to Holy Child after I graduated, was that it is okay to ask for help when you need it. As the oldest child in my family, I was very independent. I also had significant responsibilities at home, because my mother had been ill, on and off, for many years. That is why I didn’t attend the infamous Freshman Sleepover; I had to babysit my sisters when my mother was in the hospital. I was proud of my self-reliance and was confident that I was equipped to handle whatever challenges might arise. When my mother almost died in March of my senior year, I thought I was in control. My teachers knew better, and they refused to let me do homework for a week. They insisted that I prioritize taking care of my family and myself, even though I felt their concern was completely unwarranted. I didn’t fully appreciate their support at the time, but I gradually came to real-

ize, however reluctantly, that I didn’t have to do everything by myself.

Meanwhile, my sisters did not receive similar attention from teachers at their school. When Marnie, who was in eighth grade, started doing poorly in classes, no one inquired about the reason—they just assigned her to remedial classes for her freshman year. Luckily, Marnie stood up for herself and asked to transfer to Holy Child; Dede, then in 10th grade, chose to follow her. They appreciated, long before I did, that the best educators were concerned about more than academics, and they weren’t afraid to ask for help when their school let them down. I am very grateful that I was lucky enough to go to a school that forced me to accept help, even before I was ready to ask for it.

It’s been over four decades since I graduated from Holy Child, and I continue to profit from things I learned during my four years there. My teachers fostered intellectual curiosity and helped hone skills that served me well in college, law school and in the workplace. My classmates taught me how to be a friend, and they have been a source of invaluable love and support my entire adult life. As I headed to Yale, I understood the debt I owed to these wonderful teachers and friends. It was not until years later, however, that I recognized the continuing impact of the less obvious lessons I learned while at Holy Child.



*Joanne after organizing Blair's Day of Service 2018*

**Jason Beck** is chair of the history department, holder of the J. Brooks Hoffman Chair in American History, and a junior class monitor. Since joining Blair's faculty as director of financial aid in 2001, Jason has also taught advanced placement U.S. history, advancement placement world history, western civilization and advanced placement European history. In addition, he has previously served as assistant dean of college counseling, chair of the Accreditation Committee and co-chair of the Faculty Professional Development Committee. After completing his undergraduate work at Vassar College in Poughkeepsie, New York, in 1999, he joined the staff there as assistant director of admission. In 2010, he earned an MA in classics and philosophy from St. John's College in Santa Fe, New Mexico. He lives on campus on Park Street and does dorm duty in Freeman Hall.



*Jason on graduation day*

# Into the World

**I**t was an awe-inspiring space—tall granite steps, carved names of the greats of the Western tradition flanking the entrance, marble pediments and grand oak doors. The main reading room of Williamsport, Pennsylvania's J.V. Brown Library sported a majestic dome and a physical card catalogue that stretched seemingly forever. As a young man, this space gave me the illusion of being part of the broader world—one full of ideas, culture and possibility. It was there that I found a love of the novel, there that I stumbled upon books yellowed with age that drew me in for a few hours, there that I would beg to spend more time during each errand-packed Saturday of my childhood. Tucked just to the right of the main hall, behind an unassuming door, sat a stuffy room with one ancient computer, a stack of floppy disks with BASIC games and a shelf full of college guidebooks. In an age when the Internet meant dial-up modems and online "bulletin boards," it was here that I discovered the magic of college—where the images on TV and in movies were written into real life amid lists of majors and ratings of campus food.

I am the first person in my family to attend college, yet my parents had made it abundantly clear from a young age that my future lay on a campus and in classrooms. For as

long as I can remember, they were certain that I was going to college. My father had a yellowed and fragile dot matrix printout of projected tuition costs at Penn State tacked to the back of his bedroom door for my entire childhood. That fading march of digits made it clear what my college attendance would mean—a tremendous burden that would require incredible sacrifice.

I remember checking out every one of those college guides from the library over the course of a few precocious years in my childhood and, as a result, I had the first conversation of my life with a stranger about college. The kind librarian who always seemed to say the right thing when I stumbled up to the circulation desk with books in hand simply remarked that one of the colleges I had noted on a piece of paper used as a bookmark was, "so delightfully bohemian!" I nodded and agreed, then ran away in order to try to figure out what on earth bohemian could mean and why that made Vassar so "delightful." It was years before I figured that out for myself.

When it finally came time to seriously consider college, I was tired of the process. The packets of mail—flashy viewbooks, enticing letters, massive course guides, all clogged my bedroom no matter how ruthlessly I tossed those that held no appeal into the lit burner



barrel. Some places always made the cut; however, Williams had a great viewbook, Middlebury had spiral-bound their materials, Haverford's campus was small and cozy as it sat around its duck pond, and Vassar... well, Vassar remained both mysteriously bohemian and in possession of a perfect library. That building kept me going back to the viewbook to admire its collegiate gothic mass. One million books beneath beamed ceilings and Renaissance tapestries. It stole my heart in an instant. It was so much larger and even more incredibly magical than the hometown library I loved so much.

Of course, the reality of it all meant that affordability was an overriding concern and I knew no one who had personal insight into the schools about which I cared most. My guidance counselor applauded my dreams and then took my hand to guide me to the shelf with the Penn State and community college applications that she relied on to soak up the minimal college interest at the school. When I ultimately chose Vassar and somehow convinced my parents to figure out the finances, I found out that no one knew where I was going, knew why it was bohemian or appreciated the hold that library had on my soul. Twenty percent of my high school graduating class went to college that year. And only three of us left the state of Pennsylvania to do so. My parents' sacrifice to make that pos-

sible, even though it seemed like an insane undertaking, and it will always be their kindest and most generous act—one of innumerable kindnesses they have shown me.

College proved to be a monumental experience in my life, a clichéd bit of analysis I suppose. College is indeed meant to change lives or determine careers or solidify social groups. But, for me, college wasn't simply the continuation of a certain way of life as it was for many of my peers at Vassar. For me, it was completely, totally disorienting and fundamentally different. I was, at best, ill-prepared to be on that campus. I knew few of the references of my classmates, had few of their shared experiences and had no idea how to be a real student. Much of what was ahead was hard and confusing for me. I stumbled often and spent far too much time trying to mask my fear and self-doubt, all the while pretending that everything was fine.

But there were also moments of great joy that first year:

Discovering small staircases set in the stone walls of the library's main reading room.

Escaping for whole days to the stacks to read and dream.

That magical winter evening taking my dorm neighbors sledding in the deep snow above Sunset Lake.

The serendipity, in an age before cell phones, of stumbling upon

random groups of folks on weekend evenings and letting the night create its own story.

The “Civilization in Question” course where I learned that classics, philosophy, history, hip-hop, pop culture, and life all shared threads of beauty and wonder.

Those awesome days in “Art 105-106” spent pondering the monuments of the artistic world.

The kind, dear and generous people in the career development office who employed and put up with me.

The creaks and groans of my first Swift Hall history classroom.

The majesty of the London plane tree on the library lawn.

And that final night of freshman year spent on the Lathrop House roof, where I finally allowed myself to open up—to share a bit about who I was with those around

me and, in turn, realize that I had begun to find a place for myself on that campus.

Along the way, I learned how to read, how to write, how to question, how to research, how to appreciate music and art, how to be politically active, how to debate, how to dream, how to travel, how to be. Through it all, the finest moments were those of intellectual connection—when an idea summoned in one class made its way into another. When I felt like I could glimpse some sort of essential and underlying order in the nature of things. My life has been profoundly changed by my time on that campus and within the walls of that library. So much of my internal dialogue since was formed in that place. There can be no greater gift than that of an education. A gift I will forever cherish and that I strive to pass on in all that I do.

**Tom Parauda** is a faculty member who joined Blair in 1988, was married the following June, and has since seen his four children graduate from Blair. He emerged from 12 fun years in East and West Halls unscathed and unrepentant, and now lives on Mohican Road. He coaches, teaches in the English department, and wears a few other hats as necessary to keep things more or less on track. Here, he reminisces on a few things, eventually settling on his own experience in the dreaded college application process. He dedicates these simple thoughts to Jim Kelley, Dick Malley and Dave Low, Blair stalwarts who were kind enough to take the chance to hire him.



*Tom ready for the prom*

# On Bricks, Lincoln Logs & Patrick Ewing

**B**oarding school is not for everyone. I begin with this unexceptional fact only because those likeliest to read the Review may need reminding of it. Working at Blair has its share of peculiarities, precisely because working here includes eating here, sleeping here, falling in love here (often enough), raising a family here, sharing here—in short living here. It is not without its rewards, of course, as my extended experience and increasingly enthusiastic approval can attest. But committing to a life at a private boarding school, for even the bravest, means a lot of adjustments.

Granted, I came here as unfamiliar with the norms of such a place as anyone who has ever blithely, and blitheringly, deflected his way through the overnight blitz that is a Blair job interview. That wonderful boot camp of an evaluation process, incidentally, has not changed since I applied for a teaching position 30 years ago. In some ways, I'm still waiting for my head to stop spinning from that strange initiation. An apt primer for a busy, rewarding life!

Despite my ignorance, I realized in my first days here that I did have some advantages I can only attribute to my background. Raising a family of eight children separated

by a total of nine years, my parents understood that, for their six boys especially, the guiding principle was, "Roll a few balls out (or, as was as much the case in my home—a few dice) and let 'em figure it out." Well, we did. Mostly.

So when I first peered down the long hallway of East Hall's third floor, a sort of gangly-limbed adolescent gauntlet leading to my apartment, I was reminded of a game my testosterone-infested neighborhood had played when I was a kid. We called it Can You Survive This—in which one bold lad, dared and baited to within an inch of his life, 'volunteered' to take on a challenge: walking down a flight of basement steps, finding his way to the wall on the far side, and then escaping to the place from whence he came.

Hardly a task reminiscent of Hercules' labors, you're thinking? Wrong. Beforehand, the 10 or more soldiers occupying that underground hellhole, ranging in age from five to 15, would carefully booby-trap the path with whatever they found handy or had snuck in for the purpose—Lincoln Logs, roller skates, overturned tables, pond scum—and then, right before turning off the lights in that windowless void, would arm themselves with genuine government-issue missile

equipment—toy building blocks, (more) Lincoln Logs, tennis balls, and verbal epithets of disingenuous encouragement and quite genuine discouragement. Both psychological and construction-toy warfare. It was fun.

And good training. As I took my first steps down that narrow hallway to the small apartment waiting on the other end for its unsuspecting new victim, I thought, “Pssshh, I can survive this!”

And survive I did, and I have quite recently procured the nostalgic debris to prove it—one of the numerous bricks that once framed those hallowed halls (as the song puts it), or, more accurately, that once enclosed the Ark (as the song also once put it, though a recent edit of *Ever Always* has replaced ‘Ark,’ the dorm’s original nickname, with the more picturesque and marketable ‘Arch’). Ah, poor East Hall, made obsolete in form and in song, but not in memory!

I can’t help but wonder if my keepsake is one of the bricks that, 20 years ago, stoically endured the indecent, curving stream originating from an upper-floor occupant as my wife, hand-in-hand and hand-in-hand with our two eldest as they walked to school, duly noted the window that served as threshold between the pangs of bladder suppression and the sweet, golden arch of release. Later, when confronted by his young housemaster, the culprit

explained with some exuberance that he had opted not to walk the long, frigid hallway to the bathroom a full 50 feet afar. “Besides, Mr. P, you made very clear your distaste for guys that use a bottle when ‘their time’ comes.” While I do not remember ever comparing this more routine, profane urge to any of the sacred feminine mysteries implied in his words, I had to give him credit for his adherence to the letter, if not exactly the spirit, of that particular law. Oh, if those bricks could speak; no doubt every one of them has a story.

But to return, at last, to where I had first meant to launch. The point is that an Italian-Irish Catholic from a big family and a neighborhood chock full of the same did not find a dorm of adolescent boys particularly life-altering. However, one adjustment I did have to make was getting used to the significant importance of the college process for these young students, a trauma that has only grown in the years since. I had the gnawing sense that I was missing something—that the stress and success, the sighs and the highs, were foreign to me. Perhaps my misgivings are best understood if I offer as a clear contrast my own college application experience. It was a process so blissfully uninformed, so wrong-headedly naïve, it’s a wonder I ever prevailed in college or beyond.

My college counselor was my

dad, who provided some applications and Wite-Out in the opening months of my senior year. He was Jesuit educated and felt the same would be fine for his children. As the only colleges his sons paid any attention to were the ones we saw playing sports on TV., we were hardly in a position to suggest otherwise. BC, Fordham, Fairfield, Holy Cross, Georgetown—you get the idea. All good schools, all in the Northeast.

But none particularly close to West Virginia. See, a female friend of mine had a plan, one she would go on to follow with unfailing focus and absolute success: to go to a school she could pay for herself, one with an accredited and respected program in social work, and then to go to a university for her MSW degree. I had a plan, too—to go to a college close to her. So, when she found the undergraduate program she was looking for in West Virginia, I acted on the initiative that comes with young love. But was I ready for an adventure in a place I somehow thought of as another world—"the South?"

A Springsteen fan by geographical and aesthetic necessity, I had defined the South up to that point as the Jersey shore; in traffic, it was a full morning's drive from my central Jersey home to the netherworld of Asbury Park. Long after the Boss frequented The Stone Pony, we were still willing to risk "the shutdown

strangers and hotrod angels" we imagined racing up and down the Garden State Parkway in exchange for a glimpse of kids who 'flashed guitars just like switchblades,' and, especially, for some time on the beach. And the Deep South? Cape May, I guess, an ineffable vision of seaside tranquility that for me fit C.S. Lewis's description of heaven—a place the existence of which is more important than my ever getting there.

But love called, and though I did not know of any schools in West Virginia, I had heard of a school south of the Mason-Springsteen line that my dad might approve of: William and Mary, in Virginia. Virginia and West Virginia—something like Stroudsburg and East Stroudsburg, right? I mean, how far apart could these be? I applied, and for a brief time was prepared to attend, but by the time the acceptance came, my gal had found a better option, a state school in Pennsylvania. Immediately, I found myself siding with the prescient line in a beloved Steely Dan song: 'William and Mary won't do!' Both my applying and my demurring, it turns out, were inspired by thoughts of love, which a young man's fancy should ideally keep to the spring. Hardly the recommended course of action presented to students from their Blair college counselors, in any event.

So, I accepted an offer instead from Fordham, resigned to the 180-



mile buffer separating the Bronx and central Pennsylvania which, as luck would have it, was exactly half the distance I would have needed to travel to visit that West Virginia school from Williamsburg, Virginia—proving, as became a dangerous pattern in my college years, that things worked out twice as well when I gave less thought and instead embraced whim and procrastination. Yet, in so doing, I secured an independence that served both my newly-distant beloved and me well—and which I avenged later when I married her. Yes, Christine, my high school darling, my sweetheart, my primary extracurricular interest, now also acknowledges the less-dazzling appellation of “wife” and, more substantially, “mom.”

And my college experience? Just fine. I realize now that the lack of expectations served me well. I was the *tabula rasa* that enjoyed being etched in philosophy, history, theology, art and literature. I became enamored with so much about the Western world,

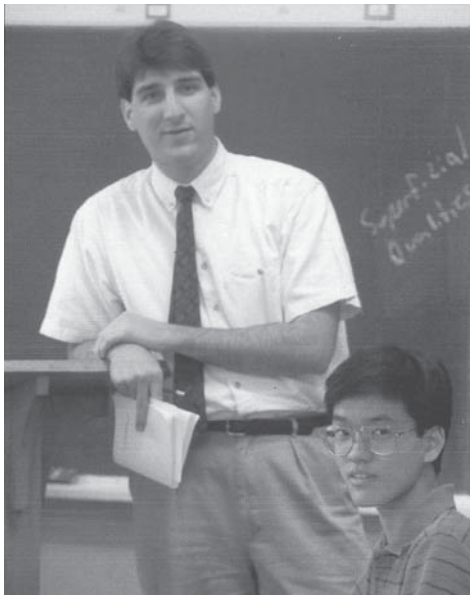
and remain so thankful of the life of learning my professors—including several Jesuit priests—inspired in me.

Sounds simple enough, but I realize, of course, that things are different now. I certainly worry about the pressure students are under, much of it self-imposed, but much of it stirred unintentionally by the rest of us, well-meaning parents and teachers alike, who can sometimes give in to celebrating and lamenting outcomes that the world often calibrates for us. Better by far are the refreshing conversations I have with alumni who acquire a perspective with the passing years. They so often

come to the same conclusion that I did about my college experience: that the variables that can never be calculated, evaluated or predicted so often determine the quality of one's overall experience.

None of this is meant to imply that I did not have any low moments in my application process.

In fact, there was one crushing rejection. Well, not crushing, exactly, but eventful. As fate would have it, Patrick Ewing



and I both applied to Georgetown. Apparently, to hear my mom tell it, the institution had to choose between the two of us....

A letter to the Georgetown president followed, detailing “our” frustration—not from me, who would have agreed wholeheartedly with such a choice, and, as a lifelong Knick supporter, I later came increasingly to admire Patrick Ewing. But, of course, there had been no such either-or choice. For my mom, however, this was beside the point, and her letter was a scathing indictment of the dangers of high-end athletics at would-be prestigious institutions. I think she read somewhere about Patrick’s regrettable high school record or board scores.

My dad, a Georgetown man himself, smiled knowingly (yup, even a legacy could not upend a 7-foot game changer). His smile was not at the apparent ethical catastrophe inherent in the ascending supremacy of sports in a hitherto academically credible university—no—but at my mother’s fierce determination to make herself heard. He called it “getting her Irish up,” and knew at such times to give her space, plenty of it. Well, I can confirm that her Irish was most definitely up. It was a display of passionate zeal I had witnessed several years earlier when my mom’s sister wrote an equally paint-peeling letter to (no kidding) Billy Joel, whose invitation,

*Come out Virginia, don’t let me wait,*

*You Catholic girls start much too late,*

did not sit well with—pause here for the gods of irony to take a bow—my Aunt Virginia. As my dad would have been happy to remind us, yes, only the good die young—and those who stand in the way of a Grady girl with her Irish up.

And so, in a rather convoluted fidelity to my mother’s side of the family, I felt I too should be outraged, but the most I could muster was a good feeling about Villanova’s great upset win a few years later, preventing Georgetown from winning consecutive NCAA titles. But I was just rooting for the Cinderella team.

I believe my mom may still be waiting for a letter of apology for the perceived slight of my rejection, which perhaps explains her rather gleeful, knowing head shake at the recent news that her life partner’s alma mater (but, in her eyes, a mater that is persona non grata) had, in a tight financial pinch, sold slaves... to right the university’s ship, so to speak. Apparently, it was the second most controversial decision in their storied history. Perhaps the latter choice was an unconscious response to the guilt incurred by the former. After all, what did Patrick Ewing ever do for Georgetown?

Yeah, I know. Try telling that to my mom.

**Steven Kampmann** moved from Hollywood to Blair in the late 1990s to teach senior English, screen writing, and his famous elective “The Dreams Class.” He was Blair’s writer in residence until his retirement in 2010. His three sons **Woody ’01**, **Billy ’02**, and **Mikey ’04** graduated from Blair and went on to fantastic lives of their own. Judith Kampmann, Steven’s wife, began Blair’s video program which still carries the stamp of Kampmann excellence. Steven returns to guest lecture as his schedule allows, much to the delight of another crop of Blair students.



# Mr. Paige

Writers need an inner mentor—a muse for whom we write to please, be it a personal hero, a master of our bliss, or any elevated soul who sweeps us heavenward with truth, beauty and wisdom—teaching, guiding and inspiring us to evolve into the very best writers we can possibly be. Choosing the right mentor, however, can be a tricky endeavor. We're tempted to seek out the overly supportive type who gushes affirmatives, heaping buckets of praise on us that we know in our heart of hearts we don't deserve. But experience has taught me to search in an opposing direction—to seek the mentor who ridicules your very being, who mocks and diminishes your talents and regards your writing efforts as a sinful waste of time.

Mr. Paige, my 12th-grade English teacher, a silver-haired gent in tweed coats, tortoiseshell glasses and faded Brooks Brothers' ties, presented himself to the world as a stable and pleasant enough fella, but behind the preppy mask was a bipolar-anxiety-driven-closet-alcoholic, who managed to stutter and stammer his way through Hamlet with a breathtaking lack of teaching skills, leaving students both bored and confused in equally unhappy measure. He savored smoking his stylish pipe in class, flicking lit matches over his shoulder with a

casual, aristocratic flair; that is, until one sunny morn he set fire to the curtains, which set fire to the building, which set fire to his precious car, a Ford Falcon that he insisted on calling "my beloved Lincoln" as if it were a gilded carriage on its glorious way to a coronation ball. He was forever referring to his tall and long suffering wife as "my lady." "My lady" went to the market. "My lady" saw the dentist. "My lady" did this and "my lady" did that. Oh, how I wished that Mr. Paige would drive the "Lincoln" and his "lady" over a steep and unforgiving cliff.

For whatever reason, Mr. Paige took an instant disliking to me. I never learned exactly why he felt such venom, but his loathing went viral when I suggested Hamlet suffered from the Oedipus complex. I believe my exact words were "Hamlet wanted to sleep with his mother. It makes perfect sense. I mean, at one point he did live inside her, right?" The next morning, bleak and drizzly, he pulled me aside after a scintillating class discussion on Moby Dick that caused me to hate whales for years, and smugly proclaimed he was failing me for the entire year—an extraordinary and shocking pronouncement given it was only September and he barely knew my name.

But such were the slings and arrows of outrageous high school

fortune with Mr. Paige, whose face and very being belonged on the cover of Dostoevsky's *The Idiot*. While my classmates garnered As and Bs, I became marooned on the other side of the grading spectrum, receiving the full brunt of Ds and Fs accompanied by Mr. Paige's ever encouraging words "great job!!!" emblazoned in red ink next to my dismal, sad-faced grade. Mr. Paige, that Falcon-driving-Lincoln-loving bastard, single-handedly ruined my senior year, forcing me to take a postgraduate high school year the following fall.

And, yet, years later, while walking under a summer starry night, mysteries of all mysteries bloomed in my brain—the very same Mr. Paige, who by then had taken up permanent residency in my psyche, became my mentor! Instead of crushing and defeating my bruised spirit, I mentally made a reverse pivot, allowing myself to appreciate Mr. Paige more and hate him less. From that miraculous evening, Mr. Paige's criticisms toughened me, which propelled me to new realms of stubborn determination to earn his respect.

For 88 straight quarters, I made a living as a screenwriter, in no small measure by proving to Mr. Paige that I was a worthy enough writer to finally earn a reasonably good grade. Ironically, who would ever have imagined that I would turn out to be the only member of my Eng-

lish class to actually earn a living by writing? Certainly not Mr. Paige, who discouraged and dismissed me like no other teacher. But time can be a transformative healer, and while I used to write for Mr. Paige, now I write with him. The two of us are inseparable partners. I've even come to like him, and, while he has never said so, I think he feels the same way about me. Mr. Paige tirelessly looks after me, pushing me to seek excellence, to slow down and rewrite again and again, all in service to making me a better writer. As I write these very words, he just whispered, "Certainly, we can do better than that last sentence, can't we?!" See what I mean?

**Editors' note: When the good writer was asked by the editorial staff (we are still in the world of high school, after all) to please address the prompt and discuss the transition to college from this experience, the verbal response was "College; hated it." No rewrite was ever produced. Were we to grade this piece for compliance with the rules of high school essay writing, we might well line up with Mr. Paige. Go ahead, be inspired anyway.**

## Graduation

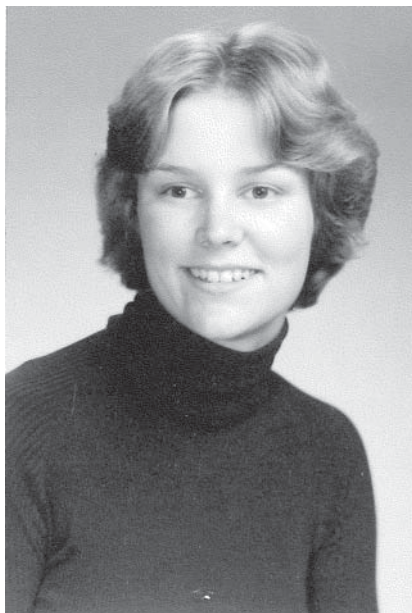


Senior . . . . . to . . . . . Freshman

This delightful cartoon was published in the *Blair Breeze*. It was contributed by **Charles R. Rogers '51** who provided more than 60 cartoons as a Blair student. He created wonderful depictions of campus life, including this rite of passage from high school senior to college freshman.



**Kaye Evans** joined Blair's English department in 1994. In addition to teaching English classes, she is assistant drama director and community service coordinator. She completed her undergraduate work in Latin, English and education at Dickinson College in Carlisle, Pennsylvania, in 1979, and began her career at the Hun School in Princeton, New Jersey, and the Tilton School in New Hampshire. Kaye earned a master's in letters in literature in 2007 from Drew University in Madison, New Jersey. She lives on campus in Hanson House with her husband, Craig, who also teaches theatre and English, and she serves on the dorm staff of South Cottage. Kaye and Craig have two children: **Faith '05** and **Dylan '08**.



# Another Love Story

**M**ine is a love story, pure and simple. I went to college and I fell in love.

“Dickinson College—a small, liberal arts college nestled in the heart of the Cumberland Valley.” This was the official description in the brochure I opened at the admission office. I had my sights set on greater things—Northwestern and the University of Virginia—two excellent schools for journalism. But my sister had gone to Dickinson, and at her suggestion, I decided to take a look.

It was the only college I actually visited. A scant two hours from Bethesda, Maryland, the D.C. suburb where I lived, it was an easy, familiar and beautiful drive. So, we drove—my sister and I—to see where she had spent four years, two of them away from her family which was living in Japan. I would be almost a year old when she finally met me, her very little sister. Nineteen years and one day apart, we would cherish our Dickinson connection, and it would become another common bond we shared.

Well, it looked like a college was supposed to look. It had dormitory rooms, a cafeteria, classrooms, trees and grassy areas. There was also a small indoor swimming pool—unimpressive as it was, it would be enough for me, a competitive swimmer, to continue my athletic, as well

as my academic career. There was a swim team. What more could I want or need? And the added bonus? A frozen custard stand, exactly like the one around the corner from where I had grown up, stood right across the street from the campus. Dickinson had been good enough for Arlene (one of the smartest people I knew), and so, I thought it might be good enough for me.

When I see Blair students apply to 10 to 12 colleges, I am always amazed. How could one possibly make up one’s mind? It is like going to the grocery store and trying to find laundry detergent today—the plethora of choices is overwhelming. But I lived in simpler times. I applied to four schools. UVA rejected me; Dickinson accepted me. It was the only institution I had visited, and, so, I sent in my enrollment contract with the \$50 deposit.

There was no admission video to show me the wonders of a Dickinson education, the happy students frolicking on the quad or the friendship of dormitory life. There was no orientation program. I did fill out a roommate survey, and I received a letter with my roommate’s name and address in late July. There was no texting or calling by cell phone. Calling long distance would have been prohibitively expensive. I think we may have written a few letters, but I do not remember collaborat-

ing with my future roommate, Annie, on colors of comforters, curtains or coffee pots.

So what did I expect college would be like? I figured it would be exactly like high school, except I would share a bedroom with someone. My sister still exchanged Christmas cards with her college roommate, so I thought my roommate and I would become good pals. I thought I would go to college and then get a job and live in a house in the suburbs of Washington, DC, where I had grown up. That was about it.

First and foremost, of course, there were the academics. Our dormitory floor was assigned a professor to act as an academic advisor for us, and I met with Professor Sider to select my four classes. My Latin 101 class met at 8 a.m. on Monday, Wednesday and Friday. So, exactly as I had done in high school, I got up every morning at 6:45 a.m. and went to breakfast at 7:30 a.m. to get to class by 8 a.m. On Tuesdays, when my first class wasn't until 11 a.m., I still got up, went to breakfast and then went to the library to work on the three hours of homework that was given for every hour of class.

After two weeks of getting up early and heading over to an almost empty dining hall, I realized that I was the only one on my hall who got up to go to breakfast. I thought that, as in high school, from 8 a.m.

to about 3 p.m. were school hours. I didn't realize I didn't have to get up unless I had an early class. And, by the time it was time to select classes for the second semester and I could have picked later classes, I was stuck with the 8 a.m. Latin classes to fulfill my language requirement. While my hallmates slept until 11 a.m., noon or their 3:30 p.m. class, I was at the library or in class. This was school, right? I thought I should go to school, and so I did. I followed this schedule for the entire first semester and some variation of it thereafter. While I did eventually eventually relax and find some courses that met later in the day, I continued to consider the hours between 8 and 3 to be "school hours" or the academic day. I never expected the flexibility or freedom college would offer when it came to my scholastic schedule.

As for my course of study, I went into college thinking I wanted to be a journalist. I had worked on the yearbook and had been an editor my senior year. When I got to Dickinson, I found out there was no journalism major. (You would think that I would have researched that, but somehow I missed it). One could major in English, though, and so I decided to do that. When I selected my courses, Professor Robert Sider, who taught classics, listened to my requests. I had taken French since middle school, and I intended to pursue French to complete my

language requirement. However, the French courses were already filled; as a freshman, I could only take classes that hadn't already been fully subscribed by upperclassmen. My advisor's eyes lit up. "Kaye, why don't you take Latin?" he gleefully asked. I had friends who had taken Latin in high school and who liked it, so I said yes. After three weeks in Latin 101, I decided to major in Latin, along with English. There was no reasonable explanation—there was little in the way of careers it could offer me. But I loved it.

In general, the smaller classes at Dickinson were so different from my large public school classes I had experienced. I loved learning and every class I took (even "baby" chemistry for non-majors—we made peanut brittle in one lab). I thrived with the extra attention I received from my teachers. I fell in love with school. The joy I felt when I was in class cemented my choice to go into education. I changed my aspirations from being a journalist to becoming a teacher. I now joke that if I had gone to UVA, perhaps I would have had Katie Couric's career—she graduated from UVA the same year I graduated from Dickinson. Maybe we would have been roommates!

That first semester, along with being a life-changing academic one, also proved to be an important one for me athletically. I went to Dickinson fully intending to swim.

Swimming was an important part of my identity. I spent most of my summers in high school lifeguarding. I swam even when I wasn't even in season. I knew the Dickinson team wasn't great, but the coach was a fatherly (maybe even grandfatherly) coaching legend at the school. They needed a backstroker—I was in luck. However, sometime that autumn, my right arm began to ache, and I had trouble lifting things and moving it. The school physician diagnosed it as bursitis in my shoulder, but by the time I got home for Thanksgiving, my arm was weak and the muscles in the upper arm had completely atrophied. Finally, I was diagnosed with brachial plexus neuropathy—a virus had destroyed the nerves in my arm. I would recover and go on to swim for the next three years, but there would be no competitive swimming that year. This incident taught me for the first time that your body could betray you at any minute; that your physical self was not, in fact, entirely safe from injury, illness or accident. I spent the year cheering for the team from the tiny spectator stands, smelling the chlorine in the air, but missing its strong scent in my hair and on my skin. However, NOT swimming made me realize how much I loved gliding through the water, kicking and pulling as hard as I could to reach the end of the pool, and the afterglow of a good workout. I have forgiven my alma mater

for building a beautiful, new eight-lane swimming pool the year after I graduated, and I have even swum in that pool on several alumni days, but it wasn't the pool but the swimming I came to care about that year.

When I went to college, I anticipated nothing beyond the larger academic world I would encounter. What I really didn't expect was how much my life would change. I didn't know how formative the entire experience would be. I was lucky to have good friends, great professors and a pretty healthy social life. My roommate and I parted ways after freshman year (she actually transferred, so no lifelong friend as I expected), and I became a resident assistant, living with underclassmen. (Being an RA made my transition from public school teacher to dormitory master in boarding school all the easier later on.) While others are not so fortunate in their college selection, Dickinson was an excellent choice for me. It was the place where I honed my reading and writing skills, developed my teaching style and fostered my love of literature.

However, it became more than just a college where I took classes, student taught and got started in education. It became the most important place in my life. Senior year, I fell in love with a fellow resident assistant, Craig Evans, whom I had known for three years. His brother had also attended Dickinson (coin-

cidence? I think not!). Our relationship changed everything. To make a long story short, we dated, graduated and, a year after graduation, got married and began teaching at The Hun School of Princeton. The school was in need of a drama director and English teacher, as well as a Latin teacher; I had been laid off from my public school job teaching English. Hun gave us both jobs and an apartment, and the rest is boarding school history. If I hadn't taken Latin, we may not have gotten the two jobs. Although my Latin professor had encouraged me to apply to private schools, I was a public school girl, and I knew nothing else. I had envisioned myself working in public schools for 30 years and then retiring. But fate intervened, and, at Hun, we found ourselves teaching, coaching, directing and mentoring young people in a way we never could have in public school. From Hun, we moved to New Hampshire to teach at Tilton School, where we lived and taught for seven years.

We have spent 36 years in boarding schools, teaching and working together. I never would have seen that in my future when I arrived at Dickinson in 1975. But because of my experience at that small liberal arts college working closely with my professors and developing relationships with them, teaching at boarding school offered us a familiar lifestyle—small classes and dormitory life (without the fraternity parties,

of course). I felt more at home at Hun than I had at the public school where I began my teaching career. I think Dickinson had something to do with that feeling.

Furthermore, I never would have thought that Carlisle, Pennsylvania, would have been a centric, almost magical place for me, a place that calls me back. My older brother attended the Army War College there, and when he retired, he and his wife stayed there. I love going back to visit, to walk on campus, to eat the world's best frozen custard. In addition, my daughter, Faith, applied to Dickinson, was accepted and graduated in 2010. As alumni, Craig and I were on the podium to hand Faith her diploma. I never would have imagined as my sister and I drove on Route 15 north to Dickinson for the first time that my daughter would follow me there or that Carlisle would become so axial in my life.

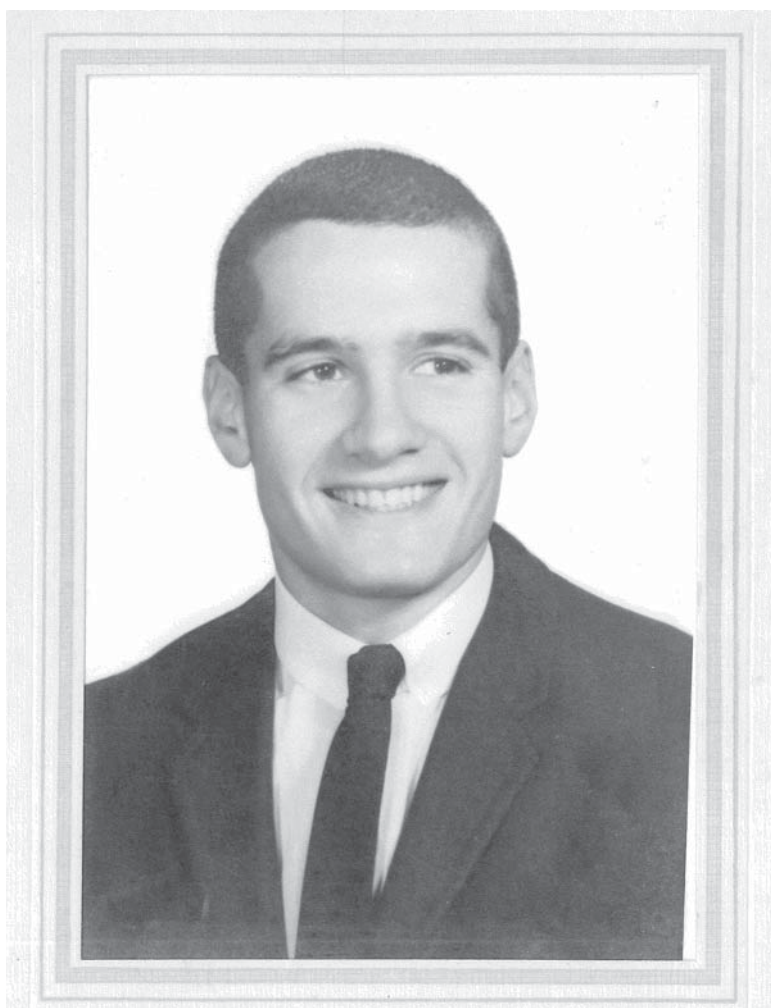
As it turns out, since college, I was raised in the suburbs, where cars were necessary for shopping, socializing and just about everything. When I got to Carlisle, I found a church downtown, within walking distance. I started shopping in the little independent stores and eating in the small restaurants that dotted High and Hanover Streets. One of those restaurants is still in business and, when we visit Carlisle, we try

to stop for my favorite blueberry muffins on the planet. "Shop Local" wasn't a thing back then; malls ruled retail. There was no Internet shopping. But I enjoyed walking downtown and interacting personally with the folks who ran the stores and restaurants and who came to know me by name. Living in Carlisle (even for two summers), I came to appreciate life in a small town. The boarding schools where we have taught are all in small towns—no suburbs. I never returned to the suburban life I lived as a child and adolescent, and I believe that my love for the small communities in which I have lived comes from my college years living in a college town.

There is a saying that "all roads lead to Rome." For me, however, all roads seemed to lead to Carlisle. Dickinson turned out to be about family connections, a core of wonderful caring professors, intellectually challenging classes, swimming, frozen custard and, most importantly, my soulmate. Was it happenstance or fate that I ended up at Dickinson College? I don't really know, but you probably can figure out where my feelings lean. I didn't become a host of *The Today Show*, but at Dickinson, I found the love of my life and a life that I love. How amazing is that? I never saw that coming.



**Martin Miller** joined Blair's history department in 1980. In addition to teaching advanced placement European history, political economy and economic theory classes, he directs the Society of Skeptics program, edits the Blair Review, runs the Model United Nations program and is in his 39th year as head coach of cross country. He completed his undergraduate work at Syracuse University in 1966 and earned his PhD in comparative politics from the City University of New York (CUNY) in 1982. Before coming to Blair, he taught at Stockton State College in New Jersey and CUNY in New York. Marty lives on campus at Steckel House with his wife, Micheline, with whom he has two children: **David '88** and **Colin '00**.



*College graduation photo*

## From “Stuy” to “Cuse”

**M**y college counseling experience was a marvel of simplicity. Without prior warning or fanfare, it began at the high school's first bell and ended 15 minutes later. That was it! Mrs. McGillicuddy, bless her soul, was our homeroom teacher in fall 1961. A Depression-era holdover, this sweet lady in a flouncy, floral dress dispensed counseling wisdom or, should I say, gave brief directions to a group of distracted boys focused on other matters, like Sunday's football scores and which teams “covered” the betting line. A number of rat-ty boxes were arrayed on her desk, and index cards were handed out to all students, no exceptions. After all, this was Manhattan's Stuyvesant High School, and everyone was expected to head off to college and meet the imminent Soviet threat.

If you had an 88 plus average, you placed a card with your name and grades into box one (City College) or dropped it into box two (Queens College) if you had an 85 to 87 percent average, and so forth. The constituent colleges of the City University system were tuition-free—well, there was a much-discussed \$5 fee for activities—and everyone with an academic bent could afford higher education. Of course, that's if families were able to support you while studying, a challenge for mostly blue-collar folks. We sauntered out of the room and

headed to first period class without so much as a nod to our respective choices. As mentioned, sport was the topic of spirited debate, and the usual boasting and jabbering resounded throughout the corridors. Unfortunately, girls weren't part of the scene in this all-male bastion on 345 East 15th Street. Currently, the decrepit building—constructed in 1902 for 1,500 students and housing almost 3,000 boys by 1961—has been repurposed as P.S. 22, and co-ed “Stuy” is situated in magnificent quarters on the Hudson near Battery Park. Things change.

Nikita Khrushchev's USSR launched the first satellite, Sputnik, in October 1957, possibly a prelude to a feared ICBM nuclear missile attack. It's difficult to overstate the impact of this event on the American psyche: Presumably the backward Russkies now had the technological and military advantage, or so we were led to believe. People were scared and looked to the government for answers. Among any number of responses was President Eisenhower's support of the 1958 National Defense Education Act, which provided low-interest loans to qualified, college-bound students. It seemed obvious that American security rested on advanced education to compete on all fronts with our ideological foe. Science and engineering were in the air and most “Stuy” graduates pursued

such rigorous majors. Wall Street and various financial career paths were not on our radar. You were prepared to go off into the sunset with a slide rule and mechanical drawing skills—add training in electronics, metal shop and the lathe. No room for dreamy poets and philosophers in that environment!

How did I, a future history and politics guy, get involved in this straitjacketed, tech powerhouse, a school about an hour-and-a-half from my house, door-to-door? Well, I was urged in junior high school to take the test for “specialized schools,” and I chose Stuyvesant for a critical reason: it had an excellent football team. I drifted into this milieu without much thought and zero parental input—no visit, no perusal of brochures, no advice from peers. It never dawned on me that the local high school alternative, a walk away from my home, should be considered. I lost most of my junior high buddies, was cut off from the neighborhood, and spent endless hours on the grimy, hot and crowded New York City subway. What I did manage to obtain was some sense of advanced academic work (even if I slacked off) by rubbing shoulders with confident, often brilliant students.

And then there was running, always running. To sum up my high school cross country and track career, it separated me from the big brains at school, focused all my

manic energy on sport, and attracted interest from various colleges—recruitment that circumvented Mrs. McGillicuddy’s elegant schema. A New York City cross country title and second place in the mile attracted attention, but I was generally clueless about options. I was the son of a Bronx bricklayer, communication among family members was below the bare minimum and a tradition of higher education was lacking among the Millers. A reserved slot at City College awaited, and the price was right. But coaches from schools now termed NESCAC liberal arts colleges kept sending letters. My reflexive response was either dismissive (“What the hell is a Bates?”) or puzzled (“Why pay to attend college?”). Columbia came knocking, but any financial burden was unacceptable in my household—borrowing from Uncle Sam was beyond the pale. It was never stated outright, rather conveyed implicitly. So much of teen maneuvering depended on familial signals: a sour look, a raised eyebrow, moping, the silent treatment and the like. You just knew not to ask.

Sad to say, that’s how I operated throughout this formative period. The Naval Academy coach suggested a postgraduate year at New Mexico Military Academy to gain maturity, the equivalent of banishment to Mars. Never heard the term “postgraduate” before and knew next to nothing about the Southwest.

One fine day, though, the coach of Syracuse University made an offer I couldn't refuse, a full ride as they say in jock parlance. That I understood. There was never a visit planned or a discussion of the pros and cons of Division I athletics. It was a done deal in two minutes' time.

How this came to pass deserves a digressive comment or two. It really had to do with the helping hand of a fine human being, Mr. Dickerson of Taft High School in the Bronx. A teacher and coach in the Public School Athletic League (PSAL), he took a proprietary interest in runners throughout the five boroughs. The mission was to link talented kids to out-of-town schools, and he functioned as a scout for various universities, including his alma mater, Syracuse. An avuncular African-American in his late 30s, this kindly fellow offered an upbeat word or smile of recognition to so many us, even though we competed against his team. I'd like to think we were all “his” boys!

Evidently, Mr. Dickerson recommended me to the Syracuse coaching staff, which changed the course of my life in ways large and small. No essays or college recommendations were required; the application was a pro forma 10 minute affair and, voila, I was an Orangeman. A Hollywood ending eluded Mr. Dickerson; he died of a congenital heart ailment before reaching

the age of 40. And, unfortunately, I never really thanked him for his encouragement and support. Ah, the blinders of youth, the endless narcissism, are sad to behold from the perspective of a senior citizen. Unsung educators like Mr. Dickerson impacted the lives of so many youngsters and, for a bright shining moment, were part of city lore. And then their tireless efforts faded into obscurity. I do remember, though, and honor his memory at this late date!

Homage should also be paid to the mentorship and expertise of Francisco Castro, “Paco,” the City College cross country and track coach. I joined a track club the summer prior to my senior year. Such groups were ubiquitous in the 1950s and included the New York Athletic Club, Pioneers, Grand Street Boys, Teddy Foy's Manhattan Flight Kings, Bruce Track Club and many others. Mr. Castro was part of the scene, particularly at Bruce TC, my club. Such institutions were the great equalizers, providing any city kid, rich or poor, entree into the world of serious training. No shoes or fancy gear were doled out, just a shirt and shorts, and you could identify with runners representing all corners of the city.

Given my “Stuy” coach's complete ignorance of modern methods (Mr. Davis's fall regimen: three days per week training, traversing the 2.5 mile course at Van Cortlandt each

session!), “Paco” allowed me to train with City’s crew of relatively high-level athletes once the summer ended. And I held on for dear life! A single workout would be far more rigorous than the entirety of Mr. Davis’s truncated weekly schedule. I came in contact with pre-med students, literature majors, engineers and budding social scientists, undergrads who bandied about authors, book titles and intellectual fare well beyond my limited background. But I was accepted! It did put a crimp in my school spirit and allegiance to Stuyvesant teammates. I found a new home, though it turned out this resident was somewhat of an ingrate. When Coach Castro learned of my defection to Syracuse, he was not pleased. And I simply moved on, somehow believing my appreciation for the college’s nurturing environment would be conveyed magically to Mr. Castro. It would be many years before I learned the essential lesson: Don’t forget to tell certain people you care about them.

In any case, my prospects appeared to be bright as college loomed just over the horizon. Without a visit, I could only imagine what awaited. The cultural phenomenon of the ’60s hadn’t quite reached upstate New York, and Syracuse was happily moored to the norms of post-war optimism. Most colleges were in a similar situation, apart from such campuses as Berkeley and the University of Wiscon-

sin. Of course, I couldn’t articulate such thoughts as a youth. Football was king back then. The great Jim Brown made his mark at the “Cuse” earlier in the last decade, and the football team was crowned national champion in 1959, a tectonic shift toward the East of enormous proportions. Imagine having Alabama in your backyard! And it only got better. Ernie Davis garnered the Heisman Trophy in 1961, the first black athlete to do so, further adding to the legendary status of squads coached by D-Day combatant Captain Floyd “Ben” Schwartzwalder, Coach of the Year in ’59. These stunning accomplishments filtered down to my sport-obsessed neighborhood, including the local bookies, who suddenly became interested in my matriculation. I was joining an athletic department of giants, all 140 pounds of me. It was heady stuff for a teenager, and I lapped it up.

In late August of 1962, just weeks before my 17th birthday, I was dropped off unceremoniously on the Syracuse University campus and delivered to Watson Hall, where senior volunteers gathered up my possessions (i.e., one suitcase) and babbled on about “rah-rah” frosh activities. Huh? My old man turned the car around and headed back to New York City “to beat the traffic.” No nuggets of wisdom or educational visions were offered and none were expected. It was alien territory to my parents, much the same

for me. I wandered around campus disoriented by the opulence: stately fraternity houses displaying strange Greek symbols, students tooling around in Austin-Healys, 'Vettes and the like—my friends didn't have access to cars—guys in the standard uniform of khakis, loafers, blue oxford shirts (i.e., items decidedly not to be found in my suitcase) and girls in plaid skirts and knee socks (a co-ed school!). I was a kid thrown into an adult world, if that's the right term for, dare I say, a party school.

On schedule, my angst dissipated when practice began at the newly opened Manley Field House. Here I met other runners from places like Buffalo and Lancaster, Pennsylvania, regular guys from modest backgrounds, and felt more at home. At some mile marker on an initial distance run, came the epiphany: competitive training partners were abundant, endless country roads and the Drumlins golf course would be part of the daily routine and a cross country focus was shared by my roommate. Add to the list a special dining room for varsity athletes, which included recruited “frosh” like me. According to NCAA regulations, one had to wait a year before joining a varsity squad. (Lew Alcindor, later known as Kareem Abdul Jabbar, played on the UCLA freshman team!) Commuting was a burden of the past and hours were literally added to my day. I had arrived. A quiet dorm room

was infinitely superior to a crowded apartment with everyone jockeying to avoid each other.

Best of all, I could be a spectator at big-time athletic events—for free. There were four major athletic schools in the East back then, all “independents” without a conference affiliation: Penn State, Pitt, West Virginia and Syracuse. I would attend as many contests as possible. Life was surprisingly sweet. (Ernie Davis, the number one NFL draft pick that year, returned to the Commons training table early in the fall. He sat right THERE at the table! Unbeknownst to me, Davis hadn't taken a snap with the Cleveland Browns; leukemia halted the Elmira Express in his tracks. I simply looked on in awe.) One glitch in this litany of pleasant surprises: little thought had been given to signing up for classes. And so, the plot thickens.

The line snaked down the hallway outside of Dean Faigle's office as athletes picked up their scholarship packets. In those supposedly benighted days, we all received “university scholarships” that were irrevocable except for academic failure or moral turpitude—in loco parentis rules forbade co-ed dorm visits of any type. The room-and-board portion of the aid package was basically controlled by the coach, hence the term “brown baggers” for those who transgressed in some way (e.g., missed practice) and were denied



access to the excellent food at the training table. In today's progressive era, the NCAA allows scholarships to be pulled for a variety of reasons related to performance. I recommend the reader research the byzantine framework regulating the current legion of Division I scholar-athletes. Good luck!

In any case, the dean dispensed university largesse in exchange for three seasons of competition and training, six days per week. As a rabid fan of schoolboy basketball, I couldn't help but notice an array of national-class talent crowding into the room: Dave Bing from D.C.'s Springarn High School, Sam Penceal of Brooklyn's Boys High, Frank Nicoletti and Fran Pinchot from New Jersey and Norm Goldsmith from somewhere on Long Island. The Orange hoopsters were traditionally a pedestrian team at best, lucky to compete with, say, nearby Colgate. Little did I know, this was the vanguard of big-time teams launching Syracuse far into NCAA tournament brackets—later deemed March Madness—for the next half-century. What I did know was this bunch could shoot hoops, and I would be at courtside. Funny, Jim Boeheim, the architect who contributed to much of that success as a Hall of Fame coach, enrolled that year, a parochial kid from a local area high school. I don't believe he was part of the elite, Dean Faigle entourage. Apparently, Boeheim

was a walk-on player who later developed into a steadying backcourt complement to the dazzling all-American, Dave Bing.

Back to course selection: Engineering majors leaned heavily on math and science classes with time-consuming labs. I signed up for what was considered a challenging load befitting a Stuyvesant grad, that's before the reality of Division I athletics chipped away at my resolve. Coaches felt chemistry and physics labs might interfere with practice, though I stuck to my guns and fared well that first semester. Locker-room wisdom encouraged padding your schedule with gut courses like "Marriage and the Family" and "Rhythm and Dance." I kid you not!

If you looked in on the latter classroom, behemoth linemen stumbled around the room in hilarious fashion. I peeped! Also to be considered was an English course taught by a professor particularly sympathetic to the athletic department. It was a seductive invitation to easy street, though I didn't bite. One memory sticks out: As I sat for an English placement exam, an attractive female graduate student handed out tests in Archbold Gym. A frosh linebacker, who looked about 25, casually grabbed her rear. There was no intervention or outrage, just some guffaws and business as usual. I kept my head down. Such were the "good ol' days" when some

men thought this was acceptable behavior.

I played it straight as an engineering student right up to the point of changing majors, which occurred after experiencing a first-rate constitutional law course taught by Dr. Sawyer. But I never really buckled down to extended study beyond the minimum required. I had my moments, though. By senior year, I attended lectures by Thomas Szasz, the famed psychologist, discovered the sociologist Ernest Becker and took a class with the esteemed political philosopher Donald Meiklejohn of the Maxwell School. In fact, there was plenty of intellectual stimulation at Syracuse if you looked for it, though most of us living in Washington Arms dorm (runners, gymnasts, wrestlers and crew guys) didn't scratch the surface. Indeed, my half-hearted academic conversion was of the too-little-too-late variety. Full disclosure: I never opened a book on a cross country or track trip. Many years later, when I entered a PhD program determined to study comparative politics in a serious manner, a deficient background caught up with me. Research skills and broad reading in politics and history were lacking. Will I ever forget professor Ivo Duchacek's scathing, red pencilled critique covering the entire opening page of my first 30-page opus? "This reads like a hastily excerpted avalanche of research notes." Gasp! "Hastily" and

"avalanche" were daggers etched indelibly in my mind—forever. Was it reasonable to pursue a doctorate with such baggage? Years later, Duchacek, a grand old Czech emigre who fled the communist coup in 1948, proudly sponsored my dissertation and joked about a rambling initial paper in his course. How did this experience affect my relationship with students over the years? Well, I'm a bit reluctant to wield such daggers, but as teen sensitivity grows exponentially, my hunch is youngsters can be overwhelmed even by watered-down criticism.

From 1962 to 1966, American society was transformed and the "Cuse" was nudged incrementally away from the mindset of the Eisenhower years. The assassination of a president, the ramping up of JFK's counterinsurgency in Southeast Asia to half a million soldiers in Vietnam under LBJ, the Pill (think Philip Larkin's *Annus Mirabilis*: "Sexual intercourse began in 1963..."), weed and psychedelics vying with booze, and the civil rights and peace movements—all profoundly impacted the campus. A radical Students for a Democratic Society (SDS) chapter popped up on the Hill, and Chancellor William P. Tolley (1942-1969), a gent from another era, struck an offending anti-war protester with his cane! Picture that footage making the rounds of today's 24-hour news cycle. Bob Dylan and Joan

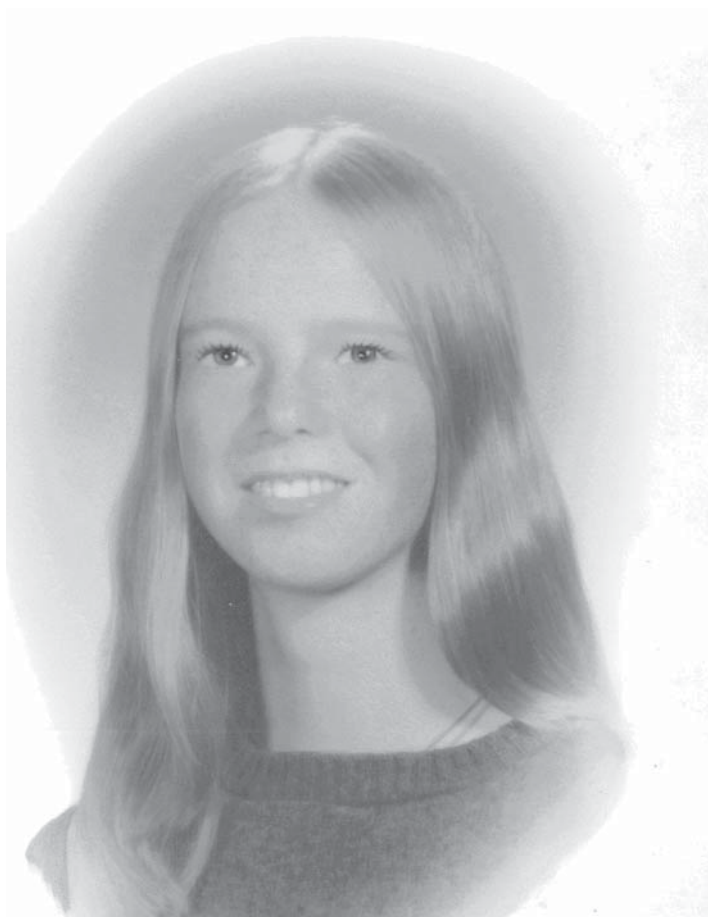
Baez competed with the Kingston Trio and standard top-10 music; longer hair, mustaches and beards appeared; and black athletes and their supporters mobilized, to some degree. They distributed a petition urging football players and fellow athletes to boycott a segregationist opponent in the Cotton or Sugar Bowl. It was easy to sign your name, a low-cost proposition without penalty for those of us not heading to the professional ranks. The larger truth was that I remained a crew-cut onlooker, a voyeur of sorts, barely comprehending the ground shifting beneath me. The rhythm of daily training and the camaraderie of the Washington Arms gang insulated me from the “winds of change” that swept across the land. (British Prime Minister Harold MacMillan used that phrase to denote the inevitable decolonization of the Empire; I hadn’t noticed.) My life would soon race off in other directions. But that’s another story.

How to make sense out this tale? Luck appears to play an outsized role in our lives, chance shaping decisions at every turn. Life’s lottery gave me a free ride past the Great Depression and World War II, to be born into a thriving world of the GI Bill, free New York City higher education and new-found travel opportunities unimaginable to older generations. The public schools and PSAL, admittedly devoid of frills, afforded every kid access to education and athletic competition. In historic terms, it was an unbelievably rich smorgasbord for average folks. Did I take full advantage of this abundance? Well, my choices were not always the best, and I often learned the hard way by negotiating life’s hurdles in halting, circuitous ways. In the final analysis, a nagging insight remains constantly with me: A decent future was not necessarily in the cards, and I owe a rather large debt to the gods of fortuna. Perhaps teaching has been one way to pay that bill. I’d like to think so.



*Blair students line up outside Timken Library for graduation*

**Ann Williams** is director of Timken Library. A Blair faculty member since 2007, she teaches in the history department, serves as a monitor to the freshman class, and coaches the girls' JV soccer and softball teams. Ann completed her undergraduate work in English at the University of Delaware in 1981 and earned her graduate degree in library and information science at Rutgers University in 2006. A resident of Blairstown for more than 25 years, she worked at Blairstown Elementary School prior to coming to Blair, along with her two children: **Robbie '12** and **Kelly '15**.



# The Economics of Education

**I**t all began in fourth grade, the exciting year when teachers reported “real” grades: A (absolutely!), B (boo), C (can’t imagine getting one) and some other letters that held no sway in my school career until much later. But let me back up a bit to give an idea of the arena where this battle took place. Growing up, I was one of seven siblings (middle child, oldest girl of five brothers and one sister) in a traditional two-parent family in the suburbs of a college town in Delaware. Competitive? My own brother would try to pick me last for sandlot baseball played every day and his friends would step in and choose me over some boys who could not play infield as well or run as fast as me. This was a meritocracy, and I knew I had to make the grade on my own. As the only girl in the mix, it was make a team or go play dolls and that was not happening. I didn’t even know where my doll (a present from my ever-hopeful grandmother) was and wherever she was, her head was probably ripped off or smashed with a hammer. Sorry Barbie, when we cut your legs open with our pocket knives we were only trying to figure out how your bendable knees worked.

I ran home from Mrs. Philhower’s fourth grade class with my first REAL report card and waited for my father to open it when he got home, having been told by our

teachers we could not open our own report card as they were for our parents. This had to wait until my father had eaten dinner, enjoyed some coffee and read the evening newspaper. Somehow, my brothers already had their defenses ready against any grade that was not an A during the unveiling. I never understood why they were so good at thinking on their feet with ready answers. Stupid me, following directions as always. When my dad saw my seven A marks, there were no questions or comments, and he simply dismissed me from the criminal lineup and returned to reading his paper. Later, thinking a private audience might be more productive, I told Dad my friend Kim got a dollar for every A she earned. Dollar signs in my eyes left me vulnerable to attack. “How many dollars did she get?” “Two.” “That is because she is stupid and her parents have to pay her to get an A. I expect a smart person like you to get A grades. Would you rather be stupid and have \$7?” Nine-year-old me folded under this line of questioning, and I went back to the homework table (also our family dining room table), never bringing up that idea again. For someone who made 50 cents a week to make 6 beds a day, wash a nightly pile of dishes and pots and pans, vacuum the entire house, and iron 5 white shirts (light starch), the \$7 option might have been the correct answer.



Even at nine, I understood there was no correct answer.

After graduating second in my class from high school, I attended “the University” on a Rotary scholarship. I think, in all of the intervening years’ report cards, there were maybe two grades that were Bs, and I was interrogated to explain them. By this time, I had certainly learned to read my own report card first, and we could no longer be placed in the criminal lineup, as it was hard to find a time when sports practice, work or friends hadn’t called us away from home. Since my Rotary scholarship was not renewable, my first University of Delaware tuition bill arrived in the mail the summer before my sophomore year, and I laid it on the stack of bills at the end of the dining room table. There had never been ANY discussion of any of us going away to college (since we lived in a college town, who would spend any money to live in ANOTHER college town?) and I had fallen into my brothers’ footsteps. The bill never seemed to move from the top of the pile as the days ticked by. Bills were always paid immediately, so I began to worry, but did not dare say anything. One Saturday, while I was eating my cereal, my father slid the bill off the pile and left it next to my bowl of Life. “I see your name is on this bill and so you should be paying it,” he said as he walked by with his coffee.

Since those long ago days, I

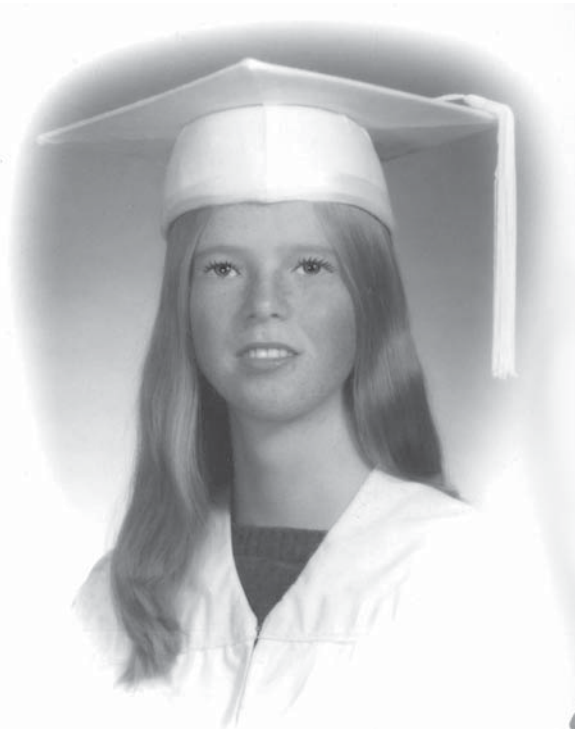
have had the shoe on the other foot. Faced with my son’s desire to go to a pricey private university in upstate New York, where he was accepted into an accelerated graduate degree program, over his chance to stay near home and attend Rutgers’ honor program on a full scholarship, I duly mortgaged my almost-paid-for house and helped him pack his bags. He agreed to be a working student at the University he came to love and took on some student loans to make it happen. We survived those expensive years and he has begun his professional career with a great job and a manageable student loan burden. My mortgage payoff date simply slid further into the future.

Over that summer when my tuition bill was hanging in the balance, I scraped together my paychecks and paid it. When the end of the semester arrived and my father asked to see my grades, I simply told him my report card had my name on it so it did not seem to me that it was any of his business. He suggested I join the Army ROTC so they could pay for my schooling, and I told him I would not shoot anyone just because he would not pay for my tuition. The terror of listening to the lottery for Vietnam draftees rang in the back of my head, and I could still taste the fear that my oldest brother would be called up, leaving me a solid pacifist long after that senseless war ended.

This defiance did not go over

well and my father began to impose a curfew on me. I had to work to pay for school and only night shift could allow me to both go to school full time and work full time. I was not even finished working when my “curfew” would arrive. Having missed it anyway, I then did as I pleased after work and my father would be fast asleep by the time I came home. This battleground was not sustainable for me, and I soon happily moved into a farmhouse apartment near school and I was on my own at 19. Yes, there was a bad grade on one report card. After working past midnight, I just could not make 8 a.m. class for German II on any regular basis. When I sat

for the final, my professor challenged that I was even enrolled in class since she rarely saw me. I aced the final, but my verbal scores were a failure (since I was hardly there to earn any), and I just passed the class. There was no firing squad, and I was actually proud of myself. Aside from one semester when I just could not afford to buy my books, I had made my way easily through college with mostly great grades, and I loved learning in class and on my own. My father did not attend my college graduation, but that was no big deal because I didn’t either. It fell on a Saturday, and that was a double-shift work day for me.



**Pedro Hurtado** was a teacher at Blair for three years from 2014 to 2017. He attended Dartmouth College, where he majored in comparative literature and minored in history. He is now pursuing a PhD in comparative literature at the University of California, Berkeley. He challenged his students in his Spanish classes to use their intellectual curiosity to dive into both language and culture. He was also a guest lecturer in history class.



*Pedro (second from right) in Guizhou Province, China*

# My Education: The Hong Kong Chapter

The options that awaited me as a 16-year-old who had just completed high school in Nicaragua were the following: apply to the University of New Orleans, where I had family and the prospect of a partial scholarship; go to a local university in Managua, where I was guaranteed admission and scholarship; or apply to something called United World Colleges, where I was guaranteed close to a full scholarship and another partial scholarship should I choose to attend college in the U.S. I did the latter, I think, partly, because a friend of mine told me I would be perfect for it and partly because I was itching to do something different.

When I applied, there were 13 of these prep schools known as UWCs (now there are 17). The way it worked was that you applied to a committee made up of alumni and parents from your own country. If selected, you could be given the choice of where to go. I was asked to choose from among three schools: one in India, one in Costa Rica and the one in Hong Kong. I chose Hong Kong because it sounded most interesting to me. The idea was to defer going to college for two years (since I was young for my grade, that didn't seem so bad) and study the International Baccalaureate while living in a boarding school

with students and faculty from pretty much all over the world: 90 or so countries represented in a student body of 250. Classes were taught in English, which was a bit of a challenge at first. I remember being particularly frustrated by my relatively low scores in chemistry (my best subject in Nicaragua) and blaming my performance on the fact that I couldn't get the nomenclature right and that it took me so long to read directions on exams. It got better with time.

Even among the prestigious UWC group, our school was known for being academically rigorous. Teachers were demanding, extra-help seldom given. It was assumed, correctly as far as I can tell, that every student had been a top student in his or her previous school. We were constantly reminded that our school's IB results average was far above the world average. Probably to a fault, there was little to no discussion of different learning styles or capacities. We relied mostly on each other for academic support: Bright students in my math higher level class helped me with my homework; I would help friends in standard level and so on. Before classes started, I was asked to choose three classes to take at the higher level and three at the standard level (the idea was that your higher levels

would represent your academic interests). At the time, I was most interested in math and science, but my interests were promptly overruled: I was told that I had to take Spanish literature at the higher level because the teacher refused to divide the class between standard and higher levels. This was the inauspicious beginning of my long-lasting fascination with literature. In addition to math and Spanish, I took chemistry and English language and literature as my higher levels, and beginners French and business studies as my standard levels.

There was no dress code; elephant pants, Thai pants and pajamas were staples. During meals, we generally sat where there was room. The general vibe of the place was friendly, unpretentious and non-hierarchical. We called teachers by their first names. They sent over minutes of their faculty meetings, and student representatives were allowed to sit through them and contribute some. I wasn't particularly close to any one teacher, and I don't think I was alone in this; all teachers lived on campus with their families but they generally kept their distance. The ones I liked a lot—and there were many—were fierce, principled, worldly people. Most of them had traveled extensively and lived in several other countries. Most of them had master's or doctoral degrees. There was not a single "young" faculty (only young at heart). It was

obvious they enjoyed teaching a diverse group of students—and we really were diverse, not only in terms of national representation but also socio-economic background. It seemed to me that there were a lot of us on either full or close-to-full scholarship, which included stipends for school-related travel.

We studied a lot but we also had the most fun. Our school was a short walk away from the subway, which connected us to the whole of Hong Kong. We were an hour and \$0.50 away from the center of the city, which we were free to explore at will as long as we were back by 9 p.m. on weekdays and 1 a.m. on weekends. Since this was a two-year school with students ranging from 16 to 18 years old, our teachers gave us an extraordinary amount of leeway. Though they acted in loco parentis, leniency prevailed: short of going to jail, we were allowed to do anything (outside of school), provided we met our curfew. We didn't have varsity sports so our afternoons and evenings were our own. We kept busy, joining one of a million clubs and activities, but we also had plenty of unstructured and unsupervised time to bum around, explore the city, read for pleasure, break the rules, etc. It was really amazing.

Memorable moments: friends and I going to the airport to see Mariah Carey in the middle of a typhoon alert; nights at "USSR" (Under Sai Sha Road), the little parklet



of cement at which we loved to hang out; afternoons in Ngau Tao Kok debating authorial intention with my friend, a budding Nabokov scholar; community service trips to China, Malaysia, Vietnam and Singapore; an endlessly bizarre trip to North Korea; eating two dozen rambutans in one seating and becoming deathly ill as a result; ridiculous, outrageous parties; the Hong Kong skyline during Chinese New Year; and the sunset at Angkor Wat.

It was too expensive to go back home during the holidays, so twice I backpacked with friends across Southeast Asia. Twice, I used up all my savings, which amounted to something like \$500, and gallantly traipsed about Thailand, Laos, Cambodia and Malaysia for three weeks, subsisting on a mostly liquid diet and the occasional street food. It was in Cambodia and Thailand that I started and finished my college apps. I remember a particularly exhilarating couple of days in Phuket circa December 28 when I sat down to write my common app essay after it became painfully obvious that I couldn't procrastinate any longer. While my friends were swimming in turquoise water and pleasantly drowsing in white sand beaches, I went to a local restaurant and typed furiously, stopping only to ask nearby patrons clarifying grammar questions: "Can you say 'done onto me?' Or is it 'on to me?'" "What is this for again?" they would

ask, clearly puzzled by my archaic language. I consolidated many skills in Hong Kong but time management was not one of them.

Looking back, an explicit goal of the UWC movement strikes me as remarkable. The frame of our everyday life was provided by the idea, conceived by a German educator named Kurt Hahn, that bringing impressionable young women and men from all over the world would essentially create a more peaceful world order. It was made abundantly clear that this was the primary reason for our being there. We knew this and most of us took it very seriously: we talked and debated earnestly about what was going on in our countries; we lit candles during the 2008-2009 bombing of Gaza; we marched for LGBT rights and the rights of Filipino house workers; we visited under-resourced communities across Southeast Asia and made a serious effort to learn about the issues afflicting them. Small as these activities seem in retrospect, they instilled in me a consciousness of world affairs and an activist ethos that I still try to cultivate.

Space and time were provided so we could develop ideas about the world: broad, big, lofty ideas with only limited applicability (or profitability) in our immediate context. One such outlet was the student newspaper, which ran stories and op-eds on everything from the latest developments in Palestine to the



2008-2009 financial crisis to migration policy to the worldwide housing shortage and so on. Another such space was the Global Issues Forum (GIF), which happened every Monday in our student common room. Each Monday, a student or group of students would present on a topical issue or current event of their choice. For instance, a couple of my buddies and I presented on the then-burgeoning “Pink Tide”—the wave of leftish governments that came to power in Latin America during the early 2000s. One thing, among others, became evident to me as a result of attending some of these presentations and the discussions that followed: friends and classmates from other so-called third world countries had similar stories to tell concerning American hard and soft power, confirming my own rudimentary sense of the prominent role of American foreign policy in organizing the world. Due to the visibility (to us) of American hegemony, it was possible to link distant issues and events, see emerging patterns and locate common agents (often the U.S., but not always). Accordingly, ideas like “nature” or “culture” became less prominent in my own sketch of the world than “power.” The world for me became less a land of exotic countries, isolated from each other, acting on age-old cultural idiosyncrasies, and more a kind of system sustained by the interests of wealthy and power-

ful people.

It was never in the cards for me to feel apathetic about “the order of things.” My wager is that those of us from countries on the receiving end of imperialism (be it American, Japanese or Western European) tend to think of our own socio-political arrangements, indeed the global order, as largely determined by power. Both my parents’ influence and growing up in Nicaragua in the immediate aftermath of the Sandinista Revolution had much to do with this early assessment. But my time in Hong Kong sharpened the insight by broadening its scope.

I think the product of these formative years in Nicaragua and Hong Kong was ultimately that they gave my life a restless, utopian inflection. It is to the credit of my teachers in Hong Kong that, in addition to submitting me to a grueling academic schedule and preparing me for college, they also provided the circumstances for me to look beyond myself and my immediate, pragmatic concerns. Curiously, I don’t recall my teachers ever interrupting class to mouth off about this or that worldly injustice. And, although some of my teachers would march with us and attend GIF once in a while, these activities felt largely student-led. Of course, looking back, this was probably intended on the part of my teachers.

It is commonplace to say that knowledge is power, and I think

that's true, as long as we recall that power doesn't only mean domination (puissance, power over) but the ability to do things (pouvoir, power to). I suppose that once one identifies agency (i.e., U.S. did X) and contingency (i.e., U.S. could have done Y instead of X) in the world order, it becomes possible to think that one can do something to change it. It also becomes possible or easier to make up one's mind about the world: Is it good, bad, legitimate or illegitimate? My own sense is that there's a lot that is deeply, profoundly wrong with the world. To me, the fact that 795 million people are undernourished, that 836 million people live in extreme poverty and that one out of every four of the world's children have stunted growth due to malnutrition are troubling facts.

I mention this here because these are some of the thoughts with which my high school education in Hong Kong enabled me to wrestle. As evinced by this little narrative of my own development, a high school education will never be solely the teaching of skills, no matter how badly we want that to be the case. Students learn just as much by what is put in front of them as by what is not. I'm unnerved by the idea that I might inadvertently induct my students into a kind of passivity in relation to the world we live in, or, worse yet, that my own passivity will legitimate the status quo in their minds.

As every schoolchild knows, silence can be full of meaning. I'm terrified, as I think my teachers were, by the prospect of my students going on to reproduce the world as it is; but most concerning is the prospect of them not even recognizing that for what it is: a choice.

It is depressing how often high school and college are reduced to college and job training, are evaluated on the basis of a profitability ratio or otherwise assume all the characteristics of a trade school. I should think that an education, if it is to be worth much, should force us to constantly reassess what we take to be our ends; to question received ideas; to think the world otherwise and to think it ethically, conceptually, historically; to bring into relief what was hitherto flat; to contemplate the forest and not just the trees ahead; to develop the emotional maturity to deal with ugly truths and the moral fortitude to act upon them—in short, to become undone, transformed and awakened.

I've grown fond of recalling that, in *The Social Contract*, Rousseau points out that "man is the only animal liable to become an imbecile." It is against this unattractive fate that education—lifelong, never-ending education—protects us. It sounds quaint to insist on what philosophers (Rousseau, Mill, Tocqueville) have insisted for centuries: Democracy is not so much an achievement but an ongoing project, one that

must be sustained and advanced by people educated for it. The goal of educating students for democratic life—or, to make decisions in conjunction with other precious human beings in a planet with limited capacities of renewal—is, at best, incommensurate to the technocratic fantasy of teaching skills. Another forebearer that we would do well to remember is Socrates, Plato’s teacher, who held that teaching ought to be the teaching of ignorance. What I think this means is that education should fill you with doubt and humility vis-à-vis what you think you know—an appropriate enough stance to take with respect to a world whose constitutive features are, according to me, nonsense, upheld only by constant and profound ideological deception.

To close, I’ll end on some thoughts that I have been grappling with lately and that bear a strong relationship to some of the issues I have discussed. I learned recently that the legendary legal theorist and feminist activist, Catharine MacKinnon, once wrote: “One genius of the system we live under is that the strategies it requires to survive it from day to day are exactly the opposite of what is required to change it.” For some time now, I have thought it a good endeavor to try to beat this genius: For instance, in my professional life, I’ve asked

myself how I might effect change without being alienated, how I can be a tolerable, welcome nuisance; as a teacher, how I can get my students to both do what they have to do to get ahead and think critically about what we ask of them, to play the game without taking it at face value, being good enough at it that they win while doing their part to change the rules. But it’s not clear to me that this is the right way to think about our situation right now.

Earlier this summer, the United Nations announced that, unless something radically changes, we are edging toward geopolitical mayhem and worldly devastation due to the rising temperature of the planet. At one point, President Trump took to Twitter threatening nuclear war with North Korea. Staying with MacKinnon’s terms, I have begun to wonder whether survival is possible at all under this system and whether our default “business-as-usual,” “the-grown-ups-will-figure-it-out” sense of things will lead us straight into the wolf’s mouth. As far as I can see, our historical moment is special (or especially terrifying) precisely because an unprecedented number of us can appropriately wonder these things. If so, this might be the right moment to become undone, transformed and awakened, and to teach others to do the same.



*Pedro (seated third from left) in Angkor Wat in 2009*