

FROM BENNINGTON AND BEYOND

FROM THE EDITOR

Dear Comrades,

In January 2001, I sat in Barn One with 20 other Bennington Writing Seminar newbies and listened to Liam proudly announce that we were about to enter “The Vortex.” Which he defined as, (say it with me now) “A radiant node or cluster.” Up until that point I had always envisioned that little swirl of water at the bottom of my bathtub whenever I heard the word “vortex.” How little I knew. And how glad I would become for that redefinition and the reliability of the “drawing into its center” every six months for two years. Among the advice that Liam imparted to us that day about the ways in which to best proceed through our course in the “Low Residency Experience” was a certain encouragement (which we would come to learn is one of his mantras): “Seek out those with whom you find rapport.” How deceptively elementary the sound of that, and how loudly it would ring throughout our time at Bennington.



In his recent address to the January 2004 graduates, Rick Moody called it the “consolation of the writer’s community.” It seems to me that this is one of the greatest benefits of the education at Bennington—this “consolation.” For of all the things we become immersed in while at B’ton, from the pressures of producing monthly packets, to the anxiety of delivering the graduate lecture, from the joys and woes of our pieces being torn up in workshop, to the pleasures of being saturated in language via the readings, and lectures, and conversations in the pub, it is that rapport and the connections it fosters, the community it creates, that becomes the grounding that carries us through the entire MFA process, into graduation—and beyond.

In his speech Moody intoned, “Many are the people you will meet in life who know little or nothing about what you intend to do and who care even less. All the more reason to hold onto the fragile and singular community that you have begun assembling here.” For 10 years now, Bennington alumni have been practicing Mr. Moody’s wise recommendation via the Alumni Association, the chapbook series, the Bennington Collective, and *The Far Side of the Vortex* alumni newsletter. But of course, this year, the greatest way that we are offered connection with our community is the upcoming 10th anniversary celebration.

In June those who are able (we hope it is most of you) will gather back together on the Bennington grounds (some for the first time since graduation) to celebrate the Bennington Writing Seminars, its creators and creation. But most importantly we will be there to celebrate the community of writers that gives us the consolation of connection, that continues to remind us of who we are and why we do what we do, and allows us to keep doing it.

I hope that during my time as editor of *The Far Side of the Vortex*, I can continue what George Carver started 10 years ago, to offer even in a small way, a place for Bennington alumni to come together now and then and remind ourselves and each other of the work that we did, the things that we learned, the rapport we established, the community we made, while whirling around in the vast and profound experience that is the Bennington Vortex.

Happy Anniversary Bennington Writing Seminars!

See you in June,
GabrielleFROM THE
ALUMNI LIASON

10th Anniversary Greetings!

In January 1994, the Writing Seminars held its first residency.

Through snow measured by the foot and temperatures colder than I’ve seen there since, we 30 or so huddled and bundled ourselves from lecture to lunch to workshop to dinner to reading, before retiring each night to our lumpy mattresses.

I was a student in that first class—along with Gene Baker, Mandy Benz, Deirdre Bonifaz, Wendy Burton, George Carver, Joanne Clark, Victor Cruz, Cristina Del Sesto, Tony Estern Jadow, Ruth Farmer, Mark Guralnick, Stacey Harwood, Gail Hathaway, Tammy Hollins, Bill Hunt, Perrin Ireland, Therese James, Colette Kelso, John Lane, Carole Merritt, Robin Neidorf, Brenda Pitts, Bee Ring, and Tim Wooten: 16 in fiction, 3 in nonfiction, and 6 in poetry.

Liam and Priscilla wrote us letters of welcome and greeted us in Commons lounge at registration. Our five core faculty members were Susan Dodd, Maria Flook, and Jill McCorle in fiction; Liam in poetry; and David Lehman in nonfiction also taught one of the poets. Tree Swenson, the founder of our pub, models, was with us that first January, too.

All the lectures were held in Barn One (now Barn 100). Our own Sven Birkerts was with us then as an associate faculty and lectured brilliantly about reading (his lifelong obsession) and about his concerns for literature in a future that was being “forged” by a “wholesale shift into an electronic age.” Few of us foresaw how extensive that shift would be or that the Internet’s ever-expanding World Wide Web would soon catch us all (including, eventually, the Cyberbirk himself).

Donald Hall and Jane Kenyon were both with us. Don delivered lively, inspired lectures on prosody, giving fiction, nonfiction, and poetry students much to think about when he surprised

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to abdicate the throne. >> **BOB RHODES** Was last seen at a pay phone in Jersey, where he’s rumored to be living. >> **CAROLYN**

SCARBROUGH I have several unfinished projects nagging: a revamping of my poetry ms, pulling together some short stories into the beginnings of a fiction ms and a nonfiction book about the adoption/fertility life change. This nonfiction project should become the main project for this year. And daily poems—a commitment that continues to surprise and sustain me. (Ed’s note: On top of all this, *Carolyn’s husband bought her a ticket to Sweden for Christmas so she could have a visit with William and Kerstin Males. “A big surprise!” she says.*) >> **SARAH SILBERT** In April, I’m traveling to New Hampshire to enjoy a month at the MacDowell Colony, then in June I head West for another residency at Ucross in Wyoming. My year “off” to write has been harrowing, delicious, fruitful. You can find my latest published essay in *The Sun’s* September 2003 issue.

JUNE
1997

class agent Jill Hill Jorgensen

>> **JILL JORGENSEN (FORMERLY HILL)** I normally would not give news as nothing of note has happened. My puppy didn’t arrive due to the vagaries of dog love. I am still in school and beginning to realize what a Master of Science in Clinical Psychology entails, yes, some understanding of science. Otherwise I am still enjoying my grandson, who is now almost four, and trying to work in some writing that doesn’t involve the science of the brain or psychological testing. I know I am looking forward to the reunion, which I will attend, with my daughter who is interested in going to school at Goddard and wants to make the trip to see what Vermont is all about. Please note my new email is jjjorgensen1@msn.com. New address: 1601 Denver, Boise, Idaho 83706; same phone 208-345-1725. >> **ISABEL ROSE:** Released her well-received movie, *Anything But Love*, a musical romantic comedy. The movie opened to good reviews so check it out when it gets to your town. Isabel also signed a two-book deal with Doubleday and her book *The J.A.P. Chronicles* will be released soon. Watch for it. (Ed’s note: *The notes for the June class of ‘97 are amazingly small. It seems the majority of my class went missing or is in serious winter hibernation. I wish all well and hope to see members of our class at the reunion.*)

JANUARY
1997

class agent Laura Orem

>> **REBECCA BOYD** It’s been a while since I’ve sent anything into the Vortex ... mostly ‘cause I don’t have much to say regarding my literary life.

DISPATCHES FROM 10 YEARS OF CLASSMATES

It may be interesting to note that I am home schooling my son this year—with a strong focus on creative writing—and that I’m hoping to make it up to the Bennington alumni retreat in June. I did pay a visit to Carol Greenhouse and her beautiful baby Zoe out in Santa Fe during a home schooling “field trip” to the Grand Canyon in December. And I am still trying to keep abreast of the fiction submissions that pour into *Post Road*. >> **JAIMIE**

CLARKE Teaches creative writing at the University of Massachusetts in Boston and at Emerson College. >> **LYN FRASER** I taught an honors course, “Spiritual Themes in Modern Literature,” at Mesa State College in Colorado during the fall semester. Currently, I am taking this semester off to work on writing projects and am spending part of the time in Austin. >> **BETTY KRONSKY** I retired from my long career as a psychotherapist a year ago and after taking some celebratory trips (Turkey, Ibiza, London) I have settled in to writing. After I revise two short stories, I am going to complete a memoir about my experiences with my Tibetan Buddhist teachers.

>> **DEB LEVY** I’ve been keeping busy doing some adjunct teaching for a couple of colleges in the area. This past fall my husband and I bought a condo on Lake Michigan (it’s a nice quiet little place, which I’m hoping will inspire me to do lots of writing). >> **MIKE LYTHGOE** Just returned from the *Windhover Journal* Writing Festival in Texas. Good fun. Reminded me of the old days at Bennington. I had a review of Les Murray’s poems in the latest issue of *Windhover*. Got to read poems at the festival. Met some new writers. Inspiring. Recently reviewed *Recovered Body* by Scott Cairns for *Praesidium*, and will be presenting a program on John Haines’ poetry with two other poets in February. My essay on Haines, “The Night of Painted Iron,” was included in the anthology *A Gradual Twilight*, and five poems on painting and painters will be published “any time now” in an anthology by Melan Poetry Press. Still teaching World History at Clulpeper High School. Louise and I are planning to relocate to South Carolina over the summer. We will call it retirement. >> **NIKKI MACDONALD** We’re expecting a new addition to the family in May, and I am continuing to thrive. He’s an extremely verbal two-year-old. Keeps me busy. No time to write, but I’m doing a good bit of reading. >> **LAURA OREM** Over the past few months, my writing has been put aside due my oldest son’s serious illness. Fortunately (and knock wood!), he is doing better, and in between keeping an eye on my family, teaching at Goucher and Villa Julie colleges, and working on my jewelry business, I’m looking forward to doing a little writing this spring. Hey, I thrive on chaos—you should see my house. >> **CAROL TURNER** I’m writing again after taking six months off while I went to court/reporting school. Now I’m a home student planning to make tons of money out of my new career. Also working on (yet another) novel. I decided to foster

a greyhound off the tracks, and now I’m falling in love with her and will probably adopt her, which means I will have 3 cats and 2 greyhounds-making me the local crazy animal woman. Oh well.

JANUARY
1996

class agent Victoria Clausi

>> **VICTORIA CLAUSI** I have been writing daily, submitting poems to journals and magazines (and even to a chapbook contest). I’m also working on a full-length manuscript of poems. I’ll be moderating a round-table discussion on the future of low-residency graduate writing programs at the AWP conference in Chicago in March. Panelists include alum Robin Neidorf and Andrea Jarrell and three lo-res writing-program directors: Chard Deniro, Robin Henley, and Liam Rector. Along with a growing group of alumni, I’ve also been hard at the details of the 10th anniversary celebration that will take place this summer. Looking forward to seeing a big group of you suspects in Chicago (for AWP) and in Bennington for the 10th anniversary bash in June. >> **RUTH FARMER** I resigned from the Putney School in June 2003, and I’m now in Northwestern Vermont full time, writing daily, and trying to publish short stories, essays and poems. I’ve been working with the National Writing Project in Vermont off and on for a number of years and now serve as their In-Service Coordinator. I recently taught NWP-VT’s first three-credit course, *Teaching and Writing in Vermont Schools*. During Spring 2004, I will be a faculty advisor for students enrolled in Goddard College’s B. A. Individualized Study Program. >> **JOHN LANE** I’ve been working this month to set up a long southern publicity tour for my new book from University of Georgia Press, *Chattooga: Descending Into the Myth of Delivrance River*. So far I’ve got stops in Virginia, Tennessee, Mississippi, Arkansas, Georgia, North Carolina, and South Carolina. Barnstorming, as Dickey used to call it. University of Georgia Press is also bringing out *Waist Deep In Black Water* in paper at the same time. Also had 15 poems in *Nobel Trees of Upstate South Carolina*, a coffee table book from Hub City Writers Project. On the personal front, things are good—walks with Betsy along the creek, new house, off from teaching this month! >> **ROBIN NEIDORF** Somehow, I continue to write. It never comes as quickly as I want it to, but I feel that I’m onto something uniquely mine, which is extremely satisfying. (Of course, that could just be the writer’s euphoria talking.) If I ever finish the book, you-all can let me know if I’m self-deluded or brilliant. I have an internal deadline to complete a draft by my next birthday—May 17. I can’t believe it’s been 10 years since we first met. I’m hoping to see you all at the June 2004 celebration. You won’t believe the lines that have appeared around my eyes; how have you changed?

DISPATCHES FROM 10 YEARS OF CLASSMATES

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San Francisco and on a poetry/visual art collaboration with an artist in New York. I have poetry in the current issues of *Gulf Coast*, *Spoon River Poetry Review*, *Mid-American Review*, and *Seneca Review* and was recently nominated for a Pushcart Prize. My biggest news, however, is that in October of 2003 I got married! Liam Rector officiated at a very small ceremony in Donald Hall's backyard at Eagle Pond Farm. My husband, Ian Bickford, is also a poet. We're happily ensconced in Brooklyn.

>> **ANNETTE GALLAGHER WEISMAN** I've been busy freelancing, including writing book reviews for *People* magazine. Hardly literary, but pays for nice trips like the AWP Conferences, NBCC Awards in New York, and the Writing Seminars 10th reunion. Yeah! Since my graduation my daughter Samantha has had a bone marrow transplant, and survived a plane crash in the South of France. She's recovered from that too, and is now a wannabe actress in Hollywood. The highlight of this year was a family trip to my fair city, and subsequent 1,000-mile drive around the Irish coastline as far as Yeats Country. >> **MAME WILLEY** Not much to report except that it's been a cold damn winter up here in central Vermont. And I have a poem coming out in *Hunger Mountain* in the spring.

JANUARY 1999

class agent Elaine Walters McFerron

>> **PAUL BECKMAN** Not much news here but a number of my short stories have been turned into plays and three separate plays have been performed by a local community theater in Middletown, Conn. >> **RYAN BOUNDINOT** I do have rather exciting news. On January 20th at 1:32 a.m., my wife, Jennifer and I welcomed our son, Miles Brautigan

Boudinot to the world. As far as writing stuff, pieces of mine have appeared or are forthcoming in *McSweeney's* and *Post Road*. Also I am guest editing an issue of the journal *Hobart* and have been named an Associate Editor at *Pindelyboz*.

>> **ELAINE WALTERS MCFERRON** It is unusual that I only heard from three people in our class. I fear that something went wrong with the two email messages I sent. For me, this has been a very productive time. I have over 30 poems in the mail and entered a number of book contests. So the rejections are many and come most every day. I relish the ones that are handwritten or speak to a specific poem. I love it when the editors tell me they were torn or could not agree. Is this a

readership? A readership with controversy? I was pleased to have a poem published in the 114th Anniversary issue of *Poet Lore* this winter. Meanwhile, most days I feel extremely blessed....

>> **MIRIAM O'NEAL** I sent out many poems in December at once to a variety of journals using a very scientific approach: started at the front of my thesis manuscript and at the beginning of the alphabet of journal listings. And Voila! I came home from visiting Bennington to find an acceptance from the *Birmingham Poetry Review*. Still waiting to hear from A, B, C, D, and E. It feels good to have several batches of poems in circulation in part because it seems to clear space for new work.

JUNE 1998

class agent Sloane Miller

>> **LINDA MCAULEY FREEMAN** I have completed the penultimate draft of my novel. Special thanks to Sharon Pries ('96), Sloane Miller ('98), and Cynthia Todd Quan ('99), who all cast an editorial eye on the manuscript in various stages. I am six classes away from completing my MBA and, as executive director of global communications, have spent way too much time in the past year devising communication strategies and writing leadership announcements on topics that I didn't like. My company is going through an ownership change and went through-and continues to go through-more than its fair share of organizational change ... or should I say disorganizational change?! On a happier note, my husband, Chester Freeman ('99) and I continue to love our 1877 home. >> **VICKI LAWRENCE**: I've just had the good fortune to be named the managing editor of the *Michigan Quarterly Review*. I've worked with the editor, Larry Goldstein (who spoke at a residency a couple years ago), for years now on an ad-hoc basis, and I'm very

“NOTE TO CURRENT STUDENTS: NEVER UNDERESTIMATE THE POWER OF A FELLOW GRAD TO KEEP YOU ON YOUR PATH—OR YOUR TOES.”
—CAROL GREENHOUSE

pleased to move into this bigger and more regular position. We published a story by Misha Angrist recently. How about some more submissions from the Bennington community? >> **GEORGE MICHELSEN** Still in New York. Still writing. Novel came out in June with Univ. Press of New England; it met with wide success in narrow circles. Still teaching. Kids thriving. >> **SLOANE MILLER** I'm freelancing in publishing after a year. I think it should be called something else, I'm taking voice lessons and singing those old standards, I'm privileged to see many of you who breeze through town: Mike Rosovsky, Jaime Clare and Pete Hausler and some new recent Benn grads at a *Post Road* party last fall; Linda and Chester at their new house this past summer; Isabel Rose and Nikki Macdonald all the

time. I've taken a little side business that I've been doing for many years and gotten serious about promoting it: Professional Organizing. If you want to know more, I put out a monthly newsletter or email me at sloane13@yahoo.com. And I'm very excited about this summer, and look forward to reconnecting with many of you.

JANUARY 1998

class agent Carol Greenhouse

>> **CAROL GREENHOUSE** I've decided to try to live sustainably and humanely in this crazy country of ours: no products made for pennies in the Third World, nothing made with toxic elements like petroleum and everything organic and to write a lively manuscript about the result. Having my daughter has taught me to write the most from every working minute and buoyed this resolve: I want to teach her to live without exploiting the earth and its people. Addendum: not just Askold and Sven make lasting friends in graduate school. Since Zoe's birth last year, five Bennington vets (Sarah, Becky, Don, Destiny and William) have visited Santa Fe. Note to current students: never underestimate the power of a fellow grad to keep you on your path or your toes. >> **ANNE JARELL** is living with her kids in Connecticut and looking for work outside the city.

>> **DESTINY KINAL** I'm still laboring over my novel, *Silkworm*. When you read this, I hope to be sequestered in a cabin in Taos with William, delivering the last draft. By C-section if necessary. In the day-to-day paradigm, I'm living full time in Berkeley, near my two daughters and their two toddler grandsons. >> **CHRISTINE KRAVETZ** I'm teaching six classes a week through California's Poetry in the Schools program, which is a career I wouldn't have were it not for my Bennington MFA. I'm also writing poetry regularly, and taking care of my 16-year-old son and six-year-old granddaughter, as well as watching the progress of my daughter, in college at Sarah Lawrence and fast friends with Sam Conway, Mark Conway's son. >> **WILLIAM MALES** I'll be 58 this year and it's just getting better and better. I'm part of five writing collectives, including the Bennington one. Three of them are producing self-published anthologies this spring, including the Bennington Collective. I'm also producing a music CD with my son Mikael and am involved in poetry slams here in Sweden. All this keeps me writing, and I still have a good life with my sweet wife. Plus: Carolyn Scarbrough's coming to visit us soon. I'll see you all in June. Rock on! >> **LORETTA MESTISHEN** I just finished writing my latest play, very SNL, about horrifying chain e-mails, and am almost done the first draft of a memoir that should probably end up fiction. About Queen of Tarts, my long-time catering company, I'm trying

GIVING IT AWAY – THE VORTEX'S CREATOR DISCUSSES ITS HISTORY AND NEEDS

BY **GEORGE CARVER** (JAN '96)

Nine frozen Bennington Januaries ago, at the maiden meeting of what we hoped would become the Writing Seminars Alumni Association, the consensus among those in attendance was that my idea for an alumni newsletter was a bit premature. Besides there being no money, there was the issue of audience: including our 20 freshly minted graduates, alumni readership would not break a hundred for two more years.

Four months later, I delivered to Cilla a box containing 100 copies of the premier issue of *The Far Side of the Vortex*. She sent copies of its eight modest pages to our alumni (which after June's graduation would exceed 30!) to the faculty, as well as to all current and incoming students.

The rest, as they say, is history. The semi-annual arrival of *The Far Side of the Vortex* is now to post-graduation life what Liam's "Vortex" speech is to each incoming class of new students. Though *The Far Side* cost me 200-odd dollars to produce, it was not done with any expectation of repayment. It was a gift, a gesture of appreciation for what Bennington had given me. It was also a vehicle for maintaining connections between myself, my friends and former classmates, and the program itself. Though eventually Liam and Cilla decided to cover my costs, I had been prepared from the start to publish several more editions before passing the hat.

In *The Gift: Imagination and the Erotic Life of Property*, author Lewis Hyde writes of gifts and the process of gifting, from both anthropological and artistic perspectives. (By necessity of space, I must summarize his arguments briefly, but I highly recommend the book to anyone who considers himself or herself to be a follower of the artist's path.)

He begins the book with an examination of the role of gifts in society. On a chain of South Pacific islands there is a primitive culture (whose name eludes me at the moment) that uses gifting to maintain the social and political network between islands. Every island settlement periodically sends a gift to another island. Every island periodically receives a gift. Interestingly, no island knows from which neighbor their gift will arrive.

The gifts are of a consumable nature—food, clothing, ornamentation. The recipients, however, never use their gifts, nor do they keep them for long. A gift that is consumed or kept, becomes depleted. A gift must continually be given to remain a gift. When the gift is sent to one of the other islands, it leaves in its wake a strengthened sense of community, good will, and friendship. Kept or spent, it becomes property, subject to the laws and economics governing commerce. Markets are a zero-

sum process of exchange and the depletion of resources; gifts take nothing and add to our well-being, our spirit. The continuous circulation of gifts between those geographically distant islands sustain their culture's sense of unity and connection.

Looking at gifts from an arts perspective, Lewis writes of inspiration as a gift from the gods, an endowment of the Muses. Artists and writers take inspiration and forge it into stories, books, and works of art. But, he notes importantly, the process is not complete until the finished work of art is passed into the community, where it can be enjoyed, savored, and give inspiration.

Since leaving Bennington, I have been involved in several artistic projects—*The Far Side of the Vortex* being the first and most modest—that I would call gifts to the community. Every one of them affected people's lives, most in small ways, though one project actually changed the lives of many who participated. For none of them was I paid, yet from each I discovered a particular type of satisfaction that lies at the heart of giving as an artist.

On the one hand, to truly give it, I had to let go of my ownership in the work, which left me briefly with a sense of emptiness and loss. The good part was a visceral satisfaction of creating something of beauty or meaning in the world that had never existed before.

My greatest challenge as editor of *The Far Side of the Vortex* was getting alumni to submit work for publication. The problem has continued for every editor since. The problems is this: *The Far Side* pays nothing. It lacks the status of a *Paris Review* or a *Pfj*; it would never be cited in one's list of publishing credits. *The Far Side* offers none of what we think it means to be succeeding as a writer, only the opportunity to communicate with an exclusive and elite community which many of us came to love after the two years immersion in its residencies and

regimens.

To write for *The Far Side*, you have to find inspiration, find the time to write and meet a deadline. You have to give it away when you could be working on a novel or a piece for *The Atlantic*. You have to give it away; something they never talk about in any of the publishing modules. Give it away. Get nothing in return but a thank-you from the editor and a few e-mails from your fellow alumni.

The Far Side of the Vortex was a gift. It is up to all of us to keep it giving. A thousand thank-yous to all of you who have kept it giving so far.

Editor's note: This editor thanks George Carver for the gift of The Far Side of the Vortex and its humble beginnings, and for this article.

DISPATCHES FROM 10 YEARS OF CLASSMATES

JANUARY 2004

class agents Jeannie Kim
and Catherine Turner

>> **LESLIE CLARK** In the few weeks I've been away from Bennington and packets, I've been trying to get into the "consolation of routine" that Rick Moody spoke about at the graduation dinner. I am working with a dancer friend on a collaborative piece involving poetry and dance, which I hope, will be the working model for an essay on collaborative process. I ran into a former classmate of ours, Gary Decker, at a Marshall Chapman book signing in Cincinnati. He said he's thinking about rejoining the program. It was great to hear Marshall read and sing again; it brought back great memories of our graduation residency. >>

SARAH DORBIN As of this writing, I've been home from The Graduation Fest exactly 14 days and have written for part of two of those. Am not sure if this is flag-worthy or not. My guess is yes, but am justifying the lack of work on mitigating factors, such as laundry and closet-organization. A lot of crap can pile up over two years. Also still thawing limbs, which are badly traumatized from 20 temps. Perhaps this can explain lack of finger movement over keyboard. >> **ANITA D.**

TAYLOR I am utterly exhausted. But out of fear of falling into the trap that George Pecker warned us about--getting the MFA and never writing again--I have forced myself to clean up and send work out into the hinterlands. Now I anxiously await my first clump of new bathroom wallpaper--a.k.a. rejection slips--and I read. Yesterday I read Vivian Gornick. Today it's Phillip Lopate. Lucy Grealy tops tomorrow's pile. See, I'm still not ready to let go. Not yet.

JUNE 2003

class agent Barbara Brooks

>> **SALLY ASHTON** 2003 proved a fantastic year for the Ashtonst! Jeffrey, gosh, straight-A's again, was voted captain of his soccer team!!! Jenny, reading since in-utero through the complex system of Morse code and high-protein drinks I developed, is learning her fifth language, Farsi!!! Bill's environmental degradation company, thanks to Bush's policies, has made us billionaires!!! And I'm happy all the time!!! Due to someone's error in judgment, I'm now the editor of dmreview.com. Poets, send me something!!! >> **BARBARA**

BROOKS My three-year-old son chose candy apple red #54 for his first half-pedicure (right foot only)--a treat for being such a good boy while I was sick with recurrent pericarditis (now that is heartache!). It's gone for now, not to worry. Meanwhile, my interview with Alice Mattison was accepted by *Glimmer Train* and my grad lecture is forthcoming in *The Writer's Chronicle*. I'm starting

a literary journal for the women in the college program at the Bedford Hills maximum-security prison. Do not submit unless you're prepared to do time. Be well; the alternative is very unpleasant. >> **SARAH BUSSE** The last six months have brought one or two readings, one or two classrooms, one or two students, and rejection, rejection, rejection from the magazines. But the highest moment lately was overhearing my two-year-old point to a Richard Scarry picture of a kity at a typewriter and say, "Mommy's a writer." Now if I could just convince a few editors to agree with his assessment. >> **WHIT COPPEDGE** I spent the first six months putting off projects--worms and hurricanes kept me paying more attention to my paying job. Rewrote a few things; started a few things; and sent a lot out but it's taken a New Year's Resolution to get me to make any progress.

A friend has hooked me on the cult/fetish of the moleskin notebook (large, ruled). My first missed residency was kinda depressing, but I hope to see y'all at AWP, B'ton June, and Sewanee. >> **RUSSELL DILLON** I now ignore people in San Francisco as though I were still in New York. If I'm not ignoring someone in person, I'm calling them on the phone as though there is no time difference, anywhere. The email address from which I currently ignore everything is duchampshcart@hotmail.com. >> **MARY**

DONNELLY On an annoying note, was mugged yesterday. On a better note and a fluke, poetry goddess Mary Ruefle picked my poem "Locker" to win the Ruth Stone prize from Vermont College's *Hunger Mountain*. It comes out this April in an edition, ironically, devoted to Vermont writers. If my former nightie buddy Russell Dillon hadn't fied to SF, he and I could begin a tandem stalking of close friends Ruefle and Dean Young. I miss him so, though I consider myself lucky that Californian Sally Ashton visited NYC twice since graduation. In January, she read in the poetry series I co-direct and kicked verbal ass! >> **BOB GRAY** The post-grad phase was intimidating in many ways, but I have survived it with half of my wits and a few shreds of my ego intact. I'm still working at the Northshire Bookstore, but I'm also teaching an English Comp. course at a local community college. Just to get my feet planted in the vicinity of a classroom. Although I've collected a bounty of rejection slips, a few pieces managed to find homes. A condensed version of my lecture was published in the Winter issue of *Tin House*, and a couple of my stories found warm places to live (one in *Carve Magazine* and the other in *Alfred Hitchcock's Mystery Magazine*). >> **MARY**

CARROLL-HACKETT Since leaving Bennington against my will--I begged Cilla, BEGGED to stay!--I've taken a tenure-track job at Longwood University and moved my family to Farmville, Virginia. We're starting a brand-new CW program (Vortex-shaped of course) and as of this minute, I'm working on launching a lit mag., *The Dos Passos Review*--on-line first, then print. Watch for

submissions call! Writing: yes, some, not as much as I want. Reading: tons, for classes, for me. Missing Bennington? Hell yeah! Missing you guys??!! Can't even begin to say. The only thing scandalous is how badly I'm jonesing for VORTEX in June!

>> **NATALIE HARRIS** I now live in Goshen, Mass., where the snow is blowing and wind batters the windows. I can't see out for frost covering the panes and who can see anyway, since there's no sunlight after 4:30 or so. Kelsea in Alaska says cry me a handful, I'm sure. As for poetry, oh, poetry is still mysterious and I have nothing fantastic to relay (no fabulous job, no impending publication). I've sent my manuscript out into the world and keep receiving those postcards addressed by me to me--the weirdest part of all. I miss everyone. Write to me now. >> **CHRIS HOLLAND** Since June I've managed to write: a few poems (and collect some rejection slips); a 6,000-word literary bio of poet Andrew Schelling (which will be published in a dictionary of literary biographies of 20th-century American nature poets); and a PhD application to the University of Nevada at Reno. If they accept me I'll be moving to Reno in August. Escape from Silicon Valley ... at last ... yes! >> **USBETH**

KIRK Since leaving Bennington I've moved from my cabin in Vermont to a bungalow in Berkeley, Calif., where the temperatures don't dip below 40 and the sun almost always shines. After finding an apartment with my sweetie and losing the 40 hr/week editing job I thought was mine, I found a great-paying freelance gig, writing/editing for a research institute that gives me both sweet bread and butter, and the time to write--now that the move is over, the pictures are hung and we've found a laundromat at last. Thank goodness for losing bad jobs and holding the vision instead. (New email: lckirk@thewritekind.com.) >> **DAVID LEVI** Hello my friends. What have I been up to? Writing, of course, but more music than poetry. I have written one long poem since graduating which may interest some of you since the awful story of Reetika Vazirani is one of its central themes. I've posted the poem for you in a hidden place on my company's website: www.castalia.org/hornbook.htm. What else? I have a dog now, I'm thinking of breeding her. I should find a dog to help with this, so if you know any, please have them call me. (917) 803-3172.

>> **ROSEMARY MANCHESTER** I celebrated graduation with a visit to my eldest son and his family in Beijing. I had an essay published in *Tiny Lights* and won third prize in notification in an all-California contest. You can hear my radio program, A NOVEL IDEA, on the web: krch.org, the second Wednesday of every month at 7 p.m. PT. It's broadcast live; you can call in! I'm enjoying Gerald Haslam's lectures at Sonoma State University on California Writers, and doing lots of reading. No, "California Literature" is NOT an oxymoron. And daffodils bloom here in January.

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DISPATCHES FROM 10 YEARS OF CLASSMATES

lyrics: sometimes motherhood = german expressionist play: the speaker on the desk playing static-y birdsong & wind in the trees: the monochromatic, faceless finger puppets everywhere, amidst the sound of battery-near-death version of "Now I Know My ABCs." Teaching writing, teaching Peace Studies. Never have enough money. Never tire of the view. Much love, and the breath of the muse, to all. >> **AMY WEINTRAUB** My book, *YOGA FOR DEPRESSION: A Compassionate Guide to Relieve Suffering Through Yoga* was published in December 2003. Interweaving the power of an ancient discipline with the findings of modern science and my own healing experience as a yoga practitioner and veteran teacher, I show why and how Yoga works to clear the mind and bring a profound sense of well-being. My work is also featured on the new CD, "Breathe to Beat the Blues." For more information on the CD and book, and a list of my lectures and readings, please visit my web site at www.yogafordepression.com.

JANUARY 2000

class agent Leah Silverman Gales

>> **LEAH SILVERMAN GALES** I proudly report the publication of a short story in *Meridian*. I'm not so proud that I took 15 years to send it out, however. My current focus is on my memoir, on which I spent two productive weeks at the Dorset Colony last fall. Another Dorset stay this spring and, in November, Vermont Studio Center, where I hope visiting writers Alice Mattison and Bob Shacochis are up for my genre switch. In March at AWP, I'm scheduled to participate on a panel addressing post-MFA/MFA career choices. Hopefully I'll find a career by then. >> **TAMI**

HAALAND In July, I participated in the High Plains Book Fest with 80 authors, primarily from the high plains region. In October, I read at the National Book Festival in Washington, D.C., with Bennington faculty members David Lehman and Ethelbert Miller. When I returned, I interviewed Diane Middlebrook for Yellowstone Public Radio.

Finally, a group of actors and musicians developed a performance, entitled "Breath in Every Room," featuring my poems, several original musical compositions and 70 paintings based on the poems. The show received a fine review in a local paper. >> **JAMES HALL** I was selected as the

Nonfiction Editor of *Gulf Coast: A Journal of Fine Art and Literature*. My editorship lasts 'til Spring '05. A small memoir piece called "My First Time" about the first guy (a Scorpio) I fell for as well as the first time someone called me a faggot, appeared in the most recent issue of *The James White Review*. >> **JOEANN HART** Four years ago since our graduation. Four years since the millennium. It seems like another lifetime. I'm still doing freelance work for the *Boston Globe*, and my fiction has been in *Writer's Journal* and *Clare*

recently. But most of all, I've just won the PEN New England Discovery Award in Fiction and will do a reading from my novel-in-progress in March at Emerson College. That's got me pretty motivated to finish the thing. >> **ERICA LETOURNEAU**

I achieved the insanely impossible. I participated in National Novel Writing Month (NaNoWriMo), completing a novel in 30 days, while juggling a major release at work, a sick daughter the first week of the month, and life in general. Obviously what I produced is a first draft, but the experience gave my writerly self-esteem a much needed boost. I urge my fellow Benn alums to check it out (NaNoWriMo.com). Now that the holidays are over, the novel is back on the front burner and I'm starting the first rewrite. I'm also finishing up a few short stories. >> **SUSAN MAGEE** What's the stature of limitations for working on material from your thesis? I'm waiting for someone to slap the cuffs on me and say, enough already! I won my second Leeway Foundation Award in October for short fiction and spent the money so fast I didn't even get to lay it over my body and roll in it. I'm now making a deal on another book, this one on pregnancy, which will be humorous (hopefully). *Why Can't You Read My Mind?*, which I co-wrote with a marriage counselor, is out, and we're waiting for Oprah to call. >> **JULIA MICHAELS** I got an agent for my first novel! It's the one about samba and Jews in Rio de Janeiro. Now I'm writing one about a family during the years of military repression here. Writing has become much easier since I finished that first one. Couldn't have done any of this without Bennington--thanks to all. >> **DANA**

STANDEFER I have been writing, at home, and also have attended both VSC and Dorset Colony, both of which I will return to this spring and next winter. Found a good, local writing group, and enjoy seeing other Bennington alums at Newtonville Books when I can get there.

JUNE 1999

class agent Susan McHenry

>> **RACHEL BARENBLAT** I'm still running Inkberry (www.inkberry.org), still writing poems, still sending the former thesis out to first-book contests, and still trying to figure out how to get my Judaism manuscript into the hands of an agent, and eventually an editor. On the (my) writing life, I try to stay mindful of the midrash about the crossing of the Red Sea: for the self-absorbed, it was a muddy unpleasant slog; for those with open eyes, it was miraculous.... >> **EDEN ELIEFF** After setting in Dallas I'm back in the proverbial saddle--that is, writing. For the past year, I've been researching and working on a novel. I left my job at the high school so I could do this, and I earn money by running my own private writing workshop for adults, for which my studies at Bennington have been immeasurably helpful. I'll

be at the Prague Summer Program for Writers this summer, and I've been named a finalist for the program's fiction fellowship. My daughter is now reading and plays "Tinkie Little Star" on the violin. Drop me a line! I'd love to hear from you all.

>> **KAY HARKINS** Saint Isaac the Syrian said, "A small but always persistent discipline is a great force; for a soft drop falling persistently hollows out hard rock." I find much contentment in the way this reliable truth applies to my spiritual, physical, and professional life. I'm still writing, still teaching, still enjoying the friendship of other writers and building on the valuable lessons I learned in the Bennington program. Most often, the discipline and the friendship feel like reward enough. >> **MARIKA JARISLOWSKY** Cole Ruth (Jan. '00) and I are still working in advertising in Sweden. Every once in a while we whine to each other about having sold our souls, and then we get back to writing about Absolut Vodka. To ease the pain, we're actively involved in a scriptwriting group, so get ready to see some great Swedish films within the next year or two. On another note, I finally met Mr. Right (a Swede, what a surprise!) and got married in Montreal in October. >> **MARGARET TODD**

MATLAND Soon after graduation I received a Bush Artist Fellowship, which gave me a trip to Italy for research and nine months of work on my thesis, "The Dome of Creation." But a new job in 2000 as editor of *Ruminator Review* interfered with finishing the book, and I've been busily running the magazine, writing and editing book reviews, essays, and interviews, often using Bennington writers like Sven Birkerts, Anne Evans, Nicolis Fox, Lucy Grealy, Maria Lauenstein, Mark Melnicove, Arkold Melnyczuk, and Kate Moos. This year: a last-ditch effort to complete the book! >> **SUSAN MCHENRY** I'm still taking pottery classes and have set up a wheel in my basement. The process brings me much joy. All the while, I'm waiting to see when and how poetry and clay meet. I feel like a poet without words in this work, yet I sense the connection in a tangible and literal way--the act of creating a thing of use out of dirt, essentially, through a whirlwind of centrifugal force. Much like the creation of a poem, I'd say.

>> **CAMILLE RENSHAW** I'm living in Orlando now, working as CEO of a company that develops technology products at the intersection of learning and finance. I was a winner of the *Boston Review* Short Story contest last spring, but I haven't spent much time writing short stories since then. A year ago I took a fellowship at the Vermont Studio Center where I began work in earnest on a novel. I continue to work furiously on it and am close to the end. This year has been crazy with the new company, and I've allowed little time for my writing until about a month ago. Additionally, I'm finding the business of writing something long to well-take a long time. >> **LACY SCHUTZ** I'm working on a cantata libretto for a composer in

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place of solace in between potty training, starting Gareth in school and planning his 3rd birthday bash. Oh, and I am thinking of entering a contest to write a blues piece about bad garage door openers in hopes of landing a new one, installed, free of charge. >> **DEBBIE DANIELPOUR**

CHAPEL Agents are reading my novel manuscript, which I finished last fall. Still happily teaching fiction and screenwriting at Harvard extension.

>> **KELLY COCKERHAM** On September 30th, 2003, my beautiful Lucy Blue was born. She brought with her all kinds of changes, including a new address in Baltimore. Bye, bye Texas! Most days are spent feeding Lucy, chasing Zeke (can't believe he's three already), feeding Lucy, changing diapers, Tonka trucking, feeding Lucy and feeding Lucy. Looking forward to AWP, the Benny reunion, swimming with the lovely fish, and one day (a girl can dream!) writing.

>> **CAROLINE**

HELLER I was at the MacDowell Colony in Peterborough, N.H. for five weeks, where I spent hours and hours a day

working on my book, but still had plenty of time to walk in the gorgeous 450 acres of woods, meeting deer and wild turkey, and once, in the distance, a loping coyote.

>> **ALDEN JONES** I am still teaching at Emerson College, but thinking about packing up and moving to Mexico come January. An essay, condensed from my Cuba memoir (still in progress), will be out in the next issue of *Gulf Coast*. >> **REB LIVINGSTON** My poems will appear in *LIT*, *Good Foot* and *5 AM* later this spring. I'll be in Chicago for the AWP conference. Anyone who wants to check up on me can do so at www.reblivingston.net.

>> **DAVID**

MACDONALD I have continued to be active on Graywolf Press' Board of Directors and to keep at my poetry when my day job (read lawyer) allows. I had a book review published in the Summer 2003 issue of the *Ruminator Review* and keep in contact with various classmates and other Benningtonites in the Minnesota area. I am looking forward to attending the AWP Conference in Chicago in March and reconnecting with other Bennington friends.

>> **JOHN MAY** My novel, *Poe & Fanny*, will be published by Algonquin Books in May. My Bennington experience and friends have been so instrumental in this accomplishment that it is impossible for me to adequately express my gratitude. Success, however, is tempered by the first pre-publication review (*Kirkus*), which is not good, reminding me of what I learned in twenty workshops at Bennington—writing well is harder than the benches in Tishman. >> **KRISTIN**

OHLSON I've been asked to speak to lots of groups about my memoir, *Stalking the Divine*, and just found out to my terror—that a March engage-

ment I thought would be small has turned into hundreds of people. Also finishing up my novel and working on bunches of freelance articles. On a nonwritery note: I plan to plant lots of those dinner-plate dahlias in the spring. >> **P.F. POTVIN** I just returned from three months of hitching and backpacking around New Zealand's South Island. Currently, I'm in Boston writing non-fiction, awaiting a new piece in the *Santa Clara Review*, and looking for a job. >> **ANDY**

PRATT It seems I might actually get published some time this year or next, because now I have a manager who will shop my book for me. I couldn't take the indifference and rejection(s) all alone, so I put my literary career aside and concentrated on love, music, and sanity. Music life is going well, considering the times, and I still have many CDs that you could buy off my new web site: andypratt.com. I am living in Amesbury Mass with my wonderful new wife and both of us do our best to get out of New England as often as we can.

>> **RICCO SIASOCO**

I've got a novel excerpt in a new anthology called *Screaming Monkeys: Critiques of Asian American Images* from Coffeehouse Press, and am participating in a writing panel at AWP in March. Also interviewed a couple of tattoo artists in J.P. for the February issue of *Boston Magazine*. I'm considering a career change to something that involves dough, yeast, and 450-degree ovens. >> **BRENT TERRY** I've just finished my tenure as Poet Laureate of the Linden Hills neighborhood of Minneapolis, for which I was featured in the December issue of *Mpls. St. Paul Magazine*. In February I will be leading a children's poetry workshop at the world's coolest bookstore, Wild Rumpus Books (many creatures roam the place freely). I am healthy without the benefit of drugs for the first time in ten years, and am running and coaching marathons (for money) here in MN. >> **MARCIA TRAHAN**

I'm writing (and revising) a lot, tutoring kids and teaching writing to adults. I have a piece forthcoming in the March on-line issue of *Full Circle*; and I'm planning a submission blitz for two other essays. >> **RANDI TRIANT** I am currently teaching two classes in fiction and the personal essay at Emerson College. >> **JIM WOESSNER** No progress writing. In fact, I've just about dropped out of "normal" all together. Last year I finally gave up the increasingly ridiculous notion of beating the bushes for consulting contracts, something I've always hated doing but did for the money. Instead I declared myself to be a full-time professional painter. Commissions, mainly portraits of people and houseboats, are my bread and butter; but this year I will be pushing abstracts and landscapes in at least a half dozen shows. Check out some samples on my rudimentary website at jimwoessner.com.

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JUNE 2000

class agent Catherine Parnell

>> **LUCY ARRINGTON** I've recently started leading writing workshops for healthcare providers at a local hospital. It has been amazingly rewarding and challenging. These people have so many stories and so much passion about their work. I'm not a poet, but poetry is what they want to do. So I'm figuring that out along with them. Otherwise, life is quiet. >> **MARSHA DUBROW** I shrank my graduate lecture "Single Blessedness" into an op-ed, which the *Providence* (R.I.) *Journal* printed last December—thirteen months after accepting it. Two other pieces from my chapbook *Single Blessedness* are in anthologies: "Pearls," from my graduate reading, is in *Looking Back*, and "Gray Matters" is in *New Aging Women*. I won a humorous speaking contest for Md.-Va.-D.C. region with "Gray Matters." Recycling pays. One story based on my Iceland trip last summer has run, but the other languishes at the *Boston Herald* six months after acceptance. Patience, a weak point, and perseverance, a strong point, also pay.

>> **JENNY FACTOR** My book of poems was reviewed in the August 2003 issue of *POETRY*. Other poems just came out in the *Poetry 180*, *Poetry Daily*, and *Mistread City* anthologies and *California Poets from Gold Rush to the Present*. In October, I got to exercise (exorcise?) my crush on public radio by appearing on KKUP and *The POETRY SHOW* in Northern California. I forgot you can't be seen on radio, so I dressed well, and then sweated buckets. My favorite part of the trip was a visit to an alternative school. I'd like to spend more time teaching in 2004. >> **SARAH ANNE JOHNSON** I've been busy promoting *Conversations With American Women Writers*, and working on the Bennington Faculty Interview project with students in celebration of the ten-year anniversary of the writing seminars. I've also turned in my manuscript for *The Art of the Author Interview*, and will continue to teach my workshop by the same name at Bennington and at the Lesley University MFA Program. >> **TERRI MATHES** I enjoyed a one-month residency at the Ragdale Foundation, where I worked on the book that I began for my thesis. Two of the book's stories were published last fall. Slow, slow, slow. I've also been teaching creative writing at the local adult education center and at DePaul University and I was a visiting artist at The School of the Art Institute. On the homefront, I'm shepherding my son through the college application process. Think of those small black-and-white dogs that race around nipping the sheep on the heels to get them moving!

>> **AILISH WEISNER** Had a baby boy in August; doing the 4 a.m. writing thing; writing really long stuff now, as well as short, strange

BY LEN EDGERLY (JAN '03)

On a lark five years ago, I e-mailed daily text sketches from Disney World to a small group of family and friends. I titled them *Chronicles of the Mouse* and continued the practice on subsequent trips.

Thus: *Chronicles of the Moose*, to British Columbia; *Travels with Chester*, seven weeks to Canada and the East Coast with our old collie and a copy of Steinbeck's road memoir; *The Bennington Chronicles*, filed from my five residences; *The Kiwi Chronicles*, through New Zealand in a rented motorhome; *Les Chroniques*, France and the QE2 last fall; and *The Virgin Chronicles*, a recent one-month stay with my wife, Darlene's sister on St. John.

Now I can't imagine taking a trip without creating a new installment of the *Chronicles*. Because of the electronic audience, I write with more attention and craft than I would in a private journal. My distribution list usually comprises about 30 people, ranging from close friends, classmates, and family, to people I know only slightly.

When Basho left for the Deep North 3½ years ago, at the threshold of his home he wrote this poem and posted it on a wooden pillar:

Behind this door

Now buried in deep grass,

A different generation will celebrate

The Festival of the Dolls.

I like to think Basho would have enjoyed sending daily prose and verse from the road, and that he would have loved the addition of photographs. The mix of media and forms gives me more than one way into each day's riddle.

Traveling with an audience of e-readers is more work than sending postcards, especially with the hassle of finding a line for the modem card on my HP iPAQ with foldable keyboard. But the rewards are more careful writing, a sharpening of my senses, a record of where I've been, and occasional clues to where I'm headed next.

From *The Bennington Chronicles*—

Saturday, January 13, 2001

A graduating student yesterday recited a quote from David Lehman's *The Last Avant-Garde*, in a perfect impression of his halting, oddly timed speech and resonant voice. This series of expressions crossed David's face: surprised, confused, pleased, irritated, knowing and, informing all the others, a look that said he was just about to speak, but he didn't. The audience responded to the student's—and David's—performance with wild applause and laughter.

Len Edgerly



David's persona is just a shtick, a classmate told me knowingly—shtick as in entertainer's routine. But "shtick" also means a special attribute of somebody or exaggeration. One-on-one, David struck me as a man of nearly constant doubts combined with sharp intelligence and strong opinions. These opposing traits add up to a quirky, Woody Allen charisma. Perhaps he unconsciously perfects the routine in public, his poems, and the classroom. All of us here have great material and ways to be original. The writers good enough to be teachers have woven these special attributes into their work with flawless exaggeration, so that it's impossible to tell what is shtick and what is true nature, the soul revealed in all its goofy wonder.

From *Les Chroniques*—
9/17/03 Wednesday 6 p.m.
Russell Square Park, London

How quickly a place can look like home. After just over a week of traipsing around Switzerland and France, I found the London underground to be positively charming this afternoon, with all that English being spoken around us and a good number of overweight people. The park at Russell Square is the same as ever, except for a few more brown leaves fallen on the grass. I am typing on a park bench next to a woman who amazingly has brought scissors to the park and is snipping out an article from the *Daily Mail*. One thing I liked about reading French newspapers with the help of my digital translator was how slowly I had to go. Reading *The Times*, my mind races like France's Train a Grande Vitesse. Each speed has its pleasures, each country its delights.

From *The Virgin Chronicles*—
12/23/03 Tuesday 11 a.m.
Sebastian's on the Beach, Tortola, British Virgin Islands
On Tortola I began an organized comparison of reading a novel versus playing a videogame. I read or play in equal time allotments, filling both sides of a 4x6 index card with notes each session, one side for the novel, the other for the videogame.

The novel is Tom Robbins's *Still Life With Woodpecker*. The videogame is *Advance Wars 2: Black Hole Rising*, a new strategy game for Game Boy.

Initial observations: 1) While reading *Woodpecker* on the beach yesterday, I several times wished I'd brought the Game Boy, which was recharging in the hotel room. While playing *Advance Wars 2*, I did not think of the novel once. 2) Last night I dozed off several times while reading *Woodpecker*. I found myself checking my watch to see how much longer 'till 20 minutes was up. Then, battling *Black Hole* armies, I stayed wide awake and could not help playing seven extra minutes.

Len Edgerly graduated in poetry in January 2003. If you want to receive an invitation to the next Chronicles, please e-mail him at LenEdgerly@attglobal.net.

DISPATCHES FROM 10 YEARS OF CLASSMATES

>> continued from page 4

>> **MARJORIE MANWARING** After graduation, I was thrilled to have summer visits from classmates John Rowell and Kelsea Smith. In the fall I began working as an assistant editor for the on-line poetry journal *Switched-on Gutenberg* and found out that one of my poems will be cruising the streets of Seattle as part of the “poetry on buses” program. Can’t wait to see the Bennington gang at AWP! >> **DINAH MILLS** Eliza’s new piercings are mostly tasteful and the tattoo only covers one cheek. As for our Jake, musical genius that he is, we can’t complain—he chose a lovely drum set—one with red trim—it looks just fine in front of the sofa and even occasionally doubles as a coffee table. Fred is enjoying his custodial duties at the Los Angeles Public Library and I manage to get it all done in spite of the limp. Missing you all. Love and kisses. >> **ANDREW REINER** I haven’t written anything in a while, because the “c” keystroke on my computer is jammed. I guess I should get that fixed. . . . >> **SUE RODGERS** I started an assistant professor job in creative writing at Kansas State University this fall, having taught here as an instructor for 11 years. Love the job, though juggling full-time work with three kids has been ... challenging. Hosted John Rowell, Dinah Mills and her husband Fred in October. John did a reading and visited classes, Dinah worked with theater students, and Fred gave a screen-writing workshop. All were a huge hit. My book of (pre-Bennington) stories will be published by Mid-List Press in March 2004. Also had a story in *North American Review* this fall. Miss you guys. >> **JOHN ROWELL** After graduation, I continued to promote my book *The Music of Your Life*, and was generously hosted in various locales around the country by alums Bob Gray, Marge Manwaring, Tom Schabarum, Michael Schiavo, Dinah Mills, Amy Gerstler, Sarah Dorbin, Beyle Dickerman, and Diana Gould. (Thank you all!) Sue Rodgers hosted me as a Visiting Writer at Kansas State University in October. In December, I published a story in N.Y.’s *Gannett/Journal News* (StoryLine/Tag Team Fiction Project) and this spring, I’m teaching a Short Fiction workshop in New York at Mediabistro www.mediabistro.com. Paperback edition of *Music* comes out in June from Simon and Schuster Trade Paper. Love to all.

>> **CHRIS SALERNO** I just took pictures of an old guy driving a pickup full of antique missles, and with faded Bush-Cheney sticker. I’ll send them. Before that I got a \$9 haircut from a woman with a black eye. Seriously. Earlier I did a chap-book of poems, *Waving Something White*, with Independent Press (at University Book Exchange). New poems are in *Barrow Street, Diner, River City, Goodfoot, canwehaveourballback*, and *Beacon Street Review*. I’ll be at the Vermont Studio Center for the month of August, half-wishing it was Bennington. Thinking of you, old System. Old Luxury. >> **GAIL SEGEL** In 2004, I have stories forthcoming in *Salamander, Night Train, The North*

Dakota Quarterly and *Big Water*, an anthology from Michigan State University Press, as well as in FRIGG, an on-line zine. Have received enough rejection slips for a fleet of paper airplanes bigger than the Royal Canadian Air Force. >> **KELSEY SMITH** Lance and I will be moving to Syracuse, N.Y. in June. Our new address will be 224 Greenwood Place, Syracuse, 13210.

>> **WILLIAM VANDERCRIFF** I have a restaurant review column for *Out in Jersey*, a New Jersey-based GLBT magazine and do some photography for the magazine as well. I’m doing freelance writing as a contributor to PressPassQ, an Internet news source and this spring I’m going to be interviewing the writer/poet Tol Derricotte. Also, I’d be forever indebted to anyone who can send me Tol’s interview in *Glimmer Train* issue #23, which is out of print. >> **SARAI WALKER** I got a great job working on the 2005 edition of *Our Bodies, Ourselves*. I’m writing the chapter on body image, which ties in nicely with the novel I’m writing. Thanks to all you Bennington folk who keep checking in with me on the progress of my book. I need all the encouragement I can get! The novel is coming along nicely. I might even finish it by the end of the year.

JANUARY 2003

class agent Meg Kelly Vorm

>> **PEGGY BARNES** My fictional characters, worn out from my meddling, rest in yet another bottom drawer. I’ve turned my attention to non-fiction. To capture a bit of ancient history (that is, my life!) I’m using digital and still photography, adding historical text, poetry and music to create DVDs. Documentaries for captured family audiences (however generous the reviews) have a limited market. I’m hoping the appeal will be wider for a book I’m writing. For some time I’ve observed the various ways that religion transforms itself and our culture. I’m gathering data for *Who’s in Church? Conversations with Disciples and Dropouts*. If you care to essay an opinion, or suggest an interesting interviewee, pwbarnes@aol.com would be grateful.

>> **MATTHEW CAMPBELL** Started teaching “Techniques in Poetry,” an on-line course for the University of Maine system in January. I have nine poems coming out in an anthology from Six Gallery Press called *Jacob’s Ladder*. This is the Joyce issue. I also just opened my own nightclub in Rutland, Vt. called “Godfather’s.” The madness there is ruling my life for now, along with the lit-the guy, Aidan, who is now two. My wife is still wonderful. >> **MATTHEW CAROLAN** I have a couple essays in the works. I’ve got two lined up for publication, and I’m waiting on few more rejections. Still nothing in *Gray’s or Field and Stream*. I think I’m going to send my novel out next week. I’ve finally reached that I don’t give a shit

attitude again, and I’ve found that when I do, good things happen. I’m back to writing fiction, and I’ve got a memoir bubbling around in my head. I’m also reading like crazy again. I’ve also started studying for that Coast Guard exam. With any luck, I’ll be Captain Carolan next year. Tarpon, bonefish, and permit for all! I’m planning on hitting Bennington hard next June. >> **DIANA DEMERS** I’m still enjoying the Caribbean after fifteen months here. Still hoping for Bennington visitors. So far only Len Edgerly has made an appearance, but that’s not saying much since he’s visited every U.S. state, county, municipality, and territory since graduation. My friend and co-translator, Yukiko Shigetou, and I have gotten permission from post-WWII poet, Isigaki Rin, to publish translations of her work.

We’re very excited and have about 40 poems in rough translation, working now to turn them into poetry. Otherwise, in my doomed yet eternal quest to please William Pierce and Matthew Carolan, I’m working on a fiction project. >> **LEN EDGERLY** I have poems forthcoming in 5 a.m., *Four Corners*, and *Margie*. I’m finishing up two book reviews for *The Bloomsbury Review*. My six-month sabbatical from writing new poetry officially ended the day before Thanksgiving, and, sure enough, a poem arrived on the plane as Darlene and I approached Boston for the annual turkey trauma. It was great seeing Diana Demers and Valerie Ellis in person during my January travels, an amazing 60 degrees apart from each other in temperature. For Christmas, Santa brought me a platinum flip-top Game Boy Advance SP and *Advance Wars 2* to play on it. >> **NINA FORSTHE** I landed a job as a reference librarian at our local branch library last October, and I love it! I get all kinds of weird-I mean interesting questions. I’m learning a ton of things that I’m sure will be useful some day. On the publication front, I’m supposed to have had a poem in *LIT* (I haven’t seen it yet) and another in *The Mementoire*. Here in Sioux City we have 27 inches of snow on the ground and winter’s not over yet. Now I know I’m not in Nicaragua. >> **MICHAEL CAUSE** I’m still in San Francisco, fighting for the rights of all starving artists and coordinating a local campaign to increase funding for mental health programs. I’ve been so active in progressive issues that writing has been a chore, but I hope to start getting some words out there by the summer. On the personal front, I have a wonderful girlfriend, and am hanging with fellow roughish alums Matt McGlinchy and Russell Dillon. The three of us are developing a plan to take the San Francisco literary world by storm, one whiskey at a time.

>> **ANNE GERMANACOS** Has stories forthcoming in *The Florida Review* and *Black Warrior Review*. And “Irini” can be read in the 2003 archives of *Agni* on-line. >> **STEVE GREGORIS** A million classes a week to teach, plus a student teacher this semester, plus it looks

>> continues on page 10

DISPATCHES FROM 10 YEARS OF CLASSMATES

needs to choose between looking good and accomplishing something because it’s just not possible to do both. >> **PAUL EBRELY** Since June 2003, I’ve lived in the Lincoln Park neighborhood of Chicago, a couple of miles north of the Loop, in a nano-sized townhouse with Myriam, my goddess; SRE, our five-year-old; and our two Australian Shepherds and misanthropic cat. At 48, I don’t feel a minute over seventy, and I’ve become something of a workout fanatic in the (ultimately futile!) effort to stave off the effect of the years. I’ve had some success publishing my thesis stories, though less than I’d hoped. I write, I read; also, I edit for *StoryQuarterly*. I hope I see some of you at AWP!

>> **PAUL HERTNEKY** Fueled by my recent success and the eagerness with which editors request my essays, I have started a new collection: “Bitterness and Frustration are My Friends.” Thank you all for snapping up the entire press run of “My Dear Sweet Ulcer.” You’ve allowed me to rise above the shame of vanity publishing with the forthcoming “Let’s Talk Tumors.” I hope all of you, too, will find profit and acclaim in your misery. *Merci*. >> **ANDREA JARRELL** My consulting business has grown six times in the last two years as I’ve truly turned my attention to it and both my children are in school. And, both odd and exciting, I’m finding that elements of story (plot, character, setting, dialog, etc.) inform my professional work. Frankly, I think the fact that I’m a fiction writer is a big part of my success. Lots of articles last year, one of which was published as a book chapter. See you at AWP and for the 10th Anniversary.

>> **EUGENIA KIM** I will finish my novel this year. This year, I will finish my novel. By the end of the year, my novel will be finished by me. I’ll get those last chapters of my novel done, I will. My first novel will be finished in 2004. Okay, okay, I’ll squeeze in another story and a memoir piece, too, since I’ve been teaching memoir for the past six months. But mark my words, I’ll have that novel done by year’s end. I will. >> **CINDY MILWE** I have-as they say-another bun in my oven. Due Aug. 4. Been crazy-tired, super-hungry, and remarkably un-poetic. Trying to figure out how to write while chasing a toddler. Also what to name a new little person whose sister is a “Tupelo.” >> **CATE MURPHY** After giving up composition teaching at Napa Valley College, I’m spending more time writing and nurturing my editing business. One project is the *Bennington Collective Anthology*, to which all former and current Collective members are invited to submit work done within the on-line Collective. The anthology will be self-published and released at the BWS 10th Anniversary celebration in June. Other possible projects: editing two children’s books and a Napa Valley dessert book, and ghostwriting a book for a medical marijuana grower. He asked if I would mind being paid in “bud.” Thirteen years ago I would have jumped at it. >> **JOHN DIAMOND-NIGH**: In the past year or so my poetry has appeared in *The Paris Review*, *The Gettysburg Review*, *Agni*, *The*

Malahat Review, *Beloit Poetry Journal*, *Black Warrior Review* and *Barrow Street*. My new manuscript will soon make its rounds in search of a publisher. My sculpture (always integral to my writing) has in the recent past been exhibited at Yale, The Minnesota Institute of Art, and the Smithsonian.

Laid low with an injured back, I’ve had the luxury of reading more in the past two months than I’ve been able to do since those grand, almost Hellenic, days at Bennington. >> **JULIA PEARSON** I’m still writing, sending work out, and playing cello—the old drill. I also have poems appearing in the forthcoming issue of the *Connecticut River Review*. >> **ALEXA MARTIN PRUIT** After giving up nearly three years of my life to hell (hell being a place called Colorado Springs) my husband and I moved to Gig Harbor, Wash. I’m writing again, daily, fiction of all things, and it seems that as long as I’m writing and living in this state that I love with family nearby—a little too nearby at times—I can ride out life’s uncertainties. Though I haven’t talked to most of you since graduation, I think of you often, and am rooting for your success in whatever brings you joy, be it writing or digging ditches. >> **EVELYN ROSEN** My essay “Spiderwerk” will finally be coming out in the next issue of *Frontiers*, a Woman’s Studies Journal published by the University of Washington. I’m working hard at teaching, marking too many papers, tending our large family with 23 grandchildren, and working on a series of memoir/short stories. Will hike in Portugal this spring and am moving from our house of 18 years to a condo, more centrally located, smaller, and free of lawn ... thank goodness.

>> **LAUREL VAN DER WENDE** I’ve been doing what psychologists call therapeutic parenting. For eighteen months after we adopted our daughter, I put all my energy into helping her sleep and overcome attachment and post-traumatic stress issues. Finally, in October, Crystal decided that being my baby was a wonderful thing. Ah, the joy of rocking a trusting toddler instead of a bundle of rage and terror! Now I have some energy left for writing. So far, I’m writing about Crystal, a collection of memories that may become a memoir of the attachment process.

JANUARY 2001

class agent Debbie Daniellepour Chapel

>> **MISHA ANGRIST** I have settled in Durham, N.C. and am working as a science editor at Duke. I gave a reading in October and was thrilled that Bennington pals John May and Whit Coppedge came out for it. I have a short short forthcoming in *Kerem* and continue to beat my dead horse of a novel. >> **JULIE BLOEMKE** I am still reading, still writing, and finding it my

>> continues on next page

DISPATCHES FROM 10 YEARS OF CLASSMATES

>> from page 6

like more theatre stuff. I've finally just put together 5 batches of poems for submission, so I guess I'll be hearing from editors in a few months or so. No Chicago (smack in the middle of semester), or 10-year-Benn in June for me (exam time here), but I'd love to get over to Boston and get together with a few Woollites in the summer. >>>**MARTHA KINNEY** My first book, *The Fall of Heartless Horse*, is forthcoming from Akashic Books' Little House on the Bowery Series and should be out in December or January. I was a finalist in the Poets and Writers California Voices Contest, and I've been revising my second manuscript and working on some other stuff as well. I really miss everyone and look forward to seeing you all in June. Be well! >>>**LAURA LECORNE** I'm teaching composition at Tulane and have a story forthcoming in *Colorado Review*. >>>**BILL PIERCE** I've recently had fiction accepted at *The Cream City Review* and *American Literary Review*, and essays are due out this spring in *Agni* and *The Writer's Chronicle*. When my son sings, "Down by the station early in the morning, see the little puffinbells all in a row," I don't want anything to change ever or time to pass again. He was born in our first semester. Which proves *Time* isn't listening. (Ed.'s note: *Late breaking news: Bill is also the new managing editor of Agni!* Yea, *Bill!*) >>>**REBECCA ROBINSON** In November I taught creative writing at a private girls' middle school with Ann Packer-one week, three hours a day, adolescents ... it rocked! Now I'm tutoring English at the same school. I have an essay, "Consumption," coming out in *Alligator Juniper* in the spring issue. Ian turns 7 this weekend. I remember our first residency, when he was almost 4. He called me on the phone and asked, "Do you know what photosynthesis is?" I'm starting to contract as a technical writer, as the job market is finally, thank heaven, warming up. >>>**SANDY SHEA** has just moved and is nesting happily in her new home (complete with a separate room for her shoes): I've just finished editing a book of essays by the late writer Caroline Knapp, called *The Merry Recluse* due out by Perseus Books in April, to coincide with the paperback of her last book, *Appetites: Why Women Want*. Wrote the introduction and edited the collection. Still writing editorials for the *Daily News*, about to launch a series investigating family court. >>>**JODI GARBBER-SIMON** I am living in Albuquerque and still working at my public relations job for the New Mexico Credit Union League. I know more than I ever wanted to about credit unions, but am really enjoying myself. I have the nicest coworkers in the world and have ample time to write after work. I'm working on a few writing projects at the moment and will be sure to sound all the alarms when one of them is published somewhere. I definitely miss Bennington and the rhythm my life had when it was punctuat-

ed by the residences. I hope to return for a visit before too long. >>>**MEG KELLY VORM** Our minivorn, Elena, was born at home on August 31 (and you thought pushing out that first draft was hard!). Since her arrival, I've been writing buttkiss, but as far as reading, I'm revisiting the classics: *Runaway Bunny*, *Little Toot*, and *Goodnight, Gorilla*. Teaching a little skiing, adoring Enrique Fabuloso, missing the Woollites, and thinking about writing. But here's great news! I've got the high score in Centipede! >>>**GABRIELLE ZANE** I attended Bread Loaf last Aug. where I worked with the very scary and amazing poet Dean Young, and got my ass kicked in workshop. Still revisiting my manuscript and working on some new pieces including trying my hand at personal essay. Working in the arts running an after-school theater group for disadvantaged youth and an enrichment program bringing writers and artists into urban schools in Connecticut. Still on the editorial board of *Curbstone Press*. Learning to live without my brother Doug, my dog Boo, and Warren Zevon in the world.

JUNE 2002

class agent Allyson Salazar

>>>**MATTHEW ADAMS** I've been doing absolutely nothing besides being home-dad, nurse maid, houseboy and horseboy (this is a new addition to the family, his name's Rodney if you can believe it). Working sporadically on a screenplay and a novel, but not enough to mention. >>>**ANDY DEHNART** After a few weeks off to recover, I've started a new semester teaching literary journalism and three other courses. I'm looking forward to returning to Chicago for AWP in March, continuing my proselytizing for Howard Dean, and resuming hip-hop dance class. Right now I'm "working on" more than I'm actually writing, but I suppose that's a start. My writing projects right now include a piece about NASA's mythologizing for *SEED Magazine*, researching autism's links to popular culture for a story, and developing a book proposal with Jodi Garber-Simon (Jan. '03). >>>**KATHRYN DOUGLAS**, being of sound (ish) mind and fresh from yoga class, do declare the following literary life happens since our last "meeting" in the vortexual farside: One (1) public reading of poetry (my very own) at Yale Grad School; thousands of e-mails and journal entries written; listening to the famous reading whenever possible (Edna O'Brien, Robert Creeley, et. al.); working with Yale Fellows on upcoming publication of second issue of *Palimpsest*; day-dreaming about taking advantage of Aer Lingus's \$99 to Dublin promotion; sending mucho (well, two) baby congratulation e-mails to Bennington colleagues (welcome Hazel and George!). >>>**ANN FINE** class of OH TOO!, recently got a new job as the events coordinator at the

University of Arizona Poetry Center, sold one home and bought another, co-founding and co-directing a non-profit inn for writers which will open in the next few months-hope Bennington alumnus will check it out on the web at www.casabire.org.

>>>**JOHN GREEN** Due mostly to some encouraging words from an agent I think I like, I'm working daily on a novel. In a few days I'm off for a three-week writing retreat to see if I can finish a first draft. For the time being, I parked the Great American one, which was filling me with fear, doubt and constipation, and am working on the regular American one, which is a whole lot more fun. I've got an R-rated story out in the most recent issue of Andrei Codrescu's on-line mag, *Exquisite Corpse* (www.corpse.org/issue_12/edonism/green.html).

>>>**ANASTASIOS**

KOZATIS It's all Andy Dehnart's fault. I have not written a poem in ages, but I've spent countless hours creating www.lostbaklava.com, a photo-blog for our new baby boy George A. Kozatis, who arrived on 8 January 2004. That act, however, must be one of the true meanings of poetsis. All the while, I wrote the introduction to the E. Ethelbert Miller's new book of poems, *How We Sleep on the Nights We Don't Make Love*, and a number of essays and reviews for *Another Chicago Magazine*, *Boston Review*, *Jacket*, and *-VERT*. Oooo almost forgot: I have poems in the new issue of *Emergency*

Almanac

(www.emergencypress.org). >>>**ROB PHELPS** My short story "Bodysurfing" has been accepted for publication in the first 2004 issue of *Body Positive* magazine (www.bodypos.org/publications), and I'm still writing personal essays for *Poz Magazine* (www.poz.org). Was on a panel of HIV positive writers who write about HIV at the Lambda literary festival held this year in my hometown Provincetown and hosted the event's open reading (John Rowell, you, your wit, and your spiffy bow tie were sorely missed up there). Otherwise shivering out on boarded-up, winter-time Cape Cod. >>>**ALLYSON SALAZAR** I am busy completing a 14-canvas study of postpartum depression, which (if finished) will be on display at the William Benton Museum in the fall of '05. I am working daily on writing my name. So far it's going pretty well.

JANUARY 2002

class agent Tom Schabarum

>>>**REBECCA BALCARCEL** I continue to teach for Tarrant County College (part-time) and home school my three boys. I'm writing articles as well as poems, on everything from home school ideas to poetry translation. Most recent pubs are on-line-if curious, check *Poetry Midwest*, *3rd Muse Poetry Journal*, and *Muse Squared* in your search engine. I also read "on the air" for a University of Texas radio program, which led to an offer to

BENNINGTON ALUMNI CREATE AN ONLINE FORUM

BY BRIAN COOPER (JAN '05)

The Bennington Writing Seminars offers students an opportunity to learn from some of the best writers working today. Making the most of the experience, however, should also involve forming relationships with peers whose literary, aesthetic, and critical interests have some relevance to our own—or, as Sheila Kohler put it to me during the most recent graduation dinner, "making friends."

Low-residency, compared to a traditional graduate school format, offers advantages and disadvantages, in this regard. After the six months between residencies, you might forget everyone's name. After the ten days of residency, you might want to. Both the first packet and the demands of home insist on attention. There's little time for corresponding with friends from Bennington. Or, maybe more than anything else, without the common context of the residency, there's not much to talk about. And after graduation, when the obligations of post-Bennington life resume their place as priority, keeping in touch with classmates can be difficult.

After the Summer 2003 Residency, an essay by Leslie McGrath on National Public Radio was the catalyst for a series of mass emails, between a group of B'tonites, first about the nature of feminism, and then about a variety of branching topics. Both current students and recent graduates participated, delivering challenging, well-phrased (and often lengthy) opinions.

One recipient, finding his inbox filled to the point where it wouldn't receive new messages, started thinking about how he could continue to listen in on the discussion without missing e-mails from his mom.

Forty-five minutes later, the Bennington Bulletin Board began accepting posts at <http://bennington.proboards21.com/>

An Internet Bulletin Board is a website where members can post messages on topics of common (or uncommon) interest. Posting a new message is much like sending an e-mail, except that it's stored and displayed at a single, shared website. Members can make public replies to messages posted by others or start conversations on new subjects. The Bennington board is hosted by ProBoards.com, which also provides the tools for registering new members, maintaining the boards, and organizing message posts. They provide the service for free, accompanying it with targeted ads.

<http://bennington.proboards21.com/>

The Bennington site includes several boards, or general categories, where users build conversations or "threads" on particular subjects of their choosing. The site includes boards for "Events" (such as readings or festivals), "What we're reading," "Opportunities", and of course, one for each of The Three Genres. Leslie McGrath and Ish Archbold moderate two of the more active boards, "Quotes and Thoughts" and "Poetry" respectively. Perhaps most popular, with over 100 posts, the General Board will let you talk about anything.

Members use the boards both for one-time general announcements and on-going discussions. Since the most recent residency, Priscilla Hodgkins has posted a job opening from the National Endowment for the Arts and Ishmael Archbold has noted a reading series in Brooklyn. Clark Knowles, with the title "let's get the party started/it's already too late" has started a conversation about "writing from dark places."

One respondent has suggested that if we write from "a deep place", it's not surprising that place should also be characterized by darkness. Another describes this as "the re-routing into art of 'unacceptable' impulses." Other new discussions are developing under the titles "Links of Interest to Poets (& others)", "Would you call this a lyric essay?", and "Writing & Music."

The Bennington Bulletin Boards welcomes new participants, including students, faculty, and graduates. If you have questions about using the boards, I have started a separate account just for corresponding with my mom, and would be glad to receive your questions at [cooper_kuandika@yahoo.com](mailto:kuandika@yahoo.com).

Editor's note: As you've probably guessed, it was Brian, with the bulging e-mail box, who is the creator (and moderator) of the B.B.B. Much thanks to Brian for giving our community a place outside of residency to share our beloved obsession. The FSotV hopes you will all check it out. And post!

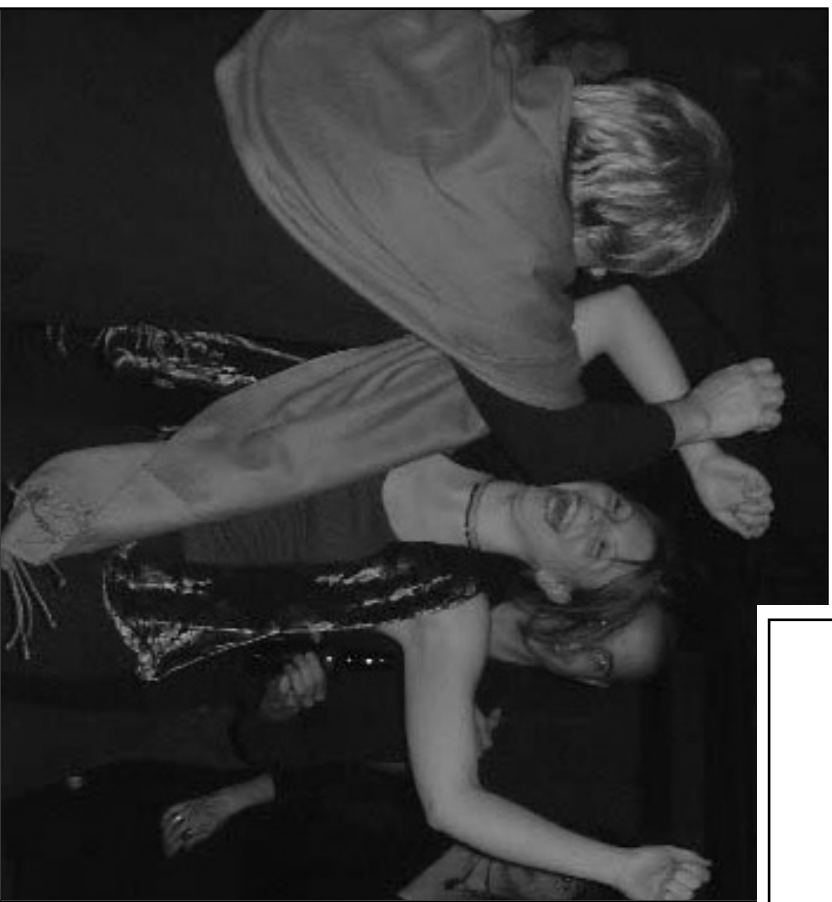
ONE THOUSAND WORDS

THE CLASS OF JANUARY 2004 IN PICTURES

Andrew Hughes and Amie Keddy



Cilla and Jennifer at the grad dance



Tom, Andrew and Matt perform karaoke at the pub



The Class of January 2004 and the Core Faculty

(left to right) *front row:* Virgil Suarez, E. Ethelbert Miller, Jane Hirshfield, Martha Cooley, Any Gerstler, Jill McCorkle, Priscilla Hodgkins, David Gates; *second row:* Henri Cole, Victoria Clausi, Phillip Lopate, Holly Bern, Liam Rector, Ciaran Cooper, Peter Davis, Catherine Turner, Susan Cheever; *third row:* Elaine McFerron, Sheila Kohler, Vivian Gornick, Amy Hempel, Judith Rosen, Rebecca Armstrong, Anita Taylor, Sven Birkerts, Mary-Beth Hughes; *fourth row:* Jason Shinder, Ed Ochester, Nicole Hardy, Matthew McGlinchey, Marcia Mead-Lebre, Jeannie Zi In Kim, Kari Ruth, Annabel Davis-Goff, Askold Melnyczuk; *back row:* Amie Keddy, Sariah Dorbin, Samuel Miranda, Kim Puckett, Leslie Clark, David Harbilas, Anthony Owens.



Vanina Marsot, Kim Puckett-Slim and Anthony Owens