Society of Skeptics Series Turns 30

AN INTERVIEW WITH DIRECTOR DR. MARTY MILLER
June 13, 2007
Vivien Collens
Mixed Media 12” x 18”
March 24–April 6 – The Romano Gallery
Ever Always: The Campaign for Blair Academy Continues

As of December 31, Blair’s campaign total reached $36 million, up from $31 million in September. Three separate donors made gifts to Blair of more than $1 million each in December.

Success by Design

Pursuing their passion for fashion, two young alumni from the Class of 2003 have made a distinctive mark in their field. Such success at any age is impressive, but when the achievers are only 23 years old, it’s no wonder the industry is abuzz.

Thirty Years of Skeptical Thinking

Blair’s renowned Society of Skeptics series evolved from the International Society begun in the 1950s, according to former history teacher Dr. Elliott Trommald. Under the direction of Dr. Marty Miller for the past 22 years, the weekly program thrives and is considered one of the finest of its kind in the country.
Under the direction of Dr. Marty Miller for the past 22 years, Blair’s weekly Society of Skeptics series is considered one of the finest of its kind in the country. Students and teachers often linger after the formal program ends, eager to continue the Q&A with Marty and guest speaker. At right, the buildings of Blair wear the mantle of winter in spectacular fashion. Both photos by Bruce Cramer.
This year, independent schools and boarding schools in particular are back in the news, and as usual, the news concentrates on areas that are familiar: our college admissions record and our wealth. (There are also reports of “scandals” in independent schools—kids hacking into computer systems or boys’ and girls’ kiss-and-tell stories—but that simply comes with being well-known.)

Specifically, *The Wall Street Journal* continued its less-than-scientific—or even logical—surveys in a shameless attempt to sell papers with the banner: “What schools get you into Harvard.” Sounds like a great revelation, but in fact, the table of schools that were purported to get a student into Harvard used a methodology of examining the admissions success (or patterns) that included a rather random group of eight selective colleges and universities. For instance, the list included Pomona but not Stanford; Haverford but not Swarthmore; Harvard but not Yale. And no, Blair did not make the list; had the writer’s select list included Brown, Cornell, Dartmouth and Stanford, we might have. And yes, a Blair student did get into Harvard, the third in the last two years. This “report” was not serious journalism, just a popular way of playing on the fierce interest in today’s college admissions climate. Those schools that made the special list—which had to be revised when so many schools complained—are fine schools, and their students go to very selective colleges and universities. Many, many schools not on the list have just as enviable college admissions records, yet because of the vagaries of the select colleges examined, were omitted. What is wanting is serious journalism, not pandering to the public’s confusion and fears surrounding this very challenging college admissions climate.

Conversely, in January, *The New York Times* did produce a serious article on the rise in endowments of the country’s independent schools. Using the rather stunning news that Phillips Exeter Academy’s endowment now tops one billion dollars, *The Times* examined the larger trend of endowment growth over the last 10 years, the average being 93%. (Blair’s increase is exactly 93% for that time period.) Beyond presenting the facts about our growing endowments, the article went on to analyze cost-per-student comparisons between public, day and boarding schools, underscoring the growing disparity between the experience of a public school-educated student and one who is fortunate enough to attend an independent school, particularly if that school is well-endowed. As in any good article, the facts were allowed to speak for themselves, but the point was made that unless these very large endowments are used wisely, the middle class student who aspires to attend an independent school will find him or herself caught between the needs of the thoroughly disadvantaged and the thoroughly affluent. Consequently, independent education will likely need to re-position spending priorities away from building the finest dormitories, largest libraries and most gilded athletic facilities, and more toward financial aid.

In that regard, boarding schools—according to the article—are “leading the way,” with nearly 41% of all students receiving scholarship aid, while day schools remain under 20%. Part of this might be that boarding schools have larger endowments. Or it may be that boarding school alumni have clear memories of their own scholarship support or of their friends who received scholarships. They may also remember that the true diversity of the boarding community was the unique combination of race, religion, cultural heritage and economic backgrounds. Certainly a spacious campus with attractive and functional facilities is both desirable and to some extent necessary to boarding education, but there is a strong tug—particularly at Blair—to provide deserving young people with the opportunity of a Blair education. That is why, despite growing enthusiasm for providing Blair necessary and competitive facilities, many of our generous supporters ultimately also chose to endow or support scholarship funding for the School. And we know that we must not inadvertently eliminate the worthy middle class family from our community—indeed, we need the door to Blair to be wide open for all.

By the time you receive this *Bulletin*, you will, I hope, have seen and read another newspaper article: this one is about Blair. In early January, *The New York Times* sent a team of reporters and photographers to do an in-depth story on a young woman who is spending her senior year with us. Shamila Kohestani came to Blair from Afghanistan, growing up for much of her childhood under the Taliban’s rule, and is now trying determinedly to catch up on the years of education lost to her. The article covers her life before Blair and her life at Blair, and—though I have not yet read the article as this *Bulletin* goes to press—I expect you will be impressed by and proud of the School. How Shamila came to Blair is an interesting story, but her acceptance and her scholarship are very straightforward: the Blair family and a foundation that has long supported the School stepped forward to make her education with us possible. How fitting.
Commentary on Capitalism

PBS’ “Bill Moyers Journal” featured Jack Bogle ’47, former Board Chairman and founder/retired CEO of the Vanguard Group, on September 28. With an initial focus on private equity firms, the session discussed some of those firms that buy companies for a fast profit to the detriment of employees, cutting their wages, pensions and health benefits. Excerpts follow.

BILL MOYERS: What should be the dominant? What is the job of capitalism?

JOHN BOGLE: Well, ultimately, the job of capitalism is to serve the consumer. Serve the citizenry. You’re allowed to make a profit for that. But, you’ve got to provide good products and services at fair prices. And that’s the long term, that’s what businesses do in the long term. The businesses that have endured in America have done that and done that successfully. But, in the short term, there’re all these financial machinations in which people can get very rich in a very short period of time by creating highly complex financial instruments, providing services that can be cut back easily... not measuring up to basically their duty.

We all know that in professions, the idea has been service to the client before service to self. That’s what a profession is. That’s what medicine was. That’s what accountancy was. That’s what attorneys used to be. That’s what trusteeship used to be inside the mutual fund industry. But, we’ve moved from that to a big capital accumulation—self interest—creating wealth for the providers of these services when the providers of these services are in fact subtracting value from society. So, it doesn’t work... What is enough here? And the society is out of control. I mean, in The Battle for the Soul of Capitalism, I talk about the frightening similarities between the American economy in America, our nation, at the beginning of the 21st century and Rome all those centuries ago around the 4th century.

BILL MOYERS: What are the comparisons?

JOHN BOGLE: We have an idea that we are the world’s value creator and leader. And I’m talking not just about economic value, but, we like to think of America as having the best values of integrity and citizenship in the world. We’re getting a little bit too much self interested. We have our own bread and circuses.

And they’re a little different than the bread and circuses they had in Rome. But, we surely have our circuses whether it’s sports teams or casino gambling or the lottery in the states. And we see this not just in our economy, in our financial system. This very short-term focus on everything... And, the short-term focus ultimately betrays the very values that we have come to be used to in this great nation of ours.

BILL MOYERS: Your book is called The Battle for the Soul of Capitalism. Tell me what you mean by the soul of capitalism.

JOHN BOGLE: Well, I try in the book a little definition from Thomas Aquinas about the core of being—he’s talking about the human soul, of course—but, the core of being, the elements that give you meaning, the values that you have—the whole kind of wrap up of what makes a human being a human being. And that happens in a much more, you know, a much less profound way in a corporation. There is in a good corporation and in capitalism a core of being of providing goods and services, at raising the standard of living. And it’s done a very good job at that. I don’t want to demean that. You know, we went from the beginning of time, to around 1800—the way people lived barely changed at all. And since 1800, the Industrial Revolution, and capitalism around that time has taken us to standards of living that are just—that would have been unimaginable to anybody of that day. We have all the perquisites and ease and freedom and safety of modern life. And so I salute capitalism for doing that. It’s just we’ve taken it too far. Today’s capitalists are different from yesterday’s capitalists...

[The full transcript of this edition of “Bill Moyers Journal” with Jack may be found on-line at http://www.pbs.org/moyers/journal/09282007/profile.html]
Living the Dream

Equestrian Hillary Dobbs ’06 was featured in the November 7 edition of USA Today in an article by Jill Lieber Steeg entitled, “Teenager Dobbs Rides Into Show-jumping Spotlight.”

Steeg wrote, “Hillary Dobbs knows what it’s like to fly by the seat of her pants. In the past seven months, the 19-year-old from Sussex, N.J., has become one of the brightest young stars of the equestrian world. Since making her first serious foray last April into the highest level of show jumping, Grand Prix, Dobbs, the daughter of CNN anchor Lou Dobbs and former CNN sports anchor Debi Segura, has won four Grand Prix titles, plus numerous open jumper and amateur owner classes.”

Steeg continued, “Run over tight, twisty, timed courses with 10 to 16 obstacles (fences ranging from 5-feet to 5-feet-6 inches high, open water and ditches), Grand Prix show jumping tests the power, precision, endurance and control of both the rider and his or her 1,200-pound horse. Often the youngest in the physically demanding, big-money Grand Prix events, Dobbs has more than held her own against some of the nation’s best, including Olympians Joe Fargis, Norman Dello Joio and Peter Wylde. This weekend, she takes another step in her career when she competes as a member of a four-person team in the Nations Cup in Buenos Aires, her first international event representing the U.S. Equestrian Federation.”

Steeg added, “So, what is it like being considered the sport’s new It Girl? ‘A dream come true,’ Dobbs says. ‘This is a goal of every little girl who’s riding ponies, all the way up. We’d see the best Grand Prix riders at every horse show on Sundays competing, and that’s what we’d look forward to doing in the future.’ And oh, yes. She’s accomplishing this while a sophomore government major at Harvard. In fact, she’ll fly home from South America on Sunday and will be back on campus Monday. In her free moments at the Nations Cup, she’ll be studying for two mid-terms.”

Steeg delved into Hillary’s belief that she was destined to become a horsewoman. “I was pretty much born into it,” Dobbs says. “We grew up with horses all around us. Starting when we were only a couple weeks old, my dad held my (fraternal twin) sister Heather [class of 2006] and me in a saddle with him. And after that, it was all second nature…The older we got, the more competitive we got,’ Dobbs says. ‘It just became addicting. It was our life.’ When they were 14 and freshmen at Blair Academy, the girls approached their parents about making the transition from local horse shows to the top tier of competition, known as the ‘A circuit.’…This year [Hillary] was junior national champion, individual and team gold, and won one Grand Prix, on [horse] Quincy B; she won three Grand Prix events on [horse] Corlett…After the Nations Cup, Dobbs gets a short break, then she’ll compete on the three-month Florida winter circuit, beginning in January. She’ll commute from Boston, and she’ll be joined by her parents, her two older brothers and their families, and of course, twin sister Heather, who passed up Harvard to become a professional show jumper.”

Steeg concluded, “And where will this all lead? Perhaps the Olympics—in 2016. ‘We’re taking this, right now, year by year, without setting any major goals,’ she [Hillary] says. ‘This was my first full year in the division, and it takes a while to get the experience that a lot of these Olympians have…. Both my mom and my dad have always encouraged me to be independent, to strive for my own success, so it’s nice that I am kind of branching out and getting some success in this sport.’ ”

[Note: At the Nations Cup, Hillary, riding Corlett, placed second in the Speed Derby; in the Grand Prix, she placed third with Quincy B and ninth with Corlett.]
Faith Evans ’05 is one of the student volunteers at the Dickinson College farm in South Middleton Township, Pa.; along with her peers, she assists farm managers in growing vegetables for the school’s dining hall on land owned by the college. Produce grown on the farm also goes to Project S.H.A.R.E., a Carlisle-based food bank. The Patriot-News—the daily newspaper serving Harrisburg, Pa., featured the farm in a September 12 article by T.W. Burger.

Burger wrote, “At the Dickinson College Organic Farm near here, the school is putting its money where its mouth is. Literally. Matt Steiman bent his lanky frame over a box of fresh tomatoes sitting at the base of a tree on a farm near here owned by Dickinson College. ‘Want a couple? They’re really good,’ he said. The tomatoes in the box were grown by Dickinson workers and student volunteers on about one acre of the 90-acre property. In the coming years, about half of those acres ought to be in full production, growing produce for the school’s dining halls using principles of organic farming and powered largely by the sun.

Steiman, assistant farm manager and project supervisor of the college’s biodiesel project, said the farm project was launched in January as part of the school’s efforts at being sustainable and, along the way, teaching students to work with nature…

Burger continued, “The farm is to support academic interests including environmental chemistry, geology and photography. It is a living classroom that folds student and faculty interests into sustainable food production, renewable energy, environmental conservation and livestock management, Steiman said. Along with director Jenn Halpin and Steiman, seven students work on staff at the farm, and 15 to 20 students volunteer there on Friday afternoons and on Saturdays. William Durden, president of the college, spends time working on the farm on Saturdays. Volunteers’ interests include bee-keeping, nutrition and just getting outdoors and away from computers and books. Starting this fall, the farm began supplying fresh produce to the dining halls, if on a fairly limited basis. It also provides fresh produce to some of the area’s residents who most need it.”

Dustin Schoof’s article in the November 15 edition of The Express-Times (Easton, Pa.) noted the charitable work of Deven Amin ’08, who, without fanfare, has been assisting Kenyan villagers. The article, “He’s a Student on a Mission: Teen Works to Spread the Message about an African Community in Need,” begins, “Like most kids his age, 18-year-old Deven Amin spends his summers hanging out with friends, playing a little outdoor football and catching up with family. He’s also managed to climb Mt. Kilimanjaro, travel to Kenya, Africa (twice) and experience firsthand the devastating effects the HIV/AIDS epidemic has had on families living in sub-Saharan African countries. Now Amin is hoping others will join him in bringing hope to a community torn apart by the deadly disease. The Blair Academy senior and Bethlehem Township resident has been raising awareness about the Nyumbani Village in Kenya where he spent the past two years working with The Children of God Institute.”

Schoof continued, [said Deven] ‘I learned so much. I love
working with the kids. Every day I got to teach them something. Some of those kids took more away from (the experience) than I did,’ Amin says. The village is comprised of orphaned children who have been paired up with elderly citizens of the community. Most of the children have lost their parents to the HIV/AIDS epidemic that has ravaged many African countries. Many of the children also suffer from the disease. ‘They live such a simple life, it’s hard to explain. The biggest difference (in cultures) is the independence the kids my age have. The fact that many of them are orphans themselves, they take the responsibility of looking after each other.’ ”

Schoof added, “Amin—whose father Atul is a Palmer Township [Pa.] doctor born in India and raised in Kenya—said he was turned on to the organization through his family. He says working with an orphanage was something he always wanted to do. ‘I had been to Kenya before, so I knew a lot about its culture,’ Amin says. ‘I just wanted to help them with problems in the village.’ The money raised by Amin will go toward the construction of various basic-needs facilities in the village, including a multi-purpose recreational building. The goal of the program is to make the village completely self-sufficient. So far, Amin says he’s raised more than $7,500. Though Amin says he’s not sure what his post-high school future holds for him, he says one thing is certain: ‘I’ll definitely go back (to Kenya). I want people to know the whole plan. The fact that it’s going to be self-sustainable, it’s the only village in east Africa with that goal, and it needs all the funding it can get.’ ”

The Morning Call (Allentown, Pa.), as well as PBS 39 in the Lehigh Valley, Pa., area ran similar features about Deven’s work.

Deng Calls for Aid to Darfur

USA Today’s NBA “Noses” section contained the following information on Luol Deng ’03, compiled from wire reports, on October 22: “Bulls’ Deng Works to Stop Darfur Killing. The Chicago Bulls’ Luol Deng knows the stakes in the Sudan all too well. He was born there, and he and his family ended up fleeing the African nation for their lives. The refugee-turned-NBA-star drew on that personal history Sunday to appeal for help to stop the bloodshed in Sudan’s Darfur region, where civil strife has left more than 200,000 dead. ‘We all need to put a stop to this and do whatever we can to stop this,’ he told about 200 people at a downtown Chicago rally. ‘I just hope more people will get involved.’ ”

The report continued, “At 10, Deng and his family settled in England. As a refugee, life was tough, but I know it was a lot better than what I would have had if I had never left the Sudan,’ said Deng, a member of the Dinka tribe. Deng, who played basketball at Duke, has been active in several programs providing aid to Africa. ‘I think there are a lot of people out there waiting for hope, and if we don’t do anything … the opportunity that came to me will never come to them,’ he said.”

From the Ivory Coast to a Longhorn Post

Mark Rosner, a staff writer for American-Statesman (Austin, Texas), profiled Alexis Wangmene ’07—now playing for the Texas Longhorns—on November 7 in an article entitled, “From Cameroonian to Austin, Basketball Freshman’s Journey Has Been a Long One.” He began by writing, “Alexis Wangmene does not figure to become flustered by a screaming basketball coach, taunting fans or his immersion into a new culture. The Longhorn freshman from Cameroon has already endured a civil war in the Ivory Coast, a demanding student visa process and a date with the Immigration and Naturalization Service.

So sure, Alexis Mang-Ikri Wangmene has a smile for Texas coach Rick Barnes, the student section in Lubbock and teammates who tease him about his preppy clothes. Wangmene (pronounced Juan-MEN-ee) feels fortunate to be alive, enrolled in college and playing center continued on page 8
or forward for the Longhorns. ‘When you go through something like that, you know you can die at any moment,’ Wangmene, 18, said. ‘The thing I learned was to enjoy life.’ ”

Rosner then chronicled Alexis’ journey to America. “The NBA, staking out new territory to plant the flag of its sport, conducts camps through a Basketball Without Borders outreach program… [Alexis] had to first prove himself worthy of the opportunity to come to the States… That was not difficult for Wangmene, who once considered becoming a doctor but now says international business might be a more realistic pursuit… Home for Wangmene is Maroua, a city of about 400,000 in northern Cameroon, which is in west central Africa. Leaving home was not easy for him. His father, Teophile Mang-Ikri, a former athlete who has traveled, understood. But his mother, Germaine Mang-Ikri, was not enamored with the idea…”

Rosner wrote that, after living in Texas and attending high school there, “Wangmene left to spend his senior year at Blair Academy in New Jersey, a boarding school with students from 23 states and 18 countries. The basketball team has featured future NBA players [and Blair alumni] Luol Deng, Charlie Villanueva and Royal Ivey, the former Longhorn. Wangmene averaged 19 points and 14 rebounds last season. Rivals.com ranked him the 81st-best player in the country among high school seniors. His coach, Joe Mantegna, said that the 240-pound Wangmene—with his 7’4 wingspan, an inch less than former Longhorns LaMarcus Aldridge and Kevin Durant—plays as though he were at least 6-10. ‘He had the second-best year of any kid in my nine years here,’ Mantegna said. ‘Only Luol had a better year.’ Mantegna, also the associate dean of college counseling, was impressed by Wangmene’s academic record and the way he assimilated at Blair. ‘He gets along with everybody,’ Mantegna said. ‘He didn’t just hang around with the jocks, or with people of a certain racial makeup or ethnic makeup. He’s a once-in-a-lifetime personality.’ …Shortly after enrolling at Blair, Wangmene committed to play for the Longhorns this season, choosing Texas over Florida and Virginia. ‘In Africa, we don’t like to fail,’ he said. ‘Everybody is going to laugh at you when you fail. So I have that mentality: I have to work hard.’ ”

Déjà vu for Rock ’n Roll Hall of Famer

The Times Herald-Record (Middletown, N.Y.) noted the “new career” of John Sebastian ’62, a member of the Lovin’ Spoonful and inductee to the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame. In his October 7 article, “What a Day for a … Jug Band,” writer Steve Israel explained, “Turn on the TV and you hear his mellow voice singing ‘Daydream’ for the lottery, Kohl’s, Pepsi and Talbot’s. You hear ‘Did You Ever Have to Make Up Your Mind?’ for Vanilla Coke. Head to Ulster County on Saturday and you’ll see him at the Woodstock Film Festival, in ‘Chasin’ Gus’ Ghost,’ a film about the rootin’, tootin’ music that inspired Sebastian—jug-band music. You’ll also catch him on a panel about music in films—he wrote and sang for Francis Ford Coppola’s ‘You’re a Big Boy Now’ and Woody Allen’s ‘What’s Up, Tiger Lilly?’ ”

Israel added, “Stop by a record store next month and you’ll find a new John Sebastian album, which he just recorded with mandolin master David Grisman. [Grisman’s band played at Blair a few years back as part of the School’s Bartow Series] Not bad for the 63-year-old Rock and Roll Hall of Famer who, just a few years ago, was more apt to be playing at his son’s Cub Scout camp than winning cheers at a music club…. But last year, he got a call from a guy who wanted to make a film about the music played on washboards, jugs and string basses. The fan—Todd Kwait—not only knows about legends like Gus Cannon (who the film is named for), he knows that the Lovin’ Spoonful was a jug band and that the jug pioneer—the late Fritz Richmond—suggested the Spoonful name, engineered the Spoonful albums and invented the granny glasses Sebastian made famous. To make the movie, Sebastian flies to Japan, which is experiencing an unlikely jug-band revival. He plays a festival—on the fourth floor of an office building—with 30 jug bands, including one, the Southern Chefs, who perform in chef’s hats. Back in the states, he flies to San Francisco, where he appears in a jug-band concert with Maria and Geoff Muldaur, Jim Kweskin and the Grateful Dead’s Bob Weir. The mayor proclaims it Jug-Band Weekend. Back home, John Sebastian turns on the TV and hears those old Spoonful tunes. ‘It’s like the past, present and future all coming together,’ says the man with…a new career.”

From the Ivory Coast to a Longhorn Post (continued)
From the Sidelines to the Field: True Test of Courage After Fall of Taliban

On June 20, 2006, CNN broadcast the following interview with Shamila Kohestani ’08—now a student at Blair—who was honored with a 2006 ESPY (Arthur Ashe Courage Award) from ESPN-TV. Look for an in-depth story about Shamila in the Spring 2008 Bulletin.

CNN’s O’BRIEN: It looks like an ordinary day of soccer in New York City. But for these teens on this field and for many watching, this is much more than a game. I know that the future is very bright for Afghanistan, but it can’t happen without cultivating future leaders, and that starts today.

Awista Ayub is a 26-year-old woman who came to the United States from Afghanistan at age two. She’s always loved sports and felt empowered by athletic competition. So she started a nonprofit group called the Afghan Youth Sports Exchange.

AYUB: I thought of the idea soon after the fall of the Taliban.

O’BRIEN: The idea was to give youngsters in Afghanistan, especially girls and young women sidelined by the Taliban, the skills to become the next generation of leaders.

AYUB: It was one of those a-ha moments that just flows and makes sense and feels very natural.

O’BRIEN: It all started with eight girls she brought to the U.S. for soccer camp in the summer of 2004. Two of those girls, Shamila Kohestani and Roia Ahmad, are back in the United States now. Awista has changed their lives.

SHAMILA KOHESTANI: It’s definitely changed my life… I play football [soccer], and I go to different countries for trips and for football [soccer]. And I know about their culture.

O’BRIEN: Shamila had never played soccer until two years ago. Now she’s one of 250 young women playing on 15 female soccer teams in Afghanistan. And she’s the captain of the country’s new national team.

KOHESTANI: In period of Taliban, it was very hard for my family especially. We always sat at corner of room thinking that how can we spend all of this life like this? No study. All sit at home. It’s too hard.

O’BRIEN: The Taliban kept her out of school for more than four years. Now, at 18, she’s nearly caught up and is looking forward to college where she wants to study journalism or business. Sixteen-year-old Roia [Ahmad] has similar dreams.

O’BRIEN (voice-over): Glamour magazine calls Awista its hero of the month. But she’s not the only one being honored. Next month Shamila and Roia will receive an ESPY, called the Arthur Ashe Courage Award, from ESPN.

AYUB: They faced so much tragedy and hardship. And for them to be awarded now finally for showing the perseverance they have, despite all of the challenges they face, I think just will hopefully take soccer and girls to the next level, and youth sports to the next level, and show that young girls can be role models in their own lives.
Peddie Preview Provides Perspective

The Express-Times (Easton, Pa.) previewed Blair’s winning football team on Peddie Day (November 10) with an article by Chuck Givler entitled, “Rivalry Win Would Cap a Great Season; Blair at Peddie: Buccaneers Enter 104th Meeting with the Falcons Sporting a 7-1 Record.” With a 42-17 win that very afternoon, Blair claimed the Big Three Trophy that Lawrenceville, Blair and Peddie compete for annually.

In his preview, Givler wrote, “When the Blair Academy football team travels to play archrival Peddie School today, it will ride in style. The Buccaneers from Blairstown will make the trip to Hightstown, N.J., in modern buses, zooming along interstates and the Jersey Turnpike in comfort for their annual tussle with Peddie in the longest ongoing private school series in the state. Considering today’s season finale is the 104th Blair-Peddie clash, zooming and comfort weren’t always the bywords for the travel team. The teams have been clashing since 1903. In the early days, Warren County was a rural outpost to the rest of the state. The visitors made the tedious journey riding in clacking rail cars pulled by smoke-belching steam locomotives on a journey that took the better part of a day.”

Givler continued, “Now in another century, 7-1 Blair, coached by Jim Stone, meets the 5-3 Falcons of Geoffrey Harlan. Blair leads the series 50-47-5. In a game that fosters week-long activities at both schools, the Bucs look for payback for a 33-9 pasting by Peddie a year ago in Blairstown. ‘This game is huge…As they say, you can throw out the records,’ said Stone, in his 14th season at Blair. Blair will try to use a powerful ground attack that is averaging more than 300 yards per game. The Bucs’ sole loss was 30-7 to Hun School, which held the Bucs to 111 yards rushing.”

Givler concluded, “Both schools have a long list of famous football alumni. Notable for Blair is Bob Novogratz [Class of ’55], who prepped a year (1955) after graduating from Northampton High School. Novogratz went on to West Point and became an All-American lineman on a team coached by Earl ‘Red’ Blaik.”
Running in the Streets Pays Off

Jon Phillips ’03 and teammates were pictured in the November 17 edition of The New York Times, accompanied by an article by Geoffrey Decker entitled, “Obstacles: Crowded Sidewalks and Misconception.”

Decker wrote, “In a blur, the New York University men’s cross-country team ran west on 14th Street toward the Hudson River, passing through a bustling Union Square at midday. After the team crossed the West Side Highway, the Chelsea Piers descended quickly from the horizon as the runners headed south on a scenic pedestrian path in Hudson River Park and Battery Park. They passed views of the Statue of Liberty, moved through crowds at the South Street Seaport and went under the Brooklyn Bridge before their route weaved its way back through Chinatown and SoHo to complete a 10-mile loop. To an observer, it was a sight-seeing tour in fast-forward. To the nationally ranked N.Y.U. cross-country team, it was just one of many courses the team uses to train in the city.”

Decker added, “Despite less than ideal training conditions, the N.Y.U. men’s program is ranked No. 2 in Division III. Undefeated this season, the team has compiled a cumulative record of 124-0, including a first-place finish in a field of 38 teams at the Atlantic Regional on Saturday at Van Cortlandt Park in the Bronx. The meet was a qualifier for the national championships this weekend in Northfield, Minn., where N.Y.U. will be among the favorites to win. The defending champion, Calvin College of Grand Rapids, Mich., is ranked No. 1. Compared with the recent New York City Marathon, one of the world’s largest road races, these New York streets are less glamorous, less celebrated and more distracting. Traffic clogs the intersections. Double-parked cars crowd the streets. Vendors and tourists clog the sidewalks. N.Y.U. has thrived in recent years under Coach Nick McDonough, who discounts the notion that his team is at a competitive disadvantage because of where they train. ‘The city itself has a vibe you get back from running here that kind of just keeps you pumped,’ McDonough said. ‘You always have to watch where you’re going, and it kind of keeps you on your toes.’ ”

[Note: In fact, the N.Y.U. men’s team won its first-ever NCAA Division III National Championship on November 17, besting a crowded field at St. Olaf College in Northfield, Minn.]

Good Things Come in Small Packages

Brian Chapman’s article in the December 3 edition of New Jersey’s largest daily The Star-Ledger spotlights Jenni Rogers ’96, coach of Gill St. Bernard’s championship girls’ tennis team. Said Brian, “Jenni Rogers is small in stature, barely five feet tall in heels. But she’s always dreamed big. That’s how she was able to play four successful years of high school tennis at Blair Academy and then four more on the collegiate level at Florida Southern. She was never the biggest, tallest or fastest, but more often than not she was the hardest-working and most positive player. So when an opportunity presented itself to become a coach at Gill St. Bernard’s, a near-dormant program at a school that wasn’t known for its athletic programs, Rogers was able to see possibilities through the negatives. Four years later, Rogers has built the Gladstone program into a winner.”

Chapman continued, “This past season, Gill St. Bernard’s concluded a banner season with a 17-2 record and the school’s first state championship, in Non-Public B. The team that had won its first sectional title earned a berth in the prestigious Tournament of Champions. Gill St. Bernard’s also has won back-to-back Prep B championships and finished the season ranked No. 16 in The Star-Ledger Top 20. ‘Jenni has taken our program to heights that few thought were possible,’ said Dave Pasquale, the athletic director at Gill St. Bernard’s. ‘Her energy is infectious and the girls have elevated their games considerably under her tutelage.’ ”
Campaign Update

Since the announcement of Ever Always: The Campaign for Blair in September, Blair has received a record-breaking number of new gifts and pledges, making it the strongest period of fundraising in school history.

As of December 31, Blair’s campaign total reached $36 million—up from $31 million in September—and keeping the School on track to meet its $50 million goal. During the month of December, three separate donors made gifts to Blair of more than $1 million each. While all three of these individuals wish to remain anonymous, their remarkable gifts reflect a deep commitment to Blair and underscore the broad and generous support of an ever-growing number of the School’s alumni, parents and friends.

Equally encouraging, more than half of Blair’s donors have increased their giving this year from the previous year. This collective effort is an extraordinary response by the Blair community to the challenges of this Campaign, an initiative that will both preserve Blair’s present success and strengthen the School for the future.

Also, as of December 31, giving to the Blair Fund surpassed $1 million. This is the first time in School history that this milestone was reached by the mid-point of the fiscal year. The majority of Blair’s alumni, parents and friends are choosing to participate in Ever Always: The Campaign for Blair by contributing to the Blair Fund. Increased participation and support are helping Blair reach its goal of establishing a $2 million, annual-giving program by the close of the Campaign, providing the vital financial resources necessary for the School to move forward with confidence.
Naming Opportunities

To Name the Activity and Athletic Center...$6,000,000

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<th>Student Center</th>
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<td>Upper Mezzanine Seating</td>
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Field House                      | $1,000,000 NAMED |
| Basketball Courts, 2 @ $250,000 | $500,000 NAMED   |

Fitness Center and Weight Room   | $1,000,000 NAMED |
| Wrestling Room                  | $1,000,000       |
| Team Room & Lockers             | $250,000         |

Performance Basketball Court     | $500,000 NAMED   |
| Athletic Hall of Fame           | $500,000         |
| Clock Tower                     | $500,000         |

Interior Courtyard               | $350,000         |
| Landscaping and Gardens         | $100,000         |
| Lounge                          | $100,000         |

Aerobics and Fitness Room        | $250,000         |

Squash Center                    | $500,000         |
| Squash Courts, 7 @ $100,000 ... | $700,000 4 NAMED |

West Entrance and Reception Area | $250,000         |

Training Room                    | $200,000         |

Athletic Director's Offices      | $250,000         |

Locker Rooms
| Boys' Locker Room               | $100,000         |
| Girls' Locker Room              | $100,000         |
| Coaches' Locker Rooms, 2 @ $100,000 | $200,000 NAMED |
| Large Equipment Locker Room     | $100,000         |
| Visiting Team Locker Rooms, 2 @ $50,000 | $100,000         |

Walker Gym
| Entrance Renovation             | $100,000         |
| Equipment Room                  | $50,000          |

Landscaping
| Plaza Area                      | $100,000 NAMED   |
| Student Center                  | $500,000         |
| Wallace Pool Facade             | $50,000 NAMED    |
| West Entrance                   | $50,000 NAMED    |

.Named Endowment Funds for the New Facility

Landscaping Endowment            | $50,000         |

Equipment Endowment              | $50,000         |

Team Endowment                   | $50,000         |

Outdoor Athletic Facilities

Football Field
| Synthetic Turf Field            | $500,000 NAMED   |
| Spectator Bleachers             | $100,000 NAMED   |
| Press Box                       | $100,000         |
| Sports Lighting                 | $250,000         |
| Concession Stand                | $50,000          |

Track & Field
| All-Weather Track               | $1,000,000      |
| Running Lanes 8 @ $25,000 ...   | $200,000         |
| Equipment                       | $100,000         |
| Throwing Event Area             | $50,000          |

Tennis Center & Courts
| Tennis House                    | $100,000         |
| 10 Courts @ $50,000 ............ | $500,000 4 NAMED |
| Lighting for Five Courts        | $100,000         |
| Spectator Bleachers and Landscaping | $50,000          |

Baseball Field
| Varsity Field                   | $100,000         |
| Junior Varsity Field            | $50,000          |
| Dugouts                         | $50,000          |

Soccer Fields
| 4 @ $100,000                    | $400,000         |

Golf Course
| 9 Holes @ $50,000 ............... | $450,000         |
| 7th Hole                        | $50,000 NAMED    |
| 8th Hole                        | $50,000 NAMED    |
Brian Clayton ’63: “Right to My Heart”

When Brian made his gift to Ever Always: The Campaign for Blair, he wrote, “I am so clear about how valuable Blair was to me and about wanting other people to have this experience that I made up my mind 10 or 12 years ago to get re-involved with the School in a bigger way and support it, because it goes home. It goes right into my heart.”

Holding true to his word, Brian has become involved at Blair in a big way. After serving on the Alumni Board of Governors, he joined the Blair Board of Trustees in 2003. He has been a long-time supporter of Blair through the scholarship he established in 2004 and has also been an active member of the Class of 1963, helping his classmates as they worked to create the Class of 1963 Faculty Chair, which will eventually be the first million-dollar teaching chair established by a Blair class.

A wrestler at Blair, Brian decided that he wanted his campaign gift to support and name the wrestling locker room in the new Activity and Athletic Center. “Having spent time on campus these past few years, I have seen how students and faculty are affected by the lack of space in the Old Gym during the winter months. We need to give students the facilities they need to be active, involved and engaged in learning—both in and out of the classroom. When I was at Blair, I learned a lot of life lessons in the wrestling room!”

“When I was at Blair, I learned a lot of life lessons in the wrestling room!”

A Growing Volunteer Network Makes the Difference

One of the essential ingredients in Blair’s Campaign success is a growing network of alumni volunteers. Look at any great school or college and you will discover committed alumni who devote their time to fundraising. At Blair, 120 class representatives, the Alumni Board of Governors, reunion committees, and the 1848 Society Leadership Committee all actively support Blair’s fundraising efforts.

Hoby Van Deusen ’54 is perhaps one of Blair’s most effective volunteers. In 2004, he offered to lead his 50th reunion class committee. At the time, only 15% of his class contributed to the Blair Fund; last year 72% of the Class of 1954 supported Blair. How did Hoby accomplish this remarkable turnaround?

Hoby explains, “When my 50th reunion came in 2004, I seized the opportunity to do more than just write a check. I volunteered to help with the reunion and thoroughly enjoyed connecting with classmates to encourage them to return to Blair and contribute to our class gift. It was fun to increase—substantially—class participation and dollars raised for the School.”

After his reunion, Hoby joined the Alumni Board of Governors, becoming president as well as serving ex-officio on the Blair Board of Trustees. When Hoby asked how he could help revitalize other Blair classes, Cara Mohlmann, annual fund director, suggested he adopt the Class of 1943, which was in need of a Class Rep. So far this year, Hoby has personally called all 27 members of the Class of 1943. “What an extraordinary group of men they are,” Hoby reports. It is this growing commitment to personal outreach by Hoby and other Blair alumni that has led to a revitalized alumni body and a Blair Fund that is on the brink of reaching $2 million a year in annual support of the School.
Harry Gates ’77 loves Blair. Many refer to him as “Blair’s Ambassador.” A great volunteer, he is one of the first to arrive on Peddie Day to set up and greet fellow Blair alums, parents and students and one of the last to leave at the end of the day. He mixes with all alumni—young and old. At the fall Young Alumni gathering in New York City, Harry skippers his boat from Weehawken to the Boat Basin with Blair faculty aboard. His favorite time each year, though, is Alumni Weekend when he helps to register and welcome the Old Guard back to campus. Harry has become so popular with members of the Old Guard that it’s not uncommon for the Alumni Office to receive calls and mail addressed to him. Jenny Maine, director of alumni relations, calls Harry her “right hand man.”

Harry served as secretary to the Board of Governors for three years and is a 1977 class representative. In 2007, Harry won the Alumni Volunteer Award for his selfless service to Blair. Harry and his wife Carol have also chosen to support Blair Academy through a bequest. As one of 145 members of the John C. Sharpe Society, Harry proudly wears his John C. Sharpe pin to all school events.

“Planned giving is a way that Carol and I can give back to Blair what it has given us. Blair has always been an important part of my life, and I plan on it being that way for a long time.”

Today it is often alumni between the ages of 40 and 60 who are most involved with writing their wills and making estate plans. Harry and Carol are among a growing number of alumni who have chosen to leave a philanthropic legacy behind them by including Blair Academy in their will or as a beneficiary of their IRA, pension or insurance plans.

If you have included Blair Academy in your estate plans, please be sure to let us know so that we may recognize you as a member of the John C. Sharpe Planned Giving Society.
Christmas Vespers
Each December, the Blair community looks forward to the annual Christmas Vespers service of readings, candle lighting and carols of the season, with musical performances by students. Held at the First Presbyterian Church in downtown Blairstown, the service is also attended by friends and family of Blair.
Ever Eager to Pitch In

Blair’s community service program, under the direction of advisor Kaye Evans, sponsored a three-mile CROP (Communities Responding to Overcome Poverty) Walk on campus in October. CROP Hunger Walks encourage community members to walk together in a stand against world hunger; the event builds awareness and funds for international and grassroots relief. This year’s walk raised nearly $5,000 and aided local Blairstown food pantries. Insley Hall residents, as well as cast members of the Blair Academy Players’ production of Dracula, participated in the charity walk.

On Wednesday afternoons, Blair students and faculty (pictured above) regularly assist at the local elementary school in Blairstown and at Bristol Glen nursing home in Newton. Earlier in the fall, another group traveled to Newton to lend a hand at the Manna House Soup Kitchen, while others sent letters and care packages to members of a military unit serving in Iraq. These soldiers are comrades of the late Spc. Armer Burkart (husband of Christy Burkart ’97), who was killed in the line of duty in 2006. Christy is Blair’s assistant director of annual giving.

The entire Blair community shops for gifts for local families in need during December, choosing toys and food items to make their holidays merrier. Todd Lewis ’08 also conducted a pencil drive for students in Africa who lack the school supplies most students in the States take for granted.

Blair athletes often get in to the act of altruism as well; see the Sports section of this issue for details on the December Coaches vs. Cancer basketball competition.
Fun for All at 29th Fall Run
The Blair community held its 29th Annual Fall Run in November. Walking was also allowed, so despite some fog and mist, parents and siblings—even friendly canines—joined in the event. Participants followed the 3.1-mile Blair cross country course (which includes some of the scenic golf course), while children under 10 enjoyed their own competition. Tradition has it that the first female student to finish will design the T-shirt given to all who completed the course; this year’s winner in that category was Kait Surdoval ’08. Ryan Newton ’08 and Scott Chamberlin ’11 tied for first place, while fastest faculty prize went to Mike Eckert.

Headmasters’ Societies Competition
In February, Blair students and faculty are divided into four teams named after four former Headmasters. Together they compete in a week of after-school intramural games ranging from inner tube water polo to an egg toss, to a talent show finale. As we go to press, the teams are preparing to compete for the famous Hardwick trophy and bragging rights for a year.
Halloween Highlights
From knights to harlequins, skeletons to sailors, creative costumes made for Halloween fun at Blair. Faculty children paraded through campus, trick or treating along the way, while students and faculty enjoyed “dressing up” for dinner. Blair’s Health Center was also decorated to the hilt for Halloween, with treats and a festive cake for all their visitors.

For the first time this fall, the freshmen girls—on their own initiative—converted the attic of Locke Hall into a haunted house (see photo below). No doubt their creativity gave birth to yet another Blair tradition.
Pursuing their passion for fashion, classmates Roberto Alfonso Felipe ’03 and Christine Mayes ’03 have made a distinctive mark in their field. Such success at any age is impressive, but when the energetic achievers are only 23 years old, it’s no wonder the industry is abuzz. Based in New York City, the two young alums often confer with each other, seeking advice and encouragement, all in the name of fashion and friendship. — Melanie McMahon

Apparently it’s not enough to be enrolled in the Stern School of Business at New York University. Roberto Alfonso Felipe ’03 (who goes by Felipe) insists on running a fashion enterprise on the side. To top it off, his work is impressive enough to have garnered a profile in the Entrepreneurs section of Debonair magazine’s October 1 issue. The text begins, “It’s 7:15 a.m. at O’Hare airport. Roberto Alfonso Felipe sits patiently at his gate holding a book of fabrics—ready to bid a temporary farewell to the Windy City. He knows that a week-long trip that included Philadelphia, Phoenix, and All-Star weekend in Las Vegas is nearing a close. But this was no vacation, merely business as usual for the 23-year-old fashionista/finance student. Next stop—afternoon midterms at New York University. Felipe, founder and designer of the made-to-measure fashion house, Alfonso Felipe, leads an unconventional life… [he] regularly attends classes, yet his ambition strays far from Wall Street. Intent on running a flourishing
fashion empire, the budding entrepreneur has achieved a degree of success far exceeding his years.”

Felipe’s passion for wearing stylish clothing took root in childhood. “As a child, it was always important [to me] to be well dressed. It was something to take pride in.” But it was his friendship with Blair classmate and Chicago Bulls’ forward Luol Deng ’03 that proved the catalyst for his current success as tailor and stylist to other NBA stars and coaches. He and Luol co-captained Blair’s varsity basketball team during their senior year. Felipe’s love for fashion, combined with his approachable personality, account for a growing list of clients who run the gamut from athletes, to Wall Street execs, to race car drivers, to an 80-year-old fellow from London, where Felipe also conducts business.

He prides himself not only on his clothing but his ties with what he calls “the Blair family.” This dapper alumnus appears in the DVD recently created for Ever Always, the Campaign for Blair, inserted in the

“As a child, it was always important [to me] to be well dressed. It was something to take pride in.”

Roberto Alfonso Felipe ’03
“My collection was inspired by a converging of literary elements from *On the Road* and various minimalist artists.”

*Christine Mayes ’03*
Fall 2007 issue of the Bulletin. Admitting on-screen that he may not have realized his good fortune at the time, he added, “At Blair, everyone wanted me to be successful. Everyone was always willing to help me out.”

Perhaps those sentiments now account for his business ethic. Felipe prides himself on the personal touch bestowed on each of his customers and the positive word-of-mouth referrals that account for his company’s success. Clients first meet him when he arrives at their home, often with swatch book in hand. “I immediately start to build their trust and form a relationship,” he explained. “I chat with them about what they want and advise them on how they should dress for whatever social setting they’ll be in, making sure that what I ultimately provide is appropriate and comfortable. Of course, I have to reflect their personality and tastes as well, since each of them is unique.”

Before any work can begin, Felipe takes precise measurements of each customer so that every piece of their wardrobe — jacket, trouser, shirt, vest, etc. — will fit perfectly. “All of our suits are made to measure and cut to each client’s build,” he said. Further consultations take place to discuss fabric, with second and third fittings standard practice. Any alterations are made accordingly. Finally, the custom-made attire is personally delivered to the client. Of course, Felipe’s enterprise is represented on the World Wide Web at www.alfonsofelipe.com.

“I am very pleased, yes, and I am very lucky,” Christine said. “Despite what some people think, being a designer is not for everyone. It’s a big sacrifice and not as glamorous as it’s often portrayed. The work requires long hours and serious talent. The days are stressful, rushing to complete every last detail for each fashion show and delivery date. Plus it’s a very competitive and unforgiving industry. Image is everything at this level.”

Christine considers herself fortunate to have recently worked for Vivienne Tam. “The hardest thing to do as a designer is to be able to put your own aesthetic aside for someone else’s views on style and fashion, and that’s exactly what I had to do at Vivienne Tam,” she explained. Christine worked directly with Vivienne to carry out her design process and vision. She oversaw the sample room process, created tech-packs for production, and formatted all the line sheets and sketches for each delivery date. Christine also assisted in all fittings, patternmaking, draping and hand-sewing, as well as constructing Vivienne’s style of “cut-out” artwork. She was head of handbag design and was chosen to assist Vivienne at her show during Olympus Fashion Week.

During college, Christine interned at Isaac Mizrahi Couture as a design assistant. She worked directly with Mizrahi on costume design and sourcing for the spring 2006 Broadway show, Barefoot in the Park. In between, she worked for such fashion houses as Cloak, Yigal Azrouel and Vena Cava.

Her senior year at Parsons may have proved the toughest of all these positions, however. “We had to design our own collection, under our own direction. It was so intense, designing close to 30 garments in a nine-month period,” she said. Christine’s collection, which she says was “inspired by a converging of literary elements from Jack Kerouac’s novel, On the Road, and various minimalist artists who are part of the permanent collection at Dia: Beacon,” so awed her professors and industry professionals that out of 200 students, she was one of 10 honored with the Golden Thimble Award for Excellence in Design.

Continued on page 24
As part of this senior thesis project, Christine presented her collection to a panel of “industry giants,” an experience that, as she says, “was completely surreal and a major accomplishment.” Among the illustrious panelists were one of the head curators for The Costume Institute at the Met; a representative from the Gucci Group International; Julie Gilhart, the head buyer for Barney’s; and editors from both Women’s Wear Daily and Harper’s Bazaar.

The attention she received as a result of this appearance was worth its weight in gold, allowing Christine access to the top names in the business. “I was projected into the industry,” she said. “My thesis presentation was my grand finale, my one shot at showing these remarkable people what I was made of. The positive feedback and reactions on my collection led me to believe that nothing is impossible. I got noticed, and it was a jump start for me in terms of being where I am today. It paved my way for some great internships and job opportunities.”

Christine’s poise and ability to speak before such a panel was honed while at Blair and in college, particularly when she ran for chairman of Parson’s first-year class council—the very year that such a student-run government was enacted. She won the election and discussed the reasons why in the Spring 2004 Bulletin. In that article she said, “I would definitely give a great deal of credit to the public speaking class that I took with Mr. Evans during my senior year…I owe a lot to that particular course because we touched on many different ways to present a speech, as well as the various types of speeches that one may give. His class basically prepared me all around for the election…I found it was very easy to deliver my ideas and thoughts in a clear, organized, articulate manner.”

Her dedication to succeed—so crucial to her achievements—hearkens back to Blair as well. In that past Bulletin article, she noted, “I can also thank Blair Academy for such a diligent work ethic and a strong desire to succeed in everything that is put in front of me.”

Christine’s passion for her profession is obvious, despite the competition and dedication required for success in the industry. “The entire design experience is so cerebral and hands-on. It is really incredible to be able to bring a sketch or an idea to life. I believe that clothing can become an art form and, therefore, an appreciation.” From sketchpad, to pattern, to fashion runway, her enchanting idea has come true.
Peddie Day Gridiron Victory
The New Jersey Herald ran the following article on November 11 covering the Blair football team’s win against Peddie, 42-17.

Dion Lewis ’09 put all kinds of numbers on the scoreboard, but it was Blair Academy’s defense that put up the most surprising numbers of all. Lewis ran for 245 yards and four touchdowns on just 14 carries Saturday in Blair Academy’s 42-17 win over Peddie. After falling in a 10-0 hole, the Bucs scored 42 unanswered points en route to the lopsided victory.

“We went to our spread offense and started to open things up a little bit,” Bucs coach Jim Stone said. “We’ve got some quick kids.” But it was the defense that was the star Saturday. Entering the game, Peddie running back Matt Brown was averaging nearly 150 yards a game. Blair held him to just 32 on 14 carries. “Our defense was outstanding,” Stone said. “It was the whole defense, it was our best defensive performance of the year, it’s what you hope for as a coach.”

The Bucs (8-1) return three of their four running backs, including Lewis.

Girls’ Cross Country Wins Over Peddie
Head coach Latta Browse had reason to be proud of his girls’ cross country team this year, as he reports the following regarding the Peddie Day race:

A record number of runners for a Blair girls’ cross country team—16—lined up to face the Peddie School at the annual season-ending dual meet on the Peddie golf course in Hightstown, N.J. The rain had cleared by race time, leaving a damp course for the girls to navigate in the 40-degree weather. In the season’s three previous meetings between the two schools, Peddie had bested Blair twice (at the Canterbury Invitational and at the State Prep meet) and Blair had finished in front of Peddie once (at the MAPL championship meet), ensuring a very close race between the teams. Peddie’s Katherine Warren won the individual race, but Liz Connor’s ’09 second place finish and Quinn McKay’s ’11 fourth place gave Blair’s four-girl pack the chance to secure the victory. Heather Britt ’10 (sixth), Niki Weiner ’09 (seventh), Chrissy Devemny ’08 (eighth) and Christelle Akon-Akech ’09 (ninth) finished within 10 seconds of

continued on page 26
Girls’ Cross Country (continued)
each other to bring Blair a 27-30 victory, the first over Peddie in four years.

Arie Kim ’09 was Blair’s final varsity finisher, in 12th place. The junior varsity was led by senior Ashley Thompson ’08 in a display of grit and fortitude that surely inspired her teammates. Gameily determined to run on Peddie Day of her senior year, Ashley pushed through considerable pain to run her first race since her sophomore year. She was followed by Julie Clothier ’10 and seniors Michaela McCrink ’08 and Leila Howard ’08. Morgan Jefferson ’09 and Margaret Tseng ’09 ran together and look prepared to step up to leading roles with the varsity next year. Jenny Hsu ’10 ran her best race of the season to finish in 26:27, followed by Kiana Mendoza ’11 and Sarah Beth Clark ’09. The victory brought Blair’s dual meet record to 4-1 and provided an appropriate coda for perhaps the strongest team in recent memory.

[Note: The team took second place in the 10th annual MAPL cross country championships on November 7, at Peddie. There Blair earned its best finish ever, second place behind the Lawrenceville School, with a school record five runner average time of 20:51.8.]

Varsity Girls’ Tennis Also Wins at Peddie
Jim Moore, director of capital giving, was one of the ardent tennis fans watching the girls’ match on Peddie Day, especially since his advisee, Rachel Collens ’09, was on the team. Here’s what he reported about this exciting competition, with a bit of commentary on Blair’s winning football team mixed in:

It was looking pretty rough mid-Saturday afternoon in Hightstown. Girls’ varsity soccer, at the end of a great season, was down 4-0 to the Peddie girls. Field hockey had already fallen by the same score, and the boys’ soccer team was on its way

Full Court Press Against Cancer
Blair’s Coaches vs. Cancer Basketball competition against Northfield Mount Hermon School (Northfield, Mass.) in December, held in Blair’s Walker Gymnasium, benefited the Coaches vs. Cancer Fund, which teams up the American Cancer Society and the National Association of Basketball Coaches to win the fight against cancer. The players and coaches are pleased to note that they raised $1,000 as a result of their efforts.
to being shut out. I was in the stands behind court number three, my fingers crossed while I watched my advisee, Rachel Collens, fall behind in the pivotal girls’ varsity tennis match; if she won, her girls would not only beat Peddie but collect their first win of a disappointing season. So there I was, in the tennis stands at kickoff, and there I still was five minutes later when I heard the Peddie crowd roar; suddenly, it was Peddie 7, Blair 0. Not three minutes later… I heard the Peddie roar again, and it was 10-0.

With Rachel hanging tough, I decided to go see for myself what was going on. It was a good thing I did because I would have missed the Blair team, comprehending for the first time that the chilly wind meant we finally had some football weather and that it was time to play. Dion Lewis ’09 took a handoff from Danny Sagan ’08, faked to the right and went left, sending Peddie’s entire line toppling like dominos; by the time they hit the ground, Dion was in the end zone with the first of his five touchdowns. Meanwhile, one of the girls from the tennis team tugged on my sleeve and told me I’d better come quickly, because Rachel had tied her opponent and they were about to play what they call a “super tie breaker.” I hustled on down to watch Rachel and the Peddie opponent match each other point for point, listening twice to the Blair fans cheer touchdowns. Finally, Rachel had the girl on the ropes and closed out her win—and her team’s—with a passing forehand. Finally, Blair as a school was on the board, and it was time to watch the boys put on the show of the year.
Thirty Years of Skeptical Thinking
Blair’s renowned Society of Skeptics series evolved from the International Society begun in the 1950s when Bill Nesbitt was chair of the history department, according to former history teacher Dr. Elliott Trommald, who served at Blair from 1962–68 and 1977–85. Today, under the direction of history teacher and former department chair Dr. Marty Miller, the Tuesday evening program thrives and is considered one of the finest of its kind in the country. Other history teachers, including the late David Miller and Paul White who taught in tandem with Elliott, were crucial to the Society’s sustenance as well. Elliott and Marty reflect on the success of this storied Series. – Melanie McMahon
“Students in the International Society were eager to discuss subjects in a wide-open forum—often subjects the School administration seemed reluctant to,” said Elliott. “It was the late ’70s, a time when students eagerly took on local, national and international issues, frequently letting passion and emotion dominate thoughtful discussion. Looking for a name, several students lit on one of my favorite words, ‘skepticism.’ It had always seemed to me that a major purpose of education was to encourage an active skepticism as the best antidote to a passive cynicism. And the kids liked it—so did I—and the rest is history.” Eventually, a Society of Skeptics (precursor to today’s impressive Skeptics lecture series) drafted a constitution, took root and served as a forum for students to discuss, debate, argue and shout about economic, political and social issues of the day. Elliott notes that in the beginning, some people were not enamored with the name, Society of Skeptics; ultimately, however, the chosen title made the program even more appealing. “The founding student members of this group were an acrimonious lot, delightfully diverse and particularly interested in foreign policy and social issues,” said Elliott. “We traveled to the Foreign Policy Association in New York where we met with world-class leaders the likes of Margaret Thatcher, Mubarak of Egypt, Rabin of Israel, as well as the U.S. Secretaries of State and Defense.”

He added, “I particularly recall students debating the formation of the United Nations. ‘Was the UN good for the country or a useless institution that undermined national security?’ The realists were against it, the idealists supported it.”

Elliott’s first tenure at Blair coincided with the growing interest in Model UN (Model United Nations). He clearly recalls attending an East Coast Model UN Conference in 1959 featuring Eleanor Roosevelt as a keynote speaker while he was teaching at Governor Dummer Academy, now known as The Governor's Academy [1959–61]. Through the years, he and Marty Miller also supervised student participation in the Model OAS (Model Organization of American States). “Together we took a group of students to the Soviet Union in 1981 in the most memorable student trip I had in 41 years of teaching. Now that was a profound ‘gas,’” said Elliott. [See Marty’s comments on the trip on page 32.]

No matter the venue, be it Society of Skeptics, Model UN, Model OAS or hitchhiking to the University of Tashkent for an unforgettable afternoon with students from Cuba, Poland, People’s Republic of China and the USSR, the Skeptics seldom failed to impress Elliott, or as he put it, “to challenge his patience and sense of humor. But you know, I wouldn’t have wanted it any other way.”

According to Elliott, many of the activities took the students off campus and let them play in a bigger world. Their speaking ability and preparation often won awards. “They ‘felt their oats’ and the power of their intellect, while others felt the sting of inadequate preparation. Whatever the case, it was a good learning experience. Students really grew in this environment. Some of the average, less motivated students who had little interest in debating history and current events really caught fire and got excited. Those were the kids that gave me special joy. I loved watching them grow, even if I felt like pulling my hair out sometimes! And I can’t tell you how much working with Marty Miller meant to me; we were so lucky to have him join Blair’s faculty.”

Elliott added, “Through the years, Blair’s Society of Skeptics, due to Marty’s creativity and energy, has now been institutionalized. It has become something special—a program that I have not seen at any other private boarding school. Many have made the attempt but not successfully. The variety of speakers and the weekly offering make Blair’s program unique. While there are some ‘big names’ featured, there are also lesser known speakers who understand kids, raise
Do you suffer from medical problems linked to exposure to the WTC site?

"Yes..."

"Was the UN good for the country or a useless institution that undermined national security?"

*The realists were against it, the idealists supported it.*
thoughtful questions and relate their experiences far more effectively than many publicly massaged names that can be too scripted. The former are usually the ones that students relate to. For me, the Society of Skeptics today weaves together the curricular and extra-curricular in a seamless fabric that truly exemplifies the high quality of education Blair offers.”

In addition to his many years of teaching at Blair, Elliott headed the social science division at the Middlesex School in Concord, Mass., where he taught from 1985–2000. He also studied and taught at SUNY at Buffalo from 1968–1970 and then moved to Australia where he was a senior lecturer at the University of Queensland from 1970–1977. His longstanding interest in the life and times of Blair’s founder, John I. Blair, led to Elliott’s presentation of public lectures, archival courses and various articles focusing on this 19th century master builder. During his tenure here, Elliott was assisted by The James Howard Fund and the New Jersey Historical Commission in his extensive research activities. He published the saga of John I. Blair in four editions (1989–1998) of The Blair Review. Now retired but still actively lecturing, Elliott and his wife Dagne reside in Portland, Oregon; together they raised two daughters, Kirsten T. Bushick ’82 (a class rep and member of the Board of Governors) and Karen T. Moore ’80.

Elliott Trommald said that the trip you took with him and a group of Blair students to the Soviet Union in 1981 was “the most memorable student trip he had in 41 years of teaching.” In fact, he went so far as to say it was “a profound gas.” Do you share similar sentiments about that experience?

I couldn’t agree more with Elliott. That was my first year of teaching at Blair (I was 35 and had taught at several colleges), and Elliott, bless his soul, conjured up a memorable opportunity to travel to the Soviet Union with a large group of students. If you recall, those were the worrisome “evil empire” days of the Cold War during the Reagan administration, and students, parents and faculty were understandably nervous about touring behind the Iron Curtain. Also, the itinerary was formidable: Moscow and Leningrad in Russia, Tbilisi in Georgia, and Tashkent and Samarkand in Uzbekistan, all lands of various languages, cultures and histories. Even decades later, two things stand out about this grand tour: 1) Elliott demonstrated the power of “teaching” beyond the confines of the classroom, and 2) the complexity of the Soviet experience (e.g., nascent separatism/stable Union?) left us with more questions than answers. Frankly, it was a humbling experience. For instance, the solemnity of Leningrad’s Piskarevskoe WWII (“The Great Patriotic War”) cemetery, holding tens of thousands of unmarked graves, suggested a people
of enormous strength and vitality; the endless lines for consumer goods spoke volumes about a society in crisis. Where were they heading? Well, I certainly didn’t predict the dissolution of the Soviet Union and the end of communism throughout the Soviet Bloc! In any case, I had more immediate concerns: KGB agents were reportedly monitoring the black markets that were so attractive to our students (Levi jeans were gold!). And how to ditch the Intourist/KGB handlers? Well, in Georgia we made a beeline for the supposedly off-limits Tbilisi soccer stadium to watch the Poland-Georgia match, and we were hailed as instant celebrities. A student request to buy the national flag engendered a sea of Georgian banners rippling through the hospitable crowd to please “the Americans”! In broken English, Georgians assured us they were fellow capitalists and emphatically not Russkies!! So much for communist solidarity! In Tashkent we surreptitiously scooted off to the university. North Koreans, Cubans, Poles, and other Soviet Bloc comrades were stunned by our presence, thrilled to discuss various political issues (i.e., denounce U.S. imperialism) and applaud their new-found American friends. It was quite a scene at ol’ Tashkent U.! Yes, Elliott was a master at getting off the beaten track and driving our guides to distraction (vodka?).

Late into the evening, Blair kids sat around Pozner’s living room debating the issues that had been mere academic subjects back in the Blair classroom.

That reminds me of another trip to the Soviet Union in 1986, this time a solo jaunt with Blair kids during the early days of Gorbachev’s reforms. Blair alumnus Stu Loory ’50, the CNN bureau chief in Moscow, set up an interview forum without official clearance in the lobby of the Cosmos Hotel (“What do U.S. students think of Soviet life?”), a surefire way of eliciting a KGB “nyet” to the informal proceedings. They shut us down, but not before the taping of a CNN segment—“glasnost” triumphant! Loory was also good enough to arrange a meeting at the home of Vladimir Pozner, the Russian Dan Rather, a fellow who collaborated with Phil Donohue to create a popular U.S. network TV show supportive of detente between superpowers. Well, late into the evening, Blair kids sat around Pozner’s living room debating the issues that had been mere academic subjects back in the Blair classroom. I can still remember, say, Tom

Marty Miller’s photo file includes pictures of students and Skeptics speakers gathered informally—still discussing and debating—long after the formal program has ended.
“Don’t you trust mankind enough to allow individual freedom?”

It was a teacher’s delight, one of those moments that can and do occur during a spirited Skeptics Q and A period.
McClintock '86 challenging Pozner with questions of basic political philosophy: “Don’t you trust mankind enough to allow individual freedom?” Our host smiled, enjoying the interaction immensely. It was a teacher’s delight, one of those moments that can and do occur during a spirited Skeptics Q and A period, by the way. And later trips to Yeltsin’s Russia, Northern Ireland, Czechoslovakia undergoing a Velvet Revolution, Greece, Italy, etc., punctuated my teaching days after Elliott left Blair for the Middlesex School in 1985. The template was in place: a broadly defined notion of education was possible and indeed preferable. My sense is the general impact of the trips of the ’80s and early ’90s was considerable. Some perspective is necessary: Blair was a smaller school, a world of far fewer spring athletic trips, one where there weren’t faculty members willing to trot all over the world during vacation breaks. (Things have changed. Note that China, Spain, France, South America, etc., are destinations for any number of faculty-student trips and study abroad programs these days.)

So these trips involved many of the students you and Elliott taught—perhaps the same ones who, as Elliott said, enjoyed debating the social and political issues of the day?

Yes, the students who either traveled with us or who were in our history classes were often the same ones who, from 1980 to 1985, met with Elliott and me every Tuesday evening in the basement of Memorial Hall for discussion and debate sessions—what we called the Society of Skeptics, as Elliott explained. After Elliott left Blair, Jim Kelley, the Headmaster at the time, asked me to take over Skeptics and become chair of the history department, which I did. Given that the often vibrant debates of September and October seemed to fizzle over the course of the year, I decided to radically alter the program in the direction of a lecture series, in a sense, bringing the wider world to a somewhat insular campus. After lecturing, the speakers conducted a question-answer session with the kids, fostering debates that often carried over to the dorms and classrooms. I guess the change fit my personality. The trips, the lectures; it was all of one piece.

Now that we’ve established the evolution of what is today’s Society of Skeptics program, I have to ask a most obvious question. How have you sustained this series and directed it for the past 22 years, week after week?

Actually, four key elements account for its longevity and viability. First, I staked out a claim to a particular day and time, Tuesday at 7:00 p.m.; it became a sacred time slot supported by Headmasters Kelley and Hardwick. A paranoid thought: If I departed from the weekly format, a Frisbee tournament or activity X or Y would grab the spot in short order. Such are the hazards of jostling for precious segments of free time at a boarding school!

Second, because the guest speakers covered a variety of topics, including the arts, sciences, sports, etc., other Blair teachers began to require their students to attend Skeptics, depending on the speaker and/or subject matter. I loved the fact that these others teachers sent their students and attended the lectures with them. It promoted collegiality and an interdisciplinary approach to subjects like technological development, Darwinian Theory, etc. I could lean on the expertise and enthusiasm of fellow teachers. In recent years, for instance, Don Lawshe organized one or more science-oriented programs, and other Blair teachers have actually lectured at Skeptics on topics of interest to them. The synergy became obvious.

Third, our venues have improved markedly over the years, to the extent that speakers are duly impressed by their surroundings. We went from projecting faded images onto a Memorial Hall screen (missing window shades and all) to the amphitheatre in Cowan Auditorium within Bogle Hall. Today, if a larger than normal audience is expected, we hold the program in the DuBois Theatre of Armstrong-Hipkins Center for the Arts. So over the years, the program snowballed beyond my expectations.
Fourth, Headmaster Chan Hardwick set up a budget so that the Society of Skeptics could provide an honorarium for its speakers. So, all the conditions for success were met...and more. Now all I had to do was make it happen every Tuesday night! Frankly, it’s been a labor of love. So many interesting folks have visited the campus, slept at my house, enriched the lives of my wife and children, and inspired a generation of students. I’d like to add that I can’t think of a time when a speaker failed to show up on time. And to think I was nervously waiting at the front gate in 1985 for speaker number one to arrive, fearing the worst! I’m a bit more relaxed these days.

And so, with all the conditions in place, how do you actually “make it happen”?

Well, there is really no science to it. Sometimes I’m flying by the seat of my pants! But over the summer months, I try to organize the fall agenda. I call upon alumni, parents, a referral from a student or other Blair community member. And I will re-use or re-package the successful programs and speakers of the past. And yes, one must never overlook “the kindness of strangers.” In the end, you have to rely on your own sensibilities and taste and strive for an eclectic mix of speakers, going beyond history and politics.

By now, I’m organized about setting it up, of course. Sometimes there’s a down side to that when I find someone I’d like to include after the fact, but the dates have all been filled! Essentially, I’ve tried to model the Society of Skeptics after a lecture series one might find at a small liberal arts college.

Just as an aside, thinking about all of this has been like a trip down memory lane. I really do have lots of good memories. I enjoy having alumni back to speak; it’s like a reunion! In fact, Elliott has been a Skeptics speaker, too. So has Quint Clarke ’87, a member of the history department who frequently travels with Blair students, too, then returns to talk about the experience. In fact, he took trips with us to the Foreign Policy Association in New York City when he was a student at Blair!

What benefits do the students gain from the Skeptics program?

They get used to the setting—politely sitting through a lecture series, that is—and later asking questions of the speaker. And I opened the series to the general public, which meant that the kids look around and see other adults, besides their own teachers, in the audience and realize that people from the “outside” are in attendance. So that provides a different dynamic than the classroom.

I think the series buttresses the curriculum; it gets kids out of the classroom and often complements what they learn there. I always ask guests to speak for 30 minutes—perhaps using notes but not reading verbatim from them—and then open the floor to questions, with students first. I often lose the battle! Some speakers drone on far longer than necessary, the students drift, and my heart sinks. But then perhaps the next speaker is a hit, and I conveniently forget about the duds. A thick skin and forgiving nature are prerequisites for this line of work!

Why do you think the Skeptics speakers continue to come to Blair, considering that we offer a fee, but not a large one, and we are in such a rural area that they often travel some distance to get here?

First, they enjoy it. They participate with students and faculty in formal dinner immediately before the Skeptics program, and when the conjuncture of time and inclination are right, they return to my house for extended conversation with interested faculty and students. They even have been known to attend some classes with us. Some speakers feel a responsibility and obligation to speak at the high school level. Blair parents and alumni obviously fit that category. Others enjoy connecting with students and the fact that we treat them in a more personal way than they might be used to in a more formal environment. They also like the fact that they are accommodated overnight at my home here on campus. And my wife Micheline is a very hospitable hostess! She has always supported my efforts through all these years of directing the Skeptics program.
From Revolutionists to Evolutionists

Marty Miller recalls some of the most memorable speakers to take to the Skeptics stage, from the 1980s to the present.

1980s

**David N’Daba**, The African National Congress
Prior to Nelson Mandela’s release from prison, this “banned” ANC representative called for freeing political prisoners and a one-man, one-vote, multi-racial government. Most of us in the audience believed it was a far-off dream.

**Dith Pran**, survivor of the Cambodian “Killing Fields”
He spoke at Blair on three occasions, always attracting a long line of student well-wishers and questioners after the lecture. During dinner, he would sit patiently drawing and redrawing maps of Southeast Asia/Cambodia for young students who knew little about the Khmer Rouge genocide of the 1970s. Bearing witness to the slaughter was a life’s work for this survivor. The Academy Award-winning film, *The Killing Fields*, had been screened on the days preceding Skeptics. One student asked Dith Pran whether the snakes, lizards and bugs depicted in the movie had been major impediments to his escape from the death camp. Simple answer: “Not at all, I ate them.”

**Artie Garfunkel**
A member of the Simon and Garfunkel duo, he answered questions about music, walking across America, his relationship with Paul Simon, etc., and later questioned students about their interest, goals, fears and the like. No, he didn’t trot out the guitar for a song or two despite numerous requests.

**Paddy Joe Hill**
Wrongly convicted of an infamous Irish Republican Army bombing in England, he was incarcerated for 17 years in a British prison as one of the Birmingham Six. Finally exonerated, he was on a mission to expose this travesty of justice. Students turned to look at me when he roundly cursed his British jailors. Was he allowed to use such language at Blair?

Early 1990s

**Marty Glickman**, college football star, Olympic sprinter, the voice of the NY Giants, NY Knicks, NY Jets, etc.
Mentor to a generation of broadcasters, he spoke about the 1936 Nazi Olympics and his long and rewarding career as a sportscaster.

1998

**Colonel Bob Novogratz ’55**, West Point All-American football player
“From Blair to West Point and Beyond”
He spoke about what it’s like to block for Heisman Trophy winner Pete Dawkins, among other things.

**G.T. “Buzz” Bissinger**, author of *Friday Night Lights* (now a network television series)
Intending to draw a picture of big-time school football, Texas style, he found himself necessarily dissecting other aspects of a troubled Odessa community. Local folks weren’t amused.

**Martin Galvin**, former leader of Republican-oriented Irish Northern Aid Committee (NORAID) debating Ann Smith, representative of the Ulster Unionist Party in the U.S.
“Peace in Northern Ireland?” or “Power Sharing in Northern Ireland?”
The sparks flew in Armstrong-Hipkins! Things change! As of December of 2007, Martin McGuinness of Republican Sinn Foin and arch-enemy of Republicanism Ian Paisley lead a power-sharing government and are touring the U.S. together in search of investment funds.

2000

**Alina Troyano**, “Obie” Award-winning performance artist
“On Cuban and American Cultural Differences”

**Bret Schundler**, Jersey City Mayor
“The Voucher System of Education: How to Improve Education in Jersey City and Beyond”

2001

**Albie Sachs**, former African National Congress revolutionary who became a member of South Africa’s Constitutional Court
“Reconciliation in South Africa”
This one-armed lecturer told of confronting and forgiving the former state security operative who set off the bomb that disfigured him.

**Jasmin Verem** and **Professor Rado Pribic** of Lafayette College
A Bosnian Muslim student recounted his family’s crisis.

**Tom Kean**, former New Jersey Governor, president of Drew University
“Issues in Education”
2002

**Dr. Richard Lutz**, professor of marine and coastal sciences, Rutgers University
“Voyage into the Abyss: Exploring Tubular Worms Thriving Near Ocean Floor Vents”

**Melanie Person**, Alvin Ailey Dance Company
Film, lecture, demonstration on “The Life of a Dancer”

**Ningkun Wu**, author of *A Single Tear: A Family’s Persecution, Love, and Endurance in Communist China* and a survivor of Mao’s Cultural Revolution

2003

**The Hon. Judge Lorraine C. Parker**, N.J. Appellate Division
“The War on Terrorism: National Security vs. Civil Liberties”

2004

**Walter Carter**, author of *No Greater Sacrifice, No Greater Love*
“D-Day June 1944 and the Normandy Campaign”
The author’s father, Dr. Norval Carter, Army physician for the 29th Division, was killed in battle, June 11, 1944. His son recreated the life and times of the dad he never knew in this evocative book.

**Lou Dobbs** of CNN TV’s *Lou Dobbs Tonight*
“The Economy in Crisis: Outsourcing Issues”

**Master Sergeant Mullaney**, Air National Guard
“The War in Baghdad: an Eyewitness Account by a Soldier”

2005

**Walter Carter**, author of *No Greater Sacrifice, No Greater Love*
“D-Day June 1944 and the Normandy Campaign”

**Peter Sichel**, former CIA Station Chief during the Cold War
“The Role of Intelligence Agencies in the War on Terror”

2003

(The Herman Hollerith yearly lecture on Entrepreneurship)

**John Kennedy**, founder of Coren Int.
“On Being an Entrepreneur”

**Dr. Peter Mandaville**, George Mason University
“From Osama Bin Laden to Saddam Hussein: U.S. Policy in the Middle East”

2004

**Tony Kornheiser** of ESPN’s *PTI (Pardon the Interruption)*
Answering any and all questions about sports.

**Carolyn Buck-Luce**, global managing partner, Health Sciences, Ernst & Young LLP, and chair of the Professional Women’s Network
“On Ramps and Off Ramps: Keeping Women on the Road to Success”
2006

Dr. Robert Gay, strategist for WMG Global Macro Fund (UK) and former senior economist with the Board of Governors of the Federal Reserve Systems in Washington, D.C.
“Inside the Federal Reserve”

“From Berlin to Baghdad: Blair Father and Daughter Reflect on the Cold War, Iraq and Beyond”

Connie Ace, chemist, Ethicon Corporation (Johnson & Johnson subsidiary)
“Medical Devices: Tales of the Scientist and the Surgeon”

Andrew Hsia, director general of Taipei Economic and Cultural Office in New York
“The Taiwan You Know, the Taiwan You Don’t Know”

Dr. Jim Breune, professor of geophysics, University of Nevada, Reno
“The Issue of Nuclear Waste Storage (Yucca Flats)”

Stephanie Elizondo Griest, travel writer
The young author regaled a full house of students with stories about her travels and offered suggestions on the number of foundations and scholarship programs available to them for travel abroad and at home. She noted how similar yet how different the various citizens of this world actually are.

2007

Fred Morsell, actor
“Presenting Mr. Frederick Douglass”
One-man show on the life of Frederick Douglass, the famed 19th century escaped slave, abolitionist, journalist and champion of equality.

Lance Odden, former Headmaster of The Taft School
“Two National Tragedies: The Vietnam War and the War in Iraq”

Dr. Randall White, Center for the Study of Human Origins, Department of Anthropology, New York University
“The Evolution of Symbolism: Humanity’s Earliest Images”

Lt. Bill Keegan, Port Authority Police Department, night commander, World Trade Center Rescue and Recovery Team and author of Closure: The Untold Story of the Ground Zero Recovery Mission
He eloquently told of directing the Port Authority rescue and recovery operation from September 11, 2001 to April 2002 and linked the national tragedy with his personal struggle as father and husband. Question from audience: Do you suffer from medical problems linked to exposure to the WTC site? Answer “Yes…” A packed auditorium held its breath throughout the lecture.
**Shark Tale**
In October, marine science students enjoyed the unique opportunity to dissect a six-foot-long female blue shark weighing 150 pounds.

Teacher Rod Gerdsen explained, “The shark was caught by Chris Jensen, father of Corey Jensen ’09, in an area of the Atlantic Ocean called Monster Ledge just off the southern coast of Staten Island. She was swimming behind Mr. Jensen’s boat as he fished for tuna on Monday afternoon and, when offered a big chunk of fish on a hook, couldn’t resist and was caught. I drove down to the marina Monday afternoon, placed her in a specially designed storage box, covered her with ice, and left her outside Bogle Hall overnight. The next day, two classes of marine science students dissected the shark, examining and weighing different parts of her body. The huge oily liver tipped the scale at 25 pounds, the caudal fin weight five pounds and the rest of her muscular body accounted for another 120 pounds. There was a tag attached to her which is used to track blue sharks in the Atlantic; the students will provide whatever information is necessary to the Department of Fisheries.”

Rod added, “Many thanks to Mr. Jensen for catching the shark and to Mark Moon ’84 for his support of this endeavor.”

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**History Teachers Re-examine Antebellum Period**
History Department Chair Jim Connor reports the following news about the department’s participation in the annual Princeton History Conference sponsored by the New Jersey Council for History Education: “About 500 high school educators from New Jersey had an opportunity to hear lectures by prominent American historians on the subjects of slavery and abolitionism. Among the highlights were new interpretations on the role and effectiveness of the underground railroad during the antebellum period, presented by Spencer Crew, the first director of African-American history at the Smithsonian, as well as a description of the lives of emancipated slaves in New Jersey during the antebellum period, presented by Clement Price, a professor at Rutgers University.”

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**Poetry Fest Returns to Blair**
The Warren County Poetry Festival was held in the DuBois Theatre of Blair’s Armstrong-Hipkins Center for the Arts at the end of September. Students and English teacher Carolyn Conforti-Browse ’79 (pictured) were on hand to assist with the program and enjoy various readings, panel discussions and book signings.
**Book on Bonsai by Blair Faculty Member**


Marty has traveled and studied extensively in Asia, Europe and Africa to further his knowledge of bonsai and viewing stone art. He has lived and studied in Japan and teaches Asian Studies courses on the history and culture of Japan and China here at Blair.

The book may be purchased at the Blair bookstore for $55. While not available on-line, it can also be purchased by mail; contact Marty Schmalenberg to order a copy.

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**Foreign Travel Plans in Place**

Blair students are afforded numerous opportunities to travel to foreign countries with faculty and classmates, either during the long Spring Break or over the summer months. In fact, the Spring 2007 issue of the *Blair Bulletin* detailed the benefits of such foreign forays and is available on line at http://www.blair.edu/Downloads/bulletin/BulletinSpring07.pdf.

This year, the foreign language department offerings include 12 days in Normandy and Paris during the first half of Spring Break, as well as a summer excursion to Spain.

French instructor Maria Bowditch, who will chaperone the former, explains, “This is a great opportunity for motivated students from levels one through Advanced Placement to improve French communication skills in real-life situations. Certainly the important historic ties between the United States and Normandy since the war make for cordial relations and a sincere interest in dialogue that continue today.”

She added, “The trip includes a one-week home-stay with families from the French high school, Henri Cornat, a boarding/day school with grades 10–12 in the town of Valognes, located three hours north of Paris in the Normandy peninsula. Each morning, Blair students will attend classes with a host student, eat lunch with the school community and, later in the afternoon, participate in community service in pairs at such placements as the local elementary school, senior citizen center or shops in town. After a busy day, students will return to their host families in time for dinner. We will also enjoy a three-night stay in Paris with visits to various monuments, neighborhoods and museums.”

Language department chair Don Morley led an exciting and successful trip to Ecuador last summer (check out the special Web site he created at http://web.mac.com/morled). This summer he will head to Spain. According to Don, this year’s group of travelers can expect to live with a Spanish family for a month in Segovia and experience the following: three hours of classes plus cultural activities each day at the Instituto San Pedro, academic credit from Blair Academy, a five-day excursion to Andalucía at the end of the course, and all the fun of La Fiesta de San Juan y San Pedro.”

At the time of this writing, other tentative trips include excursions to Russia, China, and Africa and an art history trip to London and Paris. The Blair Academy Singers will also tour Austria, Hungary and the Czech Republic this summer; see next page for details.
Singers Set for Second European Tour
When the Blair Academy Singers boarded a plane in Newark in June 2005, so began their first trip abroad in the recent history of the School. Over 14 days, the Singers performed six full concerts and participated in two mass services in and around Rome, Florence, Pisa, Vicenza and Como. In each locale, the group received ovations and cries of “bis!” which is Italian for “encore!”

This coming summer, Director William Hammer, along with Jennifer Pagotto, who directs Blair’s instrumental program, will travel with the current group of Singers on a concert tour of Austria, Hungary and the Czech Republic. Over the course of 12 days, the students will perform in Prague, Cesky Krumlov, Vienna and, finally, Budapest, where they will present a joint concert with the Pomaz School.

River Show Reaps Awards
Blair artists were among the winners in the student art competition that is part of Art Across the River, an annual event that spans a local footbridge across the Delaware River.

Art teachers Rita Baragona and Kate Sykes report the following: a first place drawing prize was presented to Da In Lee ’09 for her Still Life with Self Portrait in Mirror in pastel (featured on the cover of this year’s arts calendar brochure); third prize for drawing to JP Bowditch ’08 for his Still Life of Folds and Eggs in charcoal; first prize in the 3-D category to Andrew J. Clark ’09 for his sculpted head, and third prize in the 3-D category to Jenna Lubliner ’09 for her spherical teapot.

Speaking of rivers, artist Ken Metcalf exhibited a show of paintings—“River Sanctuaries & Island Temples”—in the Romano Gallery in December (see image at right).
**Performing Arts Students Usher in the Holidays**

The fall choral and instrumental concert, which featured the entire music department in a varied program of musical masterworks, took place in November in the DuBois Theatre of Armstrong-Hipkins Center for the Arts, ushering in Thanksgiving break. A few weeks later in December, dance students joined the Doo Wop group and instrumentalists in a festive holiday program.

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**Players Sink Teeth in Roles**

The Blair Academy Players opened their theatrical season with *Dracula* on Halloween night, followed by two more performances in the DuBois Theatre of Armstrong-Hipkins Center for the Arts. The version presented was adapted by Crane Johnson from the novel by Bram Stoker. Performing Arts Chairman Craig Evans, director of the production, said, “This classic horror story came to life (or is it undeath?) as a Halloween treat for the Academy Players’ audience. Johnson’s new adaptation brought the focus to the events that transpired in London, where Lucy (played by Lotte Lijnzaad ’09) has suddenly developed a strange malady, stumping her fiancé, Dr. Steward (played by Todd Lewis ’08) and her aunt Mrs. Harker (played by Tina Tozzi ’09). Meanwhile, Steward’s subject Renfield (played by Andrew Hutcheson ’08) exhibits the bizarre behavior of eating flies and birds and calling for a mysterious master. Maid Abigail (played by Olivia Trozze ’08) warns the inhabitants that something is amiss, even when the renowned metaphysician, Dr. Van Helsing (here a female, played by Taylor McKay ’08) begins to suspect the family’s neighbor, Count Dracula (played by Michael Richards ’08). Thereafter it is a desperate race to save Lucy, and the others, and to drive a stake through Dracula’s schemes.”

The play was student directed by Katrina Hefele ’09 with faculty member Kaye Evans as assistant director. Technical director was faculty member Wayne Rasmussen, assisted by faculty member Michael Sayers. The technical crew consists of Freddy Knight ’10, Savannah Mourao ’11 and Matthew Ziff ’09.

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**A Community of Artists**

Along with paintings, photographs and ceramics, gallery-goers were treated to other art forms created by Blair faculty and staff—as well as their family members—including jewelry, textiles and woodworking, during the 27th Annual Faculty Art Exhibition.

Art teacher Melissa Paul Erne ’96
Blair’s Fine & Performing Arts Season Continues...

The Blair Academy Players

PROOF
by David Auburn
April 30, May 2 & 3
David Auburn’s Pulitzer- and Tony-award winning play focuses on the complexities of familial and romantic love, as well as the relationship between genius and madness.

METAMORPHOSES
by Mary Zimmerman
May 7, 9 and 10
Mary Zimmerman’s Metamorphoses brings Ovid’s tales to the stage “with its emphases on love, loss and the transforming powers of memory and the imagination,” said The New York Times of the play, adding, “Writer-director Mary Zimmerman’s lovely, deeply affecting work...recaptures the primal allure of the theater...It shows that theater can provide not just escape but sometimes a glimpse of the divine.”

Music & Dance

SPRING CONCERT
Thursday, May 15
DuBois Theatre
Selections meant to herald the beauty of the season are performed as spring comes to campus.

Music & Dance

Armstrong-Hipkins Center for the Arts

BLAIR MEDIA
Offered as both an art elective (video production) and an after-school option (fall and spring), Blair Media produces a variety of videos including documentaries, “mockumentaries,” interviews, mini-movies and public service announcements. Blair students produce and edit an enormous range of interesting work. Please check with instructor Judith Kampmann (ext. 5690) during the course of the year for information about screening times of the various projects. You may view student work on the Blair Web site at http://www.blair.edu/About_Blair/ab_online_videos.shtm

THE DANCE-IN-EDUCATION PROGRAM
This program is designed as an age appropriate introduction to the exciting world of dance. Students learn the basics of dance and the elements of movement through imagery and improvisation, rhythmical patterns, storytelling, usage of directions in space and enrichment workbook exercises. Performance dates will be listed on Blair’s Web site as the season progresses; please log on to http://www.blair.edu/Performing_Arts/pa_introduction.shtm

Romano Gallery

VIVIEN COLLENS
March 24 – April 26
Reception: Thursday, March 27, 7–8 pm
Using broad, curved washes of colored acrylic glaze, Collens paints a dense atmosphere which, she notes, may be the context for a precisely defined counterpoint.

ALUMNI SHOW: BREED PHOTOGRAPHY
May 18 – June 8
Reception: Saturday, June 10
A collection of photographs by Dr. Breed, former Blair Headmaster, artistically captures a bygone era. The art curators at the Carnegie Museum of Art state, “Charles Breed helped to establish the traditions and conventions of the formal family photograph and the more casual family snapshot.” Selections are on loan from a collection in New York City owned by Jack Lubliner, who reminds us of Breed’s great love for Blair Academy.

STUDENT GALLERY
Annual Student Art Exhibition
April 30 – May 17
Reception: Thursday, May 8
[Note: The Campus Center also features regular monthly exhibitions by student artists, so enjoy a snack while you take in the talent.]
IN MEMORY OF...

1939

Hamilton S. Corwin. Mr. Corwin was born in Orange, N.J. He was a World War II veteran and a former POW. Mr. Corwin began a teaching career at North Country School in Lake Placid, N.Y. His final professional endeavor before retiring was co-founding the School for Special Learning, now known as the Corwin-Russell School of Sudbury, Mass. He is survived by his son, Hamilton W. Corwin and his wife, Nancy; two grandchildren, Timothy Corwin and Kimberly Gray and her husband Mike; and one great-granddaughter, Ana Bell Corwin.

1953

Richard C. Harden. A graduate of the Wharton School at the University of Pennsylvania, Mr. Harden and his wife Midge lived in Franklin Lakes, N.J., for 44 years. A firm believer in community involvement, Mr. Harden was a member of the Franklin Borough Planning Board for 35 years and chairman for 18 years. He was also president of the Wallkill Valley Rotary Club. Mr. Harden owned a retail heating oil and lumber yard business until 1978 when he sold the business, becoming vice president for services and installations. Upon his retirement in 2001, Mr. Harden and his wife retired to Mobile, Ala., to be near three of their four children and four of their six grandchildren. Mr. Harden is survived by his wife, Mary; his son, Richard ’82; his daughters, Kathleen Balderston-Harden, Wendy Mouner, and Eileen Harden; and six grandchildren.

Henry P. Ruffolo, Jr. Mr. Ruffolo received a bachelor’s degree from the University of Miami and a law degree from St. John’s School of Law. A member of the New York Bar, the Florida Bar and the New York State Legislative Bill Drafting Commission, he was employed by the United States Supreme Court. Mr. Ruffolo practiced law for thirty-nine years and is remembered for his expertise in adoption law. He was one of the first mediators and arbitrators in Palm Beach County certified to practice in all courts including county, state and federal. An active member of the community, he served as a judge in Belle Glade, Fla., and was instrumental in founding the Boys and Girls Club in Palm Beach County. Mr. Ruffolo also founded the Italian American Lawyers Association of Palm Beach County and was instrumental in the founding of Jog Road Baptist Church. His passions included fishing on his boat, Senior Moment; crossword puzzles; and traveling and attending University of Miami football games with his wife. Mr. Ruffolo is survived by his wife, Mary Belle Schlechter Ruffolo; his son, Enrico and his wife, Joanne; his son Christopher John and his wife, Tracey; his daughter Mary Andrea Hopson and her husband, Tim; daughter Mary Alicia Ruffolo and her husband, Paul Madsen; and seven grandchildren.

1960

William K. Grollman. Dr. Grollman received a bachelor’s degree from Wharton and a PhD from New York University Graduate School of Business Administration. He was a professor of accounting at Bernard M. Baruch College and Fordham University Graduate School of Business, and he occupied the Robert M. Schaeberle Chair at Pace University. Dr. Grollman was an internal consultant and auditor for Coopers & Lybrand and Chase and continued professional education for Coopers & Lybrand and Chase and was an internal consultant and auditor for BDO Seidman and Seidman. In 1981, Dr. Grollman formed and became the CEO of the Center for Video Education, a monthly video magazine covering the latest developments in accounting and finance. The company was brought public in 2004 with Dr. Grollman as its president. During the last two years of his life, while battling cancer, Dr. Grollman was a member of the board of directors at Nomura Securities for the Japan Smaller Cap Fund and the Korea Equity Fund. He was also the president of the Westchester Business Council. An avid athlete, Dr. Grollman was the captain of the United States Tennis Association team at the Saw Mill Club in Mt. Kisco and ran in numerous marathons. Community service was a hallmark of his life as he served on the boards of the American Cancer Society, United Way of Westchester County and the fundraiser for the Kimmel Institute at Memorial Sloan Kettering Cancer Care Hospital. He was also the president of the Chappaqua, N.Y., school board and the Mt. Kisco Town Club. Dr. Grollman is survived by his wife, Gail; his son, Eric; and his daughter, Lauren.

1968

Bertram D. Pinckney. Mr. Pinckney died on September 20, 2007, after a courageous two-year battle with cancer. A graduate of Franklin & Marshall College, he was employed by the New York State Legislative Bill Drafting Commission, retiring after 30 years of service. Living in Albany, N.Y., all his life, Mr. Pinckney was a graduate of the Vincentian Institute and attended Blair Academy for a post graduate year. At Vincentian, he was a starter on the varsity football team for three years and held the All-Albany football title for two years. He was a member of the 1966 league champion football team and was inducted into the Bishop Maginn High School Alumni Association in recognition of his athletic achievements. Mr. Pinckney was preceded in death by his brother, James J. Pinckney. He is survived by his mother, Alice McDermott Pinckney; his sons, Mathew and Charles; his stepdaughters, Stephanie Stiles and Jackie Scovello; his brothers, Andrew and Michael; his sisters, Cathy Pinckney, Bethy Finkle and Peggy Gaudet; and his grandchildren, Andrew, Matthew and Isabella Stiles.
On January 5, at Chillout Sports Arena in Hackettstown, N.J., Blair’s former hockey players played Blair’s hockey team. Although the score was close until the third period, Blair’s high school team had more steam and ran up the score to a 12-7 victory. Scoring for the alumni were: Eric Magac (Taft School recruit and former student of Chan Hardwick) with a hat trick, Matt Pruznick ‘05 with two goals, and Corey Minerva ‘06 and Eric Maine ‘77 with one goal apiece.

Other alumni who participated included John McGrath ‘03, Andrew Pearce ‘02, Chris Strickland ‘98, Mike McDonald ‘97, Jon Liegner ‘80, Wayne Applegate ‘77, Scott McKee ‘77, Jeff Liegner ‘76, Bill Pitts ‘76, Greg Sozek ‘77, and Mike Holenstein ‘77.

An informal gathering and awards ceremony took place following the game at Charlie Brown’s Steakhouse. Jeff Liegner ‘76 presented awards to the following: Matt Pruznick for Most Valuable Player, John McGrath for Best Looking, Eric Magac for Best Play of the Game; Best Water Boy went to Harley Wedholm Maine. (See photo below.) All captions read left to right.
**Ever Always: A Lasting Effect**

“So much has changed at Blair over the years, but the essentials of a Blair education remain unchanged. We were a boys’ prep school; today we’re co-ed. We had no arts center. There was one classroom building and virtually no library. Blairstown was isolated, and I used a wall phone once a week to make contact with the outside world. Miss Ellen ran the bookstore. None of that really mattered, however. It was always the faculty and their interface with students that had the lasting effect.”

– EXCERPT FROM A NOTE RECEIVED WITH A LEADERSHIP GIFT FROM A MEMBER OF THE CLASS OF 1963
Though the '70s are long behind us, Headmaster Chan Hardwick often refers to the winter months as some of the toughest at a boarding school—despite the beauty of a snow-covered campus. These days, however, students may choose from any number of activities to fend off the doldrums of the season, including the Headmasters’ Societies competitions, the annual Sadie Hawkins dance, off-campus enrichment trips, the winter student musical and, of course, the many sports competitions—from wrestling in Walker Gym to skiing at nearby Mt. Creek. Coverage of these events is regularly reported on Blair’s Web site at www.blair.edu.

“I Decided if I Liked Blair in February, I Would Like It Anytime”

—Excerpt from a Profile of Blair in the 1970s