

WINTER 2015-16

THE LINK FOR ALUMNI AND FRIENDS

WAGNER



Lifesavers

*How three alumni
turned personal tragedies
into rescue missions*

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How many different activities can Wagner students pack into their lives? Four students show us what they juggle.



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Lifesavers

Three stories of alumni who endured
extraordinary challenges and turned their
experiences into a mission to help others.

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From the President

The True Best Value in Higher Education



AS A LONGTIME PROFESSOR and administrator, I am amazed at this generation of young people, especially their commitment to making the world a better place. This issue of *Wagner Magazine* takes a look at a few of these “student jugglers,” who balance their

studies with internships, athletic endeavors, leadership of student organizations, and civic engagement.

Studies show that today’s young people want more in life than material reward. They want to belong to something larger than themselves; they have a strong sense of social and civic responsibility; and they want to work for positive change in their communities.

Nationwide, colleges and universities are providing opportunities for them to do so in a meaningful way. Where volunteering once meant an occasional service event focused on “giving back,” today’s model is one based on sustained collaborations that connect the classroom to the surrounding community.

In short, colleges and universities have evolved from community outreach to community partnerships. This shift reflects a growing recognition that our resources — principally knowledge, labor, and leadership — can and should be applied to addressing immediate needs that local governments and non-profits are unable to handle.

Higher education institutions are stepping in to help bridge the gap between needs and resources. During the 2011–12 school year, for example, student volunteers from just 557 schools — roughly one-fifth of U.S. colleges and universities — contributed an estimated \$9.7 billion worth of services to their communities, working with at-risk youth, the homeless and hungry, people dealing with mental and physical illness; and addressing issues ranging from environmental pollution to cross-cultural understanding.

Most are doing these things with little, if any, additional new spending. Instead, it’s a matter of aligning resources already earmarked for teaching, research, and student life with the needs of our surrounding communities.

At Wagner, we call it the “community-defined curriculum.” Our approach is not one of “doing for” or “showing how.” We recognize that the true experts on any

community are the people who live there and that long-term success will be determined by them.

While it’s often said that the desire to change must come from within, without the belief that change is possible and the capacity to bring it about, no amount of desire is sufficient. Partnerships enable us to focus on the root causes of society’s challenges and not merely the symptoms, and empower individuals to take control of their own destinies and contribute to the greater good.

Case in point: On Staten Island, Wagner and more than two dozen local organizations have formed the Port Richmond Partnership. Part classroom, part laboratory and part community resource, the Partnership serves as an engine of civic capacity. Student nurses don’t just

treat patients in local hospitals and clinics; they deal with the social and cultural factors that contribute to health issues. Business students work with local entrepreneurs to develop and execute business plans. Foreign-language majors help immigrant parents improve their English, so they can participate more fully in their children’s educations and in society generally. The list goes on.

These experiences not only deepen our students’ appreciation of what it means to be an active citizen, but also enhance their competitiveness in the job market. According to a 2013 survey by the Association of American Colleges & Universities, 86 percent of business leaders want colleges to provide opportunities for students to work with others to solve problems in their communities. And 71 percent value candidates and employees who are interested in giving back to their communities.

Stronger communities, better citizens, enhanced opportunities in the job market. And all within our existing budgets. That’s what I call a best value in higher education.

Richard Guarasci
President



From the Editor

The Real Tests Happen After Graduation

In an issue full of amazing personal stories from alumni who have been slammed by the school of hard knocks (see “Lifesavers,” pages 22–29), let me here present you with one more.

In October 2015, I received an email from Becky Giannatasio McCoy '08, which began this way: “I’ve been very nostalgic since I realized it’s been 11 years since I was a freshman at Wagner. It seems like yesterday and a century ago all at the same time. My story is a unique and difficult one, but I feel like it began with the confidence I gained as a Wagner College student.”

In 2007, Becky’s fiancé, Keith McCoy, battled anaplastic large-cell lymphoma. He went into remission, and they got married. After she completed a master’s in teaching physics and he finished medical school, they moved to Las Vegas for his family medicine residency at Nellis Air Force Base.

They were overjoyed when she became pregnant. Just a few months later, however, they found out her father had cancer. Her son, Caleb, was born on October 30, 2012, and her father died the next day.

The next year, Keith was assigned to Andrews Air Force Base, and they moved to the D.C. area. Becky deeply grieved the loss of her father, but the family was healing and thriving. Becky became pregnant again in the summer of 2014.

“A few months later,” Becky wrote, “Keith began experiencing drenching night sweats. After countless appointments and procedures, he was given a diagnosis of adenocarcinoma of unknown primary — a different cancer than the one he battled while we were engaged in my

senior year at Wagner. He was diagnosed the week before Christmas and passed away January 5, 2015, six days before his 33rd birthday.”

Their daughter, Libby, was born a month later, on February 4.

Becky and the children moved back to Connecticut, where she had grown up, to be near family. And then, encouraged by a friend, she decided to do something extraordinary: Even though she had never been a runner and was recovering from a caesarean section, she trained and ran the Navy-Air Force Half Marathon in memory of Keith, an avid runner. She and a team of friends raised funds to help medical missionaries in Bolivia and to give book scholarships to students at Keith’s medical school.

“The race itself was horrible, but I am thankful for all of the lessons I’ve learned along the way,” she wrote.

Becky has incredible, hard-won wisdom to share, which she does beautifully on her blog, www.beckylmccoy.com. I encourage you to read it, and I hope that sharing her story and those of her fellow “Lifesavers” helps someone out there who, in Becky’s words, “needs to hear that grief is not the end and that wonderful (even joyful) things come out of struggle.”

Laura Barlament
EDITOR,
WAGNER MAGAZINE



On the Cover

In our story on page 22, Erik Unhjem '72 returns to the airport on Long Island where he survived a small-plane crash but lost his wife, Jane Waleski Unhjem '74, in 2012. He is back to flying and frequently volunteers to transport pets like Banjo, shown here, through Pilots N Paws.

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From Our Readers



Hoary Tradition?

When did this practice [of undergrads wearing sashes and cords] begin at Wagner? [See “The Colors of Commencement,” summer 2015.] While styles and colors of the academic costume may have been established by an intercollegiate agreement in 1895, it certainly wasn’t the custom as recently as a generation ago. I suspect the practice is as new as the term “bling” itself.

Ed Kane '77

ONLINE COMMENT



“ I suspect the practice is as new as the term ‘bling’ itself. ”

Editor’s Note: From a review of commencement photos published in the Kallista, as well as materials in the Wagner College archives, it seems that the practice began in the late 1990s. As for the term “bling,” which denotes expensive, ostentatious clothing and jewelry — it originated in the 1990s, too. Good call, Ed Kane!

Boston Strong

I was so pleased to read Bob Haberle’s article “Why Did I Run the 2014 Boston Marathon?” (summer 2015). Just weeks before the summer edition of *Wagner* arrived, I attended the annual Women Empowered brunch, which honors women on Martha’s Vineyard who make a difference in others’ lives. The event featured two amazing victims of the marathon bombing. Jessica Kensky and

her husband, Patrick Downes, arrived on prosthetic legs, two for her and one for him. Jessica provided the moving keynote speech. I had the pleasure of sitting next to her, her husband, and his mother and aunt. I was inspired by her to write a poem, which I hope provides a flavor of what we heard from her about her experience. My poem appeared in the two local papers the next week, the *Gazette* and the *Martha’s Vineyard Times*. Bob, thanks for being part of “Boston Strong.”

May You Always Stand in Grace

*Once you stood on two feet
And then you stood on one
Now you stand on courage
Admired for how far you’ve come*

*You stand on love and faith
You face the future strong
You’re grateful for your life
Though so many things went wrong*

*May you never stand alone
May you always stand in grace
May happiness prevail
And a smile on your face*

Nancy Langman '70

VINEYARD HAVEN, MASSACHUSETTS

Cherry Tree Mystery

Just got my summer edition of *Wagner*, and read the readers’ notes about those cherry trees behind Cunard Hall. They were there in all their glory when my husband (Fred Brockmann ’52 M’53) arrived at Wagner in 1948, and, of

WE’D LOVE TO HEAR FROM YOU We welcome letters from readers. Letters should refer to material published in the magazine and include the writer’s full name, address, and telephone number. The editor reserves the right to determine the suitability of letters for publication and to edit them for accuracy and length.

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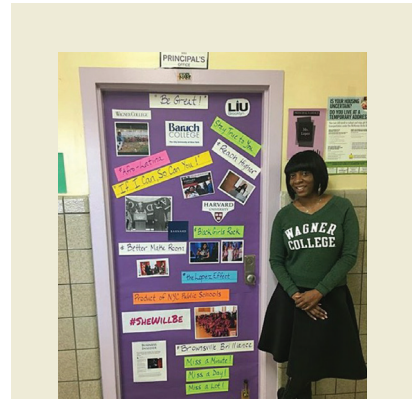
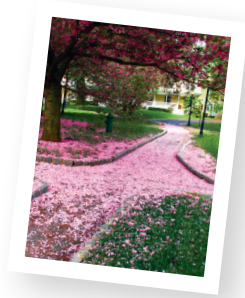
course, when I got there in 1949. They were tall and sturdy then, with their lowest branches above our heads, I recall, and looking as if they had been there for at least 10 years or more ... and full of blossoms every spring. What a sight!

I'm intrigued by this Cherry Tree Mystery! I hope you can dig up some info about when they were planted, and include it in a future issue. I'm betting the original owner of the Cunard estate planted them, himself!

Congratulations on your stellar job as editor of *Wagner*; by the way! Beautiful and very readable. I enjoyed all the articles about recent Wagner grads. And all the excellent photos! Good work!

Lee Schriever Brockmann '53
VIA EMAIL

Editor's Note: Based on studying old pictures of campus, my best estimate is that the cherry trees were planted sometime between 1938 and 1949. In the 1918 campus panorama photo shown in this issue, pages 20–21, you see a variety of large and small trees behind Cunard Hall, but they are not today's cherry trees. In aerial photos from May 1938, those trees appear to have been removed, and the space is open. On the title spread of the 1949 Kallista, you can see a grove of small trees behind Cunard — the trees that Fred and Lee Brockmann remember. The trees are now more than 70 years old, nearing the end of the normal life span of a well-tended Japanese cherry.



WAG BRAG

We profiled Nadia Lopez '99 as the “Principal of Possibilities” in the summer 2015 issue. Here she was last fall on Instagram, sporting her Wagner College gear at her school, Mott Hall Bridges Academy. She along with *Humans of New York* creator Brandon Stanton will speak at Wagner commencement in May (see page 7 for the story).

MORE SOUNDS FOUND, MORE STORIES SOUGHT

In the last issue, we announced that we had found and digitized three LPs of the Wagner College Choir from the 1950s and 1960s. Since then, we received a 1949 album that includes the only known recording of our original alma mater, and the earliest known recording of the song that became our new alma mater, “Beautiful Upon the Hill.”

We also asked you to share your remembrances of the choir: When did you first hear the choir? Whose faces – and voices – do you still remember? What was your most memorable choir-tour experience?

We have received three delightful submissions. Please join the choir of voices remembering their Wagner College Choir experiences! When we've received enough from all the years of Wagner Choir, we'll publish a roundup in the magazine.


For now, a couple of our favorite excerpts:

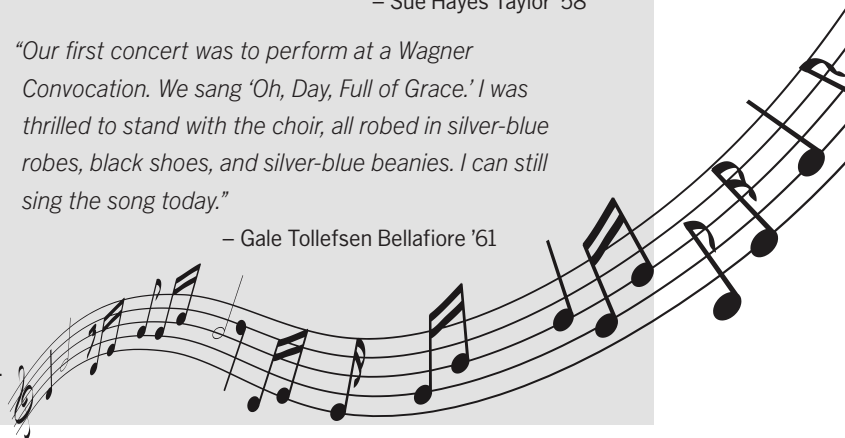
“The choir tours were highlights of each school year. We all were grateful for the hospitality of our hosts, but it took a lot of self-control to give thanks for the ubiquitous dinner of baked ham, scalloped potatoes, and Jell-O with shredded carrots.”

– Sue Hayes Taylor '58

“Our first concert was to perform at a Wagner Convocation. We sang ‘Oh, Day, Full of Grace.’ I was thrilled to stand with the choir, all robed in silver-blue robes, black shoes, and silver-blue beanies. I can still sing the song today.”

– Gale Tollefsen Bellafiore '61

 To hear the choir albums, visit wagner.edu/wagnermagazine.





Upon the Hill

Learning, teaching, giving and achieving on Grymes Hill and beyond



KEY INGREDIENTS
Wayne Johnson (left) tries a recipe with fellow culinary students and Wagner nursing students. The high school has a kitchen garden on a balcony (below).



Too Many Cooks in the Kitchen?

Not when they are all learning from each other

BATHED IN THE AROMA of warm chocolate, Wayne Johnson expertly scrapes fresh-baked cookies from baking sheets in the impressive culinary teaching facilities of Port Richmond High School, where he is a senior and aspiring chef.

His personal kitchen idol is Mr. James Ryan, his culinary arts teacher; but lately a new influence has begun to shape his cooking practices as well: students in the Wagner nursing program.

“Through my time with the Wagner students, I’ve learned the good and the bad of cooking,” Johnson says. “I didn’t know what’s good for you and what’s bad. I just liked to cook.”

During the fall semester, senior nursing students in the course Community Health and their professor, Nancy Cherofsky, spent each Wednesday at Port Richmond High School’s Culinary Arts Academy, a four-year program that introduces students to culinary and restaurant management.

The nursing students share

tips about healthier eating and nutrition facts, through presentations, one-on-one teaching, and even taste tests. On this particular Wednesday, they have samples of two types of butter, smeared on slices of bread: conventional vs. grass-fed.

Students in this senior cooking class gobble the bread and butter while also preparing to work on today’s “market basket”: quinoa, tofu, and kale. The fresh, nutrient-packed greens and herbs used in the kitchen were grown on the balcony at the end of the culinary floor’s hallway, where potato tops poke out of raised beds and leafy greens spill out of hanging baskets.

The seniors develop their own recipes from scratch, using their market basket ingredients plus anything else available in the kitchen. Johnson and his team start chopping onions, garlic, carrots, and kale for a creation called Orange-Infused General Tso’s Tofu and Pork-Fried Quinoa with Kale.

The smell of frying bacon makes stomachs growl, and the tofu with an attractive brown marinade looks sautéed

to perfection.

“I don’t know how to cook,” confesses Joe De Renzo ’15, one of the Wagner nursing students. He is already an RN, now getting his bachelor’s degree through Wagner’s 15-month BSN program. “So we pick up little hints. We’re learning from them and they’re learning from us. I have tried their food and it’s pretty good.”

Professor Cherofsky mentions another tasty creation of Johnson’s: Peruvian chicken, baked with a slew of herbs and spices, including his personal favorites — cinnamon and cayenne. He now knows that these spices are not only tasty, but also anti-inflammatory and good for the immune system.

“If we can get into these kids’ minds that eating healthy changes the quality of your life, then we are making a difference,” Cherofsky says. Johnson is definitely on board.

“I listen and critique my own recipes,” he says. “They’ve inspired me so much in my own cooking style to be healthier in my approach.”



Quote Unquote

You can go through what I went through and make it, and that means there's a way back for you.



Bob Beckel '70
AUTHOR OF
'I SHOULD BE DEAD:
MY LIFE SURVIVING
POLITICS, TV, AND
ADDICTION'

NYC's Storyteller Coming to Wagner

'Humans of New York' creator will speak at commencement, along with a Wagner-educated school principal

WAGNER COLLEGE ANNOUNCED in December that its 2016 commencement speaker will be Brandon Stanton, creator of *Humans of New York*, an ongoing project to publish, online and in a book series, the stories and photos of everyday New Yorkers.

In addition, the College will honor Nadia Lopez '99, founder and principal of Mott Hall Bridges Academy in Brownsville, Brooklyn. Both Stanton and Lopez will be awarded honorary doctor of humane letters degrees at the May 20 ceremony.

In the summer of 2010, Stanton began his ambitious project to create a "photographic census" of New York City. The photos he took, and the accompanying interviews, became the *Humans of New York* blog. In its first three years, HONY's audience grew from a few hundred to over one million. At last count, the HONY Facebook page had more than 16 million followers, and the three *Humans of New York* books have been *New York Times* bestsellers.

In *Wagner Magazine's* summer 2015 "Uncommon Lives" feature, we introduced readers to the story of Nadia Lopez, her school in Brownsville, and its intersection with *Humans of New York*: In January 2015, Stanton encountered 13-year-old Vidal Chastanet, who told him that his greatest influence was Ms. Lopez, his principal.

Stanton met Lopez and featured her and Mott Hall Bridges Academy's dedicated teachers, who serve one of the poorest neighborhoods of New York City.

He launched an online fundraising campaign to send the students on a trip to Harvard University; it raised \$1.4 million from more than 51,000 donors.

Heather Wolf '15, the 2015 Spiro Scholar, spoke at last year's commencement about creating an Instagram account, *Humans of Wagner*, inspired by *Humans of New York*. That work became an integral part of her Wagner experience. "Wagner is such a diverse community with so many interesting stories," she says. "So, they identify with the stories of *Humans of New York*."

"I learned from reading *Humans of New York* and making *Humans of Wagner* that people are more than what they appear to be on the surface," she adds. "Everyone has stories to tell."



HIGH-ACHIEVING TEAM
Brandon Stanton with Nadia Lopez and Vidal Chastanet



Institution with Influence

In the 'New York Times,' Wagner is ranked sixth in the nation

LAST OCTOBER, a *New York Times* columnist took a stab at a new method of ranking colleges, based on what value education adds to students' lives.

In his "Common Sense" column, titled "College Rankings Fail to Measure the Influence of the Institution," writer James B. Stewart evaluated a new tool designed to help students decide on their best college choice: the Obama administration's College Scorecard.

"While Scorecard adds potentially

valuable information to the dizzying array that is already available," he wrote, "it suffers from many of the same flaws that afflict nearly every other college ranking system: There is no way to know what, if any, impact a particular college has on its graduates' earnings, or life for that matter."

Working with Brookings Institution fellow Jonathan Rockwell, who had developed an innovative scale measuring the "value added" by a college to what

its students bring with them to campus, they put together a ranking that zeroed out the impact of the students' majors.

They called it "the Brookings-Common Sense ranking." All of the top 10 were liberal arts schools, and right in the middle of that top 10 was Wagner College at #6 in the nation.



Find a link to the *New York Times* article at wagner.edu/wagnermagazine.

First the Facts . . .

1939

YEAR WAGNER'S FIRST AMATEUR RADIO STATION WAS ESTABLISHED.

225

ROOM IN THE UNION WHERE WCBG, STUDENT RADIO AT WAGNER COLLEGE, WAS ESTABLISHED IN 1979.

On the Fast Track

Wagner's nationally ranked internship program gives students valuable work experience

LATE LAST SPRING, a *U.S. News & World Report* story on internships placed Wagner College among the country's top ten universities.

Nationally, "on average, 38 percent of the class of 2013 participated in an internship during their undergraduate careers," wrote reporter Susannah Snider.

But at Wagner, every student has an internship experience while they're

earning their bachelor's degree — part of the Wagner Plan philosophy of "learning by doing."

And internships provide Wagner business and accounting students with plenty of "doing" opportunities in some of the world's leading organizations — opportunities that involve lots more than making coffee or filing papers.

T. J. Schwannecke '17 was put through his paces at Hull Street Capital, a private equity firm focused on investments from \$5 million to \$100 million.

"Hull Street really allowed me to get involved in the process," Schwannecke said. "I saw how important my computer skills are — Excel, PowerPoint, Java. And knowing how accounting, finance, and the economy really work really helped me."

At the Securities and Exchange Commission, Jennifer Haug '17 learned how myriad seemingly inconsequential details can add up to a criminal indictment.

"I worked on several cases of fraud and insider trading with forensic accountants and lawyers, transcribing thousands of pages of wire records into Excel and searching for patterns of suspicious activity," Haug said.

The experience looks great on her resume.

"Every interview I've had since, the interviewer has stressed how great my relevant work experience is at the SEC."

Christopher "C. J." Jarema '16 stretched his Wagner training further than he could have imagined at Dow Jones and UBS.

"I was given a lot of work, typically juggling five or more projects at once," he said. "However, the environment around me was forgiving and fostered my ability to handle it. I encouraged my supervisor to push me further and make me better in what I struggled with."

For some Wagner students, their internship leads directly to their first professional job offer.

"I was placed on a team with a handful of other professionals, but I was the only intern for the two months I spent there," Danielle Bruscella '15 M'16 said, describing her experience last summer at Deloitte. "I was perhaps very lucky in that I participated in preparing a number of audit work papers. Since it was the summer, many other interns with whom I networked were not given this kind of responsibility."

The result?

"I received an offer to return, full-time, following graduation this May."



SKILLED LABOR

T. J. Schwannecke, Jennifer Haug, and C. J. Jarema took on significant responsibilities as business interns.

10

MINIMUM TIMES THE WAGNERIAN HAS REPORTED WCBG'S REVIVAL OR REBUILDING DURING THE PAST 35 YEARS.

... Then the Quiz!



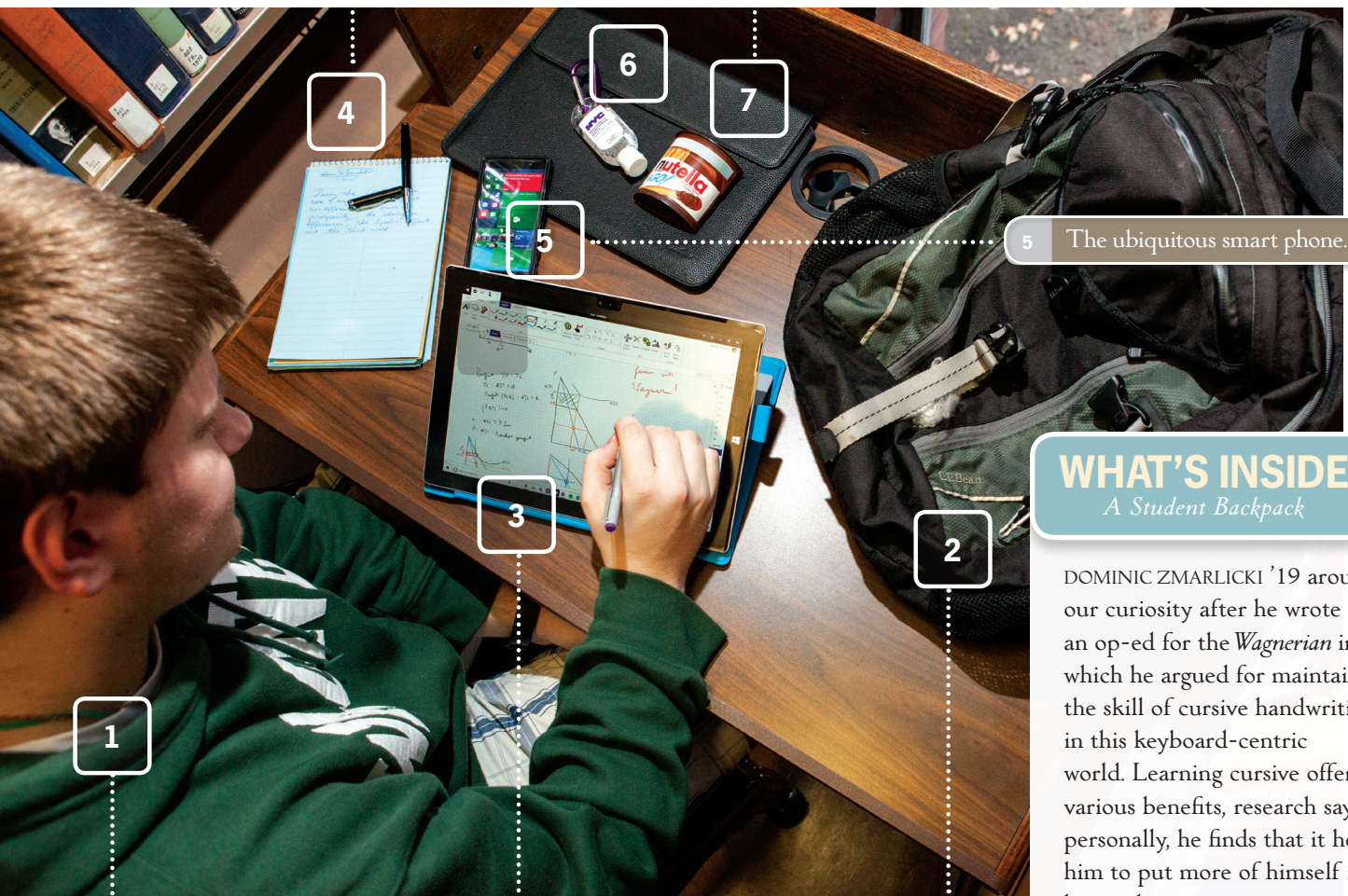
At what AM frequency did WCBG once broadcast?

ANSWER ON PAGE 11

6 Hand sanitizer from the NYC Mayor's Office to Combat Domestic Violence. "A good cause," he comments.

7 Nutella on the Go, a snack of chocolate spread and breadsticks. "People keep giving me that," he explains.

4 Fountain pen, his tool of choice when writing on paper.



5 The ubiquitous smart phone.

WHAT'S INSIDE A Student Backpack

DOMINIC ZMARLICKI '19 aroused our curiosity after he wrote an op-ed for the *Wagnerian* in which he argued for maintaining the skill of cursive handwriting in this keyboard-centric world. Learning cursive offers various benefits, research says; personally, he finds that it helps him to put more of himself into his work.

3 Microsoft Surface Pro 3 tablet, on which Zmarlicki prefers taking notes.

2 His LLBean backpack, a little worse for wear but still serviceable.

1 Dominic Zmarlicki, freshman from Connecticut, international affairs and history major. Fluent in Polish and learning German.

Quote
Unquote



My students volunteer from the beginning of their careers through graduation. ... They're very civically engaged.



Margarita Sánchez
PROFESSOR OF MODERN LANGUAGES, IN THE *NEW YORK POST*, "HOW TO LOOK FOR COLLEGES THAT THINK OUTSIDE THE CLASSROOM," OCT. 21, 2015



RADIOHEADS

Shane Ertter '16, who led WCBG's revival (second from right), and other WCBG staffers at Homecoming in September 2015.

with his grandparents. During high school, he became involved in theater, which led to voiceover work for local businesses and for public service announcements.

As Ertter tells the story, before he even arrived on campus he emailed then-station manager K. T. Sanders '14 and asked her about becoming involved. She told him, "It's off the air, but you can take it over when you get here."

Ertter took that responsibility seriously. He prodded and pushed to move the station into a new space and to acquire new equipment. Now, the station broadcasts from the lower level of Cunard Hall. It has a full slate of officers and on-air personalities, with more than 50 students involved.

"My task was to bring it back to a place where it's recognized on campus and to develop the leadership team," Ertter says. "I want to develop it into a place of storytelling and communication."

"I'm inspired by Shane and his perseverance and grit," says Curtis Wright, dean of campus life and leadership, who worked closely with Ertter. "The vision that he has for the radio station would position Wagner's radio station as a public station for all of Staten Island. So, how do we make that happen? We've been working with him to create the infrastructure so that, as we build and grow, the station can serve the larger community as well as meet the needs of our students. He's thinking more long term, more big picture. It's not just a student club."

Radio Revival

On the Internet, WCBG is broadcasting worldwide

WCBG, Wagner College's student radio station, is back — not "on air" in the old-fashioned sense, but online. On March 23, 2015, it started broadcasting on webgradio.org.

During the first two months of programmed broadcasts, about 3,500 different listeners tuned in for music, talk, and specialty programs like *Aca Hour*, a show about a cappella music.

A cappella guru Deke Sharon (music director for the sleeper hit film *Pitch Perfect*, about the trials and tribulations of college a cappella singing) heard about it and spread it to his networks.

The leader behind this radio revival is arts administration major Shane Ertter '16. When he came to Wagner from his home in Scottsdale, Arizona, in 2012, WCBG had gone dormant — not an uncommon occurrence in the history of Wagner student organizations in general and of WCBG in particular.

Ertter grew up listening to old-fashioned radio shows like *The Shadow*

The Answer

QUIZ QUESTION
ON PAGE 9

64 AM. WCBG filed for an FCC license in 1981 and broadcast in the dormitories through carrier current during the 1980s.

En Garde

Men's water polo and women's fencing added to the athletic roster

LAST FALL, Wagner College announced the addition of men's water polo and women's fencing as varsity sports. Both will begin competition in the 2016–17 academic year.

"We believe these exciting additions to our athletic program will help Wagner increase our enrollment, provide us with a competitive edge in recruiting, and raise additional revenue," said President Guarasci.

"Our success with women's water polo, which includes several NCAA tournament appearances and top national GPA records, makes the addition of a men's team a very logical and smart move," Guarasci added. "Fencing is a sport that attracts a similar type of student-athlete as water polo, and several schools in the Northeast Conference, such as Sacred Heart and Fairleigh Dickinson, compete in fencing, as well as other top-notch local institutions such as Princeton, Columbia, NYU, and NJIT."

Chris Radmonovich, in his sixth season as head women's water polo coach, will also serve as head coach of the men's water polo program.

Wagner will become the 23rd institution in the nation to sponsor Division I men's water polo. Wagner will also become a member of the Collegiate Water Polo Association (CWPA), a group of colleges and universities in the Eastern United States that compete in Division I men's water polo. The winner of the CWPA earns one of the six spots in the NCAA Men's Water Polo Championship.

Attila Lukacs was hired as head coach for women's fencing. Lukacs brings more than 10 years of experience as a fencing coach at both the collegiate and professional levels to Grymes Hill, including a nine-year stint at Stevens Institute of Technology, where he worked primarily with the épée fencers for both the men's and women's squads.

With his assistance, Stevens captured three Division III National Intercollegiate Women's Fencing Association championship titles and recorded the three highest individual win totals in program history.

A top player in his own right, Lukacs is a former member of the Hungarian National Team, helping his squad capture multiple national championship titles.

Wagner will become the 40th institution in the nation to sponsor the sport of women's fencing.



PARTNERS IN SERVICE

On January 28 at Project Hospitality's 2016 Winter Gala, Wagner College's Center for Leadership and Community Engagement was recognized with the Eleanor and Paul Proske Memorial Award for Distinguished Service to the Poor. President Guarasci and CLCE Director Samantha Siegel '12 M'13 accepted the award on the College's behalf. A member organization of the Port Richmond Partnership, Project Hospitality serves the needs of poor, hungry, and homeless residents of Staten Island. Pictured are Guarasci and Siegel (far right) with CLCE staff, students, faculty, and Port Richmond partners.

Arts & Letters

Teaching Spanish Through 'Portraits'

November 1 was a red-letter date for two modern-language professors at Wagner College, Margarita Sánchez and Katica Urbanc.

Four years after first proposing their new Spanish textbook to a publisher, they finally held in their hands finished copies of *Retratos: Arte y sociedad en Latinoamérica y España*.

It's a different kind of language text, in several ways.

Two student trips to the art galleries of Spain had shown Urbanc "that art is a very powerful tool for communication. Students are drawn, in some ways, to art more than to literary texts," and great works by Spanish-speaking artists play a big part in the new book, the title of which translates as *Portraits*.

"We don't just sit at our desks and take notes," explained Olivia Josephsen '18, one of the students who has "test driven" *Retratos*. "We look at art and literature and spend our time discussing these sophisticated topics."

"We focus a lot on women writers, too," Sánchez said, highlighting another one of the new book's distinctions, "and we picked our favorites from Spain and Latin America – and not just our favorites, but the best!"

"We wanted to avoid stereotypes," Urbanc added, "and really talk about what's going on today in Latin America. Students have been talking about bullfights in Spain since middle school. They're ready for something else!"



Go to wagner.edu/wagnermagazine for a video of Sánchez, Urbanc, and their students talking about *Retratos*.



STUD JUG



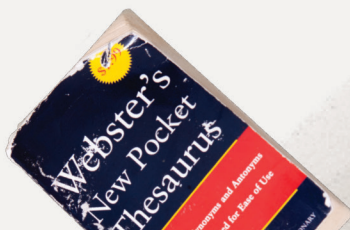
ENTREPRENEUR

It's hard to quantify such a claim, but students these days seem busier than ever.

Maybe it has something to do with the type of education that Wagner provides. To use a bit of higher-education jargon, Wagner is a leader when it comes to “high-impact practices” — i.e., educational features, strongly associated with student learning and retention, that demand considerable time and effort, facilitate learning outside of the classroom, require meaningful interactions with faculty and fellow students, encourage collaboration with diverse people, and provide frequent and substantive feedback.

Yes, it sounds exhausting, but it also produces life-changing results; and in the National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE), Wagner students report participating in high-impact practices at significantly higher levels than students at comparable colleges.

To reveal the faces and stories behind the numbers, we decided to profile a few outstanding examples of students who are thriving at Wagner while also juggling numerous ways of contributing their energy and leadership to Wagner, Staten Island, and New York City.



SOCIAL JUSTICE DIALOGUE
EYEOPENERS

BONNER LEADER

GENERATION CITIZEN

ACADEMY
PORT
IMPACT



Hadeel Mishal '17

Hometown: Brooklyn, New York

History major
English minor
Economics minor

Pre-Law Society
Chair for civic engagement;
interested in human rights and
immigration law.

**Social Justice Dialogue
Committee**
She hosts bi-monthly lunchtime
discussions on controversial
news topics.

Bonner Leader
She runs a tutoring program for
elementary school children at an
immigrant resource center.

IMPACT Scholar
As a Leadership Council member for
this network of students committed to
community service and civic engagement,
she is planning their annual summit with
a full day of workshops and presentations.

Generation Citizen
As the advocacy director, she's training
other students to be democracy coaches
who help teens become involved in the
democratic process.

**Port Richmond Partnership
Leadership Academy**
As a lead mentor in this program for
high school students, she meets weekly
with them.

Eyeopeners: Youth Against Violence
For this antiviolence youth program,
she facilitates weekly meetings and
hosts workshops on current events and
leadership skills.



Kendle Bramble '17

Hometown: Freeport, New York

Psychology major

Football

A defensive lineman, he spends 4–5 hours in training and meetings per day.

"Football is a challenge, and I love a challenge. Football is a huge metaphor for life, and it can change you for the better if you reflect on what you do."

Port Richmond Partnership Leadership Academy

It's his second year as a PRPLA mentor, and this year he's serving as a lead mentor with Hadeel.

Black Student Union

He loves this organization and is planning to run for president next year. He wants it to become more integrated with other campus groups. *"We're not just a frat that throws parties!"*

IMPACT Scholar

Along with Hadeel, he is also on the Leadership Council, preparing for the annual summit and organizing other activities to build campus spirit, like a game night and open mic night.

HONORS FLOOR

WAGCAB

BASSIC

ARTS ADMINISTRATION

FRATERNITY

RESIDENT ASSISTANT



Will Albach '17

Hometown: River Edge, New Jersey

Arts Administration Major

Wagner Campus Activities Board (WagCAB)

As president, he leads this organization that generates lots of fun on campus: slam poetry night, stand-up comedy competition, and Halloween pumpkin decorating are a few examples from the fall. He's also the VP of campus events for SGA.

Bassic

He's president of this all-male cappella singing group. They rehearse three times per week, arrange their own music, put on one or two concerts per semester, and also sing at campus events. They took orders for Basic Love Grams for Valentine's Day – they will harmonize a serenade for the person you want to treat!

Resident Assistant

He's the RA for the Honors Floor in Guild Hall. He usually spends 2–3 hours a day following up on emails and doing floor programming – but also just providing a listening ear.

TKE Fraternity

He joined last fall and is enjoying the brotherhood.

STUDENT GOVERNMENT ASSOCIATION
SONGFEST
DEAN'S LEADERSHIP CORPS
HARBORVIEW
TAU KAPPA SIGMA
ASSISTANT



Jenny Loh '16

Hometown: Bangkok, Thailand

Sociology major
Accounting minor

"I've been involved in everything since I was a little girl. I like getting myself in those positions where I work with people and push and challenge myself."

Student Government Association

Vice president. Oversees the work of the class senators, makes proposals for the campus. Spends 6–7 hours per week in meetings and working in the SGA office.

Resident Assistant

RA for the 9th floor of Harborview. She serves as an RA on duty, holds office hours, and cultivates good relationships with her residents.

Tau Kappa Sigma

She joined this sorority – the only one at Wagner that's strictly local – during her freshman year, looking for new family and friends far from home. She has held many leadership positions with the group, and this year she is TKS's Songfest Queen candidate!

ODK

She's vice president of this national leadership honor society's Wagner chapter.

Dean's Leadership Corps

Meets regularly to advise and learn from the dean of campus life.

Wagner College, 1918



Main Building



Dormitory



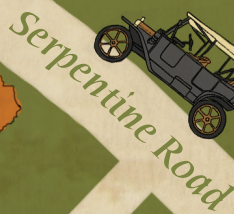
President's House



Faculty Cottages



Gatehouse



Wagner College History Tour

By Lee Manchester

A walk through the Wagner College campus is not just a stroll through a peaceful, parklike urban oasis — it's also an expedition through several layers of history.

In this issue, we're beginning a series to help Wagnerians better appreciate the historic dimensions of their alma mater's home turf. The series will conclude next year, as we begin the centennial celebration of our move from Rochester, New York, to Staten Island.

To start off, we'll take a look at the campus as we found it on the first day of classes in September 1918, when Howard Avenue was known as Serpentine Road, and Cunard Hall was Wagner College's main building.

The man responsible for acquiring the campus was Frederic Sutter, pastor of Staten Island's Trinity Evangelical Lutheran Church and an 1894 graduate of Wagner Memorial Lutheran College. Sutter joined the College's board just as it began looking for a new campus where it could grow, away from the crowded confines of downtown Rochester.

The property he secured for the College was the Hotel Bellevue, a summer resort colony established in the 1890s on the former Cunard estate. The 38-acre tract not only had a great view overlooking the Verrazano Narrows, New York harbor, and the open sea — it also had several good, usable buildings, and plenty of space for more.

The original owners of the property were Edward and Mary Cunard, who married in 1849. Edward, then 33, was heir to a Canadian shipping company; Mary, 20, was a native New Yorker. A year after their wedding, they bought property on Staten Island, where they had a three-story, Italianate villa built around 1852. The Cunards called it Westwood — and at Westwood they would live for the rest of their relatively short lives.

Mary died delivering their eighth child in 1866, and Edward passed away just three years later. Mary's mother cared for the Cunard children at Westwood until 1873, when the family moved to England, putting the property up for sale.



THE ORIGINAL CAMPUS In 1918, today's Howard Avenue was called Serpentine Road. The College had only six buildings: The main building, today's Cunard; the dormitory, today's Reynolds House; the president's house, today's Kairos House; the faculty cottages, today's Pape House; and the gatehouse, torn down. Shown here are photos of Pastor Frederic Sutter as a young seminary graduate and with his wife, Emma, on campus.





1918 PANORAMA

The campus started as a home for Edward and Mary Cunard (their house, which they called Westwood, is seen at right). Amzi Lorenzo Barber, shown below, purchased the estate in 1889 and expanded it to serve as a resort known as Bellevue or Belleview (shown with horses and carriages, *below*). The College added the president's house, *below right*, in 1918.

Westwood remained on the market for 16 years until it was finally purchased by Amzi Lorenzo Barber, an Oberlin College graduate and trustee and former Howard University professor who had made his fortune paving the streets of Washington, D.C. Barber used the villa as his summer residence for just four years. From 1893 until Barber's death in 1909, the property was leased out to various parties as a hotel or boarding house, known as the Bellevue Club or the Hotel Belleview (spellings varied).

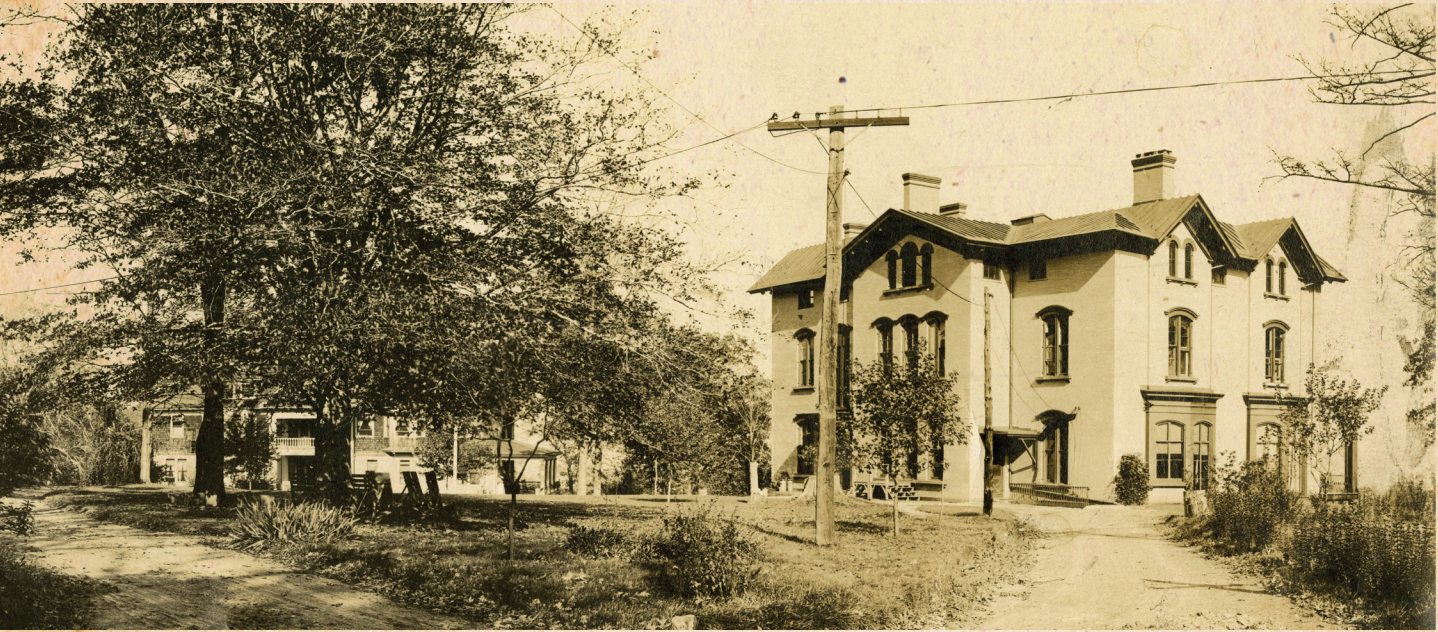


In addition to the former Cunard estate, the Bellevue resort made use of the adjoining Jacob Vanderbilt estate, also owned by Barber's Statena Company, upon which sat Captain Vanderbilt's former home, Clove Hill. Various accounts give different locations for the Vanderbilt house; some say it was located across Campus Road on what later became the Augustinian Academy campus, while others place it on the site where the Sutter Gymnasium was built in 1949.

A fire destroyed Clove Hill in 1904, leading to the construction of a new annex next to the Cunard villa the following year, along with two summer guest cottages. Today, that annex is known as Reynolds House, and those cottages survive as the endpieces of Pape House, the home of our Admissions Office.

Reynolds House was an attractive, architecturally eclectic building. It had the hipped dormers, second-story shingling and first-floor clapboard siding typical of the Shingle style — but its most prominent architectural feature





was a two-tiered, full-height entry porch with two-story columns that was emblematic of the Folk Victorian style. That distinctive feature, along with the second-story shingling, was removed when the building was renovated in 1977.

The two-story guest cottages, very simple in design, were examples of the earliest form of Prairie style architecture, called Prairie Box or American Foursquare, considered one of the few indigenous American styles of architecture. The two cottages were joined together into Pape House by a bridge building constructed in 2002.

When Barber died in 1909, he left the entire Bellevue property, which included a two-story gatehouse, to Oberlin College — and it was from Oberlin that, in September 1917, Frederic Sutter purchased the property on behalf of Wagner College.

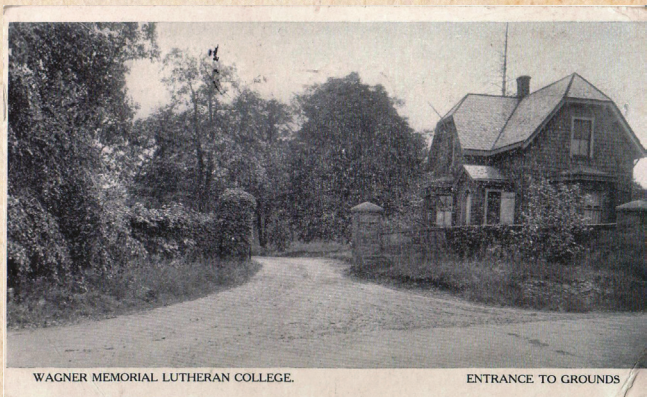
Over the next year, Pastor Sutter was busy overseeing the renovation of the existing campus, readying it for the students and faculty who would make it their home come September 1918. The summer cottages were hastily winterized with an exterior stucco treatment, to serve as faculty housing. The Cunard villa became the College's main building, and the annex (today's Reynolds House) became the dormitory.

An additional cottage was built to house the new college president, Pastor Adolf Holthusen, and his family. Today, the Holthusens' cottage is known as Kairos House, which hosts our Campus Ministry program and all three student publications: the newspaper (*Wagnerian*), literary magazine (*Nimbus*), and yearbook (*Kallista*). ■



POSTCARDS FROM THE PAST

Today's Reynolds House (*top*) originally had a two-tier, columned entry porch and second-story shingling. A gatehouse (*bottom*) was part of the original campus.



Next in our series: a walk through the early years of Wagner College on Staten Island, including a building program that culminated in the dedication of Main Hall in early 1930.

LIFESAVERS

At different times and in different places, *Erik Unhjem '72*, *Katherine Klimacek O'Connor Beiter '62*, and *Susan Moffat '98* faced diverse personal challenges and losses far beyond the ordinary. What all three of their stories show is their shared strength of character not only to survive and to save themselves, but also to turn their own tragedies into a mission to help others.



MAN'S BEST FRIEND

"I usually at least get a kiss. If I'm really lucky, I get a face washing," says Erik Unhjem about volunteering for Pilots N Paws.



NO FEAR OF FLYING

After a devastating
plane crash,
Erik Unhjem
is back in the air

On a crisp, sunny fall morning at the Orange County Airport, just west of the Hudson River Valley, Erik Unhjem '72 greets me with a firm handshake. Tall and ruggedly handsome, Unhjem (pronounced "un-yem") is a practical man who wastes no words. His airplane, a Socata TB9 Tampico, is on the tarmac, ready to taxi out to the runway. We have a mission to fly.

Unhjem explains the aircraft to me: how to climb in under the gullwing doors, how to buckle up and use the headset. A large gray animal crate fills up most of the back seat. We are undertaking today's flight to transport a dog, which was rescued from a kill shelter, from Long Island to the Boston area. Unhjem volunteers for the nonprofit organization Pilots N Paws, which connects people who save pets with pilots who transport the animals to adoptive families.

"It's a great excuse to fly places I might never go to otherwise," says Unhjem, a dog-lover who still thinks every day about his pup who died years ago. "I usually at least get a kiss. If I'm really lucky, I get a face washing."

Unhjem is a man who has learned, through the bitterest of experience, not to take for granted that he can feel a dog's tongue lovingly plaster his skin with warm slobber. Just a little over three years ago, two-thirds of his body was on fire. He was in an airplane almost exactly like the one he is flying today, when it lost power and fell from the sky, skipping over the roof of a house, hitting a tree, crashing into a Dumpster, and bursting into flame.

In that same crash, Unhjem lost his college sweetheart and loving wife of 30 years, Jane Waleski Unhjem '74.

The Unhjemms were in that Socata TB10 Tobago, on August 19, 2012, at Brookhaven airport in Suffolk County, Long Island, for a pre-purchase test flight with the plane's owner. Flying was a lifelong dream for Unhjem. After many interruptions by what he calls "Life with a capital L," he had earned his pilot's license in 2005. He loved the Socata's solid handling, well-designed interior, and the view through the almost wrap-around windows afforded by the gullwing doors. It was a real sky-lover's bird.

He flew with the local airplane club and the Civil Air Patrol, but he chafed against the restrictions of using borrowed aircraft. He longed to fly where he wanted, when he wanted — to take overnight trips, to volunteer with Pilots N Paws, to experience all of the joy and freedom of escaping Earth's gravity.

(Unhjem's email footer has a quote from World War II pilot Antoine de Saint-Exupéry: "I fly because it frees my mind from the tyranny of petty things." "It's an eloquent way of saying, 'The bullshit stays on the ground,'" says Unhjem.)

But the owner of that Socata TB10 Tobago had not properly maintained the aircraft — and he hid its condition from the Unhjemms. The aircraft rose with difficulty from the runway, and almost immediately descended again because, as it turns out, the carburetor mixture control arm was broken. The fuel mixture was not rich enough to power the airplane's ascent, and it spiraled out of control.

It crashed on a residential street of Shirley, New York, miraculously injuring no one on the ground. Neighbors rushed out to help and immediately phoned 911. Unhjem remembers rolling on the ground to extinguish the flames on his body, then returning to the plane to pull Jane out. Within minutes, a medical helicopter transported first Jane, and then him, to Stony Brook Medical Center.

Unhjem harbors no bitterness against the owner who caused him such grief and loss — he died in the crash as well. Instead, Unhjem put all of the considerable strength of his will toward recovering, first physically, then emotionally, and returning to his life, his work, his flying.

Although the Stony Brook doctors predicted that he would be spending from three to nine months in the hospital — if he survived at all — Unhjem got out after 27 days. "I turned all my attention to getting better. I did everything the doctors told me to do and more," he says. The pain was excruciating, but he gritted his teeth and started moving again.

Thanks to help from his sister-in-law, Grete, he was able to return home from the hospital, instead of going to

a rehabilitation center. Wrapped head to toe in bandages, struggling into compression stockings, dealing with scars up to an inch thick, he continued the agonizing process of recovery from such severe burns. And he grieved, deeply, the loss of Jane.

College friends remember her sparkling charm — and the effect she had on Unhjem. "When Jane came into his life, all of us who knew him saw the transformation," says Jane Primerano '72. "He became more gentle in a way, more approachable. She was a calming and a steadying influence on him. We all knew they were in it for the long haul."

An education major, Jane Unhjem became a devoted educator, beloved by students, parents, and school personnel. At the end of her life, she was the assistant superintendent

for curriculum and development for the Goshen School District. A music minor, she was an advocate for music and arts education, and Unhjem established an annual college scholarship for high school seniors active in music programs in her memory. They have awarded three \$1,000 scholarships so far.

But while he mourned and suffered, Unhjem also says he became aware of the gift of life and the many miracles he had experienced in surviving the crash. He thought of the book *Unbroken*, which he had listened to as an audiobook while biking shortly before the crash, and its hero, Louis Zamperini, a World War II pilot who crashed over the Pacific and survived 47 days on the open ocean and two and a half years as a Japanese

POW. Awakening each day, Unhjem marveled at the sound of birdsong and the feeling of crisp fall air on his delicate skin.

"I was resolved," he says, "that I was going to pick up the pieces of my life and move forward. As they say, the rest is history. I can never forget what I've been through, but I don't let it define me. People are amazed that I wanted to go in a small airplane again. It's just what I wanted to do."

The promise of flying again never left his mind. As fast as he could, he got off the heavy painkillers. "I knew drugs like Oxycodone were not friendly to the FAA," he said. He surrendered his pilot's medical certificate at the FAA's request. But after a "protracted dialogue with the FAA's Medical Certification Branch," it was returned to him. About eight months after the crash, he started flying again.

For his first flight, he scheduled a plane with the flying club, accompanied by an instructor. "I admit to having a little trepidation when doing the pre-flight check, but as soon as the wheels left the ground, I was fine." After making a steep 45-degree turn, which requires a pilot to skillfully maintain altitude, and feeling the bump of his own wake, he said, "I was so pleased." He completed three takeoffs and landings.

"I was resolved to pick up the pieces of my life and move forward. As they say, the rest is history."

“The instructor said, ‘I’d fly with you. You’re good to go.’
At that point, I resumed my quest to find and buy a plane.”

Unhjem bought his Tampico N167GT in November 2014. He also signed himself up for eHarmony, bought some concert tickets, and started dating. In October 2015, he married Nina, a fellow cycling and flying enthusiast.

At this point in his recovery, the trauma he endured is not immediately evident. His face looks smooth — in fact, he got a flash burn that gave him a “free face lift in effect,” he says. But, sitting next to him in the narrow confines of the aircraft, I can see that on his wrists, hands, and neck, whorls and ridges of thick pink scars remain. He tells me that all over his body, the skin is a “crazy patchwork of different coloration” — but that’s nothing compared to how thick the scars used to be, “like wearing a suit of armor.” He is still undergoing treatment with a dermatologist and a massage therapist to loosen the scar tissue and regain his skin’s flexibility.

Before takeoff, Unhjem goes through a pre-flight checklist with meticulous precision. The ascent seems effortless, and he asks air traffic control for “following” — i.e. to notify him of surrounding traffic. “It’s kind of like having an angel on your shoulder looking out for you,” he says.

The magnificent scenery of the Hudson River Valley unfurls beneath us, with New York City a tiny landmark in the distance and the Long Island Sound a silver stripe at the horizon.

While I’m gawking at the views, Unhjem is all safety consciousness. We’re flying at 5,500 feet, Unhjem tells me, a little higher than he might normally fly, because we’ll be crossing the Long Island Sound. This altitude would give him enough room to make it back to land if the engine died.

At the same time, he’s clearly enjoying himself. The radio crackles, alerting him to another plane located at “one o’clock.” The other aircraft looks like a faraway black speck. “All that talk in the media about crowded skies,” Unhjem sniffs. “It’s not crowded at all.” He tells me about a “fun trip” he took with Nina. They flew out to Montauk for a seafood dinner, then back at low altitude along the south coast of Long Island and past the New York City skyline. “It was fabulous,” he says.

As we start the descent to Long Island, Unhjem points out Islip airport to our right. But we are headed to a different nearby airport. We are headed to Brookhaven.

It’s Unhjem’s first time back since that terrible day three years and two months ago. But to look at him and see him operate his aircraft, you would never know. After a picture-perfect landing, I applaud.

At the airport, while we wait at the terminal for the dog, I ask Unhjem how he feels about returning to this place. At first he denies feeling anything. But then he adds, “I felt a little bit of trepidation. But I’ve gotten over it. That’s what learning, living, and loving do.”

Then the dog arrives. Unhjem beams when he gets his face washing. And we’re off to Boston to complete the mission, another life rescued.



THE BIRD'S-EYE VIEW

“I fly because it frees my mind from the tyranny of petty things,” said World War II pilot Antoine de Saint-Exupéry — a favorite quote of Unhjem’s.

MAKING ALL THINGS BEAUTIFUL

Katherine Beiter grows faith, hope, and love amidst life's most difficult passages

When Katherine Klimacek O'Connor Beiter '62 moved into a new senior housing complex in Avon, New York, a few years ago, her yard was a plain concrete slab. Now, it is a beautiful patio filled with flowers, where she listens to birds and feasts her eyes on the green grass and blue sky.

Just as she transformed her barren yard into a blooming oasis, in her hospice work Beiter has cultivated hope amidst the hard, cold realities of loss and grief — realities she knows all too well on a very personal level.

Beiter has always been an idealistic person who wanted to serve others. She came to Wagner with her twin sister, Kathleen, to study nursing at a Lutheran college, because she wanted to serve in Christian medical missions.

At the end of her sophomore year, a senior named Brian O'Connor invited her to the prom after meeting her at a mixer between his fraternity, Phi Sigma Kappa, and her sorority, Alpha Omega Pi. "He gave me a nosegay of violets instead of a proper corsage, and that won my heart," she remembers.

They started dating, and he swept her off her feet. Even when she transferred to Columbia and he went to graduate school at Indiana University, their romance grew. After he finished his master's, they married; and after she finished her bachelor's in nursing, they moved to Beaver Falls, Pennsylvania,

where Brian worked at Geneva College and Katherine worked as a public health nurse. They had two children, David and Ruth Ann. Just a few years later, in 1969, Brian finished his Ph.D. and was named dean of admissions at Marshall University in Huntington, West Virginia. They were a happy, stable young family with a bright future.

On November 14, 1970, Katherine was at home in Huntington, awaiting Brian's return from a trip to East Carolina University with the Marshall football team. Most of the team and the coaches, plus administrators and local boosters, had traveled together on a chartered jet.

Just short of the Huntington airport, that jet crashed into a hillside.

All 75 people aboard died. The crash is still known as the worst sports-related tragedy in U.S. history.

"Our lives were torn apart," Katherine says. As she wrote years later in an article for *Light and Life* magazine, "No one survived the fiery plane crash, but I know three persons who survived the months of grief, despair, and emptiness, then the years of not having a husband or a father. Those three people are my son, David; my daughter, Ruth Ann; and myself, Brian's widow."

After Brian's death, Katherine fell into a depression that persisted for many months. She started to look for help through her faith and her friends. After about 18 months, she and the children moved to Utica, New York, the area where she grew up and where her parents still lived. "It was like God took a hold of our lives and moved us, figuratively and literally," she says.

As she discovered a deeper connection to her faith, she began to heal from the depression. She joined a church in

Utica and also became involved in a Christian women's club, which gave her opportunities to talk about her experiences of loss and healing.

"It helped me to grow spiritually in my walk with the Lord and to share my walk," she says. "Without the club, I would never have thought to talk about these personal things and how Jesus rescued me from the ashes of grief." Invitations came to speak to other Christian groups, and she traveled all

over New York, Ohio, Pennsylvania, and West Virginia, telling her story.

In addition, she resumed her profession as a nurse with the visiting nurses association in Utica. She showed a bent toward working with patients and their families who were facing the dying process. "Others felt uncomfortable, but I felt OK," she recalls. "I felt challenged about being able to be in that position.

"Because of what I had gone through and the comfort I received in my terrible despair, God enabled me to provide comfort to others in that situation," she adds.

*"I have learned
beautiful
lessons from
hurting hearts."*

At the same time, she was frustrated with these patients' situations. She saw symptoms out of control, unmanaged pain, and families in grief and chaos. They needed "a team of people who could handle all this," she says. She then learned about Utica Hospice and joined their all-volunteer team, which included a doctor, nurse, social worker, and chaplain.

When a scholarship opportunity arose for her to study for a master's degree in gerontology and community health at Syracuse University, she took it so that she could become qualified to lead a certified hospice program. In 1980, she became the nurse coordinator of Hospice Buffalo. In that role, she made the initial visit to patients and their families to assess their needs and explain how hospice worked. "I loved it," she says. "It was a privilege."

Thirteen years after losing Brian, Katherine remarried and moved to Chautauqua County, New York, where she worked with an all-volunteer hospice referral service and transformed it into a full, certified hospice program. She also served as a consultant on preventing elder abuse, and she taught courses on death and dying to student nurses.

In 1992, she released the first edition of her book, *Comfort in Dying: Reflections of a Hospice Nurse* (available through Amazon). "Over the years of nursing dying patients and caring for their family members, I have learned beautiful lessons from hurting hearts," she writes in the preface. "They have taught me much about the pain and the joys of the experience of dying."

The book also includes stories about her own experiences of loss and grief in her family: Not only Brian's death and its effect on her and her children, but also her father's sudden death of a heart attack, and the passing of her twin sister, Kathleen, from cancer at age 42.

When her second husband, George Beiter, died in 1997, they were both as prepared as two people can be. George had been a volunteer for the hospice program, but in the end he died at the hospital, with Katherine at his side.

Now, at age 75, Katherine Beiter is still busy learning, reading, writing, and helping others. She shares her modest home with her beloved six-year-old Maltese named Chloe. Her children and grandchildren are a big part of her life. Her kitchen table is covered with her books and writing projects. "Never tire of your quest for insight," proclaims a plaque overlooking this scene. "I wish I had more time in my life, because I have books I would like to spend more time studying," she says.

For the recent 45th anniversary of the Marshall tragedy, she assembled a chapbook of writings entitled *He Makes All Things Beautiful: Reflections of a Marshall Football Plane Crash Survivor*. (If you would like a copy, contact Beiter at kbeiter2@rochester.rr.com.)

"I believe with all my heart and soul that one can move on [from grief] with good, professional support and with God in their lives," she says. "Those two things are very important.

"I would say that grief never ends, but it changes," she adds. "It's a passage. Sometimes it takes years, but you can move from one spot to another."

COLLEGE SWEETHEARTS

Katherine Klimacek and Brian O'Connor's romance began at Wagner College. His death in the 1970 Marshall football plane crash sent her on a new path in life.



STEP BY STEP

Janne Kouri is relearning to walk through locomotor training, which helps the spinal cord regain function. He and Moffat opened a nonprofit gym, NextStep Fitness, in Los Angeles (soon coming to Stony Brook, New York, as well) to benefit all people with mobility problems.



‘NOT AVERAGE PEOPLE’

Susan Moffat and Janne Kouri push for new possibilities for people living with disabilities

The instant when everything changed happened on a sunny Saturday in August 2006, on a beach near Los Angeles. Susan Moffat '98 was hanging out there while her then-boyfriend (now-husband), Janne Kouri, played volleyball.

It was a typical day of relaxation for the two top-notch college athletes — Moffat was one of the highest scorers in Seahawk women's basketball history, and Kouri was a star defensive tackle for Georgetown football. Both were high achievers academically and professionally as well; an accounting major, Moffat worked for J.P. Morgan Private Bank, while Kouri was a business developer for a mobile gaming firm. This power couple had all the promise and potential of the world at their feet, and they loved each other deeply.

To cool off after the game, Kouri dove into the waves. Nobody paid attention; it was a completely everyday action. But underwater, Kouri was in huge trouble. He had hit a hidden sandbar head first, breaking his neck, and was instantly paralyzed. A passing medic happened to see him and saved him from drowning. Kouri spent the next two months in intensive care, fighting for his life.

The bad news was immediate. “He will never walk again,” one of the emergency room doctors told Moffat.

“I feel that his injury happened to teach me something.”

Yet, 10 years later, Kouri and Moffat are showing the world that what most doctors thought was impossible is not. At the same time, they are also helping other people who have suffered debilitating diseases or injuries to have the healthiest and most empowered life possible.

Once Kouri had survived the initial crisis, Moffat stood before some huge decisions: What would be the future of their relationship? And, how would they face the consequences of his injury?

“When he got hurt, I thought about what that meant for my life, but I also thought about why I fell in love with him in the first place.” She laughs as she adds, “Never once did ‘because he could walk’ come up.

“I fell in love with him for his heart and his mind.”

Always “an upbeat, positive person,” Kouri approached his new life with the same attitude. “He wasn’t going to allow the stress or the grief he was feeling for what he had lost to seep into his life in a deeper way,” Moffat says. “He made it easier to stay with him and to travel this journey with him.”

Moffat went to work on educating herself about neuroscience and Kouri’s rehabilitation options — and she wasn’t happy with most of them. Doctors kept telling her that statistics showed recovery was out of the question. But Moffat and Kouri didn’t want to just learn to live with paralysis. They wanted him to go to a place where “scientists were going to push him.”

“I wrote a letter to Janne and I said, ‘You know, statistics are averages.’ When I think back on it, it sounds kind of cocky, but it’s what drove us and allowed us to push through: We’re not average people. We weren’t average people to begin with, and no matter what happened, I wasn’t going to allow us to be average people going forward. And he was going to need to put in a lot more than average work to get any kind of recovery.”

Moffat eventually found Dr. Susan J. Harkema and the Frazier Rehab Institute in Louisville, Kentucky, which offers a therapy to retrain damaged nervous systems. For the first time, Moffat says, she found a doctor who expressed hope. She quit her job and moved with Kouri to Louisville for Harkema’s “locomotor training.” After three months, Kouri reached his first milestone: wiggling his toe.

When it was time to return home, they wanted Kouri to continue this training, but there was no such opportunity anywhere nearby.

So what next? Moffat and Kouri decided to bring locomotor training to Los Angeles. More than that, they decided to create a community resource that would help all people with mobility impairments to have the best physical fitness possible. With the help of friends and family (including Moffat’s Wagner connections), they raised money and founded

NextStep Fitness, a nonprofit gym where disabled people can receive locomotor training or just work out, with the help of trained staff. As a part of the Christopher and Dana Reeve Foundation’s NeuroRecovery Network, NextStep Fitness also provides data for researchers.

“They took Janne’s spinal cord injury, which could have stopped both them in their tracks completely, and they turned it around and they have done something so remarkably creative and gutsy,” said Susan Howley, the Reeve Foundation’s executive vice president for research, in an interview with *Good Morning America*.

After three years of locomotor training, Kouri took his first steps. Now, 10 years later, he continues to take more and more steps forward, and so does NextStep Fitness. Kouri runs the organization, and Moffat — who now works for Deutsche Bank in Los Angeles — has stepped down from the board but remains highly involved.

In the entire United States, there are only six fitness facilities like NextStep. But soon, there will be one more, in the New York metro area. NextStep has signed an agreement with Stony Brook University to build a fitness center next to the university’s rehabilitation research lab. NextStep is raising \$2 million to build and equip the center, while Stony Brook will provide operating and staffing costs. They hope to break ground in early 2017.

Despite these triumphs, Moffat emphasizes that they are traveling a tough road, both in their own lives and in their work.

“Paralysis is one of the most underfunded disabilities in the country,” says Moffat. “As a society, we tend to overlook people with disabilities, because they slow us down in our daily lives. And for a society that lives a very fast-paced lifestyle, people with disabilities sometimes get viewed as being in the way.”

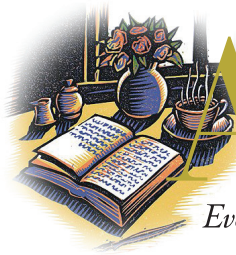
Moffat says she has learned a tremendous amount through her marriage and work with Kouri and the disability community.

“I don’t know if it’s guilt, but I feel that his injury happened to teach me something. I learned a lot more patience, which I still lack a lot of. But it definitely taught me patience, and to think outside myself.” ■



Learn more about Moffat and Kouri’s work at nextstepfitness.org.





AlumniLink

Events, opportunities, and celebrations for the Wagner family, both near and far

Bigger and Better Than Ever

Second annual combined Homecoming and Fall Festival draws record crowd

HELD THE WEEKEND OF SEPTEMBER 25–27, the weather was spectacular for the second annual combined Homecoming and Fall Festival including alumni, students, and families — more than 1,150 in attendance!

Food trucks around the Oval on Saturday, September 26, brought out eager eaters galore. The lines were reminiscent of Manhattan tourist attractions à la Magnolia Bakery of *Sex and the City* fame, the food trucks lived up to Manhattan quality, and the beer garden offered a welcome respite.

The crowd rocked out to Wagner alumni band Sons of Origin, and the kids were entertained with many different activities. Another new feature recalled Homecoming parades

of yesteryear, as the Seahawk Marching Band led a parade featuring the royal court and student organizations across the Oval and to the stadium for game time.

Other highlights included reunions of Wagner's Bregenz study abroad program alumni and of Citizen Alum participants, both held on Friday. The weekend held many opportunities for alumni and parents to engage with faculty, staff, and administrators and gain insight into what makes Wagner tick, from football to theater to internships to learning communities.

Mark your calendars for Homecoming 2016, on October 1.



1.



2.



3.



4.

1. The Oval filled with Homecoming pre-game activity. 2. The Homecoming royal court paraded across the Oval, with band and cheerleaders. 3. Students enjoy hanging out with the Seahawk. 4. President Guarasci welcomes alumni like Drew Babitts '03 M'06 and his wife, Erin.

Upcoming Events

MARCH

Wagner College Theatre: *Iolanthe*

February 24–March 6, Main Stage

In this rarely staged satiric musical, *Iolanthe*; or, *The Peer and the Peri*, Gilbert and Sullivan imagined: What might happen if the British Parliament were overtaken by a band of fairies? Director and WCT professor Rusty Curcio has brilliantly adapted the show to the U.S. Congress in 1920s Washington, D.C.

Wagner College Theatre: *New York Lands*

March 1–6, Stage One

Renowned theater artist Carlos García Estévez collaborates with Wagner students to create *New York Lands*, a devised play in which the actors are the authors of their own show. A world premier production.

Choir Tour

March 3–9

The Wagner College Choir performs throughout Florida: March 3, 7 p.m., Prince of Peace Lutheran Church, Largo; March 4, 7 p.m., Hope Lutheran Church, The Villages; March 5, 7 p.m., Redeemer Lutheran Church, Bradenton; March 6, 3 p.m., Shepherd of the Glades Lutheran Church, Naples; March 7, 7 p.m., St. Andrew Lutheran Church, Port St. Lucie; March 8, 7 p.m., St. Andrew's Episcopal Church, Ft. Pierce; March 9, 7 p.m., Redeemer Lutheran Church, Winter Park.

APRIL

Songfest

April 2, Spiro Sports Center

See Wagner's Greeks and other clubs in a night of music, dance, and spirit as they perform "A Tribute to..." to win the title of Songfest King or Queen.

The 2016 Presidential Economic Summit

April 11, 7 p.m., Spiro Hall, Room 2

Kurt Landgraf '68 H'08, retired president and CEO of the Educational Testing Service and board member of Fortune 500 companies, will speak on corporate boards and the global economy.

Wagner College Theatre: *A Chorus Line*

April 13–24, Main Stage

The Tony Award and Pulitzer Prize-winning musical *A Chorus Line* is directed by Tony winner Michele Pawk and choreographed by Maggie Marino '05.

Wagner College Theatre: *The Dance Project 2016*

April 19–24, Stage One

Inspired by the hit TV show *So You Think You Can Dance?*, WCT dancers compete in pieces by student and guest choreographers to be named Wagner's favorite dancer, based on votes from the audience and a panel of guest judges.

Treble Concert Choir Spring Concert

April 24, 4 p.m., Trinity Lutheran Church, Staten Island

Guitar Ensemble and Jazz Ensemble: Spring Concert

April 28, 8 p.m.,
Performance Center, Campus Hall

MAY

College Choir: A Pocket Full O' Songs

May 1, 4 p.m., Trinity Lutheran Church, Staten Island

Vocal Jazz by Stretto / Espresso

May 3, 8 p.m., Performance Center, Campus Hall

Concert Band Spring Concert

May 7, 3 p.m., Main Hall

Baccalaureate

May 19, 4 p.m., Sutter Oval

Commencement

May 20, 10 a.m., Sutter Oval

Check wagner.edu for our livestream of commencement featuring *Humans of New York* creator Brandon Stanton as well as Nadia Lopez '99.

HIGHLIGHTS



New York City Career Conversations

Student–Alumni
Networking Event

March 31, 5:30–8:30 p.m.

We want to connect alumni and parents with today's Wagner students for conversations about all things related to careers – pursuing an education, finding the right path, and networking. Whatever your career field may be, please volunteer your time to speak with our juniors and seniors. The event will take place at the Union League Club at 38 East 37th Street in Manhattan. Email alumni@wagner.edu for more information and registration.



Reunion Weekend

Reconnect • Reminisce
• Remember

June 3–5

Join us to reconnect with old friends, reminisce about your college days, and remember all that Wagner College means to you. Highlights include a beer blast and pizza party on Friday night, anniversary class lunches and Wagner-Fest on the Oval, a Gatsby-style cocktail reception and dinner dance, and the alumni awards luncheon on Sunday. Visit wagner.edu/reunion for more information and registration.

History Makers: How Wagner College helped Robert Loggia '51 find his role in film history



Early in December 2015, one of Wagner College's best-known alums, actor Robert J. Loggia '51, died in Los Angeles.

The son of Sicilian immigrants, he was born Salvatore Loggia on Staten Island on January 3, 1930. Somewhere along the way, Salvatore became Robert, a freshman on the varsity football team at New Dorp High School. Football was Loggia's ticket to a college education, winning him a scholarship to Wagner College in 1947.

A Dean's List student, Bob Loggia was involved in everything at Wagner: football, basketball, the *Wagnerian*, Alpha Sigma Phi, all while working on the College's maintenance crew. Then, during the spring of his second year, Loggia was recruited for his first Main Stage role, playing the male lead in an adaptation of Shakespeare's *The Taming of the Shrew*. Before that, not only had he never performed in a play – he'd never even seen one.

"Being a bit macho then, I wasn't sure about going on stage," Loggia recalled in a 1988 Wagner Magazine interview. "Once I got into the role, I loved it. ... I didn't actually decide at that time to make a career of acting, but I discovered how much at ease I felt playing a role."

Loggia's first stage performance, at Wagner, led to his first movie performance – also at Wagner. A promotional film company was shooting a 21-minute recruitment movie, *Beautiful Upon a Hill*. The producers saw Loggia in *Shrew* and cast him in the lead role of Bob Allen, a student whose big challenge was juggling his many collegiate activities.

That fall, Loggia transferred to the University of Missouri, where he completed a journalism degree before being drafted into the Army. He served during the Korean War as a reporter for the Armed Forces Radio and Television Service in the Caribbean.


When Loggia returned to New York in 1953, a former schoolmate turned theatrical agent helped him land his first stage role, which led to an audition for Stella Adler's Theatre Studio, followed by acceptance to Lee Strasberg's Actor's Studio. From that point, Loggia's career was secured.

Robert Loggia worked as a character actor. His rugged good looks and gravelly voice often landed him "tough guy" roles on both sides of the law: a drug lord in *Scarface*, a wannabe mobster in *The Sopranos*, a private detective in *Jagged Edge* (winning him an Oscar nomination), a special agent in *Mancuso, FBI* (an Emmy-nominated performance). But he was also sufficiently versatile to play the softhearted retail executive who danced on a huge piano keyboard at FAO Schwarz with Tom Hanks in *Big*. By the end of his career, Loggia had 220 television and motion picture roles to his credit, plus occasional stage appearances.

Loggia's last visit to Grymes Hill was in 2007, when he reunited with several old football buddies and staged an impromptu Q&A for theater students at Stage One. (Our photo shows him watching them perform.)

That same year, the adult animated sitcom *Family Guy* included Robert Loggia in one of its famous cutaway sketches. Loggia stands at an airport ticket counter, where an agent asks him to spell his name. "Certainly," he replies. "Robert Loggia. 'R,' as in 'Robert Loggia.' 'O,' as in, 'Oh my God, it's Robert Loggia.' 'B,' as in, 'By God! It's Robert Loggia.'" And so forth.

The fact that Loggia was never known for his ego is a big part of what makes this gag so funny. In Seahawk heaven, however, he'll certainly never need to spell his name.

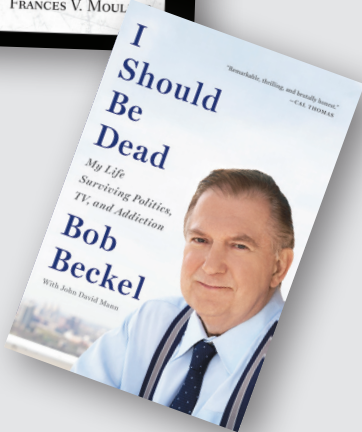
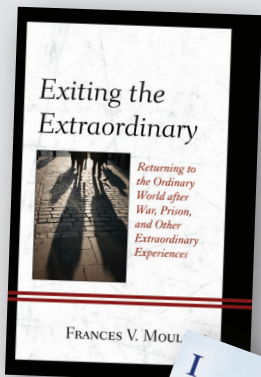
 Visit wagner.edu/wagnermagazine to see Loggia in *Beautiful Upon a Hill* and *Family Guy*.



FLASHBACK

Songfest, 1957

Sigma Delta Phi performs at Songfest on May 11, 1957. Today's Songfest looks a little different – not many performers in suits and bow ties – but it's still approached with equal intensity. If you can't come in person on April 2, check Wagner's Facebook and Instagram for photos and video.



New & Noteworthy

Francis V. Moulder '65 *Exiting the Extraordinary: Returning to the Ordinary World from War, Prison, and Other Extraordinary Experiences* (Lexington Books, 2015)

One of the first “extraordinary experiences” sociologist Frances Moulder learned about was that of her Wagner sociology professor, the late Frederick Henssler, who had participated in a leftist political movement in 1930s Germany before fleeing the Nazi regime. Since then, Moulder has analyzed many case studies, both historical and contemporary, of people who were imprisoned or enslaved, served in wars, survived natural disasters, participated in social movements or unusual religious groups, and more. The book describes the commonalities among extraordinary experiences and the challenges that people face upon returning to the ordinary world.

Bob Beckel '70 *I Should Be Dead: My Life Surviving Politics, TV, and Addiction* (Hachette Books, 2015)

TV personality Bob Beckel presents a redemptive memoir about his struggle with alcohol and drugs while pursuing a successful career in politics and diplomacy, and his unlikely journey to finding faith and sobriety. Beckel's political career began when, as a Wagner student, he worked for Robert F. Kennedy's 1968 presidential campaign. He was a deputy assistant secretary of state in the Carter administration and campaign manager for Walter Mondale's 1984 presidential campaign. He went on to be an analyst for Fox News and CNN.



ClassNotes

Updates from old friends across the generations

1946

Gloria Gilmour Lindsey wrote to us last summer: "I am bordering on birthday number 89 and doing just fine! My walk may be slower, but I get there just the same. Haven't had a cold or any other illness in more than 20 years. I'm very grateful for that. I am leading a quiet life and enjoying it, my best wishes to all!"

1949

Bill Wagner '49 M'56 celebrated his 91st birthday this past year. He participates in senior activities with his wife, Beverly.

1954

Jacques Jacobsen Jr. '54 M'63 lives in Daytona Beach Shores, Fla., with

his wife of 56 years and his son. Two of his three daughters and one of his grandchildren live nearby. **Dorothy Rausch Randall** is very active as a fundraiser for the OMI International Arts Center in Ghent, N.Y. She travels to Manhattan on the ferry from Hoboken almost every day. Her six grandchildren ("all taller than I," she adds) are a source of great joy.

1957

Richard Martinsen wrote to us with several updates about his life. He retired from Texaco in 1994; his spouse, **Mary Ann Matanic '56**, died of cancer in 2003. He lives in Fort Myers, Fla., and has three children and four grandchildren. **Peter Suchman** is a retired attorney and former deputy

assistant secretary of the U.S. Treasury Department. He recently took an extensive trip to Italy to celebrate his 80th birthday and 50th anniversary with his wife, Diane Rosenthal Suchman. **Dan Malloy** and his wife of 56 years, Eleanor, live on the King and Bear Golf Course in St. Augustine, Fla. He celebrated his 80th birthday in May 2015 and keeps quite busy and fit — golfing, traveling, serving on boards, and running his reinsurance consulting practice. Last year, he won first place in the 80+ category in a 5K charity run for breast cancer research. Dan is the president of the National Consumers Advantage Association and chairman of the National Senior Advantage Association.



1963

Roger '63 and Irene Goetz '64 Nelson (above) celebrated their 50th wedding anniversary on April 10, 2015. **Zuzana Plesa** is working as a counselor for a special operations unit at Duke Airfield, which is primarily used by the Air Force Reserves, and is part of Eglin Air Force Base in Florida. "Working with military members and their families is rewarding," she writes. **Fred C. Lunenburg, Ph.D.**, is the Jimmy N. Merchant Professor of Educational Administration

Keep in Touch!

Email: alumni@wagner.edu

Web: wagner.edu/alumni

Mail: Alumni Office, Reynolds House, Wagner College, One Campus Road, Staten Island, NY 10301

Deadlines: This issue reflects news received by December 9, 2015. The submission deadline for the Fall 2016 issue is August 1.

Content: Wagner welcomes your news and updates, and we will happily share

them with the Wagner family. We ask that you send us announcements of weddings, births, and graduations after the fact.

Photos: We accept photos of Wagner groups at weddings and other special events. With the photo, send the names and class years of all alumni pictured; birth date, parents' names, and class years with photos of children; and dates and locations of all events.

Photo Quality: Digital and print photos must be clear and of good quality. Prints should be on glossy paper with no surface texture; they will be returned at your request (please attach your address to the photo). Digital photos must be jpegs of at least 250 pixels per inch; low-resolution photos converted to a higher resolution are not acceptable.

at Sam Houston State University in Huntsville, Tex. He has authored or co-authored 41 books and more than 200 journal articles in education, such as the recent book *Creating a Culture for High-Performing Schools* (Rowman & Littlefield, 2008, 2012, 2016). He is married to Melody, who is a research fellow and Ph.D. candidate in educational administration and policy studies at Texas A&M University, and they have four children: McNeil, Nicole, Brianna, and Alexis.

1964

Robert Hauptman retired in 2005, but is busier than ever. He writes, edits, and climbs mountains. He has stood on the summit of 45 of the 50 state high points. His 14th book, which deals with controversies, hoaxes, and disasters in mountain sports, will be published soon. He also has a 14-year-old daughter who likes to go to rock concerts. **Richard Madonia** retired 10 years ago, after teaching social studies for 35 years. He lives on 16 acres in Spencertown, N.Y., with his wife, two dogs, a cat, and an acre pond. "I am using all my skills as a social studies teacher to help my little God's acre become a better place for tomorrow," he writes. "In all matters I have thus far succeeded very well." He is a member of the Town Planning Board and the Town Historical

Society, and he is on a long-term crusade to lower the speed limit in his town to 30 MPH. He also spends many hours producing a yearly calendar of his town's historical homes. In addition, he plays Santa at the town's tree-lighting ceremony each year, and is responsible for more activities occurring on the Town Green each year. "Life is good, and staying active keeps me young and well. It is so sad to see so many of my old school buddies pass on to a higher plane. Keep active and maintain a healthy life!" The films of **Gerard Malanga** were featured at the Sla307 art space in Manhattan last November. This first showing of his movies in New York in 45 years included several early short films and one newly edited film. He also gave a reading of his poetry at the show's opening, on November 12, 2015. A poet, photographer, and filmmaker, Gerard was a protégé of Wagner College English professor Willard Maas and his wife, Marie Menken, who were also poets and filmmakers (and who inspired the main characters in Edward Albee's *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?*). Gerard was also Andy Warhol's assistant during the 1960s.

1965

Frances V. Moulder published a new book at the end of 2015, *Exiting the Extraordinary: Returning to*

the Ordinary World from War, Prison, and Other Extraordinary Experiences (Lexington Books). Read more about it on page 33. Frances retired as associate professor from Three Rivers Community College in Connecticut, but is still a lecturer in urban and community studies and sociology at the University of Connecticut in Torrington. She earned her Ph.D. in sociology from Columbia University. Besides college teaching, she also worked for a number of years as a community educator and organizer in low-income communities.

1966

Louis Anarumo and his wife, Rosemary, celebrated their 50th wedding anniversary on August 22, 2015. They are the proud parents of four children, and proud grandparents of eight grandchildren. Louis taught for many years in public schools on Staten Island, finally serving as principal of PS 53 in Great Kills, retiring in 2002. Rosemary served many years as a beloved faculty secretary at Wagner College, retiring in 2014. They still live in Staten Island, and enjoy playing golf, traveling, and spending time with family. **Lois Sgrosso Was** and **Frenchy Was** '65 celebrated their 50th wedding anniversary on August 14, 2015, at a party held at the River Palm Terrace, attended

by numerous friends and family. The couple resides in Franklin Lakes, N.J., where Frenchy remains active in the family real estate consulting business. Lois was an elementary school teacher until her retirement in 2000. The couple are the proud parents of two sons, Jeffrey and Darren, and have been blessed with two grandchildren, Ava and Alec.

1967

Ted and Eileen Lasher DuLany both retired from the Medical University of South Carolina in 2015. Ted worked in outreach and client services, and Eileen in diagnostic microbiology. They thank Wagner College for giving them the education that enabled them to pursue these careers. They live in Mt. Pleasant, near Charleston, S.C. **Russ Johnson** '67 M'72 has published the first book in a planned mystery novel series. *Widow-Taker* is set in New York City and features the NYPD detective Pete Nazareth. "*Widow-Taker* is the first in a series of Detective Pete Nazareth novels, each a study of the inner workings of the criminal mind and the diverse talents of the NYPD," Russ says. It is available through Amazon.com. Russ also won the USA Taekwondo national championship for his age group for the second time and will be aiming for a three-peat in 2016. **Peggy Nuspliger** retired in 2000, after 32

years of teaching music. She directs the Adirondack Community Chorus, which she co-founded in 1976.

The chorus gives three major concerts per year as well as other performances for local organizations. She lives in Lyons Falls, N.Y.

Daniel Remine lives just down the hill from Wagner. He and his wife, Deborah, retired from careers in social service management. Daniel likes to spend his time at art galleries, Deborah enjoys gardening, and they both love classical concerts and traveling abroad.

1968

Donald W. Knauer wrote to us last summer with several updates about his life. A member of Actors Equity and a Doctor of Chiropractic Medicine, he retired at age 42 after teaching (he received tenure from the NYC Board of Education) and then practicing chiropractic medicine. For five years, he fully funded a student at the NJIT School of Architecture. He lived for 21 years on the west side of Manhattan and also owned homes in Deal Lake, N.J.;

Lake Placid, N.Y.; and Boca Raton, Fla. He now lives in Sunrise, Fla., and Gorham, N.H. "I credit the sociology department at Wagner for a wonderful life!" he wrote. **Harold Kozak** was honored with the Adjunct Exceptional Performance award from Wagner College on November 17, 2015. He teaches astronomy lectures and labs for the physics department. "Finishing up 21 years of teaching at Wagner, I felt honored receiving this accolade as an alumnus," he wrote. In addition, he has completed 15 years as a Solar System Ambassador for NASA/JPL, and he recently gave talks in Iceland and Memphis, Tenn. Finally, almost 500 copies of his science fiction novels have been sold through Amazon. "I am looking forward to hearing from my classmates," he adds.

also worked for C. F. Braun Engineering Co., formerly of Murray Hill, N.J., as an expeditor, traveling up and down the East Coast, and in and out of the Midwest, expediting equipment for the company's projects. At Wagner, Jim became president of Kappa Sigma Alpha fraternity in his senior year, while living in Towers dorm as a resident assistant, and writing a very popular column in the Wagner newspaper called *The Observer*. In retirement, Jim enjoys frequent trips to the gym, gardening, travelling, cruising, frequent trips to Atlantic City, and kicking back or dining out with friends and family close to home or at the Jersey Shore, where he worked summers on the boardwalk at Seaside Heights. The Rev. **John W. Havrilla** '69 M'73 of Bardonia, N.Y., has been serving as the executive director of Lutheran Services New York Alliance since August 1, 2015. **Marilyn Dobbin Kinelski** is chancellor of the Knights Templar St. George Priory of the Sovereign Military Order of the Temple of Jerusalem, Grand Priory of the United States of America, whose main mission is to protect Christians "at risk" in the Holy Land. These efforts now include all people at risk throughout the world. The worldwide organization is Ordo Supremus Militaris Templi Hierosolymitani, OSMTH. OSMTH is a non-governmental

Wagner College is a community where everyone contributes.

Give Today to

growWagner

Go to

wagner.edu/give

to make a credit card donation, or use the envelope enclosed in this magazine.

1969

James P. Battista is in his third year of retirement from St. Joseph by the Sea High School of Huguenot, Staten Island, where he enjoyed 30 years of teaching English, instructing driver education, and directing over 25 fall drama productions (non-musicals), ranging from Neil Simon to Agatha Christie classics. Prior to his years at Sea, Jim taught seventh and eighth graders for 12 years at Trinity Lutheran School in Stapleton, for a total of 42 years of teaching. Between teaching assignments, Jim

organization that has had consultative status with the Economic and Social Council of the United Nations. In January 2014, Marilyn was selected as a delegate of OSMTH to serve on the Committee of the Family. She feels blessed and honored to be of service in this capacity.

Linda A. Barbes Stein '69 M'73 made her acting debut as Renee in Neil Simon's classic comedy *The Odd Couple*, an Actors Community Theatre production in Davie, Fla., in November 2015. She started pursuing her lifelong dream of acting in January 2015 by taking classes at the Broward Center for the Performing Arts in Fort Lauderdale. She started taking auditions and was amazed when she was cast in a community theater production. Linda noted, "Our show was a rollicking success, with almost all sold-out performances. We spent over 80 hours in rehearsals, and I can tell you my emotions ran the gamut from excitement to fear, dread, and absolute joy in taking on this challenge at 68 years old with no prior acting experience."

1973

Kate Bell retired from the Department of Defense as a civilian certified nurse midwife, with a Civilian Meritorious Award, in May 2015, San Diego, Calif. **Earl Brunner** retired in 2013.

Crib Notes



1.



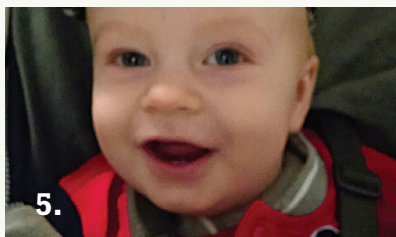
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7.



6.

1. Valerie Rose Vento, born on November 13, 2014, to Patrick and **Carolyn Palinkas Vento '04** M'06.

3. Penelope Taylor Hancock, born on March 21, 2015, to Tom and **Violetta Saj Hancock '05**.

5. Patrick Donald Breuninger, born on April 14, 2015, to Margaret and **Kyle Breuninger '04**.

6. Christopher John Kline Jr., born on September 23, 2015, to **Christopher Kline '02** M'04 and **Francie Kontominas Kline '07**.

2. Olivia Mary Vidiksis, born on July 15, 2014, to Adam and **Patricia Marrone Vidiksis '06**.

4. Blake Ryan Sabo, born on September 24, 2015, to Laura and **Eugene Sabo '04** (and Westie, Jack).

7. Mia Rose Fazio, born on June 24, 2015, to **Jonathan Fazio '04** M'08 and **Andrea Angelucci Fazio '05**.

We'd love to see your baby's face.

Please see page 34 for publication guidelines.

Doug McLarty '66

Creating a New Dimension in Art

CLAIM TO FAME Doug McLarty '66 is an artist who uses a flatbed digital scanner to create fresh and striking pictures of natural objects. His art has been seen in venues ranging from the Ohio governor's residence to the MGM Grand in Las Vegas.

RAW MATERIALS McLarty studies the details of nature all around him to find his source material. Mostly, he uses common plants, such as daylilies, known as "ditch lilies" in his Ohio home because they proliferate next to farmers' fields, or an invasive vine that grows in Florida, where he spends his winters. Collecting, however, is just the beginning. "I take apart nature," he explains. "Most photographers, when they want to take a picture of a flower, they take the picture of the flower. I like to take the entire thing apart, piece by piece, and put it back together the way I think it should be put together."

TWO AND A HALF DIMENSIONS McLarty arranges his collections of flower parts, leaves, sticks, stones, and more on the glass of a flatbed scanner, and then scans them in a darkened room. This technique is known as scanner photography or "scanography." "The depth of the process of scanning allows almost a new dimension. It's not quite two dimensions and it's not quite three dimensions. It's somewhere in between, like two and a half dimensions, where you actually feel like you can see around the side of the picture I create. You can almost feel the back of the leaf."

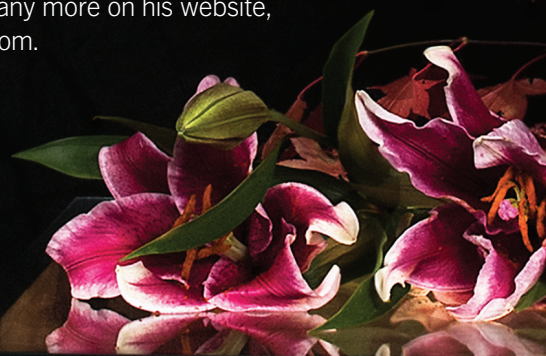
DEEP ROOTS A native of East Providence, Rhode Island, McLarty majored in English and education at Wagner; but art classes, art major friends, and visits to museums also opened his eyes to art appreciation. Another lasting influence of his Wagner years was meeting a freshman named Linda Louise Hagenbucher '68, whom he married in 1968. They have two sons and six grandchildren.

THE ROAD TO SCANOGRAPHY Before becoming an artist, McLarty had two careers: first as a public affairs officer for the U.S. Air Force (he retired at the rank of colonel), and then as the owner of a communications consulting business. In both of these careers, he used photography and graphic design. He also loved doing his own landscape photography. But one day as he was taking photos in the mountains near Salt Lake City, he realized, "I can't do this anymore. I can't do better. It's just pointing and shooting, and the camera does all the work." That's when he started seeking a new creative outlet.

LESS IS MORE About 10 years ago, he saw an exhibit in Florida of scanned nature images. He liked the technique but thought he could improve on the concept. Influenced by principles of graphic design, he wanted to go minimalist. "I'll build a picture, then I'll look at it and say, 'There's too much,' and I'll start taking things away. I want to create something simple, clean. I'm looking for sticky images. I want people to remember it three weeks later."

REVELATION McLarty's purpose is simple: "The enjoyment that people can get from taking a closer look at nature, because the designs are phenomenal and the textures are wonderful! People say to me, 'I have this leaf or this tree in my yard, and I never noticed this.' I encourage them, 'Go home and pull a leaf off and study it for two minutes, and you'll see what the possibilities are!'"

VIEW an example of Doug McLarty's art on the back cover and many more on his website, www.signaturefocus.com.





PHOTOGRAPH: DOUG TAYLOR

He lives in Tinton Falls, N.J. Besides doing church work, he enjoys days by the ocean and evenings at Citi Field cheering on the Mets. **Mary Jane Ruggles Dow**, a resident of Salt Lake City, had a nicely worded letter to the editor appear in the *Salt Lake Tribune* after the Wagner Seahawks played the Brigham Young University Cougars, and the newspaper covered the story in an article entitled "Mauling Fulfills Expectations." She took the writer to task for his "mean-spirited" and "gratuitously unkind" article. "Of course, it's football, so I suppose insensitivity to context is to be expected, but I would have hoped for a more creative journalistic approach to this curious spectacle," she concluded.

1975

Deborah Ann Clickner is the recipient of the 2015 Secretary of Veterans Affairs' awards for Excellence in Nursing and for the Advancement of Nursing Programs in the Nurse Executive Category. She is the associate director, patient care/nurse executive at the Providence VA Medical Center, Providence, R.I.

1976

Jeff Bryant was inducted into the Tappan Zee High School Athletic Hall of Fame on November 23, 2015. **Mary Murphy Kaminski** retired from the New York City Department of Education last year. She is an educational specialist with Houghton Mifflin Harcourt. She and her husband, William,

recently moved to Florida from Middletown, N.J. They have one son, Chris, 25, who graduated from the University of Virginia and is a CPA.

1978

Carol Rose-Trzaska '78 M'91 was the subject of a feature entitled "Thousands of Births for Midwife Nurse, and She's Still Counting" by Virginia N. Sherry in the August 18, 2015, edition of the *Staten Island Advance*. The story reviewed Carol's entire career, during which she worked in labor and delivery at two Staten Island hospitals and had her own midwife practice on Staten Island from 1993 to 2006. She even delivered six of her eight grandchildren, and she has been on numerous medical mission trips. She is now a full-time staff midwife at Trinitas Regional Medical Center in Elizabeth, N.J.

Merryl Freedman Schechtman '78 M'85 is a senior attending developmental and behavioral pediatrician at Children and Women's Physicians of Westchester, the private practice group for the Maria Fareri Children's Hospital of Westchester Medical Center in Valhalla, N.Y. She also is an attending physician at the Children's Rehabilitation Center in White Plains, N.Y.

1980

Dr. **Jeff S. Dailey** retired in June as the director of fine and performing arts of the Deer Park School District, where he worked for 15

years. This concluded a 36-year career in K-12 education. He is currently an associate professor of music and theater at Five Towns College in Dix Hills, N.Y. **Rosalind Noonan's** novel *Charming Christmas* (published by Kensington Books, under the pen name Carly Alexander) was produced as a movie for the Hallmark Channel that aired during the 2015 holiday season. Starring Julie Bentz and David Sutcliffe, *Charming Christmas* is the story of a magical Mrs. Claus suit that transforms the lives of the women who wear it in the Santaland of a department store.

1981

Sharon Stakofsky-Davis completed a master's certification in humanistic astrology last year.

1983

Bob Flaherty was elected as councilman to the Philipstown Town Board, Cold Spring, N.Y. **Lauren Grimaldi**, early childhood education director at Eden II in Staten Island, was honored by the Staten Island NFP Association at its fifth annual Community Service Awards on November 15, 2015. Lauren supervises the preschool program Little Miracles, for children with special needs. The Staten Island NFP Association is an organization that serves as a resource for

not-for-profit organizations throughout Staten Island.

1985

Lydia Diane Plummer-Alleyne joined One Federal Solution as director of operations, responsible for oversight of all of the company's national accounts and government contracts.

1987

The *Staten Island Advance* reported that Seahawk basketball great **Terrance Bailey** was returning to the College to complete his degree beginning in January. "I've been thinking about it for a while and talking with the school for a year or so. They're giving me the opportunity and I appreciate it," Terrance said to the *Advance*. "The former overseas star has been running a league for teens and pre-teens in his native Trenton, N.J., where he works for the Mercer County waterworks," the article reported. **Sophia Tillman-Ortiz** died of colon cancer on June 22, 2015. She was a highly decorated officer in the Army Nurse Corps, reaching the rank of colonel, and her last assignment was as chief of primary care at Womack Army Medical Center at Fort Bragg, N.C. Besides her Wagner nursing degree, she held master's degrees from the University of Pennsylvania and George Washington University. The Friends of Penn Nursing are raising money for a

scholarship in memory of Sophia, and her husband, Colonel **Orlando Ortiz**, wrote a letter in support of the campaign that glows with pride at Sophia's many achievements and positive attitude in the face of great adversity. This letter may be found on Penn Nursing's website, www.nursing.unpenn.edu, under "Giving."



1990

Carolyn Hein McGee and **Maria Giura** (above) attended Pope Francis's Mass at Madison Square Garden on September 25, 2015. They were also excited to meet actor Martin Sheen at the event.

1996

Joseph Caporale married **Elaina Mastrangelo** '03 M'05 at Addison Park in Aberdeen, N.J., on September 6, 2015. The bridal party included **Victoria Otterbeck** M'06, matron of honor; **Alexandra Pantelios** '99 M'05, maid of honor; **Bobbi Pellegrino Sawyer** '08 M'09, bridesmaid; and **Frank Colonna** '02, groomsman.

1998

Natalya Kusheleva '98 M'05, a former member of Wagner's

physician assistant faculty, was highlighted in a *Wall Street Journal* story titled “New Training Tool for Doctors” on October 19, 2015. She is the director of patient safety at Staten Island University Hospital and oversees training in four simulation rooms where doctors, nurses and students practice routine and emergency procedures.

1999

Melissa Ferrari '99 M'02 has joined the leadership team of HeartShare St. Vincent's Services, in Brooklyn, as senior director of operations, after 15 years at HeartShare Human Services of New York.

2002

Erin Cohan started a new job as the director of intergovernmental affairs at the Center for American Progress and Center for American Progress Action Fund on August 1, 2015. Along with **Jeff Currey**, a Connecticut State Representative, she is also behind a progressive think tank called the State Innovation Exchange, or SiX, that has formed to help the 50 states work through the national issues that Congress in Washington cannot. **Christopher Kline** '02 M'04 and **Francie Kontominas Kline** '07 announce the birth of their second child, Christopher John Kline Jr., on September 23, 2015. *See Crib Notes, page 37, for a photo.*

2003

Elaina Mastrangelo '03 M'05 married **Joseph Caporale** '96 at Addison Park in Aberdeen, N.J., on September 6, 2015. The bridal party included **Victoria Otterbeck** M'06, matron of honor; **Alexandra Pantelios** '99 M'05, maid of honor; **Bobbi Pellegrino Sawyer** '08 M'09, bridesmaid; and **Frank Colonna** '02, groomsman.

2004

Kyle Breuninger and his wife, Margaret, announce the birth of Patrick Donald Breuninger on April 14, 2015, in New York, N.Y. **Crystal Schloemer Dujowich** completed her Ph.D. in leadership studies at the University of San Diego and was named director of leadership development for California State University's Office of the Chancellor. She was featured in a *Forbes* article, “6 Authentic Leadership Tips for Overcoming Your Fears.” “I'm in charge of the strategic direction and thought leadership for the universities, which requires me to develop programs and metrics, as well as coordinate internal and external resources to support our campus leaders,” she says. “I have a key focus on women and diversity in leadership and draw upon my own areas of research: systems awareness and authenticity.” **Jonathan Fazio** '04 M'08 and **Andrea Angelucci Fazio** '05 announce

Knot Notes

Tavares Lee '09 M'11 and **Jessica Hart** '10 were married on October 10, 2015. Many other alumni attended; they are pictured here along with the wedding party and parents: **Adrian Adderley** '09, **Olatunde Ogunlana** '09, **Danielle Sheehan** '10, **Kate Eshelman** '10, **Lindsey Tucker** '10, **Michelle Varga** '09, **Heather Roman Green** '08, and **Cleveland Green** '09.



the birth of Mia Rose Fazio on June 24, 2015, at New York-Presbyterian Weill Cornell Medical Center in New York, N.Y. **Eugene Sabo** and his wife, Laura, welcomed their first child, Blake Ryan Sabo, on September 24, 2015. They live in Brooklyn with their Westie, Jack. **Carolyn Palinkas Vento** '04 M'06 and Patrick Vento welcomed their baby girl, Valerie Rose Vento, on November 13, 2014. In a family full of Seahawks, Valerie Rose's grandparents are **Cynthia DeRosa** '76 and **Robert** '75 Palinkas, and her aunt is **Lorianne Palinkas** '00. *See Crib Notes, page 37, for all baby photos.*

2005

Andrea Angelucci Fazio and **Jonathan Fazio** '04 M'08 announce the birth of Mia Rose Fazio on June 24, 2015, at New York-

Presbyterian Weill Cornell Medical Center in New York, N.Y. **Theresa Flanagan** was the stage manager of the new Michael John LaChiusa musical *First Daughter Suite*, which ran from October to November 2015 at the Public Theater with an all-star cast, including current WCT professor Theresa McCarthy. **Violetta Saj Hancock** and her husband, Tom, welcomed their second daughter, Penelope Taylor Hancock, on March 21, 2015. Her older sister is named Madison. *See Crib Notes, page 37, for a photo.*

2006

Julie Maltese '06 M'07 M'09 received her Ph.D. in literacy from St. John's University in February 2014, focusing on diverse and at-risk learners. She was awarded the Outstanding

Dissertation in Literacy Award at graduation in May 2014. **Patricia Marrone Vidiksis** and her husband, Adam, welcomed their first child, Olivia Mary Vidiksis, on July 15, 2014. Her proud grandparents are Michael and **Mary Pat Marrone M'87**. See *Crib Notes*, page 37, for a photo.

2007

Andrew Keating and his wife, Stacie, have moved to Billings, Mont., where Andrew serves as the director of communications and a professor for the English Department at Rocky Mountain College. **Francie Kontominas Kline** and **Christopher Kline '02 M'04** announce the birth of their second child, Christopher John Kline Jr., on September 23, 2015. See *Crib Notes*, page 37, for a photo.

2008

Anthony Cosentino M'08 was appointed principal of PS 21 in Staten Island as of September 2015. **Joe Domante '08 M'09** gave a talk at Wagner on November 4, 2015, about how he became a small business owner.

2009

Tavares Lee '09 M'11 married **Jessica Hart '10** on October 10, 2015. See *Knot Notes*, page 41, for a photo.

2010

Kathryn Chepiga finished her Ph.D. in chemistry at Emory University. She was featured in *Emory Magazine's* spring 2015 issue for her participation in an international research project through an exchange program of the National Science Foundation's Center for Selective C-H Functionalization. Working with a graduate student in Nagoya, Japan, where she spent four months, she "made a significant finding involving a new method of organic synthesis," the magazine explained. Then, Kathryn won a competitive post-doc position at the University of Muenster in Germany, where she is now living. **Andrea DeLoney** is the president of the Young Professionals Chapter of the Urban League on Long Island. She came to speak at Wagner on December 1, 2015. **Jessica Hart** married **Tavares Lee '09 M'11** on October 10, 2015. See *Knot Notes*, page 41, for a photo.

2011

Patrick Heffernan, along with fellow alum **Tommy Joscelyn '14**, was cast in the ensemble of the non-Equity national tour of *42nd Street*. The production launched on September 22, 2015, at the Capitol Theatre in Salt Lake City, Utah. This toe-tapping backstage musical is directed by co-author Mark Bramble and

choreographed by Randy Skinner, the same team responsible for the Tony Award-winning Best Revival in 2001. **Yirmeyah Arturo Beckles** visited a Wagner journalism class during the fall of 2015 to discuss his career and current project. After graduating, Yirmeyah received a full scholarship to the UC Berkeley Graduate School of Journalism, earning a master's degree in 2013. He then studied at the American Film Institute. His 24-minute documentary *Bamba*, which deals with the problems faced by albinos in Senegal, won the 2014 Best Short Documentary award at South Africa's Jozi Film Festival.

2012

Erica Wiederlight, an accomplished actress and comedian, works with the organization Durga Tree International, which is helping to end human slavery through rescue, housing, education, and economic empowerment. She came to talk at Wagner on November 18, 2015, on how to translate passion into action.

2013

Alex Boniello starred in the Broadway revival of *Spring Awakening* created by Deaf West Theater, a company that combines deaf and hearing performers. Alex played the voice of the

character Moritz, while deaf actor Daniel N. Durant did the physical acting. "When I met Daniel, I'd never met a deaf person before. I didn't have the smallest idea of what it was like to be deaf in a hearing world," Alex said in an article on NewJersey.com. However, the two became fast friends, as Alex picked up sign language to better communicate with Daniel. **Emilia Martin '07** was the hair and makeup designer for the production, which opened on September 27, 2015, and was extended through January 2016.

2014

Naofall "Ming" Folahan is a professional basketball player with the NBL of Canada. He is also vice president of an organization called Bench Bullying, for which he tours schools and basketball clubs all over Atlantic Canada spreading the message against bullying. In November 2015, he held his first basketball camp encouraging skill development and good sportsmanship. **Emily Rekestis** wrote about living at risk of Huntington's Disease for *elitedaily.com*. Her story, published in April 2015, received a great deal of attention. She was invited by the Huntington's Disease Society of America to be a speaker at their fundraising event Team Hope, a charity walk, on September 19, 2015.

In Memoriam

Celebrating lives that enriched the Wagner family

Alumni

Mrs. Doris Bensen Bucky '44 M'64
Miss Dorothy A. Mohlenhoff '45
Mrs. Ellen E. Klitgaard Campbell '46
Ms. Marilyn V. Romanelli Felesky '48
Mrs. Frances Salt Cottingham Ritchie '48 M'67
Mr. William M. Beveridge '49
Mrs. Marie Emily Young Ballweg '50
Mr. Andrew Ferretti '50
Mr. Robert A. McGovern '50
Mrs. Joan B. Brody Rafield '50
Mrs. Grace L. Behling Johansen '51

Mr. Robert Loggia '51
Mrs. Marijean Worley Luger '51
Dr. Martha Kinscher Rodin '52
Mr. William Brown '53
Dr. Marcus J. Wiesner '54
Mr. Gustave G. Nelson '57
Mr. Robert J. Farrell '58
Mr. Edward Rose '58
Mr. Robert P. Scarr '59
Mr. Charles E. Carr '61
Mr. Clinton G. Abrams '62
Ms. Elizabeth Brun Brooks '63 M'65
Miss Winona L. Cole '64

Mr. Gregory C. Colan '66
Mr. Albert F. Keck '67 M'73
Lt. Col. Edward T. Fite M'75
Mr. Michael DiMarco '78
Mr. Anthony M. Vigliotti '78
Miss Catherine V. Stock Hawkins '82
Col. Sophia Tillman-Ortiz '87
Ms. Susan B. Handel '91

Faculty & Staff

Mr. Walter Earl

WAGNER LEGACIES

Douglas '52 and Elizabeth Hamann '52 Lawrence

Elizabeth Hamann Lawrence '52 died on February 13, 2014, at age 83, mourned and missed by her sister-in-law, Elaine Lopez Hamann '60, and her niece and three nephews.

Just a few months later, her estate fulfilled a long-standing promise: a gift of \$30,000 to benefit Wagner College and its students — a gift she and her late husband, Douglas Lawrence '52, had planned at least 17 years earlier.

Liz and Doug both attended Wagner College from 1948 to 1952. They spent most of their lives in places far away from Staten Island, with work taking them to the Chicago area and retirement taking them to Murray, Kentucky. But they never forgot their gratitude for the College that brought them together.

Liz was born in Manhattan, the daughter of German immigrants. Wagner College offered her a high-quality, Lutheran education not too far from home — but it also gave her enough distance to spread her wings. She majored in German and Spanish and was involved in Alpha Omicron Pi sorority, the German Club, and the Chess Club.

In the post-war years of the late 1940s, the campus was full of veterans attending college on the GI Bill.

One of them was Sgt. Doug Lawrence, a New Jersey native and history major. From 1942 to 1946, he had served in the Army Air Force and had flown 42 combat missions, including the notorious “Hump Run” over the Himalayas.

A vivacious, intelligent young woman with curly black hair, Liz caught the eye of this man who had already seen so much of the world. Their romance blossomed into a beautiful marriage of 50 years, which ended with Doug's death in 2002.

Liz's younger brother, Herman Hamann '60, followed in her footsteps to Wagner, and he also married a classmate, Elaine Lopez '60.

Liz went on to a 20-year career with AT&T, while Doug worked for Rand McNally in cartography and also sold industrial products for a Japanese company. They stayed in close touch with their family back East, especially Herman and Elaine's children. Herman died in 2008. Liz lived with her niece, Caroline Murphy, in New Jersey for the last two years of her life. One of the few things she kept until the end was a framed set of pictures taken at Wagner College from 1948 to 1952.



Back to School

A Busy Nurse Finally Fulfills a Cherished Dream By Melissa Mistretta '15

Like most women in their forties, I have goals I have yet to accomplish. Even though I consider these bucket list items to be priorities, I always find practical reasons to push them aside. I'm happily married, the mother of two girls, and a registered nurse. I have a lot of responsibilities, and I tend to spend the majority of my time and energy on the important people in my life: my immediate family and friends. At times, I have become completely involved in other people's lives, and not in a healthy way. I have often found myself helping people, as if I needed to fix their dilemmas, and running out of time for myself.

But one day about four years ago, something inside of me clicked. Maybe I finally realized that life was too short, or maybe I was fed up with the "same old, same old" — whatever it was, life was about to change. Here's how it happened.

I had gone to work and arrived just before the change of shift. A few of the day-shift girls were talking about going back to school. Many of the registered nurses, including myself, were graduates of associate degree programs. But educational trends were changing, and nurses who possess bachelor's degrees were in demand. Higher education was being promoted in the field of nursing like never before. Going back to school to get a bachelor's degree, one of my priority

“My only regret was waiting as long as I did.”

bucket list items, was the main topic of discussion.

I wasn't involved in the conversation, but one of the girls, Danielle (who's a friend as well as a co-worker), asked me a question I'll never forget: "Melissa, do you want to go back to school?"

I answered, without hesitation, "Yes! Absolutely. When do we start?"

I had no idea the semester was starting in only a few weeks. I had nothing prepared, no transcript, no essay, no application materials.

I asked, "What college?"

When Danielle said, "Wagner College," I was overwhelmed with emotions — elation, fear, joy, doubt. This was a college I had always dreamed of going to. Wagner has a great program for registered nurses returning for their bachelor's degrees. The college itself is just beautiful, with such a picturesque campus. It was the perfect place for me to continue my education.

Danielle had my full attention as I took notes about what I needed to do to get the ball rolling. One of the best parts was that my employer would

cover the tuition. This wasn't just going to happen someday — I was going back to school ... now.

I remember announcing the news to my family like a proclamation: I had been accepted to Wagner College, and I was starting classes at the end of August. To my astonishment, they were all thrilled for me. There were no questions about where I would find the time, or how this would impact the family; it was nothing but support and love. My mother had her concerns for my well-being because I worked full time, but I assured her I was going to take it slow, only one class at a time, so I wouldn't burn myself out. The way I had it planned out, I would be done with school in about five years.

This was the real deal: I was running to classes, books in hand, admiring the campus, and loving every bit of it. I was usually the oldest student in the class, with the most life experience. But the other students never made me feel unwelcome, even though I was the same age as their parents. It was a little strange when I was older than the professor, but I got over that and so did they.

Sure, there were some frustrating times and some classes that left me shaking my head, but for the most part Wagner College fulfilled my dreams of what a higher education was all about. I was learning and experiencing a variety of unfamiliar things and had a deep appreciation and respect for



'YOU DID IT'

"I wore my cap and gown for about 10 hours. I just didn't want the day to end." Below, Mistretta with her daughters, husband, and mother.

this new-found knowledge. Being an adult student is something I highly recommend. Anyone who has a chance to advance their education should take full advantage of this amazing opportunity.

On May 22 of last year, I graduated from Wagner College with my Bachelor of Science degree. It took me four years instead of the originally projected five, because I grew impatient and started taking multiple classes as I neared the finish line. Graduation day was incredible, a memory I will cherish for the rest of my life. My mom, who had been very ill at times during my education at Wagner, was well enough to attend the commencement ceremony. This was something I had always wanted Mom to see, and that day she was beaming with pride.

After the ceremony, I gathered with my husband, Victor, and my daughters, Victoria and Samantha, for pictures. We all hugged and joked around. Then Victor said, with tears in his eyes, "You did it, I'm so proud of you," and we cried together. Right there, in front of picturesque Main Hall, we were a mess.

I wore my cap and gown that day for about 10 hours. I just didn't want the day to end. I couldn't believe such a major bucket list item had been crossed off. My only regret was waiting as long as I did, but I have to believe that everything happens in its own time. Going back to college was everything I had hoped it would be and more.

I am eternally grateful to the people in my life who gave me the strength to see it through. Such an

accomplishment would have been impossible without the unwavering support of my family, especially my husband. Vic is a gem. Yet, none of this would have happened without the initial spark from Danielle, my greatest inspiration and hero. During many challenging times of family illnesses and uncertainty, she kept me on the path. I could never thank Danielle enough for asking such an important question that changed the course of my life: "Melissa, do you want to go back to school?"



Melissa Mistretta '15 is a registered nurse in maternity at Staten Island University Hospital. A version of this essay was originally published on HumanDiaries.com.

WAGNER COLLEGE



Everyday Beauty

Doug McLarty '66 uses common plants to create stunning images with "scanography." This piece is entitled *Scheherazade*. Read more page 38–39.