

FALL 2014

THE LINK FOR ALUMNI AND FRIENDS

# WAGNER

*The history of  
Wagner trees helps to tell  
the College's story. Page 26*

## **Rooted in Grymes Hill**

**#Awareness**  
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**The Next Frontier**  
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VOL. 12, NO. 1

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## Writing a New Story

At an after-school program at PS 20 in Port Richmond, Staten Island, Wagner education faculty and graduate students work with immigrant children and their parents to build up their literacy skills and confidence. Read more at [wagner.edu/wagnermagazine](http://wagner.edu/wagnermagazine).

# From the President

## Why 'U.S. News' Is Important



IF YOU saw the 2015 edition of the *U.S. News & World Report* "Best Colleges" guidebook, you surely noticed that the accomplishments of Wagner College were celebrated in a number of the book's pages.

Wagner, for example, was one of seven colleges to be cited at least four times in the guide's "Focus on Student Success" section, which recognized our first-year experience, internships, learning communities, and service learning opportunities as among the best in the nation.

This recognition is especially significant because it is an acknowledgment not only from *U.S. News*, but also from our competitors. Inclusion in this part of the guidebook comes through a survey of college presidents, provosts, and enrollment officers nationwide. They decide which schools best fit these categories, look up the unique codes for the particular colleges and universities they are nominating, copy those codes, and enter them into the guidebook's questionnaire. It takes a bit of time and effort, indicating that our colleagues feel strongly about our work in these areas.

You'll also see that Wagner is prominently mentioned in the book's main feature. The magazine discussed our emphasis on civic learning from the first year onward, and notes how we create learning communities that combine courses from different disciplines that are seemingly unrelated, but help our students approach and analyze real-life challenges. Wagner's 2014 graduate Kellie Griffith, who is now teaching English on a Fulbright award in Ecuador, was quoted as an example of the success that the Wagner

Plan can help our students achieve.

All of this, I would argue, speaks to the role that Wagner plays

as a leader and an innovator in higher education. This is important because higher education is at a crossroads — or, as a friend of mine likes to say, at an inflection point.

As members of the Association of American Colleges and Universities (AAC&U), Wagner faculty and administrators have been participating in some of the most interesting discussions that are now going on about higher education reform and innovation. AAC&U is essentially a think tank. It is important that we thoroughly understand how the landscape of higher education is changing under our feet if we are to truly thrive and not just survive. In the current environment, I believe even survival will be difficult for some institutions. At Wagner, we must be prepared for these changes in order to continue to prepare our students well.

You will read more about these challenges and changes in *Wagner Magazine* Editor Laura Barlament's excellent story on the future trends in higher education. (See page 16.)

Please come and visit campus in the new year. Much is happening here, as always, and I would enjoy the opportunity to say hello.

Richard Guarasci  
President



### An Education That Works

Professor Cyril Ghosh teaches a government course, which together with an education course makes up the Intermediate Learning Community "Civil Liberties, Human Rights, and Disability Rights." Wagner is celebrated for its programs leading to student success, including its sequence of three learning communities.

# From the Editor

## *What the Survey Said*

About a year ago, we asked you, our readers, to take a survey and tell us what you think about *Wagner Magazine*. More than 400 of you completed the questionnaire, which was administered online. I'm deeply grateful for your time and your interest!

Considering that I usually answer surveys only when I have some bone to pick, I felt all the more gratified that, by and large, people felt good about the publication: Around 90 percent rated it good or excellent for content, ease of reading, design, photography, and writing.

The most interesting part of the survey to me was finding out what types of stories you would most like to read. Now, I have a *Wagner Magazine* readership Top 10 list. In the spirit (though not the humor) of David Letterman, here we go:

10. Alumni in their personal lives
9. Student achievements
8. Individual alumni profiles
7. Alumni chapter activities and regional programming
6. Campus facilities and growth
5. Cultural events and performances
4. Obituaries
3. Institutional history and traditions
2. Alumni in their professions
1. Class notes

Another area the survey is helping me to address is the role of the website. Survey respondents tended to favor print heavily — 77 percent said they prefer print, whereas 6 percent prefer online and 17 percent prefer both. But a good slice of the pie, 44 percent, said they would be interested in seeing additional online-only content.

If you haven't visited [wagner.edu/wagnermagazine](http://wagner.edu/wagnermagazine) lately, now would be a great time to check it out: We have a brand-new website, launched in December! I believe it's much more attractive and functional than the first version we built. And we do, indeed, have online-only content for this issue, such as a slideshow of the spectacular stained glass windows of Cliff Oster '69. (See story page 20).

I was also very happy to hear that *Wagner Magazine* strengthens your feeling of connection to the College, because that's its main purpose. Please do let me know if you have other ideas about how this magazine can better fulfill its mission and serve you and the College in new ways.

*Laura Barlament*  
EDITOR, WAGNER MAGAZINE



### On the Cover

*This Norway maple, located in front of Cunard Hall, is one of the many magnificent trees on campus, such as the red maple (see page 26–27) on the other side of Cunard or the European beech (see page 28–29) in front of Main Hall. Visit [wagner.edu/wagnermagazine](http://wagner.edu/wagnermagazine) to see a picture of our rare American elm.*

PHOTOGRAPH: SHAOWEI WANG

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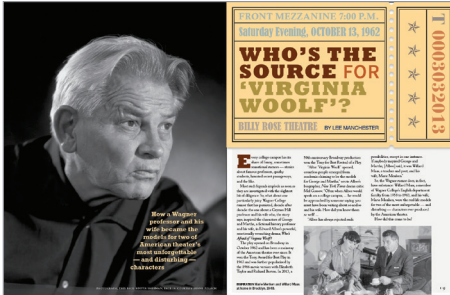
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# From Our Readers



“ I had Willard Maas as my professor at Wagner College, and he changed my life. ”

Several readers responded to the Winter 2013–14 feature “Who’s the Source for ‘Virginia Woolf’?” about Wagner Professor Willard Maas and his wife, Marie Menken, as the inspiration for Edward Albee’s play *Who’s Afraid of Virginia Woolf?*

## Dining Hall Dialogue

IN THE summer of 1961, I was a house proctor at Wagner’s North Hall, taking summer courses and working part time at the Wagner dining hall as well as lifeguarding at South Beach. I met a group of people in the dining hall who were at a playwriting workshop. The workshop was headed by Edward Albee. I knew Willard Maas but did not know he was involved with the workshop. At

the dining hall, the workshop members talked about playwriting, and Edward Albee was particularly sharp and dismissive of a middle-aged woman workshop member. I did not know who Albee was, but was told he had had a couple of short plays produced. I do not know the woman.

I did not see the play *Who’s Afraid of Virginia Woolf?*, but when I saw the movie, I recognized the method of delivery and dialogue as being very similar to what I heard in 1961 from Edward Albee. I drew the conclusion that Albee was in the process of writing the play, and he was trying out dialogue on his workshop member.

Your article filled in some holes in my memory of over 50 years ago.

*John C. Schaller '63*

CHICO, CALIFORNIA

## An Abiding Enigma

YOUR WORK is impressive, and good. Willard was and, perhaps, remains an enigma, but he changed my way of looking at the world, and when I think about it, that’s what a college education is supposed to do. I had Willard Maas as my professor at Wagner College, and he changed my life.

*George Semsel '59*

WEST YARMOUTH, MASSACHUSETTS

## Clarifications

IN THE story “Who’s the Source for ‘Virginia Woolf’?” (*Wagner Magazine* winter 2013–14), the source of the quotation by Kenneth Anger on page 20 was Scott MacDonald’s book *A Critical Cinema 5: Interviews with Independent Filmmakers* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2006), pp. 39-40. We regret any misunderstanding of the source.

The “Flashback” archival photo feature of the Wagner College Seahawk Marching Band, ca. 1969 (*Wagner Magazine* winter 2013–14) mentioned that the band performed in the Macy’s Thanksgiving Day Parade in 1971. Kathy Van Tassell Maxcy ’71 contacted us to say that the band also marched in that parade in 1969, as confirmed by a dated photo and by clippings in the Wagner archives.

**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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# Upon the Hill

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



**PREPARED FOR ANYTHING** Wagner's DNP graduates will be trained to deal with global health emergencies, such as the West African Ebola outbreak. This photo shows a worker in England wearing the protective clothing needed to treat Ebola victims and prevent the disease's spread.

## A New Generation of Nurse Leaders

**Wagner's first doctoral program proves itself a timely offering**

AS THE West African Ebola outbreak grabbed headlines this fall, the relevance of Wagner's first doctoral program, a Doctorate of Nursing Practice (DNP), became all the more sharply defined.

The DNP program, launched this fall by the Evelyn L. Spiro School of Nursing, provides advanced training for nurses, with a special focus on disaster preparedness and population health worldwide.

The program, currently open to board-certified family nurse practitioners, is for working professionals. Those enrolled in the program are expected to complete their doctorates in two years and three months, including two summers.

According to Kathleen Ahern, professor and director of graduate nursing studies, watching the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina inspired her and Paula Dunn Tropello, dean of the Evelyn L. Spiro School of Nursing, to create the DNP program.

"When Katrina happened, what really touched me was that the doctors and the nurses were so poorly prepared to handle that kind of disaster," Ahern says. "We discussed that we really needed to prepare leaders who could function in those kinds of devastations."

The interdisciplinary program features courses in biostatistics, taught by biology professor Don Stearns, and in medical ethics, taught by philosophy professor John Danisi. A course on global nursing requires a 50-hour clinical experience, where students observe international health systems. The nursing program has established partnerships in Haiti and Mexico and with the Navajo Reservation in Arizona.

This fall, 15 students were accepted into the program. "Some of them

would like to become faculty with their doctorate and continue their practice, while others are looking to take a larger role perhaps in their city or state health departments," Ahern says.

Kathleen Oberfeldt, assistant dean for Wagner's Center for Health and Wellness, is in the DNP program's first cohort. She says that the program will enhance her ability to plan for public health crises, especially in the context of a college campus.

The program has already broadened her comfort level with helping in case of a natural disaster. "I never thought I would see myself in that role, but I am emerging and taking a step out of my comfort zone," she says. "It's great to be able to have that opportunity. Opportunities like working on the Native American reservation, that really touched my heart.

"Going with a group that is already established and has confidence in the work that they do — I am very happy to be part of that kind of group. I am capable of doing more than I ever thought I was capable of," Oberfeldt adds.



## First the Facts . . .

40

MINIMUM NUMBER OF WOODY PLANT TYPES ON CAMPUS

35

NUMBER OF LONDON PLANE TREES LOCATED ON THE OVAL



**BACK WHERE YOU BELONG** Wagner College's No. 1-ranked theater program specializes in musical theater training. This year's Main Stage season kicked off with *Hello, Dolly!* starring Allie Luecke '16 as Dolly Levi, directed by Norb Joerder.

## 'The Power of Storytelling'

Wagner back at the top of the Princeton Review best collegiate theaters list

WAGNER COLLEGE THEATRE was ranked #1 in the nation, and *The Wagnerian* student newspaper was ranked among the country's top 20 collegiate news publications, in this year's Princeton Review *Best 379 Colleges* guide.

Wagner College Theatre has been ranked among the top 5 collegiate theater programs in the United States by the Princeton Review for the last decade, but this is the first time since 2005 that WCT has claimed the #1 position.

"The Wagner College Theatre Department — faculty, staff, students, alumni and audiences — is honored by our Number One ranking in the Princeton Review," said Felicia Ruff, department chair.

The department, created in 1968, has a long list of distinguished alumni, from Tony Award winner Randy Graff '76 to *Jersey Boys* film star Renée Marino '04.

"Wagner College's tradition of doing theater, particularly musical theater, clearly remains strong," Ruff said. "We take pride in our work on stage and in the classroom, but we are even prouder of our community, which is united by our belief in the importance of live performance. Our Number One ranking is a well-deserved endorsement of our excellent faculty and the values they teach, but it is also evidence of the power of storytelling to impact our culture, especially our campus culture."



1

RARE AMERICAN ELM  
LOCATED ON CAMPUS

... Then  
the Quiz!



How many deer have been  
sighted on the Wagner campus  
this fall? ANSWER ON PAGE 11



## A Good Turnover

**After 34 seasons, Hameline hands off to Houghtaling**



ON NOVEMBER 22, Walt Hameline completed his 34th season as head football coach and athletic director with a riveting 23–20 win over Bryant, giving the Seahawks their second NEC title in

the past three years.

And, he announced the following Monday, he also completed his long and successful head coaching career at Wagner. He handed the reins over to a beloved Wagner insider, Jason “Hoss” Houghtaling M’09, associate head coach. Hameline remains as athletic director.

The 2014 campaign was the 24th winning season for the Green & White under Hameline. Hameline’s win record, 223-139-2, ranks fifth among active Football Championship Subdivision (FCS) head coaches.

Houghtaling’s deep relationship with Wagner football goes back to 2006–09, his first coaching stint on Grymes Hill. He returned during the 2011–12

season and again this year for a total of seven years on the Wagner sidelines.

His accomplishments include coaching the Seahawks’ record-setting quarterback Nick Doscher ’13 during Wagner’s 9–4 NEC Championship season of 2012, when the Seahawks became the first NEC team to win an NCAA FCS playoff game.

“I am thrilled that Jason Houghtaling will take over as Wagner head coach and I have full confidence that he will continue to keep the Seahawks on the path to success for years to come,” said Hameline. “His work ethic, passion, football knowledge, recruiting contacts, and familiarity with Wagner College are all major assets that will pay huge dividends for our program.”

## Making It Practical

**New MBA program in media management draws a lively cohort of students**

THERE’S EXCITEMENT in Campus Hall this fall, where Wagner College has started a new MBA program in media management. Former film company executive Stephen Greenwald, who helped design and build the program, gave us an update at the end of its inaugural semester.

“We have seven students in our first cohort,” Greenwald said. “They’re into different aspects of media — sports, TV, music — and bringing a mix of backgrounds and aspirations to the program, so it’s a lively bunch.”

The group is taking its first three foundational courses this semester — among them, a course in media law and ethics taught by Greenwald.

“In our class, we’re trying to make it practical,” he said. “They’re not lawyers, and they’re not training to be lawyers — but they need to know enough about media law to know when they need a lawyer!”

Looking forward, Greenwald is particularly excited about two aspects of Wagner’s media management MBA program.

“For their capstone project, our students will come up with a business plan for a media venture — and then they’ll work on getting it launched,” Greenwald said.

“And we have some very solid international content programmed into this MBA, with weeklong intensive seminars abroad. Students can study at Israel’s Kibbutzim College of Education or the HFF München in Germany, one of the 15 best film schools in the world.”

## The Women's Executive Perspective

Alumnae speak about the triumphs and challenges of corporate success



**LEADING WOMEN** Kathleen Haggerty '80, Cynthia DiBartolo '84, Lisa Bennett '85, Mary Caracappa '82, and Joan Arnold '75 all serve in executive positions at major financial corporations and law offices.

WHILE FEMINISM may have “conquered the culture,” as a recent *New Republic* cover story proclaimed, the discussion about women's equality is far from over.

One new effort to promote women's leadership in the workplace is the Take the Lead organization, co-founded by Gloria Feldt and Amy Litzenberger, a former investment banker (connected to Wagner College via her husband, Robert Litzenberger '64).

On the public launch date of Take the Lead, February 19, a panel of five Wagner women graduates who have been highly successful in the corporate world spoke to a packed audience in the Manzulli Board Room of Foundation Hall.

All five talked about how their careers have evolved. “It's a fascinating

industry,” said Mary Caracappa '82, managing director for firm strategy and execution at Morgan Stanley, where she has worked since 1986. “I've been afforded so many different types of roles.”

Kathleen Haggerty '80, vice president of global credit for American Express, has had a similar experience, having held leadership roles in correspondent banking, collections management, global rewards, and global data. “I have re-engineered myself out of a job several times,” she said.

Cynthia DiBartolo '84, a political science major, left college with a desire to work on Wall Street. She left after being told that she had been hired because she was “easy on the eye.” She entered law school, and ended up becoming director of corporate compliance for Citigroup. Now she runs her own company, Tigress Financial Partners.

Lisa Bennett '85, executive director of communications for technology and digital business at J.P. Morgan Chase & Co., said that women are forced to make choices between family priorities or workplace advancement. “You can't have it all,” she said. “The women I respect make their choices and are happy with them.”

Bennett's comment sparked a discussion about whether workplaces

are becoming more accommodating to both men's and women's commitments to family. “There's been a generational shift,” argued Caracappa. “This next generation is going to radically change all these horror stories we're talking about. Firms have to figure out how to balance lifestyles and career cycles in order to retain women and men.”

Joan Arnold '75, a partner and chair of the tax practice group with Pepper Hamilton LLP in Philadelphia, said that the discussion of women in leadership roles needs to be conducted with the male leaders at the table as well. “The senior male leadership of the firm has to be there and deal with the barriers to women's leadership,” she said.

With the help of these alumnae, Wagner has started a Women's Professional Network for students.

In October, DiBartolo hosted the students in her office.

“For me, the biggest takeaways were her personal story and career tips,” said Arijeta Lajka '15, one of the student participants. “She almost died of cancer, and she still managed to rise again and build up a company. She also taught us how important diversity is in the workforce: Diversity of different races and also diversity of talent are needed to build a successful company.”

---

## ‘She Touched Countless Students’

**Professor Janice Buddensick dies at age 59**

THE WAGNER community was deeply saddened to hear of the death of Janice Buddensick, associate professor of accounting, on September 20, 2014. She had been on leave for health reasons

since the previous fall semester.

“It is a very sad day for the Wagner College community,” said John Carrescia '99 M'06, interim CFO and adjunct accounting professor. “Janice was my faculty adviser many years ago, and has had such an impact on my teaching career. She touched countless students and will be deeply missed by so many of us.”

*Read more about Janice Buddensick's life and service to the College on page 43.*

## Quote Unquote

“The nice thing about environmental writing ... is that you can start to get at the question of, ‘Who’s right? Where does the weight of the evidence lie?’”



*Dan Fagin*  
2014 PULITZER  
PRIZE WINNER,  
AT THE 2014  
KAUFMAN-  
REPAGE LECTURE

7 The wall is now impervious to Nor'easters with new brickwork and mortar.

6 New internal risers and fan coils in each room have greatly improved the building's HVAC system.

2 Kathleen's mother breeds champion show pugs.



### WHAT'S INSIDE

*Harborview Hall, Room 613*

AFTER DECADES of service, Harborview Hall underwent major renovations last summer to make it watertight and energy-efficient. Here's a glimpse into one room and its residents.

1 Kathleen Thieme '18 of Fort Lauderdale, Florida, who loves music, dance, and science.

3 Nicole Farkouh '18, a physician assistant major, wasn't at home, but the wall art that she created shows her personality.

4 Nicole keeps a live mint plant in the windowsill (all new throughout the building) for her tea.

5 One of the 400 new double-pane, energy-efficient windows installed this summer.

## Upon the Hill

### Quote Unquote

“Here, I have met Africa, the [Africa] I have always believed in. She’s beautiful. She’s young. She’s full of talent and motivation and ambition.”



*Sobel Ngorn*  
A MANDELA  
WASHINGTON  
FELLOW FROM  
SENEGAL, AT  
WAGNER FOR A  
SUMMER SEMINAR



### A Quiet Friend

Estate gift establishes a sizable endowment for student scholarships

#### A PASSION FOR EDUCATION

The late Helen Raminger Abichandani '54 moved to California years ago but never forgot her gratitude to her parents and to Wagner College.

YOU KNOW how sometimes your quietest friends can turn out to be your best friends?

That’s how it was with the late Helen Raminger Abichandani '54 and her alma mater, Wagner College.

For many years, while the Bronx native lived in California, she did not maintain an active connection to the campus where she had studied to become a teacher. But she never forgot the College or her gratitude to her parents for supporting her Wagner education.

Abichandani moved to California for the sunny weather, says Joni Magee, who knew her late in her life while serving as her case manager at Siegel & Associates. Tall, striking, and elegant, she was also funny, outspoken, and talkative, Magee recalls.

She taught elementary school. “Her former students kept up with her for years,” Magee says. “She was funny, and

I’m sure she made her classes fun.”

She married Krishin Abichandani, an aeronautical engineer who immigrated to the United States from India. They lived in the Hollywood Hills in a striking Mid-Century Modern home.

Helen began reconnecting with Wagner College in 1999, attending her first class reunion. Krishin died shortly after that visit, and Helen continued to enjoy Wagner events, even an alumni cruise on the *Queen Mary II*.

Former alumni director Gail Kelley '97 and President Guarasci also visited her in Los Angeles, and she spoke with them about her desire to use her estate to boost her favorite cause, education, at Wagner College.

Helen Abichandani passed away on February 25, 2013, one day short of her 80th birthday. Her Hollywood Hills friends organized her memorial service at the Unitarian Universalist Church

of Studio City. “She was an incredibly wonderful and generous soul,” says her former neighbor, Shane Nguyen. “I miss her dearly.”

Her estate plans included an \$868,000 gift to Wagner College to establish an endowed scholarship in memory of her parents, William and Erna Raminger. Polish immigrants of German descent, they worked hard to make sure their only child received the gift of education. Neither of them graduated from high school, but William built a successful auto parts business in the Bronx, and even held a patent on an antiglare headlight.

Inspired by her parents, Helen Abichandani is passing along the gift of education to future Wagner students. As many as five students per year will benefit from the William and Erna Raminger Scholarship Fund.

**The Answer**  
QUIZ QUESTION  
ON PAGE 7

Groups of 2–3 deer have been seen crossing campus frequently this year. The New York City Parks Department estimated the Staten Island deer population at almost 800 as of early 2014.



WAGNER COLLEGE'S student newspaper, *The Wagnerian*, turned 80 years old on November 8, 2014. From political movements to campus tragedies, *The Wagnerian* has been through it all, giving students the opportunity to voice their thoughts and report the news.

This year, the venerable journal even received its first accolade from the Princeton Review, earning a top-20 college newspaper listing.

To celebrate the anniversary, editors rummaged through the archives to create an issue highlighting *The Wagnerian* over the decades.

Working through the 1950s issues, Sports Editor Grace Zhang '15 pointed out the cigarette ads, gossip columns, and the dean's list, which are no longer *Wagnerian* fare.

Co-Editor Erik Parshall '15 drew attention to how *The Wagnerian* took stances on major political issues over the years, such as racial justice in the 1960s and the Watergate scandal in the 1970s.

Throughout *Wagnerian* history, the

campus has been the biggest topic of all, with perennial coverage focusing on issues with the College administration, food in the dining hall, and campus life policies.

"What separates *The Wagnerian* from other news is that we talk about Wagner, which is more relevant to students. Students are excited to see their names in the paper and are excited to know that somebody's listening," Co-Editor Audriana Mekula '14 explained.

Parshall said that looking through old issues inspired him to feature more stories on major social and political issues.

"There was more open conversation back then," he noted. "In one issue, a pregnant girl wrote about her experiences being pregnant on campus and how it affected her mental state. I think that's fantastic.

"I want to run stories that will stand the test of time, as the cliché goes," he added.

— Arijeta Lajka '16,  
*Wagnerian* contributor

# Arts & Letters

## Gustav Klimt: Why Not 'Degenerate'?

Duke University's lecture series "Art, Conflict, and the Politics of Memory" featured Wagner art history professor Laura Morowitz this November.

Her subject: an exhibition of Gustav Klimt's works staged by Vienna's Nazi governor, Baldur von Schirach, in 1943.

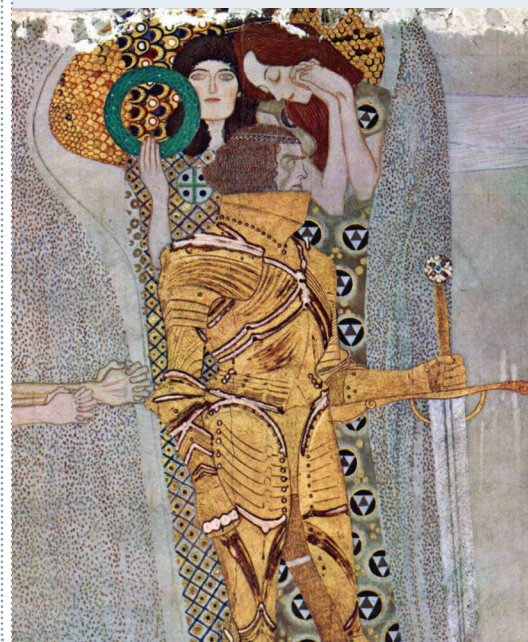
Blogging about the Neue Galerie's "Degenerate Art" exhibition earlier this year, Morowitz explained how Klimt, a product of *fin de siècle* Vienna, escaped the Nazis' "degenerate" label, despite his provocative style and his prominent Jewish patrons.

One example of why Nazi cultural officials accepted Klimt's work is his *Beethoven Frieze* (detail seen below).

"Klimt's frieze hails the triumph of idealism over materialism, an idea often found in Nazi aesthetics," she explained. "The rescuing knight around whom the frieze revolves can easily be read as a proto-Führer figure, leading his people to a higher realm."

On the other hand, Klimt's sensual subject matter made his work suspect to many. Von Schirach took a risk, promoting the Klimt retrospective as an example of the glories of Germanic art, Morowitz said, and erasing their connections to the Jewish community.

Morowitz is teaching an honors course, Art and Aesthetics in Nazi Germany, next semester. She is also at work on a novel about Klimt's art and cultural legacy.





# #Awareness

Student leaders find their way at Wagner and mentor the next generation

**R**ace is an undeniable force in American society. This summer, it was brought to the fore by the tragic deaths of several African-American men and boys, including Staten Island's own Eric Garner, in violent encounters with white policemen.



a predominantly black and Hispanic public high school in Poughkeepsie, New York.

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## *Wagner Magazine:* *How did you decide to come to Wagner College?*

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**Kerri Alexander:** Well, I knew I wanted to be in New York City. When I visited Wagner, I thought, “Wow, this campus is beautiful!” and I knew I wanted to be here.

**Jarrid Williams:** I am a football player, and I had a few scholarship offers from different schools. When I visited campus, I got sold on the “family” feel of Wagner. My little brother sat with a vice president at the basketball game, front row. Everyone knew who everyone was, the president knew the names of kids all over campus — and that was a completely different feel than what I got from any other college.

---

## *WM: Once you enrolled, what was it like? Was there any culture shock?*

---

**JW:** The makeup of the student body here was quite a culture shock for me, coming from Poughkeepsie High. The only people at Wagner who looked like me were my teammates. You would go to class and look around, and you would be the only person who looked like you — it almost made you feel like “the other.” My high school wasn’t the best — we had a ridiculous graduation rate, something like 52 percent — so when I started to get into college classes, I was nervous. I didn’t want to be the guy that answers the question wrong and have people think, “Wow, look at that stupid black kid,” so I stayed to myself. I hung

out with the other football players, and I wasn’t open to other students for my first couple of years.

And then, “the Wagner way” kind of pulled me onto the right track. I say “Wagner way” because I think Dr. Guarasci has created a good atmosphere and put the right people in place to help you become a leader. Sam Siegel [Samantha Siegel ’12 M’13, director of the Center for Leadership and Community Engagement] taught one of my education classes, and I started to meet with her outside of class. I started to gain more confidence in myself, and I met some of the other students in the civic engagement program who helped me, people like Kerri.

Before, I was just getting by. I was the football player, an athlete here at Wagner College, but civic engagement helped me create a new identity for myself, a civic identity, and a sense of community. I felt empowered enough to talk over things I thought were problematic, things that we can change. ... That’s why I think President Guarasci did a good job of putting people in place, because we have a lot of young leaders here who are active enough to change things and to really have their own voice — to speak up for what they believe in.

**KA:** My story is very similar to Jarrid’s. I spent my first two years here very much on the outskirts of the social scene. My two or three best friends were people I met in my first-year learning community. We weren’t the same race. That didn’t mean we couldn’t be friends — but, being the only black woman in this group, it was difficult to feel valid in those relationships — and they were the only ones I had. After that, I decided, “I think I will be on my own for a little bit,” just because it’s hard to feel “heard” when you’re the outsider of the group.

And then Dr. Guarasci stepped in. He was my teacher during my freshman year; he always knew my name when we

Like many predominantly white colleges, Wagner College has had its share of challenges over white privilege and diversity. Fortunately, Wagner has also had some extraordinary students who have led us in an ongoing conversation about social justice and civic engagement.

*Wagner Magazine* talked recently with two of those student leaders, seniors Kerri Alexander and Jarrid Williams. Kerri came to Wagner from a Catholic high school in West Hartford, Connecticut. Jarrid attended

ran into each other on campus, and he would always say hello. Toward the end of my second year at Wagner, I went to him and said, “I don’t know what I am doing here.” He introduced me to Samantha and many other people who helped me examine what I wanted to do and the type of person I wanted to become. Once I clarified that for myself, I started attracting people who needed to be in my life, and vice versa. We had such similar goals and values. Some of them looked like me and had the same textured hair as me, and some of them didn’t — but they were the people I was able to connect with, regardless of who they were. And I made those connections through the help of Dr. Guarasci and the people he put in place.

seminars on things like building a resume, creating an elevator pitch, writing a cover letter. The community work is with inner-city children and youth at a boxing gym run by a Staten Island nonprofit. Through boxing, we were able to build relationships with those kids, a mentor kind of thing. For me to see that, and to know that’s where I was once — it’s re-energizing for me.

I’ve also been involved with the Black Student Union all four years I’ve been at Wagner, and this year I became BSU president. I felt that our black students needed more, and I wanted to take that role and work my butt off to change things.

from the perspective of Port Richmond, a predominantly black and Hispanic community. It’s been such a great experience to work with them and to merge creativity with democracy and citizenship and what it means to be part of a community.

And two years ago, I helped start a student organization called My Sistah’s Keeper, an activism and mentorship program for women of color. It grew out of the challenges of being both a student and a woman of color. We wanted to create that space on campus where the female student of color could feel, “You’re valid, you’re empowered, your dreams are accepted and beautiful.” And to pass that on, we started mentoring students in the nearby Park Hill housing project — we



**WM:** *Both of you have become very active student leaders in the past few years.*

**JW:** I was one of the students involved in starting a program for student athletes on campus called MOVE — Motivate, Overcome, Visualize and Empower — to help them with the same process I had gone through, finding their real identity instead of just being “an athlete.” For the past three summers, the student athletes enrolled in MOVE spent 20 hours a week, either working in the community or in

**KA:** During my sophomore year, I started working with Unified Theater, a performing arts program that promotes inclusion by bringing people together through theater productions — people with disabilities, traditional students, everyone. And when Dr. Guarasci introduced me to Sam Siegel, she got me involved in something similar in Port Richmond. With help from community partners and allies like Imagining America, Project Hospitality, and El Centro del Inmigrante, we conduct a theater workshop and put together a show that tackles social justice issues. Last year, we covered interracial relationships; this year, we covered gun violence — all

brought books with main characters of color and held workshops and had a lot of fun with the students. I am in my second year as MSK president, and I hope that we can do some great things in the time we have left this year.

**WM:** *The Black Student Union and My Sistah’s Keeper were both part of Wagner’s response last spring to a campus incident*



*that, for many of us, had insensitive racial overtones. Photos taken at a party sponsored by two campus Greek organizations were posted on Instagram. The white students' photos featured captions that were meant to be humorous, but made fun of the terms "African" and "African American."*



**KA:** That was kind of the last straw for a lot of people, because it wasn't the only thing that has happened. As in any community, black and other minority students at Wagner face small racial indignities, microaggressions, all the time. I think that, because this was so high-profile, it kind of made everyone wake up, it made everyone say, "Okay, this is actually happening, and we are not doing what we thought we were doing; we are not being mindful or aware." That's when BSU and MSK came together and started the #Awareness campaign, which asked everyone to just be aware of each other and our differences and accept

one another — and be aware that not everyone has the same experiences as you, so they may not know what might offend you. We organized two long group discussions over Awareness Weekend and from that, bigger conversations began. We started proposing an awareness component in the orientation program, and a space on campus where students can feel comfortable expressing themselves.

**JW:** It's like Martin Luther King Jr. once said: "A man can't ride you unless your back is bent." After the posting of those pictures this spring, the black people on campus stood up and said, "We're not going to tolerate this. We are going to take action for ourselves." The voice that we struggled to find, a lot of people felt was controversial and adversarial, but it empowered a lot of people to speak and come out of their shells and get involved on campus. It was kind of hard at first to see how challenging this climate was for black and other minority students, but it was great to go through the process and finally be able to say, "Now we know, we're aware of it," instead of trying to escape or hide from the realities that are happening. We are aware of this; and now the question is, "What can we do together?" That's how a lot of programs like this start forming, get their legs; people had been thinking about them, they were in the works, but to get started they just needed that extra push.

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**WM** *You two worked with Campus Life Dean Curtis Wright this summer on a new mentorship program, LEAD, to help first-year students of color at Wagner*

*find a place for themselves.*

*How did you and Dean Wright come up with LEAD?*

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**KA:** Every year there are students coming to Wagner College from different backgrounds, experiencing the culture shock of being the only African-American or Latino student in a class, and we've been there. In LEAD, we tell our mentees, "What you say matters, and it's OK to speak up for yourself." There are a lot of people who don't have a seat at the decision-making table; the Jarrids and the Kerris are sitting at that table, and behind them are a bunch of people they have to represent. We are trying to say to them, "No, you can come, too, and you should be here. You are valid; you are worth it."

**JW:** We talk about being the only black kid in the classroom — and that's an experience that's probably hard for someone else to imagine: being the token black, and having to speak not only for yourself but for all the black kids who have the capacity but don't have the seat you have in that classroom. That decision-making table Kerri spoke of — if you're not at the table, then you're on the menu. That's what it ultimately comes down to. In LEAD, older minority students share their experiences with younger minority students about things like this, and that helps them see those experiences in a positive light.

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- RELATED VIDEOS** on [wagner.edu/wagnermagazine](http://wagner.edu/wagnermagazine)
- New York 1 television news interview with Kerri Alexander, Jarrid Williams, and Provost Lily McNair following the Staten Island grand jury's decision not to indict a police officer in the death of Eric Garner.
  - *Seeds of Change* documentary by Brian Morris '65, about an earlier generation of student leaders and their campaign to make Wagner College more inclusive.

# The Next Frontier

Where is higher education headed?

*By Laura Barlament*

As the nation debates the value of college education, Wagner College and the university associations to which it belongs are continuing to develop educational quality while also expanding accessibility and vigorously defending the core principles of liberal education.



resident Guarasci, for one, is worried about the state of the conversation in the public sphere. “Where is higher education going?” he asked rhetorically in an interview with *Wagner Magazine*.

“We hear about online learning, people sitting around in their pajamas and never meeting anybody. Where will people learn about diversity? Where will


they learn about citizenship, being an engaged citizen in a democracy? Where are all the social and affective pieces? How do you build a strong, vibrant democracy? How do you build teamwork? Where are students going to develop ethical values? That bothers me.”

Over the past year, we listened in on the conversation in a couple of venues:

the annual meeting of the Association of American Colleges & Universities (AAC&U) last January, and a Wagner College symposium held in October.

The discussions were challenging and exciting — just as you might hope and expect from the people who drive so much innovation and discovery and development of the next generation in our society.

# An Efficiency Problem?

 giant hotel conference room gradually begins to fill at the opening session of the Association of American College & University's annual conference.

I introduce myself to a woman sitting near me. "My name is Funke Fontenot," she says. "I'm a dean at Georgia College in Milledgeville, Georgia."

Why is she here? I ask. "This is one of the major conferences on higher education," she tells me. "It's where the conversation is happening, and I want to be a part of the conversation."

When Debra Humphreys, AAC&U's vice president for policy and public

engagement, kicks off the session by announcing, "This is the 100th meeting of the AAC&U," a few "woots!" are heard from the audience. The attendees represent 45 states, she says, and the attendance may be the biggest on record.


"We're all here seeking to work together for a shared purpose, to make sure today's college students get the *quality* college education they need," she says, adding that the AAC&U recently expanded its mission to encompass extending the advantages of liberal education to all students, in all the sectors of higher education.

And it is this issue — access to and affordability of high-quality education — that haunts many of the conversations at this conference.

Introducing the opening panel, Scott Jaschik, editor of the widely read website Inside Higher Ed, asked the crowd, "How many here think that higher education has a quality problem?" Only a few people raised their hands.

But when he asked, "How many here think that higher education has an efficiency problem?," many more hands were raised.

# The Way of the 'Ugly Ducklings'

 n a panel discussion the next day, I heard about an association of colleges that is working to preserve residential liberal education through a "provocative" (to use President Guarasci's word) new model of collaboration.

Wagner is one of the 22 institutions in the New American Colleges & Universities (NAC&U), a national coalition of small-to-medium-sized schools dedicated to the "purposeful integration of liberal education, professional studies, and civic engagement."

Once lovingly called "the ugly ducklings of higher education," colleges and universities of this type started banding together 20 years ago. Now they are seriously starting to break down institutional walls and offer more opportunities to their students and faculty throughout the network, while preserving their individuality.


"We're creating a new and innovative type of academic community," said Thomas Kazee, president of the University of Evansville. He compared the association to a free trade zone, creating access to resources that one

institution alone can't provide.

Already, the association shares special programs for students, such as study abroad programs and also "study away" programs — a domestic version of experiencing a different campus with different resources, specialties, and opportunities.

"This collaboration is a better response to the crisis facing colleges than increasing competition and stratification," said Guarasci.

# The College of the Future

 ext up, a thought experiment: It is 10 years in the future, January 2024. A generous alum has made it possible to restart Able College, a residential liberal arts college that has failed. You have free

rein to design a new program to develop students' critical thinking and problem-solving, communications, intercultural competence, and teamwork — but the tuition can't exceed \$60,000 for the entire program, and a four-year

residential degree would cost a minimum of \$104,000. What would you do? What is your new business plan?

In this "flipped session" led by Richard Holmgren, vice president for information services and planning at Allegheny

College, everyone in attendance gathered into small groups around the tables in the room to form a mock leadership team for the new Able College.

My team brought together professors and administrators from real universities, both public and private, co-educational and single-sex, in New York, Alabama, Rhode Island, and California. Despite this diversity of backgrounds, the conversation was soon bubbling with a plan for a three-year, intensive degree

program. Three semesters' worth of studies would be completed each year. A transformative first-year program should kick it off, they agreed, immersing the students in the local community. Next, all students would leave campus for internships or co-op programs, overseen by faculty. Finally, the students would return to campus for their capstone year and another culminating project serving the local community.

As all of the groups in the room

presented their business plans, the idea of reducing the time spent completing the degree was a common thread, as was incorporating local service and work as a part of the educational experience.

I left the room thinking that, whether or not any of these business plans could work, the idea of "flipping" the conference room activities is great: problem-solving with a group is more fun and inspiring than listening to someone else give you the answers.

## Responding to Disruption

Wagner College has long been a leader in developing new trends in undergraduate education that have become widely adopted across the higher education landscape. Now, the College is considering the next phase.

The faculty took one day of the College's fall break in October for an Innovation Celebration — a symposium by and for Wagner professors to share the latest methods in teaching and learning.

President Richard Guarasci kicked off the day by noting, "We're at an interesting point in higher education. We're at a

moment of what the business folks would call disruption."

Technological change and economic uncertainty is driving colleges to reconsider and adapt what they do.

But at Wagner, innovation and adaptation — around a core set of principles embodied in the College's signature curriculum, the Wagner Plan for the Practical Liberal Arts — is a way of life.

"In my time here," Guarasci said, "we've always risen as a faculty and staff to say, 'OK, what do we need to do next? How do we take this [Wagner Plan] model and

tweak it or reform it?' And we're at that point again."

The core principles, according to Guarasci, are "active learning, experiential learning, collaborative learning, and interdisciplinary learning."

Throughout the day, more than 40 faculty, staff, and even a few students, presented posters, videos, discussions, and talks about classroom projects, avenues of collaboration, assessment studies, effective use of teaching technologies, and other aspects of their teaching and scholarly work.

## Multifaceted Learning

Many of the projects presented at Wagner's Innovation Celebration encompassed an amazingly broad range of constituencies and communities to create rich learning experiences.

Take, for example, the chemistry research summer program for Port Richmond High School students presented by Nicholas Richardson, associate professor of chemistry and department chair.

It started with a chemistry major of long ago: Clarence A. Faires '46, who worked for Exxon for many years. He and his wife, Anna R. Faires, designated a portion of their estate for the improvement of Wagner's chemistry department. That endowment fund now provides about \$20,000 per year for the department to use for special projects.

For the past several years, Richardson has been thinking about involving the department more in the Port Richmond

Partnership, the college-community collaboration focused on a single Staten Island neighborhood with great economic, educational, and health needs. He envisioned a summer program that would expose high school students to advanced laboratory research and give Wagner students valuable mentoring experience.

In 2014, he launched the program. For three weeks, four students from Port Richmond High School lived on campus and worked every day in the lab

under the supervision of Mohammad Alauddin, professor of chemistry and an internationally known expert in the field of environmental pollution.

Their focus was on Alauddin's specialty: the problem of water contamination in Bangladesh. The high school students analyzed water samples collected by Alauddin's research team, using advanced tests and instrumentation. To bring their learning back home, they also did field tests on water samples in Staten Island.

Two senior chemistry majors guided the high school students in the lab.

Another Wagner student, who is a member of the Bonner Leaders program, provided co-curricular activities and supervision.

This past summer, Wagner College also launched another summer program for Port Richmond students: a leadership academy for potential first-generation college students, which combined a community-focused internship with instruction in writing and math. Integration of the summer chemistry research program with this leadership academy is under discussion, Richardson said.

In summary, Richardson said, the summer chemistry research program provided invaluable mentoring experience for Wagner students, critical research experience for Port Richmond High School students, and engagement with the Port Richmond Partnership for the chemistry department.

"And it exposed more people to science," he concluded — not as an abstraction, but as a hands-on, real-world, problem-solving experience.

## Intelligent Redesign

The one non-Wagner speaker at the Innovation Symposium was Carol Geary Schneider, president of the Association of American Colleges and Universities (AAC&U). She admitted at the outset of her keynote speech that much of what she and her organization have learned and are promoting as the best model of college education came from Wagner College.

And, she said, "the next frontier in higher education" is also to be found at Wagner College.

The AAC&U promotes the ideal of "liberal education" — an education that provides broad knowledge, cultivates the "power of the mind," and promotes civic, social, and ethical responsibility. "These goals are worth fighting for, in a moment when higher education is besieged by a narrow, reductionist, instrumentalist conception of why people go to college," she emphasized.

Added to those goals is another essential learning outcome of the 21st century: integrative and applied learning. "It's what students can do with their

knowledge that makes it an empowering education," Schneider said.

The AAC&U has also studied and defined techniques for achieving these liberal education outcomes: "high-impact educational practices" such as the first-year seminars, learning communities, service learning, and internships that are hallmarks of the Wagner Plan.

But now, Schneider said, a new vision is emerging that ties together all of these learning outcomes and high-impact practices: "an intelligent redesign of the undergraduate experience," she said. "And it's all here — you were pioneers in it — it's a notion of a cornerstone-to-capstone form to the curriculum."

In other words, the new thrust of liberal education is to help students better tie together all that they are learning, to provide themes that thread throughout all parts of the students' educational journey, and to promote student involvement in answering the big, real-world questions that they want to solve.

Specifically, this new frontier requires rethinking the general education portion

of the curriculum and making it as vital and meaningful to the students as their major.

In a reflective session that concluded the day, the Wagner faculty started thinking creatively about ways that the whole educational experience could be redesigned to make it even more meaningful for students. Ideas included having students from different disciplines write on a common theme, holding a senior conference on a common topic, and threading themes into the general education curriculum.

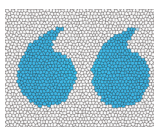
"Great ideas to further explore, discuss, and pursue," said Mary Lo Re, a business professor who has been named Wagner's new dean of adult education and extension programs, and who organized the symposium.

The symposium grew out of the work of a faculty committee on teaching, learning, value and cost; that group, as well as a special committee on general education requirements, will keep the conversations going on these important topics. ■



# From stained glass to beverage design, Cliff Oster '69 is a man who 'just knows what goes together.' Intuitively.

BY LAURA BARLAMENT



Evidently I must have a good palate," says Cliff Oster '69. That's his modest explanation

of how he became intimately involved in formulating the debut flavors of Vitaminwater — a drink that became a sensational success and changed the beverage industry.

Pressed for an example of his flavor sensitivity, he tells this story: He was at an internationally renowned flavor company, tasting one of the beverage products he was helping to develop.

He took a sip and declared, "The taste isn't clean enough. Just add one drop of lemon juice concentrate." The flavor experts scoffed. One drop added to a batch? "No one can tell if that one drop is in there or not," they replied.

"Yes, I can," he said, and accepted a challenge to test his taste buds. The staff brought him four samples of the drink, one of which had a single drop of lemon juice concentrate added to the batch.

Oster picked it out of the lineup.

Still not convinced, they gave him another test. They made four batches of another drink with a completely different flavor, one of which contained a single drop of lemon juice concentrate.

Oster tasted all four, and picked the one with the added lemon. The flavor experts scoffed no longer.

“I believe in intuition,” says Oster. And it's no wonder he does — his career has taken some extraordinary twists and turns. The Wagner history major grew up in

a blue-collar family in Farmingdale, Long Island. An aspiring attorney, he became a top debater for the College team. But instead of going to law school after college, he worked as a buyer for a department store, and then as a teacher, earning his master's in history at night.

Along the way, he got into stained glass making, and invented one of the world's foremost silver stains, used by prominent stained glass artists around the world to create rich, vibrant gold colors. He procured materials for a manufacturer of aluminum ladders, and natural ingredients for a pioneering natural-juices company, After The Fall. He ended up becoming famed entrepreneur Darius Bikoff's right-hand man as he created the international phenomenon Vitaminwater.



**COLOR PALETTE** Cliff Oster makes his silver stain at his home in rural New Hampshire. The late stained glass artist Dick Millard created this “Salesman Sample” to demonstrate the color range and vibrancy of Oster’s Ancient Walpole stain, from a soft yellow to a deep amber.

But this man who helped make some of the hippest beverages on the market really values old-timiness: He collects painted glass lamps from the early 20th century, restores rare vintage cars, writes about the homespun wisdom of his elders, and makes music on wooden flutes. And, he believes in liberal arts education.

**C**liff Oster lives with his wife, Marcia, in a lovely, light-filled house on a hilltop in rural New Hampshire — her family’s ancestral farm — where a visitor can marvel at the pristine view of green fields, forests, and mountains.

Wearing a Panama hat and a white linen shirt, Oster serves his visitor neither juice nor nutrient-enhanced water. Instead, he offers a rich and fragrant cup of coffee, with beans he roasts himself in small batches and grinds to perfection. He brews the drink in a

1940s Chemex coffeemaker, immersing the beans in water for 90 seconds before letting it drip. “The beans get wet and release a lot of flavor,” he explains.

During a consulting trip to coffee plantations in Guatemala, he found out that Chemex is the preferred coffeemaker of the most astute coffee buyers. Because of his reputation in the beverage industry, he often receives requests for help from entrepreneurs seeking to make the next hit beverage — especially health-related ones. On this trip, Oster was looking into the idea of creating a beverage out of the luscious, highly perishable fruit of the coffee tree. (Coffee beans are actually the seeds of this fruit.) He didn’t have enough time to spend on the experimentation that would be required for such an endeavor, he says, “but I learned about coffee!”

Oster’s ability to tackle a task with minimal previous knowledge and make himself into a noted expert in the field is

legendary. Mark Panely, the founder of After The Fall Beverages, still wonders at his former employee’s achievements.

“Cliff is one of the best, if not *the* best beverage purchaser I’ve ever encountered in 37 years in the business,” says Panely. “He was brilliant at it. But, when he applied for the job, his resume showed me nothing to believe that he was qualified for the job.”

At that point, in 1991, Oster was in charge of purchasing for White Metal Rolling and Stamping in Walpole, New Hampshire. Its main business was producing aluminum ladders for Sears.

Through a combination of charm and persistence, Oster persuaded Panely to hire him as the purchasing director of the beverage company, located in nearby Brattleboro, Vermont. And Panely never regretted it.

“I feel like Christopher Columbus discovering a diamond in the rough,” says Panely, enthusiastically mixing his



metaphors. “I believe he’s a genius in some form, by virtue of his extraordinary intuition and knowledge of people.”

Through his skills in relationship-building and his attention to the details of every deal, says Panely, Oster helped After The Fall get better prices on the highest-quality ingredients, packaging materials, and manufacturing contracts. While traveling extensively to do research on the company’s purchases and manufacturing processes, Oster also started developing his palate.

“Beverages are created not just on taste,” says Panely, who is a trained chemist. “There is a science behind it. Clifford just jumped on the science. And, I wanted to teach him more to make him a better purchaser.” One of the fundamental aspects of beverage formulation is the balance of sweetness and tartness, known as the brix/acid ratio. “He got very good at it and took it and made it his own,” Panely says.

Oster was an integral part of the team during the company’s best years, says Panely. This success led to Oster’s being out of a job: a bigger competitor, Smucker, acquired the small, entrepreneurial company in 1994. Most of the staff of After The Fall, including Oster, were laid off.

Oster and some of his After The Fall colleagues started their own company. “It didn’t do well,” Oster says. “We had great products, but we didn’t know our way around the sales world.” Oster also worked for Panely’s second company, Journey Foods. But then, he got a call from another of his old colleagues.

Frank Bombaci, the former head of sales for After The Fall, had been hired

by Darius Bikoff, founder of an innovative beverage company known as Glaceau and Energy Brands. It was the late 1990s, and Bikoff was just starting a new venture called Vitaminwater. It was an idea whose time had come, as consumers were becoming more and more conscious of the nutritional content of their food and drinks. The FDA’s nutrition facts label had been implemented in 1992. Now, drinks formerly considered healthful, such as the natural juice products of companies like After The Fall, were seen in a more negative light because they were high in calories and sugar.

Bikoff hired Oster as his director of operations and explained his new concept to him: To add vitamins to water in a

doing quality control on the positioning of the labels.

Oster says he doesn’t remember the exact discussions about how they chose the flavors; but “everybody knew that we were all about being natural, not too sweet. And we insisted on good flavor,” he says, with emphasis. “We were making something that was healthy and had benefits, but it had to taste good. So many beverages now are not refreshing and flavorful in a real way.”

According to Mark Panely, it was Oster’s genius to experiment with the expected sweetness content of a beverage — the brix/acid ratio — and to drastically reduce it while maintaining an acceptable taste for American consumers.

“That was a radical and brilliant move on his part,” says Panely. “He should be in the beverage hall of fame.”

**“ I said, ‘That’s a home run; no, that’s a grand slam.’ Everyone knows you should take vitamins and you should drink water. ”**

Bikoff’s company began to grow exponentially with the introduction of Vitaminwater. Before then, it had been doing less than \$1 million in sales annually; sales tripled annually during each of the following three years. In 2007, six years after

Vitaminwater’s introduction, it was sold to Coca-Cola.

Oster retired just before the Coca-Cola purchase. Since then, the company and its signature beverage have come under quite a bit of public criticism, including two major lawsuits accusing the company of deceptive marketing practices. It’s now common to find critiques of Vitaminwater’s sugar content and marketing claims in the media.

What does Oster have to say about these complaints? “I don’t know. I’m not a critic,” he says. “But what we claimed was in the bottle was in the bottle. If we said

drink that would be low-calorie and flavorful. “I said, “That’s a home run; no, that’s a grand slam,” Oster recalls. “Everyone knows you should take vitamins and you should drink water.”

It became Oster’s mission to realize Bikoff’s vision. “From the very beginning,” says Bombaci, “Cliff worked very closely with Darius Bikoff, the founder, to develop the idea of creating a great water-based beverage that had nutrients and great taste and a low sugar profile.” Oster did everything from overseeing the flavor formulation in the lab and making sure a high-quality product was manufactured to

there was 100 percent vitamin C in the bottle, we put more in. Because vitamins degrade over time, and we wanted to make sure that consumers got what they paid for. It was an ethical company right from the beginning. Our goal was not to make money and hoodwink people, but to make a healthy beverage.”

Oster points out that Vitaminwater was first sold in health food stores. “People who go to those stores will read and question labels, and we met their expectations big time.”

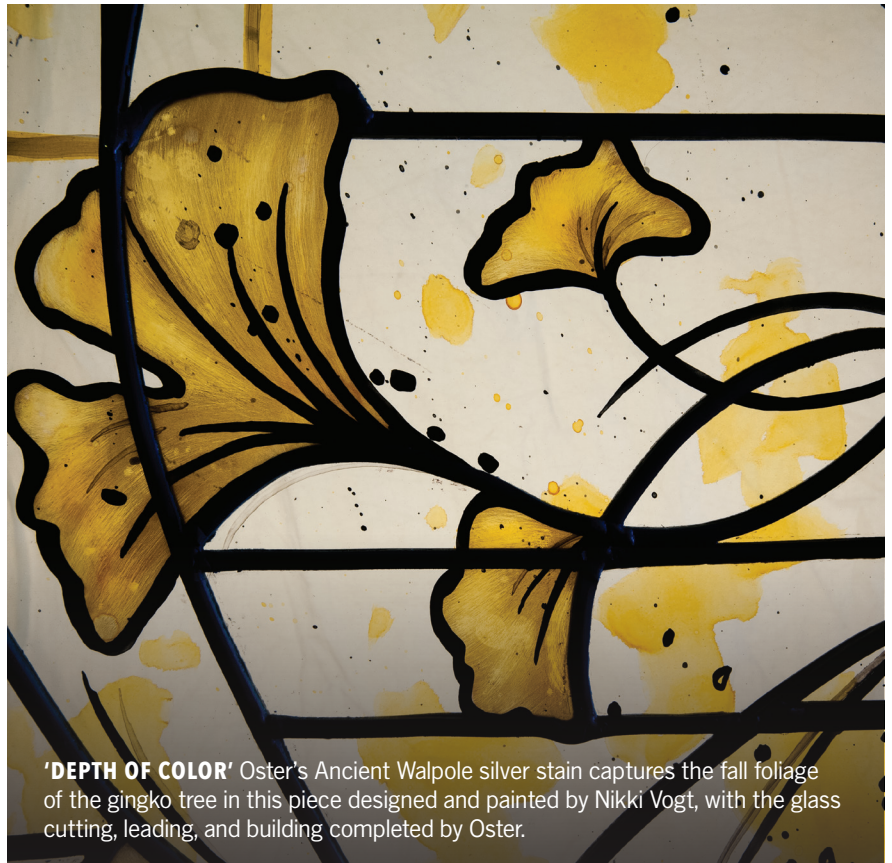
Oster’s colleagues in the beverage industry admire him not only because he was effective at his job, but also because he is just a mensch, a good guy with a great attitude and sense of fun. “He always treated other people with kindness and always handled tense situations in a reasonable way,” says Bombaci.

Bombaci also says that to understand Cliff Oster, you have to know about his work in a very different part of the human endeavor: the world of stained glass art. “I’m jealous of him creating those stains,” says Bombaci. “Those are something really special.”

The world’s foremost stained glass artists agree.

John Kebrle, for example, has created stained glass windows for 43 Hard Rock Cafes around the globe, and each one of them features the golden glow of Oster’s Ancient Walpole stains. “The reason for this is that Clifford’s stains are simply the best available anywhere and have always been so,” says Kebrle. “The others were just not up to snuff.”

Another fan is John Reyntiens, one of whose recent works was Queen Elizabeth’s Diamond Jubilee window. This gift made by the Houses of Parliament in 2012 is the first new piece of permanent art to be installed in Westminster Hall, the oldest building of the English Parliamentary Estate, since the Renaissance. It uses about 1,500 pieces of glass to depict the Queen’s coat of arms, and 60 percent of



‘DEPTH OF COLOR’ Oster’s Ancient Walpole silver stain captures the fall foliage of the ginkgo tree in this piece designed and painted by Nikki Vogt, with the glass cutting, leading, and building completed by Oster.

“He used the stain, and everyone went nuts.”

the window features the Ancient Walpole stain.

“I’ve always used Clifford’s stain,” says Reyntiens. “It’s the best I’ve used. You get a really good consistency of shade. There are cheaper alternatives, but I prefer not to use them.”

Silver stain is distinct from other types of color used in stained glass art. Whereas most colors are paints that adhere to the glass’s surface once fired, obscuring the passage of light through glass, silver stain actually “stains” the glass. (Hence the name, “stained glass.”) Based on silver nitrate, silver stain chemically bonds with glass when fired and alters its molecular make-up, creating a transparent color

that varies from yellow to gold to orange. “Stain gives you another dimension of color,” explains stained glass artist Paul Coulaz of the famed Durhan Studios.

Oster learned the craft of stained glass in the 1970s at Durhan Studios, then located in Manhattan and owned by Coulaz and the late Albinas Elskus. Oster created his silver stain in 1983, a few years after he had moved to New Hampshire and established his own stained glass studio. One day his teacher and friend, Albinas Elskus, came for a visit and showed him how to make silver stain and fire it into glass, using an old kiln Oster had refurbished.

“The first results ... were mediocre,”

Oster wrote about the experience. "I knew that I could do better. After reviewing our initial firings, I instinctively knew what changes had to be made."

Oster kept working on the formula, aiming for maximum vibrancy. "I somehow knew what to mix in, and in what proportions," he says. "And on the very first experiment, I got it right. The stain was named Ancient Walpole: 'Walpole' for the town of its creation, and 'Ancient' because the depth of color resembled stains from previous centuries." Elskus liked it so much that he used it in his next commission, a series of windows honoring Saint Elizabeth Ann Seton, the first American Catholic saint, for her namesake church in Shrub Oak, New York. "He used the stain, and everyone went nuts," says Oster.

Word spread quickly. Over time, in response to artists' requests, he developed two additional shades of silver stain, Ancient Winchester and Ancient Lemon. They were all featured in a 2010 book by J. Kenneth Leap, *Silver Stain: An Artist's Guide*, which compared Oster's stains with others made in the U.S., Germany, and France. Oster makes the stains at his home in individually prepared batches.

“We are not limited,” Oster insists. “You can do things people don’t expect you to do. Mark [Panely] called me ‘Lazarus Man’ because I’ve been up and down, and I just get up and keep going. That’s a good quality people need to have. Always move forward. End of sermon for today.” And he laughs, with two high-pitched wheezing breaths.

Lately Oster has been working on another new venture: writing a book. “It’s about how to achieve a good life based on things many of us learned as kids,” he explains. “Like how my father would say, ‘Anything worth doing is worth doing well.’ Or my aunt, ‘A promise is a promise.’”

Those words of homespun wisdom, plus an absolute belief in intuition and

hard work, have guided Oster far in life. But there’s also one other factor.

“I attribute it to my liberal arts education. At one time I doubted it, but it’s prepared me to do a lot of different things. My Wagner liberal arts education gave me the confidence to talk to anyone about almost anything. It also introduced me to the art of listening.

“I want people to value a liberal arts education,” he continues. “It’s almost like a religious feeling I have about it now.”

And he jumps into his 1937 Starlight Blue Pontiac sedan convertible, which he has been painstakingly rebuilding over the past two years, to guide his guest to the highway. ■

“We are not limited. You can do things people don’t expect you to do.”

SEE MORE EXAMPLES of *Ancient Walpole* stained glass, including the *Queen’s Jubilee* window, at [wagner.edu/wagnermagazine](http://wagner.edu/wagnermagazine).

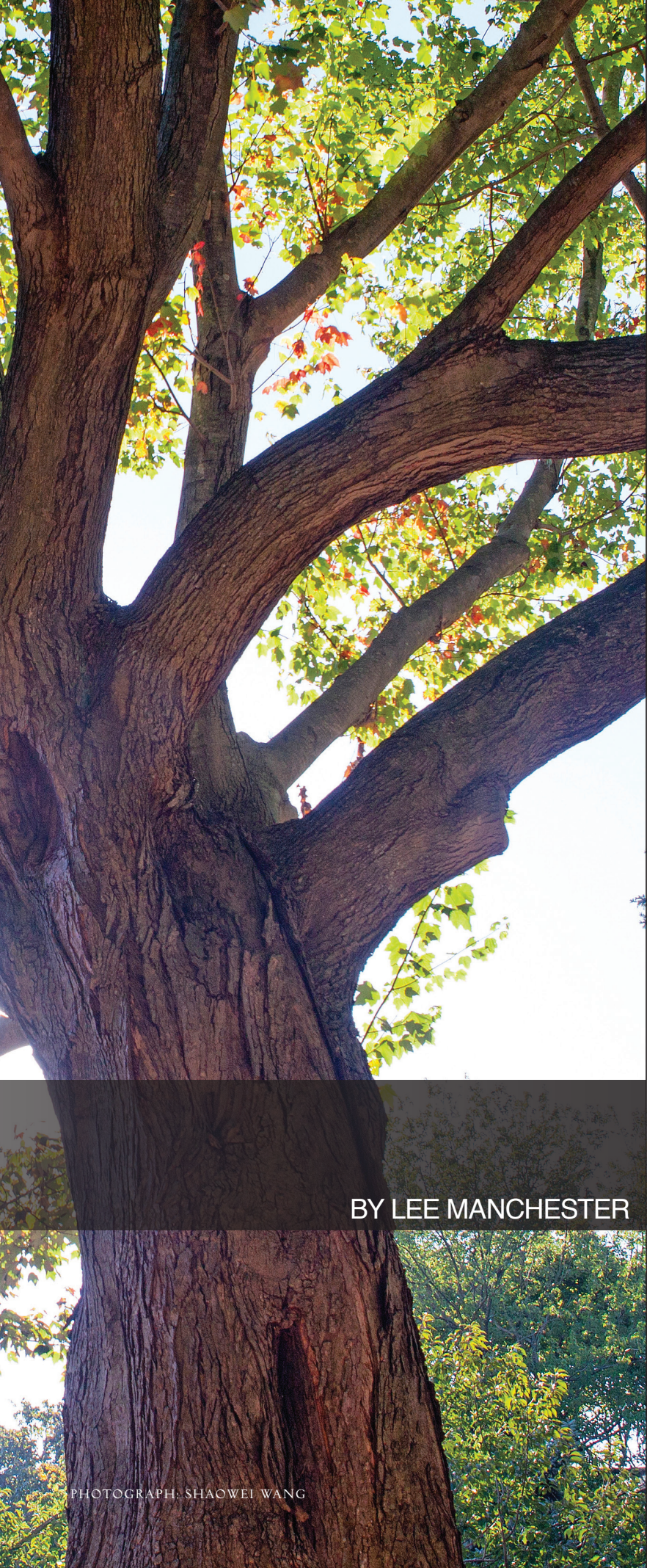


**JUST HAVE FUN WITH IT** Oster, who played in an award-winning drum and bugle corps as a boy, started collecting and playing wooden flutes when he traded a case of Vitaminwater for one during a business trip to California.



# Rooted in Grymes Hill

The history of Wagner trees helps to tell the College's story in this place



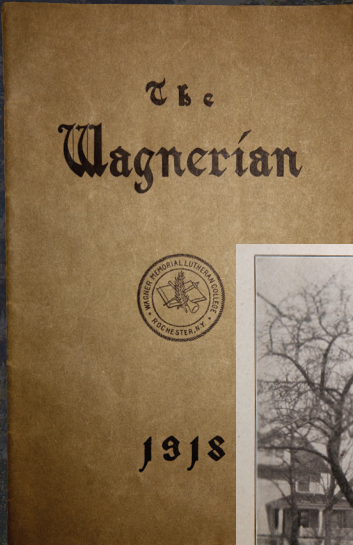
A

s in the book of Genesis, a tree plays a major role in Wagner College's creation story.

And our first yearbook, published in the spring of 1918, serves as our bible.

It tells the story of how two Lutheran pastors founded the school in 1883 in Rochester, New York. Next to a photo captioned "The Old Apple Tree," the editors wrote, "This particular tree is intimately connected with the founding of our Alma Mater. . . . It was in its shade that the venerable patriarchs . . . often met to discuss the project which was so dear to the hearts of both."

BY LEE MANCHESTER



The Old Apple Tree

**THE UR-TREE** In Wagner's first yearbook, published in 1918, the editors described the school's founders meeting under "The Old Apple Tree."



**BRANCHING OUT** A limb of the Founders Tree was used in Main Hall's dedication.

That apple tree, known as the Founders Tree to the early Wagner community, continued to be a powerful symbol throughout our early years on Staten Island. According to the 1925 yearbook, plans were even made “to transplant a shoot of the tree on the Hill next year with the hope that it will grow up as a ‘new Old Apple Tree.’” No record has survived, however, of the success or failure of those plans.

But that was not the end of the Founders Tree in our early history. In February 1930, a branch cut from that tree was brought to Staten Island for Main Hall’s dedication ceremonies. As a church official handed the branch to the College president and the trustee chairman, “he admonished them to ... have Wagner grow in numbers and service in the future as she has in the past since the days of its humble beginning under this old apple tree.”

**I**t was no wonder that trees were such powerful images in the College’s early life on Staten Island, considering that our first permanent home in Rochester had been a single three-story building on a tiny urban lot, just a block away from the city’s busy railroad yard. By comparison, Wagner’s new home was a veritable park, “located in a region of tranquil seclusion. ... Tall and stately trees, stretches of greensward truly give Wagner something which may be referred to as a ‘Campus,’” the *Wagner College Bulletin* said in its spring 1918 issue.



In 1922, four years after the new campus opened, a Pennsylvania miners’ strike created a shortage of the coal used for heating throughout New York City.

“There is a shortage of 40 per cent. in anthracite of domestic sizes, and by no possibility can it be made up this Winter,” said the *New York Times* early that December.

“All the professors’ homes and the dormitory are hard hit for coal,” said the *Wagner College Bulletin* in November 1922. “There is but thirty days’ supply of coal in the borough of Richmond for the 86,000 inhabitants.”

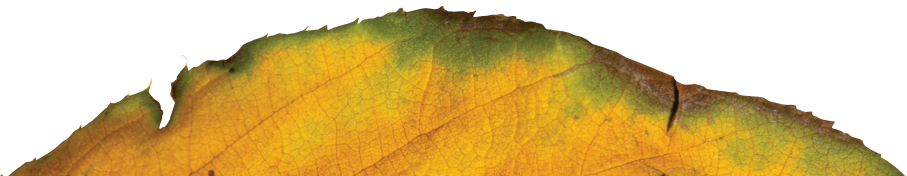
Our solution to the coal shortage? Culling the deadwood from our campus forest.

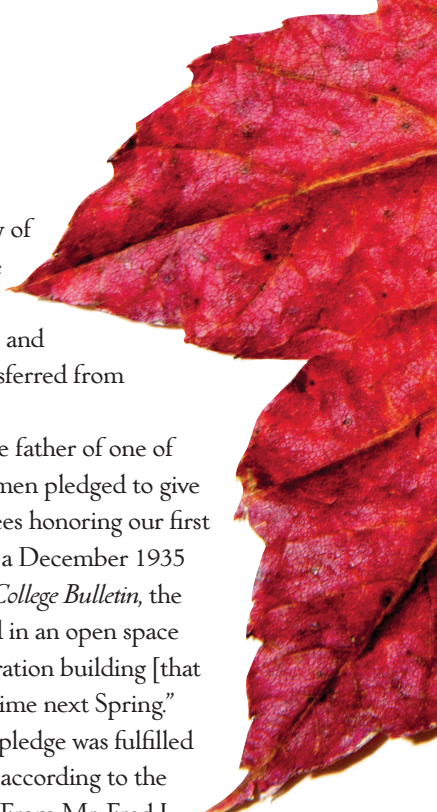
“Our students have been very faithful



during the past few weeks in cutting down dead trees and sawing them up for fire-wood,” the *Bulletin* said. “They are organized into ‘gangs,’ led by upperclassmen, to attend to this work at least two hours each week.”

**T**he next episode in Wagner’s arboreal history began in September 1933, when the first women enrolled on Grymes Hill,





ending a half century of male exclusivity. The enrollees included 17 first-year students and four others who transferred from other colleges.

Two years later, the father of one of those pioneering women pledged to give Wagner 17 maple trees honoring our first co-eds. According to a December 1935 story in the *Wagner College Bulletin*, the trees “will be planted in an open space behind the administration building [that is, Main Hall] sometime next Spring.”

Sure enough, that pledge was fulfilled the following spring, according to the April 1936 *Bulletin*: “From Mr. Fred J. Biele of Huntington, Long Island, [have come] twenty sugar maples.”

Several varieties of maple trees can be found today on the inner campus behind Main Hall — red maples, Norway maples ... and, yes, sugar maples. As this article is being written, they are bright with autumn colors.

So, how does this documentary information mesh with the popular but unsubstantiated campus myth that the trees around the Sutter Oval were the ones planted to honor our first co-eds? There are, after all, 17 trees rising from the inside of the walkway around the Oval — is that just a coincidence?

Our best answer to that question is, “Yes, it is.”

A campus aerial photograph from 1938 shows a neat array of saplings that had recently been planted on both sides of the driveway in front of Main Hall — the area we know today as the Oval. Another aerial photo taken in 1950 shows maturing trees rising around the Oval in the same array as the 1938 saplings — and the height of those trees is consistent with the known growth habits of the London plane tree, which reaches about 60 feet in its first 20 years.



**NEW GROWTH** *Left:* Some of the first women to enroll at Wagner College in fall 1933. *This page:* The campus in 1938 shows the saplings lining the drive to Main Hall.

The fact that there are 17 London plane trees on the inside of the Oval, and 18 trees on the outside, is just a fluke: The blank space between two trees in the pattern on the inside of the Oval shows where one of the 18 original trees was removed at some point, possibly because of disease.

The trees memorializing Wagner's first co-eds, however, were maple trees, not London plane trees, and they were planted behind Main Hall, not on the Oval in front of it.

**I**n 1960, a new organization was created to share the botanical resources of Wagner's park-like campus with its neighbors on Staten Island.

"An arboretum — a botanical garden specializing in trees and shrubs — will be established on the Wagner College campus," wrote Robert Olwig in the Sept. 1, 1960, issue of the *Staten Island Advance*. "A joint announcement was made today by the college and a new citizens group called Staten Island Arboretum Inc."

While "the arboretum will include plantings throughout the 75-acre hilltop campus," Olwig wrote, "the focal point ... will be the heavily wooded ravine off Howard Ave. between Hillside Ave. and the library building now being constructed."

The purpose of the Staten Island Arboretum, according to the October 1960 *Wagner College Bulletin*, was to "demonstrate the wide variety of trees and shrubbery suitable for local soil and weather conditions and serve an important service to home owners" who were landscaping their new houses.

By 1964, however, the Arboretum was "being challenged by 'progress,'" according to the *Advance*. "The college

4. Black Cherry *Prunus serotina*



The older trees are identified by the platy scales and upturned edges of the bark. Common on the veins of the underside of the leaf is a reddish-brown hair-like covering (pubescence). The fruit provide food for songbirds, gamebirds and black bears. The species grows readily following disturbances. Caution: the wilted foliage is poisonous due to cyanic acid. The fruit can be used for jelly, wine and flavoring rum and brandy.

5. Sassafras *Sassafras albidum*



Only three species of Sassafras are known; one in Formosa, another in China and the third native to eastern U. S. On S. I., the tree is found abundantly along roadsides and in early succession following disturbances. The tree may contain three different forms of leaves; smooth, mitten-shaped, and three lobed. The leaves and bark have a strong aromatic odor and the bark of the root is used to prepare a terrific tea!

6. Eastern Hemlock *Tsuga canadensis*

Hemlocks may reach 160 feet in height. The bark is the most useful of the tree being a source for tanning used in making leather. The tree can be identified by its small cones which are less than 1 inch long. The leaves which are about 1/2 to 2/3 of an inch long are narrow and flat and attached to the twig by a short stalk.

7. White Pine *Pinus strobus*



White Pine has extremely fine needles, the only native pine to have this 5 needle in a bundle. Needles do drop off, but are replaced, thus the pines are called "evergreens". White pine was called "coffin pine" in pioneer days because it was light and easily worked. Today the wood is used for window frames and trim. The seeds are eaten by many song and gamebirds and the needles are often used in their nests. Pines rank near the top in importance to wildlife.

8. Hawthorn *Crataegus sp.*

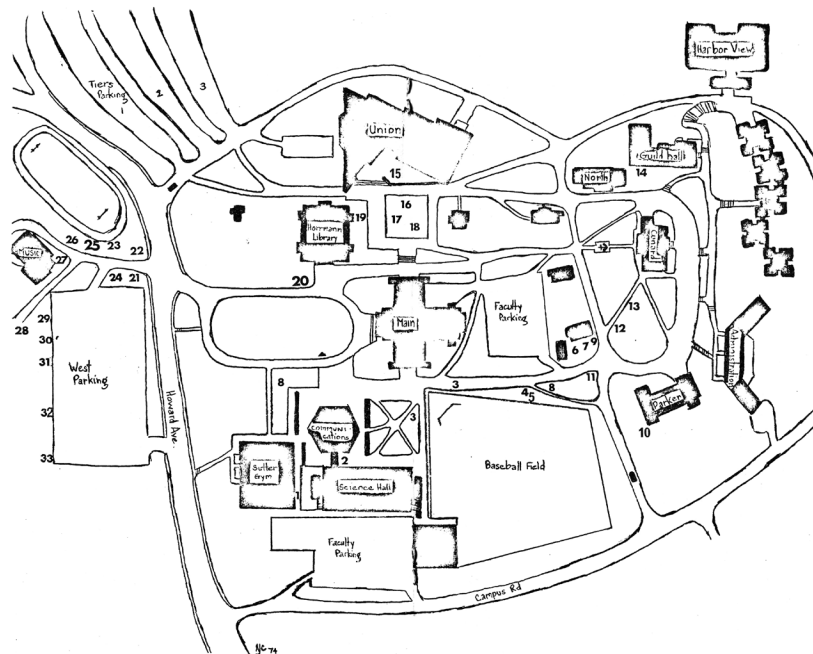


More than 100 species are native to the U.S. Generally a small tree found in open area pastures. It is difficult to identify the species since they are so similar to leaf-shape branching and fruit types. Spines are from 1/4" long and the fruit hangs on the tree providing a winter food source for such songbirds as the fox sparrow and cedar waxwing. Many species are used in ornamental plantings.

9. Red Mulberry *Morus rubra*



This is similar to the white mulberry which was introduced into the U.S. from Asia, for silkworms to feed upon. The Mulberry first ripens in early summer and is a popular food for songbirds. The leaves of mulberries tend to take many shapes unlike most other trees which have similar shaped leaves. The tree also can be identified by its yellow orange bark.



**'WOODY PLANTS OF WAGNER COLLEGE'** Want to take a look at this 1974 survey of campus trees? You can download a copy at [wagner.edu/wagnermagazine](http://wagner.edu/wagnermagazine).

is completing a new dormitory, other structures are being planned and a large area between Wagner College Rd. [the main entranceway] and Hillside Ave. is being filled in with dirt from the Staten Island Expressway." That fill created what we know today as the Tiers parking lot.

We don't know what arboretum

activities were undertaken in other parts of campus, or for how long. We do know, however, that by 1977, the Staten Island Botanic Garden (as it had become known) had moved to the campus of a former retirement home for merchant seamen, Sailors Snug Harbor, that had been landmarked and purchased by the City of



New York for refitting as a cultural center on Staten Island's North Shore.

**T**he next stage in Wagner College's consciousness of its own sylvan resources came in 1974 with the publication of "Woody Plants of Wagner College," a 16-page illustrated guide to the common tree species found at that time on our Grymes Hill campus. It was written by biology professor Dean Christianson and student John Cain '73, with leaf drawings by Paul Greccay '74 and a species locator map by Alice Cook Taylor '74.

"We were really an active group at the time," Christianson told us. "Earth Day had been celebrated for the first time in 1970, and we were pretty fired up."

The booklet, however, was not created as a tool for the Staten Island Arboretum, Christianson said. In fact, Christianson doesn't recall ever hearing of the arboretum project during his tenure at Wagner, which ran from 1969 to 1975.

"Woody Plants" wasn't meant to be a definitive, exhaustive inventory of all the tree species found on Grymes Hill, just "a guide to some of the more common woody plants found on the Wagner Campus. ... Many other species are also found on Campus, but most are not common in this region other than for ornamentals."

**F**inally, to bring us into the present day, we enlisted the help of two current members of the Wagner College community. One of them was biology professor Horst Onken, an animal physiologist who grew up surrounded by the greenhouses and orchards of his family's nursery in western Germany, a business started by Onken's father and uncles.

"I enjoyed that a lot," Onken said. "It

was right on the outskirts of town — on one side of us were fields; on the other, forests."

Some years back, after Onken happened upon an old copy of Christianson's "Woody Plants" in a lab drawer, he decided to create an updated, informal tour of Wagner's modern trees for new biology students — his way of introducing them to the varieties of woody life in their new community. He gave us an abbreviated version of that tour early this fall.

As we walked through Trautmann Square, next to the library, Onken knelt and picked up the spiny, open seed cover of an American beech tree.

"Squirrels love the beechnut," Onken

"Squirrels love the beechnut," Onken said. "They've already got the nuts from this one."

said. "They've already got the nuts from this one."

Onken guessed that the beech tree in Trautmann Square was probably about the same age as the twin European beech trees planted on either end of Main Hall after the building opened in 1930. One of those trees succumbed to illness half a decade ago; it was replaced with a young tree of the same variety — and since the beech only grows to a certain height, and no more, eventually the two Main Hall beeches will again be of matching height, Onken explained.

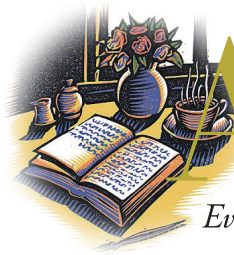
**O**ur last exploration of Wagner's campus trees was in the company of Long Island arborist Maryann T. Matlak, the mother of Corrine Matlak '15, a student worker in our Communications Office. Maryann Matlak helped us look with a landscaper's eye at the trees currently growing on the Inner Oval, the small yard behind the Cunard family villa that served as the core of Wagner College's original 1918 Staten Island campus.

"Most of what you see here is for shade," Matlak explained, pointing to the two magnificent red maples, the ash, and the sassafras in the yard, and the towering old white oaks that ring the area. "You also have lots of ornamental trees along the margins — the cherries lining the walks, the crabapple off one corner of Cunard, a little dogwood on the south end, a magnolia. With all of those blossoms, this must be lovely in the spring."

And so it is, as all Wagnerians know — but, of course, it's lovely all year around, and inspiring, too. The trees of Wagner College, these great, huge creatures rising into the sky, serve as a powerful nonverbal counterpoint to the river of words that flows through our classrooms and textbooks, a silent, strong testament to the diversity and durability of Being.

And the Wagner woods endure. ■





# AlumniLink

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



## Tricks and Treats on Fall Festival Weekend

**A three-day event drew more than 700 students, parents, and alumni**

COMBINING TWO HUGE annual Wagner fall events — Homecoming and Family Weekend — along with Halloween and NYC Marathon Sunday, Wagner's Fall Festival weekend generated a lot of energy and school spirit on campus, despite the not-always-hospitable weather conditions.

The weekend kicked off on Halloween, with open classes for curious parents and alumni, followed by an open house in Harborview Hall for little trick-or-treaters. Hardier souls visited the Towers of Terror, a haunted house in Wagner's

spookiest residence hall. A spirit rally with free food trucks and a parade by the Seahawk Marching Band, cheerleaders, and dance team warmed everyone up for the game day.

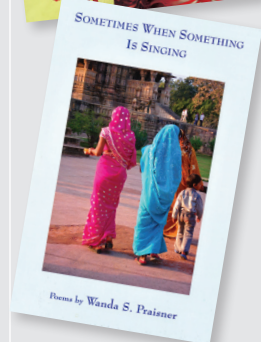
On Saturday, November 1, a big tent kept everyone dry and decently warm as a cold drizzle fell outside. Staten Island food vendors Alfonso's Pastry Shoppe, Cucumber Sushi and Salad Bar, Jimmy Max, Joe & Pat's Pizzeria, John's Restaurant, Marie's Gourmet, Moe's Southwest Grill, Planet Wings, Venga Mexican Grill, and Wagner Dining Services provided a wide variety of eating options. Staten Island's new craft beer brewery, Flagship, was also on hand for sampling.

The Wagner Seahawks fell to the Sacred Heart Pioneers, 7–23, the team's only NEC loss of the season. But everyone was able to warm up, dry off, and forget their cares that evening while watching the Wagner College Variety Show, featuring student performances by magician Mathieu Loiselle and a capella singing groups Fermata Nowhere and Vocal Synergy.

## New & Noteworthy



**Robert Geronimo '09** *Little Maia and the Coral City and Agent 87 and the Black Train* (Ascalon Press, 2014) A successful Kickstarter campaign allowed Geronimo to publish his first solo book, *Little Maia and the Coral City*, which tells a story entirely in pictures. Through Ascalon Press, he is publishing more books that feature strong female characters overcoming adversity – such as the protagonist of his second work, *Agent 87 and the Black Train*, whom Geronimo describes as “a cross between Indiana Jones and James Bond.”



**Wanda Schweizer Praisner '54 M'57** *Sometimes When Something Is Singing* (Antrim House, 2014). Praisner’s fourth collection of poetry “reflects on a lifetime of close family ties and far-flung travels, with an eye for local color, period detail, the surprise flash of memory,” according to poet Maxine Susman. “She brings an unflinching candor to poems about the death of her son, and her own survival as a wife and mother.”



### FLASHBACK

#### Cheerleaders, Homecoming 1968

This year’s Fall Festival recalled the big Homecoming celebrations of yesteryear, featuring a parade and student-designed floats. Here, Linda Barbes Stein ’69 and Anita Carroll-Sabattino ’69, co-captains of the 1968–69 Wagner College football and basketball cheerleading squad, spur the Seahawks on to victory for the 1968 Homecoming game.

## Upcoming Events

### FEBRUARY

#### Wagner College Theatre: Monty Python’s Spamalot

Main Stage, Feb. 18–March 1

This outrageous musical comedy (lovingly ripped off of the 1975 film classic *Monty Python and the Holy Grail*) opens on Ash Wednesday.

#### College Choir: Black History Month Concert

Feb. 21, 12 p.m.

First Central Baptist Church, Staten Island

#### College Choir: Tribute to Black Music

Feb. 24, 9 p.m.

Music Performance Center, Campus Hall

#### Wagner College Theatre: The Dance Project 2015

Stage One, Feb. 24–March 1

### MARCH

#### College Choir Mini-Tour

March 5–8

Hear “Wagner’s best choir ever” (according to Director Roger Wesby) on March 5 in the Washington, D.C., area; March 6, St. Mark Lutheran Church, Yorktown, Va.; March 7, Trinity Lutheran Church, North Bethesda, Md.; and March 8, Trinity Lutheran Church, Staten Island.

### APRIL

#### Treble Concert Choir: Spring Concert

April 19, 4 p.m.

Trinity Lutheran Church, Staten Island

#### Wagner College Theatre: *Cats*

Main Stage, April 22–May 3

One of the world’s most popular musicals makes its long-awaited Staten Island debut right here at Wagner College. “Memory” will be made.

#### Wagner College Theatre: *Helen Keller:*

*The Eighth Wonder of the World*

Stage One, April 28–May 3

Jack Cummings III applies his acclaimed theatrical storytelling to this extraordinary woman’s life.

#### More Information

[wagner.edu/calendar](http://wagner.edu/calendar)

## Who in the Wagner World Was... Joan Venes '56?



Although today women make up half of all medical school graduates, their numbers are vanishingly small in specialized fields – only 5 percent of neurosurgeons, for example, are female.

That perspective makes the achievements of the late Dr. Joan Lisbeth Venes '56 all the more remarkable. In the 1960s, she was one of only two women certified by the American Board of Neurological Surgery. “Dr. Venes was a legendary figure,” said Alan R. Cohen, secretary of the American Society of Pediatric Neurosurgeons. “She helped to define the field of pediatric neurosurgery.”

Venes grew up in a blue-collar, immigrant neighborhood in Queens. According to her sister, Virginia Riffey, the family lived in poverty. But Venes was driven to make a change – and to help children, especially.

Venes was the first in her neighborhood to attend college, graduating from Wagner in 1956 with a degree in nursing. She started her career as an emergency room charge nurse, but she wanted more. “Nursing tended to become more and more of an administrative thing,” she said. “I very quickly saw that the things which interested me in medicine just weren’t in nursing.”

She earned her M.D. with high honors from the SUNY Downstate Medical Center in 1966. She found her calling during her surgical residency, when she witnessed the sudden death of a bright young boy who was being treated in the hospital for hydrocephalus.

Joan became the first woman neurosurgery resident at Yale, and later taught neurological surgery at the University of Michigan medical school. In 1990, she became a Robert Wood Johnson Health Policy Fellow, and served as a health policy assistant for the U.S. Senate. That year, she was also named one of Wagner’s 500 most successful alums ever.

She made many significant contributions to her field through research and practice. She was the third woman to be admitted to the American Board of Neurological Surgery and a founding member of the American Society of Pediatric Neurosurgeons. Her proudest possessions, however, were the letters she received from children and parents thanking her for her lifesaving care.

Venes spent her retirement years in Maryland and California, and died on March 31, 2010.



### When in Beijing...

On the Wagner alumni China tour, September 2–15, about a dozen Seahawk travelers not only saw many of the must-see sights — from the Great Wall to the Yangtze River — but they also gamely (pun intended!) involved themselves in cultural learning opportunities. Aboard the Yangtze River Cruise, Rita King '62 and Tim Keneipp, Christopher and Nancy Myers '69 Benbow, and Irma Bahr Madrid '71 got a lesson on playing mah-jongg. The origins of mah-jongg can be debated — some believe it was invented around 500 B.C. by Confucius, while others believe Chinese army officers developed the game during the Taiping Rebellion in the late 19th century. Regardless of origin, the playing of mah-jongg, a game similar to gin rummy, is deeply ingrained in Chinese culture.



**HONORED** At Reunion 2014, the Alumni Association recognized those who have given outstanding service to the College, the community, and their professions. **1.** The awards were presented by **President Richard** and **Carin Guarasci**. **2.** Representing the late **Donald M. Fox '64**, posthumously named the John "Bunny" Barbes '39 and Lila T. Barbes '40 Wagner Alumni Laureate, are his brother-in-law, Charles Barnett, and his sons, Alex and Graham. **3.** **Ernie Jackson '87**, professor of music technology and director of the jazz band at Queensborough Community College, was honored as an Alumni Fellow. **4.** **Harold Theurer '79** received the Dr. Kevin Sheehy '67 M'70 M'92 H'99 Alumni Leadership Medal for his consistent service to the Alumni Association. **5.** **Bianca '80 and William '81 Formica** were given the Certificate of Appreciation for their support, dedication, and commitment to Wagner College. **6.** The Reverend **Bruce Buchanan '73** received the Reverend Lyle Guttu Award for his spiritual contributions to his community. He is the associate pastor of community ministries for the First Presbyterian Church in Dallas and leads the Stewpot, the church's ministry to the homeless and hungry. **7.** **Joyce Anastasi '79**, honored as an Alumni Fellow, is the Independence Foundation Endowed Professor of Nursing and founding director of the Division of Special Studies in Symptom Management at New York University. **8.** **Nancy DeBasio '68**, president of the Research College of Nursing in Kansas City, was named the 2014 Distinguished Graduate. *Not pictured:* **Renée Marino '04** received the Alumni Key, which recognizes career achievements of graduates from the last decade. (See story, page 41.)

### Reunion News June 5-7, 2015



CELEBRATE your Wagner memories with old friends and reconnect with today's campus during a weekend packed with fun events. If your graduation year ends in a 0 or a 5, this is a special anniversary year for your class.

HONOR a fellow Wagner graduate with a 2015 Wagner College Alumni Association achievement or service award.

Recipients are honored during Reunion Weekend. The deadline for nominations is Fri., Jan. 23, 2015.

SERVE your alma mater. Applications for the Board of Directors of the Wagner College Alumni Association are being accepted for the term 2015-18. The deadline for nominations is Friday, February 27, 2015.

More Information and Forms: [wagner.edu/alumni](http://wagner.edu/alumni) • 718-390-3224 • [alumni@wagner.edu](mailto:alumni@wagner.edu)



# ClassNotes

Updates from old friends across the generations

## 1951

**Gerry Kern** sent in an article he wrote, "Religious Freedom in This Nation Is a Gift from God," defending the importance of religious liberty in the United States. He lives in Austin, Tex.

## 1952

Chris Hamann, son of **Elaine Lopez Hamann '60** and the late Herman C. Hamann '60, sent the following note about his aunt: "**Elizabeth Hamann Lawrence** passed away quietly on February 13, 2014. She was preceded in death by her loving husband, **Douglas Lawrence**, in 2002, and her brother, **Herman C. Hamann '60**, in 2008. She is survived by her sister-in-law, **Elaine Lopez Hamann '60**. Elizabeth held many fond memories of her years at Wagner College."

## 1953

**Miriam Plitt** wrote several articles about her experiences overseas and her family history, which were published in *Creative Expressions* magazine.

## 1954

**Manfred W. Lichtmann** recommends reading *The War That Ended Peace* by Margaret MacMillan (Random House), in memory of World War I beginning 100 years ago. "It is a remarkable account of the events that led to this terrible conflict," he says. **Wanda Schweizer Praisner '54 M'57** has published her fourth collection of poetry, *Sometimes When Something Is Singing* (Antrim House, 2014).

## 1958

**Betsy Ebers Press** thoroughly enjoyed serving as the home stay host chair for the 2014 American Documentary Film Festival in Palm Springs, Calif., in March. It included 135 films from 18 countries, with

85 filmmakers attending. Betsy escorted the group from Capetown, South Africa, representing the opening night film, *I Live to Sing*, and also took a writer from the Danish Film Society sightseeing around the Coachella Valley. "Fascinating people!" she says.

## 1964

**John E. Dreslin** left Wagner after three years, without finishing his bachelor's degree, to attend the Tufts University School of Dental Medicine, where he earned his doctorate in dentistry. After celebrating the 50th anniversary of his non-graduation at the 2014 commencement ceremony at Wagner College, where he led the procession as a Golden Seahawk, he looked into what it would take to get his Wagner undergraduate degree. Wagner awarded him his Bachelor of Science as of August 31, 2014, and he is invited to commencement next May to receive the degree with the class of 2015.



**MUCTARR JALLOH '05** paid a visit to the Wagner campus in April with his wife, Houssainatou Balde, and their son, Mohamad Hady Jalloh. They received a hearty greeting from President Guarasci. Muctarr works as a care coordinator at Coney Island Hospital.

## 1968

**Kurt M. Landgraf**, immediate past president of the Educational Testing Service (ETS), had a great honor bestowed upon him in April 2014: ETS President and CEO Walt MacDonald dedicated a 105,000-square-foot building on the ETS campus in his honor. Landgraf Hall provides a high-performance working environment that encourages excellent human and environmental health, reduces impact on the environment, and incorporates significant operational efficiencies. **Mary Ellen Peeling Markant** published a book, *Pondering Leaves: Composing and Conveying Your Life Story's Epilogue*, in 2014. The book offers a new, personalized, and fun approach to planning funerals. A nursing major and former obstetrical nurse educator, Mary Ellen became an end-of-life pre-planning facilitator after realizing the joy of organizing a memorial weekend to celebrate her father's life. She promotes "revised approaches [to funeral planning] that reflect an individual's unique characteristics and personal tastes."

## 1970

**John Trentacosta** was featured in the *Santa Fe Reporter* in January 2014 in an article entitled "History Re-Beating: Local Jazzman John Trentacosta Is Here to School You." He is a drummer, public school music teacher, KSFR DJ, and professor at Santa Fe Community College, where he teaches the history of jazz and the history of rock and roll. He also founded a non-profit, the Santa Fe Music Collective.

## 1971

**Sharon Richie** was appointed director of the Norwich University School of Nursing in 2013. The school is located in Northfield, Vt.

## 1972

**John Iasparro** was honored with the annual *Staten Island Advance* Service Award in 2013 for his decades of teaching and dedication to sports on Staten Island, including service to Wagner College Athletics.

## 1973

**Ed Bray** retired in 2012 after teaching high school English for 38 years. Ed spent 36 of those years at Cañon City High School in Cañon City, Colo. In June 2014, Ed graduated from Pueblo Community College with a degree as an RN.

## 1976

**Lou D'Aquila** published a novel, *Daddy, It's Only a Game* (Bookstand Publishing, 2014). This gripping account of what happens when student-athletes are pushed too far is a "must-read" for anyone with children involved in organized sports. A retired public school teacher and coach, Lou remains active in physical fitness and education as well as volunteer work. He lives in Sayville, N.Y., with his wife, Margaret.

## 1977

**Jerel Gade** attended the 2014 Winter Olympic games in Sochi, Russia, with his son, Josh. Josh trained with many of the 2014 Olympic luge competitors. Jerel, who is a pastor in Pennsylvania, is an official for international luge racing events.

## 1979

**Ann Marie Stanger Henderson** was named senior vice president and general counsel for Raritan Bay Medical Center in Perth Amboy, N.J., in March 2014. Ann Marie was previously senior associate attorney for North Shore-LIJ Health System and associate vice president and deputy general counsel for Staten Island University Hospital.

# 1980

**Claire Regan**, journalism professor at Wagner College as well as associate managing editor for the *Staten Island Advance*, received the Charles R. O'Malley Award for Excellence in Teaching at the 90th annual spring convention of the Columbia Scholastic Press Association in 2014.

# 1981

**Tom Masella** left Wagner College, where he had been associate head coach and offensive coordinator for the football team for the past two years, to become defensive coordinator at the University of Massachusetts in 2014. He has previously been the head coach at Fairfield, Boston University, Central Connecticut, and Fordham.

# 1982

**Dominick Iorio** '82 M'84 was appointed in January 2014 to the management team of the financial services firm Lee, Nolan & Koroghlian LLC, a general agency of the Massachusetts Mutual Life Insurance Company. He is focusing on expanding the firm to a new location in Edison, NJ. Before joining MassMutual, Dominick worked for many years at MetLife in a variety of leadership positions.

# 1984

**Christian Miller** '84 M'88 marked his 30th year with the YMCA in June 2014, including 17 years with the YMCA Retirement Fund and 13 years with the YMCA of Greater New York. **Robert O'Neill** M'84 was named assistant director for

financial services of the New Jersey Courts in Trenton. Robert oversees financial operations, including budgeting, financial reporting, spending plans, accounting, and other areas. He lives in Readington Township, Hunterdon County, with his wife and two children.

# 1993

**Pia Wilson** had two of her plays staged in February 2014: *Black Bee*, given a reading at Keep Soul Alive Mondays at the National Black Theatre in New York City, is about a celebrated violin virtuoso whose love is oppressive to his family; and *Generation T*, produced by Adelphi University, is about two Marines returning from Afghanistan. She is also working as a communications associate at Artemis Partners.

# 1996

**David Goldberg** '96 M'98 is senior vice president, Ocean Freight Asia Pacific, at DHL Global Forwarding. He and his wife, **Natawan Phichetkorn Goldberg** M'98, live in Taipo, Hong Kong, with their son, Matthew. Natawan launched a new women's clothing line, Zuri Zuri By Flora. The brand is registered in the U.S., Europe, and Asia, with a design office in Hong Kong, and a production location in Shanghai.

# 1998

**Tom Baldinger** released a short romantic comedy film in 2014, *Two Sides of Love*, which was shown at film festivals including the AOF International Film Festival in Monrovia, Calif., and the Garden State Film Festival. *Two Sides of Love* was originally a play, which premiered at the Roy Aries Off-

Broadway Theater in 2011 and toured throughout New Jersey, earning three NJACT Perry Award nominations. Tom founded the company 624 Productions LLC, which allows writers, actors, and producers to work in a collaborative environment on screen and stage projects.

# 2000

**Frank Cafasso** '00 M'02 and **Kara McGann Cafasso** '07 M'09 announce the birth of Olivia Grace Cafasso on January 21, 2014. See *Crib Notes*, page 38, for a photo. **Victoria Crispo** '00 M'02 was selected as a career coach for the website WomenWorking and wrote blog posts for the site throughout June 2014. Victoria's advice was also featured in an article, "7 Common Career Mistakes That Can Hold You Back," published on Daily-Worth in July 2014. She is a managing partner and career coach with Career Services USA, based in Morganville, N.J.

# 2004

**Michael Alas** was the subject of a story published on the Columbia University website in March. A violist and student in Columbia's post-baccalaureate pre-med program, Michael "has worked to reconcile his passion for music with his medical studies," the story said. "He teaches music part time, is a violist in a piano quartet through the Columbia University Music Performance Program, and serves as an assistant principal of the Columbia University Orchestra." A native of Cebu, Philippines, he gave benefit concerts to raise money for his community after Typhoon Hainan devastated the area. Michael also revived the Columbia University Medical Center

Orchestra, which includes practicing physicians, medical professionals, and Columbia University College of Physicians and Surgeons faculty. He is also principal violist with the Weill Cornell Music and Medicine Initiative Orchestra. The story concluded, "After finishing the post-bac program, Alas intends to apply to medical school with the hope of becoming a pediatrician, though he doesn't plan on putting down his viola any time soon." **Kyle Breuninger** married Margaret Bristol on May 11, 2013, in New Rochelle, N.Y. See *Knot Notes*, page 39, for a photo. Dr. **Stephanie Famulari** graduated from the New York College of Podiatric Medicine with a doctorate in podiatric medicine. She completed her surgical residency in foot and ankle surgery at Lutheran Medical Center, Brooklyn, in July 2012, and is in private practice on Staten Island. On May 29, 2010, she married Jon Fundaro at the Pierre Hotel in New York City. The maid of honor was cousin of the bride **Amanda Savino** '08. Dr. **Dana Romano**, **Frank Giusto**, **Michael Vicidomine**, **Michael Savino** '13, and **Brittany Fundaro** '14 also served in the bridal party. Many other Wagner graduates were also in attendance and helped the couple celebrate this special day, including **Michela Agozzino Schiavarelli**, **Kelly Dalton Noto** '03, **Nicole Gaeta Barone**, **Jessica Errico DiMarco**, and **Lauren Babcock Rymer**. See *Knot Notes*, page 39, for a photo. **Dawn Yngstrom Perniciaro** and her husband announce the birth of Abigail Grace on December 27, 2013. They live in North Bellmore, N.Y. See *Crib Notes*, page 38, for a photo.

# 2005

**Jake Browne** '05 M'08 left Wagner College, where he had been serving

## 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 October 15, 2014. The submission deadline for the Summer 2015 issue is June 1.

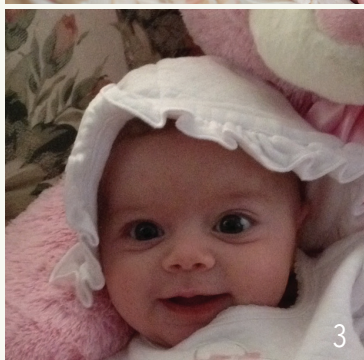
**Content:** Wagner welcomes your news and updates, and we will happily share them with the Wagner family. We ask that you send us announcements of weddings, births, and graduations after the fact.

**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. Digital photos must be jpegs of at least 250 pixels per inch; low-resolution photos converted to a higher resolution are not acceptable.

## Crib Notes



1. **Frank '00 M'02 and Kara McGann '07 M'09 Cafasso** welcomed their first child, Olivia Grace Cafasso, on January 21, 2014. 2. **Christopher '07 and Laura Woodruff '07 Duni** welcomed Natalie Claire Duni on November 22, 2013. 3. **Dawn Yngstrom Perniciaro '04** and her husband welcomed Abigail Grace on December 27, 2013. 4. **Mark '05 and Amanda Concilio '08 Intoccia** announce the birth of Joseph Victor Intoccia on February 16, 2014, in Staten Island.

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

Please see page 37 for publication guidelines.

## 2005 cont.

as director of admissions, to become director of admissions at Eckerd College in St. Petersburg, Fla., in May 2014. **Mark Intoccia** and **Amanda Concilio Intoccia '08** announce the birth of Joseph Victor Intoccia on February 16, 2014, in Staten Island. **Corrine Mertz** finished her Master of Social Work at Smith College. **Jeannine Morris**, founder of the blog Beauty Sweet Spot, has found great success as a beauty and lifestyle blogger. She has appeared on the Emmy red carpet for the E channel several times as well as on *Today* and *The Wendy Williams Show*. In January 2014, she was featured in a national Crest 3D whitening strip campaign. The print ad reads, "Beauty Sweet Spot blogger Jeannine Morris gets in the holiday spirit with teeth that sparkle."

## 2006

**Elisabeth Cardiello '06 M'07** gave a talk at the TEDx Fulton Street location, in Lower Manhattan, in June 2013. She discussed the founding of her company, Caffè Unimatic, and her journey in entrepreneurship, inspired by her father. Caffè Unimatic products are now sold at the famous Di Palo's Fine Foods in Manhattan's Little Italy and at Lioni's and Papa Pasquale's in Brooklyn, and they were approved for sale at Whole Foods Markets as well. **Seth Golden** and Kristen Guerra Golden celebrated their first wedding anniversary on August 3, 2014. They live in Denver, Colo. **Victoria Ophhof-Cordaro** gave birth to her first child, Dahlia, on October 30, 2013. **David Osborne** and Ashley Morgan Caprio were married in West Milford, N.J., on December 29, 2013. David works for the Montclair Police Department, and the couple settled in Oak Ridge, N.J.

## 2007

**Kara McGann Cafasso '07 M'09** and **Frank Cafasso '00 M'02** welcomed their first child, Olivia Grace Cafasso, on January 21, 2014. **Laura Woodruff Duni** and **Christopher Duni** announce the birth of Natalie Claire Duni on November 22, 2013. **Monette McKay** married Preston Warren Dugger III on September 29, 2014, in Flanders, N.J. How do we know this? Because it was written up in the *New York Times* on October 5. (Look it up online to read their charming love story.) The article reveals that the couple met in 2011 while performing in the ensemble of *Memphis: The Musical* on Broadway. Monette has ended her run with *Spider-Man: Turn Off the Dark*, and she has paintings on display at the jazz club Birdland. Preston is an actor in *Motown* on Broadway. **Gina Watzka** graduated from the University of Wisconsin-Madison with a Doctor of Veterinary Medicine degree in May 2014.

## 2008

**John Gordon M'08** married Cara Liander on September 19, 2014, in Staten Island. Their wedding and the story behind it attracted the attention of the *Staten Island Advance*. The write-up was titled "Love Is A Brewing," because the two first met at a Staten Island coffee shop, and are now part of the leadership team of Staten Island's new craft beer company, Flagship Brewing. John is CEO and president of Flagship, as well as a portfolio manager at Reich & Tang Asset Management in Manhattan. Cara is a producer, writer, and actor at ROAM Productions in Staten Island and the public relations director for Flagship. Flagship was also featured by the *New York Times* on May 23, 2014, in a piece by Alex Vadukul entitled "Staten Island Gets a Craft Brewery of Its Own." **Amanda Concilio Intoccia** and **Mark Intoccia '05** welcomed Joseph Victor Intoccia on February 16, 2014, in Staten Island. **Greg Mescall M'08** was



spotted on ESPN in March 2014, calling women's water polo. He lives in Long Beach, Calif., and works for USA Water Polo.

## 2009

**Matt '09 M'11 and Alissa Cafaro '09 M'11 Abbey**, who got married in September 2013, moved to Newport Beach, Calif., this fall. They plan to open a franchise of the CKO cardio-kickboxing gym. For the past three years, Alissa worked at Wagner, two years in financial aid and one year as a staff accountant in the business office. Matt was working as an insurance underwriter at C.V. Starr. **Christine Seraphin** moved to Germany and competed in *Keep Your Light Shining*, Germany's version of *American Idol*. With only three singers left standing, Christine sang "Burn It Down" by Linkin Park and was crowned "Soul Queen" by German Grammy nominee Andreas Bourani. Christine performs regularly with her band, Seraleez Quintet, which combines the sounds of soul, jazz, hip hop, and fusion.

## 2010

**Jacob Shore**, a Wagner creative writing instructor, wrote a play, *Sick City Blues*, that premiered at Manhattan's Connelly Theater, part of the New York International Fringe Festival, in August 2014. His entry for the 2013 festival, *Down the Mountain and Across the Stream*, earned him an Excellence in Playwriting Award. **Shauna Sorensen** talked to Wagner students in March 2014 about her life as an artist. She is thriving as a master's student at CUNY Hunter College, manager of Brooklyn's Open Source Gallery, and an administrator and artist with the Ligo Project's Art of Science program, an artist-in-residence program that pairs artists with scientists to learn about research and create science-inspired art. Shauna also got one of her Wagner art professors, Jenny Toth, involved in the Art of Science program.

## 2011

**Christine Angeli** left her job with Wagner's External Programs to join the Customer Centricity Office of MetLife as a project leader. She works

closely with the communications, marketing, and human resources departments. The office is located in Manhattan. **Emily Burkhardt** was featured on the AmeriCorps blog on Mother's Day, May 12, 2014, for sharing how her mother, Councilwoman Molly Markert of Aurora, Colo., inspired her to service. Emily was with New York City Service, a program of AmeriCorps, for two years. She went on to work for New York Cares as a disaster response program manager. She also mentored students in Wagner's new Bonner Leaders program. Now she has joined Teach for America and is teaching middle school science at Martin Luther King Jr. Early College in Northeast Denver. **Colin Shaw** was hired as the head coach for lacrosse at the University of Oxford in 2013. He also plays in lacrosse tournaments all over Europe, where his prowess has earned him the nickname "The Force of Nature." **Katie Jo Younkins '11 M'13** finished her master's in counterterrorism studies at the Interdisciplinary Center in Herzliya, Israel, and returned to the United States in September. She is looking for jobs in intelligence in the public and private sectors. She writes, "Reflecting on my diverse experiences, from trying to remember

my Hebrew to living through the most recent war, I can truly say I had a wonderful time abroad and learned a lot in and out of the classroom." Connections she made through Wagner helped her through the good times and the bad: She spent many Shabbat meals and holidays at the home of a family she had met in 2010 while on Wagner's program at Hebrew University; she went to Kenya during her winter break to volunteer at the orphanage and school founded by **Jennifer Musick Wright '09**. "Finally," she writes, "during the mentally, emotionally, and physically exhausting war, I had numerous peers, professors, and staff reach out to either check in or offer places to stay if I felt unsafe."

## 2012

**Danielle Dallacco** was featured in the comedy-horror film *Jersey Shore Massacre*, produced by Jennifer "JWoww" Farley in 2014. Danielle has also appeared in NBC's *Law and Order: SVU*, MTV's *One Bad Choice*, *Brooklyn Valentine*, and a national Pepsi commercial that aired during the 2013 MLB All-Star game. **Anna Demenkoff** received kudos in the *Huffington Post* for her work with an

### Knot Notes



**Kyle Breuninger '04** married Margaret Bristol on May 11, 2013, in New Rochelle, N.Y. Many alumni joined the celebration. Pictured here: **Jared Andrus '01**, **Phil Maravolo '01**, **Ryan Scanlon**, **Kyle Breuninger**, **Chris Zaki '04**, **Venus Cowan Roman '05**, **Alfredo Roman '04**, **Ray Breuninger '71**, **Denise Kyle Breuninger '74**, **Michael Hiney '05**, and **Tauny Ventura '07**.

At the May 29, 2010, wedding of Dr. **Stephanie Famulari '04** and **Jon Fundaro '04**, many Wagner alumni joined in the celebration, including these members of the bridal party and of the bride and groom's family: **Amanda Savino '08**, **Brittany Fundaro '14**, and **Michael Savino '13**.



Have a wedding photo with "Wagner family"?  
Please see page 37 for publication guidelines.

## Russ Johnson '67 M'72

*The Way of the Foot and the Hand\**

**CLAIM TO FAME:** Russ Johnson '67 won the USA Taekwondo National Championship for the men's fourth master division (ages 66 and over) in July 2014, and he took the bronze medal in the World Poomsae Championships in Mexico in November. A sixth-degree black belt, Johnson has been a student of Taekwondo since 1972.

**POOMSAE?** "*Poomsae* is the Korean word for what most martial artists know as 'forms,'" Johnson says. "*Poomsae* is a complex set of techniques – strikes, blocks, kicks, etc. – organized into a rigidly choreographed 'fight' with imaginary opponents. When you perform one of the eight black-belt *poomsae* required by the World Taekwondo Federation (the Olympic governing body), you are expected to perform it precisely the way it was designed. My execution of a given *poomsae*, in other words, should be precisely like that of a competitor from Korea, Australia, Mexico, or any other country."

**MASTER OF MANY TRADES:** Armed with Wagner's bachelor's and master's degrees in English, Johnson became a captain in the Air Force and taught at the Air Force Academy; vice president for development at Wagner College in the late 1970s; and an executive for several different investment banks. He retired from Citigroup in 2001, having served as founding chairman and CEO of Tower Square Securities, Inc.

**WHERE HE WAS MEANT TO BE:** After his retirement, Johnson went back to his first love: art. "I've been a full-time watercolor artist and workshop leader since 2001, having taken full advantage of all those art classes I took as both an undergrad and graduate student at Wagner," he says. "Although I majored in English, which seemed a bit more practical for an aspiring job-seeker, I suspect that art was where I was meant to be." Check out his work and his workshop schedule at [www.rhkart.com](http://www.rhkart.com).

*\*A loose translation of the Korean words that make up taekwondo.*




## 2012 cont.

Off-Broadway show, Elizabeth Irwin's *My Mañana Comes*, in September 2014. Drama critic David Finkle wrote, "Congrats to all concerned — that includes set designer Wilson Chin and props designer Anna Demenkoff — for achieving the kind of verisimilitude that Arnold Wesker also stalked and captured in *The Kitchen*, his 1959 play that followed restaurant workers through a single morning to night slot." **Francyna Evins** was featured in the *Staten Island Advance* for her gold medal performance in the college/open 55-meter dash at the 40th Colgate Women's Game finals in December 2013, held at the Armory Track and Field Center in Manhattan. Francyna finished in 7.2 seconds.

## 2013

**James Alicea** is in his second year at Cornell Law. He returned to Wagner in October 2014 to talk to students about how to prepare for law school and what to expect once admitted. **Sara Auerbach** returned to Wagner to discuss her work as a child life specialist at K. Hovnanian Children's Hospital in Neptune, N.J. **D'Mya Clay M'13** began coaching for the National Basketball Academy in Orlando, Fla., in June 2014. D'Mya was previously an academic advisor for the football program at the University of Central Florida. **Anthony Colasuonno** has been getting a lot of attention on YouTube for his music videos. Under the stage name Anthony Corvix, his cover of "My Immortal" by Evanescence has more



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[wagner.edu/grow](http://wagner.edu/grow)

than 150,000 views. **Douglas Donato** was hired as a development associate at Shakesperience Productions Inc. in 2014. **Concetta Raineri**, whose stage name is Chetti, released her first single, "In the City," in January 2014, followed by her first EP, also called *In the City*. It's available via iTunes. **Dominique Williams** signed an NFL free agent contract with the Minnesota Vikings in May 2014. Dom was an outstanding running back for the Seahawks football team from 2009 to 2013.

## 2014

**Christopher DeFilippi** joined the admissions team at Avenues: The World School, an international private school in Manhattan, last summer. "It's a great school with an even greater mission," he says. He is also serving as vice president for a new non-profit organization, Interview Forward, which connects women and girls cross-generationally.

## From Stage to Screen

### Renée Marino '04 makes her film debut in Clint Eastwood's *Jersey Boys*

A veteran of the stage (including recent Broadway productions *West Side Story*, *Wonderland*, and *Chaplin*), Renée Marino '04 took on her first film role in Clint Eastwood's summer musical, *Jersey Boys*.

Marino had played the role of Mary Delgado previously on Broadway and on the national tour of *Jersey Boys*. She's also a true Jersey girl, of Linden, New Jersey, just to the west of Staten Island.

She says that Eastwood was the perfect director, for her and for this movie.

"Clint Eastwood is one of the most upstanding gentlemen I've met in my whole life. He is so genuine, so down to earth. He has no ego," Marino says. "I had to keep reminding myself that I was speaking with Clint Eastwood, a legend."

Marino says that Eastwood's background in Westerns influenced his directing style in an unexpected way. "When Clint's on set with you, he just kind of moseys up and says, 'Whenever you're ready,'" she says, leaning in and squinting at me with one eye in classic Eastwood fashion. That approach dates back to his early acting experiences, she said; yelling "roll!" or "cut!" would startle the horses, so directors would start the action quietly.

You may hear a bit of authentic Marino dialogue in the scenes



**STAR POWER** Renée Marino '04 as Mary and John Lloyd Young as Frankie Valli in Warner Bros. Pictures' musical *Jersey Boys*.

between her and Frankie Valli (John Lloyd Young). "We would finish the scripted scene, and [Eastwood] would keep the camera rolling. There was one time where Frankie and I were going at each other, back and forth and back and forth, for probably 10 minutes. Then we finally cut, and he said, 'That was great. I can't wait to edit that.'"

"You just got to do what you do as an actor. And I really appreciated that."

— Laura Barlament

# In Memoriam

*Celebrating lives that enriched the Wagner family*

## Alumni

Mrs. Jane Davies Newhouse '37  
Mr. Edward J. Jones '38  
Mrs. Glorva Muller Stevenson '40  
Dr. Philip A. Marraccini '41  
Mrs. Cornelia Gurka Iversen '43  
Dr. Charles A. Fager '44  
Mrs. Violet Dittmer Geffken '46  
Mrs. Elizabeth J. Longair Rose '46  
Mr. Claude F. Geffken '48  
Mrs. Alice Jensen Hamlin '50  
Mr. Ernest Kiefer '50  
Mr. Martin Ratner '50  
Mr. Joseph J. Shannon '50  
Dr. Raymond A. Amoury '51  
Mr. Francis P. Hannigan '51  
Mr. Herman J. Methfessel '51  
Mr. Richard "Swede" Norlander '51  
Mrs. Elizabeth Hamann Lawrence '52  
Mrs. Norma Zawadzki Banta-Maute '53  
Mr. Francis E. Goodell '53  
Mr. Clarence F. Schneider '53  
Mrs. Phyliss Schmidt Seigel '53  
Mr. Albert Tosi '53  
Mrs. Emily George Bradt '54  
Mr. Clarke De Waters '54  
Mr. Jean-Paul Pillet '54

Rev. Daniel Uzupan '54  
Rev. Harry A. Reis '55  
Mrs. Diana E. Young Thiemer '55  
Mrs. Elizabeth Traeg Hunter '56  
Mr. Philip Mione M'57  
Mr. Donald L. Roper '57  
Mrs. Sara Walker Smith '57 M'58  
Mr. Fred E. Thiemer '57  
Mr. Andrew A. Crocco '58  
Dr. Thomas H. Falk '58  
Rev. Stanley M. Phillips '58  
Mr. Albert T. O'Donnell '59  
William J. Skeen '59  
Dr. Aaron M. Taub '60  
Mr. Peter Thompson '61  
Mrs. Nancy G. Luquer Wallich '61  
Mr. William R. Garrison '62  
Mr. Steven R. Grunsfeld '62  
Mr. Robert Lapen '62  
Dr. John E. Lehmann '62 H'93  
Mr. Robert G. Rebollo '62  
Mr. Gerald P. Bourne '63  
Mr. Francis J. Herel '63  
Dr. Anthony J. Scalia '64  
Rev. Dr. Paul D. Hrdlicka '65  
Mr. Richard C. Roman '65  
Mrs. Emily Fischler '67  
Mr. Thomas D. Olsen '67

Mr. Marvin Lax '68  
Mrs. Marilyn Borack Spierer '68  
Mrs. Jacqueline W. Wolf '68  
Ms. Lynda Benedetto '69  
Mr. John Brand '69  
Mr. Wendell C. Martin '69  
Mr. James Herman '70  
Mr. Douglas Petersen '70  
Mr. Alexander Labetti '71  
Ms. Anna Savastano '73  
Mr. John B. Bonner '74  
Mr. Dennis M. Forde '74  
Mrs. Maureen McGrath Lynch '76  
Mr. William P. McGuire '77  
Dr. Gail Flathmann Palmisano '77  
Mr. Gregory C. Hiby '85  
Mrs. Patricia Smith Amis '90  
Ms. Maureen Dicks Ross M'91  
Mrs. Aileen Sein Gupta M'96  
Mrs. Mary K. Catandella Bonner '05

## Faculty, Staff, and Friends

Prof. Janice C. Buddensick  
Prof. Margery Mayer Voutsas

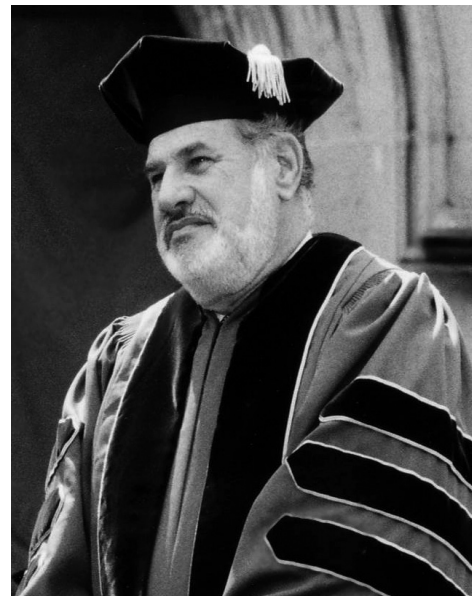
## John E. Lehmann '62 H'93

*Lifetime trustee, businessman, and nursing scholarship donor*

Lifetime Trustee John Edward Lehmann '62 H'93 died on April 18, 2014, at his home in Florida, following a long battle with Alzheimer's disease. He was 82 years old.

After serving in the Air Force during the Korean War, Lehmann worked full time as a mail carrier while taking night-school courses at Wagner College. He graduated in 1962 and became an accountant with Butterick, the sewing patterns publisher. In 1983, he was part of a Butterick management group that acquired the company in a leveraged buyout. In 1987, Lehmann was named president of Butterick; the following year, he became CEO. He retired from the company in 2001.

In 1988, Mr. and Mrs. John E. Lehmann endowed the Kim Adrienne Lehmann Scholarship in Nursing in memory of their daughter. It helps four nursing students continue their education each year. John Lehmann joined Wagner College's Board of Trustees in 1989. He served as treasurer and as vice chair, until 2001, when he was named a lifetime trustee.





## Professor of Accounting Janice Buddensick

*Beloved and dedicated teacher and colleague*

Janice Buddensick, associate professor of accounting in the Department of Business Administration, died on September 20, 2014, at the age of 59, in Staten Island University Hospital.

A native of Brooklyn, Buddensick earned her bachelor's and master's degrees in business administration from Pace University in Manhattan. She married her high school sweetheart, Thomas J. Buddensick, in 1974, and they settled in Staten Island.

Buddensick taught at Wagner College for 28 years and even served for a time as the College registrar. She helped Wagner launch its master's in accounting program and the Wagner Plan undergraduate curriculum. She connected students with internship opportunities, served many years as director of the undergraduate business program, helped redesign the business

curriculum, and was a key member of important faculty committees.

"Janice was a highly dedicated and brilliant teacher," says fellow business professor Mary Lo Re. "Janice embodied our 'learning by doing' ethos and was always willing to experiment with different pedagogies to better reach her students. Her integrity and devotion to her students' success earned her their respect and love. As a colleague, Janice was a superb collaborator in research, a true and dear friend, someone I could always count on. I will sorely miss her and her zest and passion for living."

Her survivors include her husband, Thomas; her two children, Thomas Jr. and Julie; and two grandchildren.



## Professor of Music Emerita Margery Mayer Steen

*International opera star and top-notch vocal coach*

Margery Mayer Steen Voutsas, former music professor at Wagner College and contralto with the New York City Opera, died on May 12, 2014, in Cupertino, California, at age 96.

Known professionally as Margery Mayer, she enjoyed great success as an opera singer, starting at an early age in her native Chicago. In 1946, two important events occurred that brought her to New York City and to Wagner College: her New York City Center Opera Company debut, as Suzuki in *Madame Butterfly*, and her marriage to Sigvart J. Steen, who served as chair of Wagner's music department and conductor of the Wagner College Choir from 1948 until his death in 1968.

Mayer became a leading contralto at the New York City Center Opera, starring in dozens of roles, including highly acclaimed performances in *Carmen*, *Aida*, and *Il Trovatore*. She was also an accomplished oratorio singer and performed with major orchestras.

In 1961, Mayer was appointed assistant professor of music at Wagner, where she taught voice lessons and also developed a popular course in opera appreciation, drawing on her many contacts in the New York City opera world to enrich students' experience. Recalling her own teacher's motto, "If you can speak, then you can sing," she taught singing for personal as well as professional enrichment. A few of her students found significant professional success, such as Olivia Brewer Stapp '57, who received a Fulbright Fellowship to Italy and sang major roles in Berlin, Vienna, New York, and San Francisco.

Mayer retired in 1977. The following year, she married George Voutsas, a retired NBC music producer. Her survivors include two sons, two granddaughters, and six great-grandsons. The family requests that memorials in honor of Margery Mayer be sent to the Sigvart J. Steen Scholarship Awards at Wagner College.

# The Heel

*Notes on building a grown-up relationship By Ethel Lee-Miller '69*

In the early years of my second marriage, I felt confident in my ability to avoid the mistakes of the past. After all, I had invested thousands of dollars in self-actualization (my lofty description of years of therapy). I had gone on to professional family dynamics training. And Hank was the best of partners. “We are the architects of our relationship; we are not copying the blueprint of another,” I would say. “Yes, we can take what we like and leave the rest,” he would reply.

Yet, in spite of this academic and therapeutic background, I sometimes — oh, all right, very frequently — smashed up against the wall of self-centeredness, and was forced to crawl through the door of humility into the land of awareness to regain the cozy glow of our togetherness. With a blush of embarrassment, I recount one example — and its background.

My favorite meal is a scrumptious and luxurious breakfast. Is it a reaction to my childhood breakfasts, planned first and foremost with nutrition in mind? My sisters and I were served one soft-boiled egg, one piece of whole wheat toast swiped with a knife that had barely kissed the margarine, freshly squeezed orange juice, and a small alphabet of vitamins. And the torture of chewing dry toast was multiplied when you got the last piece at the end the loaf: the dreaded heel.

The heel, as most people know, is almost all crust. It is not as soft, not as comforting to eat as the other slices. Sometimes by the time a loaf of bread has been reduced to the heel, it has aged and is less than fresh. “It’s still good for you,” my mother would insist. “We’re not going to waste food. Eat it.” We ate briskly, in an atmosphere of what can only be described as utilitarian dining. Food on plate; utensils, glass, and napkin on the oilcloth that served as our table covering for breakfast, lunch, and dinner. Sit, eat, swallow vitamins, clear dishes, leave table.

During my years at college, I discovered new modes of meal serving and dining. College cafeteria food, though not inspiring, was certainly abundant. No limits on the number of times you could go through the line with your plate piled high. I discovered I loved toast with butter — real butter — and jam. On the bread trays, the heels were abandoned like so many orphans.

It was before my 8 a.m. Spanish class that my love affair

with breakfast began. I liked piles of bacon. I loved pancakes smeared with syrup. Imagine my burgeoning gluttony when I discovered the world of New Jersey diners! In a New Jersey diner, the waitress (not “server”) has a coffeepot permanently affixed to her pouring hand, deftly refilling as she goes by your booth with another order. And the bread! Rye, wheat, sourdough, challah, pumpernickel, and white. Toast, bagels, grilled cheese sandwiches, three-decker clubs, French toast, with never a heel to be seen.

Fast forward to the year Hank and I got married. We were on a pretty strict budget and rarely went out to eat. My answer to, “What do you want for your birthday?” was, “I’d like breakfast in bed.”

Hank was inspired. He brought it in on a white wicker tray with the *New York Times* in the side pocket, a tall glass of OJ, two eggs over easy, and two slices of rye toast slathered with butter and cut on the diagonal, which is always so much better than rectangles. The good silverware made an appearance, with a linen napkin folded on the side. My saliva glands stirred, the taste buds on my tongue perked up. This was living. This was a gift from a loving husband. A bite of egg, a sip of juice, and then, the climax: biting into the toast. My hand froze. I physically recoiled. The toast was ... the heel. *Was that the last of the bread? Was he being funny?*

My sweetie was waiting expectantly. I spoke from love. “It’s wonderful. Thank you.”

Such was the success of this breakfast that, two months later, on Mother’s Day, the wicker tray made an encore appearance — scrambled eggs, crisp bacon, cranberry juice, and a rose in a tiny acrylic bud vase that had “LOVE” etched into it. My eyes scanned to the bread first. I couldn’t help it. I poked at it with my index finger. Again ... the heel. *Come on.* I felt my face get hot.

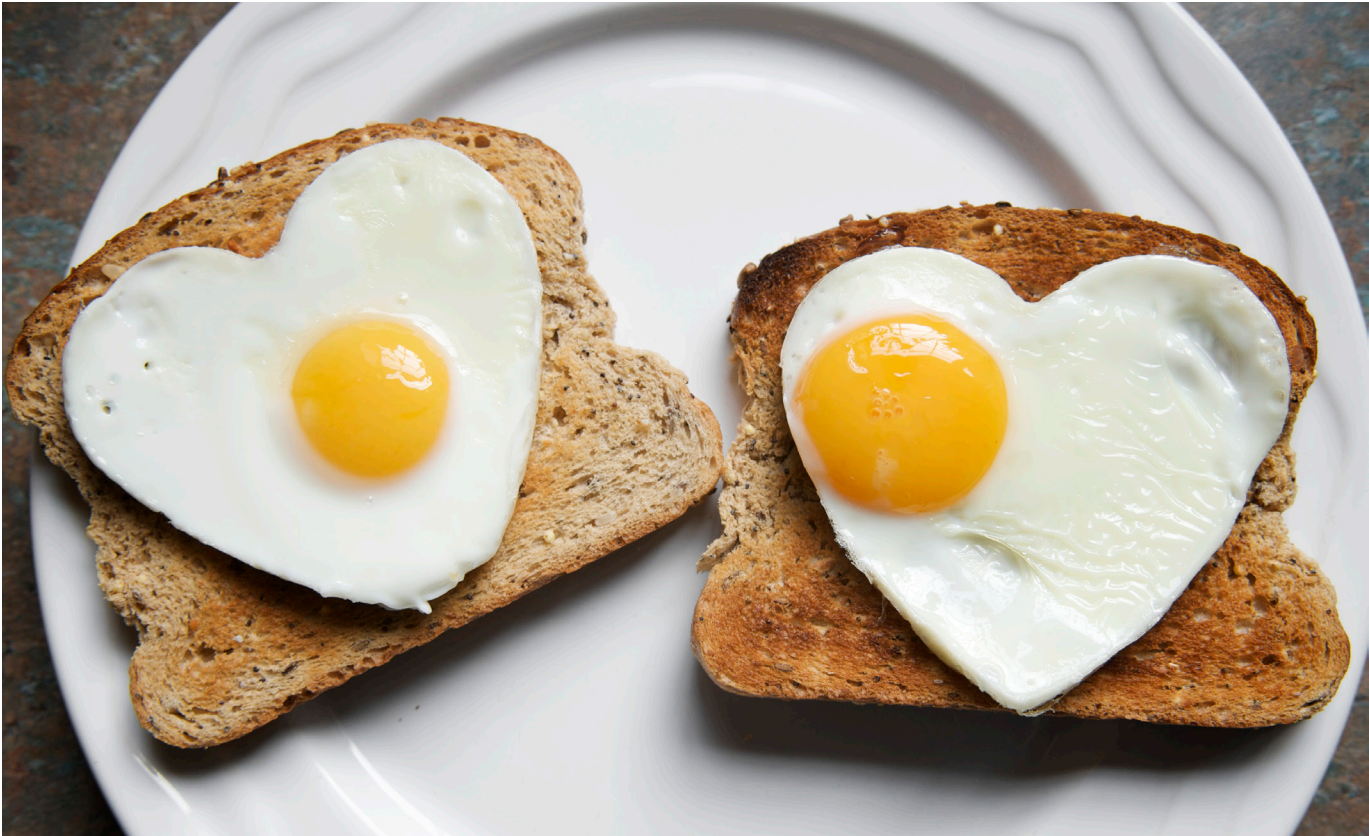
“Eth, what is it? What’s wrong?”

We had agreed never to say “nothing” to the question “what’s wrong?” when, in fact, something was wrong.

Possessed with the perceived deprivation of childhood, I whined, “Why did you give me the heel? What kind of present is that?”

Hank’s mouth made an O of genuine astonishment. He had

“It was before my 8 a.m. Spanish class that my love affair with breakfast began.”



no response.

*Ha! See, he is being mean.* My actualized, adult Ethel vanished. The petulant child in me took over. I believe the look on my face could be labeled a pout.

Hank turned and left the room. I almost cried. *So much for talking things out.* When he returned, he had the loaf of bread in his hand: a package containing about six pieces. *So why'd he give me the heel?*

"Let me tell you something," he began, as he sat on the side of the bed. "I wanted to give you a really special breakfast in bed. So I fixed all this and deliberately gave you the heel. When I was growing up, whoever my mother gave the heel to was the special one for the day and sure to have good luck. When someone got

the heel, my sisters would say, 'Oh, you're the special one.' So, honey, you're the special one."

The heel of my childhood or the heel of his? We kept the one from his.

*This essay is an edited excerpt from Seedlings: Stories of Relationships (Wheatmark, 2014) by Ethel Lee-Miller '69. A former elementary educator in New Jersey, she now lives in Tucson, Arizona. Her business, Enhanced Life Management, is at the core of her work as a writer, educator, coach, and observer of life. Learn more at etheleemiller.com.*

Answers to Pop (Art) Quiz (see back cover, clockwise from left): Keith Haring dog, Frida Kahlo backpack with monkey, Van Gogh "Starry Night" umbrella, Cubist coat, René Magritte "The Son of Man" hat, Roy Lichtenstein pop art Wagner letter jacket, Piet Mondrian shoes, Henri Matisse boots, late 19th-century boots, Andy Warhol blue shoe.

## WAGNER COLLEGE



### Pop (Art) Quiz

Last spring semester, the art department got creative with an unused coat rack in the stairwell outside of their offices in Main Hall. Seniors Carly Schmidt and Laura Salerno, with assistance from Professor Jenny Toth, designed and painted this mural alluding to famous images and styles of various artists and eras. How many can you identify? Answers page 45.