

# Sem Snippets

Spring 2010



## A SCHOOL ON THE MOVE! MESSAGE FROM HEAD OF SCHOOL JODY DOUGLASS

What will the world look like ten years from now? How can we prepare our children for the challenges and changes to come? At Sem, we ask these questions every day.

We know that our girls will face a future filled with tough new problems as well as exciting possibilities.

With that future in mind, Buffalo Seminary is on the move. Our programs prepare students to think critically and solve problems. From the first day of her freshman year to her final days as a senior, each girl learns that success comes from collaboration as well as bold initiatives. She knows that she must speak with clarity and write effectively to communicate her point of view. By the time she graduates from Sem,

every young woman will also know how to access and analyze complex information in a world that is increasingly diverse and globally connected.

The 21st century requires that schools be bold, flexible, creative, and challenging, and that they foster those traits in all their students. Sem is proud to be an independent school where a wealth of activities and events can inspire intellectual curiosity and emotional growth.

Don't forget to join us on Saturday, June 5, to celebrate Harry Schooley and Toni Wilson, two beloved teachers, who are retiring after many years of service. Even if you can't join us in June, stop by anytime – and see for yourself the excitement and energy here at Sem!

## A WORLD PREMIERE: A SINCERE THANK YOU

In March, audiences were treated to the world premiere of *Riders to the Sea*, a drama set to original music and based on a play by the Irish writer, John Millington Synge (1871 – 1909). J.M. Synge's *Riders to the Sea* was inspired by the story of a man whose body had washed up on the distant coast of Donegal. It is considered one of the few modern examples of theater depicting a tragedy. Under the direction of Toni Wilson and Ron Martin, the student performances transcended time and culture to move modern audiences. Mr. Martin, an internationally acclaimed composer, wrote the original score for *Riders to the Sea*.

*"I am so grateful to have worked with an extraordinary composer like Ron Martin, who has captured this theme in a stunningly beautiful score written for the girls' voices," Mrs. Wilson said. "I am also thrilled to have worked with this wonderful cast."*

The role of the aging mother was deftly performed by **Robin Epes '10**. The two sisters were played with equal poignancy by **Margaret Mugel '11** and **Bella Dixon '12**. The chorus of seven was made up of six students – **Jennifer Cotto-Ecklund '11**, **Raina Duggirala '13**, **Jourdan Green '13**, **Emily Glick '13**, **Caitlyn Orta '12**, **Journée Robinson '11** – and one faculty member, Lizz Coffey. The musicians who worked

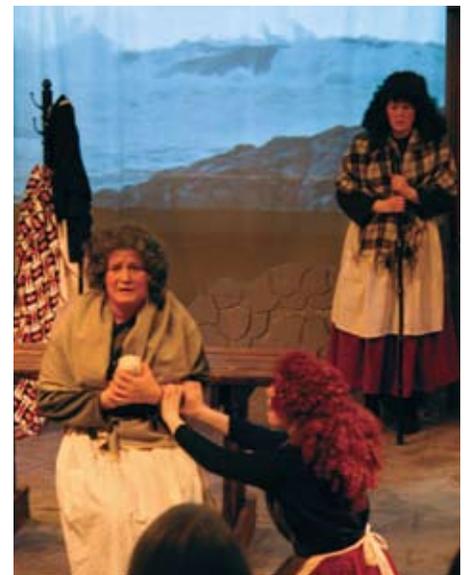
with Mr. Martin were Christine Ford, oboe; **Kelsey Shea '10**, violin; Anneka Ieda, viola; and David Meyer, cello. Before each show, the Celtic duo *Kindred* set the mood for the audience by performing traditional ballads. Buffalo-based *Kindred* is the husband and wife team of David and **Felicia (Miller '80) Meyer**.

*Riders to the Sea* marked the final school production for Mrs. Wilson, who will retire in June after a remarkable 40-year career at Sem. A co-founder of the Theatre of Youth Company, she is well-known throughout the Western New York arts community.

"Our theater motto has been *Fail Gloriously*, for it is better to have a magnificent failure after raising the bar than to have a mediocre success because you did not challenge yourself," she explained. "We haven't failed yet, so trust the process. What a great lesson for life."

And what a stunning legacy for Sem – a repertoire of one-of-a-kind performances ranging from classical dramas to avant-garde physical theater to puppet theater with multimedia.

We congratulate Mrs. Wilson, Mr. Martin, and the entire cast and crew of *Riders to the Sea* for a brilliant production – and we extend our deepest appreciation and admiration to Mrs. Wilson for four decades of glorious success!



*Robin Epes '10, Bella Dixon '12 and Margaret Mugel '11*

## ENVIRONMENTAL STUDIES: WHAT PRICE OPEN SPACE?

That was the question posed by a unique four-day lesson centering on the fictitious community of Thoreau. Culminating in a group role-play exercise, the lesson was part of Environmental Studies, a senior elective taught by science faculty member Glenna Leous. For one week, students were asked to study up on the imaginary community and its specific land-use challenges.

With a population of 10,000 people, Thoreau has a stable, if unimpressive, economy. Its major employer, the Bailey Appliance Company, has a workforce of 600 and hopes to expand its operations to add 200 local jobs. To do this, however, an area of pristine land known as Butterfly Meadow as well as some adjacent property would need to be destroyed. In addition, about 180 new homes would need to be built in Thoreau.

Each girl was given a part to play during a hearing conducted by the Thoreau Zoning Commission. Students were instructed to review and consider two proposals:

- #1 Change the zoning on Butterfly Meadow from agricultural to industrial
- #2 Change the zoning of land owned by Tom Olson from agricultural to residential

At the hearing, Thoreau residents and business owners were allowed a few minutes to state their position before the Zoning Commission. Each presentation was followed by a brief question-and-answer period that involved the audience. With Mrs. Leous facilitating, students were encouraged to stay in character and ask follow-up questions of their peers. After all the presentations were completed, the commission deliberated and finally rendered its decision. The result was the passage of both proposals,



Maps of the Thoreau community



Environmental Studies class with physics teacher, Glenna Leous

with two stipulations: that the Bailey Appliance Company would expand vertically (up a few stories rather than out into Butterfly Meadow) and that the local Native American organization, led by F. Walkingtall, would oversee the meadow's environmental conditions. Walkingtall, role-played by **Anna Malkiewicz**, enthusiastically agreed with the commission's decision. "A lot of the assignment was based in compromise and workable solutions to conflicts of business and of environment," explained **Naomi Jackson**. "You have these limits between what business can and can't do in relationship to resources and to our environment. A lot of it is just about what people will tolerate, what they won't, and what they're willing to protect." Naomi played the part of Renee Stone, a banker and president of the Chamber of Commerce. In addition to her business interests, Stone had a personal stake as a landowner. **Alyssa Moffat**, who played a member of the Zoning Commission, explained that reaching a decision was relatively easy, given the amount of information that had been presented.

Mrs. Leous couldn't have been prouder of her students, who embraced the exercise by delivering fervent speeches and posing some tough questions. "My goal is to give the students as much information as I can so that they can then go out into their world as educated voters. This activity gets right to the heart of that. It shows the students the importance of participating, negotiating, and compromising for the greater good."

## CELEBRATING CITIZENSHIP

"I HEREBY DECLARE, ON OATH, ... THAT I WILL SUPPORT AND DEFEND THE CONSTITUTION AND LAWS OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA..."

In early March, Buffalo Seminary Spanish teacher Linda Slingerland took the oath for American citizenship and the Sem community couldn't be prouder!

A native of Colombia, Ms. Slingerland joined Sem's Language Department in 2008. She was graduated from the University Autonoma de Occidente in Cali (Col) with a Liberal Arts B.A., concentrating in Journalism. She worked in public relations for the National Marathon in Colombia and the Chamber of Commerce. Linda is currently attending Buffalo State College in a Spanish Education (7-12) Post-Baccalaureate Teacher Certification Program. She came to the U.S as an Exchange Student attending St. John's University in Long Island, NY, where she received certification in child health safety and development.

Congratulations, Linda!



## SPOTLIGHT ON OSCAR NOMINEE GWEN YATES WHITTLE '79



We congratulate alumna **Gwendolyn Yates Whittle**, who was nominated for an Academy Award in the category of Best Achievement in Sound Editing for her work on James Cameron's *Avatar*. The 1979 graduate has already won numerous awards for such films as *The Curious Case of Benjamin Button*, *Cloverfield*, *Iron Man*, *Munich*, *Saving Private Ryan*, and *Titanic*.

Gwen recently participated in an interview conducted entirely on Facebook. The interview was part of an online senior elective, *Reel Narrative*, taught by Ben Joplin, Ph.D., chair of Sem's English

Department. Gwen told students what it was like to go from Sem to working at George Lucas' Skywalker Ranch. "I credit Sem with laying the groundwork for a lot of my self-confidence – which you need in the film world." A graduate of New York University, she initially had no idea what kind of job she wanted. She moved to San Francisco and involved herself in so many activities that when an assistant editing job came along, she threw herself headlong into it. "You've got to keep your ears and eyes open," she advised the students, "Say 'Yes' if you think you can do any part of the job."

It took her many years, but a lot of hard work finally earned her a key position at George Lucas' Skywalker Ranch. Her favorite part of the job is to oversee the recording of actors' dialogue: "I like the word departments best. I love working with the actors and the directors, especially watching them interact. On low-budget films and documentaries, I have cut everything from foley to sound effects. On bigger pictures, I work with some fantastic sound designers: Ben Burtt, Chris Boyes, Gary Rydstrom, and Randy Thom, to name a few. For *Avatar* I loved working with the Na'vi language and the translating of all the extra crowd dialogue in the film with the inventor of the language, Paul Frommer."

Gwen used a quote from one of her films to stress the importance of taking risks and pursuing dreams. "As Benjamin Button says: 'It's never too late, or too early to be whoever you want to be. There's no time limit, start whenever you want, you can change or stay the same, there are no rules to this thing... I hope you live a life you're proud of, and if you find you're not, pick yourself up and start all over again.'"



Gwen with Brad Pitt



### LAUREN BELFER '71 BESTSELLING AUTHOR

Author of the bestselling novel *City of Light*, **Lauren Belfer '71** will be holding a reading, discussion, and book signing for her newly published novel, *A Fierce Radiance*.

Burchfield Penney Art Center  
1300 Elmwood Ave. • Buffalo, NY  
Thursday, June 24, 2010  
7:00 pm

To reserve tickets for the event, please call 716.878.6011

**Critical Praise for A Fierce Radiance-**  
*"Belfer combines life-and-death scenarios, romance, murder, and wartime reality at home and abroad, while taking a stab at industrialists who profit by dubious means and save their consciences through philanthropy. . . . An engrossing and ambitious novel that vividly portrays a critical time in American history."*

— *Booklist* (starred review)



### ALICE STRACHAN BARR '74 2011 MAINE TEACHER OF THE YEAR CANDIDATE

On Monday, March 15, **Alice Strachan Barr '74** was chosen by the Maine Department of Education as a semi-finalists for the title of 2011 Maine Teacher of the Year. Five semi-finalists were chosen from 13 nominees who were honored earlier in March in a State House ceremony with Gov. John Baldacci. The semi-finalists were selected by a distinguished review panel consisting of teachers, principals, and members of professional organizations and the business community.

Currently the Instructional Technology Integrator at Yarmouth High School in Yarmouth, ME, Alice has been facilitating the school's 1:1 high-school laptop initiative since 2004. She has worked overseas in International Schools in the educational computing field as both a computer teacher and technology coordinator and has been involved with helping teachers integrate technology into the curriculum. Alice has trained students and teachers in the productive use of the Internet and has given workshops both nationally and internationally on the effective uses of technology in the classroom. She holds a B.S.Ed. from Wheelock College and an M.Ed. from Lesley College.

## SPORTS SHORTS

### BASKETBALL

The 2009-2010 Varsity Women's Basketball team completed its season with a loss to Cardinal O'Hara, making its final record for the regular season 8-19. Despite losses to some of the region's toughest competitors, this season marked a dramatic improvement for Sem varsity basketball compared to years past. Seniors **Taylor Smith** and **Julia Papiernik** led the squad to major victories over the Park School, CCA, and Maritime. The team was led in scoring and rebounding by Junior co-captain **Julia Schreck**, while Junior co-captain **Olivia Knauss** and Smith led the team in steals. Freshman **Francesca Shreck** led in blocks. And on Sunday, March 7, **Julia Papiernik** and **Julia Schreck** were chosen for the All-Catholic team in the Monsignor Martin League.

Thanks to all for an exciting season. You should feel very proud! We also thank Head Coach Eva Cunningham, Assistant Coach Anna Jablonski, and Assistant Coach Linda Groff-Mroz.

### LACROSSE

On Monday, April 12, the Buffalo Seminary Red-Tailed Hawks started their season with a bang. In a game held at Sem's Larkin Field, our varsity team beat Holy Angels Academy's varsity team with a final score of 16-12. **Thalia Steely '10** made her lacrosse debut starting between the pipes and made 4 saves! Leading our scoring was **Sarah Miller' 11**, who had 4 goals and 6 shots on net. **Paige Gress '11**, **Meg Starzynski '10**, and **Carol Sullivan '10** all had hat tricks (3 goals each). **Tori Lester '12** added 2 more goals and **Grace Niswander '10** had 1. We had a total of 26 shots on net. **Dani Trolli '12** played the second half of the game in the cage and made 11 saves!

Meanwhile, the JV team played the Holy Angels JV team at the Holy Angels field. Despite an aggressive first half, Sem wasn't able to move past Holy Angels. The game was close, with a final score of 9-8. The high scorer was **Caroline Pelham '13**.

All in all, our girls on both the varsity and JV teams came out flying and played with heart. We're looking forward to an exciting season!



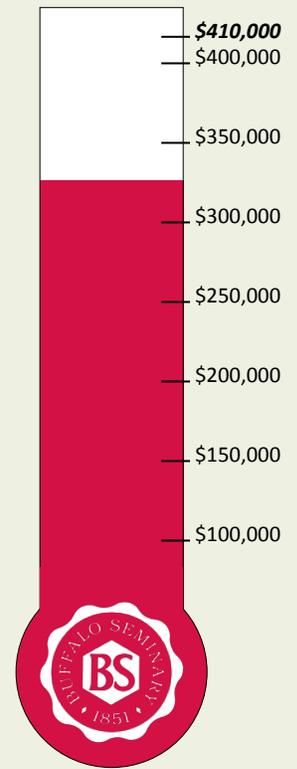
## THERE'S STILL TIME TO PLAY YOUR PART!

**If you have made a gift to this year's campaign, your Annual Fund dollars are hard at work supporting all that makes a Sem education exceptional.**

The operating budget depends upon your Annual Fund dollars each and every year to balance the current cost of educating our college-bound young women. So if you've made your gift to the Annual Fund, thank you! If you haven't given or pledged yet, now is the time! This year's Send Sem Annual Fund campaign runs through June 2010. To make your gift, visit [www.buffaloseminary.org](http://www.buffaloseminary.org) and click on Ways to Give, or call Rebecca Collins at the Development Office at 716.885.6780, ext. 209.

*At Sem, just as every girl matters, every gift does make a difference!*

## Help Us Reach Our Goal!



You Are Invited To A Special Celebration  
In Honor Of Two Of Buffalo Seminary's Finest

**Harry B. Schooley and Toni Smith Wilson**

As They Retire From Teaching

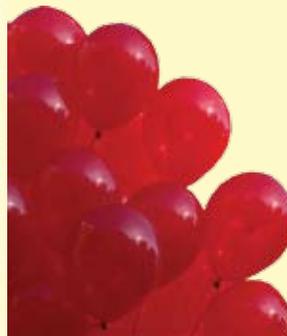
**Saturday, June 5, 2010**

**5:00 p.m. - 7:00 p.m.**

**Presentation at 6:00 p.m.**

**Buffalo Seminary**

R.S.V.P. by May 28, 2010 - 716.885.6780



EXTRAORDINARY TEACHERS MAKE A  
SCHOOL TRULY GREAT!

For decades, Harry B. Schooley and Toni Smith Wilson have inspired Sem students and their families through their devotion to and love of learning. Please join us in honoring them as they retire from teaching.



*With City Hall as a back-drop, Alum Association Board member Gigi Pooley Helliwell '79 enjoys Soiree XXIII at the Avant in downtown Buffalo*

## THANKS FOR HELPING US REACH OUR GOAL



*Soiree XXIII Co-chairs Jacki Knauss, Naomi Moore and Mary Pat Schreck with Assistant Director of Development Rebecca Collins (center) and Head of School Jody Douglass (right)*

Soiree XXIII took place on March 6 downtown at the beautiful Avant. Many thanks to this year's chairs Jacki Knauss, Naomi Moore, and Mary Pat Schreck and their committee for hosting an outstanding, fun event that hit our goal and raised funds for this year's operating budget! We netted over \$117,000, which will be used to support all current academic programs. Thank you to all event sponsors, donors, advertisers, guests, and volunteers for joining together on behalf of education for girls. We couldn't do it without you!

# REUNION

JUNE 4 - 5

# 2010

- ◉ Welcoming All Alums
- ◉ Special Tribute To Those With Class Years Ending In 0 and 5

For further information visit our Web site: [www.buffaloseminary.org](http://www.buffaloseminary.org) and click on the Alumnae News and Events tab, or call Carolyn Clark at 716.885.6780, ext. 221.

### Strive for the Cup!

*The Oshei Cup will be awarded at Reunion Dinner Friday, June 4, to the Class with the most money contributed in support of Sem's Annual Fund!*

*Join the Reunion Club by increasing your Annual Fund Gift by 50% and help your class move closer to attaining the coveted Cup.*



## IN MEMORIAM



Patricia Maisel Cotsen '53  
 Diane Spaulding Forman '60  
 Gaye Godell  
 Judy Brown Harvey Grant '41  
 Ellen "Nebbie" Wilkes Gurney '27  
 Thomas L. Mitchell  
 Craig Morris  
 Audrey Kinney Pabst '51  
 Patricia Moore Patterson '43  
 Richard E. Peckey  
 Ronald Raskin  
 Louis B. Reich  
 James J. Ross, Ph.D.  
 Frank J. Schreck  
 James J. Warde, M.D.

## SEM CELEBRATES CHINESE NEW YEAR 2010: YEAR OF THE TIGER



## CLASS OF 2010: SENIOR TRIP



*What do you get when members of Buffalo Seminary's Class of 2010 and their chaperones don bright pink "princess" tee shirts and head for the airport? You get a fun-filled, action-packed Senior Trip to Disney World in Orlando, Florida! You also get fond memories that will last a lifetime...*

## FRESHMAN DEBATE: ATHENS VS. SPARTA



*Ms. (Molly '98) O'Connor's World Cultures freshman history students presented an Athens/Sparta debate to various Sem community members as part of their unit on ancient Greece. Over the course of a few weeks, the girls researched, planned, and practiced for the project, which culminated with the formal debate in the Library.*

## WNY ACADEMIC TEAM HONORS TWO SEM SENIORS



*Kelsey Shea '10    Deanna Arthur '10*

school leadership, and community involvement. The top 25 were named to the First Team, 25 runners-up to the Second Team, and another 50 to the Special Mention list.

Two of Buffalo Seminary's seniors have been named to *Business First's* 2010 All-Western New York Academic Team. **Kelsey Shea** (First Team) and **Deanna Arthur** (Special Mention) have qualified for this year's list of the 100 best and brightest high school seniors in the eight-county region. Winners were chosen for their records of academic excellence,

"We are incredibly proud of Kelsey and Deanna. Their hard work and extraordinary accomplishments are an inspiration to our entire school community," said Head of School Jody Douglass.

"This is an honor of true significance," said Jack Connors, president and publisher of *Business First*. "The Academic Team is an extraordinarily exclusive group. There are roughly 20,000 seniors in Western New York's high schools this year. Only 100 have met the incredibly stringent standards to make the Academic Team. That's the top one-half of one percent, the real cream of the crop." Schools throughout the eight-county region were asked to nominate their smartest and most accomplished students for consideration by a nine-member committee, which included six admissions directors at area colleges and three *Business First* editors. A total of 112 schools responded with 386 nominees. (Each school was limited to four candidates.)

## THE WORLD IS THEIR OYSTER!

One highlight of the 2009-2010 academic year has been our foreign exchange program. After hosting visitors from Colombia, France, and Spain earlier in the school year, many of our students had the chance to travel to these countries over spring break.



*Oviedo news photo*

Traveling to Oviedo, Spain, with Spanish teacher Amber Zepper were **Elizabeth Bassett '11, Annalee Burkley '11, Jennifer Cotto-Ecklund '11, Michela '10 and Madison '13 Gacioch, Jourdan Green '13, Liza Marlette '13, Julia Papiernik '10, Kendall Priebe '12, Julia '11 and Francesca '13 Schreck, Haley Stearns '11, and Cailin Walsh '11.** A group visit to the town hall, hosted by local council members, even landed our girls on the Oviedo news! This exchange trip was a collaboration with Canisius High School.



*A warm welcome in Colombia*

Our students kept in touch with family and friends by blogging. We invite you to check out additional photos and their commentary at:

<http://semspain2010.blogspot.com/>

<http://semcolombian2010.blogspot.com/>

<http://semfrench2010.blogspot.com/>

Sophie Michaud, French teacher and chair of our Foreign Language Department, traveled to France with three juniors and one sophomore. **Corey Schoellkopf '11, Katy Melber '11, Riley Featherston '11, and Natalie Schoetz '12** enjoyed exploring Normandy and Paris with Madame Michaud, a native of France. The Sem group traveled with faculty and students from City Honors and Nichols School.

Last but not least, five students accompanied Spanish teacher Linda Slingerland to Cartagena, Colombia: **Leanora Karnath '12, Eliza Kaye '12, Anna Malkiewicz '10, Victoria Roney '13, and Chunhui (Ariel) Xu '10.** Ms. Slingerland is a native of Colombia.

*"Being apart from any other Americans, I have had to use my French all the time ... and I think that I have certainly improved. At least I know how to say flamingo and how to negotiate while playing monopoly in French!"*  
-Katy



*Paris, France*



*El Palacio Real, Madrid, Spain*



Buffalo Seminary  
205 Bidwell Parkway  
Buffalo, NY 14222-1295



716.885.6780      FAX 716.885.6785  
[www.buffaloseminary.org](http://www.buffaloseminary.org)  
[development@buffaloseminary.org](mailto:development@buffaloseminary.org)



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## SEM STORIES

One hundred fifty-nine years of history, traditions, personalities, challenges, achievements, and antics galore provide us with memories and stories to tell.

Please join us in savoring these wonderful historical Sem chronicles. A compilation of audio recordings is being created to record memories of those who have attended and worked at Buffalo Seminary.

Do you have a story to share? Visit our Web site at [www.buffaloseminary.org](http://www.buffaloseminary.org) and go to the Alumnae pull down tab. There you'll find Sem Stories.

## ◉ ON THE ROAD AGAIN ◉ WE'RE TRAVELING TO MASSACHUSETTS

### JULY 26 - 30, 2010

- ◉ Andover
- ◉ Wellesley
- ◉ Cape Cod

Check details at  
[www.buffaloseminary.org](http://www.buffaloseminary.org)

Look for us soon in CT, ME, NH and NYC