

TERRA FIRMA

Department of Earth Science and Geography

Summer 2012

Dear Alums,

Greetings from Ely Hall! I am writing to you amidst the sounds of construction as our building undergoes the final phase of its exterior envelope renovation. Over the last two years all of the masonry has been re-pointed and the roof replaced with new copper. For the first time since I've been at Vassar (15 years), we're no longer placing trashcans under the dripping ceiling every time it rains! This year, the rotting old windows are being ripped out, and the haz-mat team is



cleaning away layers of lead paint and asbestos-filled caulking, making way for gorgeous and energy efficient mahogany windows. Inasmuch as members of our department have long preached the importance of sustainability, we are thrilled that our new double paned, argon-filled windows and the accompanying fixes to the masonry surrounding them will save energy and money for decades to come. We are also thrilled with the creature comforts that come along with the installation, as Arctic blasts in winter will no longer be able to penetrate the rotting wooden frames. We are grateful for the generous financial support of our alums that makes projects like these possible!

As usual, the 2011-12 academic year was event-filled and flew by with amazing rapidity. The Earth Science program undertook its first external review in over 20 years, and we are pleased to report that while the review team gave us several excellent recommendations for ways to grow the major, we also sailed through with flying colors. In their words:

[illegible]

1. The faculty is dynamic and prepared to plan for change proactively and willingly.
2. The degrees they offer are highly valued by students, the institution, and employers.
- 3. They are student-centered and have loyal alumni.**
4. They are actively engaged in promoting the geosciences, locally, regionally, and beyond.
5. They are active players in Vassar's academic community and deeply vested in working collaboratively in an interdisciplinary department with Geography as well as in several other multi-disciplinary programs (e.g. environmental studies, women's studies).
6. They are congenial and collaborative.
7. Successful recruiting of faculty has led to a diverse faculty with appropriate balance of skills and interests.

Both students (in person) and alumni (in comments solicited by the department) spoke eloquently of the way in which their experiences in the Earth Science program contributed and are contributing to their education. The department is also blessed with an administrative assistant and a technical director who are both full participants in department activities and are pro-active, especially in ensuring close outreach ties to Vassar's surrounding community."

Thanks so much to all of you who took the time to respond to our survey. As are we, our external reviewers were truly impressed by all of your accomplishments and by what you had to say about the role of our department in your lives. You make us very proud!

Other highlights of the year included our first celebration of National Fossil Day with a lecture delivered by former visiting assistant professor Alison Tumarkin-Deratzian (Temple Univ.), a wonderful set of Geography Awareness Week events featuring a screening of the film *Dirt* and a lecture by former visiting assistant professor Salvatore Engel-diMauro (SUNY New Paltz), and a department-sponsored trip to the American Museum of Natural History in celebration of Charles Darwin's birthday.

This newsletter will provide additional information on what we've been up to since the last issue of *Terra Firma* came out in 2010 and will fill you in on the activities of your classmates. If you haven't done so yet, please friend us on Facebook at [Vassar EarthscienceandGeography](#). We love to hear from you and also use the site to post interesting geoscience news items and fieldtrip photos.

Best wishes,

Kirsten Menking

Chair, Earth Science and Geography



Upper right: The new windows delivered, in bulk.

Above: Storm King contractors prepares another of the arched windows for installation.

Below: All battened down, and ready for trim and finishing.



ELY HALL CONSTRUCTION FINAL PHASE!

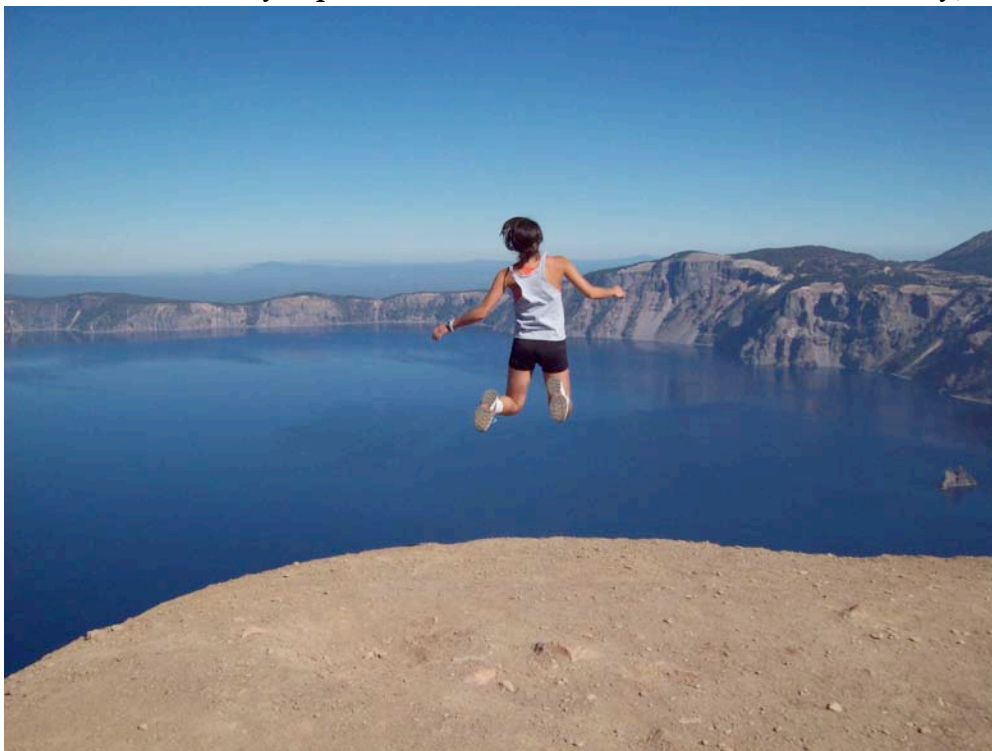
The third and final phase of restoration of the exterior of Ely Hall is well under way this summer! Projects include the final third of the new copper roof, and an entirely new floor for the Aula. Even more spectacularly, all new mahogany windows are replacing the 123 year old wooden windows, all of which were really showing their age, and were no longer keeping the weather out. The new windows are double paned, energy efficient, and extremely durable. And *really* good looking.

The engineers at CVM have made every effort to restore the building to its original look and colors, and Storm King contractors have done a fantastic job of carrying out that exacting vision. We have always loved the building, but now, as the beautiful restoration work progresses, we are looking forward to the final finishing touches. There are a few surprise elements that we don't have images of yet, but stay tuned, on the webpage, for a peek in September.

FIELD TRIPS 2011 & 2012

The last two years have seen a continued commitment to taking the students of the Earth Science and Geography Department to the field as part of a strong experiential curriculum. Besides weekly trip to areas of interest around the Hudson Valley, here are a few of the

highlights.



Jeff Walker's Volcanology class explored the igneous history of Oregon, around the Bend area. The lava cast forest was intriguing, downed trees hollowed out after lava had buried them, creating tubes 8 ft wide. The 360 degree view from Paulina Peak was spectacular, giving the class an overview of all of the areas they visited, especially the 150' thick obsidian flow, from the highest point on the Newberry Caldera.

Jill Schneiderman's Sedimentology Class spent spring break in Big Bend National Park in Texas, canoeing on the Rio Grande, and camping inside an eroded bowl of sediments. The stars were especially fantastic in one of the darkest places in the lower 48 states.





Kirsten Menking and MaryAnn Cunningham revisited their Environmental Studies trip to Louisiana, touring the delta and river controls, and sampling the beach and waters throughout this dynamic landscape, struck last visit by Hurricane Katrina, and this time by the Deepwater Horizon oil spill.



Brian Godfrey took the Geography Seminar for an exploration of lower Manhattan in New York City. First up was a visit to the United Nations and displays on sustainable development, and art based on human rights issues. Next was the experience of Dialog in the Dark, where a tour is led through 4 simulated environments, completely in the dark! The blind tour guide is able to give you tips and helpful conversation to help you experience NYC as a blind person. Occupy Wall Street was in its final throes of the fall, but the trip to Zucotti Park was certainly moving, as was the final destination, the 9/11 Memorial at the site of the World Trade Center.



Jeff Walker's Field Geology of the Hudson Valley class ended with a department cookout on the shores of North South Lake, former home of the Catskill Mountain House.

And finally, Yu Zhou is traveling with 5 Vassar students in China this summer, on a fact-finding mission about green practices and sustainability as China continues its economic growth.



Next year looks to be every bit as exciting for our majors, especially with a Fall trip to Yellowstone being planned as you read this!

Above: Canoeing on the Hudson in the middle of a mighty squall.

Left: Climbing 'up' through time....

2011 Seniors

Earth Science

Katherine Interlichia

Geochemistry of High-Elevation
Bogs in the Catskill Mountains

Ann Robertson The Response of
Diatoms to High-Frequency Climate
Fluctuations in the Estancia Basin, New
Mexico



Jenica Law

Erika Noll

Rowan Swarny

Kathryn Troy

Laurel Walker

Geography:

Daniel Black Stories of a City's Rebirth: The Development Discourse in Detroit, Michigan

Tatiana Hoffecker Kenya: A Nation Defined by
Running? National Pride and the Global Sport
Economy

An Investigation of the Development of Spatial
Thinking Skills, Geography, and Map Use in the
American Classroom

Allison McManis The Battle of Knowland Park:
The Politics of Open Space Preservation in the Bay
Area

Whose Israel-Palestine? The re-making of place
through discourse: Ultimate Peace and Soccer for Peace

Celine Teo Ying Zhen Chinese Take-out as a
Tool of Resistance and Assimilation In New York City

Jeremy Teperman Park51 and Ground Zero:
Place, Scale and Islamophobia in the Making of
Controversy

Sam Thypin-Bermeo Imagining and Experiencing
Amazonian Frontier(s): Marabá, Pará 1897-2010

Sarah Craig

Richard Kurtzman

Vanessa Lampson

Gabriel Schuster



Geography-Anthropology

Marissa Mandel

Geology

Danielle Bonneau Determining Provenance from Detrital and Heavy Mineral Analysis of Fossiliferous Layers from Fossil Lake, Oregon

Alison Denn 50 Years Later: A Comparative Study of Currently Farmed and Old-Field Soils at the Vassar Farm

Laura Gruenberg Comparing Flood Risk in Urban and Rural Watersheds: A Hudson Valley Case Study

R Michael Sandstrom Surficial Mapping of the West Shokan Quadrangle, Catskill Mts, NY and Interpretation of the Glacial History in the Upper Esopus Drainage Basin

Earth Science & Society

Julia Sisson

Geography

W. Marshall Daly The Pocket Neighborhood and the Post-Industrial City

Alexander Herman

Caroline Iosso “El Alto de Pie, Nunca de Rodillas”
The Place of Violence in October 2003

Luke Leavitt Loft Jazz and No Wave: Race, “A Progressive Sense of Space,” and the production of Subculture in 1970s Manhattan

Laura Livingston Imagining and Experiencing Amazonian Frontier(s): Marabá, Pará 1897-2010

Kenneth Wolkin A Trip to Cayuga Country: Race, Law, Nation, and Sovereignty in the Making of Cayuga Territory

Zachary Zeilman
Reimagining the Industrial Landscape through Adaptive Reuse: Comparative Case Studies from New York and the Ruhr Valley

Rokuhei Fukui (International Development Studies – honorary major)

Flexible Activism and the Construction of Space: Singapore’s Migrant Worker Movement

2012 Seniors and Theses



2012 Geography Majors

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Roku Fukui (Friend of Geography), Zac Zeilman, Marshall Daly, Ken Wolkin, Laura Livingston, Caroline Iosso, Alex Herman, Luke Leavitt

Notes from Faculty and Staff

Mary Ann Cunningham I have spent a lot of this past year learning about sustainability and food. Last spring I was joined by Lucy Johnson (Anthropology) and faculty from Middlebury and Furman University in writing a faculty development/travel grant to Europe to learn about innovations in sustainable design, alternative energy and transportation, and other efforts toward sustainability in Denmark and Germany. A group of 18 faculty rented bikes to get ourselves around Copenhagen, Aarhus, and Freiburg. Already this trip has spawned a variety of conversations, projects, even student trips (from Vassar and Furman) on similar themes. You can find our subject reports [here](http://sustainabilityseminar.blogspot.com/p/introduction-to-this-blog.html): (<http://sustainabilityseminar.blogspot.com/p/introduction-to-this-blog.html>). Also on a topic related to sustainability, this summer Jeff Walker and I are among 6 faculty doing summer URSI projects focused on helping to inform landscape design (considering ecosystem function, native plantings, biodiversity, reduced maintenance) around the Fonteynkill watershed. The new science facility is planned to bridge the Fonteynkill, from Olmsted over to Skinner Hall, and we hope to help make sure the site's landscape is healthy as well as beautiful. Three rising seniors in our department (Sasha Brown, Patrick Donohue, and Matt Zeltzer) are working with me and Jeff on this. Keep an eye out later in the summer for Fonteynkill project reports at <http://dutchesswatersheds.org/research>. Laura Livingston ('12, Geography) has joined us in these efforts as our newest Collins post-baccalaureate for research in environmental science, replacing the accomplished Peter Grauman ('11) in this position.

A related initiative that has taken a lot of my attention has been the Multidisciplinary Learning-Living Community (MLLC), an experimental project to create a small community of students on campus who can live together in the TH coops and share a sequence of courses for a semester. I'll be participating in the inaugural MLLC semester of fall 2012. Ideally this structure will allow us to do field trips and projects and have continuing discussions about sustainable food systems in the Hudson Valley, in a way that is just not possible in a normal, scattered semester. We have a great group of enthusiastic students for the semester and an exciting set of field trips planned.

In addition to these projects, it's been a busy and rewarding semester of teaching, including the Food and Farming course, an Environmental Science in the Field course, with a spring break trip to coastal Louisiana, and GIS. It's always a pleasure seeing the creative ideas and excellent projects students produce in these classes.

*Left:
The Fonteynkill
Watershed URSI
Study group.*



Brian Godfrey Brian Godfrey has served as director of Urban Studies for the last two years. As an urban geographer, his position has strengthened the department's multidisciplinary linkages on campus. He also taught courses on "Brazil: Culture and Environment" (GEOG/LALS/AFRI 242), "Urban Geography: Place, Space, Environment" (GEOG/URBS 250), "Senior Seminar: Geographic Theory and Method" (GEOG 302), "Memory and the City" (URBS 303), and "World Cities and Public Space" (GEOG/URBS 340). Brian recently presented papers and published scholarly articles and book chapters on several topics: the evolution of historical geography, urban environments of Brazil, boomtowns of the Amazon Basin, and urbanization of South America. He is particularly proud of co-authoring articles in peer-reviewed journals with two recent Vassar graduates: "Envisioning Amazonian Frontiers: Place-Making in a Brazilian Boomtown" in the *Journal of Cultural Geography* (June 2012, with Sam Thypin-Bermeo); and "Regulating Public Space on the Beachfronts of Rio de Janeiro" in the *Geographical Review* (Jan. 2012, with Olivia M. Arguinzoni).



*Brian Godfrey and the Geography Senior Seminar
at the United Nations Building*



Lois Horst The last 2 years have been eventful for Lois. Two beautiful new grandchildren have arrived, making a total of three now (how did that happen so fast?). With family spread all across the US, Lois, and husband Jeff, made the decision to start working on building a retirement home in northern CA—no, not San Francisco!, but near the north-eastern border of CA in the foothills of the Sierra Nevada Mts. Not far from Lassen Volcanic National Park, which speaks to her growing interest in geology. This will be a multi-year project.

Work has been stimulating as usual—this department has got to be the best on campus! Lois gets to help or at the very least, listen in, while faculty plan field trips (this year one to New Orleans, and one to the AZ border) and occasionally drives for the local trips—in particular Jeff Walker’s field geology ½ unit class. But this past spring, she assisted in a class in ENST and traveled to Kansas and Nebraska over spring break. The class looked at the prairie; studying issues of farming practices, wind energy, human migration and history, and bison, bison, bison!

They are magnificent creatures. Lois got to meet and talk

with Wes Jackson, one of her heroes, and to tour his Land Institute facilities. They drove more than 1400 miles, white-knuckled, as she held tight to the steering wheel against the prairie winds. The crowning glory of the trip may have been (it’s hard to say, there were so many glorious moments) the migration of sand-hill cranes on the North Platte River in Nebraska. Hundreds of thousands of birds landing in the river at dusk—the cacophony was unbelievable!

Our Darwin Days project from 2 years ago (the crocheted coral reef) inspired Lois to start knitting and she is working on her skills. Small items so far (baby booties, scarves, etc.), but she has the goal of knitting all her own socks in mind. Wouldn’t that be cool?

Rick Jones Celebrating five years in the department, I continue to enjoy the variety of assignments given to me...setting up field trips, graphic work, constructing lab equipment. As caretakers of the Natural History Museum, Lois and I have really enjoyed assisting in the Vassar Artifact Project, with members from all over campus attempting to preserve the historical objects and history of Vassar. This summer I am taking a ‘hole’ trip of the West with my family- the Grand Canyon, Meteor Crater, Death Valley, Lake Tahoe, Crater Lake, and Mt. St. Helens. While not comprehensive, we are really looking forward to returning to the Golden State for a few weeks.



*Above: **Ben Horst (GEOG '99)**, with Tracey and Nate. Right: Luke, Rick, Roku, and Ken at the 9/11 Memorial, NYC.*

Stephanie LaRose I grew up in Poughkeepsie, with Vassar College practically in my backyard. I am proud to now be working at Vassar with its wonderful professors, students, and staff. The Earth Science and Geography Department, my usual home on campus, is a great department with knowledgeable professors, friendly students, and a wonderful collaborative atmosphere. Vassar recently worked with the City of Poughkeepsie bus system to provide better bus service to and from campus, and I used GIS to help them create the map that is distributed in a pamphlet about the service to the Vassar community. In addition to working part-time on campus as GIS Specialist, I also work as a Geologist and GIS Specialist at an environmental consulting firm in the City of Poughkeepsie.

Brian McAdoo This past year, Brian McAdoo had the pleasure of teaching the "Oil" class with Professor of History, Ismail Rashid. The two profs traveled to Alaska's North Slope (Prudhoe Bay via Deadhorse) some years ago, as guests of BP. While they were impressed with the overall efficiency and cleanliness of their operations, Brian found it curious that Prof Rashid was grinning the whole time- and he was pretty sure it had nothing to do with the sub-freezing, late June temperatures. When pressed, Prof Rashid, who is originally from Sierra Leone, admitted that his old friend from home was the Minister of the Environment, and BP was just permitted to start offshore exploration there, promising to hold to the same international environmental standards. We'll see how that goes.... The class was capped by a Fracking Field Trip to Marcellus Shale country in Central and Eastern Pennsylvania. McAdoo also taught an introductory course on Meteorology for the first time to 45 students. The timing was perfect for the strange weather we experienced- a 10" snow at Halloween and nothing else to speak of for the rest of the season. In the spring, he taught Global Geophysics where the students enjoyed the multitude of challenges that comes with modeling the deep earth using Excel.

After last year's dramatic and traumatic tsunami in Japan, McAdoo enjoyed a recess from post-disaster surveys (knock wood). He is presently engaged with two former Vassar students (Nicole Krenitsky, STS '11 and Jared Augenstein, STS '10), and present ESCI correlate Matt Zeltzer ('13) on a project for the UN International Strategy for Disaster Reduction to investigate how geophysical hazards trigger economic losses and mortality. He is also working with Bard master's student Karen Corey on a project that is checking on the state of nearshore fisheries following the 2009 tsunami in Samoa, where McAdoo mapped the damage on the coral reefs shortly following the disaster. And the last news is that Professor McAdoo will be taking a 3 year leave of absence to help a brand-new enterprise between Yale and the National University of Singapore. Yale-NUS College will be the

first liberal-arts college in Asia, accepting the first students in Fall of 2013. For the first year of the project, McAdoo will act as the Coordinator for Environmental Studies, one of three interdisciplinary majors in this college with no departments. For more information, check <http://www.yale-nus.edu.sg/>.

The Oil Class, in Pennsylvania.



Kirsten Menking Kirsten started her three-year stint as department chair this year by writing a self-study of the Earth Science program as part of the first external review in over 20 years. Dozens of pages and much carpal tunnel pain later, she is pleased by the strong endorsement of the program by the external review team and the helpful recommendations they made to further strengthen the major.

After several years in a row in which she taught new classes, this year Kirsten enjoyed the relative calm of teaching only courses she had taught before. These included Structural Geology, which included a fieldtrip to the anthracite coal belt of Pennsylvania and a ride in a coal car into an underground mine, and Paleoclimatology, in which students carried out original research on sediments from the Estancia Basin of New Mexico to piece together the climatic history of the area during last glacial maximum time. With Mary Ann Cunningham, she also taught the Environmental Science in the Field course on Louisiana's coastal processes. A reprise of the 2006 trip that followed hurricane Katrina, this year's class enjoyed a swamp tour in the Atchafalaya basin complete with opportunities to hold a baby alligator, visits to post-Katrina Army Corps of Engineer construction sites designed to keep water out of New Orleans, and several days at on the coast at the Louisiana Universities Marine Consortium field station to study marsh degradation and barrier island processes. Kirsten and the class were again impressed by the resiliency of Louisiana residents in the aftermath of the BP oil spill and interested to see how many houses were in the process of being elevated to deal with future flooding threats. The joie de vivre of New Orleans was also a highlight for the students, none of whom had ever visited the area before. Despite Mardi Gras having been over for three weeks by the time we arrived, New Orleanians continued to party and parade, keeping up their motto "laissez les bon temps rouler!"



Perhaps the most profound event in Kirsten's life this year was her adoption, along with partner Roger Anderson, of a 13-yr-old boy. Blake Tylor Menking hails from Poughkeepsie, loves science and nature, and hopes to be a paleontologist when he grows up! He and mom have enjoyed many hikes in the 'Gunks and New Mexico (where Roger still has a house), ziplining in the Catskills, and trips to numerous zoos. He's also got her jumping on the trampoline, playing catch, and all kinds of other activities that have countered the middle age spread and allowed her to lose ~20 pounds over the past year.

Joe Nevins

Joe served this year as the Chair of the Geography Program. One of his main activities involved overseeing a search for a two-year post-doctoral fellowship position, a search that culminated in our hiring Keith Lindner from Syracuse University; Keith will teach three courses in the program each year. Joe also served as the Director of Vassar's Independent Program, which allows students to create and pursue their own majors in close collaboration with faculty advisers. He taught a new seminar in the Fall, Political Ecology, and once again co-taught with Professors Tyrone Simpson and Sam Speers the "U.S.- Mexico Border: Nation, God, and Human Rights in Arizona-Sonora." The course involved taking 29 students on a 16-day trip that included a round-trip train travel between Poughkeepsie and Flagstaff.

The U.S. Mexico Border class in the Sonoran desert, depositing a water cache.



Jill Schneiderman

After a full year on sabbatical, I returned to Vassar fully rejuvenated! My wife, Meg Stewart, had the distinction of being a Fulbright Scholar at the University of the West Indies at the Cave Hill campus in Barbados. What can I say except that my recipe for rejuvenation is a beachside house with backyard mango and lime trees and a coral reef for a backyard?

In the two years since the last Terra Firma I put the finishing touches on two papers that I wrote while in Barbados and they have just come out--"Contemplating Home: John Burroughs in the Carribean" appeared in Interdisciplinary Studies of Literature and Environment and "Awake in the Anthropocene" came out in the journal Contemporary Buddhism. If any alums are intrigued, I'd be happy to send you the publication or a link to an electronic copy. Another thing I've been up to regularly over the last two years is a monthly blog-essay (aka "blessay") for The Shambhala Sun Foundation called "Earth Dharma" that is my attempt to teach some earth science to members of the general public interested in Western Buddhism. It's a pretty big audience and I feel very good about the opportunity to have as an audience people who want to understand the wholeness of the earth system. If you want to check it out I can send you the link or you can just Google my name and "earth dharma" and it should come up.



Probably the greatest highlight in the department for me in the last two years was the opportunity to take a group of Vassar earth science and geography students on a spring break field trip to Big Bend National Park and Carlsbad Caverns. The geology there is so spectacular and for some students it was their first look at fully exposed bedrock in the desert and they were appropriately WOWed! We weathered high winds, canoed up the Rio Grande, and soaked in the geothermally warmed waters of a deserted spa all while learning the geology of the Permian basin!

Another big high for me was all the visits from alums who returned for reunions in 2011 and 2012. It really is thrilling to be in touch with so many of you, to watch your processes, and applaud your successes. You Vassar earth science and geography students are really doing us proud! I also really want to take this moment to express my gratitude to all the alums who make

donations, large and small, to our field trip fund. These field learning experiences are a highlight of the educational experiences for students these days. THANK YOU!

Looking to the future, I've started an interesting and fun collaboration with a new faculty member in Vassar's chemistry department. We recently hiked up the Beaverkill Range in the Catskills to sample a mountaintop bog. The bog itself is unusual because it is fed only by rainwater thus, in theory, it should record variations in atmospheric composition over time. In particular we are looking at the deposition of metals such as mercury in the bog sediments. I just spent the last week sectioning 1-meter cores into centimeter sections....tedious but I hope ultimately worth the effort.

Please keep in touch!

Jeff Walker

One of the real highlights of the past couple of years has been an increase in the number and variety of field trips taken in the department supported by the Nancy Austin Wright Field Trip fund, and the Joan Rockwell Field Trip Fund. During Spring Break 2010, Dave Gillikin (now at Union College) and I took about a dozen students to Virginia. We stayed at a retreat center on Joan Rockwell's Rockcliffe Farm (the most comfortable field quarters I have ever seen). By day we visited geologic sites such as Luray Caverns, and a variety of quarries. Given that the soils of Virginia are 20 feet thick in places (demonstrated for us in the walls of one pit), we opted to visit active quarries to see fresh rocks. We saw mines for talc, kyanite, and dolomite. The last day was spent on the coastal plain digging up Pleistocene fossil clams (including fossil scallops 10 inches across!). October Break, 2010, found me with the Volcanology class in eastern Oregon staying in yurts at a State Park campground (the second most comfortable field accommodations), climbing Newberry volcano, visiting Crater Lake, and climbing down into casts of huge trees caught in a lava flow. Spring Break, 2011, Jill and I took her Sedimentology class to Big Bend National Park where we slept on the ground (still pretty comfortable especially since the stars were so amazing at this, the darkest place in the United States), paddled up the Rio Grande River into Santa Elena Canyon, and drove some of the longest and straightest roads I have ever seen. The good thing is, that the more we take the students out in the field, the more we want to do it. Plans for the coming year include possible trips to Yellowstone and Death Valley. Other than field trips, I am looking forward to going back to teaching full time in the department after a decade of work with the sustainability committee at Vassar. The college has hired a full-time Assistant for Sustainability Affairs who can do much of what I have been doing lately to help guide the college along sustainable pathways.



Yu Zhou

I taught five courses this semester, among them, three are rather new. In the fall, I taught two courses: The making of Modern East Asia (Geog/Asia236) incorporates guest lectures from five different professors specialized in Korea, Japan, Southeast Asia, China, in art history, sociology, film, and literature. I learned a lot from the course. Research Methods course (Geog230) combined two separate half credit courses into one. Students designed one collective and one individual project to learn about different ways to collect data. I taught three courses in the spring semester, Global Geography (Geog102), Spaces of Global Capitalism (Geog276), and a seminar on Capital Imperatives (Geog372). The seminar is new and it engages with the deep readings of theories of advanced capitalism. It helps to put the contradictions and contestations we experience on a daily basis into the theoretical perspective. It was a heavy semester but I really enjoyed teaching these subjects. In addition to teaching, I also advised three theses from geography and independent majors, on subjects ranging from Jazz in NYC, to urban infill projects in Baltimore and migrant workers in Singapore. I always learn a lot from my theses students.

I maintain an active research agenda in studying the technology industry in China. I used the summer of 2011 to work with a Ford scholar to process my data collected in 2010 on the impact and reaction of Chinese information technology firms in the financial crisis. The paper is finished and submitted to *Economic Geography*. Several of my other works on China's ICT industry have been published as articles in journals or as book chapters. I also started to move into the new area of sustainability and technology. I have submitted a proposal for studying China's green building sectors to the Peking University-Lincoln institute, Urban and Land Policy Center. It was funded partially, so I will use my coming sabbatical to start research on Green building policy and practices in China. I have also selected five students who have a background in China and interests in sustainability to apply for the Freeman faculty-student fellowship to study sustainable practices in Beijing in the summer of 2012. The proposal was accepted and I have taken five students this summer to Beijing. They will investigate, along with three students from Peking University, food choices, alternative transportation infrastructure and energy efficient appliances in Beijing. I look forward to the experience.

My public services at Vassar and beyond continued. I served as a member of the AAG book award committee and Vassar's research committee. I worked with the Vassar administration to negotiate the agreement of exchange program between Vassar College and Peking University, starting next academic year, and helped to prepare for Cappy's visit to Beijing. This is the first Vassar exchange program with China. I participated in the discussion of college's application to Luce grant in Asia and Environment. I gave a talk at the 50 years reunion dinner at Vassar College in June 2012. My blog on Apple factories' operation in China was published at Huffington Post. I hope to expand my activities in these areas.

Closer to home, I am delighted that my son Kevin has graduated from Arlington High School. After carefully considering admission of several colleges, including Vassar, he decided to go to Worcester Polytechnic Institute to pursue his interests in Chemical Engineering and Computer sciences. My daughter Kaitlyn is also doing well at school and is occupied by her busy extra curriculum schedule including soccer, field hockey, theater, piano and violin. This has been a very productive year, and I am looking forward to my sabbatical in the coming year.

As regular faculty take sabbaticals for the next few years, we are pleased to have two new appointments. **Keith Lindner**, of Syracuse University who works on areas of stewardship and repatriation of lands in the Southwest will join us for the Geography department. **Stephanie Peek**, from the University of Wyoming, will bring a welcome focus on paleontology. She studies Strontium/Calcium and Barium/Calcium ratios in mammal bone and how those ratios relate to growth and diet. Additionally, we have our regularly returning adjuncts who will fill other spots in our curriculum: **Susan Blickstein**, **Phil Thibault**, and **Paul Cimonello**.



With the goal of exploring the nexus of science and the humanities, Darwin Days continues to provide interesting topics and presentations to the Vassar community.

In February 2011, the third Darwin Days at Vassar, the committee

brought in Dr. Daina Taimina, a mathematician from Cornell University who co-developed the use of crochet as a means to visualize hyperbolic curves. Her work has been popularized into the making of the Wertheim sisters' community displays of Hyperbolic Crochet Coral Reefs displayed around the world. With Darwins' very early work on coral reefs in mind, we also created the Vassar Hyperbolic Crochet Coral Reef, with contributions by students, faculty, staff, and community all incorporated in the exhibit in Ely Hall.



Darwin Days At Vassar

Above Left: Students and staff at work on hyperbolic crochet work!

Above Right: Dr. Daina Taimina

Below: Professor Schwarz and her Biology Lab in the Hall of Biodiversity, AMNH.

Michael Zimmerman, of Butler University, and founder of the Clergy Letter Project, also came and spoke of his work in attempting to civilize the debate between evolution and creation- and being attacked by all sides!

For Darwin Days at Vassar IV, Professor John Long spoke of his fascinating work with evolving robots, in conjunction with the publication of his new book, *Darwin's Devices*.



We then took two full coach buses of Vassar students and staff to the American Museum of Natural History in New York City, where they could experience the Hall of Biodiversity for themselves. All day, one could spot groups of Vassar students in different parts of the vast museum, from the exhibits on native fauna of New York to the excellent lessons on evolution of life on Earth in the Hall of Dinosaurs on the fourth floor. The ride home was even capped with a viewing of *A Night at the Museum!*

ALUMNI NOTES!

Janet Swan Hill ('67) "I retired from the faculty at the University of Colorado Libraries in October, 2011and am using the time freed up to do more figure skating. My synchronized figure skating team recently won the ISI (Ice Skating Institute) national championship in the Masters Division for the second year in a row. I am still judging figure skating freestyle, pairs, and ice dancing. My daughter Scottie is a college counselor at a Jesuit boy's high school in San Jose, and can lay claim to have steering at least one of her advisees to Vassar. "

Ann Moor Jones ('70) Ken and I are both retired from "work" and continue to fill our days with lots of WORK! I am enjoying the Master Gardener Program, concentrating primarily on Senior Living Activities with seniors older than myself, and the continuing education "hands on" programs we have with the Tulsa County elementary schools. 101 schools keep me busy and out of trouble. We have made many memorable trips to IA, CO and MT see kids & grandkids, mostly driving to enjoy the roadside geology and scenery. A special anniversary treat was a Baltic cruise. I want to do more of *that!*

Karen Spencer ('70) has embarked on new career: "as a "retirement" job my husband and I have opened a five room bed and breakfast - Meritage Meadows Inn (www.meritagemeadows.com) in Redmond, WA. We have been open now for 2 years and are having a ball. We are close to Seattle and the Woodinville wine district (over 90 tasting rooms and wineries). We even have a small winery onsite as my husband is a winemaker of a very boutique winery Cinq Cellars. Their first commercially available wines will be available late this summer. Here in Washington State we have lots of basaltic flows and glacial till as well as seismic potential."

Caroline (Carrie) Bryan ('73) "I lost my job at the Kansas City (MO) Art Institute in June '11, but started working for the Kansas City Zoo in December '11. I process donations on the computer and create reports and mailing lists. While I was unemployed, I started a microbusiness making and selling lap quilts (look for the shop "PixiesQuilts" on www.etsy.com), and I trained to be a tax return preparer at H&R Block. So I went from one job to none to three, all in five months! I have been Class Correspondent for the Class of '73 for nine years and am gratefully preparing to retire from it in '13."

Laura Joines ('81) "I am professor of architecture at California Polytechnic, specializing in teaching design studio. I have a private practice, DOMU that does exclusively modern, sustainable buildings. We have won numerous AIA awards over past 6 years. We also have an online store that sells our sustainable products (<http://www.domudesign.com>). My other hat I wear is being Mom to my 3 kids, 6, 12 and 15.

Allison Kozak ('84) is enjoying retirement with hubby Howard Yellen '82 – spending the winter in Palm Springs (warm, with lovely hiking & fun geology) & summer in San Francisco (cool, and endless cultural & culinary opportunities!) She relies on her geology background only when explaining stuff to friends & griping about overuse of the Palm Springs aquifer.

Julie (Merrill) Dubosky, ('90) "After enjoying 15 years of acupuncture practice, I have decided to return to school to further my career. Having completed a year of prerequisite basic sciences, I am beginning an academic program to become a Physician Assistant. I am excited to wrap my mind around medical knowledge and to understand more deeply the inner workings of the human body."

Craig Nelson ('95) I recently started a new job as Senior Editor at Zagat in New York City working on content for city guides around the world. I'll always be thankful to Brian Godfrey for teaching an excellent urban geography class my sophomore year that kick started my love of cities!

Dave Palmieri ('95) My wife, Sandra Martinez-Zuniga, and I are living in Durham, North Carolina. We gave birth to our first son, Ari Martinez Palmieri in March of 2012. I'm teaching World and United States History at Raleigh Charter High School, a high school devoted to social, active, creative learning and citizenship and community involvement.

Doug Silin ('96) "Recently switched jobs but remaining in Hong Kong, now an in-house counsel for Western Union, Asia. The geographic analysis of where funds flow from and to in the world reveals telling trends in population movements and economic/political relationships. Our travels continue, the highlight being a two week trek to the lost Kingdom of Mustang, where Anne and I had tea with (likely the last) King of Mustang. Exploring the rich history (and unfortunate future) of this now former country is a geography/anthropology dream. I encourage all to read the 1964 book "Mustang; A Lost Tibetan Kingdom", by Michel Peissel, whose footsteps we traced. "

Stephanie Andrews ('99) has been farming for 7 years, for Land's Sake, Inc. as Assistant Farm Manager, embarking "into farming as a result of my Soils coursework and correspondence with Jeff Walker. I also had a job as an Environmental Consultant at TechLaw, Inc. for a year and a half. I also learned that I couldn't work as an Environmental Consultant because I needed to be outside studying the physical world more, just like I did in the Geology Department."

China Mabee ('99) "I received a Diploma of Graduation in Advanced Culinary Arts from the Connecticut Culinary Institute in 2009. I'm currently a stay-at-home mother. In addition to mom-duties, I'm training to be the assistant cantor at my synagogue, doing volunteer work for Foodshare, and am the vice president of the Hartford Vassar Club."

Catherine Schloegel ('00) "I continue to live and work in the wild lands of southern Ecuador up high in the Andes...and I love it. My work as Executive Director of Fundación Cordillera Tropical in the city of Cuenca brings me into contact with local communities, large companies, and government decision-makers and I enjoy working on conservation across these different levels. We have found a spat of dancing spectacled bears who make our camera trapping work much more silly than we would have originally thought. Follow our bear photo-trapping adventures on Youtube. "

Beth Feingold ('01) is the Pim Postdoctoral Fellow in Global Change in the Department of Earth and Planetary Sciences, Johns Hopkins University. "I am doing climate - mosquito- malaria modeling in the Peruvian Amazon. I just brewed my own beer and it is the most fun I have ever had with chemistry. "

Ian Saginor ('01) "This is my 4th year as an assistant professor at Keystone College in Pennsylvania and I just took over as Director of the Honors Program. Also, my wife and I just had a baby boy named Jacob, who is now 5 months old. He's already sleeping through the night and laughs all the time."

Skippy Sturdivant ('01) works as a Project Manager for Vertex Environmental Insurance Services, and as a Senior Environmental Assessor for Adapt Engineering. "I recently passed the ASBOG exams and am now a Licensed Geologist in Washington and have a pending application for licensure as a Registered Geologist in Oregon. I am also happily married. No children yet, but we do have a dog, two cats, two sheep, six ducks, and fourteen chickens."

Kate Wallace ('01) is an attorney for Jones Day. Her daughter, Declan is 18 months now and she and her geologist husband are expecting a baby girl in August.

Steve Raciti ('03) earned an MS (2007) and PhD (2010) from the Department of Natural Resources at Cornell University. He now works full time as a postdoctoral research associate at Boston University. "My research focus was (and continues to be) the ecology of human-dominated ecosystems."

Gina LaCerva ('06) "I am currently doing a bit of research for a social business consultancy as well as exploring working in science writing. I hope to return soon for a PhD."

Roger Putnam ('06) After many years working for the National Park Service in Yosemite National Park, I left California to pursue a master's in geology at UNC Chapel Hill with Dr. Allen Glazner. I am studying igneous petrology with a focus upon the mechanisms of pluton emplacement. El Capitan in Yosemite Valley is my field site. My study will produce a three dimensional map of a batholith in support of a study of pluton geochemistry in the vertical dimension. I enjoy being a graduate student but sorely miss the mountains. For a more comprehensive article, see:

<http://college.unc.edu/2012/06/13/elcapitan/>

Ryan Pleva ('06) completed his MBA in Marketing and Luxury Strategy at HEC-Paris in December 2010. Still living in Paris, Ryan is currently working in the Designer Fragrances Division at L'Oréal Luxe and launched a perfume for the Stella McCartney brand in January 2012. He completed his first half-marathon in March 2012 and is looking forward to facing other challenges in the near future.

Colin Wilson ('06) "I got a Masters in Earth & Planetary Sciences from Washington University in Saint Louis in 2009 and now I work at the Saint Louis Science Center as a senior educator. I just got married in October and we just got back a few weeks ago from our (belated) honeymoon as well to Lake Atitlan in Guatemala (a flooded caldera!) which was really awesome."

Elizabeth Engel ('07) "I'll be graduating from Cornell Law School in a few weeks and, this fall, I will be starting work at Sidley Austin, a law firm in New York City."

Annie Maldonado Heaps ('07) "I got married in November of last year (2011) in Austin, TX, to Jonathan Heaps, and the famous Salt Lick BBQ was served at our reception. In addition, I will graduate with my J.D. from Boston College Law School where I have been active in the International Law Society, Amnesty International, Law Students Association, and Latino/a American Law Students Association. After the bar, my husband and I will move to Milwaukee where I will begin a career as a public interest lawyer working in direct legal services for low-income clients."

Libby Murphy ('08) "I am finishing my first year at Bard where I am pursuing a dual-degree M.S. in Climate Science and Policy/M.B.A. in Sustainability. I get to study all of my favorite things-renewable energy, electric cars, agriculture and more. Music-wise, I'm playing bass in local band Madre Padre, so if you're around you should come see us live. Living-wise, some friends and I moved into my childhood home in New Paltz and are making a huge garden!"

Hannah Ewert-Krocker ('09) lives in a great big house in sunny Denver, Colorado with three fabulous Vassar '07 alums. She is currently working as a Neighborhood Outreach Coordinator for a small non-profit that focuses on grassroots community development, building great neighborhoods, and increasing opportunities for healthy living. Hannah spends her free time working in her local community garden, riding her bike, doing yoga, and being outside.

Nate Kimball ('09) "I am living just down the river in NYC, and after two and a half years in sustainability consulting at Great Forest, Inc., have moved on. I am now working at the Port Authority of NY&NJ as an airport environmental specialist, tasked with developing and implementing sustainability programs at the area airports, focusing first on Stewart, Newark, and Teterboro airports. I'm having a blast so far and it is exciting work. Unfortunately, rock identification is not one of my job duties, but my stormwater management lessons learned from Mary Ann Cunningham's classes are certainly coming into play."

Jeanette Roach ('09) is currently working on her master's degree in Community Development and Planning at Clark University. Previously, she spent two years working with youth mentoring programs as an AmeriCorps Ambassador of Mentoring. She also facilitates an arts and leadership program for middle school girls, and serves as a youth programs consultant for a multi-service community-based organization.

Wilson Salls ('09) is employed by ecoPartners, "which helps forest owners develop carbon offset projects. This involves many facets, the most relevant of which is remote sensing and GIS. The ultimate purpose of much of my work is to account for greenhouse gas sources and sinks, which is also a related concept."

Kathryn Thomas ('09) "I am currently living in Sioux Falls, SD, working as the corporate archivist for the Evangelical Lutheran Good Samaritan Society. I also tutor four nights a week."

Davene Daley ('10) "I am currently working on a Master's of Science degree in Civil and Environmental Engineering with a focus in Geotechnical Engineering. My expected graduation date is May 2012. I am currently employed as a research assistant in the Geohazards Research Group at Tufts University."

Jenica Law ('11) "I worked at a law firm as a paralegal and am now a Research Assistant at Stanford in the Psychology Department. Eventually, my work will consist of running simulations using MATLAB and potentially manipulating other models of human cognition. Having a background in programming using STELLA and Fortran (from the Modeling the Earth class) has been very helpful and is related to my current work. My programming experience was a large factor in the hiring process, and I think that it greatly contributed to me being selected for the job - it was something that separated me from the others. That being said, all of the investigative and experimental research done in my various earth science classes has also helped me develop the critical and interdisciplinary kind of thinking needed for this type of work. I also am part-time coaching for Gunn High School's Track & Field team (working with hurdlers), both JV and Varsity."

Erika Noll ('11) I am working on my first year of a MS in Geophysics at UC Riverside.

Laurel Walker ('11) will be attending graduate school at the University of Kentucky in the fall. As a beginning grad student, this summer she is working on neotectonics as a graduate research assistant in Denali National Park.

Rosemary Pusateri "My biggest news is that we became grandparents. Quinn, our precious granddaughter, was born March 2012. I continue environmental volunteer work focused on protecting Lake George, where we live. With my Vassar education and some 30 years of environmental activism, I feel some confidence in what I do even though progress is slow. Frank and I continue to enjoy travel to geologically interesting places. This month, we will be rafting the Grand Canyon. "

Bruce Taterka “I’m still teaching environmental science at Mendham High School and at the Schiff Nature Preserve in Mendham, NJ. My daughter Maddie is in the VC class of 2014. She’s double majoring in Geography and Women’s Studies and has great things to say about the faculty and staff in Ely Hall! When I’m not teaching I get outdoors as much as possible. In 2010 I was a NOAA Teacher at Sea, spending 18 days on the NOAA ship *Oregon II* in the Gulf of Mexico during the BP oil spill, and in 2011 I finally completed my paddling journey of the entire length of NJ’s Passaic River from source to mouth.”

The museum is, at the moment, looking pretty bad. Fortunately, this won’t last long. As noted elsewhere, this is the third summer of a renovation process that is elevating our space into the realm of magnificent! Our contractors and engineering team

will have completed, by the end of the summer, a job worth much acclaim. The halls of Ely must be so happy!

The museum has had the metal windows facing the front porch restored and the four arched windows down its southern exposure completely replaced. Not only energy efficient, these windows, with their double-paned glass, will provide more UV protection to the specimens inside the room. And beautiful—have we mentioned how beautiful these windows are?

News from the Warthin Museum of Geology & Natural History





Another wonderful addition due to the building envelope restoration is the installation last summer of a large trace fossil of *Arthropycus alleghaniensis* in the outside front wall of Ely Hall. The hugely heavy fossil, visible in an early photograph of the Museum in Avery Hall from around the turn of the century, needed a lot of structural support to properly sit within the bricks. It is safely ensconced and announces to everyone entering that we are a department devoted to investigating the Earth.

Over the past two years we have developed a few new exhibits in the museum and renovated some of the older ones. Mentioned in the Darwin Days notes is the Coral Reef exhibit that was put together as a collaborative effort by students, faculty, staff and local community members. The end product included crocheted examples of corals, sponges, nudibranchs, octopi, jellyfish, and ancient creatures such as trilobites, ammonites, and belemnites. The raucous colors and sensuous forms of an undersea world enchanted all who saw it. We have kept a remnant of the reef in one of our cases.

Darwin is also represented in another related exhibit showing his early work on coral reef formation. This exhibit is enhanced by our collection of preserved contemporary corals and sea fans in beautiful, muted colors, and includes fossil corals from the Devonian and Silurian periods.



Above: The Arthropycus fossil. Below, some of the many crochet coral organisms crafted for the Vassar Hyperbolic Crochet Coral Reef.

Thinking of the Silurian brings us to another new exhibit. Rick Jones has put together a case filled with fossil remains from the Silurian-Devonian seas. Maps in the exhibit show the distribution of the oceans at the time—pointing out clearly that our area of New York State was underwater during that period. Explains all those brachiopods, crinoids and eurypterids that show up in our rocks! Early artistic renderings of Silurian seas add a touch of imagination.

We have some new ideas percolating in our heads and refuse to spoil the fun by talking about them now—you'll have to keep an eye on our website to see how they turn out. As well, there is a certain lovely surprise coming in the form of our new windows. Watch for this, too!

The museum has continued its outreach mission by working with local Cub Scouts to help them earn their geology pins and badges. We've also co-hosted the entire Arlington Middle School 7th grade (that's 180 kids!) for the second year in a row. The students get time in the museum, a talk on the evolution of life on Earth, and visit with and work with biology and chemistry faculty. It was a generous welcome to the Vassar campus for local students.

And just recently, Rick and I have joined forces with faculty and administrators across campus to form a committee (we call ourselves VAP—Vassar Artifacts Project) to preserve the tools of the educational trade, essentially Vassar's history. From old astronomy equipment to stuffed birds, mouth-blown chemistry glass to old maps, these are the items of immense value to our community, to the college. Vassar's history is a microcosm of this country's history and filled with lessons we cannot afford to lose. Preserving, storing, and displaying these artifacts is our prime objective. The collections that Matthew Vassar insisted upon for his college are as valuable today as they were in the beginning and are deserving of our care.



The museum is open, during the academic year, to the public. We never charge a fee, though we put a lot of effort into sharing our collections, our knowledge, and our enthusiasm with all who come through those doors. We'd sure be happy to see you here, any time you're in town.

~ Lois Horst
Museum Curator