

December 2008

Dear Classmates,

This past summer I received the following email from **Jeff Wolin**:

Hey Doug, **Jonathan Sisson** visited me in Paris last week where I'm teaching a 6 week photography workshop. He was on his way from Brussels to his home in Switzerland where he is working for Swisspeace, a terrific and important organization devoted to issues of war refugees and reconciliation. He deals a lot w/ the Balkans.

We spent 2 days walking around Paris, going to hear a friend and former student of mine play funk music on a barge in the Seine en face de Notre Dame and visiting the glorious outdoor market at Bastille. We had a great time and talked non-stop about the past 30+ years and the course of our lives.

Like me he is curious about Toar and what he's up to. I promised I would check with you since you are better than anyone else at herding cats (i.e., keeping in touch w/ our unruly classmates).

Great French open, eh? My friend (and funk band guitarist) saw Rafa today doing a photo shoot on a bridge here.

A bientot, Jeff

It is not hard for me to picture these two friends wandering a beautiful foreign city, catching up on everything since our graduation. It is an appealing image. And their desire to reconnect with one another only re-emphasizes the power of friendship forged at Kenyon. Of course, Jeff's staying in touch with a former student shows Kenyon isn't the only institution that creates these types of bonds. But creating lasting friendships is certainly an attribute many of us associate with Kenyon.

I followed up on Jeff's and John's request to locate **Toar Palar**. His response was:

I've wondered what Jonathon Sisson and Jeff Wolin have been up to all these years. Imagine my surprise to find they're yakking it up in Paris.

As much as I like praise for my talents at herding cats, I have to admit it wasn't so hard to track down Toar. I only had to go to the alumni directory on the Kenyon website to get his email address. I want to emphasize that staying connected to Kenyon and classmates is not

difficult. And I encourage you to stay or become connected. If for nothing else, you never know when it will lead to yakking it up in some exotic port.

The College does like utilizing my role as class agent/cat herder, because it helps in their generating support – most importantly, financial support – for Kenyon. And the class letter is a nice opportunity to gather and share news from classmates. But I want to re-emphasize there are many ways to stay connected to Kenyon. One classmate of ours informed me he now has a Facebook account and can be in touch with all the Kenyon people he chooses. He said I'm no longer needed. And that's fine as long as he does stay connected.

Besides class letters, the class notes in the Alumni Bulletin or just contacting classmates using the alumni directory, one can stay connected to Kenyon by attending alumni functions in their regions. The "Learning in the Company of Friends" series has proven to be very popular with alumni. At these affairs you might run into old schoolmates or meet new friends from different eras of the College. You'll hear some news from campus and the lectures/talks are often engaging.

At the recent LCF function in New York, Paul Kluge '64, professor of creative writing at Kenyon, gave a talk entitled: "First And Not Quite Last Thoughts On A Small College In Ohio". Those attending also received a copy of his new novel, "Gone Tomorrow", courtesy of Matt Winkler '77. The novel is about a professor at a small college in Ohio. Alumni that evening were certainly given a dose of Kenyon.

One alumnus I ran into at the Kluge event was classmate **Bob Fine**. I didn't know Bob at Kenyon, but have gotten to know him over the years through phone conversations (cat herding stuff) and meeting him at regional functions. Although you will find Bob in our yearbook, he may not register with a lot of you. That is partly due to his starting at Kenyon with the class of '71. But Bob has stayed connected to Kenyon. Over the years he's visited the campus and remained close to Professors Michael Evens and Harry Clor. He now has two sons attending Kenyon: Philip '09 and Rob '12. His wife Bonnie, a Bryn Mawr graduate, also loves the College. Bob worked on Wall Street for 22 years before starting a second career running a photography studio in Westchester County. He specializes in high resolution fine art portraiture and landscapes, which you can see some examples of at rfinephotography.com.

Reunion weekend is always a good way to stay connected with the College, even if it isn't our class reunion year. This past June, I joined with **Tom Moore** in attending the Class of '73's reunion. **Bill Wallace** was there with Candy for her reunion. It turns out a number of other classmates were also on campus that weekend. The AD's and the ALO's both had all years reunions. I ran into **Bruce Mavec** and **Henry Wickham** of the AD's and **Lance Coon** and **Sam Barone (along with Paula)** of the ALO's. I'd have more to report on all of these folks, but I was a bit disconnected then. While driving out to Gambier, a deer ran in front of my car (Ruby, the Cadillac). You'll have to trust me, at 65 mph on the interstate, hitting a deer is not at all like herding cats.

Earlier in the spring, I had a chance to reconnect with my old roommate, **Peter Moffit**. I asked Peter, who is the musical director for an Episcopal church in Jersey City, to help with the music at a memorial service for a family member. The family wanted something with a jazz flavor, and Peter seemed to be the perfect person to put that part of the program together. And he was. He helped structure the service. He charted the songs and recruited the musicians. **Dave Jaffe** attended the service and later emailed me his thoughts. Among them, "Fun to see Peter and hear him play." For those of you who wonder if Peter sounds as good as you remember him being, I think Dave and I can attest he is.

Being a part of the Kenyon community, whether by being in touch with old friends, attending events or giving money, helps keep Kenyon a vital institution. As a class we have been generous in giving to the Kenyon Fund. No doubt the current economic uncertainty has had its impact on many of us. I hope you can still be generous with Kenyon. Any support from the alumni is welcomed by the College. The news from Gambier indicates the alumni as a whole are continuing their support. This is important in a time when so much of the financial fabric is stressed.

I suspect many of you have read President Nugent's report in the Kenyon Digest or on the website elaborating how Kenyon is weathering the financial storms. President Nugent stressed the College is not in crisis mode, does not have a cash flow problem and will balance the budget as we have since 1969.

Our endowment has been hurt (it's now \$120 million, down from \$144 million). One silver lining of Kenyon having a small endowment is the College depends heavily on the Kenyon Fund to meet its current needs. So the impact of our declining endowment is less than it is at other colleges and universities. That said; the college is setting aside contingency funds for financial aid and other emergencies. There will be a pause in the development of several facilities – two buildings for the visual arts and a new residential hall on the south campus. Construction has not started on these and won't commence until the financial climate has stabilized. The planning and fundraising for these projects will continue.

President Nugent said looking ahead she is encouraged by two factors. As she states it:

One is, thanks to the Kenyon family, our "We Are Kenyon" campaign is advancing well. We are on track to meet our goals. Second, sound financial practices and planning are a strong tradition at Kenyon. Prudent management is not a virtue we have to rediscover; it has long been our standard way of operating.

Finally, I have received some other news from other classmates:

Chuck Barton sent an email with a letter attached. His instructions were:

For the class notes, if you can find anything in the attached nomination form. I did not win a national award - at least nothing more has come of this.

The letter nominates Chuck for the National Governors Association Award for Distinguished Service to State Government in the Private Citizen Category. Specifically, the nomination is for Chuck's leadership with Operation Clean Government, a statewide volunteer organization in Rhode Island dedicated to promoting honest, responsible and responsive state government. The letter goes on to describe the mission of OGS and what Chuck's leadership has done for the organization and for the state. The letter also mentions:

Above and beyond his activities with Operation Clean Government, Chuck is also serving as a director on the boards of the Rhode Island Clean Water Finance Agency and St. Mary's Home for Children. He was a noted elected official in his home of East Greenwich, RI where he served elected terms on both the school committee and as President of the Town Council.

Some of you may recall Chuck ran for the US Congress in 2004. His commitment to public service, as demonstrated by this letter, continues and Rhode Island benefits.

Lance Coon followed up his visit to Kenyon with this note:

No big news here. I did manage to get to Gambier twice this year. The first was reunion weekend, which coincided with my nephew's graduation from Mount Vernon HS. I saw several friends from the class of '73 and met some ALO's who had preceded me in the fraternity. The second time was mid-October, when I ran into **Preston Lentz** in the bookstore. Preston was visiting his brother and sister-in-law the same weekend at the end of a business trip.

Roberta Fancher reports of her recent visit to Gambier and other things:

I'm still teaching high school. I teach English and Study Skills to eleventh graders. Our football team is doing well. Recently I have been daydreaming that maybe Liz Forman would come to our school to recruit. I visited Pat and William McCulloh when I stopped in Gambier this summer. There was a nice concert outside in front of the Alumni Inn where I stayed. Very cool to hear songs while eating dinner in the twilight. Mazza's is now out of business. I thought it was kind of sad. I also was very sad at the demise of Paul Newman. I was a long time fan. Great to hear from you.

Larry Harbison writes:

I am editing books for the theatrical trade publisher Smith & Kraus, continue to write my weekly column on my adventures in the theatre, and am writing a book on contemporary American playwrights. My son Kenyon and his wife have a one-year-old daughter, Madeleine. They are lawyers in Los Angeles.

And once again **Brian Mark** updates us:

As the nation frets and sweats through another of these interminably endless presidential elections, and as my retirement accounts burst open and empty like the earthen dam in the Johnstown Flood, the important issues are being sweated out over here on the West Coast as we face state deficits and drought, deciding which drought tolerant plant looks best in the northwest corner of our front yard while Sacramento and the Movie Star face off in the annual budget battle shoot out.

In Taiwan, on the east coast at the hot springs of Zhyh-ben (where foreigners never venture), in May I ran into a family of Persian Bahais with their American relations from Iowa. They run a language school up the road from Zhyh-ben in Tatung, teaching English to the Taiwanese, with their lilting Persian accents tempered by twenty years of living in Taiwan. Whenever I meet a foreigner living in Asia, they never have a business, a store, a donut shop.....they are always English teachers. Even the Persians. If we ever decide to stay in Taiwan, I too will be an English teacher. There is no other path.

I'm still getting orders for Polynesian themed art, and am preparing for my third art show of the year this weekend. Get your order in before the Christmas rush,

Herding cats is not so bad. At least I get to keep in touch with many of you. But I think we should all continue to keep strengthening the bonds we started at Kenyon.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Doug".

Doug
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