When I was a high school student looking at colleges, I was dragged kicking and screaming to look at Sweet Briar. Sweet Briar touted the refrain that women’s colleges offered far more opportunities than coeducational schools did for women to become leaders. I was one of those students who matriculated despite the fact, not because it offered single-sex education, and I took the leadership mantra with a grain of salt. After all, I attended a small Catholic high school where everyone seemed to be involved in everything and I could not imagine that women, especially me, needed help with anything. (This was the early 1980s, and I was only 17!) Not until I attended law school did I really begin to recognize what Sweet Briar had given me.

Then, as now, College leaders led by example and provided ample opportunities for the students to take a lead somewhere, somehow. I was involved in all sorts of campus activities as a student and remained involved with Sweet Briar in some capacity since my graduation because I believe so strongly in the Sweet Briar Promise. In my years on the Alumnae Association Board, I have served under the leadership of two fabulous presidents, each of whom I admire for her wisdom, diplomacy, and dedication to our alma mater. I feel privileged to have been given the opportunity to follow in their footsteps. Although I have served on several boards in my professional and residential communities, Sweet Briar’s Alumnae Board is special to me in the way that Sweet Briar is special to each of us, but for reasons we cannot always articulate.

Right now is a particularly exciting time on campus as Ken Huus, the dean of admissions, and his staff helped Sweet Briar enroll her largest class since 1983! Louise Swiecki Zingaro ’80, executive director of alumnae affairs, and all the ladies in the alumnae office planned our third annual Homecoming Weekend, which was so successful that we had over 1,000 participants from the alumnae and campus communities. Of particular interest at Convocation were our Keynote speaker, Prudence Bushnell, former Ambassador to Kenya and Guatemala, and our Distinguished Alumna Award recipient, Gay Hart Gaines ’59, both of whom are worthy role models.

As you read on, you will get a glimpse into the lives of several Sweet Briar alumnae who are leading the way in their varied career fields. Being a leader does not mean that you have to be in the position at the top rung of the ladder; it can be as easy as setting an example by the manner in which you do something or agreeing to accept a task nobody else will.

Opportunities for leadership present themselves to us each day and throughout our lives. After reading this issue I hope that each of you will be inspired to recognize the opportunities in your lives and to rise to the challenge. I am certain most of you already have.
Leadership at Sweet Briar

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INSIDE BACK COVER: “In the Sweet Briar Tradition”


Photo © Aaron Mahler
I am reminded each year during Homecoming Weekend, that as a community, we continue to weave relationships while bonding to a common experience, born long ago by the school’s founders. This is the Sweet Briar College experience and it is our Homecoming Weekend experience.

Now in its third year, Homecoming 2007 celebrated with more than 1,000 registered participants including students, alumnae, faculty and staff, and friends of the College. Final registration counts included 195 alumnae, 122 faculty and staff, 471 students, and 305 guests. Alongside the many social, athletic, and academic events shared with students, faculty and staff, the weekend opened with a panel discussion led by the College’s senior staff on the Sweet Briar of today.

“It was great to see the camaraderie and sense of team among the senior administrative staff. As usual, it was too short. It is always nice to learn about the College’s new initiatives,” commented an alumna returning with classmates to plan for their 35th reunion.

Throughout the weekend, updates, training, and annual meetings were offered by the Alumnae Association Board, Annual Fund, Visiting Committee on the Riding Program, Friends of Athletics Steering Committee, and Advisory Councils.

Advisory Councils, now in their third year, are comprised of alumnae, faculty and staff,
In Sweet Briar College, Advisory Councils offer students advising beyond the traditional academic borders. A young alumna who serves as an Advisory Council member responded, “This meeting was excellent. I hope more alumnae will attend in the future. It was good to hear from all appropriate faculty and student majors and minors. I look forward to becoming more involved.” Once a year, these off-campus advisors meet with students to share career experiences, participate in one-on-one meetings, and hear student presentations on recent internships and research opportunities. Faculty also share department updates. Currently, there are five disciplines with advisory councils including: business; classics, philosophy and religion; English and creative writing; modern languages; and psychology.

There are a number of ways to engage in the life of the College, and we hope you will consider attending Homecoming 2008 if you have not visited campus recently. You will leave with renewed knowledge and interest, knowing that Sweet Briar continues to shape and fulfill the goals and aspirations of its students.

Next year’s Homecoming Weekend will be held on September 25–28, 2008.
The Pink & Green Competition Continues!

In late summer, members of the Classes of 2011 and 2009 came in droves, clad in greens of all sorts, to the Farm House challenged by the Classes of 2010 and 2008 who were dressed thoroughly in pink. The gathering on a balmy August evening ignited the friendly competition for the third year in Sweet Briar history. This end-of-summer fling was the perfect chance for the teams to come together and relax before the true competition began during Homecoming Weekend 2007.

During Homecoming, alumnae and students attend events donning their color, and the class years with the most color support win a victory party at the Farm House, home of Louise Swiecki Zingaro ’80, executive director of alumnae affairs. Class years ending in an even number flaunt their “pinkest” outfit, while those with odd years sport their greens. The Alumnae Association counts on you and the students to keep the spirit alive!

The competition is always close; however, the Green Team was victorious this year! The Class of 2011, the largest class to enter Sweet Briar College since 1983, attended events throughout the weekend with good cheer and clothed in their greens. The Pink Team remains a force, but the large and enthusiastic incoming class tipped the scales for the odd year classes. More than 88% of the first year class registered for Homecoming Weekend.

The annual victory party honored the Green Team (First Years and Juniors, Classes of 2011 and 2009) this year on Tuesday, December 4, 2007 at the Farm House.

As plans for next year’s Homecoming are already underway, both students and alumnae know the competition continues!
Scholarship Recipients Express Gratitude
SHEILA ALEXANDER, DEVELOPMENT COMMUNICATIONS COORDINATOR

On Friday of Homecoming Weekend, a special luncheon honored Indiana Fletcher Williams Associates and Silver Rose Society members. Williams Associates provide for Sweet Briar in their estate plans, and Silver Rose Society members have consistently made gifts for 25 years or longer. This year’s honorees were joined by another group of very special guests: donors who generously give to scholarships and endowed funds.

Nannette McBurney Crowds ’57, alumnae board and planned giving chair, gave the opening remarks to hearty applause. “We had founders with a dream of making young women the equals of men in society; early faculty who believed in women’s education; students who believed in going after what they wanted, even if the world wasn’t ready for them. You are in this room today because you share those early visions and believe that women’s education knows no bounds!”

Michelle Sanchez ’08, a philosophy major and Sweet Spirit, gave the invocation. While dessert was served, eight slightly nervous students stood to speak about how scholarships help make their dreams come true, a theme that surfaced repeatedly. Their words were heartfelt, and the audience was overwhelmed by the sincerity with which they spoke.

“… I am incredibly thankful for being awarded a scholarship to study at Sweet Briar. I have probably never been happier in my life than I am now, because I am constantly reminded that dreams can be reached every day. I wouldn’t have been able to make this dream come true without my scholarship.” So spoke Tania Salas-Platt ’11 from Ecuador. Her mother, Deirdre Platt ’83, studied at Sweet Briar 20 years ago. Ms. Platt has not been able to visit Sweet Briar again, but her dreams live on through her daughter.

In her remarks, President Muhlenfeld said, “the game isn’t over with the end of the campaign; it is vital that our vision and our giving continue every year, faithfully, so that new generations of young women can live out their dreams of success as educators, scientists, athletes, writers, mothers, volunteers—whatever their dreams, our goal is to help them live out those dreams successfully.”

The president’s introduction of the student speech portion of the program made clear the value placed on these donors and honorees: “Today you will hear from some of our students whose dreams you are helping to fulfill. These students, and all of our students, are learning their vision of philanthropy from all of you, and they have wonderful role models. Their comments will give all of us some insight into how your philanthropy has changed their lives and made their Sweet Briar education possible.”

KC Ellis ’08 explained that her scholarship allowed her to take an internship in Washington, D.C., one of the most expensive internship locations. “With my scholarship, I was able to afford a semester-long internship, where I worked at a firm dealing with humanitarian aid issues for Catholic Relief Services in addition to working for Congressman Joe Baca. I also volunteered with Bethany House for battered women and children and in Hope’s Kitchen with the Women’s Dinner program.” Scholarships allow students to accept internships that match their goals most closely, even if they are unpaid.

Each year the cost to educate every Sweet Briar student grows. We rely on scholarships to help bring the best and brightest to Sweet Briar to realize their dreams, no matter what their financial circumstances.
Recipients of the
Distinguished Alumna
Award

The Distinguished Alumna Award, established in 1988, recognizes alumnae who have brought distinction to themselves and to Sweet Briar College through their outstanding accomplishments in a volunteer or professional capacity.

1988  Dorothy Rouse-Bottom ’49
      Diana Muldaur Dozier ’60
      Karin Lawson ’74

1989  Hallam Hurt ’67

1990  Virginia Upchurch Collier ’72
      Katherine Upchurch Takvorian ’72

1991  Ann Henderson Bonnard ’49
      Sadie Gwin Allen Blackburn ’45

1992  Marshelyn Yeargin-Allsopp ’68

1993  Molly Haskell Sarris ’61

1994  Anna Chao Pai ’57

1995  Joan Vail Thorne ’51

1996  Beryl Bergquist Farris ’71

1997  Geogene M. Vairo ’72

1998  Katharine Crommelin Milton ’62

1999  Patricia Traugott Rouse ’48

2000  Connie Burwell White ’34

2001  Joanne Holbrook Patton ’52

2002  Nella Gray Barkley ’55

2003  Elizabeth Morton Forsyth ’36*

2004  Anne Little Poulet ’64

2005  Jo Ann Soderquist Kramer ’64

2006  Elizabeth Perkins Prothro ’39

2007  Gay Hart Gaines ’59

* Deceased

It is with great pleasure that I introduce Gay Hart Gaines of the Class of 1959, recipient of the 2007 Distinguished Alumna Award, a special honor that recognizes extraordinary accomplishment within a career field. Gay has shown outstanding leadership in the fields of education and politics. We are recognizing her today with one of the most esteemed honors the College can bestow because of the laudable action she has taken regarding her beliefs in bettering our nation.

Gay was born in Toronto, Canada, and lived much of her young life overseas in Bombay and Sydney. Independence was instilled in her at a young age when she began boarding school in the United States in 1951. The rest of her family crossed the seas in 1954. That was the year that Gay began her “marvelous Sweet Briar experience,” as she calls it. She earned her B.A. in psychology and graduated with honors in 1959. A glowing May Queen, she was truly one of the shining stars in her class. “Beauty Blessed with Wisdom,” is how she is described forever in the 1959 yearbook. Although she was also known as the “Queen of Diamonds,” it was said of Gay that she had a “sparkle on more than just her finger.” Her dedication to the field of education and related projects has proved this phrase true time and time again.
Ever the activist, yet also the lovely lady we remember from her four years at SBC, another quote reads from her senior yearbook: “many men came, but only one conquered.” Stanley Noyes Gaines won Gay’s hand and they were married in 1959. Together with their four children they lived in 13 different places throughout the United States. After studying interior design for two years at the University of Minnesota, Gay worked for Robert Lenox Associates and then opened her own company, Gay Hart Gaines, Inc., of which she was president for ten years. Gay was involved with the educational climate of nearly every city in which she lived. She served on the Board of The Guthrie Theater and American Diabetes Association in Minnesota; The Auxiliary Board of The Chicago Art Institute and The Juvenile Diabetes Foundation in Illinois; The McCarter Theater in Princeton; The Juvenile Diabetes Foundation in Palm Beach, Florida; The Best Friends Foundation, and the Hudson Institute in Washington, D.C. She has been a member of the Madison Council of the Library of Congress since 1994.

Gay is a strong supporter of conservative values and politics. She has upheld her convictions not only for herself and her family, but also in the greater scope of the political realm. She has gone out and made a difference in the most admirable ways. With unwavering consistency, she has supported Republican candidates for local, state, and national offices. She served as Republican County Committee person in Mercer County, New Jersey, and became the first elected Chairman of the National Review Institute, an organization founded by William F. Buckley, Jr. and John O’Sullivan “to promote conservative ideas and causes.”

In 1993, Congressman Newt Gingrich recruited Mrs. Gaines to be the new Chairman of GOPAC, the Republican Political Action Committee. She held this position for four years, during which time she helped to elect Republican majorities in state and local offices across the United States. She played a vital role in helping to achieve a Republican majority in the House of Representatives in 1994.

Through her active lifestyle involving family and friends, politics and other volunteer obligations, Gay was admired as a leader in each and every role she was granted, and this led to leadership in other areas of her field. In 2000 she was elected Vice Regent for Florida of the Mount Vernon Ladies’ Association, the oldest preservation board in the country. In October of 2004, she was elected the 18th Regent of the Mount Vernon Ladies’ Association for a term of three years. Her mission as regent has been to restore and preserve George Washington’s estate for future generations. Since she has been involved with Mount Vernon, the Gay Hart Gaines Distinguished Visiting Fellowship was established as well as the Legacy Theater, also known as the Gay Hart Gaines Theater.

In 2002, Gay was elected President of the Palm Beach Republican Club for a two-year term. The PBRC is one of the oldest clubs in the nation. Under Gay’s leadership, it became one of the largest. In 2003, Gay was appointed to the board of Corporation for Public Broadcasting by President George W. Bush. In November 2004 she was confirmed by the United States Senate for a term of six years. She is currently vice chairman and, to use her own words, she is “totally committed to public broadcasting’s role of providing excellence in learning, not only for children but for Americans of every age.” Gay also said as she was confirmed to the board of the CPB, “Although we live in dangerous times, Americans have the freedom to be risk-taking, creative, and bold.” We recognize her accomplishments today specifically because of this attitude that she has ascribed to not only in theory, but also in action.

Gay is a member of the Oak and Silver Rose Societies at Sweet Briar College. Silver Rose Society members are those friends of Sweet Briar who have made gifts to the College for 25 years or more. We thank her for her continued generous support.

I speak on behalf of all of us when I say that we are honored to share a common history with Gay.

My husband, Dick Buckley, and I have been on campus less than 24 hours, but it did not take us that long to be filled with admiration for the shared commitment to Sweet Briar’s mission we noticed all around.

In my view, this mission was appropriately refined in 2004 to prepare women to be productive and responsible members of a world community. This resonates with me because I have spent many years in that “world community.” I have been exposed to different ways to be productive and responsible, and, for the 24 years I was in the Foreign Service, I promoted American concepts and values of productivity and responsibility. I have also been exposed to the shackles that limit the productivity of women, who make up 50% of the world population.

In our busy American lives, it is easy to be persuaded that this is not our issue, or that we lack the power to make a difference. But if we recognize, as Sweet Briar does, that we are members of a world community, we will also recognize that these assumptions are wrong.

Women currently make up 60–70% of the world’s poor. We know that lifting a woman out of poverty is lifting an entire family out of poverty. We know how to do so, but have yet to act on a global scale. We understand how wars and conflict impact women. Studies show how critical their participation is to lasting peace, but we have yet to include them in meaningful ways of peacemaking.

In this country, working families lose $200 billion annually because of the wage gap between men and women. At the current rate of change it will take another 50 years to close that gap. Where is the talk of urgency? In the corporate world, studies show that businesses with greater numbers of women in senior positions can point to a return on equity up to 35% higher than others. Never mind the fact that women make up 50% of managerial and professional ranks, the rate of women corporate leaders still hovers at around six percent. Balancing work and family life remains an enormous burden on all working women, but continues to be considered a personal issue. Two-thirds to three-fourths of business leaders recently surveyed do not believe discrimination against women exists.

These are the realities of the world for which Sweet Briar is preparing young women. We used to consider these gender issues, but I see them as political, economic, and social challenges that responsible members of a world community will embrace. To do so each one of us must develop and use our leadership capabilities.

When I was growing up, leadership was a guy thing. Leaders were born, not made, and they were male—preferably tall and handsome. Leaders held positions at the top of the hierarchies of our governments, workplaces, religious establishments, schools, and homes. If women did exercise leadership, it was of the personal kind and often very subtle.

Raised in those environments, it never dawned on me that as a female I could be a leader. Fortunately, leadership has been redefined. It is not the role you are in, but the way you think and behave. Leaders think strategically and behave intentionally and with integrity.

Look at what Indiana Fletcher Williams did. Profoundly affected by the death of her young daughter, Daisy, she created a vision and acted intentionally and strategically by leaving her legacy to create this college and an endowment for scholarships. Miss Indie may not have had opportunities in her day to fill many formal leadership roles, but nothing stopped her from exercising personal leadership. Doing so changed thousands of lives for the better.

My last assignment in the Foreign Service was as dean of the Leadership and Management School of the Foreign Service Institute during Colin Powell’s tenure. He had a passion for leadership and wanted it practiced at all levels of the Department of State. He mandated leadership training for all employees. My colleagues and I were tasked to implement that mandate. We addressed leadership from the inside-out. We helped people develop an awareness of themselves, their values, their behaviors, and their impact on others. After all, leadership is not about you, it’s about others. We did a lot of work on skills like active listening, giving feedback, building teams, and strategic thinking.
We found no difference in the aptitude or skills between men and women. At all levels, we found a reverence for Colin Powell, a huge relief to finally get the security we needed, and an equally great sense of powerlessness to use these behaviors at work because “they won’t let me.” Even people with the power of positional leadership felt constrained from using personal leadership. As a result, the changes in culture Powell sought have been a long time coming.

I was lucky because I learned in early adulthood that I had to use personal leadership if I was ever to reach positional leadership. I practiced the behaviors intentionally in positions from secretary to ambassador.

When I received the formal leadership position of ambassador to Kenya, I was very intentional to develop teamwork and trust as we enthusiastically addressed policy interests. To develop trust, I had to listen to what people were saying. What community and staff conveyed were concerns about their security and the placement of the embassy chancery building on a busy corner in downtown Nairobi. As a leader, I had the responsibility to do something and for two years I banged on doors in Washington to get attention. Attention did come, but not in the way of security relief. In the spring of 1998, my annual performance evaluation for the first time ever had a coded reprimand. That evaluation prompted me to write a letter to the Secretary of State.

On August 7, 1998, we were blown up by a truck bomb sent by Osama bin Laden. It detonated in our small rear parking lot and instantly killed 213 people, injuring around 5,000. About half of the occupants of our building were either killed or severely wounded. It was left to the other half to go back in, with the help of other members of our community, to bring out our dead and rescue others. The leadership and courage I saw displayed that day was extraordinary—and had nothing to do with position.

Although they did not have to, members of our mission chose to stay in Kenya to reconstruct our organization, assist the Kenyan community at large, and help begin healing from a tragic and traumatic event. Leadership at every level, regardless of formal position or role, got us back on our feet. We had no time to learn about leadership; we had to act. It was through action that I learned the most important leadership imperative of them all, taking care of your people. I also learned how rough, tough, and nasty that can be.

About six weeks after the bombing, we crowded into another vulnerable U.S. government building. I was told that there was not sufficient funding for the marines providing our security to stay. I went head-to-head with senior people in Washington more than once, telling them that the day they withdrew the combat marines they would see me on international television waving good-bye with tears coming down my face. (It just shows that a woman threatening to cry can still work in all sorts of situations.) It was neither pleasant nor career-enhancing, but it was my responsibility.

As a woman, a lofty title will only get you a place at the table. It is no guarantee you will be heard. I had to adapt a variety of behaviors and gimmicks for that. For example, in the Washington policy arena, where information is power, I cultivated people “in the know,” and found that women colleagues were particularly helpful. In presenting myself, I learned to use a particular tone and demeanor: always assertive; always confident; and, in anger, very focused, calm, and low in pitch. I learned never to end a declarative sentence as if it were a question and to avoid at all costs self-diminishing statements like “you may disagree but …” or “I’m not an expert …” I learned to dress for my next position and always wear comfortable shoes; it is hard to do what is necessary to be heard when your feet hurt.

No one told me about the cultural mores of alpha male organizations, which abound in Washington, and I was initially hesitant to adopt some of them. After some internal debate as to whether it would taint my pure soul, I decided I had to start interrupting if I was ever to get a word in and to intentionally keep people from interrupting me. As ambassador, I advised my senior staff in our first meeting that I was to be called Ambassador in public because I was a short woman and didn’t need to be diminished even further. At the suggestion of one of my male colleagues, I asked whoever accompanied me as note-taker in meetings with foreign government officials to keep eyes focused on me so that my interlocutor, usually a man, would not engage my male note-taker instead. I learned a leader never carries anything (my husband was particularly good about carrying my purse).

Most important of all, I learned what I brought to my job as a woman. In private, I found, women can say things to men in power that would likely get the male of the species thrown out of the room. I was perceived as less of a threat. I also found out that, as a woman, I could adapt a tone of voice that conjured important archetypes, specifically mothers or teachers. Remember the tone that went with: “Children, you’ve got to do something about the mess in your room?” I have used that tone to say “Mr. President, you’ve got to do something about official corruption in your country” and get away with it.

This is my challenge to you: use every opportunity to think strategically, act intentionally, and behave with integrity no matter what role you play. If we want a different world for ourselves, if we want more women to hold positions of leadership or have greater opportunities to be productive and responsible on an equal footing, we need to develop and practice personal leadership now.

What an incredible place Sweet Briar is to do just that. Think about the lessons you, alumnae, can pass on. Consider the culture of leadership that you, faculty and staff, can create, and look at the opportunities you, the students, have. Sweet Briar is a premier women’s college in the most powerful nation of the world. What a gift! My hope is that you use it intentionally. I wish all of you gentle adventures.
“We have accomplished much at Sweet Briar College in the past ten years and we are on the brink of achieving another goal: constructing the updated Fitness and Athletics Center,” says Mildred “Bee” Newman Thayer ’61.

Bee and Bradley Thayer share enthusiasm for Sweet Briar athletics. Their recent gift of $400,000 to help fund the new Fitness and Athletics Center is one of many generous donations provided by those who share a vision for Sweet Briar’s future in the twenty-first century.

“In helping to shape the lives of young women, it is imperative that we support the national mandate to improve physical fitness by providing modern facilities. It is important to cultivate holistic wellness habits in our students for their lifetimes and future generations as well.”

Bee and Bradley have always supported Sweet Briar. They are the newest members of the Keystone Society, those valued donors who have made lifetime commitments to the College totaling $1 million or more. “We are proud to be part of a College that responds to the needs of its students as times change, and focuses on the future while still being...”
When visiting old houses, people often muse; “Oh, if these walls could talk, the stories they’d tell.” Without a doubt, Tusculum would have a lot to say about our College’s heritage. Sweet Briar’s family tree starts with Daisy, the only child of Indiana and James Henry Williams. To get to the Tusculum connection, we have to go back to Indiana’s mother, Maria Antoinette Crawford, who grew up at Tusculum. She married Elijah Fletcher in 1813, and their marriage endured for 40 years, until Maria’s death in 1853.

Elijah Fletcher came from a respectable but cash-poor family in Ludlow, Vermont. As one of 15 children, he was the only one his parents could send to college. In return, he was expected to help support the rest of the family. Soon after he graduated from the University of Vermont, Elijah Fletcher set out on a journey. In April 1810, he left the family farmstead on a little bay mare with $50 in his pocket to pursue a teaching position in North Carolina.

In late July Elijah finally reached Alexandria, Virginia. By that time his mare was exhausted, as were Fletcher’s funds. He wrote to his father that he was “as poor as Job’s cats,” having only four dollars left and had eaten only five full meals since leaving New York. With his pockets empty, he was forced to take on a temporary tutoring position with the Mason family of Northern Virginia. That winter, Elijah made an important connection with David Shepherd Garland, a member of Congress who was also a lawyer, a landowner with extensive holdings, and a leading citizen of Amherst County, Virginia. Known as “King David” for his wealth and influence, Garland resided at Brick House, now the home of Sweet Briar alumna Mary Smith Brugh ’57, who has kindly welcomed my students on more than one occasion. Garland convinced Elijah to give up his plans to go to North Carolina by offering him the more prestigious, and presumably more lucrative, position as the president of the New Glasgow Academy in Amherst.

After only one month, a letter arrived from home containing a plea for $150.00. Realizing that such a request would soon come again, Fletcher offered lessons in French and music for young ladies to supplement his income. These lessons were held at Brick House, and one of the students was the younger daughter of William S. Crawford, a trustee of New Glasgow Academy who resided nearby at Tusculum. At Christmas, Elijah joined the Crawfords for the holidays and by the following fall, he wrote to his father that “I have long been intimate with a most amiable, accomplished, sensible, lady, of one of the most rich, extensive, respectable families in the state.”

This was Maria Antoinette Crawford, who grew up in the company of seven sisters and three brothers at Tusculum. In his letter, Elijah described what life was like there, relating that: “They live in a two story, upright house, painted white. Mr. C. is … quite grey headed, was educated at Princeton, formerly a distinguished lawyer. Mrs. C. is most amiable … and the young Ladies distinguished for their sense and accomplishments. They dress in their silks daily but have too much good sense to be proud. The young lady I anticipate making my future companion … is sincere, candid, intelligent, and sensible.”

Elijah and Maria were married in 1813, and he became the estate manager in 1815 when his father-in-law died and left his considerable plantations to Fletcher’s stewardship. In true Cinderella style, going from
penniless schoolteacher to prominent landowner in four years, Elijah was able to parlay his wife’s connections into two terms as Lynchburg’s mayor and became a powerful force in that city. His marriage connected Elijah to two of the oldest and most active families in central Virginia: the Penns and the Crawfords. I am indebted to Judy Evans-Grubbs, former professor of classics at Sweet Briar College, and now at Washington University, for disentangling the lines of our founding family, which were set forth in a privately published genealogy of 1883.

Several pages of this imposing tome are devoted to Maria’s grandfather Gabriel Penn, who was born in 1741 and died in 1798. He fought in the French and Indian Wars as a sergeant in a regiment under Colonel William Byrd, and in the American Revolution he was the captain of one of two companies of recruits from Amherst County. He had a successful mercantile business here and served as magistrate both before and after the Revolution; he was also the Amherst delegate to the revolutionary committee that crafted Virginia’s “Declaration of Rights” in 1776. Gabriel Penn was clearly a man of note in Amherst County, but he had much more famous relatives: his cousin John Penn was a signer of the Declaration of Independence and another relation was the Quaker leader William Penn. In 1761 Penn married Sarah Callaway, the daughter of a well-known Bedford county family, and the couple had ten children. In 1779 Penn purchased a house worthy of Amherst County treasure. One of their daughters, Sophia, married William S. Crawford, who had established a successful legal practice in Amherst County, and they made their home at Tusculum.

Tusculum was named after an ancient town, an Italian center of villa culture located not far from Rome, a place where senators and philosophers would retire to the countryside to relax and attend entertainments at the theatre. It was a place so suited to the cultivation of civilization that Cicero wrote one of his greatest works, the Disputations, there. These writings became one of the foundations for a classical education in the eighteenth century, and that is how Crawford’s Tusculum plantation got its name: it was a conscious linking on the part of the Crawfords, who drew a clear parallel between an ancient Roman location of pastoral idyll and learned civilization, and their own home.

When we try to piece together the contents of houses of the past, we turn to the written record for historical accuracy. For records on Tusculum, we need go no further than the Amherst County Courthouse, where inventories tell us how the house was furnished at the time of Elijah and Maria’s marriage. They have provided a rich resource for faculty at Sweet Briar who have been studying our nineteenth-century history, and my colleagues Kate Chavigny, associate professor of history, and Lynn Rainville, visiting assistant professor of anthropology and archeology, have contributed to our understanding of this period in the family’s history.

When Crawford died, Elijah and widowed Sophia Crawford were named administrators of the Crawford’s estate. Along with the contents of Tusculum, described as “The Mansion House,” were items from two other plantations belonging to Crawford: Tye River and Indian Creek. In the nineteenth-century usage, a plantation denoted any tract of acreage that could be planted, and it was unusual to find a substantial dwelling on more than one of them. Listed along with grubbing hoes, a large black cow, and sets of harnesses, there are more elegant items for the household listed that would have been used exclusively at Tusculum.

In the long lists of these luxury items, one piece stands out to the historian of material culture: the celery vase. In the era of hand production, specialized items for the table were rare, and most Americans were eating with spoons from a communal trencher. Yet the Crawfords had a celery vase: a piece of expensive handcut glass reserved for one vegetable, an almost unimaginable extravagance.

The new location for Tusculum is just outside the edge of the outer circle of boxwoods surrounding Sweet Briar House, and its orientation near the Upper Lake is sympathetic to the house’s original location. This placement allows Tusculum to retain its listing on the National Register of Historic Places even after it is rebuilt here on our campus, a singular distinction shared by only a handful of relocated houses.

There is another key reason why Tusculum will be right at home at Sweet Briar. We are fortunate to have an incredibly diverse range of collections here, many of which belonged to our founding family. We have a history of taking our stewardship of these collections very seriously, and we consider buildings to be a part of those collections—our largest artifacts, if you will. Architecture is an element well-represented on campus, and when it is rebuilt, Tusculum will be erected in near proximity to other historic buildings. It will stand adjacent to Sweet Briar House, which shares its eighteenth-century roots, and our slave cabin, a significant structure dating from the early nineteenth century. These buildings rest against the buildings of our campus historic district, designed for Sweet Briar by architect Ralph Adams Cram. Adding Tusculum to this collection will allow us to present the history of regional architecture from the eighteenth through the twentieth centuries. These buildings comprise a remarkable resource and are studied and used for the benefit of our students, our local community, and visitors to our campus.

Interestingly, Elijah Fletcher remarked in 1845 that his daughters, upon their return from their European travels, might be useful to society by establishing “a sort of a nunnery or a school at Tusculum.” We know how important education was to our founding family. Indiana attended Georgetown Visitation Convent in Washington, which her father referred to as a “nunnery.” Perhaps it was Elijah’s remark that inspired Indiana to found a women’s college in memory of her daughter Daisy, which makes Tusculum an even more significant part of our Sweet Briar history.
As a member of the Student Relations Committee, this is my favorite time of year: all of our ideas and preparations come to fruition through the laughter of old friends catching up and new acquaintances becoming fast friends. The Cardboard Boat Regatta and picnic at the lower lake makes Saturday during Homecoming one of the most exciting days of the weekend. Engineering students design and build streamlined, sturdy boats to brave the waters through an obstacle course while everyone cheers them on.

Atop the sea of pink and green décor and picnic ware, a group of friends shouted my name. Wiggling between them to watch the boats, I continually scanned the scene, waving and shouting greetings to many passers-by. One person asked, “Do you know every single person here?” I smiled and laughed, but something about her question struck me while watching the competitors paddle and splash around the course. I realized that this is the unique beauty of Sweet Briar. All of us share a similar devoted spirit for a school that has shaped our view of the world and created unbreakable bonds between Sweet Briar women past or present. Friendships that form at every Homecoming are no coincidence, but the result of our strong foundation at Sweet Briar.

After the Cardboard Boat Regatta, afternoon activities were just beginning. I returned briefly to my room and found my roommate deep in study. “Oh you can’t stay locked up in the room for Homecoming, come join me for the field hockey game!” I shouted. She finally conceded to come on the condition that her work could accompany us to the game. Finding a shaded patch of grass on the hillside, we took in our surroundings. The vibrant green hues of the trees contrasted spectacularly against the clear blue sky, but those in attendance certainly came color coordinated in their own way. Dr. John F. Morrissey of the Biology Department and Donna McLaughlin, although new to the campus, were in full Vixen regalia to support the players.

My roommate and I noticed an alumna watching the game intensely, voicing technical phrases of support to our girls. As neither my roommate nor I knew the rules of field hockey, we struck up a conversation on what makes a good pass, and the best way to navigate the ball across the field. It was then that she noticed my roommate’s course book resting on the grass. By the end of the first half, they were discussing the author, his work, and their own understanding of the material, with occasional interrupting shouts of “Go Sweet!” The second half was just as thrilling; each team proved their worth and prowess on the field, and Sweet Briar won the game. The flush of victory evident on the players’ faces was exciting to us all as we cheered in celebration of a job well done. The exhilaration I felt at the game and the conversation I participated in with an enthusiastic alumna left a lasting impression on me. I’m looking forward to Homecoming 2008, to the fantastic events, and to the friendships I will make.
Homecoming Horse Show

On the warm, sunny Homecoming Saturday, Sweet Briar riders wore wool hunt coats and black helmets. They led shiny horses from their stalls, saddled them, and mounted. With the outdoor arena drug, the jumps set, and the course maps posted, SBC equestrians were ready to ride in the first in-house show of the year.

This intramural event was the first opportunity for qualified first-year students to compete on campus, riding either their own horse or a Sweet Briar horse. The sophomores, juniors, and seniors did not let the first-years have all the fun though, as they were also eager to gain more experience riding in a supportive, learning-emphasized show atmosphere. Equestrians of all levels were encouraged to attend the show to watch and learn, even if they did not compete. From the sidelines, Kimberly Rosenberg ’11 rooted for her friends and said “it’s really interesting to see all kinds of people compete at different levels.” She also noted, “I like to watch because it helps me learn about my own position and riding skills.”

Riders entered equitation classes, in which a rider’s position and effectiveness are judged, and in jumper classes, in which the horse’s speed and agility are paramount. Former Associate Director of the SBC Riding Program Jill Randles served as judge for the day.

Diana Simpson, who will graduate this spring, rode in the show. She commented, “It was a beautiful day to ride, and it was great fun to see some alumnae come and watch the show. There were quite a few people there, even some alumnae that didn’t ride. It was very bittersweet to see my friends who had moved past Sweet Briar; I miss them, and it was a stark reminder of how quickly May is looming. It was also a sad realization that this was the last homecoming at which I would be a student and not alumna.”

Rider participation in the event was comparable to previous years, while spectator attendance rose slightly. Holding the show on Saturday gave families and alumnae a chance to get settled on campus beforehand. Chairs were set up in the shade beside the arena, yet some spectators still preferred the soft grass. Many horse shows on campus are only attended by students, so it was nice to have some additional crowd support for this one. The Alumnae Office generously provided adorable horse-head carabiners as souvenirs, which were set out in the Bailey room and at the in-gate.

Kate Beach ’09, English and creative writing major, business minor

Face-to-Face Homecoming Event tops Facebook Web site

On Friday evening of Homecoming Weekend, current students and alumnae met at the Elston Inn and Conference Center for a night of networking and dancing. This is the first year that the “Who Needs Facebook When You Have Face-to-Face Time?” event has taken place, but with a catchy name and plenty of publicity, it was well attended and enjoyed.

At the beginning, alumnae office personnel and Student Relations Committee members greeted attendees with enthusiasm and pointed out tables staffed by SBC Alumnae Club Regional Chairs. These alumnae board members graciously and happily volunteered their time to meet with current students who were either from one of the states of their region or had an interest in internning or working there in the future. Connections were made based on fields of interest and career industries, which are invaluable to students hoping to gain insight into potential job areas.

After students grabbed snack plates full of chocolate fondue, nachos, and other munchies, they chatted with their new alumnae acquaintances while meeting other current students from their home region. The casual, yet focused environment was conducive to both informative discussion as well as the light-hearted sharing of stories about the Sweet Briar experience. Associate Director of Career Services Kristin Ewing introduced me to Kelly Meredith Iacobelli ’88, and we talked about her experiences working in advertising. As an English and creative writing major and business minor, I’m always looking for ways to find out more about fields in which my specific skill set could be applicable. Kelly shared specifics about the industry with me from a first-hand perspective.

Julia Pittman ’11 also had a positive experience at this party. She stated that she met friendly alumnae that “were very interested in what I planned to do.” Julia also explained, “I had fun and would like to see this event repeated next year.”

About an hour after the event began, the lights dimmed and DJ Mix Master Mike got the dance party started. Students and alumnae rocked out to a mix of modern hits and oldies-but-goodies. Those that still wanted to chat either yelled over the music or moved out into the foyer and huddled around the food tables. Some suggested that next year, we should have two separate rooms, one for dancing and one for networking, allowing people to participate in the activity of their choice. All-in-all, I heard many positive comments, and this event is definitely worth a repeat.

Kate Beach ’09, English and creative writing major, business minor

Lydia Winants ’11 is mounted and ready to ride!

Diane Reiling ’73 and Kate Lyndin ’09 met at the Facebook event.
Homecoming 2007 was packed with athletic events. Saturday, five varsity athletic games were played on our campus fields and courts followed by a busy “Alumnae Sunday.” The Sunday schedule, featuring the 2007 Class of the Athletics Hall of Fame inductees at breakfast, was filled with the brim with alumnae-student competitions in field hockey, swimming, and volleyball.

On Saturday the SBC Varsity Field Hockey team faced non-conference Shenandoah University’s players, Varsity Soccer took on conference-foe Emory and Henry College, and Varsity Volleyball hosted a tri-match with Lynchburg College and Mountain State University.

Vixen hockey treated the Homecoming crowd to a win, defeating Shenandoah 3–2. Amey Landreth ’11 gave Sweet Briar an early 1–0 lead with an unassisted goal 15 minutes into the game. Shenandoah answered with its first goal 20 minutes later.

Sweet Briar came out strong as Lindsay Eneguess ’11 and sophomore Molly McGonegle each sent a ball to the back of the cage, giving Vixens a 3–1 lead. A late goal by Shenandoah made the game close, but Vixens held on for the win.

The crowd then flocked to the soccer field where Vixens did not fare as well. Down 2–0 after the first 45 minutes, Sweet Briar tried to make a comeback. First-year Kat Alexander put Sweet Briar on the board in the 60th minute with an unassisted goal.

Alexander’s goal brought us within one point of tying the game in the final 30 minutes, but the one-goal differential was as close as the team could come. The Wasps won with an insurance goal in the 68th minute.

“I was really nervous playing in front of former students because athletics are the front porch of a college, and how we represent our school affects how people see it,” said Alexander. “In the end, I think we worked as hard as we could, we showed good progress within the program and offered a glimpse of what’s to come. I was proud to be a first-year athlete representing Sweet Briar.”

While field hockey and soccer were competing outside, volleyball took on Lynchburg College and Mountain State in the gym. The Vixens faced Lynchburg in the morning, kicking off the tri-match. Hornets unfortunately took the match in three games.

After Lynchburg and Mountain State faced off, the Vixens took on Mountain State to round out the action. Our ladies won with a close score of 30–28 before dropping the tri-match 3–1. Vixens compiled 66 digs as a team.

On “Alumnae Sunday” the Hall of Fame Breakfast honored inductees of the 2007 Class of the Athletics Hall of Fame. Cara Gascoigne, director of physical education from 1912–1923; riding champion Jamie Planck Martin ’81; and swimming star Jennifer Ellen Crossland ’86 received high honors for their sporting accomplishments at Sweet Briar and beyond.

Members of senior staff, the Athletics department, the Riding Department, current student athletes, and family and friends of the inductees gathered for the induction ceremony. Each inductee was presented for induction and those who were able to attend the ceremony were given the chance to respond. Current student athletes served as hosts for each inductee and introduced their presenters.

“The Hall of Fame Breakfast was inspiring. We were able to hear the inductees speak of their accomplishments and how Sweet Briar sports have forever changed them,” commented junior field hockey student-athlete Blair Sutton.

Alexander added, “Being in that room, surrounded by my fellow student athletes and seeing what those who have come before us have accomplished was beyond inspiring. What amazing women!”

The athletics portion of Homecoming Weekend concluded with alumnae players challenging the current student athletes in field hockey, volleyball, and swimming.
Cara Gascoigne

JENNIFER CRISPE, ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR OF PHYSICAL EDUCATION

Cara Gascoigne “arrived at the College in 1912 to start an unusually well-directed program of physical education” wrote Martha Lou Stohlman ’34 in her book, The Story of Sweet Briar College. Cara remained at Sweet Briar for 11 years, and during her tenure the students played Virginia’s first women’s intercollegiate field hockey game in 1919, as well as the first intercollegiate basketball game in 1920. The hockey game was the first women’s intercollegiate contest of any kind in the state of Virginia. In one of her student assignments, Jennifer Frost ’86 wrote, quoting Gascoigne: “Although the game had been played on campus since 1909, it was Miss Gascoigne’s hope that, someday, ‘the gentle art of knocking a rubber ball down the field without being massacred on the way’ would be mastered.”

In 1914, Gascoigne also started club lacrosse at the College. Lacrosse is now a very popular varsity sport at Sweet Briar. She returned to England in 1923 and was followed by Harriet Rogers. Gascoigne was a favorite amongst her students as evidenced by a remark written in the 1920 Briar Patch. “We are fortunate in having Miss Gascoigne again as athletic instructor after her absence abroad. We should now be able to advance steadily towards our ideal, and perhaps, some day, to reach it.”

In an earlier yearbook, a student remarked, “Aesthetic dancing [is] the desire and ambition of every awkward student in college. Miss Gascoigne does really, at times, turn some of them into Graces, but some others—ye gods!”

Long-time field hockey coach Jennifer Crispen says, “You cannot underestimate the influence of the early physical educators at Sweet Briar. They valued athletics and competition not only as necessary, but as good for their students. Much of the early progress in women’s competition was due to the competitive philosophy of women’s college athletics, particularly the Mid-Atlantic and Southern women’s colleges. Cara Gascoigne left a legacy that still benefits Sweet Briar student-athletes today.”

Jamie Planck Martin & Paul Cronin at Sweet Briar.

Jamie Planck Martin was the epitome of SBC’s recruiting slogan “Riders and Scholars.” She graduated Magna Cum Laude with honors in 1981. As a student, she was a member of Phi Beta Kappa and received the Sweet Briar Presidential Medal given to an outstanding athlete and scholar as well as the Lawrence G. Nelson Award for excellence in English. She entered Sweet Briar shortly after the Harriet Howell Rogers Riding Center moved from the 17-stall shed. A new 60-stall facility and larger arena looked “real good” to riders, trainers, and prospective students at SBC. As training and competitive programs developed, Jamie helped lead the way with her talent, experience, work ethic, and sportsmanship. Always a keen and interested riding student, she was open to new ideas and approaches and was refreshingly comfortable both questioning and encouraging fellow students and faculty. As one of these faculty members, I dedicated my book, Schooling and Riding The Sport Horse, to “The horses and students who have taught me all I know, especially those at Sweet Briar College.” Jamie is certainly one of those students, and I will always be grateful to her.

Before coming to SBC, Jamie competed successfully in the southeast, as well as on the Florida circuit and at the northeast indoor horse shows. She rode a range of horses at SBC and competed with consistent quality performances and good sportsmanship. Jamie was the ANRC National Collegiate Equitation Champion each year of her college career with the exception of her junior year abroad. After Sweet Briar, Jamie received her J.D. from Vanderbilt School of Law. Careers as an attorney and as a mother have filled her life, yet now Jamie is returning to riding in a big way. She has been involved with the government of the sport through serving on committees for the USHA, USEF, The American Hunter Jumper Foundation, and The Mississippi Hunter Association. Recently, she built Providence Hill Farm, a quality equestrian facility. We expect to hear great things from her as she continues riding and sharing her passion for horses.
About Providence Hill Farm…

“By chance we ended up with this facility,” Jamie said about her farm, Providence Hill. “The other barn in our area decided to stop going to horse shows, so we designed and built Providence Hill Farm.” On the Web site, www.providencehillfarm.com, you will find the farm’s mission statement: “Our trainers and staff are committed to providing the highest quality training and care available for our horses and riders in a nurturing and warm environment. Honesty, integrity, and a commitment to Christian principles form the basis for all of our programs.”

Aside from other activities at the farm that include raising cattle, growing crops and trees for timber, Providence Hill is also the base for the Mississippi College Equestrian Team. The venture began last spring when a group of girls from the college asked Jamie if she would help them start an equestrian team. “As God would have it, I happened to be there that day. Having such wonderful memories of Sweet Briar riding, I was excited about trying to help them. I met with the girls and we submitted a proposal to the college president. Now, riding is a varsity women’s sport at Mississippi College.”

Jamie attributes much of her success to experiences that have taken place throughout her life. One such experience was her college career. “Sweet Briar prepared me to do all of these things. I wasn’t trained to own and manage a farm; I was trained as a lawyer. SBC taught us to give back to our community and to think critically, so it was easy to take skills from another profession and use them in different areas.” In helping to start the Mississippi College program, Jamie is able to give back to her community. She also organizes a summer camp at Providence Hill for inner-city children.

“The name Providence means divine intervention. This farm is God’s intervention. There is nothing I have given or done that could have earned this farm.” Providence was the name of a Baptist church where Jamie’s great-grandfather-in-law was a music minister, and using the church’s name for her farm is her and her husband’s way of recognizing God’s hand in their life.

As owner and activities manager of the farm, Jamie has a full schedule. “My daughter, Tinsley, who is 12, also rides and travels to horse shows with me,” Jamie says. “You will often see my mother, Jacquie, cheering for us at the shows and helping at the barn. It’s a family affair.” Jamie participates in approximately 15 shows each year and considers it “a great blessing” to have taken home Champion of the amateur-owner-over-36 division at the Devon, PA, indoor horse show, and Reserve Champion at the Harrisburg, PA, outdoor horse show, for two years in a row. These are two of the most prestigious shows in the nation. — C. Murray

Jennifer Ellen Crossland ’86
BONNIE KESTNER, ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR OF PHYSICAL EDUCATION AND ATHLETICS

Jennifer Crossland and Bonnie Kestner at the Hall of Fame induction ceremony.

Jen, Jenny, Jennifer—she goes by all three, and I’m never sure what to call her, except FAST. Jenny showed us her speed as recently as last year during the first alumnae swim meet, when she beat every swimmer past and present in the 50-meter breaststroke and helped our alumnae team tie the current swimmers.

In 1981, Jennifer Ellen Crossland applied early decision to Sweet Briar and was accepted. She began swimming with us in the fall of 1982. In March of her freshman year, she represented Sweet Briar in five events at the National Collegiate Athletics Association Division III Nationals. In the 50-yard breaststroke, Jenny entered the meet seeded 28th. In the preliminaries, she dropped 1.6 seconds and moved into third. With that determined look in her eye, Jenny told us she was going to win the event. She came very close! In the final heat, she dropped another three tenths of a second, capturing second place.

Her time qualified her as an NCAA Division III All-American and put Sweet Briar on the map nationally that year.

Jenny consistently set records. She still holds the school and pool record for the 100-meter breaststroke, and her 50-yard and 50-meter breaststroke records will probably never be broken. Her 100-yard breaststroke record stood for 16 years, and her 200-yard lasted for 17 years.

Jenny is a member of four of the Sweet Briar record-holding relays in yards and three in meters. She was the breaststroker on all of our medley relays and swam on the 200- and 400-yard freestyle relays as well. She was a member of the 200-meter freestyle relay team that still holds our pool record.

Teammate Linda Mae Visocan Gabriel ’87 reminded me of the team dinner at the close of Jenny’s freshman year when we teased her for trying to miss practice. It seemed she constantly complained that something was hurt, and she could not exercise. But when meet time came, she would blow away the competition and set records left and right! Linda Mae remembers a gift we gave to Jenny: a doctor’s kit with band aids, ace wraps, aspirin, and Pepto Bismol.

During her sophomore year, Jen was quite sick. To quote her mother, Linda Crossland, “The
scenario of one event made me laugh, and I am sure the swimmers from other schools thought it was an act. Jenny would dive in, swim, pull herself halfway out of the water, lean on the edge of the pool, squirt her inhaler into her mouth, and finally drag herself from the pool. What was truly funny was that she had won!” At the end of that season Jen helped our 200-yard freestyle relay team capture 13th place at NCAA Division III Nationals.

Healthy and in good shape, Jen was stellar during her junior year. Sweet Briar defeated Division I Georgetown University in our own pool. We had tied them at Georgetown the previous year. In a newspaper article written at the conclusion of the dual meet season, I am quoted as saying about Jenny “She is having the best year of her life!”

Jenny finished her Sweet Briar swimming career on a strong note. During her senior year she was ODAC Champion in the 100-yard breaststroke and part of two Sweet Briar and ODAC record-setting relays. These school records stand today. She also was the breaststroker on our 400-yard medley relay that placed 12th at NCAA Nationals, giving her All-American Honorable Mention recognition in her last race representing Sweet Briar.

Jenny excelled in the classroom as well as in the pool. A political economics major at Sweet Briar, she made the Dean’s list, was a member of Phi Gamma Mu, the International Honor Society, and was the recipient of the Whiteman Scholar-Athlete Award. After Sweet Briar, she attended the University of Richmond’s School of Law where she was president of Phi Delta Phi, the nation’s oldest legal fraternity.

Today, Jennifer is President of the Sweet Briar Alumnae Association and a former Alumnae Club President for the Richmond, Virginia Club. Confident, mentally focused, a fierce competitor, 4-year varsity athlete, Division III All-American, a high achiever in the classroom, outstanding in her service and devotion to Sweet Briar, fun-loving, generous, and loyal friend, I can think of no one more deserving of being the first swimmer inducted to the Sweet Briar College Athletics Hall of Fame.

Please email your nominations to the Sweet Briar Athletics Hall of Fame to: Kelly Morrison, Athletic Director and Assistant Professor of Physical Education, morrison@sbc.edu, or Jennifer Crispen, Associate Professor of Physical Education, crispen@sbc.edu.
“I had always really, really been interested in [the industry],” she said. “My sister [Jennifer Brodiele Cacioppo ’92] actually worked in the industry as well, so I remember during college coming home on break and visiting her and going to her office. I really liked the environment and pace of the industry.”

Ten years later, the 30-year-old New Yorker is living her dream, working for Angel Sanchez and living on the Upper East Side with husband, John. Occasionally, she even shows up on the Big Apple’s society pages.

When she arrived in New York fresh out of the Pink Bubble, the young Samantha Brodlieb worked as a receptionist at Prada. Being fluent in Italian helped, she said, crediting advisor and Italian professor Rosalia Ascari with teaching her the language and encouraging her to study abroad.

“She was really amazing,” Platner said. “Obviously in my first job my Italian skills helped me tremendously. It’s probably part of the reason I got the job because I was fluent in Italian, and she ... really influenced me to go away for a year, which was life-changing. It’s really eye-opening.”

Platner says the exposure she got through her junior year abroad and the confidence she gained at Sweet Briar have positively affected her career. She also says the intimate setting at the College has correlations in the fashion world, which she describes as a “very small community, and similar to Sweet Briar in that sense.”

After six months at Prada, Platner went back to Italy, where she worked for a short time as an assistant booker for a modeling agency. Homesick for New York, though, she soon returned to the states and Prada, where she served as executive assistant to the vice president of advertising.

That’s when she decided her future was in public relations. After working her way up to assistant of the Prada Men’s and Sport lines, Platner accepted a position at The Gap as public relations coordinator for Old Navy.

She stayed there for two years, working in the children’s and maternity markets. It was “very large, very corporate,” she said, but also “really good exposure.”

After leaving Old Navy, Platner did production for photo shoots, securing locations and photographers, and coordinating hair and makeup for the models. “I wanted to try something different because I had been in PR for a little while,” she said.

But two years ago, she found herself missing public relations and saw an ad for PR manager at Angel Sanchez. “I read the job description in a trade Web site and it was my exact experience so I applied and got the job,” she said.

Before she was hired, Angel Sanchez didn’t have a PR person, let alone a PR department, so Platner has built the office from the ground up. With no assistants—the designer employs only about 20 people—she has had to rely on interns to take the edge off the workload.

“Really good exposure.”

That’s where Sweet Briar re-enters the picture. “I actually contacted the career services center to say if any Sweet Briar students are interested, and they’re going to be around New York during the summer. I’d definitely be looking for interns, and they can just forward me their résumé,” she said.

Lucy Knaus ’08 contacted Platner and spent four weeks last summer working with her at Angel Sanchez. Knaus worked on photo shoots and “lookbooks,” did editorial analysis and sent gowns to celebrities and magazines.

“I really appreciate that Sam ... gave me a lot of daily responsibilities and asked for my opinions and help on a lot of important projects,” Knaus wrote in an essay following her internship. “I do believe that her interns ... do a lot of the day-to-day duties.

“I learned a lot about what it’s like to work in New York City and how competitive the industry is. Completing this internship made me realize how much I enjoy working with other people and also that the majority of the people working in the fashion industry started at the bottom and had to work their way up.

“It’s a very elastic industry—there is always the expectation of promotion as long as one is a responsible and hardworking individual. I couldn’t have had a better internship experience.”

Platner appreciated the assistance and the opportunity to mentor a future Sweet Briar alumna. “[Lucy] was a great help,” she said. “It was nice to have a Sweet Briar student. I have interns from FIT and Parsons, but it was special to have a Sweet Briar student. We have a connection.”

When asked if she’d like to have more Sweet Briar interns, Platner was quick to answer: “Definitely. I would love to have another one this summer.”

In the meantime, though, Platner presses on as the PR department for Angel Sanchez. The hours are long, the days are crazy, but she loves her job and the responsibilities that come with it.

“I’m responsible for a ton,” she said. “That includes advertising, and I also work extremely close with the designer, and his schedule is super busy with meetings and designing.

“The design studio is on the sixth floor and I’m on the ninth floor, so it really involves leadership every day because often I just have to make decisions for him on his behalf, and lead.”
Katherine Irene Polevitzky ’93 became a Marine on Aug. 13, 1994, the day she graduated from Officer Candidate School at Marine Corps Base Quantico in Virginia. Her parents, Serge and Gege Polevitzky, were there. As they watched their smartly uniformed daughter receive her commission, Gege Polevitzky let go of long-held reservations about Katherine’s military vocation—a path she had stuck to since she was about 10 years old.

“This really fits you,” Mrs. Polevitzky told the brand-new second lieutenant as soon as she had the chance.

“My mother was telling me I found my calling, not just a job to clock in to from nine to five,” Polevitzky said, recalling the conversation.

“I always hope that young women going through college—especially at Sweet Briar—pursue a career that gives them a sense of accomplishment. Their career choice should be a positive contribution to society, not just earning a paycheck.”

As a leader, Polevitzky stresses being true to oneself. At Sweet Briar, an environment rife with opportunities to lead, she saw classmates who took charge Monday through Thursday “adjusting themselves to socially interact, to hang out with guys,” on the weekend.

“It wasn’t true across the board, but I did see that,” she said. “There’s just no reason to change the woman who is an incredible leader in the classroom and on campus during the week to somebody else on the weekend to impress the guys.”

Trying to be someone you’re not wouldn’t fly in her job. “Marines can smell a façade a hundred miles away,” said Polevitzky, who has risen to the rank of major.

She spoke by cell phone from her office in Baghdad, where she arrived in June for a one-year deployment. She works in the International Zone as the executive officer to the commanding general of the Civilian Police Assistance Training Team, U.S. Army Maj. Gen. Michael D. Jones. CPATT’s mission is to advise and assist Iraq’s Ministry of the Interior in building its police forces.

Polevitzky’s military occupation specialty—her MOS—is communications officer. Ordinarily her job is setting up radio, satellite, and wire communications systems to enable field units and their commands to talk or send data in any environment.

Her home base is 1st Marine Division, I Marine Expeditionary Force, Camp Pendleton, California, where last year she commanded the nearly 300 troops of 1st Marine Division Communications Company. She considers the post one of the best assignments of her career.

When she was given the command, it had a “particular reputation,” she said, diplomatically. But within a year, the Corps’ communications headquarters had hand-picked her company to develop new instruction and to be the “test bed” for new equipment slated for use by all Marine communications units. They also were tapped to train the units based in Southern California.

She and Sgt. Maj. Peter A. Hall, who was her first sergeant at the time, achieved that recognition through “elbow grease,” she said. “The first three months were focused on reinforcing discipline and communications training. The company needed to be reminded that they were a team, not a group of individuals.”

They went for field training for a week at a time, “setting up communications architecture, making sure it works, taking it down, moving it, setting it up again. For an Infantry Division Headquarters, this is no small job,” Polevitzky said.

During that time, she drew on her own six months at The Basic School, the next step for all USMC lieutenants after Officer Candidate School. At TBS, every officer—regardless of future specialty—is trained to be an infantry platoon commander.

Because the Corps emphasizes unit cohesion, Polevitzky makes no allowance for gender. “If I tried to separate myself as something other than a Marine and say, well I’m a female and here’s what I do as a female, then I separate myself from the team.”

To lead Marines, be competent in your specialty, be confident, train them well and make sure they understand the mission objective, she said. “Marines respect a leader who is true to their word, leads by example, and always remembers: Accomplish the mission and take care of your Marines.”

During her career, Polevitzky has traveled abroad, serving six months in support of the U.S. mission in Bosnia-Herzegovina in 1996—a post that allowed her to explore Europe when she was on leave. In 1998 she deployed to Kuwait with the 31st Marine Expeditionary Unit during Operation Desert Fox. She also earned a master’s in business administration from Boston University.

Her decorations include a Meritorious Service Medal with gold star, Joint Service Commendation Medal, Joint Service Achievement Medal with oak leaf cluster, and the Navy and Marine Corps Achievement Medal.

You have to want the life of a military officer to succeed, Polevitzky said. But if there are SBC women who feel called to do it, she wants them to know they can.

“It’s an awesome experience to lead Marines,” she said.

Serving in Baghdad’s International Zone, U.S. Marine Corps Maj. Katherine Polevitzky ’93 has seen an outpouring of support from Americans for troops serving in Iraq and Afghanistan. It comes in the form of letters and care packages from ordinary people addressed to any soldier, sailor, airman, or Marine.

“Whether they agree with why we’re here or they disagree, they support the troops,” Polevitzky said. “It is greatly appreciated.”

If you want to add your voice, go to AmericaSupportsYou.mil, an official Web site of the Department of Defense.
Frances G. Laserson ’70: First President of The Moody’s Foundation

Frances Griffith Laserson, vice president, Corporate Communications at Moody’s Corporation, and president of The Moody’s Foundation, lives amidst the large-scale excitement of New York City’s corporate community. Surrounded by skyscrapers and taxis in the heart of the city’s financial district, Moody’s is a 100-year-old company employing 3,400 people throughout the world.

Fran’s career success began with her positive experience at Sweet Briar and liberal arts education. Though a sociology major, Fran comments: “I recall classes with Dr. Ernest Edwards who taught ecology, field biology, and ornithology. I am still a birdwatcher and keep binoculars and a Peterson’s Guide to Birds on hand to identify what visits our birdfeeder. My favorite SBC memories revolve around individual friendships: playing on the field hockey team, spending time with my fellow QV’s, planning events with the Social Committee, step singing … and walking to Guion early in the morning.”

After graduation, Fran moved to Manhattan during a time when “Wall Street was [just] beginning to discover the business value in employing women,” Fran says. She joined the Chemical Bank Management Training Program, which had only seven women in its large trainee class.

Undaunted, Fran gained experience in the financial realm that took her to her next job with Moody’s Investors Service. As a fixed income securities analyst, “I managed public finance ratings in the Midwest … and was a member of the rating committee that assigned credit ratings to state and local governments, nonprofit hospitals, utilities, colleges and universities,” Fran said.

During her tenure as a financial analyst, Fran was diagnosed with cancer. “[It] sidetracked my career,” she commented. “I took 11 years off to regain my health and devote time to raising my two daughters and volunteering within my community.” At this time, Sweet Briar stepped back into Fran’s life. She became a member of the Sweet Briar Board of Overseers, now the board of directors.

“I joined the board just after my second daughter was born and served for eight years, participating on the marketing and development committees and chairing the enrollment committee.”

Fran’s experience on the board and with other similar volunteer work enabled her to transition back into the workforce with ease. “By September 1994, I felt that the window of opportunity was closing for reestablishing a professional career. I prepared a ‘functional’ résumé that focused on the skills I had gained through volunteer work: marketing communications, strategic planning, and program management to counterbalance my hiatus from the workforce. I approached Moody’s as an independent marketing consultant.” Fran’s self-confidence, determination, and past experience earned her management positions first in Marketing and then in Corporate Communications, “a substantial shift from my prior analytical position … but one that hearkened back to my initial interest in sociology at Sweet Briar.”

As leader of Corporate Communications for Moody’s, she developed a corporate philanthropy program. “[This was] an assignment that called upon all the skills I had acquired in the volunteer sector.” She became the first president of The Moody’s Foundation in 2002, overseeing the firm’s charitable giving programs and community affairs. “In 2008, I will transition to managing the corporate social responsibility program full time and exploring the possible expansion of the company’s philanthropic efforts beyond the U.S. and the UK to other countries where our businesses are growing.”

Fran enjoys the challenge of creating a corporate giving program with new partnerships and community activities that mold a pipeline of talent and diversity for future Moody’s employees. “Having the opportunity to develop and fine-tune a strategic corporate giving program from scratch has been immensely rewarding,” Fran says. “Branded community programs can create a positive public image and position a company as a committed corporate citizen and leader in its field. Corporate philanthropy is about ‘doing good,’ but it is also about the use of shareholders’ dollars to support corporate strategy. Balancing both objectives is satisfying work.” One such community program is the Moody’s Mega Math (M³) Challenge, an internet-based competition for high school students awarding scholarships to those who demonstrate excellence in their understanding of mathematics and modeling. “This year, CNBC featured the competition on Wall Street Report as an example of a corporation’s successful effort to interest high school students in math and careers in financial services,” explained Fran.

In her community, Fran serves on the executive committee of the board of trustees of New York Downtown Hospital. With the chief medical officer, she co-chairs the Quality Council, responsible for maintaining and improving patient care. She is a member of the board of trustees of Prep for Prep, “an organization that develops the leadership potential of able young people from segments of society grossly under-represented in today’s leadership pool.” She serves on the board of her high school alma mater, Kent Place School, Summit, New Jersey, and was recently elected president of the board of trustees of The Brick Presbyterian Church of New York. She is also a member of the Gender & Policy Program Advisory Board for the School of International & Public Affairs, Columbia University, and the task force for The Center for Work-Life Policy examining “The Hidden Brain Drain: Women and Minorities as Unrealized Assets.”

When asked what advice she would give to young alumnae and students at Sweet Briar, Fran said: “Start volunteering right away. There are special kinds of leadership skills that are developed through service to others, skills that become useful in business and for life, in general … Regardless of context, [whether] volunteering in the community or having a professional career, attitude determines experience. Asking for more responsibility and taking on assignments that may initially put you outside your comfort zone will develop the experience and the habits that will define your personal style of leadership.”—C. Murray
Nicole File ’95: Senior Editor for CNN

JANIKA CAREY ’09, ENGLISH MAJOR

and editing meant I was already familiar with those tasks when they came up in my work,” she explained. “I’m referring as much to the ‘people skills’ and ‘leadership’ parts as to the specific technical aspects of writing and editing. Also, organizing a product with a specific audience in mind was helpful later when I would work on shows with a certain demographic.”

Nicole added that her English and creative writing education at Sweet Briar was not only superior to writing programs at other schools, but it also prepared her especially well for her current position as a senior editor.

“When I first started at CNN, people would ask me, ‘where did you learn to write so pretty?’” said Nicole, who specialized in poetry and fiction. She explained that professors at SBC taught her to “write something that was true, even if it was fiction.” John Gregory Brown, Mary Oliver, and other English professors helped her to develop an eye for the important parts of a story, and she also learned not to overstate facts.

“Just because somebody drops a bomb, you can’t call it a war,” Nicole said with regard to her job at CNN.

As a control room editor, Nicole is responsible for the final edits of a show before it goes on air. During the show, Nicole updates and edits news bites as they come in—these are what we read on the scrolling ribbon at the bottom of our TV screen.

Though Nicole’s job has required her to be a leader at certain times, the current situation is somewhat different.

“We’re a team of leaders,” she explained, saying that she is equally ranked with producers, executives, and supervisors.

Working without clear hierarchies has its advantages, but of course there’s a downside too: “When something goes wrong, you’re not the only one to blame; but if you have a good idea, you have to convince everybody first,” Nicole said.

Nicole defines good leadership as a willingness to experience things from the perspective of those you are leading. She calls this “servant leadership,” and explained: “The good leaders I know defend those they lead, [they] hire—or don’t fire—the occasional unlikely candidate, and are willing to try an unorthodox idea, knowing their own careers depend on the outcome. In my experience, they almost always have a better record overall. But leaders need support from their own leaders, and from those they lead ... even when they make a bad call.” Nicole believes that a strong leader should think creatively, challenging and supporting her team at the same time. This also means that leaders forgive mistakes.

“Our culture does away with that more and more now,” said Nicole, explaining her views that success has become too much of a focus in our society. “I think the pool of people who think like good leaders is shrinking. I’m blessed to work in one of the last bastions of good news leadership.”

Despite the fact that gender equality is still not completely achieved in many work places, Nicole said that she has never felt that, as a woman, she couldn’t do something.

“CNN is one of the best places to work for women,” she said, estimating that about half of the employees are women. “But I’m not sure about management positions,” she admitted. CNN’s policy provides a maternity plan, and the flexible shifts allow mothers to spend time with their children during the day.

Nicole considers her experience at Sweet Briar valuable to her strong self esteem: “I was actually quite a tomboy when I came to Sweet Briar, and I left as something more of a lady, but also more of a feminist.”

Nicole said that going to a women’s college made her aware of the great aspects of women. “Strong women are different from strong men,” she explained, saying that Sweet Briar gave her a different perspective on women and leadership.

“Before [I came to Sweet Briar] I thought I had to be more like a man to be successful,” Nicole said. “I learned you can be a woman and be just as accomplished.”

In her free time, Nicole tutors first-grade Hispanic students at her church, helping them with their homework because many of the parents don’t speak English. “I’m both a mentor and a tutor,” Nicole said. She also volunteers on Sweet Briar’s newly formed English and creative writing advisory council. The council is available to help guide students in their specific career goals.

Nicole said she is very content, but is also exploring new things at the moment, such as reporting and freelance writing. “There are many possibilities in my current job to do something different,” Nicole said.

When asked what advice she had for current Sweet Briar students interested in journalism, Nicole had a simple answer: “Learn to write!”

Landing the perfect job takes a lot of skill, but sometimes there is some luck involved, too. When Nicole File ’95 went to Atlanta during spring break of her senior year to interview for a job at a law firm, she never thought the trip would eventually lead her to a job at CNN.

It was by accident that the North Carolina native walked into a random office building, where she encountered a headhunter agency owned by two Sweet Briar alumnae—and sisters at that. The women wanted to see her résumé and liked it immediately.

A few months after graduation, Nicole was offered a one-day assignment at Turner Entertainment in Atlanta, which turned into a permanent job. When the company underwent drastic structural changes in several departments, Nicole decided to look for another position. She responded to a posting with CNN and was hired right away.

Looking back, Nicole was amazed at how beneficial her contributions to the Sweet Briar News (now The Voice) were in getting her the job as editor. “I really thought people wouldn’t know this small women’s college, but they do,” she said, adding that CNN was impressed that she had worked for a newspaper at all. “The experience of assigning stories, researching, interviewing, writing,
Nicole Streeter ’94: A Director at Heart

“It takes courage to push yourself to places you have never been before ... to test your limits ... to break through barriers. And the day will come when the risk it takes to remain tight inside the bud is more painful than the risk it takes to blossom.” A quote by French author Anaïs Nin is found at the bottom of each email Nicole sends. When speaking with her, it becomes apparent that a philosophy of determination and responsibility, a passion for challenges, and a respect for the beauty of change are a part of her everyday existence.

“Everybody’s route is different,” says Nicole Streeter ’94, the new executive director of the Houston Texans Foundation, an NFL franchise with a mission to be champions for youth. A career path forked by change, opportunity, and a range of interests led her to adopt this mantra. She was motivated from a young age to plan for a professional life. At 14, Nicole volunteered at The University of Texas, M.D. Anderson Cancer Center, the leading cancer treatment center in the nation and “the pride of Houston.” When it came time for college, all roads pointed to Sweet Briar. Close friend LaQuinta Donatto ’92 already attended SBC and encouraged Nicole to apply. A College representative gave a winning presentation at her high school, and soon after, an interview at the home of Natalie Hoyt ’72 showed Nicole that she was destined to become a Sweet Briar woman.

Aware of her African American heritage, Nicole arrived at SBC in fall of 1990 with a mission to express her views about tolerance and acceptance. She seized every opportunity to address the issue of diversity on campus. As president of the Unity Club, she helped to host diversity forums and became part of an organization titled New Leadership under faculty advisor Helen Beckstrom. “It was a challenging time on Sweet Briar campus,” Nicole stated, “We had students sitting on the lawn of the library protesting issues related to diversity.” Many of these protests and leadership initiatives resulted in Women and Gender Studies at Sweet Briar, which has a focus on women’s leadership.

Nicole received her bachelor’s degree in psychology from SBC and moved back to Houston. “My first job was as a clinical case manager at the Community Partners Adolescent Clinic. We saw 300 or more adolescent obstetric patients per week.” Nicole felt very much out of the Pink Bubble as she dealt with crisis intervention, preliminary psychiatric assessments, and referrals. “It was my first encounter with a pregnant nine-year-old,” she revealed. “It opened my eyes to teenage pregnancy in Houston and in general.”

As Nicole gained experience, she felt called down the path to become a doctor in order to help untangle some of the problems she was seeing for the first time.

“It’s important to demonstrate that the route to your goal is not always a straight line. It is definitely a journey,” Nicole said. Always open to opportunities in her path, she realized that dreams often change as they are followed. Several pursuits in the direction of health care revealed her strong talent and passion for fundraising.

Nicole married in 2001 and enrolled in the University of Texas School of Public Health with the long-term goal of becoming a doctor. While at UT, the leadership skills and self-confidence that she gained at Sweet Briar came into play. Nicole became strongly invested in community research, yet found that funding was necessary and limited. UT did not offer any classes in writing grants and proposals, yet posted on the student affairs bulletin board was a flyer advertising the Jane Adams Fellowship for Philanthropy for undergraduates. It didn’t take her long to place an inquiry about graduate student fellowships. “A secretary told me I had just two weeks to apply,” she remembers. Nicole was accepted under the William Randolph Hearst Fellowship for the two-year program in philanthropy. “It completely turned my life around.” She worked at the Center of Philanthropy and attended classes that changed the course of her career. During internships and loaned executive opportunities, Nicole “worked at the YMCA Urban mission, helped with strategic planning, assisted with board development, and led the donor solicitation program.” She also received the Benz-Whaley Flessner Fellowship while at the Center, which allowed her to be appointed as a loaned executive with the National Medical Association (NMA).

After her work at the Center, Nicole switched gears from health care and medical school all together. She became the director of alumni affairs and alumni giving at Martin University in Indianapolis. This was “a great opportunity for me to become a director,” says Nicole.

After several years, Nicole took a job as project director of the World Health Organization (WHO), Collaborating Center for Supportive Cancer Care at M.D. Anderson Cancer Center in Houston. Her experience as alumni director at Martin allowed her to delve confidently into her position as an administrative leader in strategic fund development. “I provided administrative direction, solicited major gifts, prepared proposals for foundation solicitations, and established national and international research collaborations on health policy for supportive cancer care. I organized conferences across the country for pain and supportive care physicians, pharmaceutical representatives, and FDA officials to discuss the implications and efficacy of pipeline pain medications.”

The word about Nicole’s capabilities as a project director of the WHO sparked interest in the Houston community. When the director of the Houston Texans Foundation stepped down, Nicole was offered the job and took it, seeing a new opportunity to fundraise for another good cause.

In her community, Nicole sits on the board of Girls, Inc. “This organization is interested in making a positive, measurable impact in young girls’ lives,” Nicole says. “Girls, Inc. program coordinators go into underserved communities and provide girls with hands-on experiences that enable them to build confidence and develop their own authentic identity.” As a board member, she also serves as a mentor for the girls.

According to Nicole, Sweet Briar offered her a foundation that enabled her to pursue the path of her choice. Sweet Briar taught her to pivot on a dime, to change course as life persuaded. Nicole reminisced about a trip to Sweet Briar: “Recently, LaQuinta Donatto and I were driving by the Sweet Briar barn and saw the horses in the field. As a student, I never rode, but now I love horses! I wish I had ... taken a riding course for fun. Students should take advantage of every opportunity in which they have an interest. They have no idea where life might take them. It’s important to make opportunities of your own! Find your authentic voice, your passion, and enjoy the journey.”
In 1969 the Beatles released Abbey Road, the United States was at war in Vietnam, and men took their first steps on the moon. In a time of protests and riots, of political unrest and social change, Cathy Rasmussen traveled eastward from Pearl Harbor onto Sweet Briar campus, a place where her family knew she would be safe from the campus turmoil reported in the news. Cathy says Sweet Briar’s Junior Year in France program sealed the deal for her to attend a college on the other side of the country. Cathy also had several Sweet Briar graduates already in the family: her mother, Dolly Clark ’50, and aunts Jane Black Clark ’56, and Lynn Clark ’61.

Cathy Rasmussen Packard ’73, now executive director of a successful nonprofit corporation, views herself then as a different kind of student leader. “I wasn’t a leader like my mother,” she says, “who was ‘Miss Everything’ and May Queen [when she attended Sweet Briar].” For Cathy, leading was not about being dubbed president. It was, and still is, about rallying behind issues that she believes are important. “When I see a cause, I like to support it,” says Cathy.

As a student, establishing the Career Center at Sweet Briar was a cause that Cathy embraced enthusiastically. When she began volunteering there, “it was just a bookshelf.” She took the lead in helping to start the first fundraising campaign for a new center. Local boutiques loaned outfits to parade in a fashion show fundraiser that she organized. Letters Cathy drafted garnered support, and one earned a significant reply gift of $1,000, an impressive achievement for a sophomore.

After graduating from Sweet Briar with a degree in International Affairs, Cathy moved to Washington D.C. and staffed for Congressman Burt L. Talcott from Monterey, California. During her one and a half years on his staff, she was in charge of organizing a high school student leadership program. Talented students visited federal establishments in Pennsylvania, Virginia, and Washington D.C. “This was before leadership programs were ‘the thing,’” remembers Cathy. She introduced them to senators, members of the Supreme Court, and the president’s executive staff. While working for Talcott, Cathy would slip away to the Watergate hearings during lunch breaks. “Even though I didn’t agree with them, [the men on trial] spoke with extraordinary dignity in front of senators and aides on TV. [They were] very capable men who made choices that got them into trouble. It was an important lesson to not forget your core values.” For Cathy, the first year out of college was “eye-opening and exciting, filled with good news and bad news as Vietnam was winding down and difficult choices had to be made [regarding] the first war we weren’t going to win.”

Married and no longer staffing for Congressman Talcott, Cathy moved to Dallas, Texas; became a mother to daughters Kelly, Lynn, and Christie; and focused her leadership efforts on YMCA sports coaching and school activities. Membership in the Junior League exposed her for the first time to nonprofit organizations. With the League’s support, she re-entered the workforce.

Always at the forefront of change, Cathy was fascinated with rapidly advancing computer technology. Apple had just released its first desktop in 1978. In 1983, Cathy volunteered for the Center for Nonprofit Management, one of the top five management assistance centers of its type, to help nonprofits create personalized fundraising letters using this new technology. “Junior League training showed me how to build and manage a database, create a letter in WordStar, and use the computer for more than just letters. The positive impact on nonprofit staff students and the power that new technology gave them was breathtaking,” said Cathy.

She went on to market her skills to executives, most of whom were men, unwilling to take classes with secretaries who already knew how to type. “I realized how fulfilling and important it is to promote beneficial advancements in society.”

After twenty years in a successful career of marketing and selling technology-based products, the feeling of “Wow, I want to find a way to do this again,” resonated with her. She left the for-profit arena and went back to The Center for Nonprofit Management as director of Technology Services. Working there, Cathy
was determined to make a difference, and she did just that with the launch of low-cost training and services for nonprofits and a technology fair that is now part of an annual all-topic fair for nonprofits in Dallas, Texas.

In November of 2005, Cathy was recruited to be the executive director of Special Care & Career Services (SCCS). After researching the agency, she found that it perfectly matched another lifelong goal of hers to care for those with disabilities. Its two programs, Early Childhood Intervention, which provides therapies to babies with delays and disabilities, and Supported Employment Services, which employs adults with disabilities, allow Cathy to help individuals reach their maximum potential in school and life. She is able to help "place people in good jobs—real jobs."

Cathy has been executive director for nearly two years. In that time the organization’s adult program has grown 110 percent, beating all-time job placement records and gaining recognition from state and local leaders. SCCS has added 14 new employers for people with disabilities. According to professional studies, this program not only benefits the employee, but also the company, immediate community, and the nation at large. Cathy credits her team for this outstanding progress.

"I’m not interested in leading just to lead or be in charge. I have to be passionate about the results I can help to achieve. I use the book Good to Great by James Collins as a guide. Effective leadership is about picking the best people and building a great team, cultivating your own replacements and allowing your people the freedom and support to be successful in their jobs. I ask God every day to help me make wise decisions and to remember the ability to lead is just another trait necessary to the team … but never more important than the team. I also feel privileged to have a Sweet Briar education. It is a critical component to believing I can go toe-to-toe with anyone, male or female, and to building a can-do and will-win attitude.”

Among Cathy’s professional activities and memberships, she has served as president of The Center for Computer Assistance to the Disabled, what she considered “a boutique agency in a Wal-Mart world.” She made their acquisition by United Cerebral Palsy of Dallas (UCP) possible, which helped the program stay alive. A past UCP board vice president of development, she received the UCP Volunteer of the Year Award in 2005. Cathy is a founding member and president-elect of a brand new Alliance of Agency Executives Serving People with Disabilities that has grown to more than 20 dues-paying agency members in one year. Cathy is also chair of the more targeted Supported Employment Coalition that has launched a local job bank and contract job coach list.

Cathy advises young professionals seeking leadership positions “to represent a cause, product, or initiative that you believe in” regardless of power and fame. “Secondly,” she continues, “be a contributing member of a great team. Be clear in what you want to achieve, be mindful of other people’s time, perform your assignments to the best of your ability, and don’t be afraid to take challenges when they are presented to you—then you’ll naturally rise to a leadership position in a form that suits you and best serves your community.”

—C. Murray

SBC Development VP Wins ATHENA Award

SUZANNE RAMSEY, STAFF WRITER, COLLEGE RELATIONS

Heidi Hansen McCrory, vice president for development at Sweet Briar College, was presented a 2007 ATHENA Award Oct. 23 by the Lynchburg Regional Chamber of Commerce and the CENTRA Foundation.

The award was presented at the annual Women of Worth Luncheon, held at the Kirkley Hotel and Conference Center in Lynchburg during National Business Women’s Week, Oct. 21–27.

According to the ATHENA International Web site, the award recognizes professional women who “demonstrate excellence, creativity and initiative in their business profession,” “provide valuable service by contributing time and energy to improve the quality of life for others in the community,” and “actively assist women in realizing their full leadership potential.”

The ATHENA Award is presented each year by women’s organizations, chambers of commerce and universities all over the world. Since 1982, more than 5,000 women in 500 communities have been honored.

McCrory was one of 15 professional women nominated from the Lynchburg area. As a winner of a local award, she is eligible for the International ATHENA Award, to be presented in the spring.

McCrory was nominated by her employees in the development office, both for her work at Sweet Briar as well as her volunteer efforts in the community. “The development office is very proud that Heidi won this award,” Sheila Alexander, development communications coordinator, said. “It is a small reflection of how much we appreciate her.”

In nominating their boss, development employees praised McCrory for “being an excellent role model, not just because her position dictates respect,” adding that she “earns our respect by working just as hard—if not harder—than anyone on her team. She is supportive of us in our jobs and in all our endeavors and encourages each of us to explore what makes us happy and to strive to reach our personal goals.”

Among other things, in addition to heading up the College’s fundraising efforts, McCrory is active in the Girl Scouts of Virginia Skyline Council, where she is chair of the board of directors; a parent volunteer for the E.C. Glass High School Theatre, and a member of the Emerson College Parents Leadership Council.

She also has been a speaker and workshop leader at various professional conferences, including the Virginia Community Colleges Chancellor’s Annual Planning Retreat, Virginia Senior Leadership Seminar for Women in Higher Education, Council for Advancement and Support of Education and the Association of Fundraising Professionals.

President Elisabeth Muhlenfeld also commended McCrory in a letter to the chamber of commerce.

“Throughout the time I have known her,” she wrote, “I have been amazed at Heidi McCrory’s energy and her dedication to strengthening the community. … Still, as busy as she is, it is Heidi who remembers people’s birthdays, and who takes the initiative to find ways to show those around her how much she values them.

“She is a good friend to many, many people across our community, and a wonderful role model for the girls and young women with whom she comes in contact through her work with the Girl Scouts and at Sweet Briar. She is without question one of Lynchburg’s most noteworthy women of worth.”
Recommended by the Shape of the Future study, the Sweet Briar Board of Directors agreed that a leadership program was vital to a healthy college campus. The Sweet Briar Leadership Certificate Program (LCP) was created and developed in 2005 and is a three phase program open to all students. It combines academic and experiential learning that develops an understanding of the theory and foundations of leadership; fosters personal skills such as communication and ethical decision making; and teaches the organizational skills necessary to work well with others and to motivate groups working toward a common goal. By the end of the 2005–2006 academic year, 24 students were participating in the program. As of fall 2007, 23 students are enrolled in Phase III, 18 students in Phase II, and 32 students in Phase I.
Mission Statement

The Sweet Briar College Leadership Certificate Program prepares women to become engaged and influential members of a world community. Through a network of on- and off-campus mentors, students are empowered to learn to lead with integrity through participation in a program that combines academic and experiential learning focused on the foundations of leadership, individual personal development, and organizational theories.

Program Overview

Participation in the program is a commitment that spans a student’s entire on-campus career. Each phase is completed in one academic year, yet exceptions are made that allow students to study abroad or participate in other special programs. Students who complete all phases receive a certificate at graduation; however, they may complete just one or two phases and still receive recognition for that particular phase(s). Transfer students who demonstrate that they have begun a similar program at another institution may participate.

Students begin Phase I by being a part of the Leaders: Emerging and Achieving Program (LEAP). LEAP meets weekly and provides exploration leadership concepts, self-awareness, and may include a community project. Students may participate in LEAP without intending to complete the Certificate Program.

Each program phase includes:

• Successful completion of the previous phase(s).

• Regular meetings with the LCP Director. These sessions include the study of theoretical foundations, readings, discussions, and presentations. Recent presentations include: Youth, Innovation and Development: A Global Perspective; report on attendance at the National Collegiate Leadership Conference at the University of Arizona; and reflection on leadership defined by Machiavelli.

• Attending events with an educational or cultural component outside of class requirements. Recent opportunities have included Ambassador Bushnell’s Founders’ Day speech and sessions with students, the PowerShift conference addressing climate change held in Washington D.C., and the on-campus Fall Gospel Festival sponsored by Sweet Briar’s new minority group ONYX.

• Participating actively in at least two team-oriented activities. Students are encouraged to take leadership roles in these activities in Phase II, and Phase III requires that the student assume a leadership role for at least one activity.

• Completion of 12 credit hours from approved classes that have a focus on leadership. Courses which meet the Leadership Certificate Program requirement must do one or more of the following: introduce concepts relevant to leadership; enhance leadership skills; give students opportunities to take a leadership role in a collaborative project.

• Attend the on-campus Student Leadership Conference each spring. Participants in Phases II and III have the opportunity to help plan and implement all aspects of the conference.

• Maintain a record of leadership activities and classes and evaluate the ways in which she has molded her concept of leadership and its challenges.

• Write a reflective essay exploring her definition of leadership and how it has changed over the course of the year. She will explore the connections between her course work and individual experiences.

All students enrolled have reported that they find the program is valuable to their college experience and to their future, and all plan to complete the certificate. Our first group of students to complete the program will graduate and receive their certificates this May—Congratulations!

What the Students Say…

“I’m lucky that Sweet Briar has this program… the things we do and study in the Leadership Program help tie it all together… this program is truly my number one interest at Sweet Briar.”

—Anne Lojek ’08, LCP III

“The Leadership Certificate program has been a blessing and a challenge because of the nature of my major and minor. I was fortunate in my choice to pursue the education program because the classes I needed to take fit quite nicely with the Leadership Certificate requirements. The Leadership Certificate Program has allowed me to invest time and energy into personal development along with my other educational goals, something which I fear I might not have made time for otherwise. In previous years, especially in Phase I, I really enjoyed the chance to bond with other members of the Sweet Briar community that were not entrenched in the departments I mainly work within. We were able to compare our respective workloads and be comforted that we were not crazy to pursue so much. The type of student who becomes involved in the LCP is often an overachiever already, and to make friends with other overachievers is a nice lifeline at times. This year in Phase III the focus shifted a bit to a more personal development. I especially enjoyed the mini-workshops that have been incorporated into Phase III on useful skills such as public speaking and time management. The community we have built within the program has been a very tangible reminder of why I came to Sweet Briar in the first place. I feel at home with the other members, most of whom I rarely see and may not have ever become acquainted otherwise.”

—Emily Clifton ’08 LCP III

“One of the best decisions I have made while at Sweet Briar was being part of the Leadership Certificate Program. This program has enabled me to combine my leadership roles both inside and outside of the classroom and apply them to real life situations. The requirements help hone important leadership skills such as verbal communication, organization, marketing, writing communication, and general problem solving. This program has also helped me to better understand different types of people and how to adjust myself in order to better utilize the skills that each individual person has to offer.

Nobody said that being a leader was easy, but in order to be a good leader it is important to note that practice makes perfect. If you do not succeed at first it is imperative that you try, try again. This program helps guide you on how to be an effective leader not only inside the classroom or on campus, but also in the world at large.”

—Caroline Chappell ’09 LCP II
The Council for the Advancement of Standards in Higher Education (CAS) believes: “Leadership is an inherently relational process of working with others to accomplish a goal or to promote change.” CAS believes that all colleges should seek to develop a comprehensive program/opportunity that is purposeful, holistic, and consists of both curricular and co-curricular experiences. In addition, the program should be intentional, coherent, based on theories and knowledge, reflective of the demographics of the student population and responsive to the needs of those involved.

Coupling this national benchmark with George Dehne’s remarks that “leadership development has become a universal theme at most small colleges, but few have programs that would convince a prospective student that the institution is serious about leadership.” However, Sweet Briar College has created a leadership program that is focused and comprehensive. “Leadership is a relationship between those who aspire to lead and those who choose to follow. In addition, leadership is found everywhere—offering hope, because there is a generation of leaders searching for opportunities to make a difference.” Sweet Briar College’s leadership program allows students to become involved and explore leadership in a way they choose to define it. There is not a one-size-fits-all formula. As a result, there are nine core elements to the current, yet ever evolving, leadership program.

New Student Orientation
Orientation exposes students to the wide array of possibilities they can become involved in to build and test their leadership interests and skwvssics of room assignments and course registration, it also:

- informs students of the numerous clubs, organizations, and groups on campus;
- familiarizes new students with local civic engagement and volunteer opportunities;
- exposes students to the structured Leaders, Emerging and Achieving Program (LEAP), which is also an integral part of the Leadership Certificate Program;
- expects students to take advantage of all the opportunities of interest to them, honing their skills and experiences;
- provides venues for the exchange of ideas, thoughts, opinions, and efforts.

First-Year Experience Program
The First-Year Experience Program is an intentionally designed comprehensive, curricular and co-curricular initiative that provides new students with opportunities and resources for making meaningful connections to the campus community. Students are introduced to a community that fosters a greater sense of self-knowledge, a heightened appreciation and respect for others, a commitment to life-long learning, and a supportive climate. This is done through professional staff support and guidance, student leaders living and learning with students in the first year halls, and a variety of sponsored lectures, events, and programs focused on the transitional issues that new students face. The efforts of the First Year Experience Program are ongoing as we help students develop their identity as women and as leaders for the future.

In 2001, the Houghton Mifflin Company and The National Resource Center for First-Year Experience and Students in Transition recognized Sweet Briar’s First-Year Experience Program as one of ten outstanding first-year programs nationally.
LEAP: Leaders, Emerging and Achieving Program

LEAP is a semester-long workshop that has taken on a variety of formats. Students have taken advantage of meeting weekly with a different leadership topic each week. The presenters have included faculty and staff who have discussed leadership theory, self-identity and development, ethics and values, balance, mediation and resolution, and more. Asking community members to participate also exposes students to campus resources. LEAP has utilized books as the common reading and foundation for the course from which the weekly units are based. Texts have focused on leadership lessons with humor, to an award-winning, historic non-fiction work (with the author speaking to the class), to a more scholarly work on the sole topic of leadership. An experiential component is built into the framework—whether a one-time volunteer day to a week-long spring break trip composed of civic engagement, history, and physical challenge.

The benefits to participating in LEAP include:
• the opportunity to earn a Leadership Certificate—a complement to their academic transcript;
• an understanding for the various theories/languages of leadership;
• the chance to enhance their communication and interpersonal skills;
• compiling a reference notebook of leadership materials;
• development of critical thinking skills and engaging in the SBC community and forming a network of support.

Executive Student Leaders

There are currently 65 Executive Student Leaders who applied and were either selected or elected to represent Co-Curricular Life through a variety of leadership roles as para-professionals. To more fully represent a “real world” situation, these students were required to submit cover letters and résumés in lieu of traditional applications. As representatives of the student body, these leaders play a crucial role in New Student Orientation, but more importantly, represent Co-Curricular Life throughout the academic year. They are held to a high standard of expectation and responsibility.

Who’s Who Among Students in American Universities and Colleges

Each February, selected students are called forward to accept one of the most prestigious awards in the academic community—selection into Who’s Who Among Students in American Universities and Colleges. More than 1,900 schools in all 50 states and the District of Columbia confer this exclusive honor. Nominations are encouraged and received from all community members: staff and faculty as well as students. This award is given to outstanding Sweet Briar leaders for scholastic ability, participation and leadership in academic and extra curricular activities, and community service. In the 2006–2007 academic year, Sweet Briar inducted 20 of her best student leaders.

Omicron Delta Kappa (ODK)

In April 2004, SBC was granted a charter for the Circle of ODK. The initiation of this endeavor was co-sponsored by Co-Curricular Life, with campus support, and the vice president of the Student Government Association. The VP is in charge of promoting the importance of leadership amongst the students. Being affiliated with this nationally recognized honor society for leadership and being given the honor to wear the ODK key serves to:
• recognize individuals who have attained a high standard of leadership in collegiate activities and encourage them to aspire to higher achievements;
• bring together individuals that represent all facets of collegiate life and thus to create an organization that molds the sentiment of SBC on questions of local and inter-collegiate interests;
• mesh students, staff and faculty on a basis of mutual interests, understanding, and commitment.

Since its inception at Sweet Briar, more than 50 students and ten staff and faculty have been honored. ODK provides another means to recognize and encourage excellence in leadership where it is combined with excellence in academics—the basic premise of Co-Curricular Life.

Volunteerism and Civic Engagement

Many Sweet Briar students find that personal volunteerism and civic engagement is both enjoyable and rewarding. It also provides the opportunity to move beyond the bounds of the College into the larger community. There are a number of ways to become involved. In addition to academic courses, the Career Services Center assists students with options related to internships/externships and other ways to combine their interests with the opportunity to help and serve others. All clubs and organizations are required to complete community service projects. The director of Student Involvement and Programs and other College staff maintain contact with a variety of local organizations, which have civic engagement and volunteer focused projects.

Sweet Briar College’s Leadership Program recognizes differences amongst students and allows them to become involved to whatever degree, in whatever fashion they choose. The co-curricular life model fuses endless possibilities for out-of-classroom experiences with the far-reaching liberal arts education provided by our faculty. It is an ever-evolving process. The expectations placed upon the students regarding personal and social responsibility combined with Sweet Briar College’s mission help to develop the intellectual skills of our students and create a realm of leadership opportunities for students to take advantage of and make a difference.

1. Mr. George Dehne of GDA Integrated Services, the firm selected to conduct market research for the SOF Committee.
Excerpts below are from an essay by President Elisabeth Muhlenfeld in a forthcoming volume of essays entitled Educating Leaders for the Modern World, Ronald Riggio, Michael Genovese, and Thomas Wren, eds., to be published this year.

Today, many colleges and universities are attempting to be intentional about developing leadership skills and abilities; a number of excellent programs in leadership studies have grown up just in the last two decades…. Almost every such program provides a strong foundational statement as to the value of broad study in the liberal arts. In fact, however, the curricula of today’s finest leadership studies programs are not as broad as they could be. Steeped in the social sciences, psychology and anthropology, students are taught theories of group dynamics, the history of social movements, the development of public policy, and the skills of conflict resolution and change management. Little curricular attention is paid to the arts (especially the doing of creative work), the humanities and change management. little curricular attention is paid to the development of public policy, and the skills of conflict resolution and change management. Little curricular attention is paid to the arts (especially the doing of creative work), the humanities and the sciences. Most such programs trust that students will study within these disciplines by virtue of the general education courses required of all students. And yet it is in the arts that creativity (an essential characteristic of the best leaders) is nourished; in the humanities that communication skills (the sine qua non for all leaders) are honed; in the sciences that the most rigorous approaches to problem-solving (again, essential to leadership) are taught.

“…Serious study of the arts, humanities, and sciences as well as the social sciences, when these subjects are well taught, insures the development of a deep understanding of the connectivity between disciplines, the integration of knowledge. One cannot understand the structure and development of music without understanding math, physics, chemistry, electronics, or without a knowledge of history, art, poetry or the conventions of theater. Musicians must be multi-lingual. Interdisciplinarity is, in other words, essential to the liberal arts—not a modern fad. One cannot study biology today without solid knowledge of physics, chemistry, mathematics, and computer science, not to say environmental science and geography. To understand literature, one must be at least conversant with philosophy, history, theater, economics, art, and religion, and in many instances, psychology, sociology, economics and the sciences. A good liberal arts education provides constant opportunities to make these connections, to integrate what students are learning in one classroom with what they learn in another, and with their experience of the world outside the classroom altogether. This facility should be regarded as a core skill in leadership development. Leaders must be able to move nimbly from one world to another—drawing on everything and everyone that can help reach their goals.”

From Learning Leadership Discipline by Discipline: Cultivating Metaphors for Leadership Through the Study of the Liberal Arts. —Elisabeth Muhlenfeld

Indiana Fletcher Williams stated in her intentions for the College that all students should have “physical and moral training to be useful members of society.” This concept speaks to what the outdoor program offers the students today. Following in the footsteps of programs such as Outward Bound and the National Outdoor Leadership School, the Sweet Briar Outdoor Program (SWEBOP) has been providing “outdoor recreational opportunities” for personal growth, responsibility, leadership, and environmental sensitivity since 1980. “The SWEBOP trips have been a great test of my character,” says Sarah Doyle ’09.

Personal habits and reactions that go unnoticed in our everyday routines are revealed in the unfamiliar outdoor setting provided on SWEBOP trips. Through experiential learning and reflection, students begin to weave what they learn into their everyday lives. “SWEBOP has given me many leadership skills. I have learned how outdoor can determine perception …,” says Sara Rothamel ’09. SWEBOP uses as a reference, Outdoor Leadership, Theory and Practice, a book written by acclaimed adventurers Bruce Martin, Christine Cashel, Mark Wagstaff, and Mary Breunig. In their book, they say that an “outdoor setting provides a unique site for personal growth as well as process. Mastery alone can provide the motivation for change, but completing such a task in a unique physical and social environment has been shown to have particularly strong effect. The goal is for this effect to last, which can only be accomplished if individuals are provided with knowledge of how to transfer their newfound learning into other contexts…. The potential for lasting transformation in people’s lives is what makes outdoor leadership such an exciting practice.” This is the philosophy we embrace at Sweet Briar as we teach our students transferable leadership skills through outdoor programs.

To SWEBOP, the wilderness is an outdoor laboratory for leadership training. On an adventure trip, participants are in an unfamiliar environment, and they have to work together to achieve goals such as setting up a camp, cooking a meal together, climbing a cliff face, or paddling down a river. Time is set aside for students to reflect on changing group dynamics and individual accomplishments and challenges. Skills are taught through experience, and as the group builds competencies in technical and relational skills, they show less need for the direction of professional staff. As they progress, students will lead others on outings of their own. The following excerpts are from current SWEBOP student instructors reflecting on their own outdoor leadership journeys.

“My attraction to and motivation within SWEBOP is the chance to lead students on successful trips that contribute to the personal growth of all parties involved. The fact that I have fun while doing it is just an added bonus. The outlet to use my
Leading Through Philanthropy

LAURA G. GLOVER, DIRECTOR OF ANNUAL GIVING

An important aspect of leadership is an understanding of the power of personal philanthropy. The Senior Class Campaign encourages seniors to discover the joy of giving through a year-long program of philanthropy education. This year’s campaign theme is “Hope Everlasting” in memory of classmate Laura Jahnke, who passed away in February 2007 after a courageous battle with cancer. Laura was a remarkable leader and a role model of selfless and joyful giving to everyone who knew her. As Campaign Chair Natalie Bateman ‘08 states, “Laura left a legacy on our campus by giving of herself to others every day, and it is my hope that we can follow her example by making philanthropy and volunteering part of our lives, starting now.”

The Senior Class kicked off their campaign with a celebration announcing their goals to raise $4,000 as a class gift in 2008 and pledge $6,000 for 2009 as young alumnae. President Muhlenfeld addressed the class with a message about Sweet Briar’s legacy of giving. Annual Fund Chair Mollie Johnson Nelson ’64 challenged the class to support their campaign and vowed to make a personal commitment of $7,500 to the class gift if the seniors reach 75 percent participation.

Laura Jahnke’s parents, Doug and Merilee Jahnke, were special guests of the Senior Class. Mr. Jahnke’s remarks on Laura’s incredible spirit of giving follow. Laura’s spirit lives on in her classmates, and the Class of 2008 is poised to make a transformational difference for Sweet Briar through a lifetime of philanthropic leadership.
Laura Jahnke

Remarks by Doug Jahnke

Merilee and I would like to thank the senior class for including the memory of our wonderful daughter, Laura, as a significant component of this year’s fundraiser. While I am delivering the message this evening, please know that Merilee and I collaborated in developing this message so the thoughts shared this evening are from both of us.

Also know that Laura was a very generous and giving person in all ways and would have been honored that the Senior Class is thinking of her as they give to a worthwhile cause. Sweet Briar was a special place to Laura, and by extension it has become to us as well, and the memories of her time here and the times we have visited will be with us always.

From childhood Laura always put other individuals’ needs in front of her own. She would not only listen when others were dealing with tough issues, but she had great insight into helping them, usually in commonsense ways that left everyone feeling good. She would not only see problems in the world that needed attention, but she would do something about them to the extent she was able.

Giving was an inherent part of Laura’s structure of beliefs that she expressed at an early age. When we decided as a family to get a dog, there wasn’t much discussion about where we should search for the right one. We all felt that finding a dog at the humane society would help out an unfortunate puppy, so we all went down to the Toledo Humane Society and we found Princess.

Laura was eight at the time, and we didn’t realize until afterward how moved she was by the trip to the Humane Society. While the animals were well cared for, the living conditions were pretty spartan. Concrete floors and block walls, metal bars like prison cells detained the dogs—very basic survival conditions. Laura was moved to try to help them, and I think she came to the realization during that visit that some of these dogs, if not adopted, would not make it. I think if we had said okay, she would have brought all of them home with us. We selected a cute, small German shepherd mixed breed, named her Princess, and shared a life with her for many years.

Shortly after we brought Princess home, Laura decided to save her allowance for Lent to give to the humane society. When it came time to send the money to the humane society after Easter, she informed us that she also wanted to add all of the money in her savings account to her gift.

This wasn’t a whole lot of money to us, as I recall the total was around $80, but to her it was all she had. And even at that age Laura had begun to develop her highly sensitized affinity to shopping, which I’m sure some of her friends here at Sweet Briar were aware of and probably even helped to fine-tune. At the age of eight, this gift seemed like a pretty big deal to us, but for Laura it was simply the right thing to do. I asked her if she didn’t want to give just a part, say half, of her savings, but she had made up her mind to give all of her money.

Merilee took Laura back to the humane society to deliver her savings. The director came out and was surprised to see such a young girl making such a generous donation. She received a very nice thank-you note from the Humane Society, but the bigger thanks was in knowing that she had done her part to support an organization that was helping the homeless animals of the world to survive.

We won’t ever know whether this experience inspired her passion for animals—including her love of horses, which was an attraction of Sweet Briar—or whether it was just an in-born trait, but we do know that her generous spirit was one of her endearing qualities.

When she was at the hospital for week-long stints during 18 chemotherapy cycles after her first diagnosis, she didn’t sit in her room and watch TV or videos, or read books, or sulk about what an unfortunate hand fate had dealt her. When she had any energy at all, she would entertain visitors, chat with docs and nurses, or walk the halls and visit others who usually had similar illnesses or treatments. If they were children, Laura would play with them or color pictures. Laura could get just about anyone to talk about themselves and their likes and dislikes and their families and their hobbies and their friends to take their minds off of what they were going through. It was never about Laura. It was always about others. She was so generous with her time. She enjoyed hearing others’ stories and she brought out the best side of everyone. To Laura, no one had a bad side.

In August of 2006, when Laura had finished some palliative treatment at M.D. Anderson Hospital in Houston, she knew she was dying. She asked Dr. Pete what she should do. “Do what would make you the happiest,” he replied. She chose to come back to Sweet Briar. Through her humane society experience, we had learned that we shouldn’t and wouldn’t be able to change her mind once it was made up. So, in spite of our wanting to be with her every moment, we agreed to let her come back to Sweet Briar. She chose her classes carefully, trying to pick those that would be meaningful and that she could handle. She had loved her previous photography class with Paige Critcher and enrolled in that. She loved the challenge of Lynn Launenburg’s classes and enrolled despite worrying that she wouldn’t be able to fulfill the requirements. She loved history and Professor Berg’s inspiration, which helped her to choose that as her major. She loved music, so she chose a piano class with Rebecca McCord to supplement her banjo lessons with Joe Malloy.

Unfortunately, it took only weeks before she realized that her body was just too tired. She couldn’t keep up, and while everyone, and I mean everyone at Sweet Briar was wonderful about helping, she made the decision that the time had come to spend her time with her family and friends in the comfort of her own home. It was a blessing to have her loving spirit with us until she passed away on February 19, 2007.

We still receive warm messages from many of you and other friends and family. The essence of many of these messages is that those who knew Laura often think, “What would Laura do in this situation?” as they go about their lives. I often ask myself the same thing because she was such a role model even to me, her father (isn’t it supposed to be the other way around?) I know that today she would be happy, and probably is happy, to have all of you think about her as you face the opportunity to give to this worthwhile Sweet Briar Senior Class Campaign, and how you can generously support it in her name.

Thanks again for remembering Laura in this special final year for all of you.

SPECIAL NOTE: Anyone wishing to honor Laura’s memory with a gift to Sweet Briar may do so, and donations will be counted in the 2008 Senior Class Campaign. Gifts should be made out to Sweet Briar College with the notation “Senior Class Gift in memory of Laura Jahnke” and mailed to The Annual Fund, Box G, Sweet Briar, VA 24595.

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Sweet Briar College Alumnae Magazine • www.alumnae.sbc.edu
Barbara Parker, director of human resources

SUZANNE RAMSEY, STAFF WRITER

Barbara Parker is the new director of human resources. She brings more than 25 years of human resources experience to Sweet Briar and has worked in industry, city government and education.

She comes to Sweet Briar from Central Virginia Community College, where she was a faculty and staff recruiter. She also teaches an HR course at CVCC. Prior to that, she was HR director for the city of Bedford for five years.

Parker has completed her Senior Professional Certification for the National Society for Human Resources and has a master’s degree in career counseling and college placement from North Carolina Central College in Durham, N.C.

When she’s not working, Parker enjoys traveling to warm places and shopping. She also is active at Greater Brookville Church, where she chairs the missionary group.

Parker lives in Lynchburg with her husband, Craig, and has two adult sons. One is in the Special Forces and just left for Afghanistan; the other is a chef at Ohio State University.

Sheena Belcher Hubbard ’05

KEN HUUS, DEAN OF ADMISSIONS

Sheena Hubbard has resigned her position in the Admissions Office, effective Friday, January 18, 2008. Sheena has worked in the Admissions Office since graduating from Sweet Briar. She’s been an invaluable member of my staff, and I will miss her constantly inquisitive mind and her dedication to her students.

Nancy Douthat Goss ’55

Nancy Goss, a supporter of women’s education and historic preservation, has been recently honored with several communications to the Alumnae Office. She died on July 10, 2007, and her important work in historic preservation and women’s education is a noteworthy gift to future generations.

After she left Sweet Briar with her degree in psychology, Nancy became the first woman to serve on the Zoning Board of Appeals in Worcester, MA, and took on the role of vice president of the Friends of the Goddard Library at Clark University. Among her many activities, she volunteered at the Worcester Art Museum and received her master’s degree in English linguistics from Clark.

In time, Nancy became the vice president of the North Andover Historical Society; became a guide for the Museum of Fine Arts in Boston; and was museum house chairwoman of the Moffatt-Ladd House in Portsmouth, New Hampshire. This prompted her to become part of the National Society of the Colonial Dames of America (NSCDA), which takes an active approach to promoting American heritage.

Nancy served 12 years with the Dames on the National Museum Properties Committee as Region IV Vice-Chairman, National Museum Properties Chairman, and chairman of two National Museum Properties Workshops.

One of Nancy’s widely noted accomplishments is an article she coauthored for The Magazine ANTIQUES, which was distributed to over 63,000 readers. Because of its great success, 13,000 reprints of this issue were distributed. Beyond helping to write the article, Nancy volunteered for four years to create this issue, which focused on the Dames collections and their significance. “She inspired people to understand history because of the emotion she felt in history,” remarked her son.

Elizabeth Hays Terry and Hilary Field Griepkoven of The Magazine ANTIQUES said: “Nancy helped lead the NSCDA toward an increasingly professional level of museum management by: raising the standards of preservation, record keeping and financial disclosure; insisting on collection policies; encouraging broadening the sources of funds to maintain the properties; and, taking time daily to solve problems and answer questions from museum properties’ staff and boards.” Truly, Nancy was a woman who has made a difference in historic preservation for years to come.—C. Murray

All quotes taken from The Dames Dispatch, Vol. 17, No. 1, Fall 2007
Join in the fun by making your best gift to the Annual Fund and boost your team’s participation in the Young Alumnae: Rock vs. Hitching Post Challenge. It’s so easy! Just go to www.giving.sbc.edu or call toll free 1.888.846.5722.

Do it now!

TEAM ROCK:
TEAM HITCHING POST:

Rock vs. Hitching Post Challenge
Calling All Young Alumnae!

Wedding photos will be published in the Spring/Summer 2008 issue of the magazine. If you were married in 2007 or 2008, please send your wedding photo to The Boxwood Alumnae House, attn: Colleen Murray, P.O.Box E, Sweet Briar, VA 24595. Alternatively, you may email a high resolution photo to cmurray@sbc.edu.

SWEET BRIAR COLLEGE ALUMNAE ASSOCIATION tours 2008-2009

JUNE 3–14 A President’s Trip
A Voyage Through America’s French Heritage: From Normandy to Paris Aboard the Cezanne Celebrating the 60th Anniversary of Sweet Briar’s Junior Year in France Program Sharing with Harvard and Yale

JULY 2–15 Alumni Campus Abroad in Ukraine and Romania aboard the M.S. Dnieper Princess Sharing with The Virginia Museum of Fine Arts

NEW ADDITIONS!
July 28– August 11 Waterways of the Tsars: St. Petersburg to Moscow aboard the M.S. Volga Dream Sharing with Washington & Lee and the National Trust for Historic Preservation

July 29– August 6 Village Life in Ireland: Dublin and Killarney

October 22–30 Alumni Campus Abroad in Tuscany Sharing with Northeastern

May 29–June 11 South Africa: Three Kingdoms (with an optional extension to Cape Town)
in memoriam

Bertha Lamar Goode Moore
1949–2007

Bertha Moore, 58, died on Wednesday, October 17, 2007, at her home after of a prolonged illness. She is survived by three children, Delmar Goode, Lawan Moore-Marshall, and Edmund Hardman; one brother, Robert Goode Jr., of Baltimore, Maryland; two sisters, Florence Simms of Petersburg, and Virginia (Johnny) Mason, of Lynchburg; and eight grandchildren.

Bertha was a member of the Sweet Briar Housekeeping Department from May 1999–March 2007. She tended to the Alumnae Office and the Cochran Library. Bertha was faithful in her duties and always extended a warm smile and great enthusiasm for the College. Because of the housekeeping schedule, Bertha was most often the first person in the Alumnae Office each day. “It was such a pleasure to be greeted by Bertha, and I looked forward to seeing her each morning. Her optimistic view often set the tone for my day,” commented Missy Witherow ’80, associate director of the alumnae association.

A funeral service was held Monday, October 22, 2007, at Peaceful Baptist Church, Lynchburg.

Frank H. Fedorovich

Frank H. Fedorovich died on August 22, 2007 at the age of 78. Frank was Director of the Physical Plant at Sweet Briar from 1987–1997 under a contract with Service Master, Inc.

Born in Akron, Ohio, Frank lived in Amherst as well as Ohio. He retired from Goodyear Tire & Rubber in 1987 after 42 years of service. He loved boating and water skiing and was also a former member of the Knights of Columbus.

He is survived by his wife of 23 years, Betty; sons, Frank (Peggy) and Gary; daughter Barbara (Donald) Oakes; stepson, David (Kelly) Willison; 12 grandchildren; one great-grandchild; brother, Paul (Ruth); sisters Rose Uhrich Carole Fedorovich and Anne (Lee) McDaniel.

A Mass of Christian Burial was held August 25th at the Holy Spirit Catholic Church in Uniontown, Ohio.
recent deaths

If you wish to write to a member of the family of someone recently deceased, please contact the Alumnae Office for name and address.

1927
Emily Jones
Mrs. Hanson H. Hodge
October 11, 2007

1930
Adelaide Wampler
Mrs. George G. Kundahl
October 25, 2007

Sarah De Saussure
Mrs. C. Elliott Heath
November 27, 2007

1931
Elizabetb Stephenson
Mrs. J. W. Sills
August 27, 2007

1932
Katherine Scott
Mrs. Katherine S. Soles
July 11, 2006

Barbara Munter
Mrs. Robert A. Purdue
November 27, 2007

Susanne Gay
Mrs. C. Edwin Linville
November 26, 2007

1933
Nell Colgin
Mrs. C. F. Miller
December 26, 2007

1934
Baylis Rector
Mrs. George Love
September 17, 2007

Dorothy Turno
Mrs. Nathaniel P. Gardner, Jr.
August 20, 2007

1935
Blandina Jones
Mrs. William E. Skilton
October 25, 2007

Isabel Scriba
Miss Isabel Scriba
November 18, 2007

1936
Capel Grimes
Mrs. Charles H. Gerlach
Date unknown

1937
Dorothy Prout
Mrs. Robert W. Gorsuch
March 30, 1999

Alice Danzer
Mrs. David W. Fletcher
October 9, 2007

1938
Florence Caven
Mrs. Ralph Crosnoe
September 27, 2007

Marjorie Miller
Mrs. Marjorie H. Raber
January 18, 1996

Elizabeth Hopper
Mrs. John Turner II
November 10, 2004

1939
Grace Robinson
Mrs. William B. McGuire
September 1, 2007

Natalie Harris
Mrs. John I. Wheatley
February 12, 2007

Nancy McKee
Mrs. McKee Hullett
December 1, 2007

Sarah Tams
Mrs. George F. Kreker
October 14, 2007

Fayth Mueller
Mrs. Philip Shirkey
December 16, 2006

1940
Marianna Bush
Mrs. Robert R. King, Jr.
November 3, 2007

Emily Sebrell
Mrs. Thomas G. Lynch
October 10, 2007

Emily Sebrell
Mrs. Thomas G. Lynch
October 15, 2007

Ann Pickard
Mrs. T. F. McCary
November 28, 2007

1943
Suzanne Douglas
Mrs. Jay G. Terry
Date unknown

Harriet Pullen
Mrs. J. Ormsby Phillips
December 17, 2007

1945
Margaret Mueller
Mrs. George W. Haldeman
June 10, 2007

1946
Margaret Coffman
Mrs. Margaret C. Smith
Date unknown

Carolyn Conley
Mrs. Carolyn J. Danley
July 18, 2006

1947
Inez Rosamond
Mrs. William G. Boone Jr.
September 8, 2007

Elaine Davis
Mrs. Charles E. Blackford III
October 13, 2007

1948
Yvonne Lamon
Mrs. Julian Olevsky
Date unknown

Bemyme Richstone
Mrs. Irving Manson
July 11, 2004

1951
Anne Louise Fletcher
Mrs. Anne L. Bedford
June 22, 2007

Marjorie Newell
Mrs. William D. Curlee
November 11, 2005

1955
Kathleen Button
Mrs. L. H. Ginn III
November 7, 2007

Elinor Scherr
Mrs. Frederic Mosher
June 27, 2007

Linda Baker
Mrs. Byron Spencer, Jr.
September 15, 2007

1963
Barbara Quimby
Mrs. Thomas A. Gildelhaus
June 18, 2007

1966
Martha Spangenberg
Mrs. John E. Moore
September 23, 2007

1973
Marcia Stanley
Mrs. Roger Allen Verse
Date unknown

Kathleen Williams
Ms. Kathleen Williams Stant
August 24, 2007

1982
Margaret Camblos
Ms. Margaret B. Camblos
November 23, 2007

1983
Suzanne Flagg
Miss Suzanne D. Flagg
June 28, 2000

1990
Melissa Grandle
Miss Melissa Ann Grandle
March 22, 2006
When Virginia Cummings attended St. Catherine’s School in Richmond in the late 1930s, there was just one name on her college application list: Sweet Briar College. When her advisor suggested that she should list more schools as college acceptance was becoming competitive, Ginny declined. “If Sweet Briar doesn’t want me,” she declared, “I don’t want to go to college at all.”

Virginia Cummings Davis, Class of 1942, died on November 4, 2005. Her memory has been honored by her husband, August, with a bequest of $750,000 to Sweet Briar College. Just as Sweet Briar was the only choice for Ginny, when Mr. Davis decided to make a donation in his wife’s memory, for him Sweet Briar was still the only choice.

“We met on a blind date,” he says. “Giving this gift in honor of Ginny also honors the memories of that special time when she attended Sweet Briar and I was at VPI.”

Mr. Davis chose to make his bequest unrestricted rather than specifying how the money should be used.

“I trust the College to know best what they need,” he says. “I don’t think I need to designate what they do with it.”

Ginny attended Sweet Briar for Sociology/Economics from 1938 to 1942, during the height of World War II. The war had little impact on the courting couple, although gas rationing coupons required some planning. Ginny would visit August at Virginia Agricultural and Mechanical College and Polytechnic Institute, now known as Virginia Tech. He came over to Sweet Briar when he had time off. Ginny would take a bus from Sweet Briar to the Lynchburg train station, and then traveled by train to VPI.

“VPI was a military school then, of course, but not so regimented as other military schools,” Mr. Davis remembers. “If we weren’t in class, we could wear civilian clothes.” He was stationed at Wright Field near Dayton, Ohio, when he and Ginny married. They moved three or four times during their marriage until the war was over, and then lived in Rome, Georgia, for 35 years where Mr. Davis worked for General Electric. They later moved back to Richmond, where Ginny had grown up, to be near her mother. August and Ginny had fond memories of their dating years.

“Ginny was the belle of the ball,” Mr. Davis remembers, “and I was shy. When I worked up the courage to ask her to come to a dance at VPI, the words were hardly out of my mouth before she said ‘yes’! We surely enjoyed those dances. I couldn’t dance well, but Ginny had been dancing since she learned to walk. Other men would ‘cut in’ on our dances, but I didn’t mind; I would go stand by the orchestra and wait for her. I enjoyed the music so much, and she enjoyed the dancing.”

Although Ginny was the first in her family to attend Sweet Briar, she must have made an impression on the family with her stories of college life—four of Ginny’s cousins followed in her footsteps. Like Mr. Davis’s gift, unrestricted bequests to Sweet Briar’s endowment signify a profound belief in our mission, our history, and our future. These gifts create a solid foundation upon which faculty salaries and academic programs, student services, and maintenance of our beautiful campus are based, which are clearly necessities for the labor-intensive, highly individualized education that Sweet Briar provides. The magnitude of a college’s endowment is the best indicator of the strength of its academic program, because it is that endowment that provides the resources to attract outstanding faculty and top-tier students.

You, too, can honor a loved one by making Sweet Briar a part of your estate plan. A simply executed Letter of Intent, attached as a codicil to your will, indicates your support for the College. To learn more about the personal, financial, and charitable advantages of making an estate gift or to request a Letter of Intent form, please contact The Office of Development on (434) 381-6161 or toll-free on 888-846-5722.
The Mount Vernon Ladies’ Association presented the newly planted white ash in the Sweet Briar House garden in honor of Gay Hart Gaines ’59 on the occasion of the College naming her the 2007 Distinguished Alumna. Gaines is regent of the MVLA, which owns and maintains Mount Vernon, the historic home of George Washington. The tree was dedicated in a ceremony following the award presentation during SBC’s Founders’ Day convocation on Sept. 21.

The young tree’s DNA from the trunk up is believed to be a genetic match to a gigantic white ash growing at Mount Vernon since 1918. The estate’s horticulturalists cloned the original tree to preserve its offspring after it was nearly destroyed in a storm.

2007 Distinguished Alumna Gay Hart Gaines ’59, Mount Vernon Executive Director James C. Rees, MVLA Vice Regent Lynn Crosby Gammill ’58, and President Elisabeth Muhlenfeld are pictured watering the new tree at the dedication ceremony.