

November 2008

Dear friends of the Bread Loaf School of English:

It's November, and I'm writing once more to ask you to consider a generous gift to the Bread Loaf School of English. The School is in especially strong need of funds this year (I do recognize that, this year, you are probably also in need of funds yourself). Middlebury College has already spent major amounts on renovations at Bread Loaf; before the renovations are over, probably in 10 or 15 years, the amounts spent will be truly staggering. Middlebury relies on the generosity of Bread Loaf donors to help support this major capital outlay. We also hope, during Middlebury's current \$500 million Initiative, to raise enough to create several endowed professorships and to move significantly toward the goal of providing 100% of demonstrated need to all Bread Loaf students in need of financial aid. Every gift made to Bread Loaf will help us along in reaching these especially ambitious and especially worthy goals.

If you prefer to make a gift in the form of a charitable annuity, a trust, or a bequest, you should be in touch with Bread Loaf's own Director of Graduate Giving Dan Breen, at dbreen@middlebury.edu or (802) 443-5863.

The big news for the coming year is the reunion celebrating our 90th summer on the Vermont campus, June 19-21; you should already have begun receiving (or will soon receive) mailings about the reunion. Since we anticipate a very large turnout, I urge you to register at the earliest possible date. We will be mailing out registration forms and information in January (and posting the same materials on our Website).

Highlights of the reunion will include panels of alums and faculty from as many decades as possible; discussion groups on many different texts led by faculty members; the never-to-be-missed Bread Loaf square dance; and the chance to see and talk with many, many old friends.

If you are attending the NCTE convention in San Antonio later this month, you will have another opportunity to see Bread Loaf friends. Bread Loaf will have a booth on the convention floor (booth #632) and will be hosting a reception from 4:30-6:30 p.m. on Friday, November 21, in the "La Princesa" room at the Hilton del Palacio del Rio, just across the street from the Convention Center. Sandy LeGault and Karen Browne will be the Bread Loaf hostesses at the event.

The summer just past was a remarkable one at all our campuses. Following is a report on 2008 at the four campuses and some news about 2009.

We had an intensely musical summer in Vermont (and to a somewhat lesser extent at the other campuses; see below). Student Alex Levin, whose remarkable talents first dazzled our campus in Asheville in 2006, brought his contemporary jazz trio to Bread Loaf for a residency for most of the summer. We also had with us the New Orleans jazz trio of one of Bread Loaf's most faithful friends, Mark Wright. And, near the end of the summer, Paul Muldoon brought up his rock band Rackett to enliven an enthusiastic crowd in the Barn. Up-and-coming poet Dan Chiasson came to read his work early in the summer, and the poet who is arguably *the eminence grise* of American poetry, John Ashbery, came later on, with a special highlight of his visit being his time spent with a group of adoring students in Treman after the reading. Alan MacVey and the Acting Ensemble presented a spectacular production of *Twelfth Night*. This was the first time Alan had ever repeated a play at Bread Loaf; you had to be as hoary a veteran of Bread Loaf as Lucy and I to recognize the single actor who was in both the 1984 and the 2008 productions, Brian McEleney as Malvolio.

Even though the period of faculty recruitment isn't yet complete, I can at this point tell you that Andrea Lunsford will be rejoining us in Vermont; we will also welcome as a new faculty member Middlebury's Marion Wells.

There was good news of quite a different sort, too. An extremely generous friend of Bread Loaf's gave a gift of \$75,000 to found a scholarship fund in honor of Alexander Twilight, who in 1823 became the first African American to receive a baccalaureate degree from an American college or university: Middlebury College. Both the Bread Loaf classes of 2007 and 2008 devoted their senior class gifts to scholarship funds designed to increase diversity at Bread Loaf. Both classes have agreed to merge their gifts with the Twilight Fund, the scholarships to be awarded to deserving students who have worked to increase diversity at Bread Loaf.

You have very likely heard the news that Robert Frost's Homer Noble farmhouse was vandalized this past winter. Luckily, though, the damage was superficial, and more luckily still, the vandals didn't even enter the Frost cabin itself, where Frost wrote many of his poems. The hero of the entire episode was our own Leo Hotte, caretaker of the Bread Loaf campus; he discovered the incriminating evidence that led to the apprehension of the young men. (If you didn't look too carefully at the latest issue of *Middlebury* magazine, ferret out your copy and have another look. The weathered cowboy on the cover is Leo, and there is a splendid photo-essay on him inside.) The sequel to the vandalism was an extremely happy one. Middlebury is raising an endowment to support a writer-in-residence to live year-round at the Frost Farm. If you didn't get a mailing about this new position, contact the Bread Loaf office, and we will be happy to send materials to you.

Even though the dollar continued to plummet in relation to the pound, the number of students attending our Oxford campus in 2008 (71) grew very markedly over the number in the summer of 2007 (61). Amid today's financial panics (I am writing in late October), it would be crazy to make any predictions at all, but the recent strengthening of the dollar

against the pound offers the hope that Oxford costs won't be *quite* so forbidding next summer. Bread Loaf/Oxford students last summer saw Patrick Stewart as Claudius in *Hamlet*, and the 2009 students are slated to see Jude Law as Hamlet himself. Bread Loaf/Oxford, celebrating its own 32nd anniversary in 2009, has by now established a series of annual events to rival Vermont's: the 4th of July barbecue in Grove Quad, the Deep Hall Talent Show and Trivia Contest, etc. I hope that many of you will be on hand next summer to help extend these traditions. After two summers of the excellent leadership of Peter McCullough, John Fyler will be returning as on-site director in 2009.

While John Ashbery was in Vermont, Billy Collins was in New Mexico, where he read to Bread Loaf students and faculty, as well as several hundred Santa Fe citizens. The most memorable moment of his reading came after a quite drunk (but actually pretty knowledgeable) local woman repeatedly shouted out her requests of poems for Collins to read. Finally Collins turned upon her: "Madame, do you think I am a jukebox, and that all you have to do is to shout out the title of a poem, for me to read it?" Good line, but it had no effect. Lee Marmon, father of Leslie Marmon Silko and an important cultural figure in his own right came to talk and read. Students will rejoice that Deirdre David is rejoining our New Mexico faculty in 2009, and Vermont faculty members Patricia Powell and Adrienne Dixson will be making the move to Santa Fe as well. Cheryl Glenn will be the on-site director.

No Bread Loaf campus has taken advantage of its specific site more than Bread Loaf/Asheville, now entering its fourth year. John Warnock's splendid "Writing about Place" course has introduced students to the region and its many ways of cultivating the arts. This past summer, John Elder extended that emphasis in his course on the ballad in England, Ireland, and Scotland, its journey across the Atlantic to re-establish itself in the Appalachians, and its evolution into country music and bluegrass. A photo of Warnock on mandolin and Elder on banjo, making music together, will appear in this year's catalog. Bread Loaf faculty veterans, the much loved Val Smith and Jeff Nunokawa, both went to Asheville last summer to give talks. Some of the good news for Asheville '09: Mary Floyd-Wilson will be returning to the Asheville faculty, and Middlebury's Michael Katz will be joining the faculty, to teach a course on Tolstoy and Dostoevsky. Tilly Warnock will again direct.

2008 was a rich summer for all Bread Loaf students and faculty, and 2009 promises to be as great or greater. Before it even begins, I hope that, if you're able, you'll join us at our 90th reunion in Vermont in June. And, in any event, even in these hard economic times—maybe *especially* in these hard economic times—I hope that you'll consider making as generous a gift as you can to the Bread Loaf School of English.

With all best wishes,

James Maddox
Director