

November 2007

Dear Friends of the Bread Loaf School of English,

If it's November and you're getting a thickish envelope from Middlebury, you can be pretty sure that Jim is writing to give you the past year's news about Bread Loaf—and to ask you for money.

First, the money. As you know, one of my major goals is to try to increase Bread Loaf's resources to the point at which it can offer financial aid to any student, at (so the phrase goes) 100% of demonstrated need. Middlebury College already offers this level of support to its undergraduates, and President Liebowitz has announced his support for the same benefit for students in Middlebury's summer programs. This cannot be accomplished with the flick of a wand (or cane), however, and I hope that support from Bread Loaf students, faculty, graduates, and other friends will demonstrate our own support for this very important goal.

I also hope that faculty salaries can be raised in future years. Bread Loaf faculty members are famously devoted to their students and to Bread Loaf itself; many of them teach at salaries smaller than those they could get from their own colleges and universities for summer teaching or from institutions such as the NEH, for offering seminars or institutes.

And then there is the Bread Loaf campus. As I've reported to you in my last several letters, Middlebury College has undertaken major repairs and renovations at Bread Loaf, so far mainly on foundations (which were a real mess after well over a century of Vermont freezings and thawings). Since I last wrote to you, new foundations have been put under Birch, the Homer Noble Farmhouse, Gilmore, and Tamarack. The wonderful thing is that although renovations are proceeding apace, every effort is being made to retain the inimitable appearance of Bread Loaf, which looks as much like Joseph Battell's old stomping grounds as it ever did. I was recently in on a Middlebury conference call, in which estimates were given for continuing maintenance and renovations over the next decade. I'm not free to name numbers here; suffice it to say that they were staggering. Middlebury College is, these days, showing a renewed pride in Bread Loaf and the great programs that occupy it during the summers, and I hope that contributions from Bread Loaf friends will be of assistance in ensuring the survival of the old place well into its third century (which will come along one fine day in the 2060s).

There are two major ways to give to Bread Loaf. The first, simpler way (easy as pie!) is to use the enclosed envelope to send in a check (or a credit-card number). You may elect to make a gift to the annual scholarship fund, which will rush your dollars into action immediately, in the summer of 2008. Or you may elect to make a gift to one of our named scholarships. Gifts to a scholarship fund will become a part of the endowment for that fund; the income from your gift will support your chosen scholarship at Bread Loaf in perpetuity.

The second way to make a gift to Bread Loaf is through an annuity, trust, or bequest. A gift annuity seems to me an especially attractive option. If you are lucky enough to have an amount in savings whose capital you don't need to touch but whose income you plan to rely on, then a gift annuity may be just the thing for you. A gift annuity would offer you a substantial tax deduction as well as a lifetime of payments at a highly competitive rate. Annuities and trusts can also be funded with marketable securities, and there can be additional, significant tax benefits in doing so. If you are interested in any of these possibilities, I urge you to get in touch with Deb Wales in the Gift Planning Office at Middlebury ([dwales@middlebury.edu](mailto:dwales@middlebury.edu); [802] 443-5616).

President Liebowitz has created a new position, the Director of Graduate Giving, so that the School of English, the Writers' Conference, and the Language Schools will now have more help and guidance in raising funds. The new director is Dan Breen, whom in earlier letters I have mentioned as being in the Gift Planning office. I have worked with Dan now for more than two years. He is so personable and funny that one is apt to forget that he is also an absolute genius at his job. He is an invaluable addition to Bread Loaf.

If you have made it through my disquisition on money and giving, you now deserve some news of Bread Loaf, at all its campuses.

First of all, I hope that this letter reaches you in time for you to learn that there will be a Bread Loaf reception at the NCTE convention in New York on Friday, November 16, from 4:30 to 6:30 p.m. The reception will be held at the New York Marriott Marquis, 1535 Broadway, at 46<sup>th</sup> Street (212 398-1900). We do not yet have a room number for the reception; we will post it on BreadNet, in Cyberbarn, just as soon as we find out; alternatively, and much more simply, you can just call from the hotel lobby and ask to be connected to Karen Browne or Sandy LeGault. A large number of Bread Loaf students and graduates are presenting at NCTE; among them are Tamar Paull and Pat Echessa-Kariuki; Pat is coming to NCTE all the way from Kenya. We encourage you to bring along to the reception any colleagues interested in learning more about Bread Loaf. (Dixie and I are dividing up the travel these days: she will be at NCTE; I will be on Bread Loaf business elsewhere.)

Now for some Vermont news. I hope that the coming summer of 2008 will be remembered as the year that jazz arrived in Vermont. Last summer, Bread Loaf student Alex Levin brought his jazz trio to the Barn for a truly spectacular concert. (Those of you who were in Asheville in 2006 may remember Alex's performances in some of the local jazz clubs there.) I have invited the jazz trio back to Bread Loaf in 2008 for a residency, and I have invited the faculty to fold jazz into their courses. Craig Womack (who has previously taught for Bread Loaf in Santa Fe) will teach a course on literature and jazz. Will Nash will teach a course on African American culture in Chicago, with a jazz component. And Robert Stepto will teach a course on African American poetry counterpointed against European American poetry, also with a jazz component. Bread Loaf's own Mark Wright, with his own piano version of New Orleans jazz, and perhaps with some of his own musical colleagues as well, will also be a part of this jazz summer. Our play in Vermont in 2008 will be Shakespeare's *Twelfth Night*. Michael Cadden and

veteran Bread Loaf Ensemble member Brian McEleney will teach a course on Shakespeare in Performance, which will take every advantage of Alan MacVey's rehearsals (Alan himself will be teaching a course on *The Merchant of Venice*). Jeffrey Shoulson will be giving a very interesting twist to the "Bible as Literature" courses that have been taught at various of our campuses in recent years, by teaching the King James translation, so that the course will be both a practice in Biblical scholarship and an examination of an early-modern English text. Many of you will be happy to know that Michael Wood will return to the faculty after an absence of two years. I am very pleased to be able to tell you that John Ashbery, one of the most eminent of living American poets, will be reading at Bread Loaf this summer. And Julia Alvarez has very kindly consented to come as well, to read from her latest work. Julia is going to be on tour with her new book this coming summer, and she and I are going to try to coordinate the stops on her tour with a reading at at least one of the other American Bread Loaf campuses. I believe I may have forgotten to mention last year that the Vermont campus had its first coed dormitory, Cherry, in 2006; Larch was coed in 2007. Only six years late, Bread Loaf marches into the twentieth century.

Long-time Bread Loaf faculty member Peter McCullough, himself a fellow of Lincoln College, will again direct our program in Oxford in 2008; we hope that he will continue his practice of offering the students "director's cuts," postings of insider tips on getting to know Oxford more intimately. Oxford, by the way, after a mysterious one-year drop, shows every sign of returning to its prosperous full enrollments from the old days. Miriam Gilbert is already in the process of lining up plays for the two all-school play evenings and her "Page and Stage" class (including *Merchant of Venice*, *Midsummer Night's Dream*, *Taming of the Shrew*, and *Hamlet*, all by the RSC in Stratford; *A Midsummer Night's Dream* and *Hamlet* will be the two all-school plays). After a summer's absence, Jeri Johnson will return to our faculty in 2008.

Claire Sponsler will again be directing our New Mexico program at St. John's College in Santa Fe. Cheryl Glenn, who taught in Vermont last summer, will be joining the stalwarts on the New Mexico faculty. Jesse Aleman will be teaching a new (for us) course on Southwestern literature and film, including Hispanic, Indian, and Anglo strands. New father Vance Smith will teach a course on African literature (Vance grew up in East Africa) as well as his well-known Bible course.

Tilly Warnock will again direct our program in Asheville, in its third summer. Alison Booth, who taught in Alaska in 2006, will be on the Asheville faculty in 2008. Long-time Middlebury College and Bread Loaf faculty member John Elder will also be joining the Asheville faculty. He will be teaching a course ideally designed for North Carolina, on the traditional ballad (English, Irish, Scottish), the "literary" turn the ballad takes in the late-eighteenth-century poetry of Burns and Wordsworth, the migration of the ballad form to the Southern mountains in the U.S., and, finally, the transmutation of the ballad into country music. John Warnock will again be teaching his "Writing about Place" course, which takes full advantage of Asheville's splendid geographical and cultural setting.

Last year, in Vermont and on our travels, both Emily and I heard many students express something very like sorrow that the Alaska campus had closed; both of us share that feeling. Pure economics dictated the decision in the first place, and I at least hope that economics may play a part in a reopening, someday, of Bread Loaf/Alaska. I can make no promises; but if enrollments in 2008 or later suggest that Bread Loaf can go back to a five-campus scenario, I will do everything I can to make that happen.

Over the years, most of you addressed in this letter must have heard of the Bread Loaf Teacher Network (BLTN), originally called, in an earlier embodiment, the Bread Loaf Rural Teacher Network. As originally conceived, the network consisted of all those teachers who attend Bread Loaf on special fellowships, from private foundations, city school districts, state departments of education, or other outside sources. These fellowships carry responsibilities with them, among them the requirement that the teacher's classroom carry out at least one content-rich electronic "exchange" with another Bread Loaf classroom during the ensuing school year. Many network teachers in a very short time began seeing this requirement as an opportunity, and have led their students to markedly better writing through the innovation of having the students write to an "authentic audience" in another Bread Loaf teacher's classroom. Students become much more finely attuned, for example, to voice and to audience during these exchanges. We are now throwing open the doors and are urging as many Bread Loaf teachers, past and present, as would like, to become members of the Bread Loaf Teacher Network and participate in the kind of exchanges that the charter members of the network have been engaged in for years. Very soon, a pop-up message on BreadNet will give you instructions on how to participate in cross-classroom exchanges, if you wish to do so. If you do not currently use BreadNet but would like to, contact Caroline Eisner for a new account or to reactivate an old account: [caroline\\_eisner@breadnet.middlebury.edu](mailto:caroline_eisner@breadnet.middlebury.edu).

Among those supporting Bread Loaf fellowships last summer were the C. E. & S. Foundation in Kentucky (with the generous assistance of Middlebury College Trustee Betty Jones), the philanthropic arm of Fidelity Investments (with the generous assistance of Bread Loaf graduate Jennifer Brown), the Geraldine R. Dodge Foundation, and the school districts of Lawrence, MA and Greenville County, SC. In addition, one especially generous Bread Loaf graduate funded two fellowships herself, and another contributed a handsome award to be given to an outstanding student attending Bread Loaf/Oxford.

Dixie's "New Media and the Teaching of Writing" course this past summer worked with Bread Loaf graduate Tim Dorsey's organization, the Youth Media Learning Network, to create a DVD that showcases the work of BLTN, especially among teachers in Lawrence, MA and Trenton, NJ. If you would like a copy of this DVD, free of charge, just be in touch with Karen Browne in the Bread Loaf office, and she will mail one to you.

The 90<sup>th</sup> reunion, which I announced last spring, is still in the early planning stages. It will be held at Bread Loaf, before the summer session, June 19-21, 2009. We already have volunteers for the planning committee. They include Anne Hoover, Bob Kauffman '68, Rachel Wortman (exp. '09), Gary Montano MA '98, M.Litt. '04, Laurie O'Neill '98, Meg Sempreora M.A. '72, M.Litt. '89, Edward Brown '89, Kalli Federhofer '97, and

Sandy LeGault '87. We will keep you posted on planned events. If there's something you'd especially like to have featured at the reunion, by all means drop an e-mail to Sandy LeGault (sandy\_legault@breadnet.middlebury.edu) or to me (jim\_maddox@breadnet.middlebury.edu).

This October, Middlebury College announced its extraordinarily ambitious new "Initiative," to raise \$500 million for the college. Anything that you give to Bread Loaf over the next five years will also contribute to the Initiative, which has as one of its major commitments the support of the School of English and the Bread Loaf campus. I hope that you will be able to make a gift this year.

With all best wishes,

James Maddox  
Director