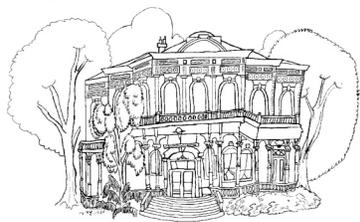


# NEWS



# NOTES

FALL 2011

## A LETTER FROM KATY

THIS YEAR, OUR SCHOOL COMMUNITY begins the second strategic planning process. At the Fall Parent Meeting in October, the Board announced that the new strategic plan will be on a three year cycle, and the focus this year is to create goals in the areas of 1) Mission, Vision and Values, 2) Communications and Outreach, and 3) Governance. At the meeting, we heard a historical overview of strategic planning at Peninsula and the rationale for selecting these three areas at this time. We broke into small groups and each group discussed the various aspects of a particular goal area, as well as how and why this work is important for Peninsula's future.

The meeting took place the day after Steve Jobs had died. As a fitting tribute to his genius that helped reshape the world's digital landscape, his death triggered an outpouring of emotion around the world. When we gathered in the auditorium for the meeting, we took a few minutes thinking and talking about the man who was, in President Obama's words, "among the greatest of American innovators."

Thirty-six years ago, Steve Dompier went to the third meeting of the Homebrew Club in the auditorium at Peninsula School. He had built an Altair computer and brought it to the meeting to share with his fellow computer hobbyists. Dompier set up shop on the floor, but nothing happened when he plugged in his new computer. It turned out that the fuse was blown. After several extension cords were connected and run upstairs to a working socket, the computer sprang to life. It was as if lightning had struck when, unexpectedly, strains from the Beatles'

*Continued on page 4*

## ALUMNI REFLECTIONS ON DRAMA AND PLAY

*by Stacy Dryer*



*Javier Mourier, Gianna Prainito, and Annie Hambrun in their 8th grade production of Peter Pan, June 2011.*

LAST YEAR'S 8TH GRADE CLASS put on an utterly unforgettable production of "Peter Pan." In her program book, Merrill Gruver, Peninsula's drama teacher and the play's director, wrote:

"Through their work in 'Peter Pan,' these young actors have had a rich opportunity to explore the nature of play and its potential to generate joy. What a fitting script for almost-grads to tackle. On the cusp of leaving their childhood behind, they have taken a (literal!) step back into kindergarten to revel in the land of make-believe.... Peninsula School has much in common with Neverland, and as these students leave Peninsula for their next great adventure, they will take with them many things, not the least of which is their understanding of the power of play. It is particularly fitting that this production is their last project as a class, the last project they will

*Continued on page 2*

## "SLAP! BANG! HERE WE ARE AGAIN, AT GOOD OLD PENINSULA SCHOOL!"

### A YEAR OF REUNIONS

*by Andromeda Garcelon*

WE HAVE PUT A NEW FOCUS ON REUNIONS at Peninsula, knowing how important it is for alumni to keep in touch with the school and with each other. This past year we had several class reunions of note. Some were aided by the school through alumni class representatives, including the 10th reunion of the Class of '01 and the 25th reunion of the Class of '86, and some were spontaneously organized by our alumni, such as the joint 40th birthday bash of the Class of '85 or the Spring Fair 20th reunion of the Class of '91. It was wonderful to see so many alumni travel great distances or open their homes to former classmates, put in



*The 25th reunion of the Class of '86*

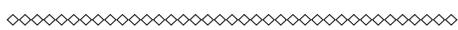
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ALUMNI REFLECTIONS

*Continued from page 1*

undertake here at Peninsula, before they open the window and fly.”

Over the years, many Peninsula students have taken flight not only into lives they truly love, but also into the world of performing arts beyond Peninsula School. Recently, we asked some of our alumni to reflect back on favorite memories from their Peninsula School productions, as well as the dramatic opportunities those experiences launched... or not. Here’s what they had to say:



ROBERT FOLKER, '64

Sixth grade? Maybe seventh? Early sixties, anyway... we put on “Oliver” directed by Dee Marcus. It was a relatively new show on Broadway, so amazing that we got the rights... or did we? There must’ve been recorded music so we could sing along. Shannon Page had the lead role. I was Mr. Sowerberry, the undertaker. Voice so bad, Dee cut my singing part. My one and only time on stage.

STEVEN TRENT SMITH, '61

Gilbert & Sullivan’s “Mikado” was performed c.1960. I played – very badly – the title role. I still remember a lot of the songs. The following year we did “I Remember Mama.”

LARISSA BROWN SHAPIRO, '87

We did many plays. I have particularly fond memories of “The Lion, The Witch, and The Wardrobe” and one that we wrote ourselves for 8th grade graduation. I remember Billie Shaw showing me the Mikado costumes – she was very proud of them, and of those of you who were in it. You may think you did badly, but as someone she told about it 20(?) years later... in her memory, you were perfect.

TRAVIS TIPS, '97

I just wanted to share my excitement as a recipient of an Emmy for Outstanding Cinematography for my work on “Deadliest Catch.” I’m so grateful for having had the opportunity to grow up at Peninsula. The Peninsula Community nourished my creativity (to say the least) and put me on the road to making it on the show. If it weren’t for making home videos with Daniel Carr and Andrew

Ostrenga, I may not have ever discovered my passion for filmmaking. Thanks guys! Thanks for all the support, enthusiasm and encouragement along the way! It’s an honor to get to share this with you all.

PEFY FRASER, '02

I remember in 8th grade for our play at graduation, we performed “Captain Fantastic” and I was one of the girls who wore a poodle skirt, screamed whenever I saw Captain Fantastic/Waldo (played by Marcelo). However, I also had a unique characteristic in that I fainted every time I saw him or his name was said, even if he wasn’t in the room. I fainted in a variety of places, the floor, someone’s arms, awkwardly over the side of a couch, etc. (had to practice that last one a lot!). I remember there were four of us “girls” in total, but one of the girls was played by a guy (Ben Spar). It was so fun to see him dressed up like a girl and with make-up on. Haha. It worked out well, too, because every time I fainted we needed Ben to carry me off stage. I think I still have my poodle skirt up in the attic somewhere....

KENNY MEEHAN, '94

In 5th grade, our teacher, Stephen Gagné, decided that he would let the students write the script for our class play, and that got me really excited. I believe I first wrote out a scene I had in mind, about some sort of “Igor” type character... and with Stephen’s help that scene turned into the main narrative arc. I got pretty involved with writing the script after that and I think I started pulling my first “all-nighters” staying up scribbling out story ideas & jokes.

I can still hear the audience laughing. I didn’t know it at the time but I think that 5th grade play was rather transformative for me, seeing as I’m still writing out stories in the middle of the night and turning them into productions. Most recently, I enjoyed working with my fellow Peninsula classmate, Matt McCroskey, on a documentary film called “Big in Bollywood,” which is currently playing at film festivals in the U.S. and Canada, and has also played in Europe and Costa Rica. Whether it is speaking in public, acting, or producing, my career as a filmmaker was most definitely sparked at Peninsula.

PAZ HILFINGER-PARDO, '00

In seventh grade, as we sat around a table and argued and haggled and agreed on the casting of the class play, I had no idea I was participating in something that would eventually shape my entire philosophy of artmaking. At the time, I was mostly annoyed at the Powers-That-Were (Lynne) for not stepping in and presenting a value system against which we could measure ourselves (e.g. This is good acting; this is bad acting. “A” is a good actor, “B” is a bad actor; therefore, A will play the lead and B will shift the set during transitions). Instead, we had to hash out for ourselves what we valued in each other, and what we thought we were best suited for onstage. It took forever to cast a play by consensus, and the process involved all of the usual dysfunctions of my class. I was relieved when I got to high school and we could all pretend that casting was a rapid, objective process based entirely on a narrow definition of merit. As I’ve become a professional performer and playwright, however, I have realized that nothing in the theater really works this way. Making a play mostly involves slow, subjective processes based entirely on arbitrary and wide-ranging definitions of merit. I wouldn’t have it any other way. I am now much more interested in a process that is honest in its dysfunctionality, and in an aesthetic that has room for people to show whatever bizarre thing they are naturally good at onstage. This is why I’m in experimental theater and not trying for Broadway. Peninsula’s drama program taught me to value an unexpected range of skills in a way that I apply now in my everyday life.



*Kenny Meehan, Matt McCroskey, and Jesse Engelberg in Marion Conley’s Indian Play, c. 1985.*

AVA DONOVAN, '09

Before I came to Peninsula (which was in 6th grade), I always dreamed of becoming an actress... it seemed so glamorous. But, even though I had small roles in one or two plays in my public elementary school, it never felt very comfortable, so I decided acting was not for me. At Peninsula, in 7th grade, we put on the play "Horror High," and we *had* to act in it, so I chose a small part. For some reason, with all the encouragement around me, I opened up and found out not only that I LOVE acting but also that the people around me wanted me to act. Doing improv with Merrill also really helped my confidence. At my high school, I am now on the improv team and I have been in three shows. Without the improv and acting I did in my three years at Peninsula, I do not think I would be able to do what I love now.

DANIEL MARCUS, '69

My first Peninsula School dramatic appearance (other than playing our beloved woodshop teacher, Izzy, with a paper mustache glued to my lip when I was 6) was in 1965 in Magda's 4th grade class where I wrote, starred in and directed (in other words, made it up as I went along) a one-man "Cinderella." Later that day, the 8th grade taped a cardboard star on our classroom door and I was doomed for life. I envied kids from earlier years when Peninsula used to perform Gilbert and Sullivan, which was (and still is) my first love. Performance while I was there wasn't about putting on plays; it was about folk songs at school fairs and at campfires on trips to Yosemite; it was about sing-a-longs led by one class for the whole school; it was about Pete Seeger coming to class and singing songs about war and workers; it was about playing the recorder at school concerts. My first real experiences of performing at Peninsula were these types of experiences – communal and inclusive – where the kids onstage and the kids in the audience were all one group of kids. That was a gift that continues to give because as I get older, I am more and more certain that what I do isn't about a division between Artists and Civilians but about the union of storytellers and listeners. Without tellers we hear only silence and without the listeners we are talking only to ourselves. The arts, like life, really are just one big Peninsula School community sing-a-long.

CARTER BURR-KIRVEN, '10

I am a very dramatic person. Merrill and the Peninsula drama program definitely provided a fun outlet for me to express that side of my personality. To me, one of the most important things about our Peninsula performances was that we did them as a class, with the kids driving the production – everything from selecting the play to building the sets. For 2-3 weeks, we would set aside everything else and focus only on the play, which allowed us to give our very best and produce amazing performances in a short period of time. In high school, I've had a very different experience. While I still enjoy and am very active in drama, the teachers now manage most aspects of the production – it seems very rigid and structured compared to Peninsula. I appreciate all the freedom we were given at Peninsula – we were able to channel that into our performance and really have fun on stage.

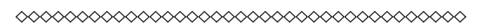


Carter Burr-Kirven (pictured standing) in his high school production of Shakespeare's Twelfth Night, 2011.

ZACHARY APPELMAN, '99

Last night we did our two-hundredth performance of "War Horse on Broadway." As I sat in my dressing room after the show, wiping away a thick layer of make-up, cold cream, and sweat from my smiling face, I had one of those "how-on-earth-did-I-get-here?" moments. As I sat there, with an ice-pack on my knee and the post-show adrenaline gradually giving way to post-show exhaustion, I found myself thinking back to Peninsula. I thought back to the production of "Hamlet" we did in "Summer Fun and Games" with Bobbie. I remembered how proud our 8th grade class was when we made our magnificent jungle backdrop for "Treasure Island." And I thought about the plays we wrote, the skits we threw together on camping trips, and the numerous other theatrical opportunities Peninsula gave us. More than any

particular play, however, I thought about the *verb* "play," the actual act of playing. It is something that children do naturally and freely, with beautiful, loud, imaginative abandon. In far too many educational environments, the instinct to play is tragically discouraged, but not at Peninsula. We played in the clay room as we sculpted monsters and spaceships. We played in the music room and instantly became rock stars! We played as we learned our times tables and long division. We played all across the campus as jungle gyms became castles, puddles became oceans, trees became skyscrapers, and around every corner was the opportunity for discovery and surprise. We played, and we *learned* by playing. We discovered that they were essentially the same thing, learned to love them both. Tonight, my 34 cast-mates and I are going to *play*, and we are going to invite over a thousand audience members, many of whom have not played in a very long time, to play *with* us. I'm pretty confident we will all learn something.



In the words of William Shakespeare, "All the world's a stage." And nobody seems to know this better than our own Peninsula students. Whether they are decorating sets, composing their own music, or performing beneath the auditorium lights, the lessons they learn through the performing arts program are lessons that stay with them long after their final bow is taken and long after the final curtain is drawn. In learning to act – both on and off stage – with passion and joy, with courage and conviction, with an unyielding respect for themselves and others, and with a commitment to never forget the importance of play, Peninsula alumni take the stage of life by storm, always looking for that special place to contribute and to shine.

*If you'd like to help Peninsula students embrace the wonder of "play" this year, we invite you to use the enclosed remittance envelope to make a gift to our Annual Giving Campaign. Annual Giving allows Peninsula to keep tuition affordable for as many families as possible and to provide financial aid for those who otherwise could not afford to attend. Thank you for helping to ensure that every child has an equal opportunity to attend Peninsula School, and to uncover the shining star within.*

## A YEAR OF REUNIONS

*Continued from page 1*

time for planning, and take time off work to make these events successful.

I write this not only as a bystander, but as a member of one of the reunions, 25 years after graduating with the Class of '86! Certainly these were a time to reconnect with the school and rekindle friendships, but as alumna Summer Pierre reflected, "Reunions aren't so much to pick up where you left off as students (although it can be that), but more about knitting the past to where you all are now. It is a chance to know your former classmates as adults and form and further friendships that may or may not have existed as children." These reunions were a chance to meet remarkable and kind people, with interesting lives, with whom you happened to have shared a childhood history. They were also a chance to reminisce about Peninsula and nourish that flame for our childhood haunt.

We all remembered Peninsula fondly, though we had different areas of focus for that love and therefore individual desires in visiting the school. For some, it was to see a certain classroom, for others, to sit on the front steps with old friends. Some wanted to edge the Big Building, still others just wanted to see what had changed and what was the same. Many of us in the older sets loved seeing our children mingle with the children of our classmates, and see them delight and discover the joys of this amazing childhood wonderland that is the Peninsula campus.

Kate Carroll from the Class of 2001 expressed, "The years right out of college have been exhilarating and wonderful, but also challenging, tiring and at times uncertain. I think the hardest task for a 20-something is to define what makes a home and to create one for ourselves wherever we may be. My Peninsula reunion this year provided such a welcome opportunity to reminisce with friends about our childhoods and growing up at Peninsula. The shared delight of our class at getting to catch up on the last ten years reminded me that Peninsula will always be home, and will always welcome us back with open arms. To all my dear classmates and teachers, thank you!"

It is interesting to note that these reunions are not the same for everyone. Some former students have kept in touch, and this

is just one of many encounters through the years. Other friends and classmates, after graduation, and especially after high school, move far and wide and do not see each other. Several people at this year's reunions had not set eyes on each other since high school or even 8th grade graduation. It was amazing, in those cases, to meet the adults those kids in far off



*The 10th reunion of the Class of '01*

memories have become. It was an introduction to a fully formed person with a rich life, with whom you have the amazing foundation of a shared childhood... a few years spent together growing and dreaming, climbing and reading, experimenting and learning, and of course, laughing. Either way, it is invigorating to see each other, because each person is in the midst of living his/her own life, and the stories we have to share with one another are helpful, interesting, sad, thrilling, and inspiring. The joys of a Peninsula education stick with each of us in our own way. We each carry forward the lessons learned uniquely, though common threads I have found are caring, kindness and understanding, which adults who were Peninsula kids tend to have in spades. We gained a bond here that is hard to explain, but it is not just the bond that makes the meeting at reunions special, it is also the individuals our alumni have become since graduation.

Like any type of reunion, these had the potential to be emotional and intense events. They were full of laughs, affection, nervous encounters with childhood adversaries, debates, confessions, news of classmates who have passed on, tears, introductions to significant others and kiddos, true listening ears, inspiration in hearing accomplishments, reconnections and budding new friendships... all the things that Friday morning meetings in Upper School lofts prepared us for.

Whether meeting at a classmate's home, at the Spring Learning Fair, at a restaurant for dinner followed by a night on the town, or an overnight in the Gallery, these reunions were a priceless opportunity to catch up and move into deeper friendships. We met our classmates and bonded with Peninsula School and our experiences here all over again. We were nostalgic, in the moment, and even forward thinking. I hear a class camping trip, including families, is already in the works, as well as many other plans to continue meeting for alumni from these four classes. I would encourage any of you reading this to consider your class, and think up the reunion that best suits your group. The school is happy to help and will particularly support the 10th, 25th, and 50th reunions of your class!

## KATY

*Continued from page 1*

"Fool on the Hill" emerged. Everyone jumped to their feet in applause.

It is hard to know when something that happens might actually change the world. That night in Peninsula's auditorium, the Homebrew Club was electrified, and today we know that many people at the meeting later had magnificent accomplishments, which impact our lives every day.

The Fall Parent Meeting is another important event that occurred in the same auditorium. While it may not change the world, it will shape the way Peninsula operates in the future. By addressing Mission, Communication, and Governance, the Strategic Plan for 2012-2015 will help strengthen the school's foundation and help us grow in ways that are consistent with the school's legacy and values. Though without a standing ovation at the meeting, there was a sense of positive anticipation for the school's vibrant future.

As is generally the case in education, we never know at what moment students might learn something that will enable them to contribute to the world in a positive fashion. At Peninsula, it seems as if this potential might be higher; we have heard so many success stories from our graduates. If you have a story to share with us, give us a call or stop by and visit. We love to hear from our alumni.

## WE WELCOME NEW STAFF

by Abby Chen

### KHEATON SCOTT

Kheaton Scott, our new P.E. teacher, was first spotted by a Peninsula family at the Y in East Palo Alto when he was coaching a youth basketball team in which a couple of our kids participated. Speculating a sure fit, the family introduced Peninsula School to him when the P.E. position became available. Later, kids from the class to which Kheaton gave a demo lesson likewise endorsed him by launching a “Vote for Kheaton 2011” campaign.

Kheaton was well traveled during his formative years. In between his birthplace, Harrisburg Pennsylvania, and Palo Alto, where he attended high school, his family had also lived in Maryland, Connecticut, Japan, and Texas.

After Paly, he moved to D.C. in order to attend Howard University, a college historically for African American students. Come sophomore year when he was grappling intently for an academic major, he found himself awakened by the raging debate inspired or incensed by Michelle Rhee, chancellor of D.C. public schools (2007-2010), as she initiated education reform around the city. Inspired, he arranged a meeting with the School of Education faculty and, in the spring semester, transferred into the Department of Human Development and Psychoeducational Studies where he found an intellectual focus and felt a sense of belonging.

Before long, he ran for the student council, and for the next two years helped steer its direction as a non-profit charitable organization. For instance, the council partnered with Heart of America in a number of school library makeovers (READesign) around the country. He and fellow council members traveled out of state to schools in need on week-long assignments renovating libraries, which would receive fresh paint on the walls, new shelves and furniture, artwork for decoration, technology upgrades, greatly expanded book collections, as well as free books for children to have and read at home. Additionally, they lent a hand locally to Sunday Suppers, D.C.’s own citizen-founded program since 1990.



Kheaton Scott

Part of the student council’s budget was slotted for groceries, which they would purchase in big loads on Saturday night. The next day, they would serve sit-down meals at designated street sidewalk locations.

Kheaton’s propensity is to stay involved and reach out. It propelled him to facilitate an AIDS Walk fundraiser as the vice president of the student council in his senior year, to join the Alzheimer’s Walk in San Francisco this fall, to remain current with Heart of America’s on-going library renovation projects, to attend the school’s Fall Parent Meeting, and to continue coaching youth sports at the Y. As those of our students who once campaigned on his behalf would likely say, “Go Kheaton!”

### SEYON VERDTZABELLA

Joining Megan Hart as a co-head teacher in Nursery Blue this year is Seyon Verdtzabella. While he was an undergraduate at Stanford, a developmental psychology class led him to the Bing Nursery School for three months of observation, copious note-taking, and an objectively-as-could-be-formulated written account of what he saw. There he developed a real appreciation for how much children know and can do.

After college, he joined the staff at Bing, first as an assistant, then a teacher, for a total of

14 years. All this time, aside from working with young children, Seyon committed himself to continuing education. This began with regularly taking early childhood development courses, later making two visits to Reggio Emilia, Italy (2004, 2007), and culminating in a Master’s degree from Capella University (2010). He maintains connections with other Reggio-inspired educators from the Bay Area by participating in the Innovative Teacher Project Roundtables. Through the

founding of “Project: Clarity,” a learning community for educators concerned with bringing vision to practice, he hopes to promote dialogue and exchange of ideas beyond geographical constraint. In over a decade, a



Seyon Verdtzabella

sustained desire to learn and grow professionally has transformed him from a serious student to a leader of resources from within and without.

The core of Seyon’s thinking about education revolves around the ideas of “Constructivism,” “Documentation,” and leadership. Constructivism (Dewey, Piaget, Vygotsky, et al.) relates the belief that a person, especially a child, builds understanding

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NEW STAFF

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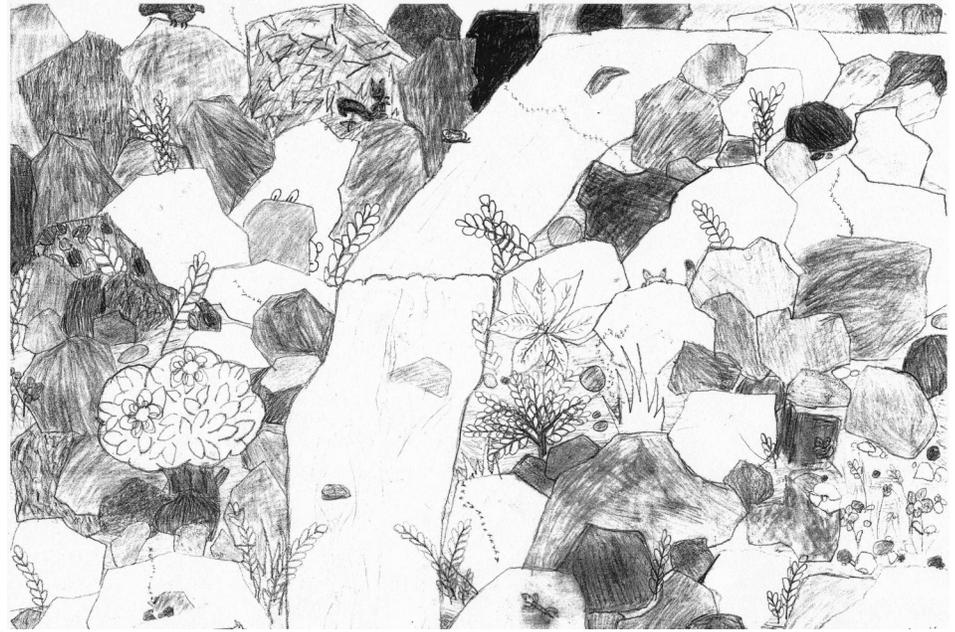
and knowledge in his/her own mind through active, hands-on engagement with materials in a social context. Documentation is a key tool in the Reggio approach for studying children's learning processes. In the case of a nursery program, it aims at making the education as explicit and visible as the caring, so that it invites reflections, encourages interactions, and consequently renders the details of a program alive. Leadership grapples with the conceptual framework around which a nursery program is implemented to pave the foundation for advanced education. It is reflected through resource organization, articulation about the people, environment, materials, and curriculum activities in relation to philosophy, as well as sharing through outreach on a national and global level.

Seyon thinks not in terms of dichotomy but of duality. He believes it possible and necessary to bridge vision and practice. He values leadership grounded in teamwork and close collaboration with colleagues immediate and afar. He knows that quiet reflection is essential following a time of intense work with children. He considers the prospect of change not as negating what has been, but as a matter of living and breathing. He understands that it takes all the gritty daily details to materialize the intellectual construct of a program. He sees articulation of one's work not as a distraction or burden but rather enabling the work itself. He advocates Documentation as a means to substantive and inspiring communication, as it not only honors what has happened in a concrete fashion, but also shines light on the potential of what may continue to happen.

**MICHAEL FREDRICKSON**

Michael Fredrickson, a new assistant in Nursery Green, grew up on a 50-acre farm near Fairfield, Iowa. His dad owns and operates a business selling, installing, and maintaining wood-burning appliances, while keeping a full-time hobby in recreational farming.

Organic farming and healthy eating have been the family's way of life since his parents' move from the west coast to southeast Iowa over three decades ago. The family cultivates multiple gardens, grows grains, and raises cows, chickens, and at times horses and sheep. Michael was given a cow to take care of at age



*Drawing by a student in Roger's (the 4th grade).*

five or six. They grind their own grains for flour to bake bread. His parents frequently brought picnic lunch to school for the family to eat together.

Michael experienced and benefited from alternative routes to gaining knowledge early on. Noticing his ambivalence toward school during the 6th grade, his mom decided to have him homeschooled. For two years, he helped his dad build a traditional family house; they did everything themselves, barring concrete. Additionally, he began an apprenticeship with a computer consultant, learning to do installation, networking, one-on-one tutoring, and advising on equipment for clients of small to medium-size businesses. At sixteen years old, he started a computer consulting business, putting his skills to use while earning some pocket money.

After graduating top of his class from high school, he enrolled in the nearby Maharishi University of Management. Believing that the teachers are more important than the subject matter, he chose interdisciplinary studies so that he could pick classes taught by professors who are among the top in their fields. A number of self-directed courses allowed him to travel around the country and abroad to, among other places, Europe and South Asia.

After college, his interest in learning French and German led him on a three-year journey through part of Europe, financed primarily by working as an au pair. For a year

he lived with a family in Paris looking after four children ages four to eleven, and another year in Berlin with two little tikes, ages two and three. In the beginning of his search for employment, he passed through London, Rotterdam, Miltenberg, and took on a 100-mile hike around France.

A few years ago, what he planned as a brief visit with his grandmother in Palo Alto ushered in a new chapter for him. He ended up staying to keep his ailing grandmother company. In 2008, having met Chyerl Hoshida, a Nursery Green head teacher, at a French conversation group, he started substituting in the nursery classes and working in childcare. For three years prior to joining the regular nursery staff, he has been a reliable fixture at the school working with our very young students. Now, his new position enables him to maintain continuity of care and relationships with fellow teachers, kids, and their families.

**AKASH PANDEY**

Akash Pandey, our new 7th/8th grade assistant, was born in Cambridge, England, but soon moved with his family to the United States. He grew up in Santa Cruz, California and, earlier this year, graduated from UC Berkeley with a double major in Political Science and South Asian Studies.

Akash's interest in teaching seems to have sparked from his participation, first as a student and thrice more as a facilitator



*Akash Pandey*

over a period of two years, in a democratic education course offered by the Graduate School of Education at Cal. The course gave no letter grades, but began with a three-day camping retreat when the group worked together to create a system by which they hold one another responsible for attendance, class participation, community service projects, and team teaching assignments. Though overseen by a graduate teaching assistant, the class is led as a discussion-driven seminar by five facilitators.

A core component to this class is outreach, for which students design subject units serviceable to the local community. For example, Akash once presented the subject of dental hygiene for preschoolers at a nursery school. In the fall of 2009, he and two friends led workshops in music and public speaking at Youth Uprising, a community center in East Oakland designed to keep youth off the street through a diverse offering of arts programs, career training resources and more. In spring, 2010, he interned at a law firm in D.C., where he conducted research and wrote a paper about successes of the charter school movement in combating the achievement gap. During his senior year, he volunteered with Citizen Schools program in Oakland coaching a basketball team.

Akash was preparing to become a teacher through Oakland Teaching Fellows' preparation and placement program, which would allow him to teach and fulfill credentialing requirements simultaneously. Last summer, following graduation, he received training and began assisting in a preschool classroom

of kids with severe autism. When, on short notice, the program scaled down significantly due to lack of funding, Akash found Peninsula School. Being here, he quickly realized, is nothing like starting from scratch, but more akin to diving into a running river and easing into a vibrant flow of things in progress. He felt accepted straightaway as an able and active participant in the happenings around the 7th and 8th grade classrooms.

Akash recalls the blessings of growing up in a home filled with books, sharing many things (sports, chess, a pack of neighborhood kids) with his older brother, having theater throughout high school, and being surrounded by close friends and extended family whose diverse interests and accomplishments have long inspired him. Meanwhile, the future is a beckoning open slate, toward which he wishes to build himself an identity through hard work and excellence.

#### LOGAN ROSENBERG

Logan Rosenberg is the new assistant to Marcella in the 6th grade classroom. For the last three to four years, he has intuited and been edging towards precise imagery of himself residing at a homestead with handsome land for a garden, some chickens, pigs and goats, while professionally running an environmental education program and being in charge of staff training and development.

Life's calling, in Logan's case, seems to have sprung from his deep roots in rural Cecil County, Maryland, but the epiphany that revealed it arrived largely through his insistent and patient searching from within.

Logan grew up on 60 acres of field with farm, ponds and woods, in a close family of six – parents who are schoolteachers, a sister two years younger and grandparents living across the road. As a kid he loved natural science and reading, and felt at home with bugs, snakes and all that was present in his surroundings. He went to a small public liberal arts college, St. Mary's, in Maryland and majored in English and French. Having taken many creative writing classes offered, he once entertained becoming a writer, a poet.

Logan hated his first job after college in the office of a consulting firm. Quitting it after a year and a half, he paired up with his college roommate, moved to Maine in the depth of winter, and lived in a cabin without electricity or running water. He needed to clear his

head and find out what he wanted to do. Five months later, he left the cabin certain that he didn't wish to spend his life writing poems but would rather endeavor to learn and teach about nature.

When summer came, Logan joined the state's trails maintenance crew and worked with college students to clear trails that were wiped out by the winter snow. Experienced working at Boy Scouts summer camps throughout high school and college, he next worked for a year in Big Bear City, California, teaching 5th and 6th graders outdoor science at week-long residential camps. Mid-2009, he migrated north to work at the Hidden Villa summer camps, then further north to Portland, Oregon for a year assisting in a 5th-grade classroom. Meanwhile, he was preparing to begin graduate work in environmental education at Prescott College, Arizona, which offers a unique self-tailored



*Logan Rosenberg*

distance degree program that fits his work life. Last year's internship at Hidden Villa and this year at Peninsula School provided the context for his studies.

Logan connects with a place through learning and teaching about local ecology. Eating locally notwithstanding, he thinks in terms of "learning locally" by being there and following what's presented to him. Everyday, he takes a walk to his "sit spot" near the edge of Hidden Villa (where he currently lives) and stays for what time he has – to experience, observe, meet questions and, by the grace of nature, find answers.

## In Alumnae Parents' Words

COMING BACK TO PENINSULA two years ago felt like coming back home. The buildings did seem smaller, but the trees had grown. Since my son Michael's Nursery Blue head teachers were Megan Hart (who'd been in my Peninsula class) and Jan Grisell (whose son had been one year ahead of me), it felt immediately just like family. On the few occasions when I've been able to stay with my son for a morning, I am both envious and nostalgic for all the activities I see him enjoying (swinging on ropes, edging the Big Building, going to the library...). I want to go back to the time when I was the student here!

But I'm not. I'm the parent, so now I get to see all the behind-the-scenes work that goes into making the wonderful environment that I used to take for granted. I do remember the parent involvement (it made a big impression on me when my non-sewing mom made pillows for our kindergarten classroom), but I hadn't

seen all the planning and thoughtfulness that goes into all the decisions that make up the Peninsula life. I have been so impressed with all the effort that is put into taking care of both the individual student and the class group as a whole.

My niece and nephew, Elizabeth in Melanie's and Daniel in Roger's, are several years ahead of Michael, so I'm always hearing stories about what he has in store for him – some traditions from my time (camping at Memorial Park), and some more recent additions (the Rock Concert). I'm looking forward to it all.

—NANCY ALLEN ('82)



*Nancy Allen and Holly Varian (Zuklie) coming out of Marion Conley's classroom (now Annie's), 1975.*

IT WASN'T UNTIL AFTER COLLEGE that I gained enough perspective to realize the extraordinary gift my parents gave me with a Peninsula education. Ten years of soft dirt under my toes, damp wind in my straggly hair as I swung out over a giant puddle on a thick rope, hours in the weaving room listening to the bang of the looms was all about friends, laughter and freedom. But with the distance of time, I realized that the true gift of Peninsula is the acceptance and celebration of each child. My teachers were genuinely interested in me and worked to draw out all the potential Holly in me. Rather than

molding me to meet a pre-existing standard, the teachers teased out my gifts, interests and quirks to enrich the fabric of Peninsula.

Now I'm a parent of two Peninsula kids and I marvel as I watch them each have their own unique Peninsula experience. They don't spend their days the same ways I did, although their feet are just as dirty. But they do feel accepted and loved and celebrated. There

is something timeless about the physical space at Peninsula that is enjoyed by every child who scales the Big Building, climbs up to the tree house, hides in a loft or settles into the library to hear a story. But we Peninsula kids also share the knowledge that our own individuality, creativity and talents help shape and enrich the communities in which we live and work. Teachers in schools the world over make indelible impacts in the lives of their students, but I believe Peninsula teachers, both past and present, make that impact even more profound by helping us define and honor our individuality.

—HOLLY ZUKLIE ('82)

## IN MEMORIAM

### Norina Miller

On August 16, 2011, Norina Miller, Class of '97, died peacefully at her family home from brain cancer, diagnosed in 2006. Norina is survived by her parents, Jeff ('70) and Terra, current Art teacher, Summer School Director and former Upper School teacher; her brother, Lee ('00), and sister-in-law, Ayla, former assistant in Garv's; her brothers, Cole ('03) and Dale ('05). After attending Peninsula and Menlo-Atherton High School, she graduated with a major in dance from San Francisco State, and since 2010 had been working on a teaching credential and Master's in Education at Mills College. Norina came to Peninsula at the age of five and continued to be a vibrant member of our community throughout her life. As a



student, Norina could often be found at the top of a tall tree reveling in Peninsula's magical outdoors, or in Art or Clay where she was uncommonly prolific and joyful. She shared her gifts as an adult by teaching in Gail's, in Childcare, and in Summer

School. Norina was deeply committed to improving the lives of children. She volunteered as a tutor, dance and drama teacher, and bilingual classroom assistant with children in San Francisco, Oakland, East Menlo Park, and in a village school in Maharathastra, India. Throughout Norina's 28 years she touched many lives and inspired others with her artistry, activism, and her spiritual devotion to Avatar Meher Baba. She will be remembered for her intelligence, grace, humor, integrity and compassion; as a gifted teacher, artist and dancer, and beloved member of the Peninsula Community.

**Rachel Lawrence**

Rachel Lawrence, Class of '90, died unexpectedly from a heart condition on July 2, 2011, at the age of 35. She had lost her son to cancer two years before, but is survived by her parents, three sisters, including Judy Lawrence ('86), one brother, as well as a community of dear friends. She is remembered for her keen intelligence, and fierce and brave strength as a mother. Remarkable was her drive to show her son by example that a college degree was important. When she realized she expected him to attend college, she went back to school herself and was accepted to UC Berkeley. She was receiving high honors in her major of Anthropology until her son Louis was found to have a rare cancerous brain tumor. At that point she stopped school to focus on him. The next five years were an ebb and flow of recovery and recurrence. They housed happy moments, friends, and trips, and she loved him dearly throughout. He succumbed to cancer at age thirteen. Rachel was a private person, who did not waste words. She once said, "think of what you want to say and then cut that in half. Then cut it in half again." She loved reading, was an intent listener, and one of her best friends and fellow Peninsula classmates, Paige McKerral-Burnett, said that she was an astute observer of character and gave great advice. Her well attended memorial on July 9, 2011, just a week after her death, showed how much she had impacted the lives she touched and how much she was loved.



**Magda Dennert**

Magda, Peninsula teacher from 1964 through 1981, died peacefully without pain at age 79 on



Sunday, October 16, 2011, after a serious arrhythmia four days earlier. She first taught as a head teacher for 5th or 4th grade through 1970. Then Magda worked in the Junior High and helped create the Upper School system we still have today. Many Peninsula alumni will remember her focus on excellence in learning, and her strong yet caring manner. Those who worked with her remember she laughed a great deal and was very supportive. Math and math puzzles always interested her. Astute and critical reading to understand an author's message was an important skill she wanted to pass on to her students. She became very interested in leatherworking and left Peninsula to pursue it full-time in 1981. She worked at Palo Alto's Artifactory for many years, selling her leatherwork with many other local artisans. She had a passionate commitment to love and protect our companion animals. She is survived by her partner, Mary Alvord, with whom she traveled around the country and abroad and passed many happy years. She will be greatly missed.

**Terry Fieldhouse**

Terry, Peninsula's 5th/6th grade teacher from 1966 to 1969, passed away on June 5, 2010 at his home in Nevada City, California. He was 81. Terry developed an interest in forestry early on. His skills as a smokejumper helped pay his way through college. His expertise later led him to advisory and managerial work in the Dominican Republic, Alaska, Washington, and his native California. In his prime, he gave two decades to teaching and, during this period, earned a Master's degree in Education from Stanford. In his mid-fifties, he participated in a spiritual commune in Oregon for three years, followed by two years of service with the Peace Corps in Honduras. He was closely involved with the Quaker community and its progressive causes. Terry will be remembered for his sense of humor, kindness, wit, and his lifelong search for spiritual fulfillment and social justice.



**Helen Webster Feeley Wheelwright**

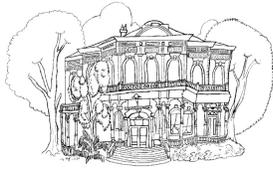
Helen, Class of '29 and one of the very first students at Peninsula, died on August 22, 2011 in Carmel, California. She was 96. Helen's mother, Anna Cutler Woodman Webster, helped found the school and taught Art from 1925 to 1934. Two of her siblings, David ('31) and Cutler ('34), also graduated from Peninsula. After the 8th grade, Helen stayed on for two more years participating, along with three other pupils, in an experimental high school program established by Josephine Duveneck. She graduated from Bennington College in Vermont. This portrait of Helen was taken in her summer house in North Bennington, Vermont. She is standing in front of a painting she did when she lived on a cattle ranch in Nevada.



**Pamela Proctor Westerfeld**

On June 8, 2011, in the midst of a four-month road trip from South Carolina to Alaska, former teacher Lloyd Westerfeld visited the school and related that his late wife, Pam, had died on January 7, 2003 at their home in Desoto, Texas. Pam was the school's enrollment secretary from 1966 to 1967, while Lloyd taught the 7th/8th grade. In between 1965 and 1967, her three children attended Peninsula: Wendy ('72), Jackie ('75), and Scott ('76). Scott is an author of young adult science fiction, known for his *Uglies* series, among many other books.





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## UPPER SCHOOL STAFF TRANSITIONS

THIS YEAR, SOME OF THE UPPER SCHOOL staff have assumed different posts within the program.

Rebecca Reynolds, Peninsula's 5th grade teacher for the last thirteen years, became the swing teacher, a position she occupied three times before. This fall, in addition to working with Jerry Hearn, who retires in December, to facilitate the graduating class' transition into high school, she has been mentoring her successor in the 5th grade classroom.

Scott McCracken, who came to Peninsula School in the fall of 2010 as the 7th/8th grade assistant, took the 5th grade head-teaching baton. Assisting Scott this year is Livy Siegel ('01), who was the 6th grade assistant last year.

Upon joining the Upper School team in 2005, Marcella Ramirez ('94) assisted David Garvin in his 6th grade classroom for a year, followed by two years as a swing teacher and three years teaching the 8th grade until spring 2011. She began teaching the 6th grade this fall.

Brian Adams ('00) returned to Peninsula to join the teaching staff in 2008. For two years he was the 7th/8th grade assistant; last year he succeeded David Garvin in the 6th grade classroom; he now teaches the 8th grade.



*Come join us for the  
Peninsula School*

## Spring Fair

*Save the Date*

**MAY 6, 2012**

*11am to 5pm*

Please contact Andromeda at [andromeda@peninsulaschool.org](mailto:andromeda@peninsulaschool.org) if you would like additional copies of News Notes, or want to add someone to the mailing list. If for any reason you would like to be removed from our mailing list, let us know and we will discontinue future mailings to you. Please contact Abby at [abby@peninsulaschool.org](mailto:abby@peninsulaschool.org) for more information about any of the articles.

EDITOR: ABBY CHEN • WRITERS: ABBY CHEN, ANDROMEDA GARCELON, HOLLY ZUKLIE, KATY DALGLEISH, NANCY ALLEN, STACY DRYER, AND CONTRIBUTING ALUMNI • PHOTOS: ABBY CHEN, ALICE NEWTON, ANDROMEDA GARCELON, COURTNEY DUHRING, NANCY ALLEN, SCOTT PYNE, AND PENINSULA SCHOOL ARCHIVES • LAYOUT DESIGN: MAX SPECTOR