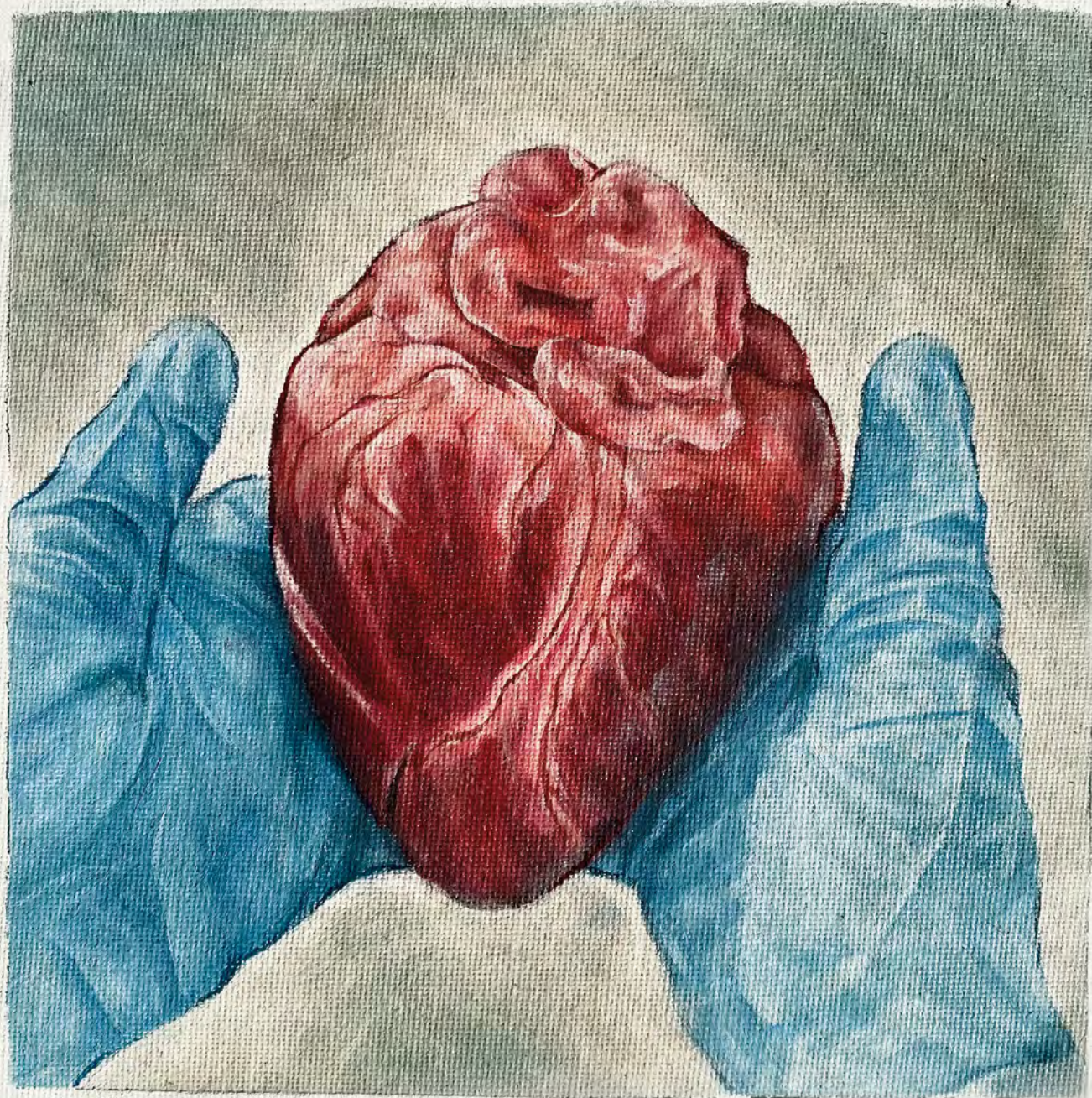


ISSUE NO. 148 / FALL 2024

# PUTNEY POST



TRUST & RESPONSIBILITY





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## TRUST

BY THOMAS R. SMITH

It's like so many other things in life  
to which you must say no or yes.  
So you take your car to the new mechanic.  
Sometimes the best thing to do is trust.

The package left with the disreputable-looking  
clerk, the check gulped by the night deposit,  
the envelope passed by dozens of strangers—  
all show up at their intended destinations.

The theft that could have happened doesn't.  
Wind finally gets where it was going  
through the snowy trees, and the river, even  
when frozen, arrives at the right place.

And sometimes you sense how faithfully your life  
is delivered, even though you can't read the address.

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In Memoriam



*Custodian in  
Winter, Vestal,  
New York,  
February 2021 by  
William Heller '79*

On the Cover: "Dissection," by Willa Sheehan '22



**DEAR READER,**

I am in the interesting (and terrifying and wonderful) position of being the mother to three young children—ages 7, 7, and 9—and the witness to about 230 teenagers every single day of my life in my staff role at The Putney School.

Last year, as the first Project Week approached, a freshman asked me about sponsoring his project creating explosives. Now, I will never know if he A. just didn't know the ropes, B. thought I was a science teacher and not the communications director, or C. just sensed I was the kind of doormat who would likely greenlight this kind of thing. I worry it's the latter.

I see my little kids who still invent imaginary games like "Rainy Day Marshmallows," I see who they are about to become, I see my own relationship to adolescence. I see it all through a kaleidoscope—all the beauty, all the fear, all at once.

The gift of being here, at Putney, now, is this message of trust and responsibility and its transformative properties. I read once: "The only way to make a man trustworthy is to trust him." This is possibly what Putney does best, and this lesson has been key to raising children I trust, who trust themselves, and who trust the world around them, even when it's not simple, straightforward, or easy.

Bright young faces  
abounded at Putney  
Reunion 2024. This is  
sweet Ripley, daughter  
and granddaughter of  
Putney alumnae.





However, the concept of trust, much like my parenting journey, is neither simple nor straightforward. It's a practice, a neurological/emotional state, a religious experience, an evolutionary fact. We asked alumni to grapple with the concept and its consequences from various vantage points: William Heller '79 investigated how we trust in our governments. Stephen Blackmer '74 and Sara Paasche-Orlow '84 looked through the perspective of faith. Jason Pina P'16, '24 explored it through the eyes of a parent and educator. Alison Frye tells the story of Peggy King Jorde '76, P'10, who has spent decades helping us take responsibility for our past through the preservation of burial grounds of enslaved Africans.

It was challenging to invest in this issue, because the thematic premise was an abstraction. I have gratitude and admiration for the writers and thinkers who stepped bravely towards it anyway, and who, in that process, made new ideas rather than simply reported stories. I love both, of course; and we need both. But the former is scarier, for sure. It requires trust between both the writer and the subject and, I'd argue, the ineffable.

Best wishes from the hill,

**DARRY MADDEN**  
*Publisher*





Faith &  
the Ties  
That Bind

# *Heaven* (NOT IN)

**Stephen Blackmer '74** took a deep breath. Paused.

"I'm going to speculate here. I'm going to go beyond the realm of what I can prove," he said.

The anthropologist turned ecologist turned radical Episcopal minister had just argued that trust was foundational to human society. But, stepping back—way back—he saw it as even more fundamental than that.

"Over 14 billion years of growing complexity of structure in the universe, from the primordial blast of energy to the formation of molecules, stars, galaxies. This increasing complexity of structure, I think, is in some ways connected to the trust required to form bonds."

The bonds he means are not social-emotional, the kinds we form with family, friends, lovers. He was referring to atomic, nuclear, and chemical bonds—the building blocks of all life and all ecosystems.

In his theory, trust is the essential ingredient to everything. The evolutionary trajectory has always led us towards trust—from the first molecular bond to present-day global financial markets—and is leading us ever onward toward ever more complex systems of relationship.

Trust in God is down—the breakdown of trust in religious institutions is not news. Have we simply placed that trust elsewhere? In science? In the cult of self? In popular culture? Perhaps, says Blackmer, though he believes it's more the latter than the former—science had its fifteen minutes, he said. But this is not sophisticated enough thinking. God—by any name—is only a piece of the puzzle.

"I think we're entering a time when a lot of things are shifting, and institutions that were very effective in getting us—for better and for worse—to where we are now, aren't necessarily well-equipped to get us to where we're heading," said Blackmer. "And we don't quite know where it is we're heading."

We are at a crossroads. Our personal and cultural sense of trust is unattached. It is not focused. But is Blackmer's evolutionary trust, the trust we cannot see, control, contain, or understand, operating, as always, at peak efficiency?

"Things have to fall apart before they can be made again," he said. "As long as the system is very stable, there's no room for something new. For new things to grow, old things have to allow new light in."

STORY BY **DARRY MADDEN**





**“As long as the system is very stable, there’s no room for something new. For new things to grow, old things have to allow new light in.”**

< < S T E P H E N B L A C K M E R

“There is so much about trust and responsibility in Jewish life and tradition,” said Rabbi **Sara Paasche-Orlow** ’84. “The Torah is full of language around ‘trust in God,’ and ‘fulfill these responsibilities.’”

And yet, Paasche-Orlow observed, a deeper continuity of trust was broken with the Holocaust.

“I worked with elders for a very long time—people who had faith in an individual God, but no longer did after the Holocaust. Jewish theology has been rebuilding trust ever since then,” she said.

Some of the work to rebuild that trust has found a beautiful landing place, according to Paasche-Orlow, in this assertion: there is a spark of God in every human being. God is not “heteronomous,” that is, external, a force, greater than ourselves, which, in its separateness, created or abided unspeakable betrayal.

Jewish practice in America is trying to find a more mystical understanding of God, one that is intrinsic versus extrinsic, as a response to this lack of control in the world at this earlier time, said Paasche.

“There is a deep level of trust to say that I will work my hardest and the world will get a little better. We know that that’s not always the case, that horrible things happen both to individuals and to whole peoples,” she said. “But that is where is where the deeper level of faith comes in. And that’s the closest we have to the right answer.”

But here’s how it circles back, almost perfectly, to those ancient ideas about trust and responsibility: God is no longer in heaven. God is what we build here on earth, as she sees it. “The message from God is, *this is on us*.” ■

**“God is no longer in heaven.  
God is what we build here on  
earth. The message from God  
is—this is on us.”**

S A R A P A A S C H E - O R L O W



# DOING THE WORK

## LAND, COMMUNITY, AND LEARNING

STORY BY ALISON FRYE • AERIAL PHOTOS BY MAX RANDALL '25

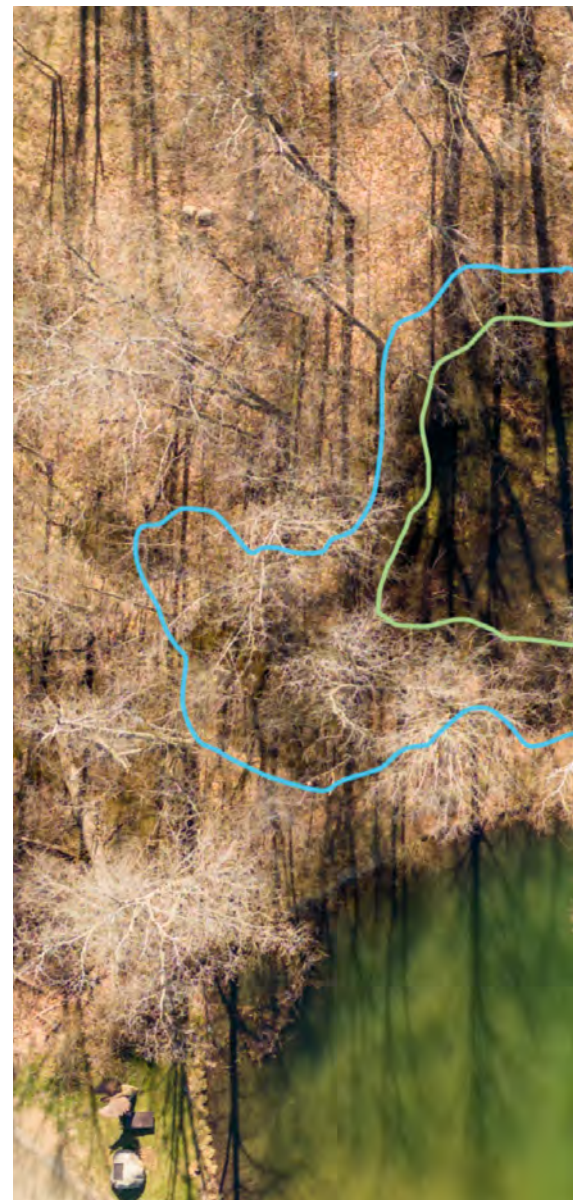
Nestled in the hidden corners of the Putney campus are spaces with stories. A student project dreamed up and carried out, possibly maintained, possibly neglected and reclaimed by Mother Nature. If you open your eyes and ears, these spaces whisper their stories and echo the eager visions of generations: a natural dye garden, a forgotten perch in a tree, a sculpture in the woods.

Putney is made of moments of quiet attention and care, of the landscape and of the students. Sometimes a story, like this one, is simply a happy one. Sure, there is an adversary (nature and her invasive species), but at its heart, this is a story of learning at its best: vision, collaboration, care, persistence, dreaming, and hard work. Decades upon decades of Putney alumni can tell a story that is a gripping combination of those assets.

For Cam Cox '24, her just-over-two-years time at Putney offered a chance to dive deep into her passions. In return for the trust the school put in her educational vision, Cam took responsibility for reclaiming a beloved space and for the species that call it home.

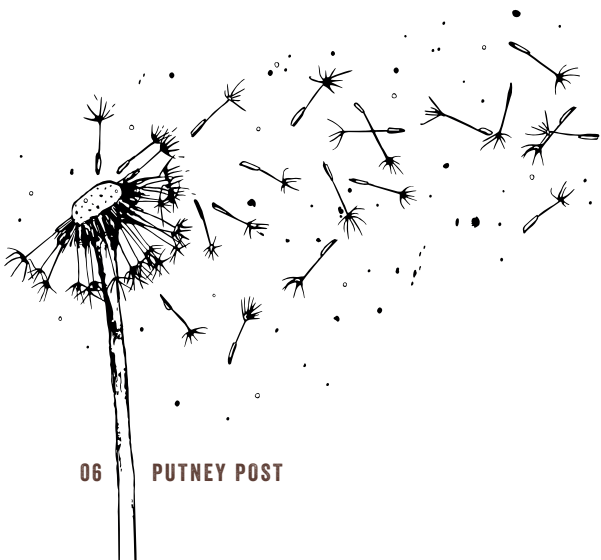
### YOU ARE INVITED INTO ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION .

The area around the puddle at Putney offers abundant opportunities for hands-on teaching and learning. Fish. Plants. Amphibians. Birds. Flowers. Trees. Wildlife. But habitats



can change in just a few years. “Invasive species can take over and cause extinctions of native plants and animals. Native species have to out-compete something they’ve never seen,” says Cam, whose work transformed the Puddle (specifically, its surrounding area) from an impassable tangle 15-feet thick with invasives into a hub of student-led learning, relaxation, and reflection.

Science teacher Dawn Zweig frequently walks the campus with students, pointing out invasives, the native species struggling to survive in their presence, and their potential and actual harm to biodiversity. Year after year, her students tackle tasks that are, by every definition, tough. The work is muddy, thorny, messy, buggy, smelly, and scientifically sound. “This is real science,” says Dawn.







Upland

Deeper water

Wetland  
boundary

In Cam's ecology class, 11th grade fall (Cam's second semester at Putney), Dawn taught students to measure trees and identify invasives. "I have always been interested in the environment, and I learned to identify the invasives around me," said Cam. The spark was already there for Cam; Putney provided a place for it to grow. "My junior year, every time I walked by the puddle often, which was often, I noticed a new invasive species. It was terrible." She signed up for Independent Topics in Science and got to work. Cam organized a work day crew of students removing invasives, and started researching, designing, discarding, and refining data collection strategies. "I took baseline data, but it wasn't great. It was pretty superficial."

Clockwise from top, an aerial view of the Puddle and its wetland boundary, Cam and the construction of a teaching/observation platform, teacher Dawn Zweig clambered over trees and roots in mapping out transects, zoom view of forest measuring using a Cruz-All tool







**IN A WORLD FILLED WITH STORIES OF INDIFFERENT DISREGARD FOR OTHER PEOPLE, A WORLD IN WHICH YOU MIGHT SEE SOMEONE THROW A TAKEOUT FOOD BAG OUT OF THEIR CAR WINDOW ON THE HIGHWAY, CAM COX, AT AGE 18, HAS ALREADY SEEN A PROBLEM, WORKED HARD TO MAKE IT BETTER, AND IS THIRSTY FOR MORE .**

That changed in 12th grade with Cam's senior exhibition. Cam and Dawn crawled through the thick growth of buckthorn, multiflora rose, privet, winged euonymus, periwinkle, and dandelion. They hacked the invasives, flagged for chainsawing those too large to cut by hand, and hauled them all out. Cam guided a conservation crew that burned them before the seeds could transfer. Cam organized additional work days and engaged even more students in her work. She honed her leadership skills and brought the community into her project. Slowly, over the course of more than a year, and with

plenty of sweat and a good bit of fire, the space started to open.

Cam and Dawn then mapped out transects and created quadrats, an essential piece of ecological study. Cam studied how native species regenerate once invasives are removed by observing activity in the quadrats and recording her findings.

Spring ephemerals are fast to grow, and returned quickly once the invasives were removed. "A multiflora rose grows like an umbrella. They don't take up all of the ground, but they cover everything from the sun so nothing can grow underneath them.

## Eat Our Invasives!

An email from Cam Cox to the Putney community April 2024

### Garlic Mustard Pesto

(Makes about 1 cup)

**4 cups garlic mustard greens**

**½ cup toasted walnuts (some recipes use pine nuts)**

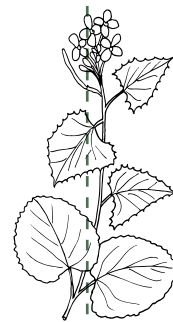
**½ cup finely grated Parmesan cheese**

**1 tablespoon lemon juice**

**Fine sea salt and freshly ground black pepper**

**½ cup extra-virgin olive oil**

Pulse the garlic mustard greens in a food processor with the walnuts, cheese, lemon juice, and ½ teaspoon each salt and pepper. Then, with the motor running, slowly pour the oil through the spout. Toss the pesto with pasta and a ¼ cup of pasta-cooking water, or spread, as is, on crusty bread. You can also add the leaves directly to salads to add a mild garlic flavor.



In an area 30'x10' was that was *completely* multiflora rose, we got it all out, and so many flowers grew there, jack-in-the-pulpit, trout lily, and dogwood sprouts. It was really beautiful."

Cam established the structure to collect long-term data about canopy trees, as well as the broader world of conservation ecology and amphibians. She performed soil tests and went canopy cruising, identifying and measuring large hickory, sugar maple, red oak, bigtooth aspen, staghorn sumac, regenerating white ash, and medium sized basswood. She planted aspen, silky dogwood, and witch hazel. Cam set up camera traps and pitfall traps to measure wildlife and amphibian activity.

Dawn lit up when asked about Cam's work. "We watched a place transform. You quite literally could not walk around the side of the puddle. It wasn't like that ten years ago." The project also had a potent unique-to-Putney element that involved collaboration of many different hubs, all pushed forward with Cam's bright persistence: Dawn's afternoon conservation crew, work days, and an academic challenge that deepened as it progressed, with many layers that led from a class, to independent work, to project weeks, to a senior



The finished platform offers a quiet place to relax and is large enough for a class to use together.



exhibition, and back around to a final project week. And, importantly, the project exhibits Dawn's trust in Cam—and Putney's trust in students—to pull it all together.

### A VISION EXPANDED

It turns out that the puddle is a class two wetland. This came as a surprise to Cam, and she discovered this fact during her senior exhibition. The puddle and its surrounding area meet the qualifications of a class two wetland because it contains dense non-woody and woody vegetation, is adjacent to an open body of water, is more than 2,500 square feet, is a breeding habitat, and is the headwater for Mill Brook Stream. The water in the wetland rises and falls drastically when it rains.

Cam had been planning for a whole different ecosystem when she started her exhibition. With this knowledge, she shifted her study to be relevant to that specific site, and collaborated with Putney-area conversationalists to learn about wetlands and invasives.

Cam's work aligned with other students', specifically Finn Stephenson Ryan '25, who

was studying fish populations in the puddle\*, and Phoebe Bates '24, who was studying bird populations in the area. An idea was born. "This site is so cool and has so much biodiversity. It would be great to have it be an area for teachers to bring students, learn how to do data collection, and see a habitat. It's a cool space, central to campus, and easy to get to in a class block."

After Cam's work re-opened the space, people flocked to it. A hammock appeared. Cam re-discovered a meditation space on the far side of the puddle built by Flannery McDonnell '14 as a senior exhibition ("Oh my god! What is this?!" said Cam when she discovered it). People were using the space. Cam was delighted, and wondered how to get more people to the puddle.

"Dawn and I came up with the idea of a boardwalk." After more than a year working on this space, Cam wanted to spend her final Putney Project Week building something useful and beautiful. But was it feasible? Cam talked to a few key adults ("Yes, possible. Figure out what kind of boardwalk to build."). With the help of people who knew

how to build things\*\*, and with fellow student Ben Orlinsky '25, they finalized a design and started to dig. "We wanted it big enough for a class to do observational data, but not so big that it covered the whole wetland." Levels and plumb and rocks and mud were their work, the sludge filling in the post holes as they dug, of course. And after a project week of dirty work, they finished, a day early, with a completed 8'x8' platform and a 3'x12' boardwalk. After which, in true Putney fashion, "Dawn and [her husband] Nathan drove us to get maple creemeees."

### LASTING IMPACT

"What do you want to see in 10 years when you come back?" I asked her. "I want people to use the space and continue to care for it. It's peaceful to listen to the frogs and the birds. I have enjoyed spending the last two years in that area. I could sit on that boardwalk for so long, looking in the water, watching the salamanders and frogs. It makes me happy. Students built a raft for the puddle last spring. People see it as a space with potential." Dawn and the student conservation crew will carry on Cam's work next year.

But it's more than that. Cam sees the world around her and wants to do something about the things that worry her. A California native, she has been scuba-certified since age ten, has completed a program on coral reef restoration, and is heading to college to study environmental science. She feels a pull toward marine biology and the ocean. "I've always been interested in the ocean. It needs a lot of help right now."

In a world filled with stories of indifferent disregard for other people, a world in which you might see someone throw a takeout food bag out of their car window on the highway, Cam Cox, at age 18, has already seen a problem, worked hard to make it better, and is thirsty for more. May we all emulate her open eyes, sense of responsibility for our surroundings, and optimistic understanding of our ability to make a difference.

Watch this space. We will hear from her again.■

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*\*A cautionary tale: our best guess is that about five years ago, a student put a couple of goldfish in the puddle at the end of the school year. The puddle's goldfish population is now around 450.*

*\*\*Special thanks to Chris Olsen, Nathan Zweig, and Bryce Jewel*



# A World That Does Not Yet Exist

Reflections from a Putney Parent

BY JASON B. PINA



*Jason Pina knows schools. In more than two decades of work at various universities, he has engaged in student life, diversity education, and the ever-complicated work of a dean of students. Currently Senior Vice President of University Life at New York University, he is also the parent of two Putney alumni. With his experience, he is uniquely poised to offer insight into what Putney can do for a student, and the impact of this education.*

My wife, Shai, and I told each other during Putney's June graduation weekend that this may be the last time we visited The Putney School. It was a sad realization that, after sending both of our children to Vermont for high school, our family's journey may be over. I was so wrong. Beyond our children's education and experiences, we received many gifts as parents, which continue to unfold as our children grow into adulthood.

As I sit on my 14th airplane since my son's Putney graduation, I have many thoughts about the future. My job takes me worldwide and exposes me to many cultures. Some of my summer travel experiences have made me prouder than ever to be a Putney parent. Let me share some of my observations.

## **Maturity of Thought**

I visited San Diego, Los Angeles, San Francisco, Seattle, and London in June to speak at NYU's summer sendoffs, events designed to bridge our incoming families' time between high school and university. These students are among the 8% of applicants admitted to NYU's Class of 2028. Two everyday observations during these events made me think of Putney.

It won't surprise you that these students were excited and anxious about their moves to New York City. What was missing from many of them was the Putney student's maturity of thought. I observed that confidence of self from my children, Kayla '16 and Myles '24, and many of their classmates. It's not that they have it all figured out, but they are open to new experiences with a sense



of direction and wonderment. A Putney education prepares young people to clarify and interrogate their goals today and tomorrow. Putney students consistently create paths that are true to themselves while staying open to new experiences and re-evaluation. (These are lessons that took me a very long time to develop.)

The second observation was about my son, Myles. He will be starting at NYU in the fall, and he joined me in California for two of these events. I watched with admiration as he connected with his future classmates and their parents. Time after time, Myles was asked about his academic plans. Repeatedly, he did not just state his major, he also shared the throughline from Putney's educational philosophy to his academic pursuits at NYU. Repeatedly, he did not just state his major, he also shared the throughline from Putney's educational philosophy to his academic pursuits at NYU, where he will join a university program that is intentionally interdisciplinary and self-designed. It was a testament to the lasting impact of a Putney education on a student's future success.





### A Sense of Hope

Additionally, in July, I traveled to Israel and Germany with some current NYU students. This trip was a culmination of an eight-month program where our students examined human extremism. It was highly emotional to be in Tel Aviv, Jerusalem, and especially the Gaza Envelope. To see firsthand what humans can do against each other was hard to process. Even in the desert of the Middle East, I couldn't help but think of Putney. Despite what I saw and the stories I heard, I left Israel with a sense of hope. The students I traveled with came from all over the world and had varying views on conflict, but an open mind to learning. Over the week, I observed analysis and complexity of thought that my Putney children exhibited as early teenagers. I am proud that Putney students will interrogate "facts" and develop their own beliefs. As time passes, I hope these young people are in positions of influence in their communities and the world.

The biggest misconceptions about earning a high school diploma in rural Vermont may be what is perceived as missing. The Putney School



Jason's children, Myles '24 (far left and inset below) and Kayla '16 (left, at her Putney graduation with dormhead Sarah Wiles)



cannot be all things to all families, but it beautifully does not try to be. During three or four years, students are asked to buy into a culture that prepares them for a world that does not exist yet. A world that they can create.

From a work program that imbues a strong sense of community responsibility, to the numerous ways students take the lead in constructing their academic journey, students learn skills many adults never grasp. At the end of my week in Germany, I hosted a dinner for our students where we shared appreciation for each other. Most students shared how much they felt "seen" and "heard" by the three leaders. What was meant as a compliment made me feel sad, as these feelings were unique and unexpected to them after three-plus years at NYU and 12-plus years in formalized education settings. In contrast, this "unique and surprising" experience is the norm at The Putney School.

I am amazed and grateful for Putney. As a higher education professional of over 30 years, I have seldom met students with the constellation of experiences and maturity of those at Putney. In many ways, their education is a counternarrative to trends that families worldwide accept. The Putney School is not only instructive for secondary education, but has a thing or two to teach higher education. I hope my colleagues and I achieve a portion of the successes seen in the KDU, Barn, and hallways of Putney every day. ■

Repeatedly, he did not just state his major, he also shared the throughline from Putney's educational philosophy to his academic pursuits at NYU. It was a testament to the lasting impact of a Putney education on a student's future success.



# (I GRIED HERE)

Alumni Bid a  
Fond Farewell  
to Old Boys Dorm







Even on a sunny June afternoon, the long, musty hallways of Old Boys dorm remain dark, with occasional swaths of sunshine filtering through an open dorm room door. At reunion 2024, alumni of all ages slowly paced down those long hallways. They quietly took the time to remember friends, some still living, some not. They shared stories with each other across decades, the space providing an immediate connection. Laughter abounded and a few tears flowed. With paint and markers, poetry and art, they said their goodbye. Farewell, Old Boys. You served us well.









# TRUST & GOVERNMENT

STORY AND PHOTOS BY WILLIAM HELLER '79

Is trust necessary for a functioning society? Do people have to trust one another to work together? How important is it that we trust the governing entities and organizations—courts, legislatures, executives and their enforcement arms—that structure and constrain how we go about our daily lives? If you're thinking "well, yeah, trust is key," you're not alone. But, in fact, we actually are better off if we don't trust each other. Before I get into why, let me first attempt to pin down what trust is.



For starters, "trust" can imply different expectations. I can trust someone because I believe that they will do what they say, but I also can trust that they will behave in predictable ways even if I would prefer that they behaved differently. I can trust a narcissist to behave as if no one else's needs or desires matter. I can confidently trust that toddlers will put things in their mouths that do not belong there. I can trust that certain people, in particular those I love and who love me, will at least try not to harm me. I can even, naively you might say, trust agents of the government to have some notion—their notion, probably not mine—of society's best interest in mind when they make policy. For present

purposes, let's say we "trust" agents whom we believe want to make us better off.

Trust or trustworthiness, then, is not a characteristic but rather a product of belief. And any belief that agents will act in our interests is based in our ability to reward them if they do or punish them if they don't. In a non-governmental example, 11th-century Maghribi traders leveraged their outsider status to build tight networks that allowed them to trade throughout the Mediterranean. Basically, members of the group would act as agents for each other; as no trader would take on an agent who had broken trust with another, information that would be widely shared within the Maghribi community, acting as a bad agent meant abandoning future employment opportunities. That ability and willingness to punish bad agents meant that the Maghribis could cultivate a collective reputation for dependability, which consequently made them sought-after trading partners (Greif 2006).

Consider a simple political system made up of citizens, legislators, and an executive branch. Under what circumstances should citizens trust politicians? In order for citizens to believe—and therefore trust—that government policy as implemented will reflect their wants, there has to be some connection between citizen wants and policy outcomes. This might occasionally be achieved by chance or, more consistently but less plausibly, by a wise and



benevolent ruler able somehow to discern what society wants. Or it can be baked into the system via a process that creates the linkage.

For such a process to work, there must first be a way to learn what society wants. This is problematic for many reasons, most importantly because what any group wants will depend on how, when, and by whom group preference is measured. Even starting with a single set of voters and candidates, for instance, there are good reasons to believe that different electoral systems, such as single-member district plurality, ranked choice, or some form of proportional rule, would yield different outcomes. Moreover, the choices offered to society depend on who gets to propose the alternatives, and in pretty much any case that matters, anything that some legislative or societal majority likes can be beaten by something else that some other majority prefers. That said, any means of discerning what people want is more informative and provides for better linkage than no means. Typical means of communicating collective preferences include elections, opinion surveys, legislative (and campaign) debates, demonstrations, and strikes. It is worth noting, finally, that repressive regimes suffer the opposite problem—where people fear the consequences of expressing opposition to government, rulers can have exaggerated beliefs about the depths of their support.

The second necessary condition is that collective preferences must influence legislation. In democracies, we count on incumbents' desire for reelection to make them pay attention to what we want. Evidence shows, as theory predicts, that politicians who are not worried about reelection (whether because they are retiring, term-limited, or in a safe district) or other repercussions from ignoring societal wants behave differently and more self-interestedly than those who anticipate credible electoral competition. (We are accustomed to believe that we cannot trust politicians, though evidence from around the world suggests that politicians and their parties try hard to carry out their promises. That they often do not succeed is more plausibly a consequence of political decision-making processes than politicians' lack of scruples.)

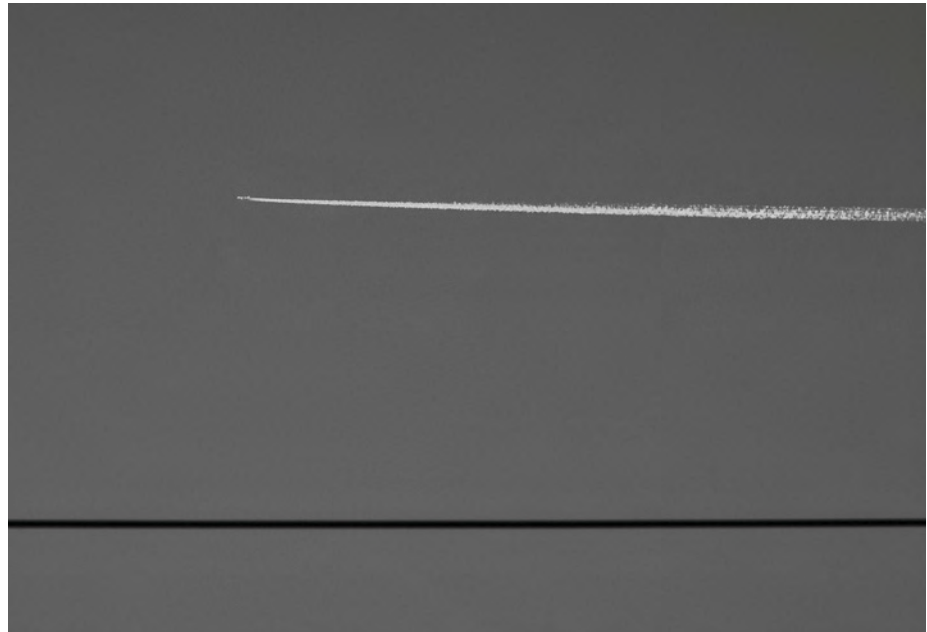


Functioning links between collective preferences and policy making only matter if the executive branch is constrained to follow the dictates of the legislature in transforming policy into outcomes. The usual solution, dating at least to 17th-century developments in Crown-Parliament relations in Britain (Cox 2016; North and Weingast 1989), is to separate the purse from the sword: the executive branch implements and enforces, but only when the legislative branch is willing to provide funding. This arrangement, reflected in U.S. “checks and balances,” means that the less the executive and legislative branches have in common the more each must restrain its more extreme impulses if it wants to get anything done at all.

Not all checks are alike. The U.S. Constitution builds checks into the process formally, with the several steps a

bill must pass to become a law controlled by different agents representing different constituencies. The process protects the status quo and those who benefit from it. In parliamentary systems, by contrast, formal checks are fewer but political considerations are more immediate: the ability of legislators to replace the executive (sometimes leading to new elections) means that leaders are well-advised to ensure that no majority finds itself wanting a change in leadership; and in multi-party systems, coalition parties can check each other because they all are needed to pass legislation. The differences go deeper, though. In presidential systems, with fixed terms in office and multiple veto powers, politicians can claim credit for blocking legislation in order to protect their constituents from their political antagonists. Exercising the veto is part of the job. In





## AND IF ANY OF THOSE CONSEQUENCES BREAKS DOWN THEN TRUST EVAPORATES, AT LEAST FOR ANYONE ON THE LOSING SIDE.

parliamentary systems, by contrast, the job of government—and parliament—is to make policy; officeholders who refuse to pass bills risk bringing down the government and possibly having to face voters who might want new laws and who almost certainly don't appreciate having to go to the polls too often. There is in parliamentary systems thus a stronger tendency toward active government than in the U.S. In either case, what we might call trust comes from the ability to keep bad things from happening. That is, we can expect that outcomes will be at least tolerable precisely when we or agents we believe represent our interests can block new initiatives; and that happens only when we don't trust either our agents or those whom we want them to check.

Trust is a slippery concept. We trust other people most when we believe

that they would pay a cost for breaking our trust. But that means we have to be able, and willing, to impose costs, which implies that trust is not really in play. Contracts are binding because they are legally enforceable. Campaign promises are meaningful because politicians seek reelection. Courts are seen as fair because we think that judges don't like to be overturned on appeal and so write measured opinions. If anything, we trust processes that provide for rewards and punishments, not people. And if any of those consequences breaks down—e.g., if contract enforcement or the appeals process is predictably biased, or if reelection is independent from behavior in office—then trust evaporates, at least for anyone on the losing side. ■

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# STORIES of BONES

Peggy King  
Jorde '76  
and the Work  
of Reparative  
Justice and  
Preservation



**Above:** Peggy King Jorde '76.  
**Opposite:** The Memorial Wall at the African Burial Ground National Monument

## Albany, Georgia and Putney, Vermont, 1950s–1980s

In mid-March 1988, Peggy King Jorde '76 began making good on a promise made to her father: that upon his death, she and brother Leland King '75 would build his coffin by hand. The two, who by then were both architecturally trained, sketched out a design, placed sawhorses on the undertaker's back porch, and attended to what can only be described as a labor of love. The result: a pine box handsomely made to cradle their father in his "crossing over."

"It was both personal and profound," Peggy recalls of fulfilling a duty to a man the world knew as the legendary civil rights attorney C.B. King. "His skills inside the courtroom served as a powerful weapon in defense of Blacks in South Georgia at the height of Jim Crow."

After his death, Peggy would begin following in her father's footsteps, advocating for Black people, defending their humanity in death and dedicating her life to preserving their final resting place—literally around the globe.

Years before crafting her father's coffin, Peggy's time at Putney made it clear she was no stranger to working with her hands. Arriving in the fall of '73, she joined Leland and other students in the construction of a new art building. She built costumes for stage productions at Lower Farm. She designed and crafted jewelry in the school's metalworking studio. And, like many students, she laid bricks for what was then the KDU's new patio.

Peggy headed to Bennington, where she studied architecture and costume design. Then to Columbia University's Graduate School of Architecture, Planning and Preservation. Her studies there led to an internship—and ultimately a job—in the Mayor's Office of Construction for the City of New York.

Much of her work in City Hall involved interior design projects. The mayor's private chambers, Gracie Mansion. The Metropolitan Museum of Art. PS 1 in Long Island City. But the discovery of an African burial ground in the middle of a bustling lower Manhattan city block would change the trajectory of her work and, indeed, her life—forever.

## Lower Manhattan, 2024

The African Burial Ground National Monument in lower Manhattan is a quiet space of reverence nestled near the busy Federal Plaza where the NY County Courthouse looms above Foley Square. You enter the monument by passing memorial burial mounds and walk through a massive sculpture of sleek stone into a circular outdoor sanctuary, with walkways descending along a curving memorial.

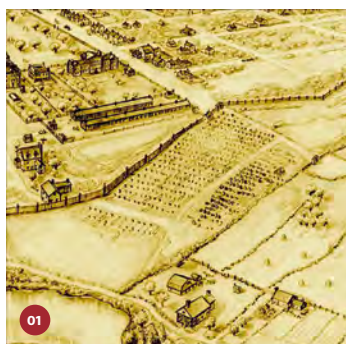
The burial mounds mark the re-interment sites of 419 African descendants who were unearthed when the burial ground was rediscovered in 1991.

The sleek, imposing sculpture, made of polished granite and called the Ancestral Chamber, soars 24 feet high, intentionally recalls the bow of a ship, and represents the Middle Passage across the Atlantic Ocean.

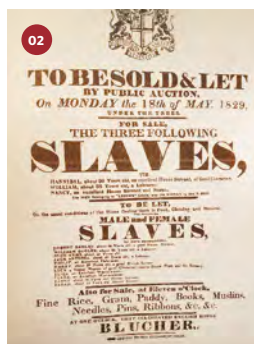
The circular memorial wall is inscribed with images and shapes from Africa, Latin America, and the Caribbean that represent the far reaches of the African Diaspora.

## HISTORICAL RECORD

The sites of Peggy's work include a grim history. For decades, she has made headlines and traveled the world telling these stories.



01



02



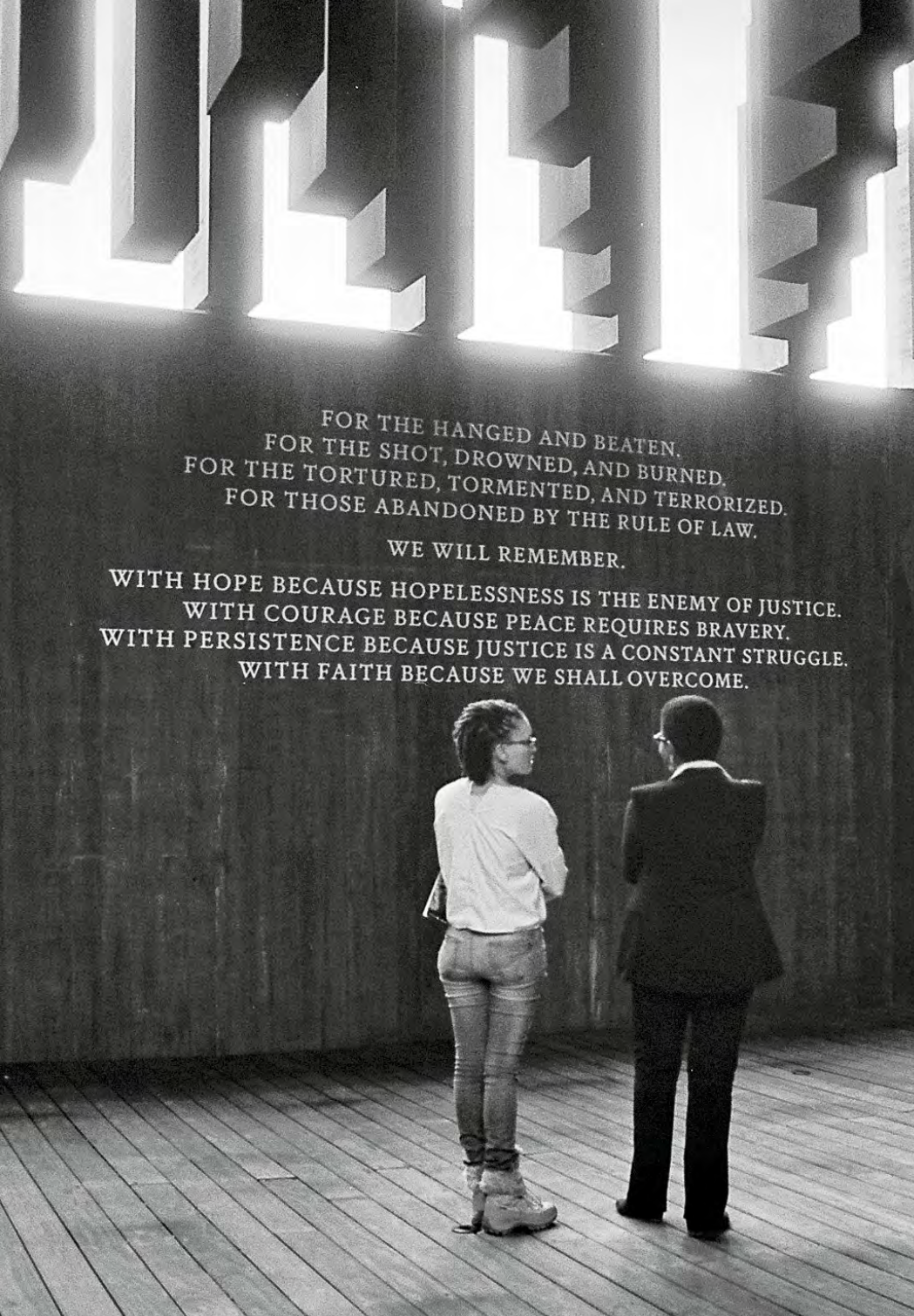
03

01. The "Negroes Burial Ground" near the Collect Pond, Manhattan (late 1700s map); Courtesy of Wikimedia Commons

02. Slaves sale notice, St. Helena 1829

03. St. Helena burial ground mapping and skeletons





And finally, after your circular descent, you find yourself standing on a map of the world, with West Africa at its center, and circular rays of light reaching to North American, Brazil, Europe, and the Caribbean. The sites of the Transatlantic Slave Trade.

Its hushed stillness is sacred and haunting.

#### Lower Manhattan, 1600s, 1700s, 1990s

In the early 1600s, Dutch settlers arrived in New York. Early maps (see below) of what is now Lower Manhattan show a burial ground where enslaved Africans were allowed to congregate and bury deceased members of their community in a ravine.

At the time, the city did not allow the burial of Africans, and the burial ground was located outside of the city limits. As the city grew and expanded southward, the city boundary shifted with it, and the development of streets and buildings in the early 1800s led to the filling of the ravine, which is estimated to have witnessed more than 20,000 burials.

In 1990, Peggy worked for then-mayor David Dinkins. Late-career civil servant Harry Wurster, a colleague from the Parks and Recreation Department, left Peggy a hand-written note asking her to have a brown-bag lunch with him. Wurster, a lover



04



05



06

04. Peggy's work on Manhattan's African Burial Ground made headlines in 1992

05. Mayor David Dinkins (center), Peggy King Jorde (Mayor's Liaison), and Howard Dodson (Chief, Schomburg Center) (front) are briefed on the excavation by Michael Parrington (Principal Archaeologist for HCI and John Milner Associates), 1992

06. Peggy stands on the site of the African Burial Ground Monument



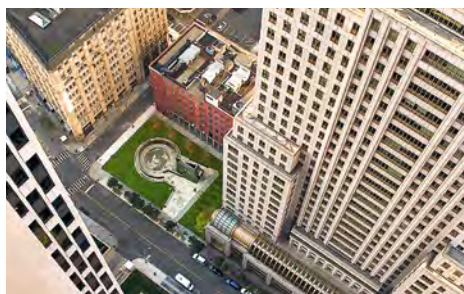


**Above:** Siblings Leland King '75, Peggy King Jorde '76, and Clennon King '78. **Top left:** Attorney C.B. King, left, with Martin Luther King, Jr. **Bottom left:** Aerial view of the African Burial Ground in Lower Manhattan

of old maps with many connections in the city offices, had received an environmental impact statement for a proposed federal building project two blocks north of City Hall. Wurster trusted Peggy to understand the importance of that statement's findings—the discovery of a burial ground of enslaved Africans—and to act on that discovery. Struck by the revelation, and moved by Harry's concern, Peggy considered Wurster's request to take the report directly to Mayor Dinkins.

Peggy debated how best to proceed, especially given the complex layers of city government and her relative newness to working there. Harry dropped by regularly to ask if she'd spoken to someone. This cycle repeated for a while, and in 1991, Peggy took action. She leaned on her connections through her work in the Mayor's Office of Construction to get people to listen and to act—to strategically draw attention to the site and its historical significance.

Peggy reflected on this time period in a recent interview with the New York



Preservation Archive Project: "A moment which made this preservation project personal was when Landmarks [Preservation Commission] invited me to take a walking tour at the site. I joined a group of city employees for a visit to the site under excavation [see timeline below]. We were met by ... one of the archaeologists. A question was raised, 'We understand that this was an African burial ground for enslaved people. What have you found or what can you tell us?' When the archaeologist answered, he clearly gave an answer that was intended to diminish significance." Peggy had heard whispers that the federal government had issued a gag order to archaeologists not to have that conversation. She felt his response was intended "to be a way of disappearing the people who may or may not be buried there."

The response signified something bigger than one archaeologist. It was further evidence of a pattern of ignoring forgotten,

buried histories. "He was rendering invisible the lives and the meaning of these people. And these people were *my* people."

"My work was about building. Here now I was faced with a site that had personal, cultural, and historical meaning to me. That launched me learning a lot politically, socially. The project ultimately set the bar for what meaningful *community* engagement means. The project set the bar for who should be leading projects that have difficult histories tied to marginalized communities. Who has the voice? Who gets to tell the story?" Peggy said in an interview for her 2024 Pillar of New York award.

With this work, Peggy made a name for herself, and her purpose came into focus. The journey from architectural training at Columbia to interior design work on Gracie Mansion to construction projects in the Mayor's office led her to the work that would define her career, and her life, going forward.

### St. Helena, South Atlantic Ocean, 2012

The island of St. Helena sits in the middle of the Atlantic Ocean, 1,200 miles west of Angola and 2,500 miles east of Brazil, four time zones ahead of New York, with a total area of about 50 volcanic square miles and a population under 5,000 people. (If you enter "St. Helena" into a Google Maps search, you have to hit "zoom out" seven times before a continent appears.) Best known as the site of Napoleon's exile and death, the small island, a British Overseas Territory, was a vital outpost during the Atlantic Slave Trade.

When the British outlawed slavery in 1833, the island became a strategic post for interrupting ships on the Middle Passage. The Royal Navy raided slave ships and offloaded enslaved Africans onto the island that sits a six-day's boat ride from South Africa. But arrival on the island was not a happy rescue,

## HISTORICAL RECORD



**07.** The completed African Burial Ground National Monument

**08.** Filming *A Story of Bones* on St. Helena

**09.** Peggy and Annina Van Neel



and thousands of Africans died of dehydration, dysentery, and other diseases. All enslaved Africans retrieved from the hulls of slave ships had to quarantine in St. Helena's Rupert's Valley. And thousands upon thousands of the people who died there were buried in unmarked graves.

*A Story of Bones*, a film that premiered at the 2022 Tribeca Film Festival and on PBS's *POV*, tells this story. The film is a call to action to the United Kingdom for restorative justice, and a film that asks us to think globally about the Transatlantic Slave Trade, the many countries active in its shameful history, and the importance of reclaiming and celebrating African burial grounds throughout the world. Director Joseph Curran put it this way: "The film is asking us to actively examine how we choose to remember our histories."

In 2012, Annina van Neel arrived on St. Helena's as part of the project team developing the island's first airport. Arriving by boat after the six-day journey from Cape Town, Annina described the island in a 2024 *Guardian* article as an oasis in a desert, and an enigma. During excavation and construction of the road that would lead to the new airport, crews uncovered a mass burial ground of formerly enslaved Africans. Annina knew well the standard logistics of the work ahead—the bureaucracy of environmental protection, cultural considerations, dust and noise reduction, waste management. She also knew about the bones; 325 human skeletons had been unearthed when the road was constructed four years earlier. But she was unprepared for the *impact* of the bones and the power of the stories they would uncover.

As construction continued and thousands of more bones were discovered, she wrote, "I found myself struggling to negotiate the relationship between my own identity, the

identity of those lying in the ground or in boxes, and the identity of an idyllic community whose own history is woven into a rich tapestry of colonialism, slavery and the slave trade."

Annina knew she could not do this alone. She needed support, and turned to the internet to see who, if anyone, could help her with this work. She found Peggy. Peggy and Annina connected online. For over a year, Peggy offered support and consultation through email and Skype calls, but Peggy also knew that the real work needed to be done in person, because the work is about communities. She joined the film as a consulting producer (and a key protagonist). "The bedrock of doing any kind of memorialization is the *community*. You have to build a groundswell of community support," Peggy said in a recent interview. She saw, and helped address, the fragmentation on St. Helena. Peggy met St. Helena's governor and asked her why the government wasn't taking action to build a memorial site. Peggy spoke to the community about New York's African Burial Ground. "Everyone [on St. Helena] knew there were remains," said Peggy, who is careful not to indict St. Helena's residents. "We know who the culprit is. All of the island's funding comes from London ... This is a burial ground that is upwards of 10,000 individuals." This is a global site. And Peggy wants the burial ground to receive the global attention support it deserves.

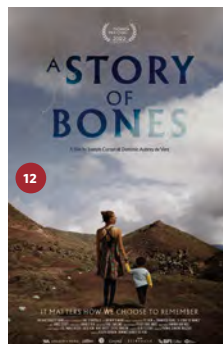
St. Helena's airport opened to commercial flights in 2017. The film crew for *A Story of Bones* has traveled the world promoting the movie and telling their story and they continue to advocate and to share their call for action on a global scale. They have spoken on radio and television, presented lectures, and appeared at film festivals around the world (Tribeca Film Festival, Movies That Matter, Berlin Film Festival, and many more).

Said Annina of Peggy, "It felt like connecting with a source that was created over generations to address exactly the situation that we found ourselves in, connected by our shared history." Said Peggy, "The film is the story of two women of color on opposite sides of the Atlantic who are trying to preserve and memorialize a burial ground in the South Atlantic the island of St. Helena." And, as Peggy says in the film, "You don't turn your back on something like this. It's immense."

Peggy was born to a lawyer father and a mother, Carol R. King, who left a teaching job to found the Head Start program. "A life of service was at the heart of their vocations; in fact, 'service' was at the heart of the community," said Peggy. A commitment to family and community have taken Peggy from Albany, Georgia, to Putney—which her daughter, Lena, attended, and for which Peggy spent fifteen years on the school's board of trustees—to New York, and now throughout the country and the world. But she was born in Georgia in the 1950s. "I will never lose sight of the fact that I was born into an American apartheid in the basement of a segregated hospital in Albany, Georgia," said Peggy.

Her work, and our reporting about it, requires us to listen and to consider the emotional depth and impact of these burial grounds. As Peggy supports descendant communities and fosters support for her work, we are all tasked with recognizing the significance of these sacred sites, and the historical and cultural trauma they hold.

*For all those who were lost  
For all those who were stolen  
For all those who were left behind  
For all those who were not forgotten\**



10. *The Story of Bones* film crew

11. Peggy with filmmakers Joseph Curran and Dominic Aubrey de Vere

12. *A Story of Bones*, movie poster

13. Peggy at the Movies that Matter festival, 2023

\*From the Ancestral Libation Chamber at the African Burial Ground Monument.



The Vermont Center  
for Ecostudies led a  
bird-banding project  
on campus last spring

# ON THE HILL





## LETTER FROM THE HEAD OF SCHOOL



I write this letter in the midst of a charged and consequential election season in America. Like many of you, I am often dismayed by what I see. Winning and self-interest seem more important than a better future. Many people ask how we got to this place, and how we can do better. I have Putney's Fundamental Beliefs framed behind my desk. Do they have some of the answers?

What would it look like if our politicians modeled Putney's Fundamental Beliefs? Would we have more trust in our politicians, our government, our society, *in each other*? Here's what I think:

- Candidates' speeches would care less about winning the news cycle and taking jabs at opponents, and more about helping us further understanding and knowledge.
- Politicians would inspire us to offer our energies to lending a hand in our communities, pushing us to combat our prejudices, to walk in the places of those who think differently than us, and to fight injustice.
- We would strive to be a country not marked by division and dissension, but by true comradeship and cooperation among people of all stripes, identities, and persuasions. Can you imagine what that would look like?
- Politicians would—in the final words of Putney's Fundamental Beliefs—lead us on “the long and slow road toward achieving a civilization worthy of the name.”

I think we can strive for this as a country, and we should demand our leaders do, too.

The Putney School, after all, is framed by these efforts. In everything we do, our responsibilities extend beyond

our own immediate interests. We value collective learning more than individual achievement. Importantly, we trust students. Yes, they keep animals alive on the farm, manage brunch stations in the KDU on Sunday mornings, and shape their own learning experiences. But they do more than this. At Putney, they learn to use their voice, and we try, especially in challenging times, to teach them to listen—to listen for understanding, rather than simply for a chance to respond and “win” the conversation.

Last spring, I attended an overflowing, impromptu School Council meeting in Barnes Assembly Hall on a Friday evening. It was a difficult stretch on campus for both students and adults, and I saw clearly that I was in the midst of a community who cares about their school and wants to lend a hand to make it better. There is little immediate self-reward in these efforts; what we are creating instead is more magical. Our students are taking responsibility for their community as much as themselves. We adults learn from them as much as they learn from us.

We need more of this in our world, and I am glad we have The Putney School to model the way.

You are reading this magazine because you also see—or experienced—this at Putney. Our collective belief in this place ensures these community values continue to thrive. Thank you for being the biggest catalyst of them all by seeking to embody these Fundamental Benefits in your own lives, and for carrying Putney with you into the world.

With warm wishes,  
**DANNY O'BRIEN**  
 Head of School





# Symphony Debut

Theoden Marvell-Brown '25 debuted his original composition, *Fourmile Symphony*, in May with the Keene Chamber Orchestra. Each of the four movements spoke to an aspect of Fourmile Creek, near Brown's home in Colorado. Thoden said, "Composing for the Keene Chamber Orchestra was buckets of fun. Because they played my symphony, I learned many things about how to effectively use orchestral textures. Since I play in KCO, I was able to learn from the players themselves about how to write for their specific instruments."

## BIRD BANDING

The people at the Vermont Center for Ecostudies handle, tag, and band birds with a gentle precision that quietly exhibits the expertise and care of their work. For the second year running, Putney students



had the opportunity to witness and assist the VCE with an on-campus bird tagging project. In addition to the addition of a Motus tower two years ago, Putney students helped tag bobolinks in 2023, and this year sought to capture and tag white-throated sparrows, whose populations are feared to be in sharp decline. After this year's successful tagging, students followed the bird's progress among the Motus towers throughout New England and North America. This collaboration offers an opportunity for hands on work mixed with a healthy dose of nature's magic.

## PUTNEY AND BOSTON COLLEGE COLLABORATE ON AI TOOL

*What is your purpose?* The answer requires a great deal of insight, of personal reflection, of setting intentions, questioning your choices, learning from failure, staying honest with yourself, setting goals, and following through. In other words, everything Putney students are taught to do.

Which is why the masterminds behind Lumi, a reflective intelligence co-pilot designed by Boston College researchers, choose to create a beta version of the AI tool specifically tailored to Putney's Project Week. The chatbot allows students to type in questions, and it responds with thought-provoking responses designed to clarify a path forward, and then constructs tangible tasks that will lead to achievement.

Co-Academic Dean and Director of Technology & Library Services Kevin Champney has been managing the program at Putney. During Project Week, he's found Lumi to be particularly successful at helping students think through a process and figure out a direction on their own, which can then be further refined in person — putting them miles ahead of where they would otherwise be.

"We have so much independent work that if a student can come to an adult and say, 'here's where I am,' it's more valuable than them coming to you and saying, 'I have no idea where to go right now.'" Champney said. "Lumi is really good at getting you to do that work quickly."

The creators are adamant that the technology is no substitute for traditional human-to-human counseling, but see it as a way to enable deeper and more critical thinking, and help people bring more meaning to their life. Putney, they hope, will serve as an example of how artificial intelligence can have a positive impact on the educational landscape, and on society as a whole.

**Learn more about Lumi:**  
[findmytruenorth.com/lumi-reflection](https://findmytruenorth.com/lumi-reflection)  
[findmytruenorth.com/lumi-intention](https://findmytruenorth.com/lumi-intention)

**LUMI FOR INTENTION**





# Goodbye, With Gratitude Hello, With Excitement

At the end of the last academic year, we said goodbye to John Barrengos P '18, '22, Putney's director of admission and financial aid for the last 11 years and a tremendous force and personality on campus.

Soon after, we welcomed Donnie Smith to the role. Smith came to us from Redwood Day School in Oakland, CA, where he led their admissions program, and many other schools before that.

The role is central to the success of any school. We spoke with both Barrengos and Smith about Putney's enrollment trajectory—the school that John inherited, the one he hands off to Donnie, and the school Donnie hopes to help build.

**John:** “When I started, I interviewed the faculty to get their sensibility about the kids we served well, the kids we served adequately, and the kids we didn't serve well. This helped my understanding of our identity and our value proposition. And it had not, to my view, been articulated all that clearly. As I was asking people, ‘what's the school about?’, I was hearing it's an art school from the kids who loved art; it's a farm school, and on and on. There were nine different versions of Putney. And what occurred to me through the conversations with the faculty was that it was, in fact, all those schools—but what was important to notice was not the separate identities, but the larger purpose served for students that all those identities supported.

“So whether you were on the farm or in a weaving studio or in an English classroom, or writing a book or orchestrating music or whatever it was that you were into, it all pointed toward inviting students to take up their authority as the primary authority—not the only—but the primary authority in their journey.”

**Donnie:** “My biggest task is to make sure that we're highly visible. Putney is probably the most unique educational program in the country. When I think about what Putney has to offer and where the world is headed, Putney offers the path forward.”

“Families are looking at particular kinds of schools because they already know them. Our job is to help people burst out of that bubble to say, ‘Oh, there are



John Barrengos (top) and Donnie Smith

other options that really fit where our child is and who we are as a family.”

“We offer a deep level of independence. This resonates for me as a skill one needs for life—not necessarily for college—but for life. The world is changing so rapidly.”

“A lot of schools are trying to be everything to everyone. Putney knows what it is—this is what we do, this is how we do it, we do it really well, and we want the world to know about it.”



# LEAVING A LEGACY



Charlie Young '74 and James Thomson '74 at their 50th reunion last June.

## CHARLIE YOUNG '74

“Leaving money to Putney in my estate plan was an easy decision. My four years there had such a profoundly positive impact on my life in so many ways. I want to help the school continue on long after I’m gone!”

## JAMES THOMPSON '74

“I chose to make Putney a part of my planned giving because I appreciate the impact the school has had on my life and wish to give back so the school can help others.”

**BEQUESTS** remain the most powerful way for alumni, parents, and friends to ensure that this educational experience endures. They are vital to our vision for the future of Putney and of progressive education at large.

We are happy to hear from you, answer any questions, or help with your planned giving. Email Director of Development Kalya Yannatos at [kyannatos@putneyschool.org](mailto:kyannatos@putneyschool.org), or call (802) 387-6248.





# ALUMNI CONNECTIONS



# REUNION 2024



☛ 1967 to 1969. **Front row:** Sophie Spurr, Jonathan Hillyer, Lucy Winner, Henry Isaacs. **Middle row:** Mark Gilford, Judi Forman, Sonia Kelley Reese, Nancy Segal, Carol Quigless, Frank Morris, Marni Hinton Rosner. **Back row:** Rob Postel, Bruce Tanner, Stuart Michaels, Richard Hamburger

→ 1974. Charlie Kelly, Ben Guerrero, Cindy Nathanson, Sharon McIlwaine, Tako Raynolds, Elizabeth Stevens, Bea Stern, Leslie Quarrier Pfohl, Lita Serrano Jones, a very good dog. **Seated:** Tim Caldwell, Daphne Kempner, Kinny Earle, Danny Mendelsohn, Abby Rieser, Becky Borden Bunnell, Jennifer Wilson, Donald Chong, Betsy Tinkham, David Moore, Tim Dwight, Brian Hubbell, Tim Daly. **Standing:** David Tulipan, Kate Kruesi Lincoln, Judith Swain, Georgina Kleege, Lindsay Borden, Charlie Young, Rey White, Coco McCabe, Geordie Heller, Vinnie Currier, Andy Chase, Nicole Fauteux, Betsy Berne, Paula Roderick, Mark Connors '73, David Lawrence, Debbie Smith Ameele, Brad Brooks, Peter Medvin, Austin Cooley, Paul Smart, Lee Langstaff, Keith McIntosh, Scott "Gilly" Gillingham, James Thompson

☛ 1984 and 1985. Larson Gunness, Sara Paasche-Orlow, Finn Campman, Cyane Dandridge, Elizabeth Harris-Warner, Dana Hokin, Kate Register, Sarah Zevin Vela, Jennie Hoffman, Alexandria Lippincott, Kate Lawless

→ 2003 to 2007. Many many unnamed kids. **Front:** A very good dog, Norah Lake, Sean Rooney, Margi Dashevsky, Abby Young, Tory Voight, Abbie Clafin Watts, Casey Darrow, Melissa Leo, Will Tanner, Jonitha Keymoore, Kim Chisholm. Jeanz Holt, John-Samuel McKay. **Back:** Kyra Chapin, Nora Weiser-Woods, Rowland Halkett, Ellie Holt, Joe Schiavone, Brian Quarrier, Logan Brennan-Sawyer, Jareka Dellenbaugh-Dempsey, Erika Reed, Jeffrey Hiam, Hayden Lake, Arran Bardige, Sam Slowinski, Sophia Gianniotis Pilling, Emily Ekman, Adrian Carleton, Leah McGowan, Jillian Brelsford Razza, Seth Quarrier, L. Miriam Wilcox, Miles Chapin, Kelsey van Beever Miller, Clara Rowe, Emily Kaufman, Robin Crofut-Brittingham, Nat Herz, Hallie Herz

☛ 2014 to 2016. **Front:** Bennie Johnson Bright, Aurea Kasberg, Yeshi Wangchuk, Hunter Cuming-Shaw, Katherine Whitney, Elliot Parrott, Danielle Ewald, Bea Butler, Camilla Norris, Julian Bloch, Moo Butler. **Middle:** Erin Sternfels, Alonda Robichaud, Phebe Macrae, Isobel Curtin, Erica Gelfand, Dash Mecoy, Violet Yesair-Polinsky, Angela Donahue, Sarah Freedman, Kyla Ohayon, Akhira Montague, Blair Blumberg, Nina Wittler, Cesco Giannini. **Back:** Liv Galbraith, Carter North, Fiona Babbitt, Mollie Montague, Morgan Entwistle, Lindsay Moon, Veleena O'Donnell, Ella Schmidt, Katalin Berlow, Jam Flint, Miles Brautigam, Sundara Ziegler, Aidan McGiff, Zack Tashman, Caleb Erskine, Dalir Kellett, Seamus Moore, Sam Porter, Isak Saaf, Jeremy Wolf

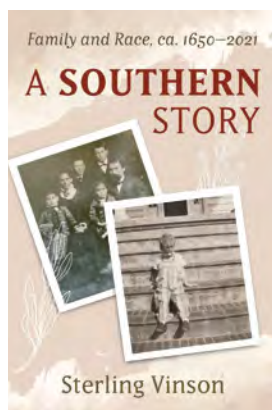




← Alumni with Putney family connections at Reunion 2024. **Front row:** Sara Paasche-Orlow '84, Sarah Freedman '16, Margi Dashevsky '05 with mother Tako Reynolds '74, Hope Farley '04 with mother Abby Rieser '74, the Chase/Johnson crew Sophie Spurr '69 with niece Bennie Johnson Bright '14, Bennie's dad Lorne Johnson, and Bennie's uncle, Andy Chase '74. **Back row:** Tim Dwight '74, Jillian Brelsford Razsa '03 with aunt Carlotta Brelsford Cuerdon '80, Abby Young '03 with father Charlie Young '74 peeking from behind, Katherine Lee '75 with daughter Aurea Kasberg '14, Emelyn Daly '07 with dad Tim Daly '74, Erin Sternfels '15, Miles Brautigam '15 in the back, Will Tanner '05 holding daughter Harriet, with dad Steve Tanner '69 (and family photos of Kersten Tanner '71 and Steve Tanner '40), the Quarrier crew Brian '05 with son Adam, mom Leslie Quarrier Pfohl '74 and Sam Quarrier '04, and Augusta Rodgers '25 with mom Caitlin Baggott '95



# ALUMNI BOOKS



## **A Southern Story, Family and Race, ca. 1650-2021**

*Sterling Vinson '57*

*Resource Publications, 2022*

This book is an examination of a southern white family's relations with people of color in the United States from about 1650 to the present. Part autobiography, part social history, they were slaveowners, Confederate soldiers, Klansmen, and responsible for at least one lynching. During the last two generations they befriended Nisei people during World War II, and since then were increasingly active in Civil Rights in the South and Southwest (e.g., the Sanctuary Movement and Humane Borders). The book can therefore be viewed as an account of sin and redemption, especially since the author has moved from a history of alcoholism and violence to membership in the Presbyterian Church.



## **Battle of Britain Spitfire Ace**

*Peter Usher '58*

*Pen & Sword, 2024*

This is the story of a young Canadian who in a short time, and for a brief time, mastered Britain's legendary war machine, the Spitfire. It is also the story of a young English woman who was for a short time his wife, and for a long time his widow, and of their son who for much of his life knew little about his father. William Henry Nelson was a first-generation Canadian Jew. Nelson began work in Montreal's aircraft industry, but in 1936 he left life on the ground to go to England to become a pilot in the Royal Air Force. On the 80th anniversary of the Battle of Britain, the RAF Museum featured Nelson in its exhibit about "hidden heroes," the Jews who fought in the RAF in the Second World War. During his four years in England, Willie Nelson refashioned himself. But who had he become? Who was the man behind the iconic portrayals, what had been his formative influences? How did he come to do what he did and what, in those last few years in England, did he live and die for?



## **In Dreams Begin Responsibilities: A Jonathan Rosenbaum Reader**

*Jonathan Rosenbaum '61*

*Hat and Beard Press, 2024*

From the mind of iconoclastic film, literary, and music critic Jonathan Rosenbaum, a collection that teases out three threads from nearly six decades of writing: the film criticism he is mainly known for (especially during his 20-year stint at the *Chicago Reader*), the literary criticism he has published over the past half-century, and the jazz criticism he has written during the same period. Believing that these three art forms are interrelated and have often been intertwined in his perceptions of them, he builds a manifesto out of a hundred of his best pieces, arranged chronologically, taking on such disparate figures and subjects as Stanley Kubrick, Philip Roth, Duke Ellington, Spike Lee, Keith Jarrett, Jean-Luc Godard, Vladimir Nabokov, and Ahmad Jamal, and, in a final essay dealing with all three artforms, a film of a jazz cantata by André Hodeir derived



from a passage in James Joyce's *Finnegans Wake*.

## **Finding Time**

*Katie Griffiths Cameron '63*

*CreateSpace, 2010*

A surprising and warm-hearted book about getting older, for a whole new generation headed in that direction. The chapters include intriguing titles such as "Learning to Gamble," "Sharing Space with the One You Love," "Grandparent Fever," and "Judgment Calls." *Finding Time* is a conversation opener and Katie Cameron repeatedly invites the rest of us to join in.

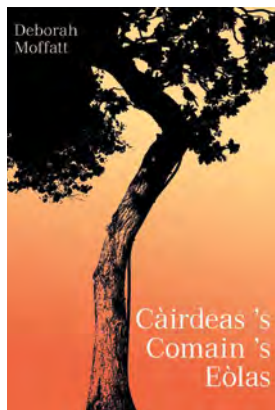
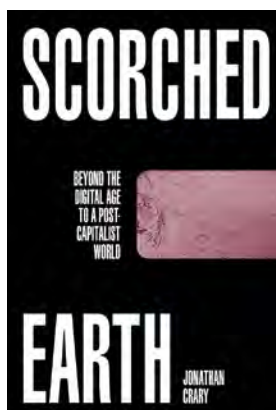
## **Eagle Falls**

*Robert Westbrook '63*

*Speaking Volumes, 2023*

Howie and Claire are hiking on the remote trail to Eagle Falls in the mountains of New Mexico when they find the body of a 17-year-old girl, Zia McFadden, floating in the river at the foot of the falls. It looks like suicide. But could it be murder? Zia is the granddaughter of Charlie McFadden, San Geronimo's most famous author. When he hires Wilder & Associate to





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Let us know by contacting  
[alumni@putneyschool.org](mailto:alumni@putneyschool.org).

investigate Zia's death, Howie, Jack, and Howie's daughter, Georgie, find themselves on a baffling case that takes them on a rollercoaster ride of secrets and revelations and a deadly high-altitude adventure to discover the truth of what really happened at Eagle Falls.

### Scorched Earth

Jonathan Crary '68  
Verso, 2022

In this uncompromising essay, Jonathan Crary presents the obvious but unsayable reality: our "digital age" is synonymous with the disastrous terminal stage of global capitalism and its financialisation of social existence, mass impoverishment, ecocide, and military terror. *Scorched Earth* surveys the wrecking of a living world by the internet complex and its devastation of communities and their capacities for mutual support. This polemic by the author of *24/7* dismantles the presumption that social media could be an instrument of radical change and contends that the networks and platforms of transnational corporations are intrinsically

incompatible with a habitable earth or with the human interdependence needed to build egalitarian post-capitalist forms of life.

### Càirdeas's Comain's Eòlas

Deborah Moffatt '71  
Clàr, 2024

The name of Deborah Moffatt's new collection of poetry in Gaelic comes from a Gaelic phrase, translated as "friendship, obligation and acquaintance-ship." It was, and is, used as a formula to regulate invitations to a funeral. There are poems about funerals, and also about weddings, poems about love and enmity, wars and victories, grief and grievances. Historical events, taken from traditional poetry, are retold from a modern perspective, while current events take on new meaning from a Gaelic perspective. Mostly, there is friendship, in all its manifestations.

### Shae

Mesha Maren '03  
Algonquin, 2024

When sixteen-year-old Shae meets Cam, who is new to their small town in West Virginia, she thinks she has found someone who is everything she has ever wanted in a companion. The two become fast friends, and then more. And when Shae ends up pregnant, Cam begins a different transition—trying on clothes that Shae can no longer fit into and using female pronouns. Shae tries to be fully supportive as Cam becomes the person she wants and needs to be. After a traumatic C-section and the birth of their daughter, Eva, Shae is given opioids to manage the intense pain. During the first year of Eva's life, Shae's dependence shifts from pain management to addiction, and her days begin to revolve around getting more pills. Meanwhile, as Cam continues to transition, she embraces new relationships and faces the reality of being a trans woman in rural America. *Shae* is as much about these two young women as it is about the home they both love despite its limitations.

### The Blue Maiden

Anna Noyes '06  
Grove, 2024

This a transportive and chilling debut novel of two sisters growing up on an isolated Northern European island in the shadow of their late mother and the Devil. It's 1825, four generations after Berggrund Island's women stood accused of witchcraft under the eye of their priest, now long dead. In his place is Pastor Silas, a widower with two wild young daughters. The sisters are outcasts: imaginative, oppositional, increasingly obsessed with the lore and legend of the island's dark past and their absent mother, of whom their father refuses to speak. As the girls come of age, and the strictures of the community shift but never wane, their rebellions twist and sharpen. When an enigmatic outsider arrives at their door, his presence threatens their family bond and unearths—piece by piece—a buried history to shocking ends. *The Blue Maiden* is a starkly beautiful depiction of lost lineage and resilience.



# P.S.



Flackback to 2014: Putney then-seniors Bea Butler '14 and Aurea Kasberg '14 taking the leap into the culvert. Ten years later, they returned for reunion. See p. 49.

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# Summer at Putney



## Putney Reunion

**June 6–8, 2025**

CLASSES OF 65-66, 75, 90-91, 99-02, 08-10

[\*putneyschool.org/reunion\*](https://putneyschool.org/reunion)

*Want to help plan your reunion? We'd love to hear from you: [alumni@putneyschool.org](mailto:alumni@putneyschool.org)*

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THREE-WEEK SESSION

**June 29–July 18**

ONE-WEEK SESSION

**July 20–25**

ADULT WEEK SESSION

**August 3–9**

[\*putneyschool.org/summer\*](https://putneyschool.org/summer)

*Applications open November 1*





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