



Letter from the Editor

Inside This Issue

Letter from the Editor	1
Report from a Semester in Paris	2
Talking with Anita Lightfoot about Volunteering	3
Talking with Jessica Brown-Velez about Teaching Controversy	4
Alumni News	5
Reading about Evolution	8
Thoughts on Patti Smith's <i>Just Kids</i>	9
A Tribute to Tim Allen	10

Cathy Middlecamp has been generous enough to give me this space to say my fond farewells to the ILS program. After an all-too-brief four years with ILS, I am taking a job at the City University of New York's Grad Center in Manhattan. Personal reasons top my list for leaving. Before I joined ILS, many faculty and former faculty told me that teaching in ILS was the best experience of their teaching careers. Teaching for ILS has been one of those rare cases when the reality is better than the hype. In spite of the certainty that there is something uniquely wonderful about ILS, the exact nature of that quality resists defining.

I will not settle a question that so many others with longer histories in ILS have not. I would like to offer my perspective. I believe that my office on the third floor is the best on campus and not

just because of the two sets of beautiful mullioned windows, the sloped ceiling, the space for two large, orange couches, and a huge coffee table that make my office the large, bright, and airy space that any academic would want. I love my office so much because in order to get to the third floor, I can hear snippets of all the many conversations going on in Meiklejohn House. Sometimes it seems to me that this house puts the integrated into Integrated Liberal Studies.

In this edition of the newsletter, I want to present ILS as seen and heard in Meiklejohn House. I have tried to collect a representative sampling of all of the voices to be heard in that house on the corner of Charter and Johnson. Reluctant though I was to ask so many people to take the time to write for this newsletter, I am very glad

that I did. Here is a glimpse of the serious, funny, smart, committed, diverse, delightful, and definition-resistant ILS-ers who make it a program that cannot be hyped too highly.

Thank you.
— Shifra Sharlin





By Chloe Purton ILS'11, Winner of the 2010 Meiklejohn Travel Prize

Inevitably, the first question everyone asks me after my four-month stay abroad is: "How was Paris?" It's a question I've become used to now, and I've developed an automatic response: "It was (pause to search for the right word) wonderful." Sometime I change the adjective. My friends and family have also been treated to the words amazing, beautiful, fantastic, and sometimes unbelievable. People seem to be pleased enough with that response, but I really am not. How am I supposed to describe the happiest, most frustrating, bewildering, confusing, and most speechless time of my life in one fleeting moment, a response to a passing question? As cliché as it sounds, I felt like I was living in a movie: I have never felt so free, so inspired, and so alone.

There were incredible parts of my stay in Paris: I stood completely alone in the ancient Greek sculpture wing of the Louvre. I taught a high-school English class the lyrics to *The Fresh Prince of Bel Air*. I had a carafe of arguably the most well-known hot chocolate in the world. I met a beefeater. I made real French friends on my own. I ice-skated on the Eiffel Tower. I waded in the Bay of Biscay. I ate escargot and duck and quail and drank French wine and absinthe. I also experienced really hard situations. I left my family and friends for the longest time I'd ever been away from home. I made my way through a country whose language I didn't speak. I sometimes had trouble communicating to my non-English-speaking host family. I had plans

Report from a Semester in Paris



The ebb and flow of life abroad generated lifelong memories for Chloe Purton.

to Nice, Rome, Florence, and Venice cancelled by transportation strikes. I spent the sleepless nights on overnight trains, and I overdrew my bank account, but I won't pretend those things are awful. I know I'm so lucky to have had that opportunity, and I wouldn't change a single part of it.

I did a lot of things I never thought I would do, and I didn't get to do some things I thought I would. The most

"I have never felt so free, so inspired, and so alone."

surprising and hard-earned thing the city offered, though, was acceptance. By the end of my trip, I had just about gained acceptance in Paris. I got complimented on the metro — by a sane woman. I gave adequate directions to a place in my quartier. I could order a meal at a café without asking them to repeat their question (the one that took a while to get the hang of was: "How do you want your meat cooked?"). And, the one I'm most proud of: when taking my last cab, I was not driven all around the city because I couldn't tell the difference. I was taken straight from my restaurant to my homestay. Am I fluent in French now? No. But did I become a Parisian? Oui.



Talking with Anita Lightfoot about Volunteering

Anita Lightfoot has been the ILS program administrator since March 2010. Before working here, she was the center administrator in Jewish Studies since 1993. Anita is grateful that Cathy Middlecamp has agreed to let her have flexible hours so that she can devote her Fridays to volunteering. In the last 10–15 years of volunteering, Anita has participated in a number of programs that offer, in addition to respite care of all kinds, visits to the sick at home, in nursing homes, and hospitals. I interviewed Anita in Meiklejohn House to learn more.

What motivated you to start volunteering?

I wanted to get out of my box, go beyond wherever my normal life would take me and stop thinking of me and my problems. I wanted to leave all that behind and catapult into something else. Life gets too easy sometimes.

I used to be involved with my kids when they were younger. I was Girl Scout leader, Boy Scout leader, soccer manager, computer mom, and religious ed teacher. When they entered junior high, they didn't want me around as much so I became editor of their school newsletter. When they got older and they didn't need me as much I thought, "Hey, I had better rethink this, I want something of my own." So that's when I started volunteering my free time for people not as fortunate as me. I truly do have a good life.

Tell me about some of your volunteering experiences?

Most folks that cross my path are moving through a wide variety of end-of-life issues. One woman in particular scared many away with her prickly demeanor ... but for some reason, we got along very well.

I'm not surprised.

It started with her grape arbor which was one of her prized accomplishments. I asked her about it and she showed me how to prepare the long vines for winter. A week or two later, I took her to

a hair appointment which transformed into weekly road trips to places that she had never had a chance to visit. Token Creek. A new housing development close to her home. Every time after that, we went somewhere she had never seen or hadn't seen in a long time. As it turns out, we both wanted to get out of our boxes. So we would go on these little road trips, but they always began



Volunteering runs in the family for Anita Lightfoot, who now devotes her Fridays to helping others. "Growing up, we were always helping others so it truly was a way of life," she says.

with some appointment. That kind of experience happens a lot.

I once visited a home where the husband was the caregiver. No cleaning had been done for a long time. So I cleaned their living room and dining area from one end to the other. I found things that they hadn't seen in years.

I keep a diary about my volunteering. I write about the family. Are they close or far away? Their interests. Their ailments. I write about what kind of mood they're in. I do this so that I don't have to start over the next

time so and that I know what to expect.

Is volunteering a family tradition?

My mom has been a hospice volunteer for years and continues at 81 and a half. After my Dad passed away in 2009, I added driving folks to treatments — something he had done for years and years, driving people from the Highland area to their Madison appointments. Growing up, we were always helping others so it truly was a way of life. Whenever volunteering comes up, my sisters comment that they should be doing something, too.

What keeps you going?

It's a challenge sometimes. I can't say that it's not. It's getting there and seeing those people. It's all so worth it. If I inspire one person to volunteer, maybe they'll do the same with someone else, causing a ripple effect. It's truly a blessing.

Volunteering becomes a way of life so that it's second nature. If there's something that needs to be done, you don't wait for somebody else to do it because then it might not get done. There is a core group of wonderful people who lead the volunteer charge but they're getting older and if my generation doesn't start stepping up, the numbers may continue to dwindle. Every group or foundation is out looking for volunteers. It should be an important part of everyone's life.

Talking to Jessica Brown-Velez about Teaching Controversy

Jessica Brown-Velez and I have worked together for three semesters in ILS 200, “Critical Thinking and Expression.” Jessica shared the Outstanding TA Award with Victoria Lantz last year. I nominated Jessica because of her commitment to teaching her students to think critically about controversial topics. For three years I have enjoyed talking to Jessica about her teaching.

You like to push your students to talk about controversial topics outside of their comfort zones. Why do you think that’s important?

I think all of us are inclined to stay in our comfort zones. In this northern culture, we’re not comfortable with conflict. I’m not very comfortable with conflict and I like to practice being in conflict by arguing with people about writing and reading, so that I can argue with people about ... other things.

It has happened more than once that a student has, at the end of the semester or after a particular set of readings, said, “I have never thought about this before, it has never occurred to me.” Students will say, “It is not as simple as I thought it was.”

How do you choose your topics?

Last year I had a crazy evaluation, “Why does the course have to be about black people?” Well if you want a history of conflict and radical thinking in this country, if you want a history of people coming into conflict, changing the way they’re thinking, changing the way a society is thinking, then we need to study women’s suffrage, abolition, radical environmentalism, and queer liberation.

Are you ever surprised by what they do or do not find controversial?

The first semester I taught the queer



liberation texts, I was a little bit surprised by how very unfamiliar they were with the issues that were being raised in those documents. I have been surprised by their lack of experience with different genres. My class has a dual project: to look at certain issues and to look at them in a breadth of genres. When I show them slam poetry and spoken word poetry videos, their minds are much more blown than I had expected. I started a fad for spoken word poetry. They become devotees! A student sent me an e-mail saying, “Hey, there’s this spoken word poetry festival on campus. I was googling it after.” That is really cool.

Have you noticed any trends among your students?

I have had some students who seem to scorn a liberal education. They wish to specialize. They want to study finance and so it is finance that they do. My favorite student who did that is the one who had the nervous breakdown in the middle of the semester. He came to me

and said, “I don’t care about the causes of the recession anymore. I want to write about violence in Kashmir!” So I said to him, “Do it! Toss that project out and do what you love!” And he wrote a really great paper about Kashmir! It was such a moment for him to admit it to me. I think he thought I would be mad that he was changing so late in the semester. In one sense it was a lot more work for him, but it was amazing how quickly

and beautifully the project came together, when he embraced what he really wanted to look at.

What do you do to help people feel comfortable talking about controversial things?

They are especially resistant to talking in groups. I take the temperature of the class in my head and decide whether they need to start talking in small groups. I put them in writing groups so that they can get feedback on their writing. The writing groups also end up being a safe space for them to talk about issues, which they can then discuss in a large group.

I also try to be very explicit about how we can have a civil and meaningful conversation about controversial issues. I might say something like, “You might be uncomfortable and that’s okay. You might feel like you’re taking a risk in saying something and that’s okay. We

all want each other to win. Nobody is allowed to hurt anyone else’s feelings. You’re not allowed to hurt anyone else’s feelings and nobody is allowed to hurt your feelings. Don’t be afraid to say if someone speaks in a way that is offensive or hurtful. Perhaps they don’t realize it. Call it out either in the discussion or

afterward. This is also hard for me to do in my conflict-averse world, but I’m better at it now.”

I was going to ask whether teaching this class has made you more comfortable with conflict outside of the classroom?

Yes! I am quicker to realize when I need to step in and say, “Hey, I’m not sure that’s what you meant to say but, if it is, can we talk about that?”

Alumni News

1991

Dan Bender:

My article entitled “The Art of Advocacy Design” is being published in the 2010 fall/winter edition of *Verdict*, the ABA Trial Practice Committee’s journal. After 10 years of litigating, I love my alternative legal career as the managing director of Litigation Graphics and Business Development at Digital Evidence Group, LLC in Washington, D.C.

2001

Patrick Somerville:

My first novel, *The Cradle*, was nominated for the Center for Fiction’s First Novel Award, was named one of the Ten Best Books of 2009 by Janet Maslin of the *New York Times*, and was a finalist for the Center for Fiction’s First Novel Prize. My writing has appeared in *One Story*, *Epoch*, *GQ*, *Esquire*, and *Best American Nonrequired Reading*. I’m a MacDowell Fellow and was recently selected as the winner of the 2009 21st Century Award, given annually by the Chicago Public Library

My third book of fiction, *The Universe in Miniature in Miniature*, came

out in November 2010 and was recently long-listed for the Story Prize. Now that I think about it, Kathi Sell’s Capstone Seminar on Artificial Intelligence, which I took 10 years ago this spring, is still having an impact on how I think. I live in Chicago with my wife — who I first met in an ILS discussion section — and teach creative writing at both Northwestern University and Warren Wilson University.

2004

Eva Payne:

I am living in Somerville, Mass., and am in my first year of a PhD in the History of American Civilization Program at Harvard focusing on 19th and 20th century social reform movements and religion.

2008

Jillian Johnson:

Peace Corps life is nothing that you probably think it is. Yes, you are living in a different place, with different people, speaking a different language, eating different food. Everything is different

except for one thing: you. You are who you are, no matter where you are. I am still Jillian Johnson, a UW-Madison graduate/ILS certificate getter, even though I am living in this crazy place called Guyana. I sweat constantly, have 10 mosquito bites on my booty at any given moment, and am called chubby, white meat everywhere I go, and, in spite of that stuff, I love it. I currently teach at a special needs school, at an orphanage, with an inclusion program, and I tutor a few neighborhood kids once a week. I have created teacher trainings, and quite possibly I will be teaching adult literacy classes for a local college. I also write a weekly column for the newspapers about bringing education home, aimed toward helping parents to get involved in their children’s education. And I lime, which is Guyanese talk for “chill.” Mostly in that limin’ time, I read, cook the local food (yum bora and guinep!) and gaff with people in the community. I am exactly where I should be.

Kirsten Laufenberg:

In 2010, I graduated from Indiana University with my MS in higher education and student affairs. I accepted a position as residence director at Pitzer College in Claremont, Calif., and am

Alumni News continued from page 5

now living and working in one of the most beautiful parts of the country. Do I miss snow? Well, when it's 85 degrees in January, I really don't think there's much to miss!

I've been thinking a lot about ILS. We have only 1,000 students on campus, so many of my students' stories about their small classes remind me of my wonderfully different and engaging ILS classes. The similarities between my current campus and that tiny brown ILS house on University Avenue are uncanny. What a wonderful place for students to feel more connected to their faculty and classes at such a very large institution like the UW.

Sean Witzling:

I graduated from the UW only to keep walking up Bascom Hill for three years at the Wisconsin Law School. I took no time in between, which, while not a mistake, is something I must come to grips with now. Over the next few months, I plan to determine not only which area of practice to commit myself to, but also which area of the country. All in all, I am excited and honored to take the Attorney's Oath to the Constitution in a few months. My favorite experience so far was undertaking a real client's case and representing him in an administrative court, my hands have never shaken so nervously nor has my smile beamed with such pride when we got the result.

Abbie Steiner:

After a year in India and six months working on sustainable farms in Madison, I am now located in Washington, D.C., where I am the community development coordinator for the Campus Kitchens Project. I am very involved in urban agriculture initiatives

and I am currently becoming a certified master gardener.

2009

Mariah Terhaar:

I am serving my second year with AmeriCorps as a VISTA leader in Fairbanks, Alaska. I stay busy by enjoying views of the northern lights, braving minus-40 degree temps, and planning Alaskan adventures.

Mike Zydowicz:

Oh ILS, how I miss you. I have been in the "real world" now for almost two years, and I've decided that it's a little overrated, especially when you have a 9-to-5 job. Luckily, I've continued to move ever closer to my dream of owning a micro-brewery, and in 2009, my business partner and I officially founded Zydowicher Brewing, LLC. Currently, we are perfecting our recipes and techniques, and hope to obtain a brewing license by 2012. By the way, we're always looking for investors...

On a creative front, I continue to enjoy writing, and since spring 2010, I have been a freelance writer for *Isthmus* newspaper and http://www.facebook.com/1/2a18cfG7nxZQg_o6Q7r8qt2oBZQ:TheDailyPage.com. The topics I cover include the Dane County Farmers' Market, sustainability, and, of course, beer! I hope everyone is doing great over at the Meiklejohn House and enjoying their time thinking together, independently.

Matthew Wiza:

Although I have left UW-Madison, I am still living on the eastern edge of the

city with no current plans to move. I am looking for a job and holding out for as high of a salary as possible. Meanwhile, I have been passing the time with computer games, I am trying to improve my cooking "skills" and I've resumed serious weight lifting after about a five-year break. I am hoping to get a job with the Madison Police next year.

Michelle Layman:

I have made a few changes since last year. I moved to Milwaukee from Madison (which I miss like crazy), although I am really loving Milwaukee, too. I live insanely close to old buildings, museums, a historic movie theater, great food, and a great big lake.

Right now, I am attending UW-Milwaukee and pursuing a master's in English education for middle/high-school students. Fingers crossed this will lead me to a something I will enjoy. I am also a literacy tutor for elementary-school students at Esquela Vieau School as an AmeriCorps member with the Boys and Girls Clubs. In the evenings, I have a lot of fun as an assistant coach for the Tosa Swordfish swim team in Wauwatosa. With both jobs, I am having to learn to explain things that have become second nature to me (swimming, reading, writing) and have been working to be more patient and to develop that loud coaching voice I know must be in me somewhere.

Nikki Carow:

Life after college had lots of unforgettable adventures. Two days after graduating, I set out with a group of about 12 UW students and grads for Israel-Palestine for two weeks of immersion in the contested region. We met with activists from all sorts of political and religious

backgrounds to discuss their work making peace and restoring hope to all caught in the middle of the struggle. It was an incredibly influential experience in my life, but I barely had time to process it before heading out on a tour de Asia with some friends. We started in China and spent a couple months traveling through Tibet, Nepal, and India before returning to teach English in Wuxi, a large city near Shanghai. In spite of my students' inability to understand most things that I said, teaching was a total blast and it was a little hard to tear myself away. But there were new experiences in store as I set out to explore Southeast Asia for a few months. I toured Vietnam, Cambodia, Laos, and Thailand, but Cambodia, with its heartbreaking history and warmhearted people, left the biggest impression on me.

As much as I enjoyed traveling, my return to the States was much anticipated, and I spent a summer hanging out with my family and looking for work. Within a few months, a great opportunity fell into my lap: when the new school year started up I moved back to Madison to begin working as the coordinator of the Quest Program, which takes UW students to some of the world's most fascinating locations for fun, intense, and transformative experiences revolving around issues of social justice and environmental sustainability. To say that I'm loving my job would be an understatement! I work with incredible students who are eager to see and make a positive change in the world, I travel to amazing places (I just got back from Kenya), and I get to immerse myself in discussions about important global issues. I feel incredibly fortunate to be able to do the work that I do, and I'm looking forward to expanding the scope and impact of the

program as I continue to learn and grow into my position. When I'm not working, I'm trying to build myself a community, home, and life in the wonderful city of Madison.

2010

Aly Maugeri:

As I rang in the new year in New York and watched the Badgers play in the Rose Bowl with some fellow alumni from Madison, I thought about how much had changed within the past year or so. After graduating this past May, I spent the summer interning at a local law firm and trying to soak in all the sun and fun I could. Currently, I live outside of Philadelphia and am attending Villanova Law School. If there's a message I took away from my time in Madison, it's that getting involved can make situations much more enjoyable. I've tried to attend conferences and guest speakers when possible, join the board for a legal organization, and even get into Philly to watch some UW basketball games with alumni there. This past year has definitely been a time of transition; yet, with time I feel like I'm getting closer to my goals and learning so much.

Kelly Creech:

Since graduation I have continued to live in the city of Madison. Although still an avid Chicago sports fan, my love for all things Badgers and Madison has caused a desire to stay in my college town for the time being. Currently, I work as an administrative assistant for the State of Wisconsin in the Department of Workforce Development Unemployment Insurance Division. The irony of

unemployment causing employment is not lost on me. I'm proud that my political science major has caused me greater appreciation for government work as I get to see federal policy enacted at a local level. To end 2010, I voyaged to Pasadena to cheer on the Badgers at the Rose Bowl and explore the city of Los Angeles for the first time.

Nicole Lenz:

I did not believe that I could find anywhere or anything that I loved as much as Madison and being a student in the ILS Department. However, since graduation, I have been teaching special education at Aspira Early College High School, an inner-city school in Chicago, for Teach For America, and I have fallen in love all over again. My days are hectic as I teach and counsel students all day long and then attend night school for my master's in education at night. Yet, the triumphs of my students and the support of my friends and family (including my new fiancée!) constantly remind me why I am currently in the Windy City fighting for what I believe is one of the most important yet neglected things in the world ... education.

Helen Seely:

I moved to Baltimore, Md., for a new adventure! Realizing that there was nothing holding me back, an old friend and I took a leap to the East Coast. I am currently the After School Care Senior Coordinator for Calvert School, the alma mater of eccentric filmmaker John Waters.

Reading About Evolution

By Basil Tikoff (Geoscience, ILS)

In the wake of Tim Allen’s retirement, I’ve been thinking about a reading list of the great books about evolution. There are a lot to choose from in this genre, probably because the number of Americans that reject evolution has been constant (and shockingly high) for the last 40 years. Scientists are part of the problem: in general, we are not effective communicators. One of my pet peeves is that evolution is a scientific law, not a scientific theory. A scientific law is a generalization of observational data that describes patterns or relationships. A scientific theory is a systematic set of concepts that provide explanations for observing patterns in nature. Evolution — the observation that species change over time in response to their environment — is a scientific law by the above definition. Evolution by the process of natural selection, Darwin’s suggestion in *The Origin of Species*, is a scientific theory. Although there are many reasons for this confusion, it is probably ultimately a result of Darwin’s brilliance, having proposed both the scientific law and the scientific theory at the same time. Okay, I’ll now get off my soapbox.

In keeping with Tim’s tendencies, I’ll focus on natural history approaches to study evolution. There are five really superb books I recommend — I would even venture to say that some of them (I’m thinking particularly of *Song of the Dodo*) are page-turners.

1. *Song of the Dodo* by David Quammen This book is more about biogeography than it is about evolution, per se. That said, if I had to recommend a single book about science, this would be one of my two top choices (the other is Bill Bryson’s *A Short History of Nearly Everything*). The book is about life on islands, and how evolution occurs more quickly and more “strangely” on them. It is well written, compelling, and ultimately memorable — you want to keep reading. It takes very complex ideas and not only makes them comprehensible, but leaves you wanting to know more. You could nitpick if you wanted: the short chapters are like sound bites and are a bit predictable, the book is not linear but rather bounces around between subjects, etc. Yet, none of that matters. From my point of view, it conveys a wonder about how the natural world works in a way that few other books have captured.

2. *Beak of the Finch* by Jonathan Weiner This book discusses evolution as it occurs in finches on the Galapagos Islands, a similar topic to that in *The Song of the Dodo*, yet it is a very different book. It follows the research of Rosemary and Peter Grant, ecologists from Princeton University, who have made their life work of tracking evolution in the finch population on these islands. Unbelievably, they track every single finch on particular islands, and observe how individuals fare as a result of changing environmental conditions. Effectively, they are watching natural selection occur. If there was ever any

doubt that natural selection is the major force acting on these populations, this book puts that concern to rest. Weiner does a superb job of capturing the results and also the people who are behind the study; he won the Pulitzer Prize for this work.

3. *Making of the Fittest*, by Sean Carroll. This book was first recommended by an ILS student, who said it was the best science book he ever read. Carroll is a scientist (and UW professor), but one who is able to clearly communicate results to people without advanced scientific training. The book is about the DNA evidence for evolution. Starting with fish in the southern polar oceans that are clear and have antifreeze for blood, Carroll tracks down how DNA sequences regulate life as we know it.

4. *A Wonderful Life* by Steven J. Gould I have to include at least one geological book, and this is probably the best. The subject of the book is the emergence of life at the beginning of the Cambrian Period (in round numbers, about 540 million years ago), as recorded in the Burgess shale in Canada. It turns out that all sorts of crazy life forms developed in the shallow oceans during the Cambrian “explosion,” before life got pared down quickly to the fossil record with which we are familiar (trilobites — the state fossil of Wisconsin — and so forth). The book discusses science, history of science, and, to a lesser extent, sociology of science. It tracks the discovery, or technically the re-discovery, of the

Burgess shale by a small group (one professor and two graduate students) from Great Britain. The historical aspect of the book is how the work of the prominent geologist Walcott, over 50 years earlier at the same site, missed this discovery. As a bonus, it has the best explanation of what graduate school is about, from the perspective of both the student and the adviser.

5. *Why Evolution Is True* by Jerry Coyne. This is a recent book that lays out evidence — a lot of evidence from a variety of different sources — for evolution. If you want a single book that encapsulates the entire richness and breadth of evolution, this is it. It is lucid, accessible, non-confrontational, and builds up an unassailable case for evolution.



Thoughts on Patti Smith’s *Just Kids*

Daniel Kleinman (Rural Sociology, ILS) writes: Some thoughts on *Just Kids* by Patti Smith. When I heard word that Patti Smith, a critical creative force in the Punk Movement of the 1970s, had published a memoir, I knew I had to read it. Smith came to prominence at the time when I was most attentive to popular music — the mid-1970s. What’s more, reviews and interviews suggested the book captured the social history of the arts scene in New York in the 1960s, an era and a place I’ve been interested in for decades. I got the book. I read it. I was deeply disappointed.



Moving from Pennsylvania to NYC when she was “just a kid,” Smith came into contact with everyone in the arts in the ‘60s: Jimi Hendrix, Janice Joplin, Andy Warhol, Allen Ginsberg ... Smith met Robert Mapplethorpe, and they became soul mates. Smith tracks her life with Mapplethorpe from desperate poverty to artistic prominence. The book makes clear that the New York’s art world was small in the ‘60s; entry into the dense set of relationships that constituted the New York art scene was apparently pretty easy, but Smith doesn’t even begin to capture what made it so or why it was possible to find a way into the network of artists at the time. Instead, she offers us a naive portrait of how and why an artist realizes success. Her answer: individual talent. To imply, as I believe Smith does, that the art world is a meritocracy seems absolutely absurd. To the contrary, artistic talent is not something intrinsic everyone immediately recognizes. Surely, as Pierre Bourdieu might say, the arts are a social field like any other. They have their distributions of power, their interests, and their struggles. Add to these factors the innumerable contingencies — accidents of history — that explain the “discovery” of certain artists and their success and you have a way to understand NYC in the 1960s. I’d really hoped for a memoir that captured what about the time explained the dynamism of the NYC art scene in the ‘60s. Smith, sadly, didn’t deliver.

A Tribute to Tim Allen



By Becca Chimis '09

Meeting Tim Allen was like no experience I have ever had before. At the appointed hour, I knocked on his office door. No answer. Thinking he had stepped out, I checked in the laboratory next door. "I'm right here!" answered the man seated at the lab table.

Allen was surrounded by food, various types of bread, to be exact. His teaching assistants stood around him and all were discussing the merits of each concoction. I attempted to explain why I was there, but he thrust a piece of pistachio bread at me. "Try this!" he commanded. Allen then explained that each bread sample was a project for his ILS course on "plants and human beings" and how they interact. "It's about learning through doing [for the students]," he explained.

Once done with the tasting, he

motioned that I follow him over to his office for our interview. On the way, a student intercepted him and asked if he could talk about the course. Allen invited him into his office, and both of us perched on his soft and well-worn couch as Allen leaned back in a recliner.

His career in the ILS Program began in the 1970s with "Plants and Man."

The student, Nick, informed Allen that his class was his favorite that semester. When Nick asked Allen how he knew all that he

knows, Allen laughed and answered, "I remember things and I'm old. I'm a systems analyst. I see relationships between things."

When it came time for my questions, Allen surprised me with stories from his own life. His father was a hospital pharmacist, a career in which botany figured prominently. He had a few stops along the way to becoming a "plants and man" specialist, however. He was a gifted actor when he was younger; he once worked with Derek Jacobi, playing Ophelia as a 14-year-old boy. Once further into the British school system, he took zoology and biology in high school and college. At the time, he says it wasn't so much a passion as it was "the next thing to move on to." He went to the University College of North Wales, the powerhouse of ecology outside of the

United States. His first teaching job was in Africa; he stayed there from 1968 to 1970. Due to his expertise in multivariate analysis in vegetation, he was invited to America. He's not only an educator but also a theorist, as well. "I've had a huge influence on the discipline because I haven't been prepared to do the standard things," he explained. Allen reports that he has always enjoyed teaching: "I got lucky. I think they made a very good choice [here at UW], but I think I got lucky, too."

His career in the ILS Program began in the 1970s with "Plants and Man." "I used to get applause every day in my lectures."

His class is all about integration through labs, lectures, and readings. In the first part of the course, he connects human technology and biology. The second part is about global agricultural origins. Finally, he discusses our "current ecological crisis." He includes history, geography, and science in his course. "I don't leave them any room not to learn," he insisted.

"They [his students] are learning how to be properly decent human beings," he said, matter-of-factly. "I'm a quality guy, so they can learn how to be quality people." He also makes sure that the students understand that more than class work is expected of them. "I ask them if they're worthy citizens of worthy nations, and what they're going to do about it if they're not. Do you treat your friends well? Do you have high personal standards?" He also finds that there can be an opportunity to learn from his students, too. When asked what he learns from his students, he answered, "Not much at all because I'm old and I know a lot. [But] from the 20-year-old under-



grads I work with toe-to-toe, the geniuses, I learn just as much as I would from a colleague." He rewards his students who are the hardest working; he cooks together with some students from his class, inviting the top 1 or 2 percent of the class into his inner sanctum. And if a student has an average of above 95 percent, he allows the student to skip the final. This gives the student "an invitation to the sandbox, and with that comes a lifelong offer to write them any letter of recommendation they ever want, because those half-dozen students are brilliant and they never put a foot wrong."

Again, meeting Tim Allen was like no experience that I had ever had before!

On Teaching at Wisconsin continued from back cover

I was an early-computer-based botanist and got into scaling. From there I came to realize that changes in quantity can make for changes in quality. I went on to invent my own version of hierarchy theory in my 1982 book *Hierarchy, Perspectives for Ecological Complexity*. Since 1980, I have been a theorist of complex systems on the ground floor of all that. I work well with undergrads who can get theory. They are simply brilliant. I mentor them for a few weeks and then basically they become colleagues. Five books later, I am presently working on narratives versus models, and ecological economics

in a mix of thermodynamics interacting with coded structures. My lab works on a range of practical and applied ideas but always with an eye on theory. In 2009, I was president of the International Society for the Systems Sciences (so were Margaret Mead, Ken Boulding, and Ilya Pirogoine) — quite an honor.

I joined ILS in 1980 in the rise of the program as a phoenix. Only Joe Elder is left on staff from those days. It has been a joy to teach my course, "Contemporary Life Science," every year since. Every year, my students have been so generous with their applause. I pull those who

really get it into my lab. ILS students and faculty remain such a joy to be around. I get e-mails and letters decades later from former students. Flying to the U.K. once, I had two former students from different decades in the Chicago airport come up and say, "Allen, yes a great course." ILS works so well because the faculty are devoted teachers who all have a huge view that appears to overlap. They are my best friends.



Thursday meeting of the Ecological Methods course in the 1970s at the Arboretum



650 North Lake Street
Madison, WI 53706-1476



Integrated Liberal Studies
UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN-MADISON

**“Thinking together,
independently”**

— Alexander Meiklejohn

Spring 2011

On Teaching at Wisconsin

By Professor Tim Allen

I got my PhD in 1968 studying algae on rock surfaces. I could clear-cut my stands of vegetation with a razor blade. After two years teaching in Ife, Nigeria, I applied for my present position, basically replacing John Curtis. It happened that Curtis' wife, Jane, was in Ife sitting in on my lectures. I also knew Bob McIntosh and had visited him in Notre Dame in 1969. On that visit to the U.S., I paid a pilgrimage to see where Curtis had done his work. I was trained in the Curtis School, but in North Wales. Little did I know that meeting a couple of Botany people at the time turned out, in retrospect, to be a job interview. So when I applied six months later, all that lined up and I was offered a visiting assistant professorship that became tenure track. It doesn't work like that these days. I'm still here. For a spur of the moment hiring, I think it worked out well.

Continued on page 11



Working on the departments of Botany and Biology's shared minicomputer, aka BOZO, in the 1970s.