

AlumNotes

HUNTER COLLEGE HIGH SCHOOL ALUMNAE/I ASSOCIATION, INC.

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Winter 2002

President's Letter

Dear Fellow Alums & Friends of HCHS:

I'm fresh from attending our annual Winter Brunch on February 3 where I was delighted that we drew one of our largest groups yet for this cozy event—38 attendees from a wide spectrum of graduating classes. It was a great warm-up for our largest event of the year, the annual Reunion, which is scheduled for Sunday, June 2, this year. I look forward to meeting many of you at that time. I also attended Homecoming at the High School on December 20. This event is sponsored by the PTA and features recent alums, who come back to visit the juniors and seniors and talk to them about college and life in general after high school. This year about 80 alums from the class of 2001 attended, representing 40 colleges. The Alumnae/i Association footed half the bill for the bagel breakfast and pizza luncheon and also presented the High School with a check for \$8,965 which represented some prior class gift commitments.

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Reunion 2002 Is Fast Approaching

Reunion 2002 will be held on Sunday, June 2nd, at Hunter College High School (94th Street & Park Avenue). Graduates from all years are invited to attend, with milestone classes (those ending in 2 or 7) being encouraged to arrange extra activities for Reunion weekend (or any other date convenient for your class). Most milestone classes now have volunteer coordinators working to locate and contact members of their classes and plan special get-togethers (see page 7 for details). If you are a member of a milestone class and have not yet heard from your class coordinator(s), you might want to contact them to make sure you are on their mailing list (this is especially important if you graduated a year earlier or later than the bulk of your classmates!!)

Our Reunion program will begin with individual class gatherings at 10 a.m. (check-in starts at 9:30, with continental breakfast available), followed

by a general assembly and a buffet luncheon. Pre-registration is encouraged and can be accomplished by using the form on the back page. Dues and class gifts can be paid concurrently (check your dues expiration month/year, printed above your mailing address on the back page of this issue).

Alums from classes of more than 50 years ago are especially welcome, and for them we offer a discounted admission price of \$15. If you haven't attended Reunion lately, please note that there are elevators available in the building and we now rent proper tables and chairs (no more uncomfortable picnic-style tables to maneuver in and out of). We also changed caterers a few years ago and have had many compliments on the food.

All of us at the Alumnae/i Association look forward to welcoming you to Reunion 2002! □

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Board Nominations Now Open

A Nominating Committee will soon be established to seek candidates for the Alumnae/i Association's Board of Directors. Dues-paid members may make nominations of individuals, including themselves, until the close of business on Friday, May 24, by writing, calling or emailing the association's office. Board members are expected to attend monthly meetings in Manhattan and to participate in ongoing work such as fundraising

and event planning. All members in good standing by virtue of having paid their dues are eligible to vote in Board elections. If you wish to vote, you must pay your dues by the date of the Reunion; if you wish to run for a position on the board, you must pay your dues at the time you are nominated. (Your dues expiration date, Month/Year, appears above your name and address on the back page of this newsletter.) □



Letters to the Editor

To The Editor:

The Fall 2001 edition of *AlumNotes* was an exceptional issue which dealt primarily with the September 11th WTC disaster. Reading the letters from alumnae/i who had experiences dealing with the disaster on a personal level, I feel that I must add something to this list, albeit not my own, but that of my grandson.

Anthony is a sophomore at NYU. His dorm is on Water Street. At 9:00 a.m. on 9/11, he and his roommate were walking to class when the first plane struck the tower. The impact of the collision rocked them both, and Anthony's roommate was actually knocked down to the sidewalk. Not knowing what was happening, but sensing immediate danger, they both began running north. Eventually they made it to the apartment of a friend who lived uptown.

When Anthony was finally able to contact his parents in Pennsylvania by phone, his first statement was, "I'll go to any school in Pennsylvania, but I don't want to be in New York; I'm too frightened." His parents wisely agreed with him and calmed him down as best they could over the phone. Anthony came home on Friday and spent the weekend there. By Monday he began to feel more secure within himself and returned to school. Time, as we know, is a great healer. Anthony no longer feels threatened by being in New York; in fact, he would no longer consider leaving and loves New York more than ever. As his grandmother, I know that feeling quite well, having spent my high school and college years in New York at Hunter.

Dickie KESSLER Miller '44

To the Editor:

You will be receiving much praise and many thanks for the remarkable Fall 2001 issue of *AlumNotes*. Your decision to include a few of the personal reactions of fellow alums in New York and around the world to the horror of 9-11-2001 was totally welcome and so, by the way, was your organization of the whole issue. It was marvelous. My husband, who grew up in the

metropolis of Mitchell, South Dakota (pop. 12,000), said he found it to be "very moving." You can be proud, as am I.

Class Notes-1940s included a question from Jean MOVERMAN Leonard about certain members of the class of January 1944, which was my class. Some of us spent seven years riding the subway to and from 68th and Lexington to attend the high school and then Hunter College. It was an era that went through World War II and its privations, but people could still feel safe in letting their 13-year-old daughters do that. Because we came from all directions, it was hard to spend much after school time with classmates. I can't help out about the three people she mentioned she is looking for.

The war years affected us even without relatives in the armed forces. Very few treats for growing kids as butter and sugar were rationed, but things became serious in the clothing and shoe aspects. Two pairs of shoes a YEAR per person, as I recall, and we all had to have saddle shoes! Among my memories is history teacher Miss Matthews who had the then-radical idea of having us arrange our chairs in a circle. She could then throw a piece of chalk at the one who gave a wrong answer. I sat as near to outside the door as I could. Two years of Latin was required of all students long before it became fashionable. Our teacher, a Miss Field, seemed perpetually sad to us, and we decided she must have lost her fiancé during the Spanish-American War! Naughty!

I can suggest another name to you for, perhaps, general interest. There was a girl one or two years behind us whose name was Smyla or Smila (pronounced Smeela) Brynd or Brind. We were in the drama club and, being 5'10", I got to play the Leslie Howard part of Henry Higgins and Smyla was Eliza in our scene from "Pygmalion." It was years before Rex Harrison and "My Fair Lady." She was a sweet-faced girl with pigtails looped up with ribbons, like my own, and she had been one of

the radio "Quiz Kids." She went on to have a career in movie acting using the name Vanessa Brown. I remember her most vividly as the daughter of Gene Tierney in "The Ghost and Mrs. Muir," which also starred Rex Harrison. I have often wondered what happened to her and suggest her to you for a subject of a future close-up, someone many people from that era would know about as a minor celebrity...IF her story turned out happily, that is.

It was awful to enjoy the long profile of Bernadine Healy (in the Summer issue) and immediately thereafter see her run into a political and emotional buzz saw. So sad. Best wishes for 2002.

Gisela RITTER Gall, Jan. '44

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Letters ...

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To the Editor:

I lost my brother, Keith Glascoe (not an HCHS alum), in the September 11th terrorist attack. He was among the more than 300 firefighters who died in the collapse of the World Trade Center. Keith leaves behind two sons—Nolan, 3 years old, and Owen, 17 months old—and his wife, Veronica, who is expecting their third child in May 2002. The September 11th attacks have caused both personal tragedy and professional challenges for me. My husband, Calvert, and I own a management consulting firm called Wright Solutions Inc., which is based in Lanham, Maryland. We are approximately four miles from Washington and 15 miles from the Pentagon. Between the plane crash on September 11th, a tornado ripping through our area on September 18th and the anthrax scare on Capitol Hill in October 2001, which nearly shut down our local mail system, we have been faced with numerous challenges to our firm's well-being. I am bound and determined to improve the success of our company. I am also committed to strengthening ties with my family in New York and renewing my ties to HCHS and the friends that I made while attending HCHS. As a milestone, I am anxiously anticipating my 20th reunion. I have even been thinking about some of my classmates that entered Hunter with me, but either graduated or left early. I hope they, as well as former teachers, get word of the reunion plans and make every effort to attend. I'd just like to say that having spoken to many people over the years about their respective experiences in high school (mostly BAD), I cannot thank Hunter enough for being the

wonderful school that it was and still is. I loved going to Hunter. I enjoyed the teachers, the students and the experiences that I had. I truly appreciate the time that I spent at Hunter College High School.

Lee GLASCOE Wright '82

To the Editor:

I read with interest the last issue of *AlumNotes*. Please add me to your list of Hunterites who were part of the American Musical Theater workshop group. I was part of the original cast from 1959-1960. Ethel Burns recruited me from WNYE's All-City Radio Workshop and the experience was a major highlight of my life at that time.

The letter from Nell COCHRANE Taylor '47 also brought back pleasant memories. She was my homeroom teacher for 7A3 starting in September 1954, when she was still Miss Cochrane. She was also my English teacher after she married and when she was expecting her first child.

One last note: The Hunter training still pays off. This summer, I visited Germany and, to my delight, language lessons from 40+ years ago came back and I was able to converse with relative ease. Thanks, Miss Karle!!

Edith ELBERT Michaelson '60

To the Editor:

I am enclosing my annual dues and a contribution to the Jack McNeil Memorial Fund. He was a great teacher who made class a lot of fun. I remember always looking forward to it. I also remember how he encouraged us to go to museums and not to be intimidated by the "suggested admission." He told us that he would put down a nickel and "look them straight in the eye." I smile each time I think of him and recount this story to friends whenever I go to a museum.

Jeehye Park '84

Winter Brunch Wrap-Up

The Alumnae/i Association's annual Winter Brunch was held on Sunday, February 3, at Raymond's Café, Seventh Avenue between 15th and 16th Streets. We enjoyed eating and conversing in a private dining room downstairs where the menu included a choice of entree, including such savories as hot & sour smoked breast of duck salad, linguini with smoked salmon, and smoked salmon, dill and cream cheese omelette, as well as a special, decadent pumpkin cheesecake dessert. Attendance totaled 38 alums from classes ranging from 1928(!) right up to 1992. Camaraderie was the order of the day as we discussed our memories of Hunter High as well as a range of other topics. Watch for notice of next year's Winter Brunch and put it on your must-do list! □

Desperately Seeking Sarah Maria Jones

If you are in touch with a classmate who isn't receiving *AlumNotes*, tell us how to reach her (or him). We rely on our members to help keep our database up to date. You can also let us know if you are looking for a "lost" classmate. We may be able to help you get back in touch. (In case you didn't know, Sarah Maria Jones was the name given to the archetypal Hunter High student.) □

High School Wants Art Slides

If you have professional, labeled art slides and would like to donate them to the art history slide archive project at the High School, please contact the Alumnae/i Association and we'll give you the information you need. (Tel. # 212-772-4079 or email: hchs alums@yahoo.com.) □

Join A Special Group

Your legacy can mean a brighter future for our alma mater. By including the Hunter College High School Alumnae/i Association, Inc. in your will or estate plans, you will help continue the special enrichment projects that we fund at the High School. If you have already included HCHSAA in your will, thank you! If you'd like to include us, use the name "Hunter College High School Alumnae/i Association, Inc., a New York not-for-profit corporation."



Remembrances of Hunter High

An excerpt from Recollections of My Life as a Woman, The New York Years, 2001 by Diane di Prima '51 (By permission of the author. All rights reserved.)

Hunter was darker and lighter, at once, than anything I had experienced. Dark locker rooms, dark slate stairs. Institutional halls. High windows with small square panes. Light of the mind and light of a little space. Stepping out of that Brooklyn culture, I scrambled to fill up whatever space there was, like one of those crystals that shapes itself to the opening that's available...

It seems I spent the first year there learning the ropes. Learning what we now call social skills. Could I hold my own, could I keep the others amused. My wit went from clown to biting, but it was a while before I let on what I thought. Let anyone into my maverick inner world. Thoughts and opinions. And I never let anyone in on the facts of my home, effectively forgot them myself. My life was probably no

stranger than anyone else's—that was quite a gathering. There was Sylvia, who later left, age fourteen, for Israel, the new land of freedom (or so it seemed for a minute) to live on a kibbutz with her lover. There was Gloria, whose father (she told us) was a murderer from Spain. He had had to leave quickly (was it the Civil War?). We visited him sometimes, where he, suave, tended bar in the Village, Gloria always wistful for his notice... There was Bobi, skinny, Lithuanian and poor, with a kind of fierce slum energy and Renee, an Armenian who cried almost all the time. And there was always Audre Lorde, who was later to become a poet of note. Black and fierce, and in those days often unreadable. She kept us guessing with her eyes and her silence. A kind of knowing and a kind of contempt.

There were meetings of the Young Progressives I never went to and socialist songs in the halls. The war was over, and all the world was astir. Some of the teachers were the best of all at this all-women's school. Women teachers of all kinds modeled a plethora of

ways of being women. And still being smart and saying what they knew. A whole spectrum of possibility. I remember walking that first term into my first science classroom ever, the world of microphotography just opening up dimension: huge blowups, black and white prints on the wall, and stamens, stems, cells were so beautiful! Shapely - another order. Ruth Lilienthal, our biology teacher, a small woman on a high stool, who later went to Japan to study Zen. Or the dark intensities of our English classes. Miriam Burstein, beautiful as her name. Her thick, dark hair. Allie Lewis, the actress turned Shakespeare teacher. She had us performing the plays day after day. Our rage, our lust, our fear, our greed for power. We owned it shamelessly in her class. Or Mrs. Robbins, our history teacher, who sent us by ones and twos into the libraries and progressive research institutions. Vast caves lined in dark wood. Institute for Pacific Relations where I learned about Mao. The strug-

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How It All Began - Hunter's First Year

This article is adapted from one that originally appeared in the magazine "That's What's Special" published in Summer, 1990 by the Alumnae/i Association. The Editor's Note accompanying the original article states that it was drawn primarily from the first three chapters of Hunter College: Eighty-Five Years of Service by Samuel White Patterson, Prof. Emeritus, publ. in 1955.

In 1868, A. Oakey Hall was elected Mayor of New York City. Known as "Elegant Oakey" because of his sartorial splendor, he was a crony of Boss Tweed. Perhaps to take the public's attention away from the flagrant wrong-doing of his cohorts, Elegant Oakey wanted only the most upstanding and well-educated citizens on the board of the city's Department of Public Instruction. Among those he appointed were William Wood, a retired banker, Isaac Bell, a business executive, and Richard Ludlow Larremore, a lawyer and the board's president. All three would play crucial roles in the events of

special interest to us, as alums of Hunter College High School.

When the education board convened in 1869, there was no regular teacher training institution in the city. The state legislature had voted in 1827 and again in 1834 to support training teachers for the common or grade schools, as elementary schools were then known. Young women who had completed the 8th grade of common school were considered competent to teach in lower grades. From 1842 there was occasionally a Saturday Normal School in the city, where primary grade teachers could get some training for their work. In 1847 The Free Academy was founded to provide post-grade school education for boys. Despite calls for a similar school for girls over the next few years, none was established. In 1866 the boys' Academy became the College of the City of New York.

One of the education board's first resolutions was to establish a normal and high school for women. Training women to become teachers was seen

as a way to improve elementary public education in the city. It was also a politically opportune move: There were 100,000 school children in city, many of whose fathers were potential voters. On October 23, 1869, Commissioner Bell invited some of the education board members to dinner at his home to discuss informally the possibility of establishing a normal school. He drafted the resolutions establishing a Daily Normal School for Females that would provide "a constant supply of trained and competent teachers" for the city's schools. A month later, on November 17, 1869, the education board approved the resolutions unanimously and authorized preliminary funding.

Commissioner Wood then sought out Thomas Hunter, whose reputation as an educational innovator was rapidly spreading, to turn plans for a normal school into reality. Hunter, originally a drawing teacher, was born in Ireland of Scottish parents and came to New

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Alum Profile - Sandi Simcha DuBowski '88



Oil and water, Kant and Nietzsche, William F. Buckley and Gore Vidal. Orthodox Judaism and homosexuality. What makes *Trembling before G-d*, a feature-length documentary on homosexuality in the Orthodox Jewish community, so compelling is its groundbreaking exploration of a group of people whose religion and lifestyle seem implacably opposed and mutually exclusive. Sandi DuBowski '88, who directed and co-produced, has received broad acclaim for his film, which follows the lives of eight men and women who are gay yet "fromm," adhering to a faith that denounces fiercely and without reservation their lifestyle.

Trembling before G-d has won in the best documentary category in the Berlin, Chicago, Seattle and Turin film festivals. In addition, it took the Mayor's Prize for the Jewish Experience at the Jerusalem Film Festival. *LA Weekly* named it one of the ten best films of the year. The film received support from a score of foundations as well as Skywalker Sound, a division of Lucas Digital, and, recently, Steven Spielberg's Righteous Persons Foundation. Despite denunciations in many Orthodox circles, the film has generated interest and dialogue for a topic that previously had received scant attention.

"This has been an unexpected journey," DuBowski reflects. He had aspirations to be a veterinarian when he was young and was deeply interested in psychology at Hunter. For his ICY

(Inter-College Year) project, he started a peer counseling program with Alexandra Cordero '88 and two advisers from the Counseling Department. "We worked with kids in ninth through 12th grades and had a beautiful retreat upstate," DuBowski remembered. DuBowski, who graduated magna cum laude from Harvard in 1992 with two Ford Program for Undergraduate Research Awards, started to look at film from an academic angle at Harvard where he majored in Social Studies and wrote a thesis on the presentation of the male form in Hollywood. "Harvard was where I explored being gay," he recalls. He came out very publicly—in a school newspaper—spring term of freshman year. Before that he remembers visiting Hunter that first Christmas vacation after graduation and making a stammering admission to Deborah Hicks, who had been his counselor and adviser, that he was gay—the first time he told anyone. "She was very supportive—she was into alternative spirituality and reassured me that in the Native American tradition, gay people were spiritual leaders."

The Hunter experience was special. "Hunter was so nurturing. Six years. I know every nook and cranny, I know how the wall curves at the auditorium," DuBowski recalls. "[I] was on the volleyball team—can't imagine how I did a sport!" he added. He credits Hunter for bringing him out of Brooklyn and teaching him how to think. "It's hard to imagine the pre-Hunter me." He barely knew what Hunter was, as he recalled his father saying, "There's this test, take it for practice. Then all of a sudden I got in." His fondest memory of Hunter was spending endless hours in the courtyard and Central Park with good friends, many of whom are still close. He remembers "Red, Red Wine," a UB40 offering that was traditionally the last song played at school dances, and the "D" train which became "a second home" for him, a Sheepshead Bay native. DuBowski knew he was gay at Hunter, a fact that he thinks was not a secret to his friends, though he never admitted it. "I kept it kind of bottled up, though today I think I would have come out at Hunter. There is so much attention to gay issues

now; it's now common to come out in high school."

DuBowski's filmmaking debut was 1994's *Tomboychik*, a short feature comprised of a series of vignettes that depicted the relationship between DuBowski and his 88-year-old grandmother. "I never intended it to be anything more than an oral history of my grandmother. One day I just stole my family's camcorder and a toupee and started filming," DuBowski recalls. *Tomboychik*, filmed in his grandmother's home, won the 1994 Golden Gate Award for Best Short Documentary. Prior to that he worked for three years as a research associate at the Planned Parenthood Federation of America, merging strategic analysis and video of the Christian right wing that has been used to train human-rights activists. Trying to explain the segue between *Tomboychik* and *Trembling*, DuBowski explains: "Sometimes you choose projects, sometimes they choose you.... It started as a personal video diary but it became a much greater commitment; I realized the pain of people who were gay...it gave a voice to people who had none." According to DuBowski, *Trembling* "was my yeshiva and film school rolled into one." While he grew up in a conservative Jewish home, making the film has made him more religious—"...It touched an ancient bone in my body."

"No one believed that this film could be made," DuBowski recounts. "I had to find people...it became a worldwide search that took six years. For each of eight subjects profiled in *Trembling*, there were hundreds contacted. The vast majority would or could not be filmed. "It was very hard to film anyone living inside the Orthodox community." In the early stages, in Jerusalem, DuBowski was forced to hand out fliers to gay men cruising in public parks to find subjects, since no gay Orthodox organizations or meeting places existed. Research took him to audiences with the former chief Sephardic rabbi of Israel as well as the Amshinover Hasidic Rebbe, who had markedly different reactions to the film's subject matter as well as the anguish of gay Jews who choose to remain Orthodox.

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The HCHS Entrance Exam - A Parent's Perspective

by Amy Finnerty

Reprinted with permission of the author. Originally appeared in the January 18, 2002, edition of The Wall Street Journal.

It is barely light outside as my 11-year-old daughter and I make our way to the subway stop in our Brooklyn neighborhood. We are on our way to the Upper East Side, where she will take the entrance exam for Hunter College High School, a famously fine public school, admission to which is considered something of a jackpot for middle-class New York parents. All of the standards and rigor of an excellent private school, with none of the tuition.

But on this morning she and I are also officially entering a strange new world—of elite academic credentializing and the ferocious competition for it. It feels a bit premature, but then New York parents, many of whom must put their children through competitive interviews for private kindergartens, are used to this sort of thing. I am not, not yet. After two expensive sessions to review the advanced math on the test, my sixth-grader has figured her chances of getting in at slightly worse than one-in-a-hundred, odds that she notes with philosophical good humor and even relief. She's thriving at her current school and at the moment is looking forward to a sleepover she has planned for later this evening. But enough about her. We mothers and fathers are, as psychotherapists like to put it, narcissistically invested in the success of our children—so much so that an unpleasant, bureaucratic and competitive admissions process inspires in us a slavish obedience and enthusiasm. And the mention of "test scores" or "class rank" transforms us from confident grown-ups into insecure children.

These feelings must be familiar to any parent who, seeing a child's high-school graduation approach, has had to scan the college lists, read up on SAT scores and do some anxious back-of-the-envelope calculations about which schools are possible and

which may be out of reach. But Hunter's admissions mailing, which some parents I know have dubbed the "fuhgedaboutit" letter, suggests that it's never too soon to start worrying—2,500 sixth graders, it says, will compete for a mere 240 spaces. And yet because Hunter is a public school and not a private one, the contest is already taking on an instructive, democratic cast—not that it is any less ruthless.

As we rattle uptown on the No. 4 train, a woman with a Brooklyn accent, trailed by her own glum, pencil-laden offspring, spots us. "You must be goin' to the Huntah test," she observes. She looks my daughter up and down, as if sizing up the competition. We chat about our educational aspirations for our children as they sit by in silent horror. In the same subway car, a clutch of seemingly street-hardened 11-year-olds is traveling, parent-free, with admission tickets in hand, toward the test location at 68th and Lexington Avenue. I'm guessing that they have not benefited from confidence-enhancing tutoring, not to mention book-lined living rooms. And their parents aren't even dropping them off. My daughter eyes them with searing envy.

We are 45 minutes early and it is freezing cold. In a coffee shop near Hunter, a dozen pre-teens, representing as many ethnic and socio-economic niches, are fidgeting in booths or on counter stools, not eating the hearty breakfasts ordered by their parents who, by contrast, appear glowing and energized. Several adults are standing in the crowded aisle to free seats for the young and gifted. At the counter, an East Asian father (Vietnamese? Chinese?) is coaching his son, talking persistently as eggs-over-easy congeal on the miserable boy's plate. How much ambition, one wonders, is being loaded onto the child's performance today? Are they immigrants? Are they poor? Is he the first in his family to have a shot at the American education gravy train? In a nearby booth, a mother with a Kate Spade bag pushes hot chocolate toward her daughter and tells her to drink it. There are

other mothers, fixing hair clips—"How can you see with your hair in your eyes?"—and suggesting last trips to the bathroom, but the fathers have made a stronger showing here than the women, in a strange inversion of school drop-off culture. Maybe the big guns only come out for events worth more than \$15,000 a year in disposable income.

We have all been given color-coded cards, one to allow our children to enter the test hall, the other to allow us to claim them at the end of the ordeal. At the entrance I am stopped by two uniformed guards who inform me that "the girl can go in" to the building but that I can't. They seem unimpressed when I protest that "I'm her MOTHER." It is dawning on me that, in the real world, 11-year-olds are free to roam municipal institutions unsupervised. It's also clear that, at events such as this, some parents are probably pushy nightmares from whom the children need armed protection. My daughter seems delighted by the doorway drama and by my lack of authority in this official venue. She kisses me good-bye and disappears into the crowd of little overachievers.

My yellow card tells me to report to the Kaye Playhouse at 12:15. There I am herded to the red section where, I'm told, my child will find me after she is dismissed. A bossy functionary on the stage hectors the ever-docile parents: "Please don't stand in the aisles. Please take your children for a very nice lunch and leave." Nearby an extended family—grandmother, parents, siblings—awaits one test-taker. They are also Asian, and, to their great fortune, they seem not to notice the woman on stage. Their hope for the future emerges from backstage, smiling. His expression is quietly triumphant, and they all beam and nod. This is one young student who probably knows the difference between, say, "affect" and "effect." As my own child walks toward me, I try to read her expression, but she's poker-faced. "It was OK, and I'm glad

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