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Editor's Introduction to the 24th Issue

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Editor's Introduction to the 24th Issue

This year, Saint John's Abbey/University and Saint Benedict's Monastery celebrated their sesquicentennial. But the changes in our local landscape since the first monks of Saint John's picked boulders from the fields to build the walls that remain today amount to the blink of an eye on the scale of geologic time. In the opening article, "Stone Walls: Stories from Minnesota's Geologic Past," **Larry Davis** echoes St. Benedict's edict to *listen* by inviting us to slow down, take a stroll on campus, slide a hand along a stone wall, feel the texture, and gaze at the patterns in the shapes and the colors while asking the question, "So stone, what is your story?"

Continuing in the sesquicentennial spirit, **Hilary Thimmesh, OSB**, in his essay on "Saint John's University and Minnesota Public Radio," offers a fascinating front-row account of the birth of Minnesota Public Radio at Saint John's 40 years ago. At the present "post-9/11" juncture in American history, where the prayers of a group of Muslim imams at the Minneapolis airport is enough to set off the terror alarm bells, it's perhaps more than a footnote of history that the first radio operation at heavily German Saint John's was shut down by the War Department in the wake of anti-German sentiment sweeping the United States after the outbreak of World War I.

A year ago, when I accepted the task of editing this journal, I expressed a vision to raise the profile of *Headwaters* as a vehicle for faculty to bring their specialized disciplinary knowledge to bear on important questions of our time. **Gary Prevost** rises to the challenge in his chronicle on "Fidel Castro and the Cuban Revolution." Castro's revolution, the 1961 Bay of Pigs Invasion, and the Cuban Missile Crisis of 1962 are landmark events that shaped our time.

In reading Prevost's piece, I was struck by the startling realization that most of our faculty now are too young to have any real-time memory of these events or of Castro's rise to power some 50 years ago. The fact that Castro — whose proximity to the United States is roughly equivalent to the distance from our campuses to the State Capitol in St. Paul — has survived in power for nearly half a century in the face of almost unrelenting pressure from the United States, serves as a stark reminder of the pitfalls of imperial hubris as we confront emerging challenges to our national security in Iraq, Iran, and elsewhere around the globe.

One of my failures as editor of this issue is that I was unable to procure an article that explains how toppling a secular dictatorship in Iraq and propping up what is essentially a Shi'a fundamentalist regime backed by militias trained, funded, or supplied by the Iranian Revolutionary Guard advances U.S. national security. But, in the face of our latest stand-off with Iran, I was pleased to have **Noreen Herzfeld** deliver "The Word on the Tehran Street." The good news is that despite the recent decline in U.S. international stature, much goodwill toward America remains among the Iranian people. But, just like us, Iranians have a great deal of national pride. To paraphrase one rank-and-file Iranian Herzfeld met during her visit to Tehran last spring, what they want from us is respect — even if just the modicum of respect we've accorded North Korea.

Although not the major thrust of her paper, **Lisa Ohm**'s observations on "German Identity Changing With the European Union" offers yet another vantage point from which to ponder America's shifting place in the world. With Germany willingly trading off some of its sovereignty in exchange for the benefits of regional cooperation, the European Union, capitalizing on unilateralist policies of the current administration on this side of the Atlantic, seems set on a course to challenge the United States for international leadership.

Luke Mancuso, OSB, with his poem "The Pleasures of Prayer," returns the focus to the more personal side of our sense of place: *Yet the cement skin of this church does not stir. . . .*

In "Moses Has No Tongue," **Jill Zasadny** examines the conflict between Abbot Boniface Wimmer, who led Benedictine men here in 1846, and Prioress Benedicta Riepp, who led Benedictine women to the United States in 1852, underscoring the fact that no organization — not even the religious order that sponsors our institutions — is untouched by the gender issues that form such an important part of our present-day mission and core curriculum.

As a new initiative this year, I invited the winners of the Sister Mary Grell (CSB) and Robert L. Spaeth (SJU) Teacher of Distinction Awards to submit their respective convocation addresses for publication in *Headwaters*. What better way to ensure that the inspirational words of our most talented teachers are permanently etched in our institutional memory? I hope future Teachers of Distinction will follow the lead of Spaeth award winner **Rodger Narloch** ("Why Are We Here?") and Grell award winner **Erin Szabo** ("Hindsight, Foresight, and Insight") by submitting their convocation speeches for publication and sustaining this new tradition at CSB/SJU.

Underscoring the fact that the educational mission of the College of Saint Benedict and Saint John's University transcends the classroom walls, extending, *inter alia*, to

balanced living, **Janna LaFontaine**, **Mary Neisen**, and **Rachelle Parsons** in “Wellness Factors in First-Year College Students” argue that the promotion of wellness behaviors has a positive impact on academic success and contributes to the development of healthy behaviors that can be sustained for a lifetime.

Study abroad is an important part of the educational experience at our institution, with about half of all CSB/SJU students participating in one of our 17 semester-long programs located in 13 countries on six continents. In “Study Abroad As Synecdoche,” **Scott Richardson** argues powerfully that the study-abroad experience, whether as student participant or faculty director, offers an amplified vision of the full college experience. I hope this essay is widely read by our students and faculty — if not by virtue of a primary interest in studying abroad (or even our educational vision more generally), then simply because it’s a rhetorical *tour de force*.

Among the many changes I’ve observed at CSB/SJU in my 16 years on the faculty is the progressively higher premium we’ve placed on scholarship and creativity — particularly collaborative faculty–student research. **Michael Reagan**, in “But What Is It That You Actually *Do*?” shows that a sense of humor can be a good antidote to despair when things don’t turn out as planned in the research lab.

The mission of our institution speaks to the Catholic intellectual tradition of integrating knowledge from the liberal arts and sciences to explore the human condition. In “The Unity of All Knowledge,” **Vincent Smiles** argues persuasively that it’s possible — indeed, indispensable — to reconcile science with theology.

Fittingly, then, **Liz Wurdak** caps the current issue of *Headwaters* with her poem, “Fall Migration”: *I wonder / As I gaze skyward / Who has spoken?*

As *Headwaters* went to press, we received word of the passing of Kurt Vonnegut. **Gregory Schroeder**’s tribute also serves as a reminder that all things must pass — ultimately even the stone walls in our opening piece.

*And Jesus said unto them, See ye not all these things? verily I say unto you,
There shall not be left here one stone upon another, that shall not be thrown
down. (Matt. 24:2)*