


# Reflections of a College Applicant

Alison McGuire, *Editor-In-Chief*

On Thursday, January 1 at exactly 1:29:33 pm Eastern Standard Time (at least according to the Internet Explorer confirmation I received), I officially sent off the last part of my eighth and final college application. Yes, the due date was Jan 1 but before you assume that I was in a complete state of stress and panic, let me assure you that despite the appearance of this being a last minute panic activity, it was not and I was not. I'd like to share with you a little about my college application experience because it was completely different from what I had expected and dreaded – and the good news is that it was far, *far* more positive. Somewhere along the line, some lecturer or teacher somewhere said that, in reality, the process is effectively over by the end of junior year – what's done is done. And when that point came, I really felt that to be the case. The pressure was off. I did the best I could reasonably do, I had strengths and weaknesses, and that was it. My mother was keeping herself calm by saying, “Worst comes to worst, there's always the Peace Corps for a year,” and she didn't seem to be freaking out. I agreed; the Peace Corps wouldn't be *so* bad, and think how interesting I would be to colleges after that!



## Happenings

**1/29** - Joint GA/Brunswick Martin Luther King Jr. Day Assembly (8 am in Raether Gym)

**1/30 - 1/31** - Senior Drama Project

**2/02** - Group XI College Night (7 pm in Young Auditorium)

**2/04** - Shakespeare Assembly (2:50 pm in Massey Theater)

**2/05** - Group IX Shakespeare Play - *Othello* (7 pm in Massey Theater)

**2/07** - Brown and White Dance

**2/09** - Ron Brown Dance Company Assembly (1:10 pm in Massey Theater)

**2/12** - End of Third Interim

**2/13 - 12/17** - Mid-Winter Break

To be honest, I had no idea what applying to colleges was like, how long the applications were, whether you wrote or typed them out, what submitting them online meant, what they even looked like. I was a complete college application neophyte. Could a student from Greenwich, CT– land of the gifted, talented, *and* connected – get into any college in America without having straight A's, without being a star athlete or singer, without any major legacies or connections, and without having won a poetry contest or science competition? I felt like I was about to test the limits of the system in a way it had never been tested before. And I am happy to tell you, having already had some preliminary success, that the answer most reassuringly is, yes!

I'm telling you this because I think I would have had fewer sleepless nights if someone had given me a little more of the real "skinny" on this whole thing a little earlier. Our college counsellors have this down to a science and they get us ready in time. Mr. Manella and Mrs. Canning help a lot to keep us on track, keep us relaxed, help us discover what's best about ourselves (and, more importantly, what would be of interest to an admissions officer) and help us match our personalities and interests with the different colleges. So don't worry if you don't know how the process comes

together: you will be led and advised every step of the way.

It's also kind of nice to do things you haven't done before. Prospective student events gave our family excuses for little road trips, family “togetherness” in hotels in various parts of the country, and gave my brother and me excuses to obtain new sportswear at the campus bookstores. I have to admit, it was kind of fun meeting other families in the same boat, running into GA and Brunswick classmates, or bumping into old friends I hadn't seen in years. There was something reassuringly familiar about sitting in on a college class, which you are invited to do, and seeing the college students hiding behind their laptops to catch up on emails or nod off in the back row. So this is college! You might even learn something new! I was really ready for Mrs. Hyman's AP chem class on electrochemical cells after attending a lecture on the same topic at Duke University. And I just happened to be present in a biomedical engineering class at Dartmouth when the guest lecturer was Dr. C. Everett Koop, former Surgeon General of the United States.

Truth be told, I enjoyed the events of the college app process – the flood of mail and brochures, the email communication, the invitations to campus events, the online chats – thank goodness for marketing and mailing lists!

## "A Modest Proposal"

Maggie Duus, *Junior Editor*

Sitting in class on a rainy November day, I thought about Greenwich Academy's struggles against the brutalities of winter. We, as students, are forced to suffer cold rain, to wear dull plaids, and to neglect the most important of sports (field hockey and lacrosse, of course!). How can we go on as a community?

After much contemplation and reflection, I came to the perfect conclusion: Palm Beach. Yes, my friends, a Palm Beach campus is the solution for a New England winter.

This new campus would be built using the same concepts as the old. It's simple. GA would have a jet to transport students between the campuses. This jet would simply serve as a bigger path. Compare the building of this new campus to the construction of our new upper school. Some thought our glass building was also impractical, but look

at its amazing success. May it never shatter.

First and foremost, the Palm Beach extension could improve our community's cultural awareness. Honestly, how many Floridians do we have enrolled currently? It would be another step in our diversification!

The Palm Beach community zoo also offers academic enrichment. Does Greenwich have an animal zoo? I don't think so.

The garlic fest, another major attraction of Palm Beach, could improve our fine culinary skills.

And, instead of drab New England plaid, students would be exposed to bright Lilly Pulitzer prints. Ah, think of the depth of thought we all would achieve meditating for hours on our beach towels in the sun, the brilliant insights we'd have, the poems we'd write.

Furthermore, those of us with pasty skin – not that pasty skin can't be beauti-

And everyone gets on them, once you get into the College Board database. If you want to speak to someone on a particular campus – an admissions officer, a professor, a student – just pick up the phone or email, and they will respond quickly. Remember, we are the group of students it is their job to get to know this year, so they are as interested in us as we are in them. We are the customers and *they* are trying to sell to *us*. Enjoy it while you can! The year will feel so empty when all this attention comes to an abrupt halt.

But perhaps the most valuable part of the whole process is having the opportunity to get to know more intimately a very important person in our lives – ourselves! This process requires us to take a step back and reflect on all the things, large and small, that went into making us who we are, what our formative experiences were and what we've learned from them, what we like and what we don't, what we want and what's important to us. I was surprised, *shocked* really, to find out how much I had to say. It's exciting to put your thoughts together, put them down on paper creatively, send it out and see for whom it strikes a chord. That's how good matches are made.

*With special thanks to Mr. Manella and Mrs. Canning for being there for us, being prepared, keeping us sane, making us laugh, and making us look good. We're looking forward to "utopia!"*

ful – could work on our tans.

More importantly, the new campus also would enhance our athletic department. We could have yearlong sailing - what could be better? With the added practices, a big team, and the many recent successes, I'm sure the sailing team would finally win nationals. And think of the poor horseback-riding girls. They would not have to make the weekly commute down south. The community could finally give proper support and encouragement to our equestrian team. Above all, our lacrosse team could start practicing in January; who needs basketball anyway?

We deserve a Palm Beach campus. Is it not our right to insist on cultural enhancement? Should we not demand increased athletic awareness and support? Is our community really striving for diversity? As a student body, we should rise up and protest this deprivation in the Greenwich Academy community! Who's with me?

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# GA Celebrates Over One Hundred Years of Mumming

Nicole Bozorgmir, *Staff Writer*

Every December, students, faculty, parents and alumnae gather for an assembly unique to Greenwich Academy known as Mumming. Mumming has been a GA tradition for over one hundred years.

In addition to the darkened gym, the table filled with candles, and the songs, Mumming is also known for the tableau vivant, or "living painting." Each year a Renaissance painting is chosen, usually one of the Adoration of the Magi. Seniors dress up as characters from the painting and together they reconstruct the scene.

Many people are involved in creating the tableau. In September, various members of the Arts Department, headed by Mrs. Sherry Tamalonis, bring in samples of possible paintings. From these, they choose the piece they think is best. This year, it was *Adoration of the Kings* by Sandro Botticelli and Filippino Lippi, which is currently in the National

Gallery in London.

Both Botticelli and Lippi were 15<sup>th</sup> century Florentine painters. Lippi painted the Virgin and the baby Jesus, the king who is kissing the baby's foot, and some of the people behind him. Botticelli is responsible for the shepherds and followers, the dwarf and some of the central figures.

One of the reasons this painting was chosen is that with such a large senior class, many people were able to take part. In addition, Mrs. Kate Burt and Ms. Dianne O'Neill loved the colorful costumes.

The backstory to *Adoration of the Kings* is that the Magi, the wise men from the East, have traveled to see Herod, king of Jerusalem. Herod tells them that the baby they are seeking, the son of God, is in Bethlehem and he asks them to bring the baby back to show him.

Secretly, however, Herod intends to kill the child. The baby is saved because an angel warns the Magi not

## Should Mumming Remain a Tradition at GA? Semida: Mumming is Meaningful | Denning: Mumming Divides

Katie Semida, *Junior Editor*

Carrie Denning, *Arts Editor*

Before the winter vacation began, the GA community celebrated Mumming, the traditional all-school winter assembly. While Mumming brought unity and anticipation of the holidays, it also brought the annual debate over whether this tradition belongs in the increasingly diverse GA community.

While Mumming can be toned down and small changes implemented to make non-Christian students feel more comfortable with the situation, no small change can make Mumming completely non-denominational. The ceremony's essence is the Christian songs and the Christian-themed tableau. The only way to get rid of the school's slant toward Christianity on this day is to get rid of Mumming completely.

Yet eliminating such an important school tradition would be wrong. Mumming is an integral part of the Greenwich Academy experience, one that many students look forward to throughout their time at GA and come back to when they have graduated. The ceremony is unique and beautiful, bringing students, faculty, and alumnae together.

The cultural value of the tradition is also significant. This is one of the few occasions when the whole school has an opportunity to appreciate beautiful music and great art together. Students are exposed to the painting in a morning assembly where they are introduced to it. Additionally, they see it on the invitation sent home, and, of course, in the tableau that the seniors recreate at the climax of Mumming. The carols that each grade sings at the ceremony provide exposure to musical masterpieces.

While there are obvious negative aspects of the tradition, the majority of the GA community still supports it. In a diverse community, not everyone will be happy. Yes, Mumming is not perfect and it doesn't satisfy every member of

the community. But its benefits far outweigh its costs, and, as any economics student will attest, that is reason enough to keep the tradition.

I can't speak for every student in the school, and there well may be people



Photo provided by Julianne Mifflin  
*This year, seniors brought to life Sandro Botticelli and Filippino Lippi's Adoration of the Kings in the tradition tableau vivant at Mumming.*

who feel offended by Mumming and left out when they choose not to participate. However, the majority of students do support this tradition, and many, including me, would feel cheated if Mumming were changed or taken away.

With that in mind, diversity is an important goal to achieve in any school, and I believe GA has done a lot to promote racial, ethnic and religious differences in the community as well as further awareness, such as beginning the annual Martin Luther King Assembly and hosting the Names program for the Upper School students. Other holiday concerts have expanded to include Hanukkah, Ramadan and Kwanzaa.

Let's continue with these positive changes and additions, rather than depriving students of one of the most beautiful and important traditions of Greenwich Academy.

Christmas songs, and the senior class reenacts a Renaissance scene of the adoration of the Magi in a stunning tableau vivant. Many students, especially those who have been at GA for a long time, feel partial to the ceremony. Some look forward for their chance to file down the aisle into Raether gym in red gowns their senior year, others anticipate singing a particular song. Yet others offer a different view.

As a patron of the arts myself, I adore seeing a Botticelli or a Piero reenacted on stage, but really, this school is not completely Protestant, Catholic, Muslim, or Jewish. This is a *nondenominational* school. Yes, some might argue that Mumming is a beautiful "tradition," but remember there are traditions, such as ninth grade initiations, that we look back on with an unbiased eye and note their inconsistencies.

numerous other helpers aid in creating the backdrop.

Each year seniors have the opportunity to be a character in the tableau, a privilege that is traditionally based on how long the student has been at GA. However, senior advisor and history teacher Mrs. Carol Dixon said, "We don't like to hold it strictly to seniority. However, for the main parts we might give a little push for those who've been here longer."

In terms of deciding who will have the main parts, this year Ms. O'Neill tried to pick students who match up with the main characters in the painting. She takes into account things like height and overall similarities with the actual painted characters.

To prepare for the tableau, members of the community started planning several weeks ago. According to Mrs. Tamalonis, "The tableau vivant is a tradition in art that goes back at least to the beginning of the Renaissance, cherished by GA's community and alumnae."

Most students who favor Mumming defend their position by saying that it is really not religious at all and should not be considered offensive. Yet, if it did not offend people, this article would not have to be written, and students would be required to attend.

Instead, we sidestep the issue by letting students who feel "uncomfortable" leave, and thus these students are excluded from this tradition, and never know what Mumming is. Instead of saying goodbye to their friends on the Friday before Christmas break, they leave early.

Not only is Mumming offensive to some students, but it emphasizes the homogeneity of our society, even though we claim to be diverse and bristle at all forms of defamation and bigotry. In this environment, no religion should be considered primary, especially at a school that prizes its diversity.

A solution to all of this would be to end Mumming - but that would only create more controversy. Instead, the assembly should be amended. Instead of reenacting a completely Christian scene, why not reenact a secular scene, equally as stunning? Who would not want to see *The School of Athens* illuminated by only candlelight?

And why sing only Christian songs? The musical heritage of other faiths is just as strong. Why not keep a few Christian songs, but add the songs of other cultures, too?

In reality, the controversies of Mumming could be substantially abated by simply amending the program. A school like GA, which tries to be a diverse and accepting environment, should not have an assembly - or any aspect of the curriculum, for that matter - where a student or faculty member could feel self-conscious or embarrassed. This is a school; every voice should be heard; *no one* should ever feel uncomfortable attending or not attending a school-sponsored event - especially such a "time-honored" tradition as Mumming.