

A familiar place

In the immortal words of Dorothy in *The Wizard of Oz*, “There’s no place like home.” I realize this each time I leave New England and visit my native Mobile, Ala.

The hustle and bustle of Boston fades away as soon as I land and I remember that everyone moves—as we say down South—as slow as molasses. The intensity of the Alabama sun embraces me. The familiar sights, sounds and tastes of childhood comfort me and welcome me back to simpler days. The encyclopedia collection that I got in eighth grade is still in the bookcase in my old room. The Victorian-style living room furniture, once covered in protective plastic, is now free to breathe with no children around. And my Mama still cooks my favorites—from grits and bacon (real bacon, not that healthy adult turkey bacon) to Shake N’ Bake pork chops, collard greens and cornbread.

That little ranch-style house in Alabama that now seems impossibly small will always be “home.”

Each of us holds a place like that in our hearts and memories. Wheaton students likely experience the same nostalgia and attachment to home when they leave it, though they may be too exuberant over their newfound independence and freedom to acknowledge it.

But just because there is no place like home doesn’t mean there isn’t room for other places that feel like home—complete with the sense of security, comfort with self,



Renaissance House


Nicki Pardo

and a connection to people who truly get you and want the same things you want.

I have that at my grown-up two-story Colonial with the white fence, big backyard for my 8-year-old son to run free, the deck for dancing to old-school jams with my husband and friends who know how silly I can be, and my all-glass art studio for painting and jewelry making.

Our cover story in this issue of the *Quarterly* is all about “home.” Hannah Benoit writes about how Wheaton students have created a home away from home in a theme-based house where they not only share living space but ideas, goals and challenges the way families do. The Renaissance

House, for women of color, is one of 11 theme houses at Wheaton. And it is so close to home that dishes pile up in the sink and mystery leftovers wait in the fridge to be eaten or pitched.

There is an article about the revival of the Presidents’ House where the college’s true founder, Eliza Baylies Chapin Wheaton, first made students, faculty, staff and townsfolk feel at home. Alumnus Stefan Lukow ’98 talks about how he keeps the homeland safe from terrorists by using the chemistry education he got at Wheaton. And Michael Graca writes about Project Scholarship reaching its financial goal, which will make it possible for more students to call Wheaton home. 

▶ LETTERS

Thankful for Harris books

As a parent of two young children, I read the article on Robie Harris ’62 with only distant interest, thinking I had plenty of time before I needed to look more closely at her books, *It’s Perfectly Normal* and *It’s Not The Stork*. I was wrong.

Although my 5-year-old daughter had never asked specific questions about the child growing inside me, she turned to me one day with some questions that demanded very frank answers. I was totally flustered. And

while she was temporarily put off by my “what do you think?” retort, I knew I had to get my hands on some information.

I immediately turned to a parents’ chat board I frequent and searched the words “early sex education.” Lo and behold a whole thread popped up with many glowing references to Ms. Harris and her books. So I’m off to my favorite online bookstore to order copies of each (with express shipping).

I’m thankful that Ms. Harris writes about the subjects that I, as a parent, am squeamish about.

Heather Van Holland Lawlor ’90

What’s on your mind ?

The *Quarterly* welcomes letters to the editor on topics you’ve read in these pages or on other topics concerning the Wheaton community. Please address your letters to: Sandy Coleman, editor, Wheaton Quarterly, Wheaton College, 26 E. Main St., Norton, Ma. 02766. You can also e-mail us: quarterly@wheatoncollege.edu.