

editor's remarks

Ever since I was a kid, I've been fascinated by the odd things people do and why they do them. I'm pretty sure I cleaned the local library out of every title having anything to do with customs and traditions—why Swedes celebrate Christmas with hot-cross buns and St. Lucia, why we carve up vegetables with spooky faces each October, why we throw rice at a just-wed couple. The more I read, the weirder it got. But, strangest of all, the more sense it made.

I'm an editor, not an anthropologist, but I don't think I would be venturing too far out on a limb by saying that such seemingly arbitrary acts help us make sense of the world. They enable us to mark time, to acknowledge the passing seasons of a changing world and our changing selves. In a sense, embracing traditions and rituals gives us some control—or at least the illusion of it—over the passage of time. These odd things we do and say anchor us to the past, provide continuity in the present, and offer assurance for the future.

It seems to me that some of the richest stores of tradition and ritual are on college campuses, maybe because such places are little microcosms of world and time. Other than the first couple years of life, college is probably the most dynamic time of our lives—when we're figuring out who we are, what others have to say, and where we fit into the wider context. I used to think my Alma Mater (a tiny school in the northern panhandle of West Virginia) had the market cornered on tradition, but since coming to St. Mary's two years ago—well, I'm not so sure. In any case, I hope that you'll enjoy this walk down memory lane and, above all, that reading anecdotes from fellow alums will inspire you to write down your own St. Mary's stories.

I'm more and more convinced that telling good stories is what it's all about. Along with Lee Capristo, director of publications and web, I recently went to Chicago for a conference of alumni magazine editors. It was an invigorating few days that reminded us what a wealth of stories and inspiration we have at our fingertips here at St. Mary's. We came away from the conference with a new perspective on what an alumni magazine can be. As we try new things and look towards future issues, we are guided by a desire to be relevant, entertaining, and enlightening to you, our readers—not just as alumni, but as engaged citizens of the world. As our audience, you are an indispensable part of the equation. What inspires you? What fascinates you? What would you love to read about in these pages? I encourage you to e-mail me at jefossell@smcm.edu with your comments and suggestions.

Enjoy the issue and be in touch!

Best wishes,

Jennifer Fossell O'Sullivan
Editor

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