

By Jessica Seminelli, A&S '12

On Tuesday, September 30, the Presidential Scholars Program welcomed Tom Ashbrook, host of National Public Radio's talk show "On Point," to speak to Scholars on the topic "Impressions From The New China." With an impressive résumé encompassing twenty years as a foreign correspondent, newspaper editor, and author, including ten years in India, Hong Kong, and Japan, and a current position as host of the fastest growing talk show in the country, Mr. Ashbrook spoke easily and insightfully about foreign matters after having witnessed the conditions in China and India

Brian Gray

A Tribute by Dr. Sardella

Although we ordinarily take pride and pleasure in sharing Presidential Scholars Program “firsts” with our readers, it is with great sorrow that I write to inform you of the death of Brian Gray on January 2, 2009. Brian, a member of the PSP Class of 2001, died of natural causes after a long struggle with a serious illness.

Since most of you will not have known Brian, I would like to tell you a bit about him. A Chemistry major, Brian, a native of Garden City, New York, became involved in research almost from the beginning of his undergraduate career, working in the Chemistry Department laboratory of Professor Amir Hoveyda, where he not only became a co-author on two papers, but shared in two patents as well – remarkable achievements for an undergraduate. In addition to having been named a Goldwater Science Scholar in his sophomore year, Brian had the distinction of being the first Presidential Scholar to win a Marshall Scholarship. He was described on the Marshall website in the following words: “Brian Gray of Boston College is an accomplished biochemist who seeks to pursue the control and eradication of infectious disease. He will be studying chemistry at [Cambridge University]. A Goldwater Scholar and intellectual superstar, Brian already has a major journal paper and two patents to his credit. He has been awarded a Pfizer Undergraduate Research Fellowship. He is also socially committed, participating in a 500-mile AIDS vaccine bicycle ride in Alaska, the Boston Marathon in support of autistic children, and HIV-prevention lecture courses for prison inmates.”

After returning from his studies in England, Brian began working toward his Ph.D. in chemistry in the laboratory of Stuart Schreiber at Harvard University, supported by a National Science Foundation pre-doctoral fellowship. Until poor health forced him to interrupt his studies, Brian had already published three additional papers. We learned of his struggles only second-hand, and after the fact, of the bravery and determination with which he fought the disease, of his optimism and hopefulness and his passion for science almost until the end.

Beyond the list of Brian’s intellectual achievements, though, perhaps the best way to remember him was for the energy and passion that he invested in all his pursuits, whether in science or in service to others less fortunate, and his ever-present sense of humor. My own image of him is as he was when I last saw him during his undergraduate years and at graduation, and my memories are happy ones – like Brian in France sporting his outrageous red beret (“so everyone will know I’m a tourist”) and lugging around his chess set, playing whenever he found a few minutes’ leisure. Brian’s was a life cut tragically short, but nonetheless well lived.

Ashbrook cont. from p. 1

China’s seemingly endless supply of human capital is what will potentially most amaze and alarm us, according to Ashbrook, because were war to break out, we would be shocked at their ability to “muster giant armies and throw them away.” Because its population is so enormous, poverty still persists in China, especially in rural areas. But even the most impoverished Chinese are now propelled by the hope of entering the upper levels of society and capitalizing on the country’s recent economic boom.

This spirit of nationalism grows from the memories of European and American exploitation of China in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. This horrible cycle of self-punishment has ceased, and China now has enough money, power, and pride not to return to that position. Ashbrook warned that we must cater to the Chinese nationalism and learn to respect them and to understand their political and cultural DNA.

Shifting focus to discuss his career history, Ashbrook also explained how he worked in the newspaper industry for many years before realizing that the Internet was quickly going to displace his job market, so he left the newspaper industry to begin a short-lived internet company. After writing a memoir on his experiences in the dot com startup world, he was on his

way to opening another company when he received a call from WBUR-FM, one of the Boston NPR stations, three days after the 9/11 tragedy asking if he would be willing to do a short-term radio talk show, as the station was desperate for fresh people to cover the seemingly endless news in light of the attacks.

Though he had never done a live broadcast before, the need for his service as host was urgent, and as a result, Ashbrook discovered something he “enjoyed more than print journalism.” What was envisaged as a temporary program quickly morphed into a permanent feature on WBUR, and for the past seven years he has hosted “On Point,” a show dedicated to analyzing news and encouraging lively intellectual discussion about issues that matter most in our modern society. From his experience, he offered the advice to Scholars that “when you are thrown into something in an emergency, you should embrace that.”

His final remarks told students to “go out, compete hard, and help lead, not just to make your own fortune, but to pull a whole country together and pull with China.” Tom Ashbrook was a lively, enriching speaker who shared invaluable knowledge and experience about the world in which we live and offered students a wealth of advice and information during the discussion session.

Prospective Scholars Visit Boston

Largest PSP Weekend in Program's History

By Hope Sullivan, A&S '11

At the start of each spring semester, the Presidential Scholars Program welcomes a group of talented high school seniors to Boston College to interview for the Presidential Scholarship. This year, 63 students made the trip to Chestnut Hill, coming from as far away as Los Angeles, Miami, and South Korea, making this the largest class of prospective students ever assembled. Each year, current Scholars volunteer to host the prospective students in their rooms during the five-day process.

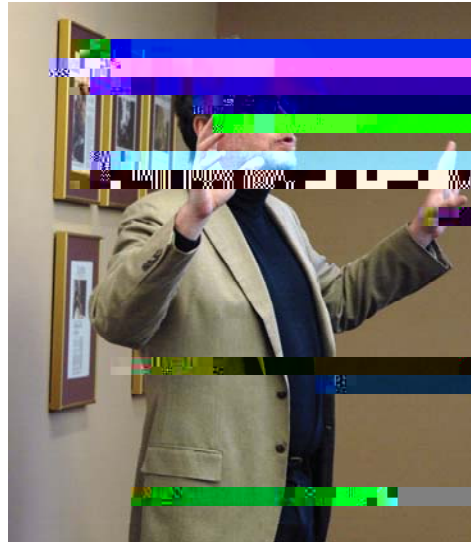
Upon their arrival on Wednesday, February 4, the prospective students met their hosts and enjoyed a pizza dinner in the Admissions Office at Devlin Hall. After moving into their temporary dormitory residences, prospective and current Scholars gathered at Lawrence House for an evening of desserts and games organized by the students involved in the PSP Weekend committee. The evening provided an opportunity for the prospective students to get acquainted with each other and the Scholars before the intensive schedule of the following days.

Over the next two days, each student completed two interviews, one with a BC faculty member, the other with an admissions officer. Prospective Scholars learned about the Presidential Scholars Program through a presentation by Dr. Dennis Sardella along with three current Scholars and one Scholar alumnus. They also wrote a timed essay on a topic relating to contemporary global leadership, as a

test of their writing skills and their ability to form a coherent argument. During their unscheduled time, prospective students were encouraged to visit Honors Program classes and to explore the campus as much as possible.

On Thursday, a special afternoon session of the PSP Evening Speaker series featured Professor Seth Jacobs of the History Department, who critiqued historian Samuel Huntington's controversial article, "The Clash of Civilizations," which offers a realist perspective on international relations. Following an enthusiastic question-and-answer session, prospective and current Scholars, PSP alumni, and Boston College faculty members gathered for dinner in the Murray Room of the Yawkey Center. Fr. William Neenan, S.J., Vice President and Special Assistant to the President, was the featured speaker, offering the prospectives guidance on the weighty decision of choosing the right college, and on the Jesuit method of reflection. Fr. Neenan's reflections were preceded by his trademark humor and trivia session, in which he posed questions to the prospective Scholars, awarding some of his favorite books as prizes for correct answers.

Friday afternoon featured a trip into the city for a trolley tour of Boston, highlights including the Massachusetts State House, the Public Garden, Fenway Park, and Trinity Church, narrated by senior Scholars. The tour was followed by dinner at the Hard Rock Café and a showing at Boston's Colonial Theater of Peter Morgan's play *Frost/Nixon*, which was recently adapted



into an award-winning movie.

Prospective Scholars and their parents attended Saturday's Honors Admitted Eagle Day to gain an inside look at the workings of the Honors Program, as well as other BC departments. Later that night, Boston College's jazz band, BC bOp!, performed for prospective and current Scholars. In keeping with the tradition of recent years' PSP Weekends, the prospective students danced along with the music, even forming a conga line around the upstairs of Corcoran Commons as current Scholars, and the diners below, watched.

On Sunday morning, students and their families were invited to attend a closing Mass at St. Mary's Chapel, celebrated by Fr. Jack Butler, S.J., a favorite among BC students. After the service, students, families, and faculty joined one last time for brunch and closing remarks from Susan Migliorisi, Assistant Director of Undergraduate Admissions and the co-organizer of PSP Weekend along with PSP Assistant Director Jennie Thomas. The weekend was deemed a great success by all involved, and the prospective students departed for their homes to await news of who would be offered a place in the Presidential Scholars Program Class of 2013.

Advanced Study Grant Presentations

By Sarah Collier, A&S '12

The Presidential Scholars Program's Evening Speaker Series periodically features presentations not only from outside professionals but also from Scholars whose experiences inform and inspire underclassmen to pursue their own internships and undergraduate research. At the November 4 Evening Speaker Meeting, five Scholars described the Advanced Study Grant (ASG) projects they undertook during the summer of 2008. In amounts ranging from \$500 to \$2,000, these awards aim to prepare freshmen and sophomores for higher-level research as upperclassmen. The five Scholars who presented shared their intentions for future research as well as their advice for underclassmen interested in applying for ASGs.

The evening began with a presentation from Kathryn Goettl, A&S '11, whose project titled "Material Expressions of French and Mexican-American

A Child Soldier Addresses Scholars

By Steven Liu, CSOM '11

For the final evening speaker of 2008, the Presidential Scholars Program, in conjunction with numerous other campus organizations, heard from Grace Akallo, a former child soldier from northern Uganda. Scholars listened in rapt silence as Akallo shared her story.

Akallo's nightmare began on the night of October 9, 1996, Uganda's Independence Day. "It was actually the very day our independence was taken away," she said. Ordinarily, the girls at Akallo's school would run and hide at night, but they chose to stay in their dormitories on that fateful evening.

Members of the rebel group The Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) attacked the school and captured 139 girls. Akallo's





Bread for the Journey

The Idea of Perfection

Your mission is proving that a love for the earth, and for things of the earth, is possible without materialism, a love without greed...I entreat you not to be turned by the call of vulgar strength, of stupendous size, by the spirit of storage, by the multiplication of millions, without meaning and without end. Cherish the ideal of perfection, and to that, relate all your work and all your movements. Though you love the material things of the earth, they will not hurt you and you will bring heaven to earth and soul into them.

- Rabindranath Tagore