

THE HOMER L. DODGE CHAIR IN SCIENCE

Awarded at Opening Convocation

September 9, 2009

By any measure, you are a Renaissance woman. Not only are you an amazing science teacher, but you are also a gifted photographer, an accomplished illustrator, a skilled botanist, a vigorous world traveler, a consummate knitter, a devotee of the opera, a supple, unflagging aerobics instructor, a tireless student across multiple disciplines—and you dance a mean tango. As one of your students recently exclaimed, “I have never seen a woman so enthusiastic and energetic about everything!”

Like Homer L. Dodge, for whom this chair is named, you believe that lectures are a very small part of science pedagogy. Instead, you weave the photographs you have taken, tales of your family, stories of your travels with lists of biological terms and chemical symbols. Like Mr. Dodge, you believe in cross-disciplinary study. With Carmel Schettino, you pioneered the very successful integrated biology/geometry course, and with another colleague, you created the ever popular forensic science course. You are never happier than when you can team teach with a colleague; for the colleague, it is a rare opportunity to learn the art of teaching from a master. As was true of Homer Dodge, an ardent boatman on his beloved St. Lawrence River, you find the outdoors to be a natural classroom. Your students appreciate the extra dimension you give to their learning, teaching them, as one biology student recalled, “to take a second look at what is around us.” You have led students on SCUBA diving, fish-counting adventures in Belize and geological explorations in Norway. Your AP Biology class has come to depend upon your 7:00 a.m. breakfasts of bagels and bio.

While all of this makes learning with you “fun,” you most definitely have a reputation for upholding demanding academic standards. When you enter a classroom, singing out your trademark, “Hello, Ladies,” your students, by their own admission, sit up straighter, “electrified, ready and raring to go.” Notably, you hold the same high academic standards for yourself that you do for your pupils. Since your arrival on Mount Ida, you have completed a second masters at Dartmouth, you have studied botanical illustration, you have been a reader for the Advanced Placement Biology examination, and you have studied environmental science in Japan as a Toyota International teacher of the year. Furthermore, you chose to audit Advanced Placement Art History here at Emma Willard, astonishing your younger classmates by doing all the reading on time!

While your in-class persona is one of rigorous scholarship and high expectations, your out-of-class demeanor is that of “mom” or “big sister.” Your nights as dorm affiliate are legendary. No matter the hour, you are always willing to provide comfort and advice on any subject in addition to science homework help. “Being outside the classroom,” notes one of your students, “Never stops her energy, her passion or her care for her students.” On your duty nights, the Sage 3 Long alcove is headquarters for your fan club. Encircled by girls, you manage simultaneously to model contagious optimism and seriousness of purpose; always approachable, you nevertheless maintain the highest standards of professionalism. Your students are amazed at what you do for

them in a day. The typical response, “I want to work hard because of what she has given up for us.” Or, as one student put it simply, “She is my hero.”

Linda Maier, it is with great pleasure that I announce your appointment as the second holder of the Homer Levi Dodge Chair in Science.