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What's Cooking?

Cookbooks are reports from the front in the battle between the sexes. An exhibition offers a look at their history.

By Laura Perillo

A woman's place is in the kitchen, the way to a man's heart is through his stomach, and the best way for a gal to hook a man is to demonstrate her domestic skills.

At least this was the popular perception in post-World War II America. And the publishing industry took notice. A recent exhibit at Olin Memorial Library wrapped up in March, but not before calling attention to some of the attitudes men, women, and society held about cooking during the 1940s, 1950s and 1960s.

The approximately 30-book exhibit was called Cookbooks and Gender in Postwar America. "For the first time, publishers speculated and produced cookbooks for single working women because they were thought to fill a specific need in the marketplace," says Jeffrey Makala, the exhibit's curator and former assistant university archivist and reference librarian . "Many single women lived away from home for the first time and worked in urban office environments."

The single woman could turn to *Saucepans and the Single Girl*, by Jinx Kragen and Judy Perrt (1956), and *The Single Girl's Cookbook*, by Cosmo's famed editor Helen Gurley Brown (1969). These and other similar books reinforced the idea that it was easier and more acceptable for women to rely on canned goods and prepared mixes as time savers in the kitchen.

Stereotypes loomed throughout the pages of many of the cookbooks. *She Cooks To Conquer*, by Robert Loeb (1952), implies that single women can capture a husband by whipping up fantastic dishes, including Zeus soup (jellied tomato soup), Shrimp Poseidon (shrimp, rice, and a red hot sauce) and Salad Athena (a mixture of salad greens with an unusual dressing). The Greek-themed book frequently mentions Circe, "who was the first female in recorded history to use the art of cooking as a lure for enticing, trapping, and domesticating the male animal."

> ***"I WAS ESPECIALLY STRUCK BY THOSE BOOKS IN WHICH THE FOODS THEMSELVES ARE SIMPLY ASSUMED TO BE SPECIFICALLY FOR MALE OR FEMALE CONSUMPTION."***

The kitchen as a gendered space is a theme that also runs throughout the courses and academic research of John Finn, Wesleyan professor of government and a professional chef who collects cookbooks.

"This exhibition illustrates that theme in a way that words alone cannot," he says. "I was especially struck by those books in which the foods themselves are simply assumed to be specifically for male or female consumption."

The tongue-in-cheek *Wolf in Chef's Clothing*, by Robert Loeb (1950), was written specifically for men. It pokes fun at man's cooking ability by illustrating with pictures how to boil and egg successfully and make a pot of coffee. Loeb sought to "unshackle [men] from the role of refrigerator vulture, icebox scavenger, from being a parasitic gourmet forced to feed on the leftovers of female cookery."

While stereotypes in cooking still existed post-WWll, Makala explains that the conception of American masculinity underwent a significant period of transition. "We were beginning to see a new, cooperative, team-based corporate masculine ideal-s-a man who provided resources, and even the occasional meal, for his family."

Men in Aprons, by Lawrence Keating (1954), and *The Best Men are Cooks*, by Frank Shay (1941), reinforced the notion that taking pride in cooking well could have been a badge of status and accomplishment for a man whose work life was orderly and controlled. Appealing to both sexes, *The Seducers Cookbook*, by Mimi Sheraton (1962), demonstrated how men and women could impress their significant others in the kitchen by emphasizing the sensual side of cooking. Steamy dishes inside this cookbook included butterfly shrimp with lemon, filet mignon au poivre, iced boiled lobsters, and strawberries soaked in white wine.

Cookbooks targeting married couples also emerged post-WWII, according to Makala. They, too, reinforced old stereotypes that women's place was still in the kitchen, even if they worked outside the home.

The Working Girl Must Eat, by Hazel Young (1944), offers menu suggestions women might want to prepare for their families after rushing home from a full day of work , including broiled lamb chops, grilled sweet potatoes, and fried Italian squash. The books says, "It doesn't guanrantee that reading this book will get you a husband in six weeks, but we do claim it will help you keep the one you already have." Titles such as "Dishes Men Like" and "12 Pies Husbands Like Best" reinforced that theme.

"This exhibit, in addition to being lively and colorful, takes a critical look at an aspect of popular culture," says Suzy Taraba '77, archivist and head of special collections. "After looking at this show, you could never look at certain types of cookbooks in the same way again."

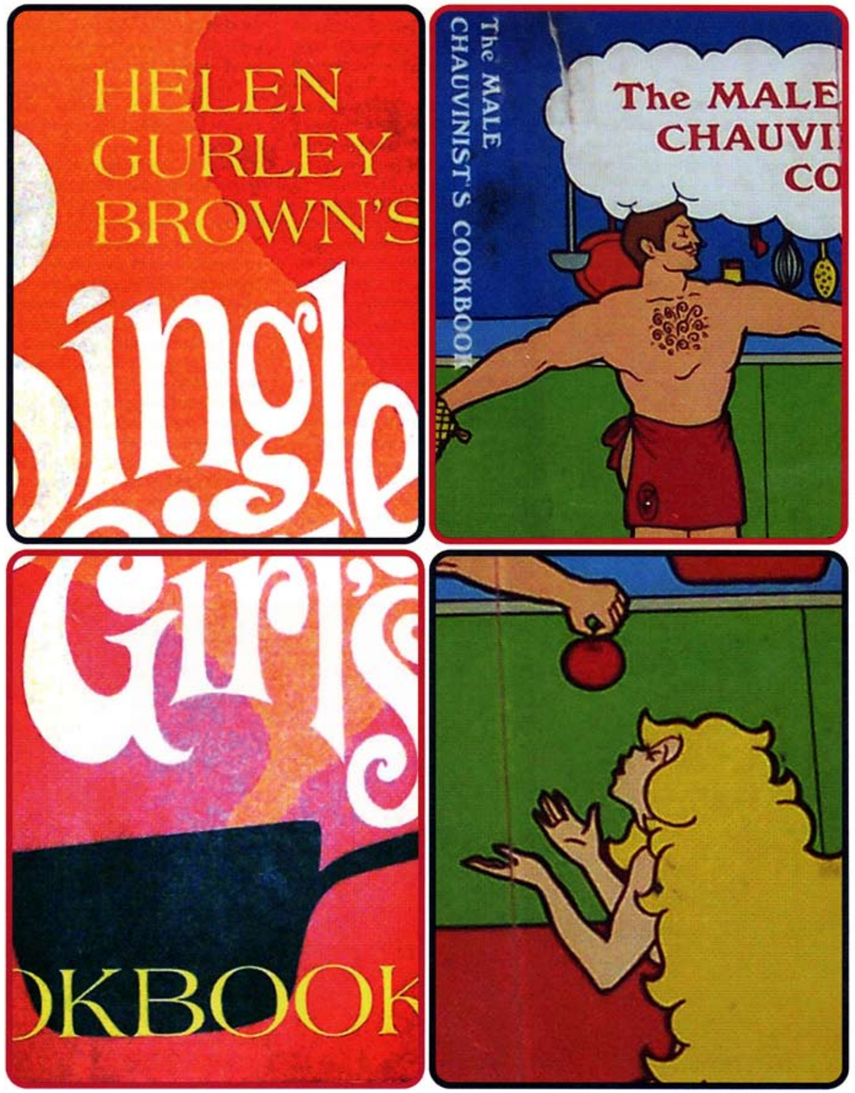
Makala first thought of the idea for the cookbook and gender display at Olin Library after reading *Manly Meals* and *Mom's Home Cooking*, and after purchasing *She Cooks to Conquer*, for one dollar, at a local library book sale three years ago.

Articles about the exhibit ran in the *New York Times* and *The Chronicle of Higher Education*. It also attracted the attention of students. Johanna Goetzel '07, who hopes to pursue an interest in food and gender politics when she travels in the fall to Nairobi, Kenya, said she is "curious about how food preparation (and consumption) is a site of female empowerment."

Makala mixed the cookbook and gender exhibit together by choosing books from his personal collection. In addition, he borrowed others from Mel McCombie, a visiting lecturer in Wesleyans Graduate Liberal Studies Program and Visiting Assistant Professor of American Studies at Trinity College, and from the Schlesinger Library at Radcliffe College.

Now at the University of South Carolina, Makala has been asked by his new employer to whisk together another exhibit similar to the one he invented for Wesleyan.

"There is much research still to be done on the intersections of cooking, gender, and printed texts," says Makala. "Often, it is examples of popular culture, like these cookbooks, that provide insight into the ways Americans lived, worked, and thought in ways that other sources simply cannot capture. Plus, they're great fun to read and collect."



LANDSAT VIEW
A FRESH LOOK AT LOCAL LAND USE

Some old aerial photos, a handmade map, a bright idea—that and a lot of hard work may provide a whole new way to evaluate and influence the rapid growth of Connecticut's Middlesex County.

The project began when Phillip Resor, assistant professor of earth and environmental sciences, brought a guest lecturer in the spring of 2004 to his class on geographical information systems. Sandy Prisloe, with the University of Connecticut's Center for Land-use Education and Research, discussed how satellite data is providing quantitative measurements of the changes in Connecticut's landscape and, by inference, the impact on quality of life and the environment.

"Sandy mentioned that he had a map from the 1970s that showed the areas that were farmland at that time," says Resor. "He also mentioned the data that was recently created by a group at the University of Connecticut showing land cover and said that it would be interesting to compare what was found in 2002 to the data from 1970, to see how things had changed."

Jessica Pfund '05, who was in search of a possible research project, was intrigued. "Many of my classmates were doing studies that were more theoretical," she says. "This seemed to have scientific and social implications for the local area that could have a relatively immediate impact."

Aided by a $2,500 grant from the Middlesex County Community Foundation and additional support from the Mellon Foundation and the University of Connecticut, Jessica got to work on data collection.

"I don't think when I started I had an idea of exactly what I was getting into," she says, now almost a year into the project. "It's been very interesting and exciting, but it's also been a lot of work."

She wrestled with the need to reconcile differences in the way data was gathered in 1970 versus 2002. Images from the older study were based on a handmade Mylar map that was, in turn, based on aerial photography. Satellite images produced the 2002 data.

"The images and data didn't match up," says Resor. "The satellite images are precisely located, but can't reveal anything smaller than 30 meters. By contrast, the 1970s map captured small details, but they weren't necessarily as well located. So we had to find ways to account for the differences."

There were some other challenges too. For instance, the old maps identified the land as "active agricultural," "inactive agricultural" or "nonagricultural." Satellite images provided more than a dozen different characterizations, including assessments of soil viability for agricultural use and disposition of wetlands.

Additional interpretive challenges came about because plots of land identified by Lands at as large lawn are as could in actuality be active or inactive cultivated fields. Ambiguities in the image s required Pfund to make many personal visits to properties to verify their use.

Resor and she anticipated completing the study before the close of spring semester. They planned to publish a report and present their findings at town meetings in Middlesex County. The towns can use the data to plan new housing and business construction."

A lot of towns in Middlesex County are proud of their rural atmosphere,"Resor says. "This information can help them maintain that atmosphere as they move forward with new developments."

The study already has generated a beneficial result. Resor received a service-learning grant from Wesleyan to expand his efforts. This spring, his students are working on similar projects for the Nature Conservancy, the Connecticut River Coastal Conservation Commission, the Middlesex LandTrust, and the Town of Portland.

"It's been pretty interesting to do a scientific study that actually has social implications and affects local issues," says Pfund. "People don't often think of scientists working that way. It's been a very rewarding project."—*David Pesci*

OLIVIA BARTLETT

Jessica Pfund '05 and Phillip Resor, assistant professor of earth and environmental sciences, observe one of Middletown's few remaining agricultural sites.

PICK OF THE SYLLABUS

Storytelling, Post-9/11

Kirk Davis Swinehart, Assistant Professor of History,
Selects *Saturday* by Iaw McEwan (Nan A. Talese/Doubleday, 2005)

J. W. SWINEHART

"And now, what days are these?" asks the protagonist of Ian McEwaris wondrous new novel, Saturday.It's a familiar question—maybe too much so—but readers expecting straightforward answers will not find them in these pages, blessedly enough. Few could have conjured up such a profound, ruminative book so soon after September 11. Perhaps fewer still would have dared open a novel, in those raw times, with a fiery jet descending on London while most of London sleeps. These days, it's different. Each week seems to bring a book about what we have come to call, rather clinically, "the events of September 11." There are books about those who died, books about the World Trade Center itself, and no end of books about who is to blame. Now come the novels. An Englishman and relative newcomer to American best-seller lists, Ian McEwan has been hailed as one of the finest prose stylists writing in English; with the runaway success here of his previous novel, Atonement, McEwaris American reputation is happily established.

Introspectively and splendidly immersed in the quotidian—making love, playing squash, cooking seafood stew—Saturday spans the course of a single day in the life of Henry Perowne, a 48-year-old London neurosurgeon. By any standard, even his rigorous own, Henry has it all: an excellent body, more or less; a wife he still adores making love to; two wildly gifted children; a vast townhouse overlooking a fashionable 18th-century square designed by Robert Adam. From this enviable perch readers first encounter Henry in the predawn hours of Saturday, February 15, 2003, peering from his second-floor bedroom window through frost-tinted panes, his wife Rosalind sleeping unperturbed nearby. And there it is: "this fire in the sky." Reluctant to wake Rosalind, Henry watches alone. His mind races in terrible isolation. How might it feel to die unseen by the world outside, except by air traffic controllers or the odd stargazer? This is the deep chill that imbues Saturday's first chapter.

Terrorists? At last, al-Qaeda's anticipated London blitz? Henry and his 18-year-old son Toby, an aspiring blues musician, aren't sure. While they swap interpretations in the kitchen, a news report confirms that the dreaded thing hasn't come to pass, after all. It was only a Russian cargo jet, landed safely. So begins Henry's Saturday, a day crossed with danger, fear, and hopes for joy. It's the Saturday of his poet-daughters arrival from France; Saturday of a family reunion, which may or may not proceed smoothly. It's also the Saturday when some 750,000 protestors will march, for real, on London against the Iraq war: hardly a day for going out into the city. Henry is undeterred. He sets out in his Mercedes S500 for a game of squash with a pro-war, Jewish American colleague whose unflinching endorsement of the Iraq war he admires and despises by turns.

The car provides an exquisite kind of safety, Henry muses, but ultimately the Mercedes' plush armor guarantees too much solitude, leaving its driver with too many of his own thoughts. Someone is toying with his happiness, threatening it. It's America, he decides, halfheartedly, glimpsing the marchers, hearing their chants, reading their placards. Or maybe not, he counters to himself. In this novel, nothing is quite as it seems. Indeed, by late afternoon, a copy of the Koran has been found in the cockpit of that Russian cargo jet and both pilots—a Chechen and an Algerian—are under arrest. And there is worse. For Henry, the most dangerous threat to his happiness isn't American foreign policy or even al-Qaeda. Equally, it is the faceless mob: the drug addicts, for example, who do their business in the square outside Henry's townhouse. Are they any more governable than their most recent surrogates in the modem Hall of Fear—the terrorists themselves? Who, exactly, is the enemy anyway?

Perhaps few things since the American Revolution and War of 1812 (during which British troops burned Washington) have strained Britain's relationship with America more than what has transpired in the wake of 9/11. Behind the diplomatic façade, even behind the mammoth displays of public resistance, are actual transatlantic friendships. And they can be volatile, depending on how safe or argumentative their constituents feel at any given moment. Henry's own views of the Anglo-American alliance vary from moment to moment. Shortly before the Iraq invasion, he treats an Iraqi professor for an aneurism and observes firsthand the injuries long ago inflicted on the man by Saddam Hussein's secret police. The memory of those scars leaves Henry with "ambivalent or confused and shifting ideas about this coming invasion"; so, too, does the game of squash he loses to his pro-war colleague, Jay Strauss. Such, in Henry's world as in our own, is the nature of life after the terrible fact of 9/11. That squash game in only a brief interlude, but for American readers it's bound to be a powerful one. In evoking Henry's friendship with Jay so artfully, Saturday has brought me to a larger understanding of how entwined our countries' histories continue to be, more than 300 years after the War of Independence.

McEwan urges us to embrace the ambiguity of our current predicament, and makes a mockery of the ideologically pious distinction some draw, in the age of terror, between "right" and "left." The reality is more complicated than either side will allow. In one of the novel's sharpest send-ups of how unreflective post-9/11 rhetoric can be, a "famous actress" rallies protestors at the London march with a "reference to Shakespeare's St. Crispin's Day Speech, Henry the Fifth before the battle of Agincourt." Hearing this on his car radio, Henry asks, "And why should a peace demonstrator want to quote a warrior king?"

Saturday achieves much in few pages. But surely McEwan's greatest accomplishment is the storytelling itself-the acknowledgement that telling stories about 9/11 is both necessary and good. As I read Saturday, I couldn't help thinking about the intensive writing seminar I taught last spring, in which each student produced a narrative piece, nonfiction or fiction, devoted to some aspect of 9/11. This gifted group of writers wrote searchingly and well about the day and all that's come to pass since. One of them, Christopher Lake '05, went on to write an honors thesis—a marvelous, fast-moving novella—with me this year. Set in his native New York and at Wesleyan, Darling's Madness chronicles the fortunes and misfortunes of a college student called Chris Darling as he adjusts to life on campus while making frequent forays back to his wounded Manhattan. For Chris, as for Henry, the most painful questions about 9/11 remain among family and friends, beneath a surface largely invisible to politicians and talking heads. Four years ago this fall, the Class of 2005 entered Wesleyan on the eve of 9/11. How many of them will tell stories is impossible to say. The writing, though, has begun in earnest.

A LETTER HOME AFTER THE TSUNAMI

Lucy Mize '78, March 16, 2005

Dear Wesleyan Friends,

The night before I left for Aceh, I was nervous and scared. While I was packing, my 9-year-old son asked me why I was going if it made me so upset. Trying to find my voice while I shoved face masks and surgical gloves into my suitcase, along with water filters, granola bars, high boots and books, I said, "Sweetie, Indonesia has given me so much; now I can give back. I have nursing skills and speak Indonesian, so I can be really useful." I flew off the following dawn, but halfway through that interminable journey, he sent me a text message on my phone: "Sorry, Mom, I was looking at it the wrong way because I will miss you. I understand now and I love you." I kept that message as one of my protective talismans.

I landed late in the steamy night of January 5, ten days after the tsunami had hit. Lots of foreigners were milling about in the small arrivals hall that was packed with good—computers, medicines, clothes, water, books, an endless torrent of things. The lights flickered and went out, the luggage carousel ground on, and the heat was stifling. Finally out in our office car and under bright sodium lights, I could see the signs papering every wall. They were not yet faded or torn, nor had rain yet made the inks run. Over and over, the words "seeking" and "lost" were printed above pictures of smiling children and birthday parties and new university graduates. It was my grim introduction to the losses of Aceh.

In the days that followed, I did a little of everything. I sat through endless rounds of coordinating meetings with people piling in from all over the globe. I hated to hear, "I just flew in yesterday but we are planning to..." How could anyone plan if they hadn't yet been to the field? So many were surprised by the government's vibrant role, by the Indonesians pitching in to help. Repeatedly I heard, "It's not at all what I expected, not at all like Darfur, not at all like Kosovo."

I went to the camps and listened to men saying they didn't want rice, they wanted to work and to rebuild. I listened to the mothers who said they had tried to hold all their children but the wave had twisted away the babies. Then they would sob and I could do no more than pat their backs. The nurses and midwives were stoic, but when I listened to their silences long enough, they would say Begini, bu or "Mother, it was like this" and their stories would trip and crawl and rush out in a series of lost family members and children still missing and every now and then, a miracle. I listened until my ears hurt and I cursed my ability to understand Indonesian and I hated that now my vocabulary included, "I follow the sorrow of your mourning," "mass grave," and "refugee."

At night, when the frogs began their ribald croaking and the insects chirred away and the last strains of the twilight call-to-prayer died away, I would open up my informal private nursing practice for our staff. I took blood pressure readings that looped and soared, changed the dressings on hands that had clung to sharpened metal to stay alive, cleaned wounds on heads and legs, and listened. Nursing protocols were different here: I could offer bootleg Scotch disguised as sweet tea in thin plastic cups, lace it with brandy, and sit listening some more, hearing again the fear and the bewilderment and despair and then the sorrow.

During my third week up in Aceh, I joined a WHO assessment team going down the western coast, translating between the worlds of the international disaster community and the local government health officers—the ones who would be doing most of the recovery work. We were based on the USS Abraham Lincoln, which was delivering food, water, and medical assistance. The overlay of military language, the Marines' concern about GAM rebels on our daily sorties, and the presence of stone-faced Indonesian military advisers tilted me into a surreal world.

For seven days we would get up with reveille and muster at flight ops. With rotor blades whumping, we flew over miles of white barren beaches with snapped coconut palms that looked like toothpicks and roads that snaked to nowhere with bridges uptilted and pointed to the sky. Ugly brown rivers bisected the white sand, and bright blue tarpaulins of temporary shelters lay like mosaic squares below. Coming down to land, we could see bodies that were not yet buried. Then we would be enveloped in a dust storm, with people streaming towards the helicopter and soldiers pushing roughly through the crowds.

In that week on the road, I collected data on diarrhea cases and suspected measles cases, on the numbers of expectant mothers and the midwives who remained to care for them. I also heard stories of the wave; it had been hot, it had come in three times in diminishing crescendo, it was so fast, it was so slow. In many of the villages, only a handful survived among hundreds of dead. In Calang, where no infrastructure was left, the head of the district sat in a stuffy, blue plastic tent, smoking clove cigarettes and dictating data on survivors to a clerk in front of a battered typewriter, all the while accepting condolences on the loss of his wife, all of his children, and all his worldly goods. I will not forget him.

My first visit ended in a flurry of mundane details. I wrote my reports, flew off the ship to Banda Aceh, and then returned to Jakarta for five days before going back to Aceh for another stint. My friends say I was muted and somber but I can't really remember; all I know is that I clutched my two children in ferocious ways and tried to tell my4-year-olddaughter that I was happy to be home, even though my face was wet with tears. I have been profoundly moved by my experience and reshaped in some fundamental way: time seems now to be a gift and life seems sweeter. Robert Frost's poem says "Some say the world will end in fire, some say in ice" but I know that for Aceh, it ended in water and crumbling earth. Things will never be the same. Neither will I.

Best, Lucy Mize '78

LETTERS CONTINUED FROM PAGE 3

SCIENTIFIC FACT VS. RELIGIOUS MYTH

While I have not read the book to which Suzann e O'Connell refers in "Noah's Ark: Myth vs. Reality" (Wesleyan, fall '04), as a former faculty member allow me to put forth some thought s I shared in April with Dr. O'Connell on the Island of Vieques, Puerto Rico (where she and her students have carried out research on the island 's famous biolumine scent bay with the help of my wife, Dr. Barbara Bernache-Baker) . When one lives in Virginia, plagued by both Jerry Falwell and Pat Roberts on, one shudders at their getting hold of Dr. O'Connell's article and proclaiming: "Wesleyan University professor says Bible is TRUE!" In fact, as early as the 1920s an archaeologist (Wooley) was demonstrating that sedimentary layers in the region of the Black Sea gave convincing evidence of a major flood occurring at almost the precise time, as O'Connell notes, that earlier sources described it. To the inhabitants of the region, it must have seemed as if the entire earth was flooded and the human population wiped out. Obviously, some did survive, though an ark containing mating pairs of every species is clearly myth (since the ark's precise dimensions are provided, we can know that insects alone—indeed, perhaps just the beetles—would have swamped it).

The issue here is the interrelation ship between scientific and historical "facts" and religious myths as well as important differences between the Hebrew Bible and the Christian Old and New Testaments. Hebrew theologian-scholar Hugh Schonfeld notes a critical difference between the Hebrew Bible and the Old Testament: the Jews, he writes, seized upon historical events and interpreted them in religious terms, e.g., Noah and the Flood. As yet an other example, the thunderous noise and appearance of a "pillar of fire by night and a pillar of clouds by day"—clearly a volcano, and there is geological evidence of volcanic activity in that region (Syria)—is interpreted as being the voice of Yahweh. By contrast, Schonfeld notes, the early Christians seized upon ancient myths prevalent prior to and contemporary with the early years of Christianity when its doctrine s were being laid down, e.g., virgin births, resurrections, etc ., and proclaimed them to be actual historical events. Thus it is not so much as "myth vs. reality" as it is the manner in which such things are viewed and interpreted though the eyes of the beholder.

JEFFREY J.W. BAKER
Ivy, Va.

COUNT THOSE SNOWCONES

After last issue's article on the scientific uncertainties of global warming, I thought I would forward something I got from my sister and her colleagues at McMurdo Station in Antarctica, about last year' s major ice breakup. They write:

"This is a satellite picture of the B15 Iceberg to the north of McMurdo, slowly moving towards the Drygalski ice tongue. (Both entities are in Lambert azimuthal equal-area projection.) But I know what you're thinking...how many snow cones would there be in that iceberg for the people of Connecticut?

Here's my rough calculation:
Weight of B15: 8.8 x 10 to the 14th kg.
Weight of a typical snowcone: 250g or .25 kg. Number of snowcones in B15: 3.52 x 10 to the 15th. Number of people on Earth: 6.5 billion. Snowcones per person on Earth: 2,707,689 or let's round down to 2 million, considering breakage and waste. Population of Connecticut: 13 million. Snowcones per person in Connecticut: some thing on the order of 1 trillion assorted flavors of course."

GREG ROLLAND '95
Easthampton, Mass.

BRIAN KATTEN '79

For the first time ever, women's basketball participated in the NCAA Division III Championship. The team advanced to the Sweet Sixteen, losing a hard-fought 62-56 game to Springfield.

MARIANA FOOS '08

As sure as daffodils, warm weather brings Spring Fling on Foss Hill.