



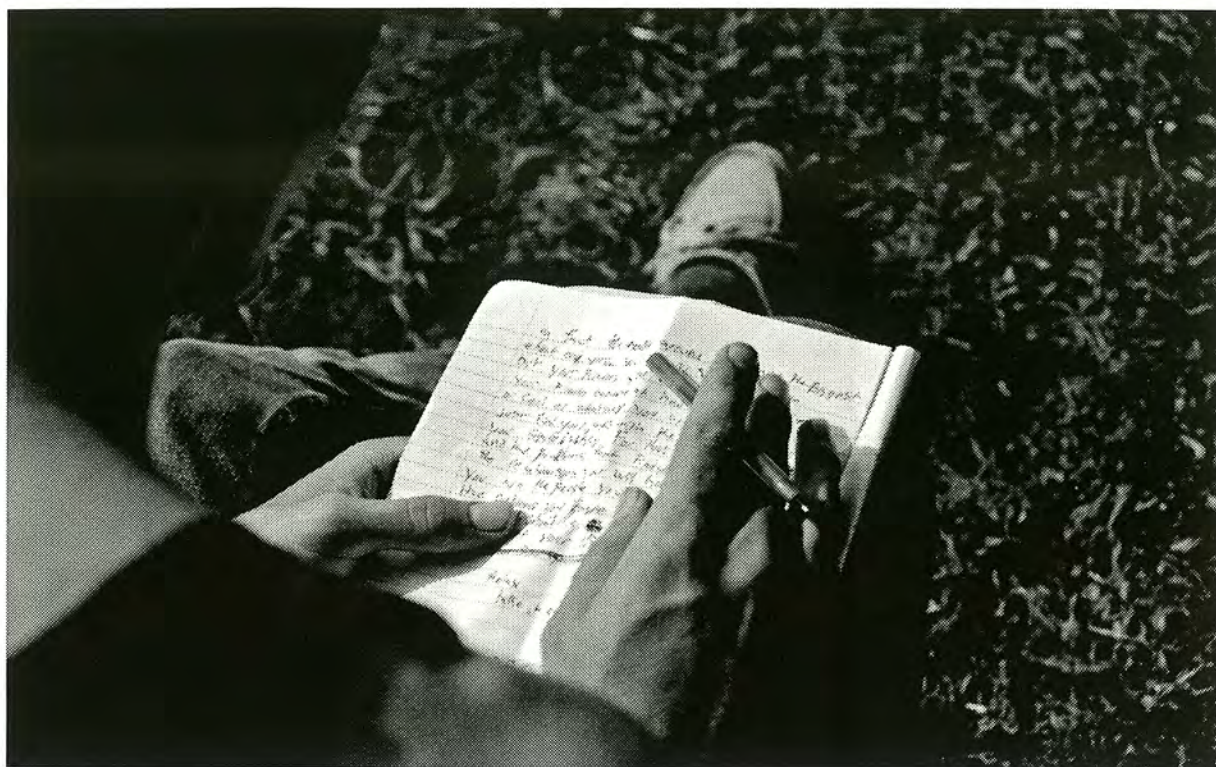
Casco Bay  
Quest  
2011



# **Casco Bay Quest 2011**

A Collaboration Involving Casco Bay High  
School, Rippleffect and the Telling Room





The Freshmen and Senior Quests are made possible thanks to the generous support of the White Pine Foundation, the Hagge Family, and the Quimby Family Foundation.

Many Thanks!

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Founded in 2005, CBHS is a school of choice for about 230 students. Their curriculum revolves around Learning Expeditions – long-term, in-depth studies of a single topic that explore vital guiding questions, incorporate standards, involve fieldwork, and culminate in a project, product or performance. Casco Bay High School is part of a national network of over 100 “Expeditionary Learning” schools. Expeditionary Learning harnesses the natural passion to learn and is a powerful method for developing the curiosity, skills, knowledge and courage needed to imagine a better world and work toward realizing it.

## **Rippleeffect**



Rippleeffect exists to serve a broad population of Maine youth through learning adventures in living classrooms. They have created an atmosphere, culture and ethos of ‘Just Say Yes’ on Cow Island and along the Maine Coast; encouraging area youth to reconsider the way that they move through the world, to think about and experience exciting, healthy ways to recreate and operate, to reassess the decisions they make that affect their emotional and physical well-being and to adopt practices and habits which they can replicate on their own.



THE TELLING ROOM

The Telling Room believes there is no skill more valuable than self-expression. Helping students between the ages of 6 and 18 in Maine to find their own, unique voices is their primary mission. Founded in 2004 by three award-winning local writers, their goal is simple: to build confidence, strengthen literacy skills, and provide real audiences for students’ stories. They believe that the power of creative expression can change communities and prepare youth for future success.



## Excerpts from Senior Letters to Freshmen

*“Ultimately, it is you who will guide yourself through your high school experience. Yes, you will have help and support, but you decide your direction. You decide who you become.”*

Madeline

*“Hey Debrekah & Eliza!*

*I am writing to you live from my tent on my final night of Senior Quest and let me tell you, despite the rain, wind, dampness and campfire eyes, it is really awesome to be here.”*

Mary

*“Ever since I’ve made the switch I’ve felt better about my future. Casco Bay pushes you to do your best and hopefully maintain a GPA of 3 or higher. Here, I’ve done things that I never thought I’d ever do in high school.”*

Susie

Although I sobbed the first night, homesick and intimidated by the work, I came to think of the farm as a second home.

In July, I flew alone to Stockholm. During my month there, I struck out into the city many times. I knew I would get lost, and I often did, but I learned to read a map. On my last day there, I decided to get my first haircut. When I sat down in the salon chair, everyone in the shop stopped to watch. I breathed in deeply and closed my eyes. There was a sharp snip, and over two feet of blond curls fell away, lifting a weight I didn't know was there. I reached up to feel my hair. It felt like I reached up forever.

I don't intend to forget of whence I came, but I do intend to become a part of where I am. While I will always love the old world, I want to be a woman of my time. My ivory tower has crumbled now, and I know I can never go back, but that's all right, because I'm ready to explore this new world.



## Ballad for an iPhone Fowzio

The young  
man, turns his  
unshaven face towards  
an artificial sun,

as his body and  
its gray lumpy  
brain  
are shut down  
cell by cell  
and lose the light.

The trees  
swish-swaying as  
the wind and sun play tag  
across the sky are lost as  
he dives deeper into his sea  
of LEDS, filling the hole  
within his soul with  
Angry Birds and  
delusions.

His holy console gives  
him loneliness but not solitude,  
for solitude comes only when one can see  
the light as it bounces through the atmosphere  
and say:  
Ah! There goes God-Krishna-Allah-Brahma-Ahura Mazda-  
The Tao-The Universe-The Whatever,  
(Especially the Whatever),  
without going into Iphone withdrawal.





## A History of Card Sharks Gabe

For nearly as long as I can remember, I have spent almost every summer engaging in ritual warfare with my paternal family. My father and his two brothers have never quite gotten over their sibling rivalries, but since they are all amiable pacifists, they express their friction and conflict through cards, specifically the game of Hearts. Perhaps this an unfair assessment; nearly all serious conflict between them ended years ago. But the cards remain.

So, here I am, on a beautiful August evening, sitting at an ancient table in an ancient house in the ancient town of Blue Hill. The single lamp overhead hasn't been replaced for over 50 years and is struggling to fill the dining room with its diffused light as the hands are dealt. Perhaps this is the most beautiful part, the shuffling and dealing, the repeated snip-snaps of the bridge and soft sliding sound as the newly jumbled cards reach their destination. This is the moment before everything becomes analytical, when physical beauty hasn't been replaced by mental alacrity. But now the game is starting, and my mind enters a new place.

I'm used to this, though. Ever since I was a toddler, my father and his brothers Jack and Dave would throw me into the game without any preparation. Initially, they would help me, try to define the expectations, but in time, as I was accepted into the card-carrying brotherhood, even that disappeared. I had to figure out the parameters of the game, and how to move within them, on the fly. My brain was like a hamster's exercise ball, except that the hamster was living purely off adrenaline. My brain began to race, constantly, trying to understand it's surroundings and why they were that way. Why did beaches wash



away after storms? In a plank of wood, what formed knots? How could rivers carve their path into rocks? What were the laws of nature? Of humanity? Through the game, the universe became much more analytical and filled with things to learn. This microcosm of cards and relatives began to seep into my mind, into the way I perceived and processed the wider world.

This mentality, one of trying to explore and push the boundaries of the world around me and my own mind, is essential to me. I force myself to understand both my limits and how to expand them. For instance, this previous summer I spent 3 weeks sea-kayaking and camping in Casco Bay with my friends. I was in no way ready for that kind of physical activity. My muscles ached, my shoulders felt like they were on fire, and I swear my arms nearly fell off. Eventually, on the verge of breaking down, I forced myself to utilize my one body part that was still functioning properly: my brain. Exhausted, pushed to my physical limit and with no other recourse, I turned towards the quiet, logical part of myself that was waiting quietly for me to return to its embrace. I thought logically, took the necessary breaks to steel my will to complete this quest, and not only survived the experience but thrived off of it.

But it's not only at the edge that I apply this method. Constantly surrounded by an excess of sound and movement in everyday life, I often try to remember that quiet, still place where the cards are still being dealt. My father and uncles are glowering at their hands and trading bad puns. For me, that is my true heritage from them. Not money, heirlooms or even my last name. My true inheritance is that place within myself that is quiet, centered and analytical. It is also the part of myself that I feel is my greatest strength. For me, the game has never ended, and the cards are still being dealt.

## Listen

### Sam

A bag was handed around to each of the groups. You could hear the clacking of stones. When my turn came, I reached into the bag, letting the stones flow between my fingers like giant grains of sand. My hand closed on one and I brought it up. "Listen", it pronounced in yellow lettering on its surface. Listen.

Years later a young girl, my friend, asks if she can talk with me about something personal. I tell her that I'm always open and she begins to unwind a tale of alcohol abuse and teary-eyed nights. I simply listen. Listening was enough.

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When I was nine years old, I was clinically diagnosed with Emery Dreifuss Muscular Dystrophy; a degenerative muscular disorder. As a boy of nine, I was told that I might lose the ability to walk by the time I'm eighteen.

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I can't say that I'm the most religious of people, but I've always believed that I was chosen, selected from the mass of clay figures, to take on this malady. I was the one who could carry it and use it. It was I who chose the word "Listen" from a bag of stones.

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"One who speaks much and listens little may know nothing. One who listens much and speaks little may know everything," a friend once told me.

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Since I was very young, I've been acting. I've been the star of more than a few productions and have been



asked many times if I was going to school for acting. All the same, I've never enjoyed being on the stage as much as being behind it. I've always wanted to work on staging, lighting, sound, all the components of theater that make it great, but get me little glory.

It's the end of my freshman year and I'm receiving an award: the Navigator award. As my teacher puts the medal around my neck he says this: "the navigator is not well known. He is not the captain. He does not get the glory. But he keeps the captain on course, and without him none of it would be possible."

My life has never been about me, and I've never wanted it to be. I'm more than happy to be a navigator for my friends and family. I prefer listening to speaking.

I'm nineteen now, and still standing. I'm not physically strong, but how I measure strength, I'm among the strongest. I have my struggles and my limitations, but they don't get me down. I carry my own weight and help others with theirs.

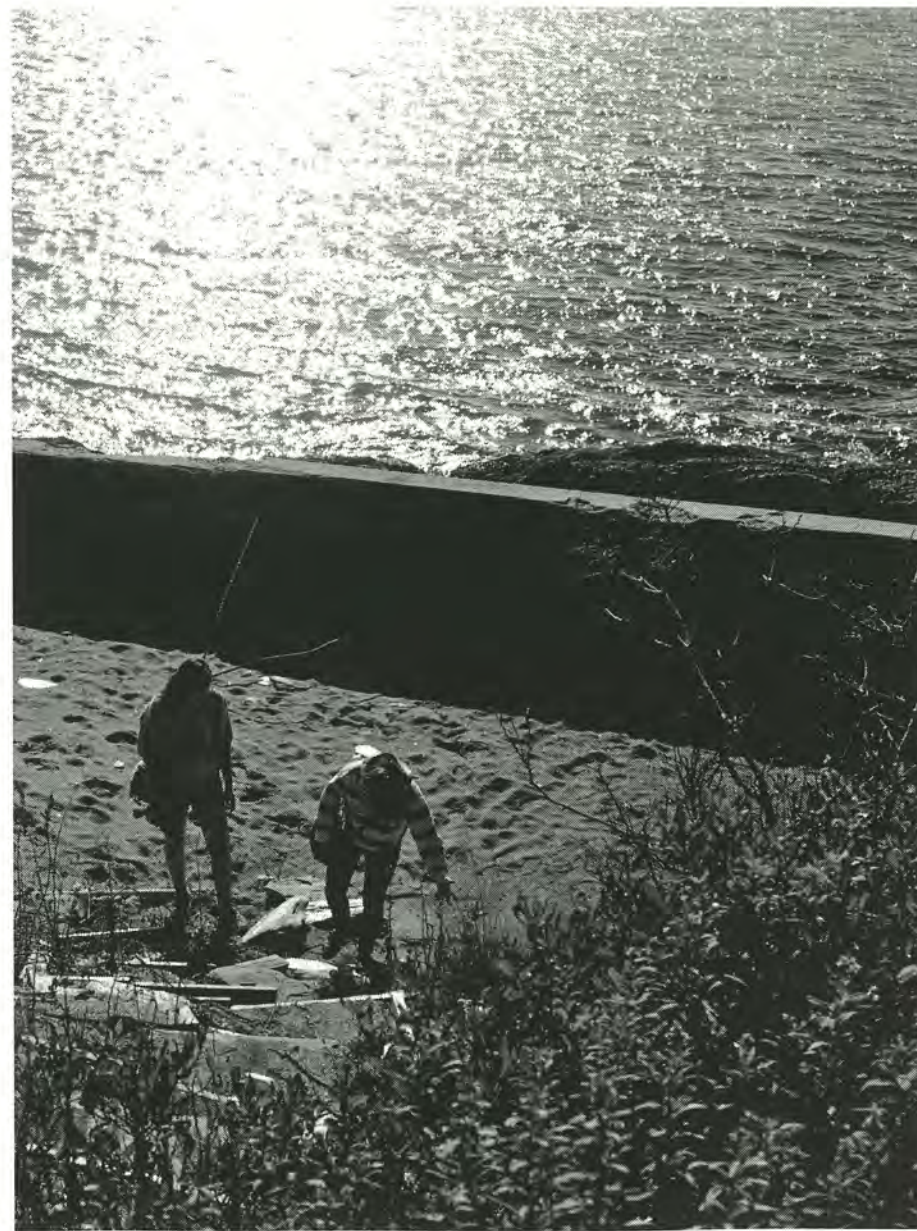
Recently, in my English class, we students were writing anonymous notes to each other saying what we think are heroic qualities in the note receivers. The last note I received was begun just as the teacher said "finish your last sentence." It was written as a single string to sum up all that they thought of me. It read, "My Guardian Angel."

A Guardian Angel; that's all that I wish to be for someone.

It's been almost ten years since I learned of my

ailment, and ten years since I picked a smooth stone from a bag. I still carry both with me each and every day.

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"When the best leader's work is done, the people say, 'We did it ourselves!'" - Lao Tsu





This school offers so many opportunities and has so much potential. Make use of them. You have an entire teaching staff that wants to help you. They all want you to be successful. If you don't understand something, ask them to explain it. Make an appointment with them during block seven. Casco Bay will give back to you whatever you put in. So make the most of it. The entire school is there to support you. Sometimes you just have to reach out and ask for it.

Finally, never be afraid to be yourself. I've tried not to and it doesn't work. Trust me on that. When you try to change yourself to please someone else, you're only hurting yourself. If they don't appreciate you for all the wonderful things that you are, they aren't worth it. Why would or should you waste your time on someone like that? You are amazing. You are awesome. When you walk into a room, people will have to put on protective head gear to shield themselves from just how fantastic you are. Don't forget that.

High school is a tough time for just about everyone. It can also be an amazing one. Remember that people have gone through the same things you have and they're bound to again. You aren't the first to have trouble and you won't be the last. But what matters is how you choose to handle those challenges. Sometimes you just have to reach out and ask for help. The next four years are a period of self discovery for you. Make full use of it. Explore. Try something you've never done before. Fail epically. Laugh about it. Try again. Don't give up. Don't back down. The ability to laugh at your own failure will serve you well. In the end you'll regret that which you never tried more than when you did try and failed. And think of it this way: if you're going to make mistakes, at least have a load of fun while doing it.

Good luck, my dear. It's going to be a wild ride. It's going to be busy and crazy and so much fun. You're in good hands. You're surrounded by people who care about you and support you. Make the best of it. It'll be worth it in the end.

Sincerely,  
Margo





Response to the poem "Younger Sister"

Max Semba

You sit behind me on the bus  
I feel your eyes observing, judging.  
You stand in my doorway  
watching me prepare.  
You don't understand that I am judged  
not just by you,  
by everyone.  
Maybe I pretend to be perfect,  
but I'm not sure that I could admit  
that in fact  
I am jealous.  
Sometimes I wish,  
sometimes I observe.  
You have the courage to show the world  
yourself.  
You don't have to hide under  
a different personality.

You sit behind me on the bus,  
but I see you in the mirror.

Poem

Max Semba

Arrival of separate people  
Departing of a single community

We moved from Facebook friends to face to face friends  
We went from Online to On Island  
We experienced the Hakka dance of Burke crew  
We experienced a cappella performances of songs and raps  
We experienced the spirit of an amazing step routine  
We experienced the confidence that came with the encouragement of our class

Communication in the darkness  
The unknown boundaries of an enclosed tunnel  
When we broke apart, screaming claustrophobia  
APART WE ARE NOTHING  
When we stayed together, relaxed conveyance  
TOGETHER WE ARE WHOLE

Scaling the rock wall  
Will we get down?  
Trust the crew,  
they will catch us.  
Trust makes the strongest ropes.  
At the top, blindfolded.  
Our crew is our eyes.

By yourself, in a maelstrom, in a group, calm waters  
Wind and waves, miscommunication, driven onto rock  
Stronger muscles, stronger bonds, stronger will, stronger trust.





Freshmen Quest Journal Entry: 10-4-11  
Sahra

*"I will remember this day because it is the day that I will become part of a community. Today is the day that I will get to truly know all my classmates. Today I will get to know myself."*



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