

**Sunday, February 21, 2010. Opening Dinner.**

(Sonoma Academy Drummers perform.)

MR. GALBRAITH: Would you all please have a seat? Thank you.

Would you please join me in a round of applause for our percussionists?

Good evening, ladies and gentlemen. I would like to make a few announcements, if I might. This evening, wine will be served to you at dinner as long as the prescribed amount lasts. Following that, the cash bar remains open on the patio, but everyone should have at least one pour of red or white, whichever you choose, and it happens to be the very fine Silverado wine.

We thank Lake/Flato Architects for their generous support of our program. And now, ladies and gentlemen, before we begin, I'd like to ask you to quietly think about the movie we have just seen. In your own way give thanks for the food and the many blessings we have, and I would like to remind you of some words that made a huge impact on me as a child, when I listened to the radio with my mom every morning, and we heard Don McNeill's Breakfast Club. None of you are old enough. This is what he said. "Each of us, in our own words, in our own way, for a world united in peace, let us pray."

I'm pleased to introduce Janet Durgin, who will introduce our performers for a brief presentation, following which dinner will begin. And immediately after dinner we have the privilege of hearing from Abigail Disney. Thank you. Janet Durgin.

MS. DURGIN: The Sonoma Academy Expeditionary Fund supports faculty professional development beyond the usual conferences and course work. Teachers are funded to go on an expedition, literally, to leave the confines of our campus and its all-engaging routine and to bring back new ideas and fresh perspectives.

Last summer teachers Brandon Spars and Doug Gallagher received one of these grants to spend eight weeks in Liberia on an expedition that they titled "Liberian Dreams, Monrovia Realities." Brandon's wife, Irma, who works in our development office, joined them for three of those weeks. Brandon, who's standing at the door -- I think he's going to open that and let the kids out in a minute -- teaches various humanities courses including African history, and he weaves storytelling into many of his classes.

Doug is our director of music and he is a one-man department and a one-man band, who covers classical and jazz and world music.

While in Monrovia, Doug and Brandon taught English in the morning to middle school and high school students and their teachers. Some of these teachers were teaching 11th grade and they had only done 10th grade themselves. And then in the afternoons they studied, Brandon with a griot, a man who's considered to be a national treasurer, and Doug and Irma with the Liberian national dance and drumming group.

This was an experience that changed the very fiber of their being as teachers and as people, and it's definitely had an impact on our programs and curricula. This evening, Doug has brought over from just the other valley a small group of mostly ninth-graders, I think, from his music foundation course to perform two traditional Liberian dances. The girls dance and the boys dance, and they are joined by drummer Madiou Diouf of the Diamano Coura West African Dance Company in Oakland. Let's bring them on.

(Sonoma Academy Drummers and Dancers perform.)

MR. GALBRAITH: Our immediate past president has something very, very important to say. Listen, please, and echo it.

MS. FORD: (In Wolof) Ladies and gentlemen, I want to thank you for all of us. You are wonderful dancers, and you, Diouf, are clearly an excellent teacher. Many thanks again.