

ALUMNI UPDATE

St. Dominic School

Spring/Summer, 2022



From Power of the Pen winners to published authors, St. Dominic School has the write stuff.

Martha Conway Class of 1978

Novelist

Martha Conway, an award-winning novelist, knew from her early days at St. Dominic School that she would be a writer. When she was in fourth grade, she shared one of her poems with her teacher, Mrs. Fox, who then took her to different classrooms to read it out loud. Conway was hooked on writing from that moment on.



Martha Conway now (above)
and in 8th Grade (below)

After graduating from St. Dominic, she attended Glen Oak School (now Gilmour) but finished at Shaker Heights High School. She then went to college at Vassar where she studied English and history. Graduate school brought her out to the west coast and the San Francisco State creative writing program. In that program, she learned discipline for writing and focused mostly on short stories. Her work was published in a variety of literary magazines.

Conway now teaches creative writing at Stanford University's Continuing Studies program and has published five novels. Her latest, *The Physician's Daughter*, will be published in September. Her first book was a mystery. She says, "That was one that was fun to write. A mystery is a very good starting off point for anybody who wants to write. Writing a mystery teaches you about how plots work." After that, she used her knowledge of and interest in history to write historical fiction. Time periods for her works include the early 1800's, the Civil War era, and the Jazz Age.

Conway's newest novel takes place after the Civil War, and its heroine is a woman who wants to become a doctor but is told that she will have to marry instead. The book has Cleveland as one of its settings because Conway learned that there was a medical college here that, for a brief time, admitted women. What she loves most about writing is "the moment when you get an idea and you sit down and the words seem to come from inside you -- it's magic."

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Conway, cont.

During her time at St. Dominic School, Conway says that the librarian told all the volunteers that children could only take out one book, except for Martha Conway, which gave her confidence as a reader. She also had a Girl Scout leader who encouraged her to write poetry. Conway vividly remembers each of her classmates and says, "I feel like I know those kids better than anyone else in the world." She even uses some of their names for people who get mentioned once but not again in her books.

When asked about what advice she would give an aspiring writer, she says, "Read a lot and write a lot. I wish I had written about the everyday things in my own life."

Conway now lives in California. She is married and has two college-aged children.



Madeline Roth at SDS (above) and now (below).

Madeline Roth, Class of 2005

Entertainment Journalist

Madeline Roth's journey to her current role as entertainment editor at the *Daily Beast*, may have begun when she wrote a story in fourth grade called, "There's a Flood in the 4th Grade Classroom". She read it aloud to her classmates, who loved it, and they were thrilled when she followed it with a sequel the next year called, "There's a Blizzard in the 5th Grade Classroom". Roth had discovered that she could tell a good story, and she has been writing ever since.

After graduating from St. Dominic School, Roth attended Beaumont and then graduated from The Ohio State University with a degree in journalism. She wrote for the school newspaper there and found that she really enjoyed interviewing musical acts who were performing at the school. Writing about entertainment combined her love of pop culture with her love of telling stories.

During Roth's junior year of college, she spent her summer doing an internship at MTV News in New York City. That was when she realized this was what she wanted to do. Her first entertainment journalism job brought her to the opposite coast -- Los Angeles, California, where she worked for *Tiger Beat Magazine*. After the magazine folded, she found herself back at MTV News, first as a freelance reporter and eventually moved her way up to music editor, covering pop and hip hop. COVID brought restructuring and layoffs, which left her looking for work again, but Roth quickly found herself a position as entertainment editor at *The Daily Beast*.

Some of her favorite work has included interviewing celebrities like Jennifer Lopez as well as more thoughtful pieces like her interview with the yearbook staff at Parkland High School. She says, "After Parkland, I was at MTV, and it was such a big story. I wrote stories about that that will always stick with me. I talked to a couple of the editors of the yearbook at Parkland. How do you carry on making a yearbook?"

Roth says that she loved her time at St. Dominic School and has great memories of the school and her classmates. She says, "I like that it's a small school. You grow up with the same people. Community was always a really important thing." One memory she'd like to forget is when she misread the prompt at a Power of the Pen competition and wrote an entire story about a party for the prompt "Parting is such sweet sorrow." She did enjoy competing on the Power of the Pen team and still has a team shirt she wears. Roth also wrote for the school newspaper, *The Bulldog Beacon*.

What she loves most about being in journalism is "that every day is different. Nothing about my job feels monotonous. Every day there's news." She would encourage anyone considering the same path to take time to write every day and put it out there.

Roth ran the Boston Marathon in April and is following that achievement with a wedding this month to her fiancé, John Zucker.