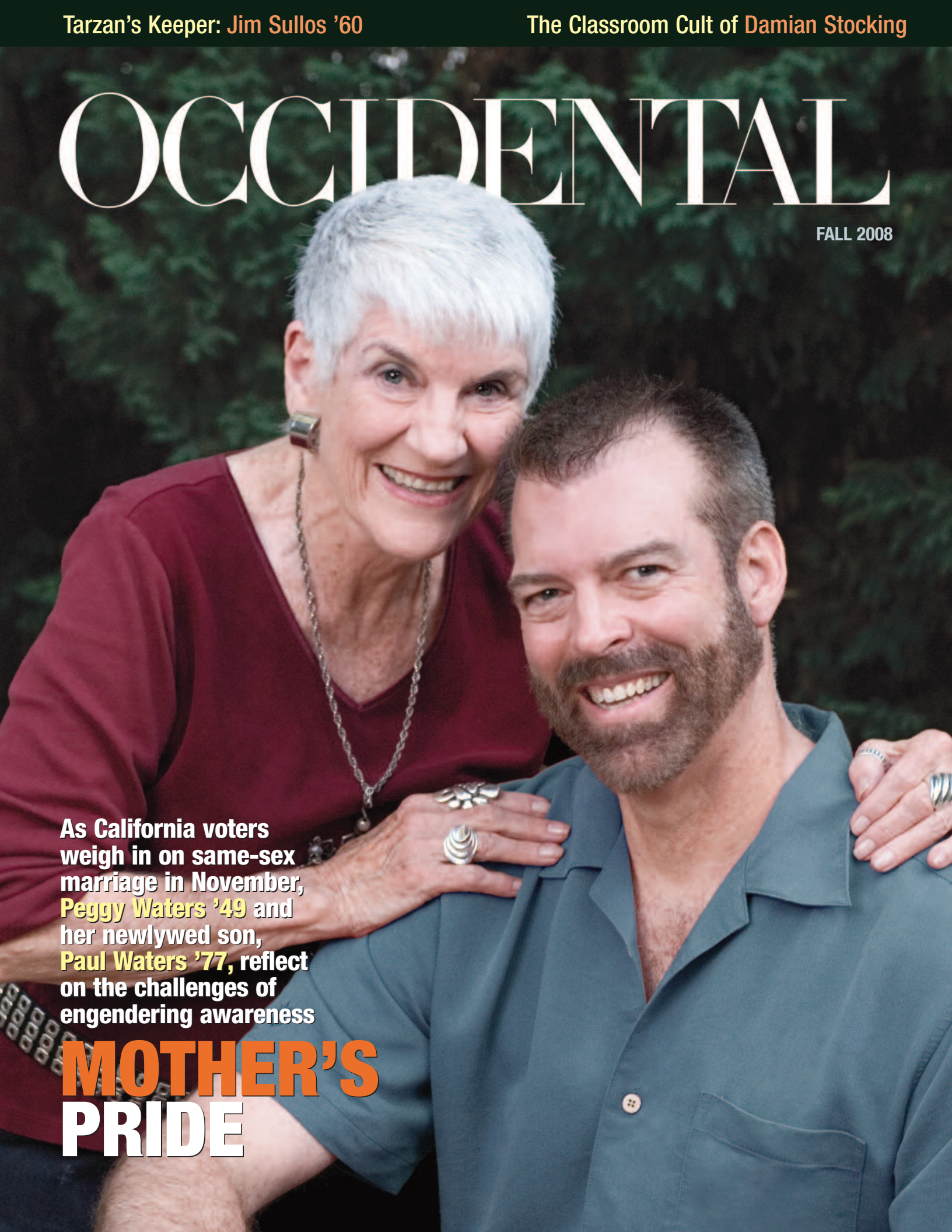


OCCIDENTAL

FALL 2008



As California voters weigh in on same-sex marriage in November, **Peggy Waters '49** and her newlywed son, **Paul Waters '77**, reflect on the challenges of engendering awareness

**MOTHER'S
PRIDE**

OCCIDENTAL

OCCIDENTAL COLLEGE MAGAZINE

VOLUME 30, NUMBER 4 FALL 2008

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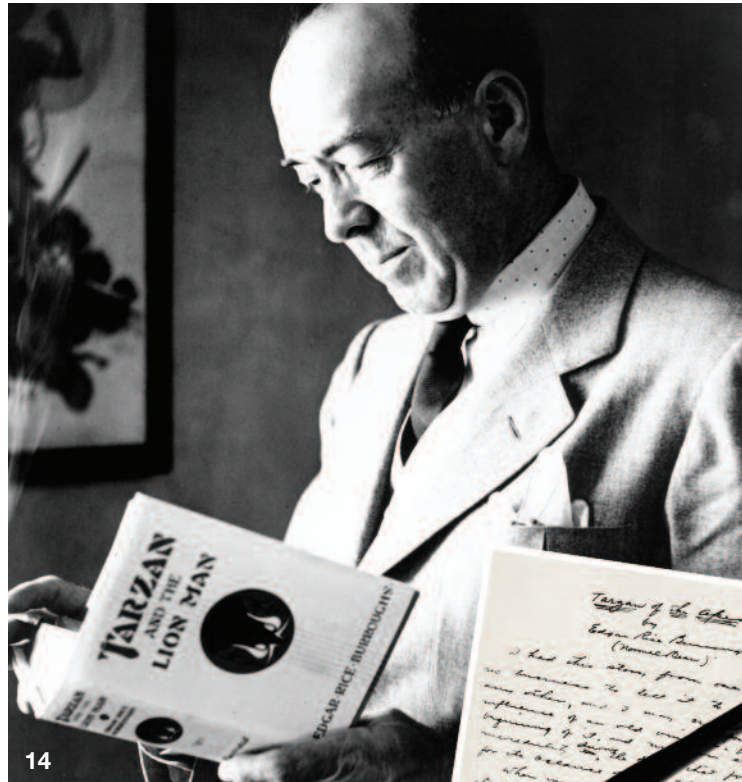
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Adventurous. Ambitious. Articulate. Athletic. Competitive. Congenial. Passionate. Proactive. ...Need we go on? Meet the new faces of Oxy.

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The busy lives of Peggy Waters '49 and son Paul '77 call for order, meticulousness, and an eye for detail—and their work on the LA/Valley Pride Festival puts those talents to work in the pursuit of awareness.

Cover photo by Kevin Burke.

Orientation (page 4) and Oxy Wear photos by Marc Campos.

Edgar Rice Burroughs photos (page 14) ©1912, 1934, owned by Edgar Rice Burroughs Inc. All rights reserved. Used with permission.

Illustration (page 56) by Benjamin Brayfield.

Changing Times

When I was at Occidental in the mid-'50s, the largest minority group on campus were the White Anglo Saxon Protestant Democrats (WASPDs), of which I was one. That's changed, as a picture of any group of current students clearly shows.

I assume this increased diversity among the student body didn't happen by accident. With Barack Obama '83 as a presidential nominee, it seems a good time to learn the history of how this change came about.

Maybe someone in the history department could write a monograph on this subject. I'd appreciate it.

JAMES R. RUSTON '57
Fresno

Becoming a Donor

I was absolutely moved by Andy Faught's piece on graduate Erica Murray '01 ("Places to Go, Things to Do," Summer). I applaud Erica's insight, strength, and her crusade to

educate the public about the dire need for bone marrow donors. She is an absolutely amazing individual, and I am deeply inspired by her perseverance and passion. I wish her all the best and will keep her in my thoughts and prayers.

The article mentioned a drive that took place, but I think I speak on behalf of other readers in requesting more information about becoming a donor. What does it require? What kinds of screenings or tests are needed? Where can one go if a donor drive is not being hosted?

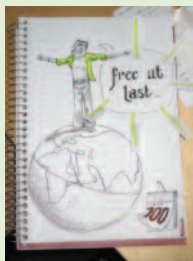
STACIE (QUINTANILLA) MILLER '01 M'04
South Pasadena

To join the National Marrow Donor Program Registry of willing bone marrow donors or for more information, please visit www.marrow.org/index.html, click on the "Become a Donor" box, and request a tissue-typing kit for \$52 by mail, or look for a bone marrow donor registration drive nearby.

Day 100 (Aug. 19): "Free at Last ... Not So Fast"

In response to many reader inquiries, here's an update (in Erica Murray '01's own words) of her progress since receiving a bone marrow transplant on April 29. For the latest, visit www.ericamurray.blogspot.com.

POISED AT THE BLOCKS, ready to commence my Olympic track race toward my old healthy self, I can see me at the finish line, with hair grown, battle scars proudly worn, somehow wiser. But then, just as the gun blasts to mark that it's indeed been 100 days since transplant, I try to lurch forward with all my soul and strength, but find myself as in a dream, fighting to run through invisible molasses. Unseen forces hinder my progress forward, keeping me close to the starting line. All of my fellow runners have left in a blur of color and I thought I'd be with them, now, finally, but this tortoise has a few more lessons in patience to learn.



"Just use your common sense." Those were the words my fabulous doctor told me in clinic last Friday. He meant this in regard to crowds, being around (even slightly possibly sick) people, air travel, parks—all the no-nos. I love him for this advice. I've hated the seemingly arbitrary nature of the 100-day mark and the six-month mark and the one-year mark. I know it's an average of scientific research (though bone marrow transplants are still a very evolving and relatively "new" procedure) rounded way up to a round number. I took some liberties with Day 100, enjoying the fresh air and eating out by Day 90 or so. I prefer to use common sense when I must balance life with treatment. It's empowering, logical, and the right prescription.

As this journey goes on, I'm content to be conservative about what I do. I've come to a kind of peace with the molasses; in fact, it tastes amazing to just let yourself take the time to heal at a gentle pace. I don't want to be the runner who has a vast lead all throughout the marathon and then gets a leg cramp at mile 25. Things are going as well as one could hope with a mismatch allogeneic transplant, and I intend to keep it that way.

I'm stronger than 100 days ago. I've watched my body heal and grow; it seems to take three steps forward and one step back, but it's moving toward that finish line. I'm down to only 22 pills to take each day. I have honed a super relationship with my roommate/Mom. I have started counseling for all the mental crap that my daily pills don't address. Because we couldn't do much but hang out at my place, I've been endowed with countless hours of quality time with friends who visit. And I've discovered that there are a lot of non-ran sushi rolls out there—bring on the shrimp tempura and spider rolls. Hold the sashimi. For now.

Bookshelf

CATHERINE PARR: HENRY VIII'S LAST LOVE, by Susan James '67 (*Tempus Publishing*; \$34.95). Romantic, chaotic, and terrifying, Catherine Parr's life unfolded like a romance novel. Wed at 17 to the grandson of a confirmed lunatic, then widowed at 20, Catherine chose a Yorkshire lord twice her age as her second husband. Caught up in the turbulent terrors of the Pilgrimage of Grace in 1536, she was captured by northern rebels, held hostage, and suffered violence at their hands. Fleeing to the south shortly afterward, Catherine took refuge in the household of Princess Mary and in the arms of the king's brother-in-law, Sir Thomas Seymour. Her employment in Mary's household brought her to the attention of Mary's father, the unpredictable Henry VIII. Desperately in love with Seymour, Catherine was forced into marriage with a king whose passion for her could not be hidden and who was determined to make her his queen. James lives in La Cañada.



GLASS GRAPES AND OTHER STORIES, by Martha Ronk (*BOA Editions Ltd.*; \$14). Having garnered critical accolades and numerous awards for her poetry (including an NEA Fellowship and a National Poetry Series Award in 2007), Ronk publishes her first full-length collection of short stories. The brief, experimental pieces in *Glass Grapes* are usually dominated by an object imbued with fetishistic qualities by an obsessive, self-involved narrator. The language is repetitive, provocative, imagistic, occasionally comic, and unnerving. Ronk's fiction moves with the same grace, beauty, and attention to language as her most accomplished poetry. She is the Irma and Jay Price Professor of English Literature at Occidental.

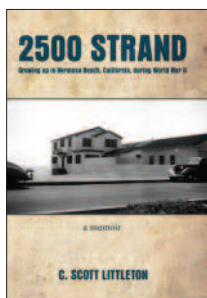
KING CAT CALICO FINALLY FLIES FREE!, by Aaron Henne '00 (*Original Works Publishing*; \$8.95). Heidi Hendrickson is obsessed—she has 150 cats in her 1,100-square-foot apartment, including 60 dead ones in the Frigidaire. She has an especially intimate relationship with the alpha cat, one King Cat

Calico, who keeps trying to escape this hellish, tuna-tainted, feces-stained prison, to no avail. A darkly comic exploration of loneliness, possession, and the need to claim one's place in this uncertain world, Henne's play includes a cameo by Rush Limbaugh, singing (literally) the praises of OxyContin—which he lovingly refers to as his “little blues”—and was produced at Son of Semele in 2006.

PASSIONATE UPRISINGS: IRAN'S SEXUAL REVOLUTION, by **Pardis Mahdavi '00** (*Stanford University Press*; \$27.95). Originally written as her Ph.D dissertation at Columbia University, *Passionate Uprisings* examines the intersection of sexuality and politics in post-revolutionary Iran. A trained medical anthropologist with a special interest in socio-cultural aspects of health and healing, gender, sexuality, and advocacy within anthropology, Mahdavi has done research in Iran, Morocco, the United Arab Emirates, Lebanon, Egypt, and New York City. She teaches medical and social anthropology at Pomona College.



2500 STRAND: GROWING UP IN HERMOSA BEACH, by **C. Scott Littleton** (*Red Pill Press*; \$19.95). This touching personal history elucidates how one American boy saw the events of a world in peril—from the news of France's capitulation to Germany in 1940, to the tumultuous years in the wake of Pearl Harbor, the underlying war hysteria of Japanese internment camps and nightly air raid drills, and a first-hand account of the famous and unexplained “Battle of Los Angeles.” With his typical scholarly insight, attention to detail, and deep love of history, Littleton offers a unique and intimate portrait of life on the beach during World War II. Littleton is professor of anthropology emeritus and a specialist in Japanese religion and culture, the origin and distribution of the Arthurian and Holy Grail legends, and comparative Indo-European mythology. He lives in Pasadena.



FIXING SEX: INTERSEX, MEDICAL AUTHORITY, AND LIVED EXPERIENCE, by **Katrina Karkazis '91** (*Duke University Press*; \$23.95). What happens when a baby is born with “ambiguous” genitalia or a combination of “male” and “female” body parts? Since the 1950s, standard treatment has involved determining a sex for these infants and performing surgery to normalize the infant's genitalia. Over the last decade intersex advocates have mounted unprecedented challenges to treatment, offering alternative perspectives about the meaning and appropriate medical response to intersexuality and driving those who treat intersex conditions into a deep crisis. In *Fixing Sex*, Karkazis examines contemporary controversies over the medical management of intersexuality in the United States from the multiple perspectives of those most intimately involved. Drawing extensively on interviews with adults with intersex conditions, parents, and physicians, she moves beyond the heated rhetoric to reveal the complex reality of how intersexuality is understood, treated, and experienced today. Karkazis is an anthropologist and senior research scholar at the Center for Biomedical Ethics at Stanford University.



Briefly Noted

As countries such as China and India experience tremendous economic growth, other parts of the world such as Sub-Saharan Africa remain mired in poverty and unable to raise standards of living. **THE DEVELOPMENT ECONOMICS READER** (*Routledge*; \$61.95), edited by associate professor of economics **Giorgio Secondi**, examines why poor countries are poor—and why designing policies to reduce poverty is such a challenging task. □ Singer-composer **David Stutz '79** created **IOLET::MUSIC FROM THE WORLD OF ANATHEM** (<http://cdbaby.com/cd/davidstutz>; \$20) as a CD of experimental ambient vocal music to accompany Neal Stephenson's new novel *Anthem*. “Music is an important part of the cloistered world of the avout described in this book,” says Stutz, who lives in Redmond, Wash., and his music is meant “to evoke the rich traditions of music that might exist there.”

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All letters should include the author's name, address, and daytime telephone number. Letters selected for publication may be edited for length, content, and style.

New Kids on the Block



Io Triumpe! In a whirlwind week of activities, the millennials from the Class of 2012 unpack their belongings, get to know their surroundings, and begin to call Oxy home

Photos by MARC CAMPOS



TOP: O-Team members cheer as freshmen and their parents make their way to Thorne Hall for a welcome during new student orientation Aug. 23. **ABOVE:** Elliot Spilk '10, right, and Victor Kali '09, center, get freshmen pumped up as they sing along with fellow O-Team members outside Johnson Student Center. **LEFT:** ASOC president Patrick McCredie '09, a politics and history major from Hemet, takes a break after moving his things into Rangeview Hall on Aug. 25.

The “O” may stand for orientation, but more than 465 students arriving on campus for the first time may be forgiven if they thought it stood for orange. Occidental’s signature color was in full bloom, from the blistering orange T-shirts to the Styrofoam tiger paws that graced the hands of Oxy’s welcoming O-team members.

While they should get used to seeing orange in the years ahead, the constancy of change—and its fundamental role in the Occidental experience for each generation of students—was the theme of President Bob Skotheim’s convocation remarks Aug. 27 in Thorne Hall. “The ways in which you are going to change over four years will be the most important aspect of your Occidental experience,” Skotheim told members of the Class of 2012. “That is what going to college is all about, if it is successful. If you are not changed by it, you are being shortchanged.”

Even for many returning students, there was a sense of the new in coming back to campus, as residents moving into Erdman, Wylie, and Bell-Young residence halls—built in 1927, 1940, and 1956, respectively—were thrilled to find the buildings had been completely renovated. Each has new energy-efficient heating, cooling, electrical and lighting systems; water-saving plumbing; a new roof;



new paint inside and out; new floor coverings and furniture; and new landscaping.

All three halls were seismically strengthened and modified for full accessibility, all while using sustainable measures and maintaining the historic fabric of Myron Hunt's original designs. After nine months of work, construction crews rushed to finish the \$18-million project on time and on budget and were still tweaking little details when students arrived—but the new residents seemed unfazed by the stray carpet staple and missing outlet cover.

"Everything's perfect. Everyone else is jealous," Kevin Hom, a freshman from Hillsborough, says of his third-floor room in Bell-Young. "Everything's clean and new. I like how big the rooms are, and how they put a refrigerator and microwave in every room."

Returning students were similarly rhapsodic. "I love the shower. There's water pressure!" says Wylie resident Isabelle Ying, a sophomore from Hong Kong. In fact, Daniel Minguez, a senior English and comparative literary studies major from La Cañada, prefers the refurbished Erdman to the all-new Rangeview Hall, where he lived last semester: "It already feels more homey."

Of the three residence halls, Erdman underwent the greatest transformation. Exterior walls were taken down to the studs, and new insulation added before the building was re-stuccoed. The new carpet and furniture are in a rust, brown, and forest green palette, but the roof tiles, windows, wooden floors, decorative iron work, moldings, and other details are all original. One telltale difference? "It smells good," says Minguez. "The old Erdman was kind of notorious for being smelly." □



ABOVE: Alex Forster '12, left, of San Luis Obispo, and Noel Seong of Seoul, South Korea, discover they are neighbors as they move into Braun Hall on Aug. 23. **BELOW:** Tom Logan '10, a politics major from Santa Barbara, delivers a package to newly renovated Erdman Hall on Aug. 26. Logan inherited his student-run business, Box It Up Storage, from Ken Smutny '08, who took it over from his brother, founder Chris Smutny '05.

ABOVE: President Bob Skotheim talks with a group of students in his office during matriculation. Continuing a custom that Richard C. Gilman introduced to Occidental, Skotheim met every freshman over a two-day period.

BELOW: Marina Nishimura '10, a diplomacy and world affairs major from Osaka, Japan, sets up her laptop in her room in newly renovated Erdman Hall on Aug. 25.





Minding *the* Groves

A generational shift in tenure-track faculty will result in an unprecedented turnover in the classroom over the next 10 to 15 years—presenting a formidable task in hiring those successors who could reshape Oxy intellectually

by JIM TRANQUADA
Illustration by JIM NUTTLE

IN HIS FOUR DECADES OF SERVICE to Occidental, Gamble Professor in Political Science Larry Caldwell has seen scores of faculty colleagues retire. But never in that time, says Oxy's most senior professor, has the College faced the prospect that will unfold over the next 10 to 15 years, when a third or more of the faculty is expected to retire.

"It's a pig in a python," Caldwell says bluntly of the group of full professors—50 of whom have at least two decades of service—who make up more than half of the 139 full-time tenure-track faculty at Occidental. "It's a very substantial challenge in terms of our institutional profile and the need to replace retiring faculty."

Occidental is hardly unique in this regard, as colleges and universities nationwide are facing the same demographic bulge. "Every deans meeting I go to, the same conversation is happening," says Eric Frank, dean of the College. According to the National Center for Educational Statistics, the percentage of full-time faculty age 50 or more has doubled since 1969, and now makes up 54 percent of the professoriate. In response, TIAA-CREF—the retirement planning firm that serves customers at three-quarters of the country's nonprofit colleges—has tripled its number of regional offices and increased its staff of financial planners to 1,000.

At Occidental, administrators and faculty agree, the problem was exacerbated by

the chronic budget deficits of the 1990s, which led to a significant slowdown in faculty hiring. “We don’t have an equal distribution of faculty within ranks. We have a relatively small number of associate professors who were hired in the ’90s compared to larger numbers of assistant and full professors,” says Frank, who points to his own department—art history and visual arts—as an example of the result. Of eight tenure-track faculty, five are full professors, with an average of 25 years of service.

“We’re still paying a terrible price for the down years,” says Caldwell, chair of the faculty’s subcommittee on finance (SCOF) and a member of the trustee audit and budget committee. The subcommittee recently estimated that Occidental will have to hire from six to eight new faculty members annually for the next seven to 12 years, not just to keep up with the anticipated pace of retirements, but to increase the number of full-time faculty overall to keep pace with recent increases in the size of the student body.

For Frank—who in the last three years has hired 21 new tenure-track faculty members—the task is daunting yet exhilarating. “If handled in a strategic way, with a thoughtful planning process, it’s a once-in-a-generation opportunity to move the College in a direction that aligns with our location in Los Angeles, our unique mission, and the needs and desires of the young faculty—the people who are the future of the institution,” he says. “It’s a historic moment in which we will see a shift from a faculty skewed older to a faculty skewed younger, a redistribution of financial resources and intellectual capital.”

Needless to say, hiring new faculty will be a top priority for the foreseeable future, says Frank—a view echoed by Board of Trustees chair Dennis Collins. “It’s going to be a very interesting time over the next 10 to 15 years,” Collins told alumni Sept. 13 at the College’s annual Volunteer Leadership Conference. “The hiring of faculty is very, very high on our list of priorities.” Frank already has begun strategizing with the new subcommittee on mission appointed by the Faculty Council to address the issue.

The budget implications are substantial, when you consider that the full professors likely to retire over the next several years earn more than twice the salary of the

average assistant professor. “That’s a big shift,” Frank says. At the same time, the College has to address the need to provide housing that young professors and their families can afford in one of the most expensive markets in the country. Occidental’s proposed master plan, currently pending before the city, would give the College the option of building a mixture of faculty houses and townhomes, in addition to the dozens of houses it already owns in the immediate neighborhood.

Recent faculty meetings have included lengthy policy discussions as faculty and administrators struggle to find a way to address both the housing needs of younger faculty and the retirement needs of older faculty. (Last spring, SCOF submitted a retirement management plan that proposes a “flexible retirement” approach that would allow faculty to gradually reduce their teaching load over a set period of time before they formally retire.) Both faculty and the dean agree on the need for the College to remain more engaged with retired faculty. “We want them to teach a class, direct a play, be a Fulbright adviser,” Frank says. “We have to plan for that, too.”

Precisely when and at what rate the faculty will retire is difficult to predict. Because there is no mandatory retirement age, the process will depend on such factors as the state of personal finances, health considerations, and at what point individual faculty members tire of grading papers. Don’t underestimate the importance of that last issue, particularly at an institution like Occidental that places such emphasis on writing skills, Frank and Caldwell say. “Teaching in the classroom is still great, but some don’t want to read all those papers after 35 years of such hard work,” Frank says.

Just two years shy of joining the late historian John Rodes as the longest-serving professors in the history of the College—43

years—Caldwell is quick to admit that it is his engagement with students in the classroom that keeps him coming back. “I still get as excited going to my classroom at the beginning of the year as I did when I started in 1967,” he says. An expert in Soviet and post-Soviet foreign and military policy and U.S. national security policy, he had several opportunities to leave academia for the private sector at the height of the Cold War. “But that would have meant giving up teaching,” he says without hesitation. “I didn’t want to do that.”

He’ll be a hard act to follow. □

Another Bumper Crop

Occidental welcomed five new tenure-track faculty members to campus this fall, including an award-winning chemist, a Chopin scholar, and an alumna from the Class of ’98. Meet Oxy’s new assistant professors:

🍊 **David Kasunic** (music) teaches courses in music history and opera, and in the Cultural Studies program. (He published a paper on Chopin’s operas in 2003.) He received his doctorate in musicology from Princeton University and previously taught at Haverford College.

🍊 Before coming to Oxy, **John Lang** (sociology) taught at Temple University and Rutgers University, where he received his doctorate. His research interests include the environment, food, organizations, power, risk, technology, and trust. Lang is fascinated with controversies surrounding new technologies as proxy debates for broader issues of social and political power, cultural values, and corporate responsibility.

🍊 In her fields of research (pattern formation and turbulence), **Janet Scheel** (physics) studies Rayleigh-Benard convection, in which a fluid cell is bounded by horizontal parallel plates kept at a constant temperature difference. She previously taught at California Lutheran University, Caltech (where she received her doctorate in 2006), and Cornell University.

🍊 **Clarence La Mont Terry ’98 M’99** (education) returned to Oxy last year as an adjunct assistant professor. Previously, he taught in the Mountain View School District in El Monte. A Ph.D. candidate at UCLA’s Graduate School of Education and Information Studies, Terry studies the impact of the development of critical literacies on the racial, academic, and social activist identities of African American students of mathematics.

🍊 **Andrew K. Udit** (chemistry), a Caltech doctoral graduate, was selected by the Camille & Henry Dreyfus Foundation as a 2008 Faculty Start-Up awardee. His research interests include the “greening” of petrochemical conversions via biocatalysis and developing synthetic heparin anticoagulants using chemically modified viruses.

🍊 In addition, **Jared Orsi** is Oxy’s new Ray Allen Billington Distinguished Visiting Professor in U.S. History. In addition to pursuing research at the Huntington Library in San Marino, Orsi will teach two classes at Oxy this year. A specialist in U.S. borderlands and Mexico, Orsi previously taught at Colorado State University, and received his doctorate from the University of Wisconsin-Madison.

Photo by Kirby Lee



President Bob Skotkeim, *far left*, congratulates the College's Alumni Seal honorees at Reunion Weekend in June: (*l-r*) emerita professor of education Rae McCormick '62 (honorary faculty emerita), filmmaker Jesus Treviño '68 (professional achievement), Coalition for Humane Immigrant Rights of Los Angeles executive director Angelica Salas '93 (young alumni), "volunteer extraordinaire" Bob Cody '68 (service to the College), Brenda Shockley '68 (service to the community), and Nuclear Age Peace Foundation founder David Krieger '63 (alumnus of the year).

Rankings Roundup

Oxy Gets High Marks for Value, Focus, Doctorates

Occidental once again has been named a "Best Value" school by *U.S. News & World Report* and *Kiplinger's Personal Finance* for its combination of academic quality and affordability. This is the sixth straight year Oxy has been a *U.S. News* best value, and the second year on *Kiplinger's* list. New this year is a *U.S. News* survey of high school counselors, in which Occidental ranked among the nation's top 25 liberal arts colleges. According to *U.S. News*, Oxy (which ranks No. 37 overall) is one of the country's most diverse colleges—third among top-tier liberal arts institutions.

Presidential Search Update Canvass for Candidates Goes Coast to Coast

The search for Occidental's 14th president is in full swing, with search committee members hitting the road to meet with prospective candidates and assemble a strong pool for the full committee to consider. "Four or five of us will be traveling around the country to meet people face-to-face, answer questions, and do some encouraging," Board of Trustees chair Dennis Collins told an alumni gathering at Occidental's Volunteer Leadership Conference on Sept. 13.

Collins recently touched down in New England, visiting "several important prospects," and he and committee chair John Farmer will soon be traveling to Atlanta, Washington, D.C., Chicago, and Michigan, where they will be sitting down with likely candidates "to see if we can persuade them this is the next step in their careers," as Collins put it.

The 14-member committee plans to narrow the pool to 12 or so likely candidates by the end of November, "with preference going to people who have a successful record at another liberal arts college," according to Collins. That group will be engaged in intensive face-to-face conversations, and some might even be invited to visit the Oxy campus. Confidentiality will be a critical factor in light of the fact that the pool is expected to include sitting presidents and provosts, Collins told the VLC gathering, adding, "Our conversations have shown there is an enormously high regard for Occidental."

In January, the committee will identify up to three finalists who will be invited to campus. "The committee can decide what the appropriate number is to bring to the board, based on its assessment of the individual candidates," Collins said. "We are still on target to meet the board's goal of naming a new president by March 2009."

More information about the search can be found online at www.oxy.edu/x7558.xml. Suggestions regarding potential candidates should be forwarded to board secretary Rozita Afar (rafar@oxy.edu).

New Bleachers, New Floor, New Paint, New Tiger Rush Gymnasium Gets Million-Dollar Makeover

Photo by Marc Campos

This year, Occidental sports fans will have a whole new reason to cheer on the Tigers in Rush Gymnasium. The facility has gotten a \$1.5-million facelift. "When fans show up this year, they'll see new bleachers, a new floor, new paint, and new graphics," says Joe O'Hara, assistant director of plan, design, and construction. "We're pretty excited."

Renovations began in early June with removal of the existing floor and old bleachers. Demolition and electrical work followed soon after, while additional construction led to the leveling of the gym's sub-floor and the laying of the new floor. The gym roof has also been repaired to prevent leaks.

The total seating capacity in the renovated gym is now 1,451. The project was completed just in time for the Tigers' home volleyball opener Sept. 26 against Pomona-Pitzer.

Built in 1965, the gymnasium is named for 1909 graduate Frank Neill "Speedy" Rush, who played football and captained the track team before serving on the Occidental Board of Trustees for 48 years, including two terms as chairman.



Occidental fared well in other college guides, including the *Yale Daily News Insider's Guide to the Colleges*, which cited Oxy as one of a handful of colleges and universities with the “strongest undergraduate focus”—an Editor’s Choice Top 10 that includes Princeton, Yale, Stanford, Swarthmore, Amherst, and Williams. According to the National Collegiate Scouting Association’s 2008 Collegiate Power Rankings List, Occidental ranks among the top 10 percent of colleges and universities nationwide for its combination of athletic and academic prowess. The NCSA, an organization that seeks to connect high school student-athletes with colleges that best meet their individual needs, ranked Occidental 44th among NCAA Division III colleges and 77th among all schools in all divisions, ahead of Division I schools including UCLA, USC, and UC Berkeley.

A recent report from the National Science Foundation also gave Occidental high marks as one of the country’s top producers of students who go on to receive doctorates in science and engineering. The latest results from 1997-2006 confirm a longstanding trend among members of the Oberlin 50, a group of small private liberal arts colleges that includes Occidental. “These schools have long outproduced (by yield) even the research universities,” the report states.

Reaccreditation Under Way Institutional Self Review Brings Future into Focus

Occidental’s reaccreditation proposal has been approved by the Western Association of Schools and Colleges, an important step in the College’s effort to renew its accreditation for another 10 years. The proposal, submitted almost a year ago, outlines the ways in which Oxy plans to evaluate itself on such fundamental issues as assessment of student learning outcomes, using WASC standards and processes.

Working groups of faculty, administrators, staff, and students are now being formed to help carry out the College’s program of self-evaluation. The reaccreditation process is scheduled to be completed in 2011. (Occidental was last reaccredited in 2001.) To learn more about the process, visit Oxy’s reaccreditation website at www.oxy.edu/x6620.xml.

Photo by Kirby Lee



Following his first collegiate meet, freshman running sensation Eric Kleinsasser of Glendale was voted SCIAC Athlete of the Week for Sept. 1-7. At the UCI/Asics Invitational on Sept. 6, Kleinsasser ran a first-place time of 26:45.50 in the 8K, leading the Tigers to a third-place finish. For up-to-date results for all of Oxy’s sports teams, visit www.oxyathletics.com.

Mixed Media

Books Return to Shelves, While Oxy Hits YouTube

Less than 10 percent of the 18,000 books damaged in the March 1 library flood were lost. Frozen and trucked to Texas where they underwent a freeze-drying process, the books returned to campus in April. Over the summer, four student workers under the supervision of circulation and reserves manager Michael Kerwin worked their way through the 900 boxes and evaluated each volume, 80 percent of which could be reshelved. Professional librarians evaluated the rest. “Hundreds of books have already returned from the bindery—they look great,” Kerwin reports. “Acquisitions has ordered hundreds more for repurchase.”

In new media news, Occidental has joined the video revolution and launched its own YouTube channel. Did you miss President Skotheim’s Convocation speech? Want to revisit a Glee Club performance? You’ll find these selections and more by logging on to www.youtube.com/OccidentalCollege.

Occidental in Brief

Occidental President Bob Skotheim joined more than 100 college and university presidents nationwide in signing a petition advocating “an informed and dispassionate public debate over the effects of the 21-year-old drinking age.” The petition is part of a Vermont-based movement called the Amethyst Initiative, launched by former Middlebury College president John McCardell. Statistics compiled by campus safety officials show that there were 69 violations of the College’s alcohol policy in 2007, up from 33 in 2006. □ Desiree LaVertu, director of the Women’s Glee Club at Chapman University and co-director of the combined Glee Clubs at Caltech, has been hired as interim Glee Club director while a national search is conducted for a successor to Jeffrey Bernstein, who left Oxy in July after 11 years at the helm. He plans to devote more time to composition while continuing with the Pasadena Symphony. □ Sara El-Amine ’07 continues her work with Sen. Barack Obama ’83’s presidential campaign in the battleground state of Virginia—and she has plenty of reinforcements from Oxy. Senior Margot Seigle and juniors Tessa D’Arcangelew, Emily Deans, and Nonda Hanneman are currently working full-time as deputy field organizers/fellows in northwestern Virginia for a full semester of college credit, while 2008 graduates Brian Damron and Chris Nelson are field organizers in the Shenandoah Valley.

Photo by Marc Campos



Professor of psychology Nancy Dess received the 2008 Graham L. Sterling Memorial Award—Oxy’s top prize for teaching, service, and distinguished professional achievement—from dean of the College Eric Frank at Convocation on Aug. 30.

Assistant professor
Damian Stocking mixes
pop culture with Greek
mythology, schedules
his classes at night, and
teaches without a syllabus.
Is it any wonder that
students love him?

DOCK STAR

BY COLLEEN SHARKEY
PHOTOS BY MARC CAMPOS





Stocking was one of four inaugural recipients of Oxy's Linda and Tod White '59 Teaching Prize last spring. He regards teaching as an experience where he learns alongside his students: "I like to discover things as we go."

Damian Stocking is removing books from his basement-level office in Swan Hall. He needs more homage space. A lanky former competitive runner, his impossibly boyish 41-year-old face lights up as he shows off a recently purchased horse's head—an ornate tribute to a class last spring on canonical Greek poet Pindar and his Olympian Odes. A store-bought raven right out of Edgar Allan Poe precariously hangs out on the shelf above Stocking's head—as enigmatic, gregarious, and charismatic as this assistant professor of English and comparative literary studies.

Even more elaborate class souvenirs will require the space that books now occupy, but the confines of his quarters thwart any possibility of a life-size replica of the fabled Moby Dick. Herman Melville's whale of a novel is the focus of Stocking's fall course titled "The Wake of the Ancient"—also known as "Prometheus Rebound" as well as "The Hero Versus Death and God Part II," and even "The American Declaration of Ontological Independence." The rest of the syllabus? There's not one.

"A syllabus is an invitation to thinking through a question," says Stocking. "I don't have an obstacle course set up that students have to complete by the end of the semester." He champions broad interpretations, multiple perspectives, and transforming moments—a few of the intangibles that attract students to what colleagues call the "cult of Damian."

Stocking's classes are as varied and open as the titles they're given. For some students hooked on his technique, one class is never enough: Legend has it that one devotee took 16 courses with him. (Stocking modestly dismisses this and points out that he is the

only teacher of Greek and Latin literature and poetry.) “Once people start taking his classes, it’s common that they continue to do so,” says Erin Conley ’09, an ECLS and religious studies major from Long Beach (who has notched seven classes with Stocking). “He’s very connected to students on a cultural level, and his door is always open. I wouldn’t go so far as to say he’s a role model, but his openness and willingness to help are great human qualities that I hope to emulate.”

On the first night of class, Stocking paces and fiddles with the room’s *a/v* equipment with the nervous energy of an eager suitor. His energy turns into excitement—the kind most students would never associate with Melville. After explaining the four titles of the class at length, he hands out a sheet of paper with two separate staves of music and asks the class to read it. While some students with a music background will doubtless make some sense of the samples, Stocking helps everyone out by playing the first, Beethoven’s wistful piano solo “Für Elise” (1810), followed by the second, Tom Jones’s testosterone-heavy überpop anthem “It’s Not Unusual” (1965).

The class chuckles upon hearing the latter, and then Stocking explains the relevance of music to *Moby*, published in 1851. “You’d

have to experience this—hear it—in order to be able to write about it, just like literature. One song is full of pathos and longing, and the other is full of gold lamé suits and hangovers. With 135 chapters of *Moby Dick*, how many songs are there to be performed?”

Broaching the semester’s main text, he breaks it down in simple terms, saying, “The purpose of this class is to make this book rock as hard as we can!” Out of the mouths of many instructors, such slang might come off as trying too hard—a little too *Dead Poets Society*. Yet Stocking seems less like a professor and more like a cool older brother who’s already discovered Led Zeppelin and anarchy and he’s about to let you in on the secret.

As the featured speaker Sept. 23 in an ongoing Oxy series titled “What Matters to Me and Why,” Stocking recounted his most valued memory. As a child of 5 or 6, Stocking visited the beach with his family, and he and

David Rosenberg, a senior cognitive science major from Portland, Ore., took a class with Stocking as a freshman: “I thought he was the man,” he says.

his younger sister, Rachel, ventured into the water and became obsessed with a game where they would hold hands and wait for waves to crash upon them. He remembers their small limbs being ripped apart by the force and, when both were able to stand up again, they would compare reactions—things like, “Oh, man, I couldn’t breathe for like 20 seconds! That was awesome!” Stocking tries to constantly recreate that euphoria in his life and in the classroom. “I remember liking that experience so much,” he says. “I like being blown away by things and by people.”

When Stocking was growing up, his mom, a Realtor, and dad, a physicist, gave him *Aesop’s Fables* and made him write them out and discuss their meaning. When he was old enough to rebel, Stocking chose the Clash over the classics and was irritated when his parents dragged him to the National Gallery in London. While moping on a bench at the museum, the would-be punk overheard a group of students comparing answers as they viewed various works of art. He heard their interpretation of Bronzino’s *Allegories* and he thought to himself, “That’s not right!”

The change that came over Stocking “was exhilarating,” he recalls. He returned to the museum day after day and “shifted out of my prejudice against interpreting versus determination,” says Stocking. “I had been arrogant and dismissive regarding literature and art because I was good at math. I spent so much of my time trying to reduce, trying to simplify things, and then I turned in the complete opposite direction. It reawakened what I had been doing as a kid with *Aesop*.”

Stocking believes that if we as a culture are bored by literature, then we have failed the text, not the other way around. He was indoctrinated into the classics as an undergraduate at Berkeley. While he used his natural gift for math to pursue a physics degree, he “didn’t savor the idea of being a lonely theoretical physicist.” Stocking’s wife of 20 years, Cheri, attended UC Santa Cruz as an art major, and he wanted to be able to talk to her about subjects other than physics.

So Stocking signed up for a Greek course taught by Gerson Rabinowitz, a professor of classics legendary for his toughness. When

At the Stocking residence, Damian (with 17-year-old son Kosmas, left, and wife Cheri) gets a reality check from 19-year-old daughter Sophie, right, when it comes to his charisma: “I don’t get it.”





Causing a commotion: *From left*, Justin Young '10, Britinee Yasukochi '11, Michael Darling '10, Aly Hammett '11, Colter King '09, Alex Wolf '10, and Sarah Jane Fischer '09, *far right*, show some love.

the class began, he was in the company of 19 other undergrads; by semester's end, Stocking was the lone student remaining. "He was very severe and destructive," Stocking says of Rabinowitz, who died in 1998. "He would throw books out the window and make people cry. But he taught me what it was to have a diligent, devoted love of things. I began to wake up to things under his guidance ... he marked me with a taste for rigor."

Stocking wants to give his students what Rabinowitz gave him, only "with a friendlier face." He applies a five-point program to literature that seizes upon seemingly small details to help him and his students "become more attentive to literary texts." Before diving in to *Moby Dick*, he and his charges dissect Botticelli's painting *The Birth of Venus*, searching for nuances to clarify the 15th-century artist's intent. Students point out the stark contrasts between a demure, clothed figure to Venus's right and two scantily clad intertwined figures floating to her left. "This picture just got caliente!" Stocking says with a chuckle.

That open discourse extends to his colleagues and peers. "Damian has what so many professors at Oxy have: a really deep dedica-

tion to the students," says assistant professor of religious studies Malek Moazzam-Doulat, who sometimes sits in on Stocking's classes (and vice versa). "On my worst days, that example serves as a kick in the pants. What would I change about him as a teacher? Well, every so often during the semester, I would shoot him with a tranquilizer dart gun, and put him back in his den to sleep a little."

"Dusty, ancient texts become vital, forceful things through his interpretations," observes Sean D. Kirkland, assistant professor of philosophy at DePaul University, who has asked Stocking to present at conferences. Stocking "always excavates the texts themselves, carefully attending to what is strange, perplexing, and wondrous there, unearthing in the end some rare gem, some startling find, which exerts an almost visceral attraction, drawing his students and his readers toward the ancients and allowing the ancients in turn to affect, alter, penetrate the way those students and readers perceive themselves and their world."

For a cult leader, Stocking comes off as a self-effacing sort. "He's always been more interested in helping me with my research

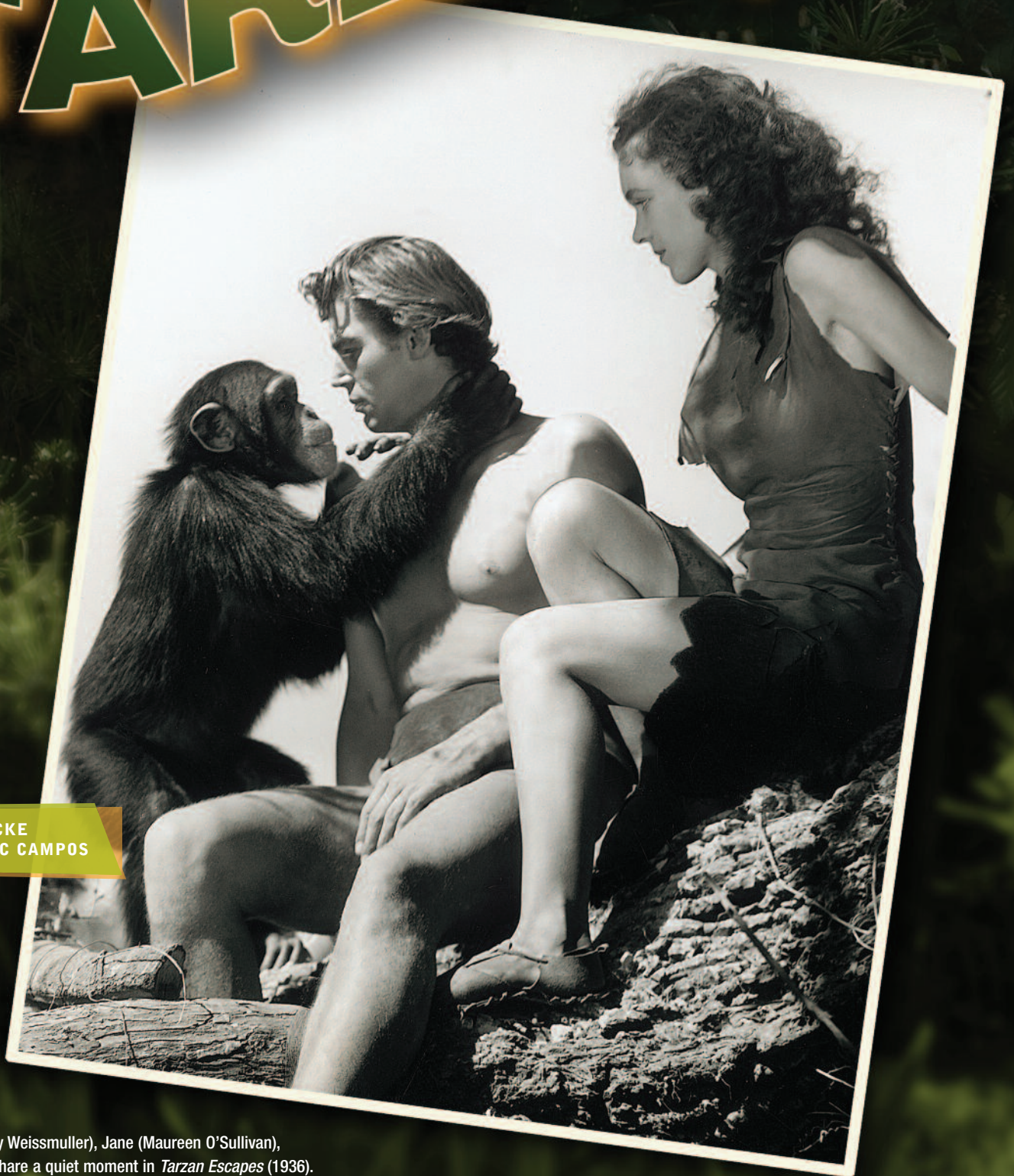
than working on his interests," says Shoshone Johnson '09, a critical theory and social justice major from Oakland. "He believes in community-oriented ethics—that you don't hurt someone because you don't want to hurt them, not because of some external punishment. In that way, he motivates his students—like 'do it for Damian.'"

And while he doesn't push his interpretations of the classics on anyone, "My goal for every class is for students to want to read Pindar as much as they want to go to the movies," Stocking says. "I want to make it a living option for them; I want them to want to return to texts on their own and with friends."

The notion of a shared intellectual rigor between students and faculty fits Stocking's ideal of a college community. "The students at Oxy are very dedicated," he says, insisting that the "cult" classification only extends as far as students happily spending weeks contemplating Pindar or Plato: "I swear to God I don't have real estate in Paraguay!" ■

Don't
Mess With the

TARZAN



BY WILLIAM COCKE
PHOTOS BY MARC CAMPOS

Tarzan (Johnny Weissmuller), Jane (Maureen O'Sullivan), and Cheetah share a quiet moment in *Tarzan Escapes* (1936).



As the Ape Man's centennial draws near, Edgar Rice Burroughs's best-known creation gears up for a big-screen comeback. And if Jim Sullos '60 gets his way, he'll be joined—at long last—by John Carter of Mars.

Not many fictional characters, particularly those of the pop culture variety, achieve the kind of immortality that outlives their creators and the fickle nature of public taste. Only a handful—Sherlock Holmes, Superman, James Bond—can be called true icons. Nearly a century after springing forth from the fertile imagination of a 37-year-old failed pencil sharpener dealer named Edgar Rice Burroughs, Tarzan is one such creation—and he shows no sign of swinging off into oblivion.

Quite the contrary—thanks to Burroughs's business acumen and determination to capitalize on all media, Tarzan remains

lord not only of the jungle, but of the movies, comics, television, and print. By having the foresight to start Edgar Rice Burroughs Inc. in 1923, the prolific author ensured that all of his creations would be protected and marketed as he and his heirs saw fit.

But at the moment, Jim Sullos '60 is less concerned with the Ape Man than he is with breaking the Curse of John Carter. While Tarzan made his screen debut in 1918 and has spawned almost 50 films since, "the John Carter of Mars series has never been made into a movie," explains Sullos, who was installed as president of ERB Inc. in May.

That could change soon in a big way, as Pixar Animation—the Walt Disney Co. sub-

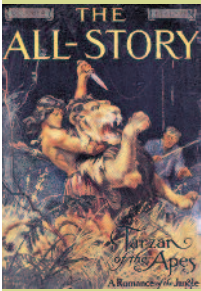


Lex Barker—movie Tarzan No. 10—also graced the covers of more than 40 comic books published by Dell in the 1950s. A 1940 Big Little Book featuring John Carter of Mars featured art by John Coleman Burroughs (Edgar's son). **ABOVE:** Sullos in Tarzana.

sidiary with a seamless stream of hits, from *Toy Story* to *Wall-E*—develops what would be the first big-screen adaptation of Burroughs's second-most popular character, a Virginia gentleman adventurer who finds himself transported to the planet Barsoom (a fictionalized depiction of the Red Planet).

King of All Media

1912: Struggling novelist Edgar Rice Burroughs sells *Tarzan of the Apes* to *The All-Story Magazine*, a popular pulp monthly, for \$700. It becomes a best-seller in book form in 1914.



1918: *Tarzan of the Apes* swings into theaters with barrel-chested actor Elmo Lincoln. It's reportedly the first film to gross a million.

1929: Artist Hal Foster (who will later create *Prince Valiant*) depicts the first Tarzan in newspapers.

1932: Ex-swimmer and five-time Olympic gold medalist Johnny Weissmuller makes the first of 12 *Tarzan* movies. His Tarzan yell (actually the product of three voices) remains definitive.

1935: Unhappy with the Hollywood treatment of his creation, ERB's Burroughs-Tarzan Enterprises produces *The New Adventures of Tarzan*, a 12-chapter serial with Olympics decathlon champion Herman Brix as a more polished jungle lord.



1966: Ron Ely brings "Tarzan" to prime-time (sans Jane and the primitive dialect) with a series on NBC. The show runs two seasons and is a staple of Saturday afternoon reruns for years.

1984: *Greystoke: The Legend of Tarzan, Lord of the Apes*, directed by Hugh Hudson (*Chariots of Fire*), gives the Ape Man the A-list treatment, with Christopher Lambert as Tarzan and Andie MacDowell (whose twang was famously replaced by Glenn Close) as Jane.



1985: Baltimore, a disco act from Italy, scores an international hit with "Tarzan Boy." The one-hit wonder reaches No. 3 in the U.K. and No. 13 on *Billboard's* Hot 100.

1991: An environmentally correct "Tarzan" starring Canadian actor Wolf Larson, *above*, debuts in syndication. This time, Jane is a French ecologist.

1999: *Tarzan* gets Disneyfied to the tune of \$171 million in domestic box office, winning an Academy Award for Phil Collins for original song. That leads to *Tarzan: The Musical* in 2006, with more tunes by Collins and a book by David Henry Hwang. While it closes on Broadway after 486 shows, its success in the Netherlands leads to two additional productions.



In 1919, Burroughs (shown here in 1945) had made enough money to move from his native Chicago to Los Angeles, so he could be close to the film industry.

Burroughs himself tried to get an animated feature made after the first book in the 11-volume series, *A Princess of Mars*, was published in 1912. A later effort, in 1931, involved famed animator Bob Clampett and Burroughs's son, Jack, but was scrapped by Metro Goldwyn Mayer. Subsequent attempts involved stop-motion pioneer Ray Harryhausen, Touchstone Pictures, and Paramount Pictures. All stalled due to cost issues, special effects limitations, or creative differences.

This time, Sullos says, "I think maybe we're going to put it together," noting that Disney/Pixar acquired the rights in 2006. "We got the pitch on *John Carter* and we were just overwhelmed—it was fantastic. They had created all kinds of pictures and drawings of whom they had in mind and what these people are going to look like."

As envisioned by director Andrew Stanton (*Finding Nemo*, *Wall-E*), the film will also include a mixture of live action and CGI effects, a Pixar first. "They now have the capacity to do a very interesting movie," Sullos says. "Hopefully, it'll be something like *Star Wars*, with sequels to follow."

Like a hero out of a Burroughs novel, Sullos finds himself in a position he likely never imagined—as caretaker and dealmaker for the potent literary legacy of one of the 20th century's most popular novelists. As Tarzan's centennial draws near, Sullos sees his

role as ensuring that the Burroughs oeuvre endures. "It's amazing," he says. "Some of these stories are nearly 100 years old, and they still take hold of your imagination."

A native of Southern California, Sullos graduated from Oxy with a degree in business administration. At the urging of economics professor Laurence de Rycke, he got his MBA, with a concentration in accounting, from Columbia University in 1962. He moved back to Los Angeles and went to work for Windes & McClaughry, a large local accounting firm in Long Beach. He spent his entire career there, moving through the ranks to managing partner until he reached mandatory retirement at age 62 in 2001. "When I was a 36-year-old partner, I voted for mandatory retirement without ever thinking I'd be that old," he says. "The time went just like that."

Since 2001, as a retired partner, Sullos has spent much of his time transferring clients to other partners. One of those clients is Edgar Rice Burroughs Inc., where he had been a director and trustee since the mid-1990s. "That's how I got involved in the company," he says. "I was the partner in charge of it before I transferred it to other partners. I stayed on as a trustee and a director."

Sullos was due to become president of the company on May 1. That same day, board chairman Danton Burroughs—Edgar's grandson and the primary overseer of the Burroughs legacy for the last 36 years—died of heart failure at age 63, a day after a fire at his home destroyed a room full of priceless family memorabilia. "It was tragic and unex-

pected,” says Sullos, who now finds himself pulling double duty—for ERB Inc. as well as his ongoing role at Windes & McClaughry.

These days, Sullos maintains an office at his firm and commutes an hour and a half each way from his home in Long Beach to Tarzana. The town was carved out of a 550-acre ranch that once belonged to Gen. Harrison Gray Otis, legendary publisher of the *Los Angeles Times*. Burroughs bought the property in 1919 and renamed it “Tarzana Ranch.” The Spanish ranch-style home, which houses the ERB Inc. offices and fronts Ventura Boulevard, was built in 1927.

“Ventura Boulevard wasn’t even paved in those days,” Sullos says. “Burroughs used to ride his horse to work every day and write his books.” After the author died in 1950, his ashes were reportedly buried in an unmarked spot in the front yard.

Much of Sullos’s time is spent dealing with trademark and copyright issues and negotiating contracts and licenses for the use of Burroughs’s many creations. (Over the years, Tarzan has been a pitchman for everything from insurance to airlines and footwear to food chains all over the world.) As the primary representative of a closely held family corporation, he is always cognizant of the Burroughs legacy. “We’re constantly trying to shut down what we call infringers,” Sullos says. “There have been a few Tarzan porno

films done, and we’ve taken those off the market. I spend a lot of time defending our copyrights and trademarks. In the trademark world, it’s use it or lose it.”

Due to a copyright renewal oversight in 1962, many of Burroughs’s earliest works were seized on by multiple publishers, and Sullos still deals with the complex issue of whether or not certain books and short stories have become part of the public domain. “Anything written after incorporation is under copyright,” he says. “It’s books prior to 1923 that we have issues with.”

Burroughs’s ultimate creation remains the bread and butter of ERB Inc. Tarzan is what the industry calls an evergreen—a character that is instantly recognizable worldwide. And despite the many TV shows (the most

recent of which, in 2003, starred ex-Calvin Klein model Travis Fimmel), parodies like *George of the Jungle*, and Disney’s *Tarzan*, there hasn’t been a live-action, big-budget Ape Man film in nearly 25 years (the 1998 blink-and-you-missed-it Casper Van Dien vehicle *Tarzan and the Lost City* doesn’t count).

But hold on to your vine: Warner Bros. and producer Jerry Weintraub currently hold a four-year option to produce a live-action movie, and *Variety* reported in September that *The Mummy* director Stephen Sommers is in negotiations to try his hand at a Tarzan flick.

So long as it’s not a sequel to Bo Derek’s execrable, unauthorized *Tarzan, the Ape Man* (1981), we’ll see you at the movies. ■

Freelance writer William Cocke wrote “*Fired Up, Ready to Go*” in the Winter issue.



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ABOVE: Glendale High School football coach James Pierce became the last of the silent Tarzans in 1927 (in *Tarzan and the Golden Lion*), after he attended a party given by Burroughs and his daughter, Joan.

RIGHT: Since assuming his duties in May, Sullos has been catching up on Burroughs’s voluminous legacy.

FIRST IMPRESSIONS



Adventurous. Ambitious. Articulate. Athletic. Competitive. Congenial.
Passionate. Proactive. ...Need we go on? Meet the new faces of Oxy.

A PILOT, A MAGICIAN, A NATIONALLY RANKED WHISTLER: Occidental's newcomers are a typically eclectic bunch. The 467 members of the Class of 2012 and 52 transfer students hail from 19 nations, speak 17 foreign languages, and competed in 42 high school sports (including wakeboarding, kickboxing, and bocce). They've sold fruit, built trails, paged Senators—even acted in McDonald's commercials. Women outnumber men by a 57-to-43 percent margin—and, in keeping with recent trends, the applicant pool (5,790) is again the largest in the College's 121-year history.

"The record volume and quality of applicants are testament to a heightened awareness of Oxy's strengths," says dean of admission Vince Cuseo, whose team has the challenge of winnowing the field. "Students are attracted to a kind of 'perfect storm' in their college search—a rigorous education at arguably the nation's most diverse liberal arts college set in a leading-edge urban environment."

As has become custom in the pages of *Occidental*, let's take a closer look at some of these multitalented newbies. They're wise, well rounded, better traveled than many politicians—and bound to bring good things to Oxy over the next four years.

TUCKER EASON

As a resident of tiny Woody Creek, Colo. (population 331), Tucker Eason was witness to a recent bit of pop cultural history—the laying to rest of famed Gonzo journalist and neighbor Hunter S. Thompson. On Aug. 20, 2005, six months after his death, Thompson's ashes were fired from a cannon atop a 153-foot tower of his own design—a double-thumbed fist clutching a peyote button—while Bob Dylan's "Mr. Tambourine Man" played. "I grew up about 10 minutes away," Eason says, "and they shot his ashen remains into the sky above where we live."

While he harbors no fear and loathing toward Colorado, "I was tired of the snow all the time," Eason admits. "I visited Oxy and loved it. It is the perfect size and has a really competitive football program."

Eason was an all-state performer in track and football—in fact, he's Aspen High School's all-time leading tackler—but also danced the role of the Prince in a production of *The Nutcracker*. "Ballet is not for the weak, that's for sure, but football is more upfront pain," he says. "Ballet is a subtler kind of pain. It takes a lot of strength and mental focus similar to football."

As for his main goal while at Oxy: "I wanna learn to surf!" he jokes. In a somewhat more serious vein, he adds, "I want to get a degree—pass with flying colors—get a SCIAC championship or four, and be happy."

"I'm passionate about making a difference and being happy, and spreading happiness," he concludes. "Kind of Miss America, but it's true."



Tucker Eason Woody Creek, Colo.

Major/Career Plans: "Right now I'm unsure. I love art, theater, literature, history, religion. I'm pretty spread out, but that's what I love about Oxy—I can explore."

Hobbies: "I read a lot, I have kept a journal since I was a freshman in high school. I lift a lot for football. I like to be outside and active, I snowboard and skateboard. I'm an artist (ceramics and mixed media). I spend a ton of time with my little sister and parents—they are a big part of my life."

Favorite Books: The Celestine Prophecy, Ender's Game, The Art of Racing in the Rain

Favorite Movies: Fight Club, Crash, Snatch

Passions? "Wow, loaded question. I just love life."

Yelka Kamara Jackson Heights, N.Y.

Favorite Book: Long Walk to Freedom: The Autobiography of Nelson Mandela

Diamond in the Rough: “If Sierra Leone were to be developed to its fullest potential, education would be available to every child.”

Urban Bright: “If I could dance with any company, it would be with Urban Bush Women”—a Brooklyn-based troupe, founded in 1984 by choreographer Jawole Willa Jo Zollar, that tells the “untold and under-told” narratives of disenfranchised people through dance. “They are fierce. My mother danced with them, and I would like to follow in her footsteps.”



YELKA KAMARA

Visiting her old neighborhood last year after almost a decade was an “eye-opening experience” for Yelka Kamara, who left civil war-torn Sierra Leone with her father for America in 1998. “I remember it as a big space where I spent most of my time playing ‘balancing ball’ with my cousins and the other neighborhood children, while the adults conversed over their cooking fire,” she says. “In reality it was narrow, filthy, and poverty-stricken. Living in America for the past 10 years has exposed me to many resources and ideas. It has instilled in me the importance of education.”

Yet, she acknowledges, “Sierra Leone had changed greatly. The civil war had ended. Hope for a better Sierra Leone engulfed the spirit of the country. The youth were determined to move past a war-torn country and make it prosperous again. On the flight back, I promised to take part in the reconstruction of Sierra Leone.”

Kamara, who plans to major in economics or international relations, chose Occidental because of its diplomacy and world affairs program. “It is a great opportunity that meets my diverse needs for my interest in a career in international law,” she says. “With the knowledge gained from an economics major, I can assist in revitalizing Sierra Leone’s economy. Having an understanding of the basics of economic decision-making and the operation of the economic system will enable me to identify and create ways to use the country’s natural resources to tackle unemployment, inflation, and poverty and to improve in areas of international trade, healthcare, and public education.”

While Kamara’s greatest passion is to make herself “a better person today than I was yesterday,” another is dance. She comes to Oxy from Frank Sinatra School of the Arts in New York City, where she performed with American Ballet Theatre’s JPMorgan Make a Ballet program and was a member of the Young Dancemakers Company. “In my world, dance elucidates the relationships between determination, dedication, and motivation,” she says. “The primary ingredient for success is motivation.”

ETHAN WEISS

Around the age of 10, Ethan Weiss of Petaluma started to accompany his father on his bike rides. “I was naturally very competitive with my dad, and by the time I was 12, began to beat him up the hills, not the other way around,” Weiss recalls. “That’s when I started racing.”

A nationally competitive cyclist, Weiss has won two state championships in the time trial—one-man races against the clock—in 2002 and 2006. In 2006 he also placed eighth in the time trial at the nationals.

Although he got started in cycling as a way to take on his old man, “What keeps me in the sport, and probably what drew me to it, was that it was a perfect match with my personality,” he says. “I really enjoy the time to myself. I enjoy pushing myself far more than being pushed by others.”

Weiss brings a similar philosophy to bear on his time at Occidental. “I’m open to anything that will make me work hard to prove myself or my opinions,” which could include debate or campus political organizations. By the end of the next four years, he hopes to be able “to begin to speak with authority on issues.”

Weiss was attracted to the College by the Oxy-at-the-United Nations program and aspires to a diplomacy and world affairs major. DWA “combines my love of language, the idea of bridging cultural divides, the intensity of the political game, and plain and simple talk with people who might not agree with me,” says Weiss, who hopes to work at the State Department, the CIA, “or perhaps some other agency where I can do some negotiation.” And if he can improve his game in ultimate Frisbee while at Oxy, all the better.



Ethan Weiss Petaluma

Ouch! *Eight weeks prior to arriving at Oxy, Weiss had a titanium plate placed in his right shoulder—the aftermath of a bike collision pedaling close to 30 mph in competition. He’ll be back on the horse before long.*

Cartographers Anonymous: *“I can stare at maps for hours. Don’t even get me started with Google Maps.”*

Words to Live By: *“I’m passionate about keeping myself realistic and grounded as an individual. For my speech at my high school graduation, I wrote that we all need to reserve moments for ourselves for the things that assure our individuality and our humanity.”*

Anything Else? *“I enjoy playing devil’s advocate.”*



DAYNA CHIKAMOTO

Honolulu and Micronesia might be separated by more than 3,000 miles, but Dayna Chikamoto bridged the distance in a big way. Growing up, she heard her father, an attorney, talk often of the conditions he saw in his travels to the remote island states “and the lack of educational resources that are available to the children there,” Chikamoto recalls. So over the last four years, the Iolani School student contacted both public and private schools in Hawaii to collect textbooks, library books, encyclopedias, and collateral materials (such as videotapes and posters) that had been earmarked for disposal.

With the help of her father, staff from the Consulate of the Republic of the Marshall Islands, and an airline and an ocean freight company that do business in the islands, Chikamoto shipped 20 tons of materials at no cost to schools in the Marshall Islands. “I believe that I am giving them a better chance of having a brighter future,” she says.

That interest in helping others is part of what attracted Chikamoto to Oxy. “When I visited campus with my family over winter break, we bumped into a man walking his dog, and he was kind enough to point out some buildings and tell us a bit about the school,” she recalls. “That encounter stood out in my mind because it shows what a tight-knit and friendly community Occidental has, including the surrounding neighborhood.”

While undecided on a major, Chikamoto definitely plans to pursue her interest in dance. “I am planning to audition for the dance team at Oxy and am

Dayna Chikamoto Honolulu

Why Oxy? *“I wanted to go to a vibrant city where there would be tons of activities, lots of opportunities, and a wide variety of people with whom I could interact.”*

Life’s in the Details: *“I am passionate about making a difference in someone’s life. People don’t realize how small things can add up and amount to something really big. A simple smile or ‘hello’ can easily brighten up someone’s day, just as putting a piece of trash lying on the ground into the garbage bin could help to make the world a cleaner place.”*

Anything Else? *“I’m so glad to be at Oxy and can’t wait to see how the next four years of my life will unfold!”*



Chelsea Kellogg Seattle

Why Oxy? *“The diversity on campus made me feel as if Oxy was a place where many viewpoints could be found. It also became apparent that Oxy would do just about anything to make it easy for a student to attend. From free parking and the liberal financial aid awards to the helpful staff in every department, I knew Occidental would work as hard as I would to make my journey here productive and comfortable.”*

Top Reads: *Mansfield Park, Middlesex, Native Son, The English Patient, and The Stranger; and The Visit, a play by Swiss dramatist Friedrich Dürrenmatt*

A Passion for Compassion: *Kellogg loves to write, and “if I believe that it is the best medium for social change, then I would like to be a journalist.”*

incredibly excited for Dance Production,” she says. “I can’t wait to be involved and would love to see this year’s Latin/ballroom dance routine.”

Over the next four years, she aspires to “make new friends, find an academic area that I am interested in pursuing, and learn a little about myself along the way. I want to leave Occidental knowing that I have worked hard but also that I have made a difference in someone’s life.”

CHELSEA KELLOGG

A self-described “adventure junkie,” Chelsea Kellogg spent her entire junior year of high school in China. “*Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon* is my favorite movie,” she says, “and I wanted to experience this economic boomtown people kept saying was taking over.” Even though she spoke no Chinese, she set her sights on a high school abroad program. Kellogg was rewarded for her leap of courage by gaining of “sturdy confidence in myself during hard times, because living in China was one of the most difficult experiences I have ever had.” That, and she reached conversational fluency in Chinese: “By the end of my stay I could speak with my [Chinese] mother and sister without stopping for a whole 20 minutes.”

Kellogg hopes to study abroad as much as possible while at Oxy, including a stint in Argentina to improve her Spanish as well as time in India, Vietnam, and Africa. “I am passionate about social change and justice,” she says. “I want to study economics because I believe that if I understand how money moves around, I will be able to understand how best to help people out of poverty.” If Kellogg could fulfill any lifelong dream, “I would eliminate poverty,” she adds. “It might take more than me working on that, though.”

Her adventurous spirit extends to athletics. Kellogg is already a ski instructor, but would like to learn snowboarding. She also practices yoga and hopes to teach that discipline someday. As for her next feat, “I am planning on learning to skydive next summer,” she says. The sky’s the limit.

KASHIKA ARORA

Kashika “Kashi” Arora hails from Redmond, Wash., but she spent most of her high school years at a school in India. Comparing her large high school near Seattle and the small international school she attended in Bangalore is like comparing her corporate neighbor, Microsoft, to a lemonade stand.

In India, some classes had as few as five students, which made it almost impossible for cliques to form: “You couldn’t afford to judge anyone, and you had to accept everyone for exactly who they were because there were only 30 people to choose your friends from,” she says. “That really forced me to open my eyes and learn from the unique 30 students in my class.”

There were a few things that she never got used to: the uniforms (“yes, they were hideous, I’m not just bitter”), the eight-hour school day, and the 90-minute commute each way. That experience with small class sizes is part of what drew Arora to Occidental. “It was small enough to have a good sense of community,” she says, also citing the College’s commitment to diversity.

Arora intends to double major in psychology and DWA, with a minor in linguistics or a specific language, and to study abroad as well. “I have already been told that I’ll be insane by the end of my senior year,” she admits, but has also set a goal of learning two new languages while at Oxy. She aspires to being a psychologist or therapist, or working in an intercultural profession like a position at the United Nations.

“I am passionate about helping people help themselves,” says Arora, who has volunteered in community service activities in both Seattle and in Bangalore. She adds that one of her favorite movies is 2004’s *The Butterfly Effect*—“because of the psychology, not because of Ashton Kutcher.”

DEAN DECHIARO

When composer Gioachino Rossini premiered *William Tell* in Paris in 1829, he couldn't have foreseen that the opera's signature overture would find its greatest fame more than a century later as the theme of *The Lone Ranger*—or that Dean DeChiaro would ride the tune to global whistling accolades. And while the Bayonne, N.J., native finished second in the allied arts teens division of the International Whistlers Convention in 2007 and third in the teenage male category in both 2005 and 2007, the champion puckerer insists he's really not competitive. "It's all about the enjoyment of making the music," he says. "I still enjoy just whistling for my own pleasure and the pleasure of others more than I enjoy competing."

In addition to tunes, DeChiaro likes to make sure voices are heard—his as well as others. As a freshman at Elisabeth Irwin High School in Manhattan, he started an independent newspaper to give students a forum for their concerns about some of the actions being taken by the school administration. Four years later, *The Charlton Label* is still going strong, and DeChiaro quickly snagged the position of opinions editor at the *Occidental Weekly*.

DeChiaro considers himself passionate about history and politics, so he may double major in those fields, with aspirations of becoming a journalist. But, he adds, "I've always cared more about the people in my life than anything academic, and everyone says that the friends you make in college will be your friends for your life. So I think I'm going to have to get on that." He's not just whistling "Dixie."



Dean DeChiaro Bayonne, N.J.

Pick a Ball, Any Ball: *A sports fanatic of all stripes, DeChiaro enjoys baseball most, but also football, basketball, and soccer. He just joined the Oxy rugby team.*

When Willie Met Chewie: *"I don't think I've ever seen a movie in theaters that I didn't thoroughly enjoy," says DeChiaro, who likes the experience of "getting popcorn, slouching back in the chair, and watching whatever you're going to see." He muses: "If they set Braveheart in the Star Wars galaxy and turned it into a romantic comedy, that might be my favorite movie."*



Kashika Arora Redmond, Wash.

Why Oxy? *"What really sold me was walking around the campus as a prospective student. It just felt right."*

Hobbies: *"I like to cook and bake, listen to music, and spend time outdoors hiking or at the beach. I used to sing before I moved to India; I'm hoping to start again."*

Favorite Books: *"I love both Oscar Wilde's The Picture of Dorian Gray and Paulo Coelho's The Alchemist because they are challenging, inspirational, and have really fascinating themes. But Where the Red Fern Grows deserves an honorable mention because I loved that book for the longest time, and I still cry at the end after reading it over a dozen times."*

Megan Donovan Eagle Rock

Things to Do: “Besides getting my B.A. before I turn 30, I would like to challenge myself academically and produce research work that I can really be proud of.”

On the Air: “When I found out that Oxy has a radio station, I got really excited and e-mailed the program director right away because I wanted to have my own radio show for the longest time. I’ve been a music nerd my whole life, and I’d love to share my eclectic taste in music with the Oxy community.”

As Seen on YouTube: A five-minute 2006 clip titled “Megan’s Progressive Cooking” shows Donovan making black bean chili for her “favorite L.A. band,” the Brokedown, who provide the music for the bit.



Jorge Tobon Pawtucket, R.I.

Why Oxy? “Its versatility and opportunity.”

Viva la Vida: “In France, I discovered that inspiration comes from anything, but everyone needs that boost that they can get from something (or someone) that penetrates their spirit on an entirely different level.”

Live and Unplugged: “I love the idea of coffeehouses, open mike nights, and street performance (all of which I have engaged in), but I love the feeling of performing in front of lots of people and making eye contact with some. The thrill and satisfaction is inexplicable.”



JORGE TOBON

Jorge Tobon calls Pawtucket, R.I., home—but his heart belongs to Paris. “I have been enamored with France since the first time I went there with my family in 2005,” says Tobon, who spent his junior year of high school studying in his adopted home. “I’ve been taking French since sixth grade and always wanted to visit, but when I traveled there, I knew I wanted to live there. I found myself writing, singing, drawing, and playing music. My fondness for France is rooted in everything it gave me while I was there.”

Tobon has also been chomped by the acting bug. He began acting in school plays at age 11, and has performed in productions of *South Pacific*, *Anything Goes*, *Carmen*, *Pride’s Crossing*, and, most recently, in *Cabaret*. “In a weird way, through this art of portraying someone else, I’ve gotten to know myself better,” says Tobon, who plans to get involved in theater, Glee Club, and a cappella at Oxy, where he applied for early admission.

“It was my first choice from the beginning, but the deciding moment was my visit,” he says. Also influential was an interview with Gordon Hayes ’74—one of about 200 participants in the College’s Alumni-in-Admission program—who “spoke about Oxy with a particular bliss in his eyes.”

An Eagle Scout, Tobon is the first in his family to go to college, an opportunity that he regards seriously. “I plan to take advantage of every moment,” he says. “I’d be insulting my brothers and my parents if I didn’t succeed and excel after all the hard work and support they’ve provided. I hope to come out of Occidental a stronger person academically, morally, and spiritually. I want to be that guy who makes the institution proud when his run is over.”

MEGAN DONOVAN

Even though she has experienced some major losses, Megan Donovan sees life as a comedy, not a tragedy. In 2005, both of her parents were diagnosed with life-threatening forms of cancer. Her mother, after undergoing treatment for nearly a year, has now recovered. Her father was less fortunate, dying six months after his diagnosis. “Caring for my parents when they were undergoing such intense cancer treatment has had an immense impact on my life and the decisions I have made in the past few years,” she says.

For Donovan, making others laugh has proved her own best medicine. A member of her high school’s improvisation team, after graduation she signed up for classes at the Groundlings School and Improv Olympic West. “Making people laugh was such a great way to break out of my shell,” says Donovan, who has performed in dozens of sketch and improv shows in Los Angeles and New York City. Her favorite bit is a sketch she performed at the Groundlings where she played a little girl throwing a temper tantrum in a supermarket: “To me, there are few things funnier than a full-grown adult pretending to be a little kid throwing a fit while flailing around on the ground.”

Her other passion has two wheels. “I love to ride my bike,” says Donovan, who owns “a beautiful vintage Italian road bike that makes me giddy to look at.” A transfer student from Pasadena City College (where she became involved with Students for Social Justice) just six credits shy of junior-class status, she plans to major in art history—having spent three months studying art in Italy last fall—and looks forward to visiting as many museums as she can while at Oxy. Professionally speaking, “I am open to any opportunity that comes my way, especially if it involves travel,” she says. “There is nothing I love more than the excitement of getting out of town.”

CECILIA PRATOR

Hailing from Flintridge Sacred Heart High School in La Crescenta, Cecilia Prator is another young woman used to performing in front of crowds: She’s the first female snare drummer to ever compete with the Los Angeles Scottish Pipe Band, an internationally renowned collective that has played with the band Korn as well as pure corn (“America’s Funniest Home Videos”).

“It took a while for the drum corps to accept me,” recalls Prator, who first became interested in competitive snare drumming when she attended events with her twin brother, Mark, who plays bagpipes with the LA Scots. “Women players were almost nonexistent in the upper levels. I accepted the challenge and began drumming lessons. I was determined to show the community that a girl could play just as well as the rest of the men.”

Prator had only been playing the Scottish snare drum for four years when she was invited to play with the LA Scots after winning the Western United States Champion of Champions for her level two years in a row. “At my first practice, I found myself standing next to men who had been playing professionally for more than 20 years,” she says. “The experience has taught me that gender bias still exists but does not represent an obstacle for me.”

The source of another of Prator’s passions, medicine, is a sad one—her father died of cancer last year. “His battle with his illness has become my source of inspiration and determination because the experience has given me a sense of the preciousness of time,” says Prator, who plans to become an oncologist and work to improve treatment options for cancer patients.

“As a local student, I know opportunities in Los Angeles will provide a college experience with unique exposure to cultural diversity only found in large cities,” adds Prator, who hopes to indulge her passions for traveling and “searching for good hole-in-the-wall restaurants” while at Oxy.

May we recommend the Bucket? 



Cecilia Prator La Crescenta

Why Oxy? “A love of learning is incredibly important, and I want to be surrounded by people who also genuinely love to learn. This aspect of Oxy’s students came through when I visited the campus and immediately appealed to me. During our visit, we approached a professor for directions and ended up having a wonderful conversation about research opportunities offered at Occidental. I found her accessibility and willingness to take that time with me impressive.”

Favorite Book: The Stranger by Albert Camus

Favorite Movie: Pirates of the Caribbean: The Curse of the Black Pearl

Beyond Snare Drums: “I compete in equestrian events and volunteer at Huntington Hospital.”

THE BUSY LIVES OF
PEGGY WATERS '49
AND SON PAUL '77
CALL FOR ORDER,
METICULOUSNESS,
AND AN EYE FOR
DETAIL—AND THEIR
WORK ON THE
LA/VALLEY PRIDE
FESTIVAL PUTS THOSE
TALENTS TO WORK IN
THE PURSUIT OF
AWARENESS

Family MATTERS

by
COLLEEN SHARKEY
Photos by
KEVIN BURKE



Los Angeles Times Photo by Gary Friedman

LEFT: With son Paul, left, on one arm, and son-in-law Kevin on the other, Peggy introduces the newly married couple to some 300 guests following their wedding in Studio City June 17. ABOVE: "Paul has always been a humanitarian, wanting the best for everyone," Peggy says proudly.



On June 17, Peggy (Sanchis) Waters '49 finally got to walk her son down the aisle. Paul Waters '77's wedding was 15 years in the making—and 12 days in the planning.

Prior to tying the knot, Paul and his partner, Kevin Voecks, had seized on every opportunity to make their relationship legiti-

mate in the eyes of the government by registering as domestic partners successively in West Hollywood, Los Angeles County, and California. And while they were encouraged by a 2004 ruling in Massachusetts that legalized same-sex marriage, they weren't about to travel some 2,600 miles to Boston to stand on ceremony. "It would have meant coming back to California and being married with an aster-

isk and a footnote," Paul explains. "Kevin and I said, 'No, we're not doing this until it's the real deal—no asterisks, no footnotes, no caveats, no nothing!'"

On May 15, by a 4-3 ruling, California's Supreme Court overturned the state's ban on gay marriage. With the signatures still unverified on the initiative that led to the ruling, Paul and Kevin felt the need to rush to the



LEFT: “I’m one of those razzle-dazzle dancers—I don’t dance according to any rules,” says Peggy, who whirls away every Tuesday to Big Band sounds at Las Hadas Mexican Restaurant in Northridge. **BELOW:** A family attends LA/ Valley Pride in 2006.



Peggy knew that Kevin, an audio technology designer, was “the one” for Paul as soon as she met him, and he feels equally comfortable with Paul’s family. “Peggy is one of the most extraordinary people in the world,” Kevin says. “You couldn’t have a better mother-in-law. There are hundreds of guys who call her ‘Mom.’”

“Mom has always given me unwavering, unconditional love,” says Paul, an insurance agent whose journey of self-discovery has made him a leader in the gay community’s crusade for equality—which faces a new challenge in November when voters weigh the merits of Proposition 8, an initiative constitutional amendment that would eliminate the right of same-sex couples to marry. “She’s the rock that allowed me to get through a lot of unpleasantness in my younger life.”

Nearly 60 years after her graduation, Peggy marvels at the fact that she wound up at Occidental in the first place. Her mother—a woman who could “charm the birds from the trees”—kept her at home until she was 14. (“She liked having me around,” Peggy recalls, “and there were polio scares back in those days.”) After enrolling in nearby Eagle Rock High School, Peggy’s class was invited

to come to Oxy for a tour and she fell in love with the campus. “The fact that I was accepted into the school with my limited scholastic record is a testament to the school’s culture,” says Peggy, who majored in art. “They really think outside the box—my kind of people!”

Peggy went to work as an interior designer and married Bob Waters in 1951. The couple had three children—daughters Lisa (a fine artist living in Trinidad, Calif.) and Kate (an accountant living in Simi Valley), and Paul, who transferred as a junior from Pierce College to Oxy, where he majored in chemistry and developed an affinity for linguistics. Peggy recalls: “I remember looking down at Paul when he was born and thinking, this is an excellent human being; this is somebody I could really enjoy!”

As a young man, Paul wondered why he felt “different” and dated quite a few women—none of whom particularly wowed his mom. At a quiet lunch at Peggy’s home in Westlake Village, he came out to his mother when he was 37. “The best thing you can do with your life is to be who you are and know where you’re going,” Peggy told Paul. “That is the best news I could get from any of my kids—that they know who they are!”

While Paul remembers Peggy being very supportive, “she was concerned about the way the world was going to treat me,” he says. “Even though things had moved along since 1970, hate crimes and discrimination are real—whose mother wouldn’t be concerned?”

As their relationship has evolved, Peggy and Paul share not only genes but also interests. A common love of dance seems to be written in their DNA—Peggy picks and chooses her design projects to leave her time to twirl around the dance floor—and their overstuffed lives call for order, meticulousness, and an eye for detail. Those traits have served them well over the last decade, as they have pooled their talents to produce the Los Angeles/Valley Pride GLBT Awareness Festival, a yearly event that draws thousands.

While pride festivals have been a staple of the gay community since the 1970s, Paul was instrumental in creating the Simi Valley Pride Festival back in 1998 in response to

altar. “This was a door that could have opened up on Tuesday and slammed shut on Friday,” Paul says. Despite the short notice, the couple invited about 550 guests (mostly via e-mail), and upwards of 300 were able to attend. The wedding took place in a corporate garden setting in Studio City, followed by a reception at Oil Can Harry’s Dance Club nearby.

the paucity of such events nearby. In the years since, the festival (which is scheduled for Oct. 12) has evolved into a community-centric event and moved to its Studio City home, on the back lot of CBS Studio Center.

"I got into festival planning because I knew this was a way for the community groups to grow," says Paul, who was looking to recruit new members to his Simi Squares gay square dancing club at the festival's outset. (A championship-level dancer in both square dance and ballroom, he also has called square dances for 36 years.)

Nonprofit organizations that go about their work year-round—the choruses, track clubs, political groups, community centers, and AIDS and social services agencies—are only charged \$50 to exhibit at LA/Valley Pride. "Nobody is priced out of the event," Paul says. Nearly two-thirds of all exhibitors are community groups—what they need most are members, and the goal is for all of them to leave the festival with at least 10 more."

As executive director of the festival, Paul deals with logistics for dozens of vendors, designing the layout, securing permits, coordinating volunteers, providing security, and a thousand other details. He draws on his linguistics training to organize the festival: "The tools that were developed to understand language—basically, how to parse data so that the data can be made sense of—can be applied to lots of other things. If it's muck, order needs to be brought to the muck in order for it to be understandable."

Peggy's purview is the "fun stuff": entertainment. She runs the two free dance tents—one dedicated to country/western music and one that combines Latin and contemporary dance—as well as the main stage, which has become a huge draw.

"When I started out trying to proselytize people to come on that stage, I had to beg them to come on because I did not have a budget for them and I was green," Peggy recalls. One Juilliard-trained chanteuse who "cut her teeth in the smoky rooms in New York City" spurned Peggy's overtures for two whole years before agreeing to perform on the cabaret stage. "She just blew everyone

"I was insistent on saying we're not married until the state recognized it," says Kevin (right, with Paul in their Studio City home). "I was holding out for the real thing, and now we're doing all we can to make sure we are allowed to stay married."

away—I mean, people were screaming!" Peggy says. "She came up to me afterward and said, 'Anytime you want me on your stage, I'll come back.' Well, she's been on my stage ever since."

The stage runs on a very tight, if asymmetrical, schedule. Paul—who earned the nickname "Groomzilla" during the planning stage for his wedding—admits that his attention to detail verges on obsessive, but it serves its purpose for the festival.

"One of the things that everyone always gives me grief about is the stage schedule. The program runs at exact times, and the acts are always on time, no matter what. For example, the program begins at 1:03 and the next act is at 1:28," Paul notes. "The thing about having these strange start times is that all of the entertainers know that that's when it's really happening. The stage runs on time, and that's good, because they're going to promote it to folks to come see them."

The community that attends the festival is reflective of its suburban neighborhood. Many are couples who have been together

for a long time; many have children. California's ruling on same-sex marriage has allowed for a new feature at this year's festival: a marriage fair. A bevy of vendors from florists to photographers to officiants will be on hand to offer their services and help couples plan their ceremonies.

In the wake of the California ruling, a reporter and photographer from the *Los Angeles Times* essentially embedded themselves with Paul and Kevin for the 12 days leading up to their nuptials—an experience that Paul jokingly refers to as "Wedding Day: The Reality Show."

"The *Times* article showed the ordinary and familiar in an ordinary and familiar way and the unique in a non-frightening way, and it's sheer genius," Paul says. "There are aspects of our lives that are the very same as heterosexual couples' lives and there are aspects that are unique"—such as mixing up their tuxedos at their wedding right before they were about to put them on. "That would never happen to a male-female couple," he says. "It's different, but it's not frightening." □



POP QUIZ

Occidental is “a wonderful, small liberal arts college,” Obama told the *Los Angeles Times* (Jan. 29, 2007). “The professors were diverse and inspiring. I ended up making some lifelong friendships there, and those first two years really helped me grow up.”

Know Your OBAMA

A Hawaiian prince? An offensive hoops genius? Or just a surfer guy in O.P. shorts and flip-flops? Your take on “Barry” Obama ’83 may depend on who’s been talking

by SAMANTHA B. BONAR ’90



WITH ALL THE RUNNING AROUND HE’S been doing lately, Democratic presidential candidate Barack Obama ’83 hasn’t had a lot of time to reflect on his tenure at Occidental. But others who knew “Barry” during his Oxy years (1979-81) have had plenty to say, as documented in major media outlets such as the *New York Times*, *San Francisco Chronicle*, *Boston Globe*, *Chicago Tribune*, and *Newsweek*.

How well do you know your Barry O? Match the quotes about the presidential hopeful with the person who said them (you will find the answers inside the box at right):

1. “When he surfaced as this national figure, I could only remember him wearing O.P. shorts and flip-flops.” (*The Boston Globe*, Aug. 25)
2. “I told him he was really smart, but he wasn’t working hard enough.” (*Newsweek*, March 31)
3. “I remember him clearly as better as an offensive [basketball] player than a defense player.” (*Globe*)

4. “He was not a philosopher king sitting there opining on the world for the rest of us as we sat there open-mouthed.” (*Globe*)
5. “When he talked, it was an E.F. Hutton moment: People listened.” (*The New York Times*, Feb. 9)

WHO SAID IT?

- A. Roger Boesche, professor of politics
- B. Margot Mifflin ’82, friend; took a creative writing class with Obama
- C. Kent Goss ’83, classmate
- D. Eric Newhall ’67, professor of English and literary studies
- E. John Boyer ’82, college friend
- F. Ken Sulzer ’82, dorm neighbor
- G. Amiekoleh “Kim” Kimbrew ’83, classmate
- H. Eric Moore ’83, friend and classmate
- I. Mark Dery ’82, schoolmate
- J. Simeon Heninger ’82, dorm neighbor

Answer key: 1: J, 2: A, 3: D, 4: F, 5: E, 6: G, 7: I, 8: H, 9: B, 10: C

6. “There were rumors that he was a Hawaiian prince. ... He was kind of flirty, but he wasn’t a player.” (*Chicago Tribune*, March 30, 2007)

7. “I also harbored an instinctual suspicion of his ... suave demeanor.” (*Tribune*)

8. “He was more worldly than the average kid in California, although he clearly looked like a surfer type.” (*Newsweek*)

9. “Some people use the word aloof. But I think what some people saw as aloof, I saw as reserved. I think he was deliberate because he was thoughtful. And very focused.” (*San Francisco Chronicle*, Sept. 14)

10. “The sort of talk was, you know, ‘What made him get so serious all the sudden?’” (*Globe*)