

Stefan Knauss '88's Lifelike Limbs

Photographer Lisa Jack '81: Beyond Obama

# OCCIDENTAL

FALL 2009

## **BABY DADDY**

He birthed E-Trade's infant pitchman and shepherded Oprah's Pontiac giveaway: Inside the mad ad world of Tor Myhren '94

# OCCIDENTAL

OCCIDENTAL COLLEGE MAGAZINE

VOLUME 31, NUMBER 4 FALL 2009

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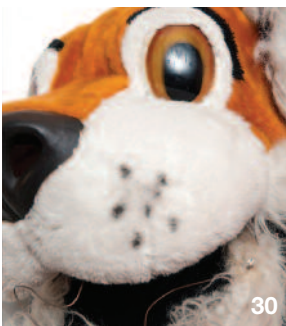
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# Sweet Sensation

Organizer-turned-author **Mridula Koshy '92** examines India's underclass, immigrants, and motherhood's highs and lows

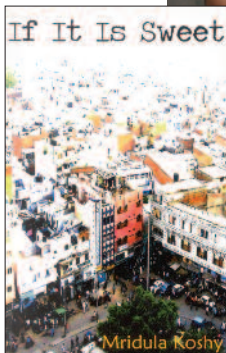
ON HER FACEBOOK PAGE, Mridula Susan Koshy '92 lists 13 jobs she's had. They include swap-meet sales clerk, backstage fashion-show dresser, Kentucky Fried Chicken cashier, community organizer, and library "reading fairy."

But it's her last job—that of a writer—that has stuck. Koshy completed *If It Is Sweet*, her debut collection of short stories, earlier this year. She's a natural at it. Her book hit the Indian bestseller lists in June and is now in its second printing. *If It Is Sweet* has also been shortlisted for India's Shakti Bhatt First Book Prize.

In dense, poetic prose, the collection's 17 stories illuminate the lives of the underclass in India, the struggles and joys of motherhood, and the in-between life of the immigrant. The stories' empathetic portrayals of maids, construction workers, and garbage collectors are not surprising given Koshy's past as a trade union organizer—a job that first attracted her as a student at Oxy.

As a senior, she stood in picket lines every week to campaign for better wages and

Photo courtesy Mridula Susan Koshy '92



Koshy at a recent book-signing for *If It Is Sweet* (Westland Limited; \$20) in India.

treatment for local hotel workers. Courses such as 18th-century literature and post-colonial literature, and professors such as Warren Montag, Brown Family Professor of Literature

("What he taught still affects me 16 years later"), and Hector Delgado, now a sociology professor at the University of La Verne, helped her understand and dissect class politics. Koshy, along with other students, also started

an alternative campus newspaper called *Current Agenda*.

"I had an instinct for injustice, that society is not working," Koshy says. "But I didn't have the language or tools to participate. The academics that were taught had a philosophic underpinning that I was looking for."

Koshy emigrated from Delhi, India, at 15. She landed in Southern California and saw firsthand America's deep divisions along racial and class lines. As a teenager, she wondered at the brewing controversy over bilingual education, and the debate over whether Los Angeles's Chinatown signs should be English-only. "There was an incredible degradation of the immigrant here in the United States," Koshy says.

After graduation, she volunteered for Local 11 of the Hotel Employee and Restaurant Employees Union, and spent six years as a community organizer in Portland, Ore., for the Service Employees International Union. She began writing five years ago, right around the time she moved back to Delhi with her partner, Michael Creighton, and their three children. "I avoided being a writer for much of my life," Koshy says. "Finally, having no other choice, I started writing."

Among her favorite writers is Michael Ondaatje, whom she discovered while at Occidental. She also admires Japanese writer Haruki Murakami "for the way he creates a vague, suppressed terror."

Koshy is better suited for writing than for some of her former jobs, where she admits to a certain, shall we say, clumsiness. One summer while at Oxy, Koshy had a work-study job as a banquet server for Reunion Weekend. She set a basket of bread rolls too close to a candle at a table for the Class of 1952, and the tablecloth caught on fire. "People were diving for the fire extinguisher," Koshy recalls, laughing. "I also dropped knives on people's clothes. So I was demoted to polishing silverware."

Next on her to-do list is a novel set in India and the United States. In September, she spent a monthlong writing residency at South Korea's Toji Cultural Center, a two-hour drive from Seoul. That quiet setting contrasts starkly with her usual place to write: busy, often crowded, and always noisy coffee shops. She finds the bustle invigorating, not distracting: "General noise and mayhem is not bad for a writer."—RHEA BORJA

EXCERPT

I can see what other people don't see. And I am small. These are the two things which make me different.

Yesterday when I took Reggie for his morning walk in the jungle-park I saw peacocks. When I returned home, as usual, Chachiji wanted to know what I had seen. I told her about the peacocks dancing. Even though I sometimes add things I haven't really seen, telling her the peacocks were dancing when they really weren't, I mostly tell the truth. Then Adhitya's mother walked in, and in a soft voice called me a liar. I call Adhitya's mother Didi. But I always think of her as Adhitya's mother. She doesn't like me. She might even hate me. She said, "There are no peacocks on the park. And there haven't been any in twenty years."

—from "Today Is the Day," by Mridula Susan Koshy '92

**THE BLUE TATTOO: THE LIFE OF OLIVE OATMAN**, by Margot Mifflin '82 (*University of Nebraska Press*; \$24.95). In 1851, Olive Oatman was a 13-year-old pioneer traveling west toward Zion with her Mormon family. Orphaned when her family was brutally killed by Yavapai Indians, Oatman lived as a slave with her captors for a year before being traded to the Mohave, who tattooed her face and raised her as their own. She was fully assimilated and perfectly happy when, at 19, she was ransomed back to white society. She became an instant celebrity, but the price of fame was high—and the pain of her ruptured childhood lasted a lifetime.



Based on historical records, including letters and diaries of friends and relatives, *The Blue Tattoo* examines Oatman's life from her childhood in Illinois to her later years as a wealthy banker's wife in Texas. Her tattoo was a cultural symbol that evoked both the imprint of her Mohave past and the lingering scars of westward expansion. It also served as a reminder of her deepest secret: Oatman never wanted to go home. Mifflin is an assistant professor of English at Lehman College of the City University of New York and directs the arts and culture program at CUNY's Graduate School of Journalism.

**HOPE IN TIMES OF DARKNESS: A SALVADORAN AMERICAN EXPERIENCE**, by Randy Jurado Ertll '95 (*Hamilton Books*; \$18.95). After spending his childhood in El Salvador, Ertll grew up in South Central Los Angeles during the late 1970s and 1980s. He also lived in Rochester, Minn.; Washington, D.C.; and Alexandria, Va. In each of these cities, he observed the dynamics and challenges facing the Salvadoran community. Having both lived and transcended these struggles himself, he depicts a realistic and compassionate picture of the Salvadoran-American/Latino experience throughout this book. *Hope in Times of Darkness* sends a message that people can be agents of positive change, and that minority youth in impoverished areas can succeed in life and become productive citizens of society. Ertll is executive director of El Centro de Accion Social, a Latino advocacy organization based in Pasadena.

**YOU ALREADY KNOW: A PLAYWRIGHT'S GUIDE TO TRUSTING YOURSELF**, by Aaron Henne '00 (*Writ Large Press*; \$15). Described by *Diamond Dogs* author Al Watt as "a fun, user-friendly tool to aid the writer in finding the story that dwells within," Henne's book offers a series of exercises to channel the creative energies of novice and professional playwrights alike. Henne (*King Cat Calico Finally Flies Free!*) is resident playwright with the Son of Semele Ensemble, and co-literary manager of the Theatre @ Boston Court in Pasadena. He runs the writers' studio Wordstrut.

**ACTIVIST SENTIMENTS: READING BLACK WOMEN IN THE NINETEENTH CENTURY**, by P. Gabrielle Foreman (*University of Illinois Press*; \$25). Grounded in primary research and paying close attention to the historical archive, Foreman's book offers against-the-grain readings of the literary and activist work of Harriet Jacobs, Harriet Wilson, Frances E.W. Harper, Victoria Earle Matthews, and Amelia E. Johnson—women who moved from near literary invisibility to prolific productivity in less than 50 years. Part literary criticism and part cultural history, *Activist Sentiments* examines 19th-century social, political, and representational literacies and reading practices. Foreman reveals how black women's complex and confrontational commentary—often expressed directly in their journalistic prose and organizational involvement—emerges in their sentimental, and simultaneously political, literary production. She is a professor of English and American studies at Occidental.



### Briefly Noted

**ADVANCED PRINCIPLES IN TEACHING CLASSICAL BALLET**, by John White '56 (*University Press of Florida*; \$29.95) explores the importance of disciplined dancing, choreography, acting, conditioning, and performance. □ Professor of geology **Donald Prothero's** latest, **GREENHOUSE OF THE DINOSAURS: EVOLUTION, EXTINCTION, AND THE FUTURE OF OUR PLANET** (*Columbia University Press*; \$29.50), mixes personal experience with scientific research in examining the human threat to natural climate change.

# OCCIDENTAL

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# Big Class on CAMPUS

By  
SAMANTHA B. BONAR '90  
Photos by  
MARC CAMPOS



As record numbers of freshmen descend on the Occidental campus, strangers become roommates, the number of adjunct faculty grows, and Rangeview offers up a buffet. What's behind this phenomenon?



**BELOW:** Orientation team members celebrate in the lobby of Thorne Hall prior to the start of Convocation. **BELOW LEFT:** Ruthie Mesnard '13 and Brooke Staton '13 take a break after moving into Stewie. **BOTTOM:** O-team members Juebong Khwarg '11, Dean DeChiaro '12, Rachel Yoo '11, and Samantha Houstoun '12 inside Rush Gym.



**W**HEN PRESIDENT Jonathan Veitch extolled the virtues of reading to the Class of 2013 during his Convocation address Sept. 2, there wasn't an empty seat in Thorne Hall (capacity: 792). And it won't likely be the last time, either.

Occidental has been preparing for months to accommodate the largest entering class in the College's history. With 578 mouths to feed, house, and teach—a nearly 25 percent bump over last year's entering class—this is no small undertaking.

Finding housing for this plethora of freshmen was the first challenge. "The main thing that we are doing is consolidating students," explains Timothy Chang, assistant dean for residence life and housing services. "It might mean that we are putting students together who may not have selected to live with each other. It might also mean that we are creating additional space in larger rooms."

In practical terms, that means turning some singles into doubles and doubles into triples. Students who are unhappy with their placements will be allowed to move as space permits. The College is also looking at the possibility of creating more student living areas in places where students don't already

live for a more long-term solution. "We will begin the process of un-tripling when we can, and as far as any complaints, I'm happy to talk to students about what we can do to help," Chang says.

Dining Services plans to help satisfy notoriously hungry freshmen in several ways. First, it will offer a new buffet dinner service at Rangeview Hall on Saturday evenings from 6 to 9 p.m. This will provide an additional dining option on the one evening that the Marketplace is closed (the Cooler had been the only dining facility on Saturdays after 2 p.m.). The Marketplace plans to provide more quick options during peak dining times—particularly Monday, Wednesday, and Friday at 12:30 p.m. Dining Services also will increase training for additional staff who supplement its workforce during the school year to promote efficiency and a clean, safe, friendly environment.

To avoid larger class sizes, the first-year Core Program has hired seven new adjunct faculty for the fall semester. "We all agreed not to raise the number of students per class," says Dolores Trevizo, associate professor of sociology and director of the Core Program. "Class sizes in the program remain the same as always. There are just more sections."

What explains this year's record horde?



**LEFT:** Freshmen and new transfers stream out of Thorne Hall following an orientation session Aug. 29. The 578-member Class of 2013 hails from 37 states, the District of Columbia, and 23 nations; is 57 percent female, 43 percent male; and includes 83 first-generation college students and 58 legacies.

**BELOW:** Occidental Dance Team member Chelsea Duncan '12 leaves no punctuation mark unturned in her pursuit of new recruits.



**BELOW:** President Jonathan Veitch extolled the virtues of reading in his Convocation address: "Ever since I was old enough to think, books have dominated my imagination," he told the audience.



**ABOVE:** Freshmen Thomas Yu, Princess Masilungan, and Deborah Chun learn about opportunities at Oxy.

**LEFT:** Trustee Fred Hameetman '61 demonstrates his hopscotch prowess. **RIGHT:** Kerry Shea '13 moves into Bell-Young with help from dad Nick '82 and family.



According to dean of admission Vince Cuseo, the target number for the Class of 2013 was 465. But due to the downturn in the economy, the admission office decided to admit a higher number of students to make sure it hit that target. Some 43 percent of applicants was admitted, up from 39 percent last year. The waiting list (which typically attracts up to 400 students to round out the entering class) was all but eliminated.

What caught the admission staff by surprise, however, was the increase in yield—the percentage of accepted students who committed to attend Occidental. "Given the economy, there was palpable anxiety about

the capacity for high-priced, private colleges to fill their classes," Cuseo notes. "The prudent approach was to anticipate a decline in admission yield compared to previous years. So we did. The combination of admitting more students and experiencing an unexpected bump in yield (a 2 percent increase over last year versus an anticipated loss) resulted in a robust class."

There's a big upside for the College: Oxy will likely reap \$2 million more than its targeted net tuition revenue for new students. "That should help stave off the kind of cut-backs other colleges were forced to endure," Cuseo says, but emphasizes that "the bump

in yield was in part related to some changes in financial aid policy that allowed us to be more sensitive to middle-class families who were on the cusp for financial assistance."

Cuseo credits vigorous social networking, an improved visitor program, changes in the UC system, and maybe even "the Obama bump" for the increased yield. Whether this gain in class size is a new trend or a one-year blip remains to be seen. Cuseo and his admission cohorts plan to monitor trends and pertinent issues over the coming year and "hope for the best." In the meantime, parents, brace yourself for a standing room-only crowd in Hillside Theater come May 2013. □

# A Ceramic History of Occidental



Utilizing a multitude of media and her own ink-stained hands, professor **Linda Lyke** traces the College's evolution in 20 tiles

By RHEA BORJA  
Photos by MARC CAMPOS

**A**S STUDENTS RETURNED TO campus in the late summer heat and looked ahead to a new school year, Linda Lyke looked back in time.

President Jonathan Veitch commissioned the veteran professor of art history and the visual arts to create a large outdoor mural to commemorate Occidental, from its beginnings in 1887 on a small Boyle Heights campus surrounded by orange and fig orchards, to its place today as a leading liberal arts

institution. The mural, which will be installed on the eastern wall of the Coons Administrative Center plaza, will be unveiled Oct. 23, one day before Veitch's inauguration, as part of Homecoming & Parents Weekend.

"I was honored to be chosen," says Lyke, whose latest exhibition, "Destructive Beauty," runs at South Pasadena's LouWe Gallery from Sept. 12 to Oct. 25. "I want to show how Oxy's early development set the course for our current interests and our commitment to excellence and diversity."

The mural is composed of 20 one-foot-square glazed ceramic tiles and features, among other things, old photos and excerpts

of poems, letters, and musical scores by Occidental alumni and faculty past and present. For instance, Lyke sprinkled fragments of poetry by 1905 graduate Robinson Jeffers on a few of the tiles. Another tile showcases the musical score composed expressly for the inauguration by Bruno Louchouart, assistant professor in the theory and practice of multimedia, and superimposed on top of it a historic photo of legendary Glee Club director Howard Swan instructing students.

Seminal college figures such as Occidental's eighth president, Remsen Bird, and architect Myron Hunt are showcased in the mural alongside many less-celebrated but

**RIGHT/BELOW:** Lyke's process is labor-intensive, "which is certainly an aspect of all work at the College," she wrote in her proposal. So she employed the tools of creativity—"whether in art, music, science, architecture, and food service"—as a metaphor throughout.



**RIGHT:** One tile features the Academic Quad and landscape architect Beatrix Farrand. **BELOW/BELOW RIGHT:** Lyke juxtaposes an image of Martin Luther King Jr. with an '80s anti-apartheid poster created by a former student.



essential folks, including Oxy's groundskeepers and campus dining personnel. And then there are the forgotten ones, such as famed landscape architect Beatrix Farrand: "She's little known today," Lyke says, "but she was an important figure in the beautification of the College."

The mural includes a number of socially conscious images, including one featuring Japanese-American students at Oxy during World War II, another of Martin Luther King Jr.'s 1967 visit to campus, and a third of students protesting South Africa's policy of apartheid in front of Freeman College Union in 1981. Various tools also loom large on the mural. The gears of an old-fashioned clock accent some of the tiles. Architectural and navigational tools, such as compasses and sextants, illustrate others. The images are layered one on top of the other, creating a pastiche effect.

With tiles saturated in deep hues of blue, red, green, and yellow, Lyke's finished mural promises to be both dazzling and dense. "I used intense colors to draw people closer to the artwork, so that they would investigate the images further," she says. "I want visitors to gain a sense of the origins of the College and how it has evolved."

Lyke spent much of the summer mining Oxy's past. She logged hours in the library's Special Collections, poring over early photos and maps of the College and its faculty, students, and visitors, as well as letters from presidents, alumni, and dignitaries. In addition, she read emeritus professor Andrew Rolle '43's centennial history of Occidental and talked with archivist Jean Paule and faculty members about the College's evolution.

"Even though I've been here 33 years, I didn't know a lot about our history," Lyke says. "So this has been a real education." □

This is Lyke's first-ever mural: "It has stretched me as an artist," she says.





## Inside the Classroom

## Seven Tenure-Track Professors New to Oxy

Occidental welcomed six new full-time faculty members to campus this fall, with a seventh to start next semester. Meet Oxy's new assistant professors:

**Michael Gasper** (history) received his B.A. from Temple University and his master's and Ph.D from New York University. A Middle Eastern specialist, he is the author of *The Power of Representation: Publics, Peasants, and Islam in Egypt* (Stanford University Press, 2008), which explores nationalism and religious identity in intellectuals' writing about peasants and how their constructions drew the social boundaries of modern Egypt.

**Shana Goffredi** (biology) completed her B.A. at the University of San Diego and her Ph.D at UC Santa Barbara. Her primary research interests include beneficial symbiotic interactions between bacteria and marine

invertebrates and the extreme ways by which microbes profoundly influence the morphology, physiology, ecology, and even evolution of higher organisms.

**Thalia N.C. González** (politics) completed her bachelor's degree at Arizona State University and her J.D. at Northwestern University. Her research interests include civil rights and economic development, the organization and practice of public interest law, juvenile justice, and the intersection between law and public policy.

**Carmel Levitan** (cognitive science) received her bachelor's degree at Stanford and her Ph.D at UC San Francisco and Berkeley. Her research combines computational modeling with simple experiments to address how the different senses interact to create our perceptions of the world, with specific questions ranging from how vision and touch work together in understanding 3-D space to how vision contributes to flavor.

**Shanna Lorenz** (music) completed her bachelor's degree at Reed College, her master's

and Ph.D in ethnomusicology at the University of Pittsburgh, and is completing a Ph.D in performance studies at New York University. Her interests include music and migration, critical race theory, food justice, and Latin American social movements.

**Heather Lukes** (critical theory and social justice) completed her bachelor's degree at UC Berkeley and her master's and Ph.D at UCLA. Her research interests include U.S. literature and film, queer and feminist theory, and psychoanalytic criticism.

**Julie Prebel** (English writing) completed her doctorate in English/American literature at the University of Washington, after receiving a B.A. and master's in English from UC Berkeley and San Francisco State, respectively. In addition to her expertise in composition studies, her research interests include American women writers, cultural studies, and 19th- and 20th-century American literary studies. She is currently working on a book that examines the intersection of American literature and scientific rhetoric.

## Chick Strand: 1931-2009

## Avant-Garde Filmmaker Founded Oxy Film Program

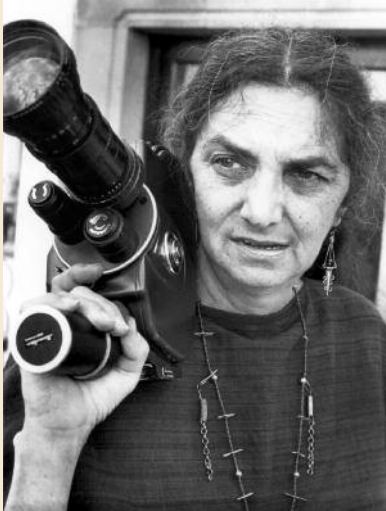
Professor of film emerita Chick Strand, founder of Oxy's film program and an internationally renowned experimental filmmaker, died July 11. She was 78. Strand joined the Occidental faculty in 1970 at the invitation of dean Robert S. Ryf and taught at Oxy for 25 years. The San Francisco native graduated from UC Berkeley in 1961 with a degree in anthropology and received her MFA in film from UCLA in 1970.

Strand eschewed the Hollywood film industry and instead delved into ethnographic documentary and avant-garde filmmaking. A co-founder of the San Francisco experimental film venue Canyon Cinema, she worked exclusively in 16mm film, and sometimes incorporated found audio and footage in her films—a 1940s radio show, a 1970s church service, and Third World images—to create a collage effect.

Her 18-film body of work explores many topics, from the lives of Mexican and Venezuelan Indians (*Anselmo* and *Mosori Monika*), to the loss of innocence (*Guacamole*), as well as sensuality and sexuality (*Fever Dream* and *Soft Fiction*). She was the recipient of a Guggenheim Fellowship and filmmaking grants from the American Film Institute and the Ford Foundation, and her films were shown at dozens of festivals worldwide (she also was the subject of retrospectives at the Museum of Modern Art in New York City, the AFI, and the Smithsonian). In collaboration with Occidental, LA Filmforum presented a tribute to Strand at the Egyptian Theater on Sept. 13, while an Oct. 3 program on campus screened three of Strand's expressive and lyrical nonfiction films: *Anselmo* (1967), *Loose Ends* (1979), and her best-known piece, *Soft Fiction* (1979).

KCET blogger Kelly Willis, who screened Strand's three-minute 1966 debut short *Angel Blue Sweet Wings* the night before her wedding, recalled meeting Strand while writing a profile of her in the 1990s in a tribute piece posted July 14: "She was by turns cranky, irreverent, bossy, outrageous and, like the effusive dog, generously affectionate and, I would learn over time, utterly passionate about her art."

Photo courtesy Occidental College Special Collections



## Our Guide to College Guides

Oxy No. 33 in *U.S. News*, Rates Well With Others

Occidental has again won plaudits in the latest editions of several major college guides, including *U.S. News & World Report*, *Barron's Guide to the Most Competitive Colleges*, *ISI's Guide to the Right Colleges*, and others.

For the seventh straight year, Occidental was ranked a "Best Value" school by *U.S. News*, and again was recognized by *The Insider's Guide to the Colleges* as one of a handful of colleges and universities with the strongest undergraduate focus. The *Fiske Guide to Colleges* bestowed four-star academic and quality-of-life ratings on Oxy, and *Princeton Review's The Best 371 Colleges* gave Oxy's financial aid office a score of 96 out of 100.

Occidental was ranked No. 33 by *U.S. News* among the top liberal arts colleges, up from No. 37 last year, and again placed third in diversity among nationally ranked liberal arts colleges. And the *Insider's Guide* notes: "Oxy provides diversity not only in the student body, but also in the breadth of academic options, the expansive extracurricular opportunities, and the great resources of Los Angeles that make the school unique."

## 12 Minutes With Obama

# Boesche Drops in to Visit His Most Famous Pupil

Roger Boesche, Occidental's Arthur G. Coons Distinguished Professor in the History of Ideas, and his most famous student—President Barack Obama '83—hadn't seen each other since 1981, when Obama was preparing to transfer to Columbia University. But they had kept in touch sporadically by e-mail, and Obama has called Boesche one of his most influential teachers. So when Boesche was invited to the White House for a “drop-in” visit with the president at the Oval Office on Aug. 13, he eagerly accepted. It was 12 minutes that Boesche, his wife Mandy, and daughter Kelsey will never forget.

The visit was arranged with the help of Janette Sadik-Khan '82, New York City's transportation commissioner. “We were enchanted, we were very happy,” says Boesche, who teaches the history of European and American political thought. “My wife and daughter were just thrilled to be able to see the president. And me, too.”

According to Boesche, Obama greeted him by saying, “Professor Boesche! It's good to see you after all these years,” and gave his old teacher a warm smile and firm handshake. “The last time I saw you I called you by a much less formal title,” Boesche told the president, who laughed and replied, “Oh, you still can!” In an e-mail to friends, Mandy remarked on Obama's “clear delight” at seeing his former professor, and “their easy and charming rapport with one another.”

Boesche continued: “Obama announced to the room that ‘Professor Boesche taught me everything I know about politics.’ And then he added with a laugh, ‘But he gave a me a ‘B’ on a paper!’” The Punahou School graduate took two courses with Boesche: American Political Thought during his freshman year and European Political Thought: Nietzsche to Foucault as a sophomore.

The pair chatted and reminisced for about 10 minutes, touching on the presi-

dent's healthcare reform proposal and Machiavelli, among other things. “I thanked him for working so passionately on healthcare, and I referred to my own experience, since I've had rheumatoid arthritis since I was a teenager,” says Boesche. “And I said I've always worried about losing my health insurance. That was a serious moment, and he took it seriously. Then I told him I thought he was the greatest American orator since William Jennings Bryan and that he could push through this healthcare bill.”

Boesche presented Obama with a personally inscribed copy of his 1996 book *Theories of Tyranny: From Plato to Arendt*. In turn, Obama gave Boesche a pair of presidential cufflinks and presidential pins to his wife

Photo by Pete Souza/White House Photo Office



Boesche brought Obama a book; the president gave his prof cufflinks.

and daughter before posing for photos. In parting, Obama shook Boesche's hand again and told him, “You're a great teacher and an inspiration.”

“The aide who walked us out said, ‘I don't think you quite realize how rare this kind of meeting is,’” Boesche recalls. “So the president obviously wanted to see us. He was warm, charming, funny, witty, sincere, and friendly.” Boesche's feeling after the visit? “Absolute exhilaration.”

A member of the Occidental faculty since 1977, Boesche is a two-time recipient of the Donald R. Loftsgordon Memorial Award for Outstanding Teaching, bestowed by Oxy's senior class, as well as the Graham L. Sterling Memorial Award for teaching, service, and professional achievement, voted on by Oxy faculty, and the recently established Linda and Tod White Teaching Prize.

## Occidental in Brief

The late Jack Kemp '57 was among 16 individuals awarded the 2009 Presidential Medal of Freedom—America's highest civilian honor—at an Aug. 12 ceremony at the White House. “A statesman and a sports icon, Jack French Kemp advocated for his beliefs with an unwavering integrity and intellectual honesty,” President Barack Obama '83 said in his citation. “On the football field, he earned the respect and admiration of his teammates for his judgment and leadership. As a public servant, he placed country before party, and ideas before ideology. Jack Kemp saw bridges where others saw divisions, and his legacy serves as a shining example for all who strive to challenge conventional wisdom, stay true to themselves, and better our nation.” Said Kemp's widow, Joanne (Main) Kemp '58, “It was a privilege for me and our family to be present at this event honoring so many people who have made significant contributions in service to others.” □ Occidental has received a \$20,000 grant from the National Endowment for the Arts to launch The Big Read celebrating the poetry of 1905 graduate Robinson Jeffers. The celebration kicks off Oct. 1 at Mary Norton Clapp Library, continues with events sponsored by Oxy and partnering schools and organizations, and culminates Nov. 7 with “Jeffers at Occidental Day.”

Photo courtesy BNL Media & Communications Office



Research scientist Jason Graetz '98, above, has received the Presidential Early Career Award for Scientists and Engineers. Graetz, who earned an A.B. in physics from Occidental, is a materials scientist at the U.S. Department of Energy's Brookhaven National Laboratory in Upton, N.Y. An expert in hydrogen storage, he is among 100 young researchers to be honored this year.

Pablo Warner, Riana King, Fatema Syed, and Claire Watson come to a crossroads.



# TRISKY BUSINESS

FOR THE OXY CLASS OF '13 AND THEIR FELLOW NEWCOMERS, THERE'S NOTHING TO FEAR ON THE PATH TO ACADEMIC GLORY

BY RHEA BORJA  
PHOTOS BY MARC CAMPOS

**H**INI, TAKE A NUMBER: Triskaidekaphobia—fear of the number 13—is sweeping college campuses this fall. But if there's such a thing as strength in numbers, the Occidental Class of 2013 (the largest in Oxy history) has nothing to be afraid of, except maybe the occasional long line in the Cooler.

But the infamously unlucky number got us to thinking about the mythology of superstitions—black cats, broken mirrors, tarot cards, and so on. (Come to think of it, the first year of college is the 13th grade for most students.) So we rounded up 13 of our most accomplished and interesting newcomers to campus this fall—11 freshmen and two junior transfers—and put them through some scary scenarios, all under the watchful eye of photographer Marc Campos.

We're happy to say that everyone survived the shoot—unless you count the one invited participant who opted out of enrolling at Oxy over the summer. So enjoy the 12 profiles that follow (we decided not to replace the 13th—call us superstitious). To read more about the students, visit *Occidental Magazine* online at [www.oxy.edu/Magazine.xml](http://www.oxy.edu/Magazine.xml).

## RIANA KING | Folsom

Riana King is unafraid to try new things. At 15, she leaped off a cliff into the Mediterranean Sea—even though she's scared of heights and large bodies of water. More recently, the Folsom High School graduate belted out TLC's 1999 anthem "No Scrubs" at a coffeehouse open-mic night—even though she had never sung in public.

Likewise, King had her own ideas when it came to college. Instead of opting for a big state university like her parents, she chose Occidental for its diversity, wealth of academic programs, and sense of community. "When I visited campus, upperclassmen said 'Hi,' and the professors sat down and talked to me," says King, who applied early-decision to Oxy. "I didn't think I would ever be in a school where everyone was so nice."

The eldest of three, King is accustomed to helping others. In high school, she taught elementary and middle school students how to deal with bullying and substance abuse through light-hearted presentations, games, and quizzes. Thanks to her summer job as a barista, she's used to serving others as well. "I

make tasty coffee and also get to mop the bathrooms,” she wrote on Facebook. “Score.”

Her bubbly personality and sense of humor should put her in good stead at Occidental, which is opening the student-run Green Bean Coffee Lounge in October should she have the urge to sing again. Score.

**PABLO WARNER** | *Honolulu*

Pablo Warner is a whirling dervish on the basketball court. At Iolani School in Honolulu, the 6'2" forward was the Raiders' leading scorer two years in a row. He landed twice on the *Honolulu Star-Bulletin's* all-state “Fab 15” team, finishing fourth in the balloting as a senior. Basketball fits his personality, Warner says, because the game has both creativity and structure: “It’s the perfect balance of athleticism and thinking.”

Warner has as much talent on stage as he has on the court. At age 11, he started playing alto sax with local jazz bands. Outside his parents' restaurant, Cafe VIII 1/2 in downtown Honolulu, passersby often saw and heard Warner serenading them on the sidewalk. Now he writes and sings his own songs and aims to run his own recording label someday. (Among the many reasons he chose Occidental is its proximity to the music business, but an added bonus is that nine of his Iolani classmates chose Oxy as well.)

In addition to athletics and music, Warner has a strong interest in quantum physics, which he blogs about occasionally. “It is easy to be ignorant and not fully understand the complexities of the world,” he wrote last year, “but I would like to comprehend the underlying roots of reason.” Marveling about his eclecticism, Iolani basketball coach Mark Mugiishi raved to the *Star-Bulletin* in February: “It’s like he was plucked right out of Berkeley in the ‘60s.”

**CLAIRE WATSON** | *Kingston, Wash.*

Claire Watson grew up roaming the trails of her family’s 15-acre farm on her horse, Dusty Moon. She loves the vibe of her native Kingston (population 1,611), a 30-minute ferry ride across Puget Sound from Edmonds. “It’s a nice small town,” she says. “You walk into the grocery store, and there are the same checkers there since I was 3.”

Watson—who was co-president of her 180-student class at Kingston High School as well as president of her local 4-H Club—

likes to be prepared. She started planning for college in eighth grade (“I’m obsessive-compulsive like that”) and closely considered a clutch of schools, including the University of Washington, where there’s a building named for her great-great-grandfather, Pulitzer Prize-winning historian Vernon Louis Parrington.

But she shifted gears as a senior after learning about Occidental at a college fair. The diplomacy and world affairs program piqued her interest, and she liked the com-

Bragdon could work off some excess energy (“I was an overly active child”). She loved the sport so much that she took lessons, and a few short years later, was good enough to be on the U.S. junior rock-climbing team. “I can shut away everything when I compete,” says Bragdon, who made the national team five times and placed as high as second in her age division at the International Federation of Sport Climbing’s World Youth Championships. “I don’t think. I just react.”



Four years of good luck: Adam Gutierrez, Marah Bragdon, Yih-Hsin Alison Ban, and Joe Maloney.

ination of Oxy’s small-school community tucked into the bright-lights, big-city atmosphere of Los Angeles. “I wanted to find a small school with a good international relations program,” she says. “But two years ago I was dead set on being a neurologist, so I may change my mind.”

**MARAH BRAGDON** | *Cambridge, N.J.*

When Marah Bragdon first laid eyes on Occidental, it was not love at first sight. The campus looked too perfect. Too “straight.” Too conservative. “I actually hated my visit,” she recalls. On closer examination, Bragdon discovered Occidental’s intellectual but unpretentious academic environment, as well as its great professors. Now, she says, “I’m hoping I can just keep up with everything.”

Bragdon is a fast study. At age 9, she and her mom stopped by a rock-climbing gym so

The daughter of two public defenders, Bragdon plans to major in psychology. Finding out what makes people tick, she reasons, will one day make her a better lawyer: “I want to understand people, what motivates them, why they do what they do.”

**ADAM GUTIERREZ** | *Valencia*

As a wide receiver for Valencia High School last season, Adam Gutierrez caught 26 passes totaling 330 yards for the Vikings, scoring two touchdowns along the way. Off the field, he logged a 4.5 GPA and graduated seventh out of class of 575. “I define myself as a scholar-athlete,” he says. “It’s not just one or the other.”

When it came time to choose a college, Gutierrez opted for Occidental over Columbia, in part because of its supportive, personal atmosphere and the camaraderie of

**FATEMA SYED** | *Kabul, Afghanistan*

Fatema Syed's path to Occidental began in her native Afghanistan, where getting a good education is just a pipe dream for most girls. The Afghan educational system focuses mainly on boys and suffers from a lack of buildings and teacher shortages. In addition, Afghan cultural tradition frowns on educating women, and those who do attend school face the possibility of ostracization, physical disfigurement, and even death. Only three out of 10 girls go to school.

But Syed and her family were determined that she receive not just a high school education, but a college degree. They moved to neighboring Pakistan, where she went to high school. The family moved back to Afghanistan in 2001, after U.S.-led forces pushed the Taliban out. But the insurgency

movement is making a comeback, she says. "Even now, they threaten the girls, their families, and even the teachers. Some have acid thrown in their faces or get gassed."

While working as a front-desk clerk at a Kabul hotel, Syed met a retired American military officer. He was impressed with her English-language skills

and intelligence, and offered to help her come to America to go to college. Carrying just one suitcase, Syed traveled eight hours under cover of night to Islamabad, where she boarded a plane to Dubai and eventually landed in Raleigh, N.C., where her sponsor and his family lived.

She received her English as a Second Language certification from a local community college before heading West and joining the California Conservation Corps, a state agency that hires young people for outdoor work such as building trails, planting trees, and responding to natural disasters. She also discovered the Feminist Majority Foundation, a non-profit group that helped her get in-state tuition at San Luis Obispo's two-year Cuesta College. Syed graduated with an associate's degree in political science in May.

The organization's special-projects coordinator, duVergne Gaines '91, then encouraged her to consider Occidental for her bachelor's degree. Syed visited campus and was impressed by Oxy's diplomacy and world affairs program, the College's internship and study-abroad opportunities, and Arabic language courses. She chose Occidental in the hopes of acquiring the knowledge and skills to improve life for Afghans, especially the lives of Afghan women.

After graduation, she would like to work for the country's foreign ministry or the United Nations. "Afghan women should be ready and brave enough to fight for their rights," she says. "I want to help."



the football team. And it didn't hurt that his brother, Andrew '06, also played football for the Tigers. "Andrew is the biggest influence in my life," he notes. "We're pretty much the same person, just seven years apart."

A Trustee Scholar, Gutierrez plans to major in biochemistry and minor in kinesiology. When he's not hitting the stacks or playing football for the Tigers, Gutierrez wants to try new things—like joining a student politics club, or even learning how to dance. "I'm a pretty shy guy," he insists. But one thing he's not is superstitious: "I only worry about the stuff that I can control."

**YIH-HSIN ALISON BAN** | *Austin, Texas*

To call Yih-Hsin Alison Ban an overachiever would be an understatement. She graduated sixth out of a class of 594 at Westwood High School in Austin, played the violin and piano competitively, and was a member of the state high school honors orchestra. She also worked as a research assistant at the University of Texas's psychology and neurobiology laboratory, where she studied how various stimuli affect memory. And she's fluent in Mandarin Chinese and French, and speaks and reads Japanese fairly well.

Ban chose Occidental in part for its undergraduate research and Core programs, but also because of its close-knit, supportive environment. "My high school was cutthroat competitive, and at Oxy, people seem to be more collaborative." In addition to feeding her interest in the sciences, she wants to continue making music by joining the Occidental orchestra and chamber ensemble.

In her free time, Ban reads (her favorite writers include Haruki Murakami and Neil Stephenson), listens to music (trance, electronic, and trip-hop), and rides horses. "I'm not a bookworm," she insists. "I work hard, but I do go out and have fun."

**JOE MALONEY** | *Sebastopol*

It's said that an apple a day keeps the doctor away, but some days Joe Maloney eats as many as five. That's easy to do: Growing up on a 13-acre apple orchard in Sebastopol, Maloney played "apple wars" with his three brothers and sliced up the fruit nightly as one of his chores. "We make apple juice, apple cobbler, apple chips," he says. "Gravenstein apples are the best—they're a little bit tart, but also sweet."

All of that healthy eating doubtless helped the Maloney brothers excel in sports, especially on the gridiron. Joe was a running back for the Analy High School Tigers, and one of his brothers played quarterback. Their dad coaches junior varsity football for Analy.

Maloney, who was president of the Fellowship of Christian Athletes in high school, will play football for coach Dale Widolff's Tigers this fall. But the self-taught guitarist wants to branch out musically as well—"maybe Glee Club," says Maloney, who hopes to add a music minor to a planned major in kinesiology. How do you like them apples?

**COLIN MOYER** | *Tacoma, Wash.*

When Colin Moyer sees injustice or abuses of power, he speaks up. Concerned that he and his fellow students at Curtis High School didn't have a voice, he and a skeleton staff launched an off-campus independent newspaper, *The Viking Underground*, last year. And when his 10th-grade biology teacher covered "intelligent design" (i.e., creationism) instead of evolution—foregoing textbooks and tests in the process—Moyer did his own reading on the subject and discovered his First Amendment rights were being violated.

After contacting the American Civil Liberties Union and the National Center for Science Education, he lodged a complaint with school district administration. Consequently, according to Moyer, his former teacher was relieved of his biology course load (he continues to teach anatomy and physiology). For his efforts, in March the ACLU named Moyer as one of 16 recipients nationwide of a 2009 Youth Activist Scholarship.

Perhaps it's not surprising that Moyer, who's also a nationally ranked fencer (a sport he took up in 2002), chose Occidental for the College's emphasis on community service and activism. "I'm trying to find out what to do with my life," he says, "and Oxy seems to be the best place for me to figure out what I want to do." Touché.

**EMILY GEORGE** | *Arlington, Va.*

Emily George doesn't rest on her laurels. After graduating from HB Woodlawn High School a year early, she spent five months teaching English in Panama through an American Field Service exchange program. Prior to that, through the international com-

What's in the cards for Colin Moyer, Emily George, Pedro Aldape, and Lance Porter? Time will tell.



munity-service organization Amigos de las Americas, she taught nutrition and hygiene classes to children in a tiny village in Mexico. She also painted the town's main building and planted trees. Regardless of the tangible benefits of her experiences, she says, "I learned that sometimes making friendships is the most important thing to take away."

George comes from a long line of Oxy alumni, including maternal grandmother Barbara Urner Johnson '43, parents Cynthia (Johnson) '71 and Roger George '71, and brother Evan '04. Emily recalls visiting Evan while he was at Oxy and liking the campus, the people, and the overall vibe. "When I was 8 or 9, I thought, 'I'm going here,'" she says.

Looking beyond Oxy, George hopes to work with a U.S. representative or senator on immigrant issues or perhaps volunteer for the Peace Corps. "I like being part of something bigger than myself."

#### **PEDRO ALDAPE** | Sherman Oaks

Baseball is in Pedro Aldape's blood: His grandfather played the game in his native Mexico ("It was his passion"), and Pedro and his family are longtime Dodgers fans. At 14, he played on a club team that won its age division in the Super Series Baseball national championships. Several years later, he helped Notre Dame High School in Sherman Oaks capture the Division III California Interscholastic Federation title. "There's no better feeling than hitting the ball," says Aldape, who started Little League at age 7.

Aldape's parents, who immigrated from Coahuila to California before he was born, didn't have the opportunity to go to college. So they stressed the importance of higher education to their children. "They want a better life for me and my brother than what they had," says Aldape, who finished with a 4.5 GPA at Notre Dame.

After connecting with baseball coach Jason Hawkins and spending time with the baseball team, Aldape gave Oxy a closer look. He liked the size of the campus and got excited about Oxy's 3-2 engineering program, which allows undergrads to study at Occidental as well as neighboring Caltech or Columbia University. "I love math," Aldape says, "and I may want to go into chemical engineering, then medical school after that."

Of course, it doesn't hurt that Dodger Stadium is only six miles from campus.


#### **LANCE PORTER** | Los Angeles

As a high school freshman in Page, Ariz., in 1984, Lance Porter didn't spend his evenings playing video games. Instead, the 14-year-old drummed for the neighborhood bar band five nights a week. "We played ZZ Top, the Cars, and the Stones," Porter says. "It was an awesome experience."

At 21, Porter signed his first record deal as the drummer for the Orange County punk band Ex-Idols. From there, he played drums for froSTed, a band fronted by Go-Go's rhythm guitarist Jane Wiedlin, and reached the big time with second-generation rocker Tal Bachman, whose 1999 hit "She's So High" led to touring gigs, opening for both Bruce Springsteen and Gloria Estefan. "I went from playing in every little beat-down club in North America to these 17,000-seaters," he says.

Even after he started his own band, the Flash Express, Porter felt there was something missing: a college degree. "I wanted to expand my intellect," he says. "My education was like a street education. I read a lot but I never critically analyzed anything."

Several years ago, Porter enrolled at a local community college, where he discovered a love for literature. Impressed by his passion, his professors told him about Occidental. When Porter found out that he had been accepted as a transfer student, he says, "I felt like I'd won the lottery."

Porter plans to major in English, go on to graduate school, and ultimately instill in others a love for the written word. "I want to be an English professor," he says. "At Oxy, I want to get a base knowledge of literature so I can be as proficient in that as I am in music." To borrow a line from Bachman's father, Randy, of the '70s band Bachman-Turner Overdrive: "You Ain't Seen Nothing Yet." 



**tuenti**  
*something*

BY DICK ANDERSON | PHOTOS BY EDWIN TOONE

OPPOSITE: Dentzel outside Tuenti's offices in downtown Madrid. BELOW: "What Zaryn brings to the table is drive and a singular focus," says longtime pal Adam Ness '05.



## Four years after sleeping on a buddy's couch in Los Angeles, Zaryn Dentzel '05 runs Spain's most popular social network

IN THE FAST-GROWING PROFESSION that is social networking, Zaryn Dentzel '05 is already a veteran. When his initial foray into the field, a politically themed site called Essembly, hit an iceberg on the path to URL ubiquity, he packed his bags, left Los Angeles for Madrid, and raised 12 million euros for his sophomore venture. Three years later, his invitation-only social network, Tuenti, is the most trafficked website in Spain.

Since starting out as a four-person operation in summer 2006, Tuenti now employs more than 80 full-time people from 13 countries in its headquarters in downtown Madrid. With 5.5 million active users, it generates more page views in its homeland than even Google. "I never could have imagined we could be so successful," Dentzel says. "It's kind of crazy."

Big-time crazy: In its 2008 Google Zeitgeist survey, the search engine reported that Tuenti was the fourth-fastest-rising search term globally (sandwiched between "facebook login" and "heath ledger").

And while Tuenti may be virtually unknown in the United States, the company has been a media sensation in its homeland. "The Spanish press has been blown away," says Dentzel, who was even featured on the cover of *Emprendedores* magazine in April ("There just aren't that many Silicon Valley-type companies in Spain").

"The company's moving so fast it's impossible to be everywhere at once," says

Dentzel, who for all his social networking knowhow is having trouble keeping up with the names of Tuenti's new hires.

Dentzel's journey to Euro moguldom began at age 15. After being home-schooled as a ninth-grader, he spent a year in Spain on a study-abroad program. From there, he enrolled as a freshman at UC Santa Barbara. "I thought I wanted to go to a big school," he says, "but soon I became pretty disenchanted because it was difficult to engage in as much stuff as I wanted to do."

While mulling his next move, Dentzel visited Occidental and sat in on a diplomacy and world affairs class taught by professor Larry Caldwell. "Oxy was completely different from UCSB," he says. He transferred to the College as a sophomore, double majoring in DWA and Spanish literature.

Dentzel flourished outside the classroom, participating in the Occidental-at-the-United Nations semester as a junior in New York City, and doing summer research in Namibia, Botswana, and Costa Rica with a pair of Anderson and Richter fellowships.

Back on campus, he was "super involved" in student government, serving as junior vice president of student services as a senator from Haines Hall and running for ASOC president against Peter Wright '05. Then Occidental president Ted Mitchell disbanded ASOC, leaving the College without an elected student government for the 2004-05 academic year. "I learned a lot going through that whole experience," Dentzel

says. "Being in student government, building goals with 35 other kids—there's no doubt that all those different experiences at Oxy made me more predisposed for entrepreneurial opportunities."

In the void created by the absence of ASOC, Dentzel and Kevin Kramer '05 created a new campus group, Student Event Services, that sent out notices for parties (such as Not Unhappy Hour) via a listserv. "It got me into technology," he says.

"When Zaryn really gets invested in something, that becomes his life," says Adam Ness '05, who lived next door to Dentzel at the YMCA during the Oxy-at-the-U.N. program. "He becomes the guy who is more committed than anyone else. He did it at Oxy when he was doing Student Event Services, and he did it with Essembly."

Essembly was the brainchild of Joe Green, a high school friend of Ness's who also happened to be roommates at Harvard with Facebook co-founder Mark Zuckerberg. The site was conceived as a "fiercely non-partisan social network" for politically minded individuals.

Dentzel was living with his family in Santa Barbara, studying for the LSATs, and working at a law firm when \$250,000 in seed money came through for Essembly. Ness was on board as chief operating officer, and soon after, Dentzel says, "I was sleeping on Adam's couch in Los Angeles, and we were doing business development and operations for Essembly."



RIGHT: One of many Spanish media articles documenting the rise of Tuenti. FAR RIGHT: A partial assembly of the Tuenti crew from June. Dentzel expects to hire his 100th employee this year. BELOW: The whole team, February 2008.



While Essembly grew to somewhere in the neighborhood of 45,000 users, it remained at heart a niche product. “It never really blew up,” Dentzel says. “What we were doing with Essembly was really complicated.” Still, he saw the growth potential for social networking in general, “with enormous room for improvement and innovations.”

In the process, Ness recalls, “One of Zaryn’s friends from Spain came over for a visit and saw Facebook. And he said, ‘We have nothing like this in Spain. We should start Facebook for Spain.’”

## The suspension of Oxy’s student government proved to be a godsend for Dentzel, who channeled his passion for politics into the nascent field of social networking.

Dentzel moved to Spain in summer 2006 to develop product strategy for the new social network, bringing programmer Kenny Bentley from Essembly with him. “They completely rebranded it and built an application from the ground up,” says Ness.

Like many of its peers, Tuenti started with a base of college students and now skews slightly older; the average user is 24 or 25. The site name (pronounced “twenty”) is a mashup of the words “tu entidad”—Spanish for “your entity.” “We were sitting around thinking what explains what we’re trying to do here,” Dentzel recalls. “It’s your space or your hub for information. We liked Tuenti—it was powerful and kind of free association.”

“We programmed our website as a local-based relevant private social network with a common understanding that what really mattered was real people and real relations,” he adds. “My goal was always to keep things simple.” Dentzel attributes Tuenti’s success not so much to one big idea, but rather, “a thousand little things—but the most important thing is the quality of the information, not the quantity.”

“I always wanted to take the approach of being more cautious in making sure information was more private—and relevant,” he

continues. And by keeping the network tight-knit and invitation-only, “The engagement rate was much higher, which created a high retention rate among users.”

One characteristic that distinguishes Tuenti from many of its online brethren is no big banner ads. “We didn’t monetize the platform for more than a year and a half,” says Dentzel, who expects Tuenti to generate 5 million euros in ad revenue this year. “Advertising on the Internet has been very dysfunctional. Why are you going to have this big, ugly, untargeted banner, same as you would in the newspaper or on TV?”

Tuenti takes a more targeted approach, with interactive marketing that leverages a

user’s “social graph” with products he or she might actually like. Dentzel explains: “We started out with some interactive sponsored events targeted to people based on specific information in their profiles”—a coolest-photo-with-Tom Cruise promotion tied to a movie release, or contests with L’Oreal and Apple. “In the case of some of these events, we have insanely high click-through rates—as high as 40 percent,” he says.

Given that the plan to prove Tuenti’s mettle in Spain before rolling out the site across Latin America is on course, the company’s stamina is all the more remarkable considering that a July 2007 auto accident took the lives of two team members and severely injured a third passenger. (Dentzel was in a second car, along with Oxy buddies Nick Fries ’05, Patrick Hovakimian ’05, and Grant Puster ’06; all walked away uninjured.) “We got over it and charged forward—nothing else really you can do,” Dentzel says.

“After all they’ve been through, they just kind of persevered,” says Ness, who recently finished his MBA at USC and has joined Tuenti as senior product manager for content and monetization. “Zaryn’s just a natural leader.”

Although Dentzel spends much of his time interviewing prospective employees or schmoozing venture capitalists, “What I really love to do is to sit with the product and design teams and think about features and how to make them work better.” He adds, “Thank God I took Spanish at Oxy.” □

*Consummate*

# PRO

With compassion for his patients and a passion for precision, prosthetist **Stefan Knauss '88** restores limbs and the human spirit

By Samantha B. Bonar '90  
Photos by Max S. Gerber



**L**ESLIE STEINBERG HAD GONE EIGHT YEARS WITHOUT wearing a skirt or an open-toed shoe. Assistant dean for public affairs at Southwestern Law School in Los Angeles, she was diagnosed with a rare cancer in her foot and had to have her left leg amputated below the knee in 2001. For years, “I was looking to get a more cosmetically pleasing leg,” says Steinberg, who wore long pants to cover her prosthetic limb. “I wanted my leg to look natural; I was tired of always having to explain it.”

Thanks to the handiwork of Stefan Knauss '88, she got her wish in July. “My new leg is so realistic-looking that nobody would know the difference,” she says. “Before, I would wear boots most of the time to cover up as much of the artificial leg as I could. Now I’m going crazy buying sandals.”

Knauss has made it his life’s work to create prostheses that are so lifelike, they are indistinguishable from the real thing. His Pasadena-based company, Aesthetic Prosthetics, crafts such realistic hands, fingers, lower extremities, and facial features that he was recently granted a patent for his prosthetic hand techniques, which include hours of hand painting, individually attached hairs, and even the client’s actual fingerprints reproduced in relief on the faux fingertips.

Why such attention to detail? “There’s a real human, existential need for privacy,” says Knauss, who has created prostheses for thousands of clients. “We need to go out into the world clothed. People with missing limbs don’t want to have to retell their story to everyone they meet. Something about life is easier on a daily basis when we have a little control over how we’re perceived.”

Craig Srednick, 52, a utility driver for the Los Angeles County Fire Department, was born with a stump where his right ear should be. He had a prosthetic ear made seven years ago by a prosthetist in Virginia, but was never satisfied with it. It was one single color, and it chafed a sore spot on his stump. It took him an hour every morning to put on, including having his wife put makeup on it to make it look more realistic. "I couldn't wait to take it off at the end of the day," he says.

Desperate for a better synthetic ear, Srednick even contacted film makeup artists to see if they could craft one for him. When that didn't pan out, he began making phone calls and finally was referred to Knauss. "I was thoroughly impressed with what he said that he could

do," Srednick says. "I came to see him three, four times, and each time I was getting more and more excited, because this thing was looking more and more like an actual ear that was one of mine. We kept making adjustments on the coloring and everything."

Within three weeks, Srednick had a new, improved synthetic ear—at less than half the price of its predecessor. "It's an incredible piece that they made. When I have it on, people can't tell which one it is. And it only takes me 10 minutes to put it on in the morning. It's to the point that I forget that it's on," he says.

Knauss traces his fascination with prosthetics back to high school, when he created a wooden mechanical hand for a science competition. A religious studies major at Oxy, he studied studio art as well as physics and got a job in the prosthetics field as an apprentice to other professionals right after graduation. For 10 years, his primary training was in function, but he was dissatisfied with the fake look of most prostheses. "Prosthetics is all about function, high-tech components, driven by manufacturers," Knauss says. "They have to create things that appeal to a large demographic. I think there's far too much excuse-making. They'll say, 'People like the robotic look.'"

Knauss finally realized he would have to go to graduate school to learn aesthetic prosthetics. So in 1998 he and his wife, Elisabeth, an occupational therapist, packed up their belongings in their Honda Civic, and Knauss enrolled in the University of Illinois at Chicago's Craniofacial Center in the Department of Maxillofacial Prosthetics.

A primary interest of his at the time was how to do hand reconstruction, he says. His anaplastology professors "sat me down with a block of wax and a client's file and said, 'Start sculpting.' Six weeks later, I was still working on that hand." Thus began his quest to find a faster, better, interactive approach to hand restoration. By the time he graduated, Knauss had roughed out a process to make a seamless hand prosthesis: painted on an inner layer, so it won't wear off; reinforceable from within with some sort of fabric; seamless, so nothing drew attention to it; and made from a "medically acceptable" line of rubbers.

After graduating with a master's in associated medical sciences in 1999, Knauss returned to Pasadena and opened Aesthetic Prosthetics with his wife, who serves as office manager. "I had no business model for what I do," he explains. Medical insurance rarely covers his prostheses, deeming them cosmetic rather than medically necessary, something that bothers Knauss a great deal. "This is a true prosthesis," he says. "We think first and foremost about function. The fact that it has a highly aesthetic component to it shouldn't detract from that. We don't try to enhance people. We're just trying to get them back to their natural image."

Recently, Knauss made an arm for a Carmelite nun who lives in complete seclusion. "She told me that her new arm made her feel whole again," he says. "It was very important to her to look 'normal.'"

Knauss's process of creating a new appendage begins with his library of more than 250 plaster models of hands, cast from friends and acquaintances and "stacked up like cord wood" in his garage at his home in Altadena. (Legs and feet are sculpted from scratch.) When he first meets with a client, he takes a cast of their remaining hand or foot, then, in the case of hands, tries to find a good match in



#### LESLIE STEINBERG

After years of searching for a cosmetically appealing leg, she found Knauss. "Stefan and his staff know how important this is to their patients," she says. "It changes people's lives."



#### CYNDI CECCHINI

Born without her left hand, she has been a patient of Knauss's for 10 years: "Stefan is a brilliant, talented artist," she says. "I hope he's here forever for me."

**ABOVE:** Knauss's handiwork is amazingly realistic—right down to the fingernails. "It's not that much harder in life to do things thoroughly than to do them in a mediocre way," he says. **RIGHT:** Knauss's first model hand, left, created for a high school competition about 25 years ago, and its more polished, pen-wielding modern-day counterpart.



his library of the opposite hand, fitting the client's age and proportions. This becomes the model for the new prosthetic. He makes a new plaster cast, then begins the process of sculpting it to match his client's appendage. When he is satisfied, he uses it as a mold to create a silicone-based prosthesis in a base color. Nails are crafted separately from acrylic (and can be painted, and repainted, with nail polish).

Then he spends several hours sitting with the patient and painting the silicone prosthesis to perfectly match their skin tone. Then another layer of silicone is placed over the painted surface. The appendage is lined with reinforced fabric to make it more durable. There is a final fitting in which there can be a little paint retouching.

The appendage stays on via suction, which requires a very carefully fitted socket. Knauss uses an adhesive to blend the margins at the end so that there is no visible seam. "They really stay on," he says. "You can wave your hand out the window on the freeway." Each piece is highly personalized according to what a person needs to do, Knauss says—

from an auto mechanic to a stewardess who is handing out cups all day. Sometimes Knauss (whose work hews closer to anaplastology than general prosthetics) creates the internal componentry as well.

"Stefan has an amazing eye for color. He can see my hand color better than I can," says Cyndi Cecchini, a supply chain manager born without her left hand who has received three arms from Knauss over the last decade (a prosthesis typically lasts from two to five years). Cecchini says she is comfortable with her deformity and only wears her prosthesis about 20 percent of the time, "But there are times that I don't want to deal with the questions. People are really something. A perfect stranger came up to me in an airport and asked, 'What happened to your hand?' I said I was born without it, and she said, 'Is that all that's wrong?' Or someone will come up behind me in the grocery store and ask if I was in the service."



**"We don't try to enhance people. We're just trying to get them back to their natural image."**

When Cecchini and Knauss worked together on her first prosthesis, he was far away and it was difficult for them to meet, she recalls, "and he went out of his way to make it work. He's a good man. He wants it to be perfect. And he's so sensitive to people and their feelings. Before I met Stefan, I

used to have a prosthesis that was just a generic glove, if you will. But he customizes my hand, so it looks exactly like I have two hands."

There are only a handful of prosthetists in the country who make realistic-looking artificial limbs—a state of affairs that frustrates Knauss. "My deep desire is that we can reach more people," says Knauss, who works on five to 10 cases a month for a customer base that stretches from California to Hawaii. (A typical prosthesis runs in "the thousands of dollars," he notes.) "Most of the country still has to put up with the mail-order system—if that. Our vision is to work with the industry of prosthetics on a much larger scale."

If Knauss had his way, no one would ever see his work at all—but it would be "infectious" within the industry. "I would like to see aesthetics gain a place of understanding, where it's not the bastard child of prosthetics. I would like to see it become the norm." □



# Tor



# de Force

By Dick Anderson  
Photos by Dennis Drenner

As chief creative officer of Grey New York, advertising maverick **Tor Myhren '94** harnesses new media to bring messages to full flower

**N**EVER LET IT BE SAID THAT Tor Myhren '94 takes his work home with him. In a world where his bread-and-butter product—advertising—is at the whim of TiVos, YouTube, and increasingly quick-cut attention spans, Myhren does not own a DVR. Or even a television. “I don’t watch TV, so I got rid of it a couple years ago,” he says. “I don’t have a car, either. I suppose I’m a minimalist that way. Things only seem to clutter my life and my thoughts.”

There’s a lot on Myhren’s mind these days. He oversees a staff of 190 as executive vice president and chief creative officer of Grey New York, the North American flagship of the world’s fifth-largest ad agency. In an industry that’s been upended by a shift in the way people embrace or ignore advertising, he’s selling everything from CoverGirl and Pringles to LongHorn Steakhouses and

Crown Royal. But inside Myhren is the soul of an artist, an activist, and a humanitarian. Which brings us to the question: Can the man who made talking babies hot again rally the planet against global warming?

After a brief foray into journalism at *The Providence (R.I.) Journal* following graduation, Myhren soured on the “formulaic” nature of his work—which mostly consisted of sports coverage—and high-tailed it back to his native Denver. There, despite lacking a portfolio, he was hired by Carson Hagen, the city’s largest ad agency. “I really got my first advertising job from the short stories and poetry I had written at Oxy,” says Myhren, an English major and kinesiology minor who counts professors Eric Newhall '67 (“very inspirational” and Stuart Rugg (“the picture of health”) among his influences. “I guess that proved to my boss at the time that I could at least write.”

After several years in Denver, Myhren made the leap to Los Angeles, where Seattle-based agency Wongdoody was opening an office. Concurrent with the dotcom boom, Wongdoody ballooned from three employees to 60 over the course of a year before the Internet bubble burst. “We had a lot of dotcom clients at the time, many of which wound up not paying us,” Myhren says.

In the aftermath, Wongdoody downsized to 20 employees, and then Myhren “took a very long sabbatical,” as he puts it, quitting his job in 2001 to travel around the world. “It added a whole new perspective to the way I was looking at my job and writing and telling stories,” says Myhren, who returned to the United States a week before the 9/11 attacks.

He spent much of the decade knee-deep in the auto industry: three years as creative director for Chiat/Day, working on the Infin-



With a roster of 60 clients, Myhren doesn't have a hand in every Grey campaign, "but I think that is the crux of my job. I still look at ads; I still go on shoots; I'm very close to the work."

inspire collaboration and communication. He found the one floor in the building that didn't have walls—the second floor, which housed the finance department—and engineered a shift that moved the finance folks upstairs and clustered all the creative people in one space. "It was not a very popular move at the moment, but it was a much better way to have a creative culture," admits Myhren, who commemorated the move with a parody of Sinéad O'Connor's doe-eyed, tear-stained 1990 video "Nothing Compares 2 U."

Of all the peculiar videos that populate the YouTube universe, one of the odder viral entities is an in-your-face Myhren, in all his shaved-head glory, warbling "Nothing Compares to 2" (as in the second floor). While he's no Keyboard Cat, Myhren has generated more than 100,000 views over the last two years: "I have no idea how that happened."

"I'm not one of these guys who full on embraces the management part of it," he adds. "If there are 200 people counting on you to make the right decisions, they need to know that you are capable of doing good creative work." Within a month of Myhren's arrival, Grey pitched and won the E-Trade account. One reason he immersed himself in the campaign—writing, producing, and even lending his voice to the spots—is "because I felt like I needed to be integrally involved in the creative product when I got there."

The unifying concept behind the campaign was that all of the commercials would be shot through the webcam—people trading online, talking to a little online camera—"it made perfect sense," Myhren says. The talking baby was just one part of a bigger campaign; other spots focused on normal people talking via webcam about E-Trade. For Super Bowl XLII in 2008—where 30-second spots sold for \$2.7 million—they rolled the dice with the infant pitchman.

Prior to its airing, Myhren feared that the ad would make him—and Grey—the laughing stock of Madison Avenue. "Our industry is very critical," he says. Finding the right voice for the baby had proven challenging as well. Myhren and director Randy Krallman had famous actors come in and read for the

ity account in the United States and Japan, followed by three years as executive creative director of Leo Burnett Detroit, where he oversaw all of the agency's car business, most notably the Cadillac and Pontiac lines.

A hallmark of Myhren's time at Burnett was the use of new and digital media to promote the GM line, but its two most memorable campaigns came from a pair of TV tie-ins—with Oprah Winfrey and Donald Trump.

Winfrey's infamous 2004 Pontiac G6 giveaway—"You get a car! You get a car!" she bellowed to 286 audience members—began with a young account executive at Burnett. "Literally nobody in America had uttered the word 'Pontiac' in close to 20 years—it was a dead and forgotten brand," Myhren says. "We spent \$7 million—the cost of the cars—to do the program. A very conservative estimate is that we got \$110 million worth of media exposure out of it."

While all that press didn't translate into sales, a more tangible result came following an April 2005 episode of "The Apprentice," when Trump tasked the teams with designing a brochure for Pontiac's new \$20,000 Solstice Roadster. The automaker ran an ad at the end of the show for a limited-edition "First 1,000" Solstice, selling out in 41 minutes (with a waiting list of 19,000). "The car was not even off the assembly line," Myhren says.

Myhren's biggest move came in September 2007, when he took the CCO position at Grey New York, a "very old-school, very conservative" agency that was better known for serving play-it-safe stalwarts like Procter & Gamble than producing buzzworthy advertising. "One of the reasons why I think I was hired at Grey was to infuse some of the more modern thinking into an older agency."

Myhren was eager to have a space for his creative department free of barriers, to

**RIGHT:** E-Trade's talking-baby spots have gotten millions of hits online. (Myhren is the voice of African-American baby Benny.)  
**BELOW:** A promotional poster for *City Lax*, which Myhren and director Gabriela Cowperthwaite '93 hope to screen at film festivals.  
**BOTTOM:** A pre-election message by Myhren went viral before the election.



**ABOVE:** Shades of Sinead! Myhren's "Nothing Compares to 2" video parody.  
**BELOW:** Carolina Panthers wide receiver (and L.A. native) Steve Smith is featured in the NFL's new super-slow-motion ads created by Grey and rolling out this fall.



Photos courtesy Tor Myhren '94/Grey New York

voice, but none of them, or any of the professional voiceover talents they had auditioned, sounded right. "It just was not funny. And I was really getting terrified."

Myhren did a voiceover track on his own computer as a guideline for Krallman to work with while directing the spot. But when he heard Krallman's own take of it, "which was absolutely great," Myhren knew he had found his E-Trade baby.

The first of two E-Trade spots aired during the third quarter of the Super Bowl—the one with "the puking baby," as Myhren so delicately calls it. A second spot, where he rents a creepy clown with his "extra coin," followed in the fourth quarter. Both ads scored big with viewers, and the campaign "took on a life of its own. It was on hundreds of news shows the next day. It was so popular that people were calling me to do interviews and be on shows, and the agency

was getting a lot more attention than it had gotten. It kind of changed everything."

In the last six months, Grey has "had a great new business run," Myhren says, picking up a number of major new clients including Ketel One Vodka, TJ Maxx, and BMW. The biggest of the bunch may be the NFL, which tapped Grey to create a unified campaign branding the league's initiatives. "It's such a fast, brutal sport and these guys have such incredible speed and strength," he says.

Grey's campaign concept dramatizes so-called "moments of truth"—those game-changing plays that happen in a fraction of a second—by shooting actual game footage using Phantom HD digital video cameras capable of shooting 1,000 frames per second, which is "10 times slower than anything NFL Films has ever shot," Myhren says.

The NFL bought three Phantom cameras to shoot games throughout the 2009 season,

and a dozen spots may air between now and January. The NFL Network may even do a program using the best footage Grey shoots each week, and Myhren expects the footage will find its way into the hands of referees, trainers, and coaches as well. "It's going to transcend just an advertising campaign."

While the recession has shrunk the work force by about 15 percent, Myhren believes there's no better time to be in advertising "because it's so much more interesting than it used to be because of all the new media channels and environments." While a business used to simply buy enough TV spots to make sure its message got heard, he says, "That's not the way the media environment works anymore. From a creative standpoint it has upped the ante of what we have to do."

As a measure of the reach of nontraditional advertising in the age of the Internet, Myhren created an ad that depicted Barack



**LEFT:** “We have to get through the recession first, but I think the creative side of advertising is going to flourish again,” says Myhren (in his second-floor office at Grey). “We have not begun to figure out the online or digital environment.”

**BELOW:** Myhren is spearheading a movement to rebrand global warming as Climacide: “I really think it will be a big and important campaign.”



Obama '83 as white and John McCain as black, with a simple message: “Let the Issues Be the Issue.” “In an election that was becoming more and more about skin color, I wanted to force people to think about the actual human beings they were voting for,” he says.

Five days before the election, Myhren e-mailed the ad to about 75 people that he knew, a few of whom “are people that know people.” Within a couple of hours, he got a phone call from the editor of a popular Australian website devoted to pop culture, who posted a story about the ad on his front page—and “that was the tipping point,” Myhren says. The ad spread to every website and blog this side of Perez Hilton, and was featured on CNN and BBC. Myhren did dozens of interviews, and he estimates that some 37 million people globally saw the image by election night.

A thread of social consciousness runs through Myhren’s artistic pursuits outside of Grey as well. In 2007 his brother Erik, a fifth-grade teacher at Hallet Academy in Denver, took Myhren’s old lacrosse sticks and helmets to school one day, sharing them with a group of African American students who had never heard of the sport. Inspired to start a team, which was later named Denver City Lax, he found coaches to work with the youths. All the while, the school was shutting down because of budget cuts.

Myhren recognized the dramatic elements inherent in the story—“Poor, inner-city African American kids introduced to rich, white suburban sport”—but he’d just started the Grey job in New York City. So he

## “I think creativity can solve anything— Including the world’s biggest problems.”

pitched the project to a good friend living in Mar Vista, Gabriela Cowperthwaite '93, a documentary filmmaker (including projects for the Discovery, History, and National Geographic channels) who grew up in Denver.

After talking it over with her husband, Brian Wilbur, she signed on—and the entire family, including then 2-year-old twin sons Max and Diego, holed up with her parents between January and July 2008.

With full access to four of the players’ households, Cowperthwaite and her skeleton crew (including a director of photography who worked and slept in her parents’ basement) filmed almost every day for six months, following the team’s *Bad News Bears*-like march toward the statewide Warrior Rocky Mountain Lacrosse Jamboree.

Cowperthwaite, who majored in political science and minored in theater at Oxy, hopes to have a finished cut of *City Lax* ready in October, after which she and Myhren (who financed the project and carries an executive producer credit) will shop it around on the festival circuit. Whatever the film’s reception, “This is literally for the kids,” she says.

“Advertising is Tor’s field, but in his heart he’s trying to do what’s right,” Cowperthwaite adds. “It’s refreshing to know that none of his success has changed the core of my friend. His soul has remained intact.”

Myhren’s latest personal project finds him working with the Copenhagen Climate Council in anticipation of COP15, the United Nations Climate Change Conference, which begins in Copenhagen on Dec. 7. “Vital decisions about our planet’s future rest on what decisions are made by the world’s leaders at COP15,” says Myhren, who is creating a campaign to rebrand global warming as “Climacide.” “One of the biggest problems with global warming is a communications problem. The facts are out there, but people are confused and lethargic. Climacide is exactly what it sounds like—the elimination of our species due to climate change. My hope is that with a clear and common enemy, the world will start fighting back.”

Myhren has been working with several prominent musicians, including John Forté (formerly of the Fugees) to create songs about Climacide “that could seep into pop culture,” as well as with directors to create longform and viral films that shed light on the issue. The campaign will also have outdoor posters, guerrilla marketing, TV ads, internet films, and cellphone applications.

And if Myhren falls short of his goal, well, it might be the end of civilization as we know it. But he doesn’t sound too worried: “I think creativity can solve anything,” he says, “including the world’s biggest problems.”



Photographer Lisa Jack '81—whose long-forgotten images of a teenage Barack Obama '83 became an overnight sensation last winter—goes back to the basement to document her Oxy generation

# When We Were Young

Below: Photo by Marc Campos. Opposite page: Susan Coll photo (inset) © Lauren Shay Lavin





**LEFT:** Barack Obama '83 in a moment of repose during his 1980 photo shoot. "He was as friendly and charming as could be," she recalls, "and followed instructions very well." **BELOW & BOTTOM:** Susan Keselenko Coll '81, Jack's roommate, poses inside and outside the pair's Hazelwood Avenue apartment. **OPPOSITE PAGE:** A self-portrait of Jack, *top*, and prior to the opening of her Obama exhibit at West Hollywood's M+B Gallery in May.



**T**HE FIRST TIME I PICKED UP a camera was during the spring of my sophomore year, when I took a photography class (from the late Chick Strand) to fulfill a requirement. It was fun. I found myself able to articulate things with a camera that I was unable to communicate verbally or in writing. I won a few photo contests on campus and picked up some pointers outside the classroom from professor Dan Fineman, way before he ever taught photography.

Last year, on a dare from a colleague, I journeyed down to my basement and found a treasure trove of photographs from the days when I dreamed of becoming another Diane Arbus or Paul Strand. Although I've been gratified to see my images of our president in a Panama hat become well known, the images of old friends at Oxy have brought me much joy in recent months. I have reconnected with people whose lives diverged from mine years ago. It's been a remarkable trip down memory lane.

I am so impressed by the tremendous success of everyone I have spoken with. I am equally as proud of the positive impact they have all made on this world while pursuing their dreams. This is so inspirational to me, given all the self doubt of our college days, in a world that has numerous challenges.

Although I put aside my camera years ago to pursue a career teaching college psychology, over the past nine months I have been able to live my dream of being a published photographer. The images presented here are just some of the many people and moments that I caught on film as an undergraduate at Oxy. I hope you enjoy them.

—Lisa Jack '81



**MY MUSTY COPY OF** *The Philosophy of Kant* doesn't see much action these days. Presumably acquired for one of Roger Boesche's beloved political theory classes, it has now been dragged both across the country and around the world, but it was only a few weeks ago that I felt compelled to pull it off the shelf and turn the pages, possibly for the first time in nearly 30 years. Out dropped a curious keepsake: It was a receipt for \$255, recording the March 30, 1980, transaction involving the first month's rent, security deposit, and delivery of keys for 1570 1/2 Hazelwood Avenue—a slightly shabby two-bedroom garden apartment with peeling green exterior paint and a tumbleweed lawn, just a few blocks from the Occidental campus.



**RIGHT:** Melanie Von Der Shulenburg '83 enjoys a laugh and a glass of some low-cost vino during her shoot in Jack's makeshift studio inside her garage.

**BELOW:** A hatless patron of one of the notorious "hat parties" of the era. Jack isn't sure, but she thinks his name was "Mitch." **BOTTOM:** Alpha sister Angie Bell '81 is now a doctor in Scottsdale, Ariz.



The place may have been in disrepair when Lisa Jack and I moved in during the spring semester of our junior year, but it seemed romantic nonetheless, even if its allure mostly had to do with the independence that living off campus provided, as well as the cheap rent.

Unlike my own children whose college domiciles seem to require hundreds of dollars injected annually into the coffers of Ikea and the Container Store, Lisa and I didn't view this as an opportunity to nest. We moved in, unpacked, and enjoyed a blithe, or maybe just lazy, acceptance of our surroundings. Our bedrooms held little more than a mattress each, and the focal point of our living room was a hideous plaid sofa that we kept covered with a sheet. A shopping cart dragged in from the side of a road was perhaps our only stab at home improvement: We turned it upside down and propped a plant on top of it, and I have some vague memory of the long-suffering ficus doing double duty as an ashtray.

Perhaps we weren't so much oblivious to our surroundings as embracing, and celebrating, some faux impoverished, artistic, bohemian view of ourselves—ridiculous, of course, since our middle-class parents were writing the checks. Nonetheless, the discussions that took place in our ratty salon—about the plight of migrant farm workers and apartheid in South Africa, about the stories that would run in the school literary journal and the editorials that would appear on the pages of *The Occidental*—aspired to a sense of cultural and political awareness, even if we were full of pretention. I suspect the current generation of college students is only now circling back to its own version of

this after a long period of political apathy, created, in large part, by the new spirit of involvement inspired by Barack Obama '83, who as it happened was among those who passed through our door.

While I sat around plotting my selfless boycott of green grapes and highlighting passages from *Das Kapital*, Lisa was doing something practical. She always had a camera strapped around her neck, and persuaded just about everyone who visited to sit for a photo session. The two of us lost track of one another for more than 20 years: We caught up over coffee at Union Station a few years ago when Lisa passed through Washington, D.C., where I now live. She told me that she'd put her camera away for a career as a psychologist, but somewhere in her basement, she still had these rolls of film. The proof is in the pages.—Susan Keselenko Coll '81



**I GREW UP IN NEW YORK** City, and Southern California was the land of my dreams. Was it really sunny and dry year round? No snow boots, no scarves, no spring monsoons, no summer humidity? I head-

ed west to Occidental to see if such a land existed. It did. Oxy was a combination of warm dry weather, a stunning campus with roses and orange trees surrounding low stucco buildings of Mediterranean architecture, a major urban area within a short drive, Malibu Beach, Mexico, and Mammoth Mountain all rolled into one. Wow. And then there were the academics, the hip, brilliant professors, and the diverse students, many of whom became my friends.

**BELOW:** A candid glimpse of Jennifer (Lambert) Churchill '80. **RIGHT:** For her senior show, art major Becky Luening '80 featured a series of collagraph prints depicting interiors of rooms in her Munson Avenue apartment as well as a few in other students' houses. (Luening now lives in Portland, Ore., with husband Brian Willson and their Welsh Corgi, Pedro.)



Lisa Jack was one of those friends. We shared our New York roots and the feeling that by ending up at Occidental, we had somehow died and gone to heaven. Lisa did remind me of home; she was opinionated and funny, sassy and thoughtful. I loved being with her.

As I was perusing *Time's* Man of the Year issue last December, I came across the stunning photos of Obama at Occidental. I hadn't known him, although our time at Oxy had overlapped. Checking the credits, my heart skipped a beat when I read "Photos by Lisa Jack." I jumped online and tracked my old girlfriend down. I was thrilled and proud that Lisa's work had achieved national attention.—*Jennifer (Lambert) Churchill '80*



**WHEN LISA JACK AND I** met in Spanish class during my sophomore year, we hit it off instantly. It was a classic case of "opposites attract"—brash, talkative New Yorker meets mellow, quiet Californian.

One of the things I most appreciated about Lisa was her directness. To answer her questions sometimes required much soul-searching. In addition to developing an intellect, a creative vocabulary, and the beginnings of a political consciousness, my four years at Oxy were very much about coming out of my shell, and Lisa was one of a handful of people

whose friendship served as a mirror in which I could more clearly see my emerging self.

I had forgotten all about this photo until Lisa e-mailed it to me recently. The set-up for the shot was her idea as we cruised the neighborhood around Oxy: Holding a piece of graphite in my hand, I am pretending to have added my mark to the wall behind me. While I'm not sure we pulled that off, I find it to be a striking portrait, and I am especially struck by the energy in my hands.

As I reflect on the urban setting, I think about the extent to which Oxy afforded me a richer experience of my native city. At different times, two of my closest college friends—Michael Bialek '80 and Afton Taylor '79—took me on joy rides throughout L.A., showing me city streets and neighborhoods I'd never seen before. (To this day, the humus and pickled turnips I enjoyed with Michael at Danny's Falafel remain unmatched.) In addition to the many field trips arranged by my art professors and those who collaborated in teaching the Collegium, these experiences contributed greatly to my expanded appreciation of the rich and diverse culture of the City of Angels.

I'm dismayed to say I have no memory of Barack Obama at Oxy, although I'm told he was a good friend of a friend of mine. Did we smile at each other in the chow line as I served up food in the Union? Was he in any of my classes—African-American Poetry or Drama, perhaps? I'll never know. Neverthe-



**ABOVE:** Mark Dery '82 models a necklace of his own creation—"Sex Pistols-approved safety pins strung on the standard-issue disco neckchain ... a dyspeptic wedding of feelgood dude-ishness and political-poseur anomie." **BELOW:** Margot Mifflin '82, a professor of journalism at CUNY and Dery's wife.



**RIGHT:** This public service announcement-style photo was a staple in every Oxy periodical of its day.

**BELOW:** Alpha madness: Barb Novinger '81, Jessica (Shuster) Glick '80, Elise-Marie Young '81, Jane (Zimmerman) Ettinger '81, and Lisa Jack '81.



“I was impressed by Lisa’s deep curiosity about the world and those around her,” says Judith Kinst ’82. “Her camera was the vehicle for all this.”



**ABOVE CENTER:** Judith Kinst '82 and her trademark big-framed glasses. “That was her look,” Jack says.

**ABOVE:** Linda Glover '82 shares a laugh with a friendly police officer.

less, I felt a twinge of excitement as I cast my vote for president last November, knowing the candidate and I had been at the same place at the same time all those years ago. And I am thrilled to have evidence of our shared experience as glimpsed through the lens of Lisa’s camera.—*Becky Luening '80*



I CAME TO OCCIDENTAL, older than most students, after a number of years of life, work, and intense political involvement. I was ready to challenge myself with dedicated academic study and found myself immersed in an environment that met and exceeded my hopes. Busy with my studies, there were few who penetrated my nunlike existence. Lisa Jack was one of them—full to the brim with energy, creativity, and intelligent questioning; I was impressed by her deep curiosity about the world and those around her. Her camera was the vehicle for all this. The photographs she showed me were more than beautiful depictions of people and places; they were a window into our lived human experience.

Lisa was my neighbor in a small off-campus apartment complex. In photographing me she captured images that expressed who I was at that point in my life. Like Lisa, I was curious, dedicated, still young in many

ways, determined to dive deeply into life. I was headed to graduate work in social psychology, when, near the end of my studies at Oxy, I found myself drawn to Zen Buddhism. Through the expert and generous guidance of professor Dale Wright, I began to study Buddhism, and to practice at the Zen Center of Los Angeles. After graduation my plans rapidly shifted from pursuing graduate studies in psychology to dedicated Zen practice at the San Francisco Zen Center, monastic training, ordination and ultimately teaching Zen. Along the way I returned to academic study, integrating the study of psychology and psychotherapy with the study of Zen Buddhism and completing a Ph.D that would not have been possible without the gift of my years at Occidental. An important part of my life is academic teaching at the Graduate Theological Union, Institute for Buddhist Studies. There I work to support the kind of deep curiosity, intelligent inquiry, and respectful dialogue that I experienced at Occidental.

I am sorry to say, I did not know Barack Obama at Occidental. But it is a delight to see Lisa’s photographs and to know we share the common experience of Oxy in those years. And it is not a surprise to know that Occidental is a part of who he is and what he has to offer the world. Barack, Lisa, and many, many others give back what they have received and benefit all of us.

—*Judith Kinst '82*



**LEFT:** Debbie Levi Holtz '81, far left, and members of an activist group on campus—most likely the Democratic Socialist Alliance—gather in the Quad during the 1980-81 school year. **BELOW:** After graduating from Oxy with a degree in political science, Holtz pursued a career in journalism and now works in advocacy communications for a nonprofit.



ONE DAY LISA ASKED ME if I would go downtown with her so she could take photos of me for a project. My creativity spun into action and I went downtown with white makeup, a black graduation robe, and huge black boots that I borrowed. Lisa took photos of me and one of them was on a motorcycle. That was on the cover of *Community Review*. Lisa also contributed several photos to *Plastic Laughter*, a magazine that I started with Mark Dery '82.

During the 2008 presidential race, I e-mailed someone who was working on Barry's campaign and explained that I was a friend from Occidental. A few days later I received a phone call to go to the VIP area at the George R. Brown Convention Center in Houston. After Barry completed his speech he came down to shake hands with everyone and I was screaming "BARRY!" He saw me and said, "Shelley!" and he told everyone that we went to college together.

As he was being escorted along he said, "I never do this but I have to go back and get a picture with Shelley." I was a nervous wreck and tears were streaming down my face. I told him I didn't have a camera and he asked the crowd to please take their cell phones out and take our picture. They did, and the woman next to me sent me the photo that night. While even my friends and family agree it is one of the most unattractive photos I have ever taken, several copies are on our metal board!

—Shelley Marks Weathers '82



JOINING THE CAMPUS movement to pressure the College's trustees to divest from corporations doing business in South Africa was a turning point for me at Oxy. It was the kind of transformative experience

that a liberal arts education promises, but which students ultimately find outside of the classroom. Becoming aware of the apartheid system of institutionalized racial segregation not only exposed me to injustice, it changed both my academic and social lives.

After nearly two years as a carefree prospective English major, I switched to political science, and a new world opened up. I combined my interest in politics with my passion for writing into a new form of expression—journalism. It would chart my course as an adult into a career as a journalist and now in advocacy communications for a nonprofit. Likewise, my social life revolved less around planning for the next party and more around meaningful conversations with fellow students and professors.

Amid all of the changes were the constants: watching friends play Frisbee in the Quad, eating burgers in the Cooler, and seeing Lisa Jack barreling across campus with her camera hanging from her neck. Lisa had a way of bringing out the true spirits of her subjects by making us feel comfortable and less self-conscious—a difficult feat among college students.—Debbie Levi Holtz '81

Photos from Jack's exhibit, "Barack Obama: The Freshman," will be on display in the third-floor foyer of Coons from Oct. 12 to Nov. 6.



**ABOVE:** After leaving Oxy, Shelley Marks Weathers '82 spent eight years working in the art world in Los Angeles and London and then nine years designing handbags and hair accessories. She's now raising a family with her husband in Houston.

Photo by Sam Greenwood/Getty Images



"There is nothing like walking the course on the final day when the competition is at its most intense," Evans says.

# Tour of Duty

**Marsha Evans '68** honed her leadership skills as CEO of Girl Scouts of the USA and the Red Cross. Can she help rescue women's golf?

Whatever happened to the lazy days of summer? While attorney John Branca '72 was busy tending to the estate of the late Michael Jackson and turnaround artist Steve Cooper '68 was rolling up his sleeves as co-CEO of MGM, retired Navy rear admiral Marsha (Johnson) Evans '68 was trekking from one golf course to the next—in her new capacity as acting commissioner of the LPGA. "I started playing golf only about three years ago so, suffice it to say, I am a high handicapper," she tells *Occidental* writer Samantha Bonar '90 as she reflects on the task of teeing up the troubled women's golf circuit for greener pastures.

**How did you get invited to sit on the LPGA board of directors?** When I was at Girl Scouts of the USA, we signed a partnership with the LPGA to extend the girls golf program to Girl Scouts. I began following the LPGA Tour and became excited about the opportunities golf offered to girls and women

—from a fun social outing, to a business experience, to wonderful role models of perseverance and integrity. Then I was invited to join the Commissioner's Advisory Council and after two years, elected to the board.

**What attracted you to your new position?** I was actually "drafted" into service. [When commissioner Carolyn Bivens resigned,] apparently the fact that I had been the CEO of several organizations was a factor in several board members inquiring whether I would "lend a hand" in this transition period.

**You're accustomed to positions of leadership—what will that experience bring to bear on the challenges you face with the LPGA?** In my many different experiences, I have learned that most, if not all, people want to do a good job. They need clear direction and support. The LPGA has a very talented and highly dedicated staff. Our staff members are the key to the LPGA's success ... along with the talented players who play

on the Tour and the teaching and club professionals around the world. It's all about setting the direction, providing support, and celebrating success.

**The LPGA has been bleeding tournaments lately. What are your plans to get the organization back in ship-shape?** We are very focused on the 2010 schedule and beyond. We have reached out to partners and supporters to renew tournaments and, in some cases, get the discussions back on track. We are also engaging in conversations with potential new sponsors and supporters. I am optimistic that we will have a solid schedule next year with some exciting new events.

The business of women's sports is very challenged right now. Rather than look at the past, I am focusing on what we can and must do to make sure we offer prospective partners and sponsors a compelling value proposition. Our players hail from 27 countries, and we are televised in more than 100. Our fan base is actually growing. Sponsors and partners have great opportunities to extend their brands and reach current and future markets through LPGA events.

**Does the state of the economy make your challenge more difficult?** The economy is a challenge, but shouldn't be an excuse. There are still opportunities—companies still are marketing their goods and services. We're working not only harder but also smarter to develop new markets and opportunities.

**How does the LPGA brand itself for the future?** There have never been so many exceptionally talented women golfers, and our tour is a global enterprise where the top women in the world play. In the U.S. we are seeing the results of Title IX and the growth of college programs that feed into both our Futures tour and the LPGA Tour. We are growing our fan base around the world through our partner the Golf Channel and overseas media outlets.

**With your new responsibilities, do you have more or less time to get out on the golf course?** Decidedly less! This is more than a full-time job. My handicap is going in the wrong direction. I think my game will actually improve when I am again able to play regularly because I have had the benefit of observing perfect technique on a daily basis. One of the hallmarks of the most dedicated golfers is they are confident their swings will improve—count me in that category! 