

# OCCIDENTAL

FALL 2011

## LIFE BEFORE OXY

Since finishing high school last year, **Ryan Hammill** has lived among monks and worked with undocumented immigrants—experiences he brings to the Class of 2015

# OCCIDENTAL

OCCIDENTAL COLLEGE MAGAZINE  
VOLUME 33, NUMBER 4 FALL 2011

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From Jonathan Veitch

## More Than Just a Number, Endowment Truly Matters

THE CHRONICLE OF HIGHER EDUCATION recently came out with its *Almanac*, an annual compilation of data covering everything from faculty salaries to student demographics. I turned first, as I always do, to the listing of the college and university endowments of more than \$250 million as of the end of the 2010 fiscal year. It was sobering to see Occidental's \$298.9-million endowment listed at No. 182, a drop from No. 174 the previous year. This leaves us trailing well behind not only such institutions as Bowdoin (No. 86, \$753.5 million), Macalester (No. 107, \$586.5 million), and Claremont McKenna (No. 134, \$466.4 million), but also Worcester Polytechnic Institute (No. 176, \$307.6 million) and Wabash (No. 179, \$303.5 million).

An endowment is far more than just a number. It's no coincidence that the country's top-ranked liberal arts colleges have some of the largest endowments—schools like Williams (No. 36, \$1.52 billion), Pomona (No. 39, \$1.45 billion), Amherst (No. 40, \$1.38 billion), and Swarthmore (No. 48, \$1.24 billion). Because of our comparatively modest endowment, Oxy depends far more on tuition revenues—revenues that have never met the actual cost of the education we provide. Oxy's success in recruiting top students and faculty is all the more remarkable in light of the fact that we don't have as many endowed scholarships or professorships to offer. We are tremendously proud of our proven ability to perform "above our fighting weight," as the saying goes. But the lack of endowment ultimately tells, whether in the limits it places on the number of students we can support with need-based scholarships, our struggle to keep up with an estimated \$52 million worth of deferred maintenance (the cumulative product of

years of tight budgets), or in the way it limits our options when planning for the future.

The need to grow Occidental's endowment—a priority that occupies many of my waking hours—becomes even more urgent when one considers the positive impact of the endowed programs we do have at Oxy. Endowment supports our renowned undergraduate research program and makes it

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**We are fortunate that Oxy's history is filled with examples of a deeply felt culture of philanthropy.**

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possible for a small group of students to carry out their research around the world. Other endowed funds bring acclaimed performers and leading scholars to campus, and financially support the operation of everything from Herrick Chapel to the Glee Club. Endowment funds make possible professor Robby Moore's outstanding work at the Center for Teaching Excellence, enabling faculty to share hard-won insights on teaching and reflect on how students learn best.

Talented students and exceptional teaching are two of the traditions we will celebrate next year as we observe the 125th anniversary of Occidental's founding. Many of the College's most passionate and generous advocates are our alumni, who understand better than anyone the value of an Oxy education and of making that education available to others. In 1907, members of the Class of 1903 created an endowed scholarship to honor a



Photo by Marc Campos

beloved classmate—the Horace Cleland 1903 Scholarship, now Oxy's oldest. Inspired by a Founders Day program in 1929, an alumnus gave \$150,000 to the College endowment—the largest gift of its kind up to that time and one that pushed Oxy's endowment over the \$1-million mark. Through decades of faithful and patient labor, the members of the Occidental College Women's Club have created an endowed scholarship fund of more than \$1 million that supports up to four students each year. We are fortunate that Oxy's history is filled with such examples of a deeply felt culture of philanthropy.

When we celebrate Oxy's 125th birthday on Founders Day, April 20, 2012, we will be giving thanks for what more than a century of gifts have made possible—everything from the pennies and dimes collected during Oxy's first fundraising drive in the late 1890s to the multi-million-dollar endowment gifts we will be featuring throughout the coming year. Occidental quite literally is the creation of the generosity of alumni, parents, and friends. My job—and that of the entire Oxy community—is to ensure that we build on this foundation so that the resources at our command match the enduring promise of this extraordinary institution over the next 125 years.

Jonathan Veitch, *President*

## Letters

### The Tarzan of Swan

I lived at Swan Hall during spring semester as a freshman in 1960. We had some extraordinary people in that dorm, and it was a joy to remember them via your article “Evolution of Swan” (Summer).

My roommate was Joe Faust, who joined me in our split-level quarters with a living area in the front and a sleeping porch in the rear. Joe was soon to be a member of the U.S. Olympic Team in Rome, and he set up a high-jump bar in our front room at exactly 7 feet. It was his ambition to clear that mark, and almost every day he would spend minutes staring at that bar in order to become comfortable with its height. (He also carried all the essentials for a high-jump structure in his car so that he could practice his jumping on the spot whenever inspired.) Later that semester, he jumped 7<sup>1</sup>/<sub>4</sub>” to set a collegiate freshman record for the high jump at age 17.

He hung a climbing rope from our sleeping porch, which was always open to the elements, and climbed up and down the rope to strengthen his upper body. Joe would spot a group of Oxyites, leap onto the rope and, with a “whoop,” swing out like Tarzan and sail around overhead to the astonishment of everyone and the admiration of most.

I lost touch with him after graduation but love the memories of living in Swan with all those special people and Joe in particular.

**DAVID MOON '63**  
Berkeley

### Culture, Sex, Cards, and Swan

As a resident of Swan Hall in its last year as a full dorm (1959-60), there is some history that should be recognized. Most of this was instigated by the Swan Hall Culture, Sex, and Cards Society—a group of misfits who became doctors, attorneys, diplomats, financial leaders, and members of Monty Python.

Up until then the campus was basically unadorned. The SHCSCS hung unendorsed campus signs, such as “Spayed the Bulldogs” before the Redlands game.

Each Sunday night a “We’re Bitchin’” list was hung from the top of Freeman Union. The society member who did the artwork would climb up a drain pipe and unfurl the list of 69 endorsees for that week. This well-loved banner never stayed up very long.

There was the overnight campout in front of what was then the women’s gym. The playing of “Taps” every hour by a future YMCA director was seldom completed and never fully appreciated by other area residents.

On many evenings a small cannon, or “deck gun,” was brought out to recognize sundown with a volley of frozen tennis balls or oranges fired down the Quad toward the library. We could have thrown them farther.

Even today we can visit Oxy and look at Swan Hall with pride, knowing that we, the chosen few, were there for its finest hour—and the focus of the only campus “tie raid.”

**BOB WILLARD '60**  
(a frequent visitor to Dr. Coons’ office)  
West Simsbury, Conn.

### Abandonment Issues

I wish to register my deep disappointment at Occidental’s recent decision to discontinue teacher credentialing. Educators today face on a daily basis challenges unimaginable to most people. We face increasing poverty and multi-generational social decay—inexpressible levels of mental and physical violence (and resulting damage) inflicted upon children starting at conception. We face relentless, withering attacks from the media, the public, politicians, and profiteers. We face the reduction of all our efforts to a single standardized test, four bubbles often irrelevant or indistinguishable to the young victims of poverty and injustice we teach.

We face an ever-accelerating pace of dismantlement by profiteers who smell blood in the water and utilize the guise of “reform.” We face abandonment by our federal secretary of Education, an increasing number of governors, many state legislatures, and in some cases our local school boards. We face California ranking 47th nationally in education investment. We face demonization.

Service and community are two cornerstones of Occidental. I cannot imagine such commitments would fail to include children.

As alumni educators, Oxy and its education department are our parents. They inspired us to teach. They gave us our credentials. In the face of the dismantling of a public institution fundamental to a healthy democracy, it is heartbreaking to know we have now been abandoned even by our parents.

**RANDY TRAWEEK '81**  
Los Angeles

# OCCIDENTAL

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# Putting It *Together*



**ABOVE:** Freshmen Samantha Michel and Clark Scally sign the College's register prior to meeting President Veitch on August 30.

**BELOW:** Members of the Class of 2015 grab a photo opportunity before lining up for Opening Convocation on September 1.



**D**EPENDING ON THE OUTCOME of the NBA lockout, Kobe Bryant may or may not be suiting up for the Los Angeles Lakers this fall. But for a brief moment in time this summer, Bryant was in the applicant pool for the Occidental Class of 2015.

But before the Tiger Club faithful get their hoop dreams too high, this “Kobe Bryant” was imaginary—a test applicant dreamed up by a basketball fan in the Oxy admission office before the application process went live August 1. Thanks largely to the online Common Application—the widely used undergraduate college application, which Oxy adopted three years ago—the admission cycle is heavily front-loaded with applicants.

“More than 50 percent of our applications come in the first two weeks of the reading season,” says Sally Richmond, director of admission. “Our process has changed so much.”

For those of us who took the SAT back when 1600 was a perfect score—or when *U.S. News & World Report* was better known for its conservative editorial bent than its annual college rankings—the admission process has evolved considerably. While 10,000 visitors (prospective students and their families) take a tour of campus each year, for most interested applicants, the Internet offers them their first exposure to Oxy.

“Our front door is our website,” says President Jonathan Veitch, who has given the green light to an overhaul of [www.oxy.edu](http://www.oxy.edu), which is scheduled to be unveiled in conjunction with the College’s 125th-birthday celebration next year.

How does a staff of 10 tireless professionals sift through a pile of more than 6,100 applications to pick the 540 members of the Class of 2015? There’s lots of travel, plenty of reading—and no shortcuts

By **DICK ANDERSON** | Photos by **MARC CAMPOS**



## NUMERICALLY

**6,112** applied to Oxy  
**39%** were admitted  
**540** freshmen enrolled this fall

## DEMOGRAPHICALLY

**56%** are women  
**44%** are men  
**39%** are students of color  
**14%** are first-generation college students  
**10%** have Oxy ties

## GEOGRAPHICALLY

**46%** are from California  
**49%** are from the rest of the USA  
**5%** are international students

## ATHLETICALLY

**66%** played sports in high school  
**26%** captained or co-captained a team  
**9** received all-state honors  
**20** were three-sport athletes

## EXTRACURRICULARLY

**63%** participate in community service  
**16%** were involved in student government  
**10%** report an active spiritual life

## CREATIVELY

**28%** play an instrument or sing  
**19%** are involved in drama or theater  
**15%** worked on the school newspaper, yearbook, or literary magazine  
**9%** are painters, sculptors, illustrators, cartoonists, or filmmakers  
**8%** are dancers

Despite the College's investment in its online content and presentation, direct mail continues to be a priority for Occidental's admission efforts. But whereas Oxy used to produce a single informational viewbook every two or three years, since 2008 the College has published a slimmer brochure/newsletter that is "more colorful and less text heavy," Richmond says. *Tiger Tracks* is mailed to about 13,000 students up to four times over the course of their senior year of high school. (She adds that parents are more apt to read such materials, given the sizable investment they are making in college.)

With a staff of 10, Oxy recruits students in person in 24 states, Canada, and Mexico.

Through its association with the Council of International Schools, an Oxy admission officer treks across Asia each year on a three-week circuit of large college fairs and cities in China, Japan, Singapore, Vietnam, and Taiwan.

Granted, admission officers are unlikely to turn up in the likes of Grizzly Flats, Calif. (population 1,066), Calhan, Colo. (1,168), and Etna, N.H. (1,258). Yet all three towns are represented in the Class of 2015, which points up the importance of a student's contributions to his or her community.

"So many sorts of information" come into play when Occidental is evaluating an applicant, according to Richmond. "Academic performance is a common criterion, so when

you look at the life of the student outside the classroom, you look for someone who has followed their own path. Then it depends on what the rest of the pool looks like."

For the Class of 2015, the target range of enrolled students was between 535 and 550. "In order to enroll the appropriate size class, we need to do a more accurate job in predicting what the yield would be," says Vince Cuseo, vice president of admission and financial aid. For the first time in three years, the College went to the wait list. "We played it more conservatively this year," Cuseo adds, noting that the admit rate of 39 percent marked only the second time since 1948 that that number has fallen below 40 percent.

And while the College actively recruits the overwhelming majority of its applicant pool, about 15 percent of that number are “stealth” applicants. “They may feel like they are very familiar with Oxy,” Richmond speculates. “They had no reason to formalize that relationship with the College.”

Occidental has three separate deadlines for applications each year: October 15 for transfer students, November 15 for early-decision seniors, and January 10 for everyone else. Applicants and their families are encouraged not to rush things along. “There’s a reason that this process should last up to six months,” Richmond says.

After each application has been vetted by at least two readers, the field is sorted into three roughly equal categories: admitted, denied, and those meriting a closer look. It’s from the last group, Richmond says, where the shape of the class comes together—all in less than two weeks. “This, for me, is the most intellectually stimulating part of the



Following an Oxy Engage outing during Orientation week, these four freshmen get their first taste, perhaps, of the In-N-Out burger experience.

job,” Richmond says. “There’s very much a human component through the process.”

Coupled with a large number of families pouring through the admission office during their students’ spring break, the first half of March is “a frantic time of the year,” Cuseo admits. In making their final evaluations, admission staffers are in frequent contact with Oxy coaches with a promising recruit,

counselors at secondary schools with whom the College has longstanding relationships, and other constituents who have a stake in the outcome.

At the end of the day, “We do not negotiate decisions,” Richmond says. She cites the office’s “obligation to the faculty, and to the students themselves,” not to admit applicants who are not up to the intellectual demands of an Oxy education.

Once the deliberations are over and the decisions have been made, acceptance letters and informational packages go out by priority mail on the third Thursday in March. Wait-list and denial letters (which—hint, hint—are much thinner) go out regular first class.

Nobody said getting into Oxy was easy—especially with the number of applications more than doubling in the last decade or so. Which leaves one last frequently asked question: Do legacies have a leg up on the field? The answer is an affirmative yes: “We like to keep it in the family,” Richmond says. ▣

## Measuring Oxy: Unique, Balanced, Artistic, Strong, Diverse—and did we mention Happy?

Disneyland may be the Happiest Place on Earth®, but Occidental can claim to be one of the happiest colleges in the country—No. 7, if the latest *Newsweek/Daily Beast* rankings are to be heeded. (Among the contributing factors: 284 sunny days per year, and an “A” for housing.)

But a casual perusal of the latest editions of several major college guides—a field more

crowded than TV singing competitions—reveals a whole lot more to smile about. The granddaddy of the field, *U.S. News & World Report*, places Occidental in a three-way tie at No. 37 among the nation’s top liberal arts colleges, while high school counselors polled by *U.S. News* rank Oxy No. 36. *Washington Monthly*, meanwhile, slots the College way up at No. 19, citing its contributions to social mobility, research, and service.

*The Insider’s Guide to the Colleges* hails Oxy as one of a handful of colleges and universities with the strongest undergraduate focus. In other metrics, the *Fiske Guide to Colleges* bestows four-star academic and quality-of-life ratings on Oxy, while *Princeton Review’s The Best 376 Colleges* gives the financial aid office a 97 out of 100.

*U.S. News* ranks Occidental fourth in diversity among nationally ranked liberal arts colleges, behind Wellesley, Amherst, and Swarthmore. And as the *Insider’s Guide* points out: “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.”

The *Newsweek/Daily Beast* rankings list Oxy as one of the country’s top schools for “artistic students,” while Fiske singles out Oxy among small colleges and universities “strong” in film/television, drama, and international studies.

Even the avowedly conservative college guide produced by the Intercollegiate Studies Institute, *Choosing the Right College*, finds much to admire. It notes that “every department goes out of its way to provide undergraduates with the opportunity to collaborate with professors,” that Oxy has “an exceptionally good program in mathematics and the physical sciences,” and that religious studies offers a “balanced, comprehensive, and solid” course list. Self-identified conservative and libertarian alumni praise the College in its pages as well: “I would tell any high school student to consider Oxy if they were looking at a small liberal arts college in a big city,” one is quoted as saying.

While methodologies vary widely, Oxy’s urban approach to the liberal arts scores regardless of who’s counting. As the *Insider’s Guide* puts it, “It’s no surprise that people love Oxy.”



You can't fake this much glee.

# Back to School

Oxy discontinues its teacher credentialing program, prompting a review of its role in public education



iStockphoto

**A** critical—and in several areas, disputed—evaluation by a state accreditation team in June has led Occidental’s education department to drop, at least temporarily, its teacher credentialing and master’s programs. Because of a mandatory waiting period before it can reapply for accreditation, the department now has two years to explore its future direction.

Occidental’s credentialing program was granted accreditation “with probationary stipulations,” and given a year to resolve what the team identified as a number of areas in need of improvement. While the department does not agree with the team’s conclusion and is contesting a number of its findings, after discussions with President Jonathan Veitch and Dean Jorge Gonzalez the decision was made to withdraw from the accreditation process for the time being.

“Our faculty and students are outstanding, and our results—as reflected in how quickly our students are hired and the overall reputation of the program in the education community—bear this out,” Gonzalez says. “Unfortunately, for reasons we are still trying to understand, the team didn’t see that.”

After a May site visit, a four-member team representing the California Commission on Teacher Credentialing found that “the quality of candidates prepared by Occidental programs is generally high” and “faculty model best professional practices and scholarship,” but also identified a number of problems that it said need to be addressed.

“Accreditation has changed significantly since the last time we went through the process in 2000. It is far more complicated,” Gonzalez says. “The loss of a full-time faculty member and the complex logistics of

rolling out significant changes to our multiple- and single-subject programs made it more difficult to closely monitor all aspects of credentialing, particularly record-keeping.” The department currently has one tenured and two tenure-track faculty members.

The 16 students now enrolled in the College’s credential and master’s programs—including Noyce math/science NSF scholars—will continue their work over the coming year and are expected to graduate on schedule next spring. The 30 undergraduates with a minor in education will be unaffected by the change, as the minor program will continue to be offered.

Reaction from alumni to the decision to drop Oxy’s 89-year-old credentialing program was swift. Jill Asbjornsen ’76, president of Alumni of Occidental in Education, sent a letter to ALOED’s more than 3,000 members noting the group’s “deep sense of loss and regret” at the department’s withdrawal from

The decision to step back and take a look at the future direction of the education department comes at a time when the entire campus is in the midst of a strategic planning process that involves looking at the future of a wide range of campus programs and priorities (“Mission and Vision,” Fall 2010).

While the number of Oxy seniors who graduate with a minor in education has held relatively steady over the last decade, averaging 17 a year, the number of master’s students has declined, from 15 in 2004 to seven this last May. This is part of a larger historical pattern of enrollment ebbs and flows that today is tied to the ailing economy, which has led to major state budget cuts to education and the layoffs of thousands of public school teachers.

Among the possible options will be a single subject credential in math and science, “a program that matches our faculty strengths and is a field in which there is still

**ALOED president Jill Asbjornsen ’76 noted the group’s “deep sense of loss and regret” at the education department’s withdrawal from accreditation and called for an open and transparent review of the program’s future.**

accreditation and calling for an open and transparent review of the program’s future.

“We are grateful for ALOED’s willingness to work with the College and the department as we chart a course for the future,” said Gonzalez, who met with ALOED board members September 15. “We will be putting together a group this fall that draws on our alumni and faculty as well as faculty from other schools and policy experts to help us look at what role Occidental should continue to play in the field of education.”

a strong demand,” Gonzalez says. Another option is the creation of an interdisciplinary major in educational leadership and policy. Occidental has not offered a major in education since 1963, when state credentialing requirements changed.

“This represents a major step, and one that was not taken lightly,” says Gonzalez. “We’re going to move thoughtfully and deliberately, take a fresh look at everything, and keep all our options open.”

—JIM TRANQUADA



## Newsmakers

■ **Jacqueline Nguyen '87**, who two years ago became the first Vietnamese-American woman to serve as a federal judge, has been nominated by President Barack Obama '83 to a seat on the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Ninth Circuit. "Judge Nguyen has been a trailblazer, displaying an outstanding commitment to public service throughout her career," Obama said September 22. An English and comparative literary studies major at Oxy, Nguyen later went to UCLA Law School and was appointed a Los Angeles County Superior Court judge in 2002.

<http://www.oxy.edu/x11789.xml>

■ **From A (Arthe Anthony) to Z (Désirée Zamorano)**, at least two dozen faculty members are working on book projects that cover almost every conceivable subject. Anthony, professor of American studies, has finished *Picturing Black New Orleans: A Creole Photographer's View of the Early Twentieth Century*, for publication next year by University Press of Florida. Zamorano, director of the Community Literacy Center, is working on *Deadly Rage*, a sequel to her mystery *Human Cargo*, for Lucky Bat Books. <http://www.oxy.edu/x11719.xml>



■ **Jeremy Levine**, an Eagle Rock-based eco-architect, recently designed a shed for a large organic garden that is part of Oxy's environmental studies program. His design caught the eye of British shed enthusiast Uncle Wilco: "The shed functions as both a garden shed and as a working example of sustainable design and solar energy," Levine explains on Wilco's blog devoted to sheds.

<http://tinyurl.com/44o7vwy>



■ **Brooks Belter '11**, who posted a 1.45 ERA and held opposing batters to a .183 batting average as a relief pitcher for the Tigers last spring, was drafted in the 25th round of the Major League Baseball draft by the Tampa Bay Rays on June 7. The right-hander went 3-2 with a 3.58 ERA in 32 2/3 innings on the mound for the Class A Hudson Valley Renegades in Fiskill, N.Y., this summer, fanning 29 batters along the way.

<http://www.oxy.edu/x11394.xml>

## Catching Up With Jim Mora '57

# Tiny Pitchman, and Goodwill Ambassador

JIM MORA '57 GOES FROM A LARGER-THAN-LIFE COACH to a pocket-size man hanging from a ceiling fan in a new Coors Light commercial that began airing during NFL games this fall, but what he really wants to talk about is the big trip he took this summer to visit U.S. troops in Kuwait and Iraq. Mora and three other current and former NFL coaches (including his son, Jim Jr.) spent five days touring bases, eating with soldiers, signing autographs, and taking photos.

"It was a good trip, a great experience. I'd do it again," says the former Marine, who suits up these days as a studio analyst for the NFL Network. "I've always had an allegiance to the military and an interest in what these guys do. The troops were great. They spent all their time thanking us for coming over there. I told them we should be thanking them. We'd just grab a table and start shooting the bull with them, women and men."

Getting back to his unlikely endorsement career, the new ad is Mora's second commercial for Coors Light, following the still-popular 2006 "Playoffs?" spot that incorporated footage from



**LEFT:** Mora offers up some impromptu coaching for a Coors Light consumer in a new TV ad. **ABOVE:** Mora poses with Marines during a recent visit to Iraq.

Mora's infamous post-game press conference rant following his Indianapolis Colts' loss in November 2001 to the San Francisco 49ers. This one, however, required some acting on Mora's part.

As Mora describes the spot, "These guys are having a party watching the game, and they're drinking Coors beer. And this one guy says he needs some coaching, and I pop out of his pocket and do some coaching." Shooting in West Hollywood, "It was fun."

Mora says he has received some ribbing from friends about his shrunken stature in the commercial: "Couple of people have asked me, 'How'd you get down from the fan?' I'm a little guy in it. It's not my normal size. I'm little." —SAMANTHA B. BONAR '90

Photo credits: Iraq courtesy Jim Mora '57; Coors Light courtesy Drafftcb; shed courtesy Jeremy Levine Design; Belter by Kirby Lee

## Notable/Quotable

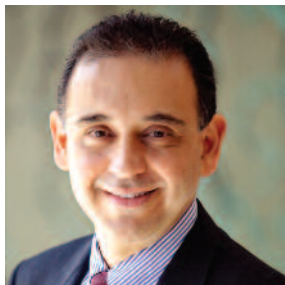


Photo by Alicia Wagner Calzada

**“When studying Latin America, it is imperative to include the millions of Latinos living inside the United States.”**  
—Dean Jorge Gonzalez

*discussing the addition of an interdisciplinary Latino/a and Latin American studies major next fall: “Our goal is to become the destination of choice for any student who wants to study these subjects at a liberal arts college.”*

<http://www.oxy.edu/x11452.xml>

**“I hope we become a typical Disney villain.”**  
—Ty Cobb '14

*Occidental basketball player (and namesake great-grandson of the baseball legend), on the news that Ben Stiller and his production company intend to make a feature film documenting the Caltech hoops team's 26-year SCIAC losing streak. That streak ended last February with a 46-45 win over Oxy.*

<http://www.oxyweekly.com>

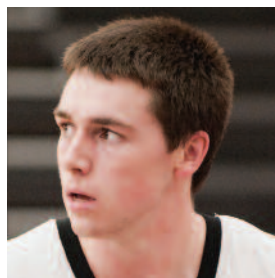


Photo by Dennis Davis

**“I feel like doing something proactive is the best way to remember the day. You know what they say: Think globally, act locally.”**  
—Nathan Landay '15

*freshman from Chicago, on lending a hand to campus beautification projects at nearby Franklin and Eagle Rock high schools on the eve of the 10th anniversary of 9/11. L.A. Remembers coordinated the citywide effort.*

<http://www.oxy.edu/x11750.xml>

**“I drove my little sister to her 25th reunion at Oxy this summer, and just buying the Quidditch T-shirt didn't seem like enough.”**  
—Anonymous

*an unidentified Oxy alum (or at least we think so), responding to an online question of why he or she gave to the College in the 2010-2011 fiscal year.*

<http://www.oxy.edu/x11491.xml>



Cobb, Quidditch photos by Marc Campos

## Flashback (1915): Ring Around the Rosie With President Baer



Photo courtesy Occidental College Special Collections

With Oxy's 125th birthday looming, we're feeling a bit nostalgic—which brings us to this image of John Willis Baer (*foreground, second from right*) and an eager group of gamers at the annual College picnic. (Hey, if President Veitch can engage in water-balloon battles at Commencement rehearsal these days, who are we to judge?)

## Bookshelf

■ **College Admission: From Application to Acceptance, Step by Step**, by Robin Mamlet '82 and Christine VanDeVelde (*Three Rivers Press*; \$19.99). From visits and interviews to early admission and financial aid, *College Admission* draws upon the collective wisdom of more than 50 deans of admission and other higher education experts. Mamlet leads the admission and enrollment practice for executive search firm Witt/Kieffer. She lives in Swarthmore, Pa.

■ **Advanced Berkonometrics**, by Dave Berkus '62 ([www.berkus.com](http://www.berkus.com); \$30), is a new volume of 101 business insights for management and boards of companies of all sizes, drawing on Berkus' 50-plus years of entrepreneurial, management, and corporate board experience.

■ **The Hot Knives Vegetarian Cookbook: Salad Daze**, by Alex Brown '04 and Evan George '04 (*Mark Batty Publisher*; \$25). With the same lust for vegetables, craft beer, and experimental music that fuels their popular blog ([urbanhonking.com/hotknives](http://urbanhonking.com/hotknives)), Brown and George destroy existing notions about boring vegetarian cooking with recipes from blood sausages to coco panna cotta. Brown is general manager for Gourmet Imports in Los Angeles. George is a food and beverage journalist and lives in Los Angeles.

■ **Eagle Rock, 1911-2011**, by Eric H. Warren '69 (*Images of America*; \$21.99). Drawing from the vast archive of the Eagle Rock Valley Historical Society as well as the College's Special Collections, Warren examines the growth of his longtime home from an open farming community populated by a few hundred souls into a busy and diverse neighborhood of Los Angeles.

■ **The Internet Book of Life**, by Irene (Brandenburg) McDermott '81 (*Information Today*; \$19.95), offers a handy guide to websites, blogs, online tools, and mobile apps designed to help real people and families answer important questions, make better decisions, and live fuller, happier lives. McDermott is a writer and librarian in California.

# TODAY THE WORLD, TOMORROW OCCIDENTAL

BY ANDY FAUGHT

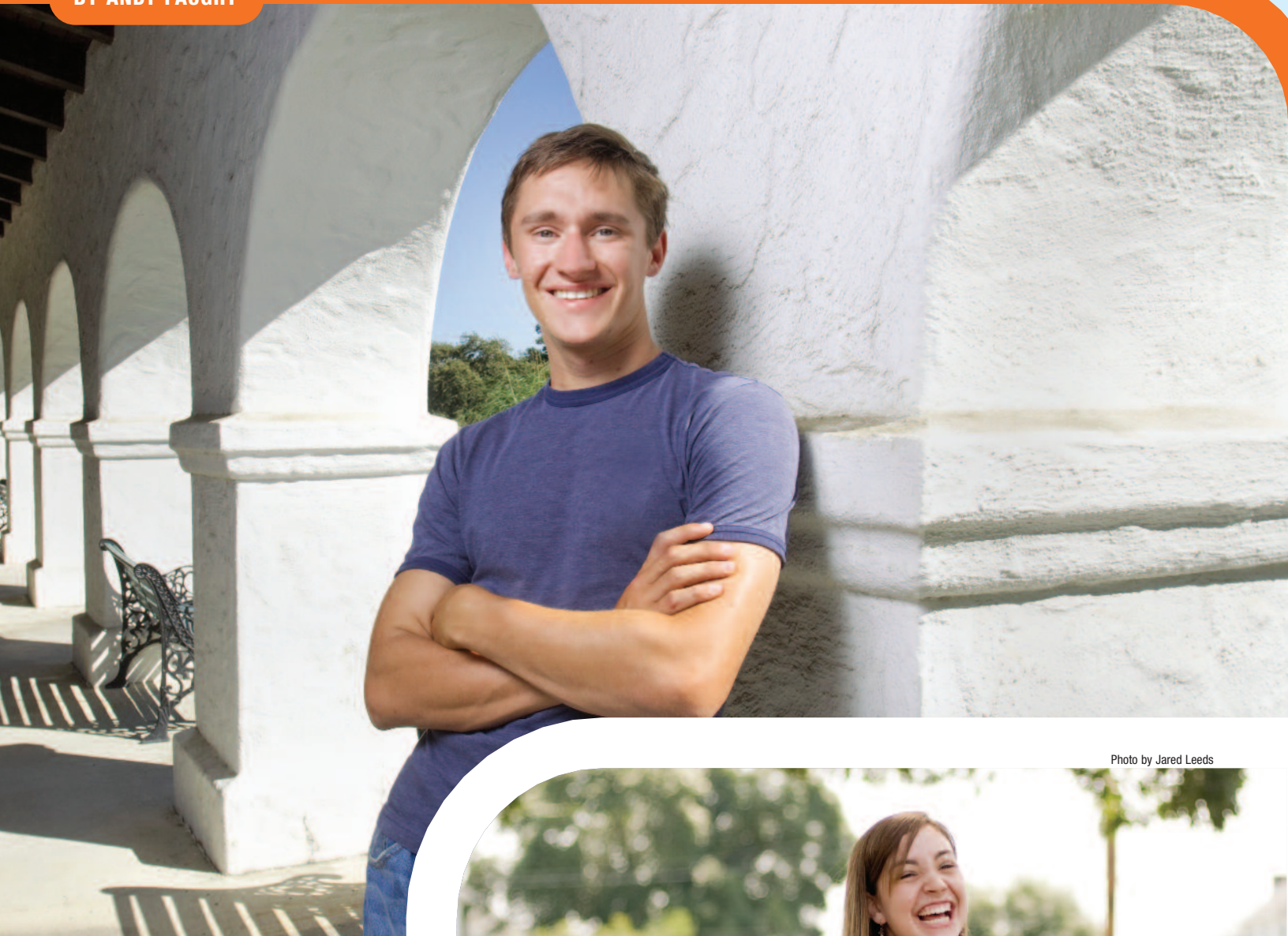


Photo by Jim Block

Photo by Jared Leeds



Gap-year students prolong the journey from high school to college with a **spirit of adventure** and a better understanding of themselves



**RYAN HAMMILL**

**Danville, Calif. / France**  
**Prospective major?** Social sciences or the humanities.  
**Any souvenirs from your gap-year travels?** Pictures from Taizé with contact information for the boys I lived with—my Taiwanese friend wrote his address for me in Mandarin Chinese characters.

**R**YAN HAMMILL was sporting shoulder-length dreadlocks when he received his diploma from San Ramon Valley High School in Danville in June 2010. But when he took a detour en route to Occidental to live among monks in Taizé, France, those accouterments came off.

For five months at the Christian Monastery in Taizé, Hammill helped the brothers sell pottery, books, and music to visitors, in addition to cooking and cleaning in what amounted to highly regimented days. “It was incredibly life changing,” he says, and a sharp contrast to the disjointed lifestyle he’d come to know in the suburban Bay Area.

“I’m not some keen social observer, but it’s pretty evident that people are trying to return to the idea of living with more simplicity and put more of an emphasis on community,” Hammill says. “It really blew me away to see those ideas lived out. I connected with a vision for a different kind of life—not necessarily in a monastery, but a life with different priorities.”

The experience strengthened his relationship with God and made Hammill think deeply about his future. “I had to make a serious choice to leave the monastery and realize what I was coming back to, and that is a college campus that is a little more communal and simple than the suburbs, which I’m excited for and welcoming of.”

Hammill is one of 14 members of Oxy’s Class of 2015 who deferred enrollment by a year (or two, in at least one case) to pack their bags for points beyond in search of adventure, self-examination, and a break from the books. The “gap year,” as admission professionals call it, is taken by relatively few. But gap students say they are better prepared for college because of the maturity and insights they gained during their layoff.

Gap-year experiences often complement the College’s mission to provide a total educational experience of the highest quality, says Vince Cuseo, vice president and dean of admission and financial aid. “Oxy’s approach to a liberal arts education—emphasizing participation through hands-on research and field experiences locally and abroad—fits well with the options gap students often consider,” he says.

Hammill, who chose Occidental because of its urban setting and liberal arts focus, first considered taking a gap year as a high school sophomore. “I’m not sure what the underlying motivation was other than going on some crazy adventure,” he admits. After returning from France in June, he went to work for a landscape gardening business in Danville. Many of his co-workers were undocumented immigrants who recounted their stories of crossing the border. “It was an assault on my feelings of entitlement,” he says. “There are so many things that I think I’m entitled to, and I realize there are lots of people who have never even dreamed of getting a scholarship to go to a private college.”

A Margaret Bundy Scott Scholar entering Oxy, Hammill is already involved with InterVarsity Christian Fellowship, and he also hopes to spend part of his college experience taking stands against government policies that can be viewed as hostile to immigrants. A high school buddy, Colin Redemer, says the gap year helped define Hammill’s purpose: “Ryan, and students like him, will enter college knowing why they were created, and they will leave equipped to transform the world.”

OVER THE LAST FIVE YEARS, roughly 2.5 percent to 3 percent of each entering class at Occidental is made up of gap-year students—more than twice the national average of 1.2 percent, according to a 2010 study by UCLA’s Higher Education Research Institute. (Next year’s entering class is expected to continue this trend, as 15 students who were accepted at Oxy this spring have deferred their enrollment to fall 2012.)

“Oxy exceeds the national average, perhaps in part because we accommodate and encourage substantive gap-year requests,” Cuseo says. Some of the nation’s most prestigious universities—Harvard, Princeton, and New York University among them—also encourage gap years and even partner with international organizations that provide service opportunities for students.

When LIZA COMART decided to take a gap year before enrolling at Oxy, reaction among her friends and family was mixed. “A lot of people couldn’t get why I’d leave the United States—a developed country where I could be clean and well fed,” she says. “It’s a lack of understanding. I didn’t blame people. Most difficult is my parents’ generation. I think people my age are more used to the idea of the gap year.”



**LIZA COMART**

**West Roxbury, Mass. / Guatemala**  
**Prospective major?** Cognitive science. **Extracurricular interests?** I intend to audition for the improvisation club. I am also starting tai chi, which confuses my friends back home!  
**Any souvenirs from your gap-year travels?** Physically, I have brought the gifts I was given by my students and friends in Guatemala. Culturally, I have brought a perspective that has helped me engage with others in a more profound manner.

As a junior at Concord Academy in suburban Boston, Comart took part in CITYterm, a semester-long program in which students research an assigned neighborhood by talking to residents and collecting their own data. She and her classmates were sent to Astoria, N.Y., a neighborhood in the Queens borough of New York City that is home to the largest number of ethnic Greeks outside of Greece.

"It taught me a lot about experiential learning, which I fell for," Comart says. "I didn't realize how valuable it was and I didn't realize how much I could get that wasn't in books or studying. You get a feel for a place that you can't get from any other source."

She applied the same ethnographic methodology to her gap year, during which she traveled to Guatemala City. There she worked with Safe Passage, a nonprofit group that provides schooling and work opportunities to children who live in and scavenge recyclables from one of the city's largest garbage dumps.

The experience offered insights both humbling and revealing. "Part of it is seeing that humans are humans no matter where they are," she says. "There's a common element among us, no matter where we're

living. Any one of us could be living in the Guatemala City dump. After the first month or two, I didn't pity these kids at all. I was admiring their valiance and vivacious attitudes, despite their hardships."

"Liza has always been good at fearlessly jumping into unfamiliar situations," says Razina Aziz-Bose, a classmate from the Concord Academy. Comart chose Oxy in large part because of the cultural and charitable activities available to students: "It seems like a wonderful place to explore new interests."

Now that she's in college mode, Comart is eager to broaden her experiences in other ways. "I got really good advice from someone: They said try something weird. I definitely want to get there and try something I haven't tried, something like roller derby or learning sign language. I'm a little nervous for starting classes again and having homework, but I think I'll be fine."

**ALEXANDER PARKER-GUERRERO'S** gap year happened by accident. He'd accepted admission at UC Davis over Occidental, but then had a last-minute change of heart. "I contacted Oxy and asked if they still had a spot," he says. But the College was over-

enrolled, and admission officers offered him a slot for the Class of 2015. "It opened this huge world of possibilities," he says.

The Oakland resident immediately solicited advice from former high school teachers. His Spanish teacher said she knew of a couple in her hometown of Bilbao, Spain, who needed an au pair for their 13-year-old son. "All I had to do was pay for a plane ticket there," Parker-Guerrero recalls. "I had taken four years of Spanish, but I wasn't fluent. I'd never gone to a Spanish-speaking country to practice the language. Now I'm pretty close to being fluent."

When he wasn't serving as a caretaker, Parker-Guerrero traveled the Basque country and took Spanish classes with students representing 13 nationalities. "It was important for me to see people who were out of their element," he says. "Living in a different country where you don't speak the language was always a terrifying prospect."

It turned out to be anything but. Parker-Guerrero wrote a blog about his experiences and kept in touch with Victoria Parraga, the College Preparatory School teacher who suggested he go to Spain. "His year off has given him a true life experience outside the four walls of a classroom," Parraga says. "He is going to be able to deal better with all the good and the bad that is thrown at him. He has been places, he has known people, he has had to deal with situations that other kids in his classes will not have experienced."

The unexpected layoff proved fortuitous in other ways. "I felt really burned out after high school, and college applications were a stressful experience," Parker-Guerrero says. "Now, more than ever, I feel fresh and excited and determined to learn."

Photo by Jim Block



**ALEXANDER PARKER-GUERRERO**  
**Oakland, Calif./Spain**  
**Prospective major?** Environmental biology. **First impressions of Oxy?** I love it. My classes, teachers, and peers are all great. I think I'm going to learn a lot about myself and the world at Occidental.  
**Extracurricular activities?** Baseball, Photography Club.  
**Any souvenirs from your gap-year travels?** I brought my Athletic Club de Bilbao soccer jersey!

**Rueter's advice to high school seniors? "If you're already thinking about a gap year, take a chance and give it a shot—it may turn out to be the best experience of your life."**



Photo by Marc Campos; Africa photo by Johanna Pecarsky

**EMILY RUETER**

**Arcadia, Calif./Rwanda, Japan**

**Prospective major?** Kinesiology.

**First impressions of Oxy?** Friendly faces, small classes, sunshine.

**Extracurricular interests?** I hope to try out for soccer, play intramural sports, and join several clubs.

**Any souvenirs from your gap-year travels?** Some African batiks and jewelry; Japanese stationery; a ton of pictures and handwritten notes.



schools to teach older students to be role models for younger children. This in a land where ethnic factions claimed 800,000 lives in the 1994 genocide.

"It definitely impacted me. I really felt empowered and I had the potential to do big things and make a difference, even if it's holding a kid's hand," Rueter says of the trip, which she took in February 2010. "It was a perspective change on myself. I never looked at myself like I could make such a big difference to people, but you could really tell. So many people were in tears when we left."

In February 2011, Rueter took part in a NextGen program in Tokyo and Okayama, Japan, where she co-hosted leadership workshops to help young adults discover their leadership potential.

The experiences, she says, aren't something she could have gained had she enrolled in college directly out of high school. "I'm much more aware of myself and what I can offer the world." Still, some friends thought she was "crazy" and ribbed her about trying to "save the world."

"The jokes weren't mean, and it didn't really bother me," Rueter says. "My parents

Parker-Guerrero, who is considering majoring in biology, ultimately opted for Occidental over UC Davis after his high school counselor suggested it was a better fit. He wanted a college with small class sizes and the opportunity to know professors. It didn't hurt that three of his friends from high school—Sean Curran, Nick Gallagher, and Lisa Gilliland, all Class of 2014—are attending Oxy.

Now that he's finally in Eagle Rock, "I'm really excited to grow intellectually," Parker-Guerrero says. "That's the thing I want to do most—let my mind grow. I want to learn and figure out what I'm interested in."

A plan was born after **EMILY RUETER'S** brother, Jesse—now 26 and an admissions officer at USC—spent a gap year in Honduras. "He inspired me to do the same," says Emily, a Trustee Scholar from Arcadia who took two years off to travel to Africa and Japan. "I saw how much he'd gained from it. It was a transformational experience for him."

She joined the NextGen Leadership Academy, a faith-based international leadership-training program based in Rwanda. One of Emily's friends had already taken part in the month-long program and spoke highly of it. Participants learn public speaking and leadership skills, while also visiting

were supportive of me, and there was never any second-guessing. But now I feel like I'm going to college with a bigger purpose and higher direction. I have a much broader perspective on the world and who I am."

Says mother Sheri Rueter: "Our family has been deeply touched by Emily's experiences. Her relationships with us—her parents—and with her brothers have become far more honest and real. I had reservations when Emily announced her decision to defer for a second year, but I was impressed by her personal initiative to convince us, and to convince the admission office at Oxy that a second year at NGA would be valuable."

Rueter was drawn to Oxy because of its size and the opportunities she'll have to get to know her professors, but there's another reason: "I like being kind of close to home, but not so close that my mom will show up." She hopes to get involved in student government and service activities—interests that in no small part can be traced to Rwanda. "I definitely learned that I like giving back," Rueter says. "I want to make a difference wherever I am."

**GEORGE COPELAND'S** gap year was nearly over as soon as it started. Traveling a Brazilian tributary of the Amazon River in September 2010, Copeland's canoe was snapped in half after being sucked into a whirlpool. He and his boat mate were dragged under the rapids before resurfacing 20 feet downriver.

"It was pretty harrowing," says Copeland, who was taking part in the National Outdoor Leadership School, a nonprofit program that teaches outdoor skills, leadership and environmental ethics. Fortunately for Copeland, "we weren't in an area with caimans or anacondas. We were also in open water where there weren't piranhas. It was obviously something to keep an eye on, but NOLS prepared us pretty well."

Copeland, of Oakton, Va., has always loved to travel and watched his cousins take gap years. He enrolled in NOLS more for adventure than self-growth, but soon discovered the 375-mile expedition required regular self-examination. "Many of my flaws were laid bare," he says. "It's an experience to be in the jungle cooking food and being

self-reliant. You start noticing things about yourself you need to work on."

From Brazil he went to South Africa, the country that, when he traveled there in the fourth grade, gave genesis to his gap year. In Africa, Copeland took part in the Entabeni Nature Guide Training School, where he learned to lead safaris.

High school geometry teacher Rick Stubbs says he voiced "enthusiastic support" for Copeland "and my usual 'I wish more people would consider such an option.'" The pair kept in touch via email and "I got no sense that George approached any day with anything other than enthusiasm and excitement," says Stubbs. "While I don't think that gaining in self-confidence was George's primary goal as he undertook these gap-year experiences, he certainly achieved that during his time away."

Copeland says he never had any doubts about enrolling in college. His family supported the year off and "I got a lot of jealous remarks from guys my own age." Copeland chose Oxy because of his fascination with the West. His first visit to Oxy was also his

Photo by Dennis Drenner



**GEORGE COPELAND**

**Oakton, Va./Brazil, South Africa**

**Prospective major?** Undecided.

**First impressions of Oxy?** It's a welcoming community, and I am happy to be a part of it.

**Extracurricular interests?**

I plan on trying the Outdoors Club and Ultimate Frisbee.

**Any souvenirs from your gap-year travels?** I have a sign warning against dangerous animals from my reserve in South Africa on my wall.

“During my gap year I really discovered what I want to do with my life,” Noon says. “I learned a lot and grew a lot.”



Photo by Glenn Cratty

#### ELIZABETH NOON

**Fort Collins, Colo./Peru**  
**Prospective major?** Politics, with a minor in Spanish.  
**First impressions of Oxy?** All of my teachers seem very supportive and really knowledgeable about their topics. The other students are very friendly and seem really happy at Oxy.  
**Any souvenirs from your gap-year travels?** I brought a hat from Peru to Oxy with me—but I don't think I will be needing it.



first time in California. “It was really the vibe there that got me,” he recalls. “Everyone was very welcoming. I felt at home.”

He's considering majoring in life sciences, but beyond that—like any explorer—Copeland doesn't have any preconceptions about what he hopes to accomplish in college. “I really do need to get out to Oxy and figure it out for myself. I want to try things and see what's right for me.”

It didn't take long for **ELIZABETH NOON'S** parents to get behind their daughter's plans to postpone college in favor of exploring the Peruvian Amazon and traipsing Incan ruins. Her father Barry, an ecology professor at Colorado State University, had already seen firsthand the impact of such journeys. “All of his best students have taken a year off,” Noon says. “They were better prepared and more mature, so he was really supportive of me.”

The Fort Collins, Colo., resident expects much the same of herself when she sets out on new explorations at Oxy. “I thought it was a good idea to learn more about the world and kind of get a break from academics,” she says, adding that the trip gave her one other

particularly valuable insight. “It was my first time on my own, and I fell right into it. I was surprised how easy it was to adjust to living in Peru.”

Her next port of call is Eagle Rock, where “I just hope to learn a lot and make some good friends and connections with the school and the L.A. community.” Noon chose Occidental because of its sunny climes (“I don't like Colorado winters very much”) and, upon visiting campus, “we all really liked the tour guide.” She also was drawn to join boyfriend Griffin Mead '14, who likewise hails from Fort Collins. Noon plans to major in politics and pursue a minor in Spanish. She says there never was any doubt she'd enroll in college after her break, particularly given her experiences abroad. “I saw the importance of being educated,” she says. “That's really how you succeed. I'm ready to start learning again.”

Noon spent seven months in Peru, where she helped teach at a primary school. On the advice of a family friend, she chose the country so she could hone her Spanish skills. In Cuzco, Noon took language classes at the Academia Latinoamericana de Español. In her

free time, she often hiked, including the Inca Trail leading to the Machu Picchu ruins.

Mother Paige Noon joined her daughter for her last two weeks in the country and was impressed by her daughter's ability to communicate with people and navigate on her own. Elizabeth didn't travel to Peru with an organization. “She had to make all of her own decisions and find her own place to live and volunteer,” Paige says. “As a parent you want to prepare your kids to be independent. She did what I had hoped.”

Noon was particularly struck by the people she met, who emboldened her commitment to compassion and justice—traits nurtured by her mother. Thanks to her gap year experience, “I learned that everyone around the world has similar hopes, dreams, and desires,” she says. “We all want the same things for ourselves and our families.”

Freelance writer Andy Faught lives in Fresno. He wrote “Watching the Wheels” in the Spring issue.



A woman with short brown hair, smiling, stands in a brightly lit hallway. She is wearing a dark blue, short-sleeved, button-down dress and tan high-heeled sandals. The hallway has large windows on the left and a polished floor with a decorative border. The background is slightly blurred, showing the perspective of the hallway.

Assistant professor  
**Kristi Upson-Saia**  
has her own designs on  
the study of Christianity—  
and students are  
flocking to her classes

# Making Religion Fashionable

By COLLEEN SHARKEY  
Photos by MARC CAMPOS

**C**AN'T READ THAT? WELL, KRISTI Upson-Saia can. An assistant professor of religious studies entering her sixth year at Oxy, she's one of only a handful of scholars in the United States who can read and translate Syriac, an Aramaic language that was spoken throughout much of the Middle East in the first several centuries C.E. She learned the ancient dialect as a graduate student at Duke University under professor Lucas Van Rompay, a specialist in Eastern Christianity. "He taught me the language that opened the door to ancient texts—and thus also communities of early Christians—that others can't access," she says.

With an engaging demeanor, effervescent smile, and fondness for ancient languages, Upson-Saia marries her passion for arcane subject matter with a talent for nurturing eager undergraduate thinkers. "How many people in this room are reading this text in Greek?" she asks her students by way of introduction to Religious Studies 175, *World of the New Testament*. She urges them to bring an open mind to the subject ("Christianity is much bigger than you think it is; it's wilder and woollier") and explains that reading the text is not enough ("I want you to imbibe the world"). Her classes consistently have a wait list—one course inspired a Facebook fan page—and Upson-Saia was co-recipient of the Donald R. Loftsgordon Memorial Award for Outstanding Teaching by a vote of the graduating Class of 2011 last spring.

"Kristi's a powerhouse of energy," says Dale Wright, David B. and Mary H. Gamble Professor in Religion and a faculty member since 1980. "As a colleague she's invaluable; she's hard-working, thoughtful, and intelligent. Students respond very well to her, and part of the popularity of the religious studies major can be attributed to her being here."

"Education is her passion, and she is very much in love with her career choice—which inspires me to search for work that will fulfill my interests and passions," says Natalie Monterrosa '11, one of 14 religious studies majors who graduated from Oxy in May—the highest number since 2005. "With her

guidance, I built up confidence in my writing and in how I present myself to the world." Monterrosa, who currently works in the recruiting department at a San Francisco tech company, calls Upson-Saia "a great example of what it takes to be a leading academic in what is still to this day a male-driven profession—truly an all-around inspiring woman."

According to a 2010 *Newsweek* article, the number of bachelor's degrees conferred upon graduates in philosophy or religious studies has doubled since the 1970s to nearly 12,000 a year, and has been rising steadily since 9/11. "When you study religion, you study phenomena that are significant not only to believers but to non-religious people too," Upson-Saia says. "Ideas about Islam in politics and the media function to shape public perceptions, bolster policies, and condition our interactions with Muslims domestically and abroad even if they aren't accurate or don't offer the complete picture. Since religion is inextricably bound to nationality, politics, and pop culture, we are taking part in religion whether we are aware of it or not."

clergy and laymen in 1887 (its affiliation with the church ended in 1910), the religious studies department became one of the first to take the Bible out of the pew and into the classroom for critical study.

"In the 1960s, religious studies was being accepted as a regular academic field—not to encourage religiosity but to study the role of it in people's lives," Wright notes. "Oxy was ahead of the curve in this. When the College began to be interested in diversifying its faculty and student body, it made sense in keeping with the tradition of the progressive Presbyterian Church that promoted openness toward the study of new religions and disciplines and inclusion of everyone. All of that made sense in the trajectory. We're still involved in trying to project ahead and stay ahead of development in the academic world and society as a whole."

Whether it's a Core Studies seminar for freshmen or an upper-level course such as *Death, Dying, and Afterlife in the Ancient Mediterranean*, Upson-Saia's classes take into account religion's enmeshment with culture,



With young faculty members such as Upson-Saia, "people can see that the College generationally is in good hands," says President Jonathan Veitch.

Upson-Saia differentiates her role from a Biblical studies position by noting that her academic appointment and her research cover a broader history of ancient Mediterranean religion. She was drawn to Oxy's religious studies department she says, because "my predecessors were doing what I was doing long before it was in fashion." While Oxy was founded by Presbyterian

politics, class, gender, and power—especially the nuances that shatter the notion that everything is black and white. "A lot of what we are trying to do here is to muddle these boundaries," she says. "I want students to realize that the world is complex and layered and, while that might be uncomfortable, the advantage of education is to get beyond those rigid ways of thinking."



**“My principal goal is to help students build the skills to see the world in a more sophisticated, deep, and complex way,” Upson-Saia says.**

needs to circle around the source at hand—analyzing it from many different angles—in order to begin to understand and comment upon it in a sophisticated way.”

“Professor Upson-Saia challenged me to my core,” says Emme Haiken ’08, a politics major and religious studies minor at Oxy who is now in a clinical psychology graduate program at Antioch University Los Angeles. “She knows so much and is so enthusiastic about the topics that it’s contagious. My friends and I wanted to do our personal best—not only because it was required, but because it was what she brought to the class.”

As an undergraduate sociology and history major at the University of Washington, Upson-Saia initially intended to pursue the study of American religion. “Then I took Latin and Greek,” she says, “and I fell in love with the Roman world. So language was kind of my entree into this set of literature.” She went on to receive a master’s in divinity from Princeton Theological Seminary (where she met her husband of 11 years, Steve, an artist) and her Ph.D at Duke before coming to Oxy.

With a long academic career still ahead of her, Upson-Saia hopes eventually to branch out into administration: “I love to think about things like institutional mission, curriculum, and long-range planning,” (To create more opportunities for collegial interaction, in 2006 she formed the Faculty Research Working Group where Oxy professors can discuss works in progress, get feedback, and find opportunities for collaborative work.) But students are where her heart is at, and it shows in her mentoring.

“I love teaching classes but, more than anything, I really love to spend time—sustained time—with students as they’re growing, offering them challenges at the right time. That’s why I’m doing what I’m doing, because that’s what I had; my mentors knew precisely what I needed and when. Many of my Oxy students start out bright, but I see it as my task that they end up brilliant. It’s such a privilege to watch students become deep thinkers who know who they are and to watch them excel.” □

*Colleen Sharkey is a freelance writer living in Los Angeles.*

That knowledge laid the foundation for her study of the cultural ramifications of late ancient Roman clothing, which culminated in the publication of *Early Christian Dress: Gender, Virtue, and Authority* (Routledge) last spring. In the 186-page tome, Upson-Saia reveals it was ancient Romans who set fashion on a course it still follows—that fashion is thought to be frivolous and shallow and is largely associated with women. As the Roman Empire began to dominate the Mediterranean world, its armies returned to Rome with the spoils of war, including exotic gems, fabrics, and adornments. Soon, though, Roman leaders faced a dilemma: How could they show off these goods as symbols of Rome’s preeminence throughout the Mediterranean while maintaining a stance of moderation and moral superiority?

Their solution was to dress Roman women in extravagant dresses and jewelry made of these goods. In so doing, their clothing could signify the Romans’ superiority over foreigners, while simultaneously signaling women’s inferiority to more pious, moderately dressed Roman men. In this moment, women and clothing became intimately associated. “It was through clothing that Romans constructed differences of culture as well as differences of gender,” Upson-Saia says. “This is when fashion became feminized and connected to notions of luxury, wastefulness, and frivolity that are still with us today.”

Carly Daniel-Hughes, an assistant professor of religious studies at Concordia University in Montreal and author of the forthcoming *The Salvation of the Flesh in Tertullian of Carthage: Dressing for the*

*Resurrection*, calls Upson-Saia’s research “innovative and theoretically sophisticated.” Their overlapping interests have led to revelations and shared insights into ancient religions that have enormous relevance to modern religious and societal issues. “Our individual studies suggest that bodily practices—such as dressing, eating and cooking, praying, or adorning the home—maintain and shape religious identities and communities,” Daniel-Hughes says.

In her second year at Oxy, Upson-Saia received the 2008 Best First Article Prize from the North American Patristics Society. (Patristics is the study of the history and theology of early Christianity.) She continues to apply her signature doggedness to her own research, which is now focused on how wounds and scars were interpreted as signs of identity by Romans and early Christians.

Her dedication to scholarship inspires her students to follow suit. “She’s one of the most demanding, organized, and honest professors at Oxy,” says religious studies major Robert Riccardi ’11, who is coaching youth soccer in the Bay Area and guest-teaching some religious studies classes at his high school alma mater while applying for graduate school in Eastern classical literature. “One of the most interesting things I learned from her is how to think better.”

Upson-Saia encourages her students to talk about the readings with a classmate, roommate, or friend in preparation for the material’s discussion in class. “I want students to grasp how any single topic or issue or text is informed by many domains of society and that a careful reader/thinker

Collins in action for the Tigers as a senior in 2006. Oxy players are wearing "AC #1" helmet stickers this season in his memory.



# 1 NUMBER

"Superman"  
Andy Collins '07  
rewrote the Oxy  
record books over three  
unforgettable seasons.  
But the late, great  
quarterback made his  
most lasting impact  
on his teammates  
off the field

BY DICK ANDERSON  
PHOTOS BY KIRBY LEE

**W**HEN ANDY COLLINS '07 ARRIVED AT OCCIDENTAL FOR FOOTBALL practice in August 2004, he was driving an old green Ford Explorer "that he pretty much lived in," according to his pal Mike Libby '06. The vehicle ran differently than most: "In order to start the engine you had to hold down the passenger-side unlock button for a couple seconds," he recalls. "The first time I got in, Andy just reached over, held down the button like it was completely normal, and then started the engine."

Libby asked Collins, "How in the world did you figure out that holding down the passenger-side unlock button would allow you to start the engine?" His answer—"I just figured it out"—"perfectly represents who Andy was and what he stood for," Libby says. "Andy had an uncanny ability of just making things work, whether it was life, football, or his car."

The SCIAC's only three-time Offensive Player of the Year, Collins died of a heart attack August 2 in Fort Lauderdale, Fla., only

10 days after his marriage to Brooke Olzendam, a college football reporter for CBS. (A preliminary autopsy revealed he had an undiagnosed condition where the arteries near his heart were smaller than normal.) His untimely passing at age 27 leaves a void in the hearts of family, friends, fans, and the Oxy community.

"In my opinion, Andy was the most dominant player in my 30 years of coaching

football in our conference," says head coach Dale Widolff. "Much more importantly, he was a man who lived a life of great character and integrity in all that he did. His impact upon the members of the Occidental football family was profound."



Matthew Andersen '07: Andy had it all. He was our Superman. He not only changed Oxy football, but he impacted every single person who ever had the privilege of playing alongside him. He's the greatest guy I have ever met, the greatest football player I have ever played with, and the greatest friend to so many.

Ted Helgert '05: After our first game against Chapman in 2004, our incumbent quarterback that Andy was competing against

**RIGHT:** Culminating an epic playoff run, Collins, *right*, moves with the ball in Oxy's NCAA Division III West Region final vs. Linfield in McMinnville, Ore., on Dec. 4, 2004. **BELOW:** Collins signs an autograph for a young fan during his playing days in the Arena Football League as an L.A. Avenger in 2008.



Linfield photo by Jon Brunk; wedding photo courtesy Brooke Collins



quit the team. The new guy, Andy, was now our starting QB and my roommate, so it was kind of weird for me. When I finally talked to Andy about it, he said he didn't want to win the job this way—it was like someone stole something from him. I thought to myself, “Most people would have just been happy to be starting QB, no matter how they got the job. What's up with this kid?”

The next game Andy proved to be our leader. He ran for about three touchdowns, and Coach Fenwick told him it was OK to throw the ball.

**Adam Rossi '06:** Before Andy came to Occidental in 2004, we had lost two incredibly close games to Redlands to lose the conference title. Andy immediately adopted our goal of beating them at what would be their homecoming game, which was also the week of his 21st birthday. You could tell Andy was a little tense that week; as he explained it to me, he didn't want to let us down. And that was Andy's way. We had warned Andy about the treatment the Redlands fans would give him.

**Helgert:** That year Redlands allowed students to stand about 10 yards away from the end zones in an attempt to intimate us. Some interesting things were said to us, to say the least. I remember the play well, because about two plays earlier I recovered a fumble.

Andy took a designed QB run 53 yards in for a touchdown to put us ahead, 13-7.

**Rossi:** Once he entered the end zone, Andy held out the ball at shoulder level, the students' eye level, and trotted across the backline to the referee on our sideline, essentially rubbing the ball in all their faces. He had one of the biggest smiles I have ever seen on his face. We didn't lose to Redlands the rest of his time at Oxy, and won three straight conference titles.

**Kyle Stowers '06:** In our first-round playoff game in 2004 against Willamette, they were obviously the favorites; a SCIAC team had not won a playoff game in a long time. During the week Andy felt the team wasn't giving enough during practice, that maybe we doubted our own chances. He spoke with such passion and belief that he inspired many of us. We ended up winning the game 28-14.

**Zac Sakowski '04:** Andy threw four TD passes that Saturday, which helped put Oxy and SCIAC on the D3 football map.

**Libby:** I was a backup safety who got to play because of an injury to our starter in the playoff game against Concordia Moorhead in the second round of the playoffs in 2004. Andy had the game of his life (a 42-40 win in Fargo, N.D.), and was being hounded by people afterward. I'll never forget when he came up to me and said, “Lib, we wouldn't have won that game without you.” Coming from Andy, that meant a lot. He wasn't much

of a talker or “rah rah” type of guy. When he said something, you knew he meant it.

**Andersen:** I'll never forget the Cal Lu comeback (a 28-27 road win Oct. 28, 2006) where we were down by 17 points at half-time, but there wasn't a single person on our team who was fazed in the locker room. There was no panic or a fear of losing but more of a sense of confidence that Andy had given our team having played with him for three years now. I remember starting the second half on our first drive, looking over to Andy in the backfield and just saying, “Let's go baby, do what you do.” And he did. Like always. He put the team on his back and led us to another win. Andy was truly blessed with the ability to instill hope into the hopeless.

**Tim Tanous '06:** During our final game playing for Oxy, we were at Whitworth in November 2006 in the playoffs. Andy injured his throwing shoulder but continued to play, fantastic as usual, without complaining or making excuses. You went out onto the field knowing he would do everything in his ability to lead us to victory. (Oxy rallied from a 10-point deficit to take the lead in the third quarter, only to lose the game, 27-23.)

**Helgert:** Off the field, Andy was a true friend—always there to talk to if you needed him. He kept bugging me to go to church with him. I did and remember that afterward, he told me church was great, but it was even better because I went with him.

**Aaron Losey '06:** Andy led by example; he was honest, funny, and never took himself too seriously. He could take a joke and spent quite a bit of time laughing at himself.

**Stowers:** When we would go out Andy was a magnet; people were naturally drawn to him. The camaraderie at Oxy is something that most of us will cherish for the rest of our lives, and I know that Andy did as well.

**Sakowski:** Camaraderie, yes ... but there has to be a stronger word for what we players shared while Andy was at Oxy.

**Rossi:** Recently, an Occidental mom told me that all of us that played in the 2004-06 seasons were spoiled. She said that we had such a good experience with each other, and formed so close a bond, that we invariably lost a little of ourselves when we were apart. We are definitely a little lost now. I was Andy's roommate for two years, and there was rarely a time, even out of season, that we weren't with teammates. One teammate ran the numbers, and figured out that we were all together more hours than we slept any given week.

In the years after Oxy, Andy refused to let any time go by without us talking. No matter how busy either of us was, he would make the time to chat.

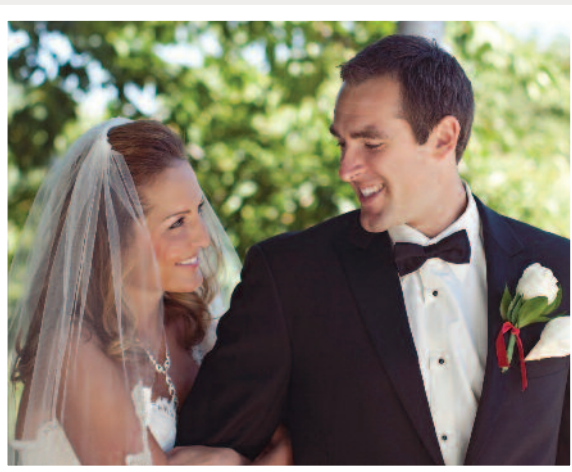
**Helgert:** I got busy with my Ph.D and moved out of state, to Mississippi. He would call me periodically to see how I was doing. Last I recall we discussed how he was upset that he might have to quit football, because it wasn't paying the bills. I could not believe there could be a world where Andy Collins didn't play football.

**Stowers:** I think after college Andy wanted the football thing to work out and the last year he realized it was time to move on. He found an amazing woman to do that with in Brooke. They spent a couple nights with me and my wife in Sacramento where we stayed up late. I could tell they were meant for each other.

**Tanous:** I had the privilege of staying with Andy in 2009 for a few months. I was lucky enough to be staying with him when Andy and Brooke's relationship started. I remember Andy talking to my now wife, Amy (who was also our football trainer from 2003-06) about Brooke. He was confused about how he felt about Brooke because she was so unlike anyone he had ever dated.

Amy asked Andy what it was that he liked about Brooke, and his answer was lengthy: "She is smart, funny, beautiful, spiritual, athletic ..." With a smile Amy responded, "Andy, don't you get it? She's different because she's perfect for you." Andy's eyes lit up; he smiled excitedly, and the rest is history.

**Rossi:** The bond we shared as teammates also enables us to feel the joy of each other greater than we normally would. We felt the joy of football with Andy, of course; those are some of our greatest memories. But it is the time off the field, the joy he felt on such days as his wedding, that we shared his greatest joys. Andy had one of the biggest grins on his face that I had ever seen at that



**Brooke and Andy Collins on their wedding day July 23: "He was truly the happiest he had ever been in that moment," says former roommate Adam Rossi '06.**

Redlands game, until his wedding. When Brooke started to walk down that aisle, his face lit up like something I had never seen.

**Andersen:** It was obvious that after attending the memorial services for Andy, that you didn't have to play football with him to realize who he was as a person. He impacted everyone that was fortunate enough to get to know him and even those who barely knew him.

**Tanous:** He was our leader in every aspect of the word—aggressive but never angry, confident but never arrogant, competitive but never violent. Being a quarterback came so naturally to Andy, not only because of his athletic ability and talent, but because of his ability to step onto the field every practice and every game and take command.

**Helgert:** The confidence he had oozed into the other players. We knew as long as we had No. 1 under center we were gonna win.

**Stowers:** I'll miss Andy's smile and laugh the most. His smile could light up a room, and his laugh could wake a sleeping baby upstairs.

**Losey:** Andy also was a dancing machine. We called him "the real deal" because of football, but that also applied to his dance moves.

**Sakowski:** Andy had that "it" factor, that gravitas that everyone wanted to be able to explain but could not find the words to do so. He was humble, thankful, and always presented himself in a positive light.

**Rossi:** Andy was an example to me on how to be a better older brother. He showed me how to improve as a teammate. Andy demonstrated to me the joys of a trusted friendship. He made me a better son. Andy inspired me to spiritual growth, all the while respecting my own views. I'll miss his inspiration, and his reassuring presence. Most of all, I'll miss Andy as he was when there was no crowd to watch him.

**Losey:** I never played with Andy, but my favorite moment was attending a 49ers-Jets game with him in 2008. Mike Libby had to work at the game, so he gave us his tickets. Andy wanted to talk to 49ers quarterback Kellen Clemens after the game, and we did. Then we got stuck in Candlestick traffic—in Andy's old green Ford Explorer—for three hours! The passenger seat was stuck forward, so any passenger was basically squeezed against the dashboard. The seats and roof were torn. I think even one of the handles fell off when I was holding it. Andy's car was always an experience.

But this time was different. I was finishing up my first semester of medical school and having some serious doubts about my life's decision. I hadn't really told anyone, but Andy always made me feel so comfortable so I opened up. We ended up in a deep conversation about life and careers. Long story short, he encouraged me to never give up, reminded me what a privilege it was to become a doctor, and gave me confidence that things would work out in the end. When I reflect on that day, I realize this is how Andy lived: He refused to give up, was grateful for the privileges in his life, and remained confident despite the challenges he faced. I never got to thank him for that day, but I will never forget it, either. □

# the **REAL DOUG ROSS**

**Doug Ross '83** is a prolific producer of some of TV's guiltiest pleasures—among them “The Real Housewives of Beverly Hills” and “Orange County.” But he'd trade it all for a writing gig on “30 Rock” or “Modern Family.”

By SAMANTHA B. BONAR '90  
Photos by MAX S. GERBER



**D**OUG ROSS '83 HATES watching reality TV. "It feels like work," he says. That's because Ross' life has been consumed by reality television since 1987. As founder and CEO of Evolution Media, Ross has overseen 45 series as an executive producer, launching now-familiar network brands such as "Big Brother" and "Fear Factor" as well as niche-oriented cable fare ("10 Years Younger," "Desperate Spaces"). These days he has his hands full shepherding two of Bravo's signature shows: "The Real Housewives of Orange County" (still going strong after six seasons) and its younger sister series, "The Real Housewives of Beverly Hills."

The latter show made headlines on entertainment and editorial pages alike in August when 47-year-old Russell Armstrong, estranged husband of "Beverly Hills" housewife Taylor Armstrong, took his own life. The couple's marital woes had figured into the show's storylines, and many critics called for Bravo to pull the plug on the series altogether. After some last-minute editing, the second-season premiere aired as scheduled September 5—a decision Ross supports.

"The press in general is itching to find a juicy story about what's wrong with reality shows," he says at Evolution's offices in Burbank. "But these people not only sign up willingly, they beg to be on the shows we do. In Russell's case, he knew full well what being on the show was. He signed up willingly for the second season. I don't think that the show had anything to do with his suicide, because it's been revealed that he had a lot of problems in his life."

Ross continues: "There are some shows that are exploitative, and there will always be. People like to watch them, and some people even want to be on them. More power to them. But I don't think that the general reality producer—and I know most of the major reality producers—goes about their work in a disrespectful or irresponsible way. So I don't buy the argument that reality has caused the downfall of Western civilization."

Growing up in Boulder, Colo., Ross says he always knew that he wanted to be in television. "Television was a really important part of our family discourse," he says. "Television wasn't an escape for us; it was something that brought us together that we could watch,

laugh, and debate together." As a child, his favorite shows included "Gilligan's Island," "The Brady Bunch," "Good Times," and "The Carol Burnett Show." Today he's still a fan of sitcoms—if Ross had his way, he would be writing for "30 Rock" or "Modern Family." "That's what I wish I were really doing," he says, "but I'm not a writer. I'm a producer. I happened to be in the right place at the right time with the right skill set to capitalize on the growing trend that became reality TV."

As an independent pattern of study major at Oxy, Ross studied English literature and was active in theater productions (including a lead role in *Our Town*). He was a junior at Oxy when he snagged his first TV job, buying groceries for a cable cooking show. He soon

Without the imprimatur of an established company, though, the first couple of years on his own were tough sledding. Using the few connections he had in the business, eventually he started getting small segment work—still in the documentary vein.

Ross got his big break with a show he created for the Disney Channel called "Bug Juice." The series, which documented the experiences of real-life boys and girls at summer camp, ran from 1998 to 2001. "At the beginning of the reality craze, people didn't understand what it meant to be in a reality show," Ross recalls. "So it was completely real. We didn't cast people. We just went to a camp that had already enrolled kids. The result was an authentic portrayal of what it's

Photo by Alberto E. Rodriguez/Getty Images



"Beverly Hills" castmates Camille Grammer, Lisa VanderPump, Taylor Armstrong, and Kyle Richards (shown with Ross and "'Housewives' whisperer" Alex Baskin, center) ogle the trophy for Best Reality Series, presented at the Critics' Choice Television Awards at the Beverly Hills Hotel on June 20.

noticed that the writing on the cue cards was sloppy and hard to read. "I had good penmanship so I volunteered to write the cue cards, which they were quite happy to let me do because it was considered a pretty crappy job," he recalls. "I thought that also gave me license to improve the copy on the cards. I guess they liked it because eventually they started letting me write the copy."

That job led to others in cable TV, most of them in the documentary arena. Four years after graduating from Oxy, Ross felt confident enough to form his own production company, christening it Evolution Film and Tape.

like to be a teenager and go through those very seminal moments of being 13, first time away from home, first time having a chance to explore relationships with the opposite sex. There was an authenticity about it that I've never been able to match since."

Ross aims to be responsible and respectful in portraying the lives of his subjects on camera—an idea he embraced while doing "Bug Juice." "We realized early on that we needed to be respectful of the people who are opening up their lives to us on camera, because long after the show is over and we move on to our next show, those kids had to



“You can tell right away if somebody is just the kind of person who is comfortable in front of a camera,” Ross says. “I am not that kind of person.”



get into college, those families had to walk into church or the shopping mall and hold their heads up high,” he says. “So we knew that we would have to tell entertaining stories that would sometimes have embarrassing moments, but we learned how to deal with the families and get them to trust us. And to honor their trust by generally having a positive overall story, even if some of the elements were negative along the way.”

“Doug has a lot of integrity,” says Greg Stewart, Evolution’s chief financial officer, who has known Ross since the two were 13. “He really does try to do the right thing, and that’s in a business where sometimes you’re pushed to not do the right thing. Doug really strives to not go to that place.”

From “Bug Juice,” Evolution spun off a number of youth-oriented reality shows for the Disney Channel. But the real game-changer was being asked to launch the American version of the Dutch hit reality show “Big Brother” in 2000. “It was the

biggest thing that we had ever done. We had a \$22-million budget that first year, and the show was on six nights a week,” Ross recalls.

But when CBS renewed the summer series for a second season, the network scaled back its commitment to three nights a week and replaced Evolution with a company that would be more adept at building spectacle into “Big Brother.” (It didn’t help matters that “Survivor” premiered at the same time, and shot to No. 1 in the ratings by the end of its first season.) While CBS’ decision was “devastating,” Ross admits, “we decided we’re not going to be kicked to the gutter because of that—we’re going to come up with a show that’s all about spectacle.” The result? “Fear Factor,” the competition series famous for its giant gross-out stunts, became a huge hit for NBC in the summer of 2001.

Around that time, Evolution also started getting into a wide array of reality series for such channels as TLC (“10 Years Younger”), TBS (“He’s a Lady”), and HGTV (“Desperate

Spaces”), as well as shows for Animal Planet (“King of the Jungle”), MTV (“Yo Mamma”), and VH1 (“Bands Reunited”). “I never wanted to be pigeonholed into any one particular kind of reality TV,” Ross says.

In 2006, Bravo approached Ross about taking the reins of “The Real Housewives of Orange County” going into its second season. (The series was created by Scott Dunlop, whose Dunlop Entertainment produced the initial seven-episode run.) “It’s been fun to be associated with a big, notable show like that,” Ross says. “I’m proud that we were able to take the general idea and make it into something successful.”

Under Evolution’s guidance, the audience for “Orange County” has grown dramatically. Season 1 of the series averaged 646,000 total viewers, including 503,000 in the coveted 18-to-49 demographic. The sixth-season finale in June drew 2.88 million viewers—1.86 million of them between 18 and 49. (In the wake of the murmurs surrounding Armstrong’s death, the second-season opener of “Beverly Hills” garnered 2.2 million viewers.)

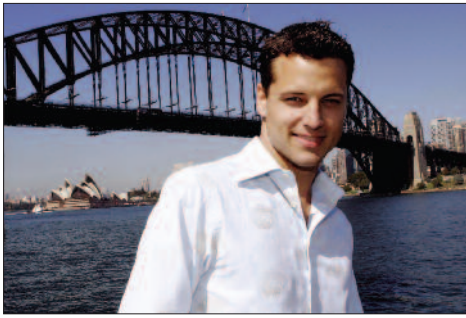
As the franchise continued to spread across the Bravo schedule, additional casts bared their claws in New York City, Atlanta, New Jersey, Beverly Hills, Washington, D.C., and Miami. All but the D.C. series remain in production, and Evolution is the only company responsible for more than one show.

In Ross’ experience, the successful execution of any reality concept comes down to casting. “Every idea has been pitched hundreds of times, every permutation of every idea has been pitched,” he says. “Now you really have to sell a show based on who’s going to be in it.” For both of Evolution’s “Housewives” franchises, “we really wanted to find women who were successful and smart and savvy and beautiful and wealthy who had a point of view—who would be fun to watch because they would be inspirational to some viewers and maddening to others.”

That hasn’t been easy with a cast of six Beverly Hills women who sometimes have their own agendas and want to be portrayed in a certain way. “Participants’ views of themselves are always different than what the camera sees and the way the rest of the people in their lives see them,” Ross says. “And often when they see how they’re coming across on TV, they have a very adverse reaction. They get upset with us, and they think that we



**1998:** "Bug Juice" premieres on the Disney Channel and puts Ross on the reality-show map.



**2003:** "Boy Meets Boy" bachelor James Getzlaff looks for true love in a pool of gay and straight men.

made them look that way through the editing. The truth is, we can accentuate qualities through the editing, but we can't make them people they are not."

Ross is upfront with all of his reality participants that they are cast members on a TV show. "We tell the participants on every show we do before we get started: If you say it, if you do it, there's a good chance it's gonna be on. So if you don't want something to be on, don't do it. But nothing's off the table, and you know what you're signing up for. We are going to put a spotlight on funny behavior, embarrassing behavior, bad behavior, romantic behavior—you can be assured of this. That's what a TV show is."

"The Real Housewives of Beverly Hills" suicide is not the first time one of Ross' shows has been at the center of controversy. Some critics felt that his 2003 Bravo series "Boy Meets Boy"—a gay dating reality show in which some of bachelor James Getzlaff's suitors were secretly straight—was in poor taste. Ross, who is gay, considers the program "groundbreaking" and "a fascinating social experiment." Still, he admits, "A lot of people thought we went too far. A lot of people thought it was bad to trick the lead guy—and [Getzlaff] himself was very upset about it."

Today, about 50 percent of Evolution's workload comes from ideas the company has successfully pitched to networks, and 50



**2000:** Ousted houseguest "Chicken George" Boswell awaits the winner of season one of "Big Brother."



**2006:** Bravo launches what will become its biggest franchise: "The Real Housewives of Orange County."

percent is shows they have been approached to produce. With a full-time staff of 15 and a freelance stable of 120, "We still are out there selling our own ideas. But because we're established and we have a long history of successful shows, and we're a company that's known for being easy to work with, being honest, and coming in under budget, we get a lot of assignments too, and that's an important part of our business," Ross says.

Part of what makes Ross such a successful producer is "he's a great diplomat," says Stewart, who joined Evolution in 1990. "He really knows how to work with people, and to motivate them to give their best. He has such a positive, can-do attitude. He can really thread that needle at times when I walk away because I'm so irritated. He can navigate those troubled waters."

As for the reality of his own life, Ross is a Jewish gym rat who lives in Valley Village and loves cars, airplanes, live theater, and the movies. But don't ever look for him on one of his shows: "I do not like being on camera," Ross says. "I would never want to be on the other side of what we do."

Behind the scenes, according to Stewart, "The same thing that drives him to be the kind of person he is to work with drives him personally. Doug is that way at work because that's the person he is. He really is kind and fair. He's a true-blue friend, and a disciplined



**2001:** With Joe Rogan as host, "Fear Factor" brings gross-out stunts to primetime on NBC.



**2011:** "The Real Housewives of Beverly Hills" enters its second season under a cloud of media scrutiny.

guy. He has a strong compass about what's right and wrong, and just as important, what's right for him."

A frequent criticism is that reality TV has played out—that there is nothing new that producers can possibly come up with. Ross disagrees. "Just like in scripted television, where ideas get recycled over and over again with a different cast, spin, or tone, the same thing will continue in reality TV."

On top of that, Ross thinks reality TV appeals to viewers in a unique way. "When viewers watch real people go through some of the challenges in their lives, they place a different weight on their relationship with those people on that show because they know it's real. And they watch it differently," he says.

Unlike some "reality" series that contrive situations to push the narrative along (such as the recent flop "Roseanne's Nuts," about Roseanne Barr's life on a macadamia nut farm in Hawaii), Ross happily insists that the "Housewives" shows "are completely real. We produce them, of course, but they're unscripted—whatever is happening in their lives we figure out how to turn it into a story and put it on the show. Viewers know these people are real. They have a completely different visceral experience with them. I think that alone will keep reality shows going for a long, long time."

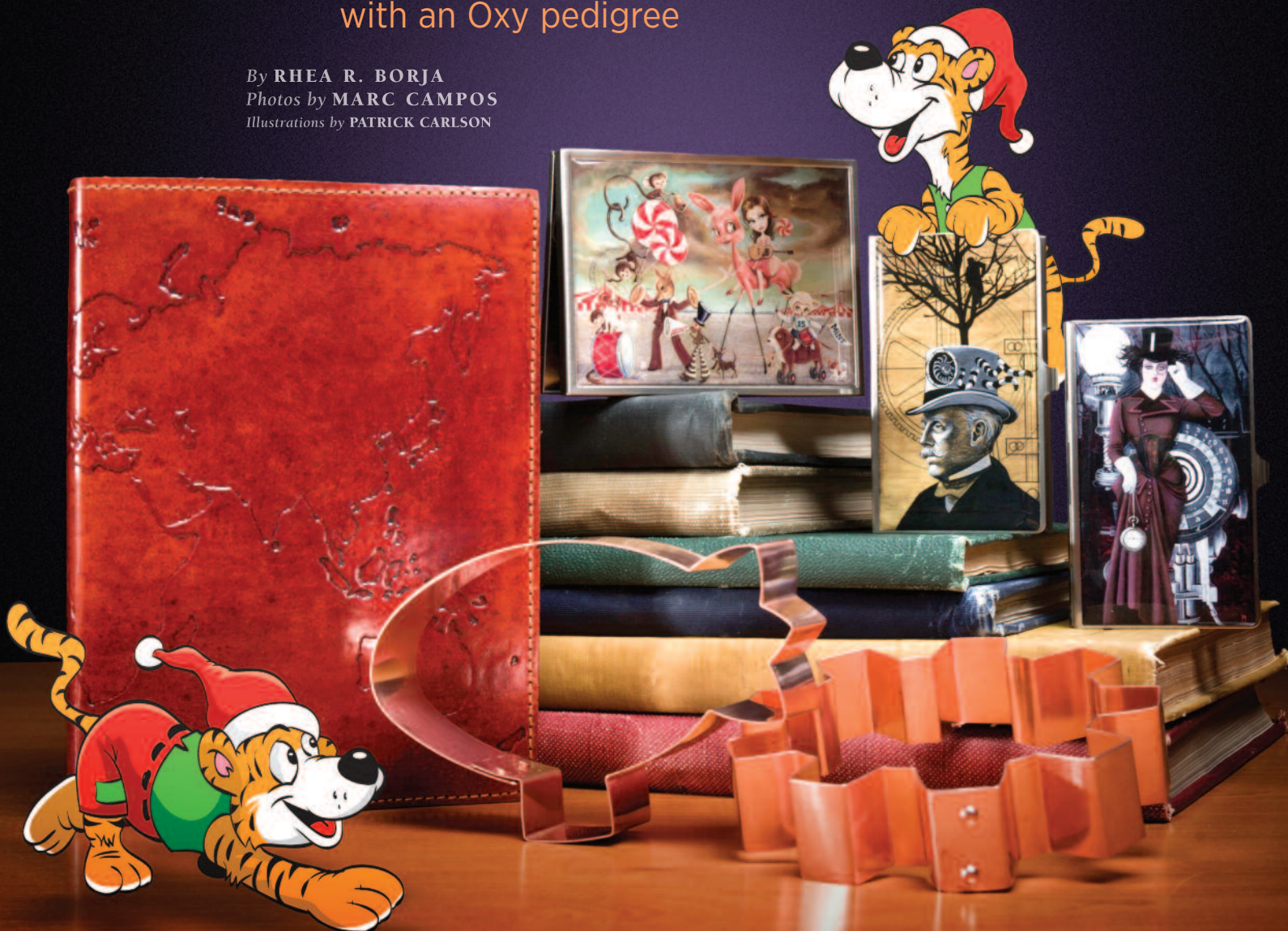
And Ross is all about keeping it real. □



*Tiger*  
*Under the Tree*

Prowling around for presents—  
or just something new?  
Consider these gift ideas  
with an Oxy pedigree

By RHEA R. BORJA  
Photos by MARC CAMPOS  
Illustrations by PATRICK CARLSON



**T**HE HALLOWEEN CANDY STILL MAY BE ON THE SHELVES, but the holidays will be here before you know it—and with them the challenge of finding the ideal (or at least affordable) gift for those people on your list. If you're looking for a stocking stuffer, an environmentally friendly water bottle, or just a conversation piece made with Oxy pride, we've gathered the following items with a touch of Tiger DNA.



## Cross Pollination

For someone who never considered herself an artist, **NIKKI CROSS '04** is doing pretty well. She recently sold an oil painting of Orion's Horsehead Nebula to actor Nicolas Cage, and her vibrant origami flower bouquets are as perfect for special occasions as they are colorful pick-me-ups for an office or dorm room.

"I've been doing origami since I was 12," says Cross, who has a B.S. in sociology from Oxy and a master's in urban planning from the University of Delaware. Working from her Koreatown studio in Los Angeles, Cross designs and creates her own origami out of translucent, hand-designed vellum paper. Before opening her online shop in 2010, she worked as a Philadelphia city planner for two years.

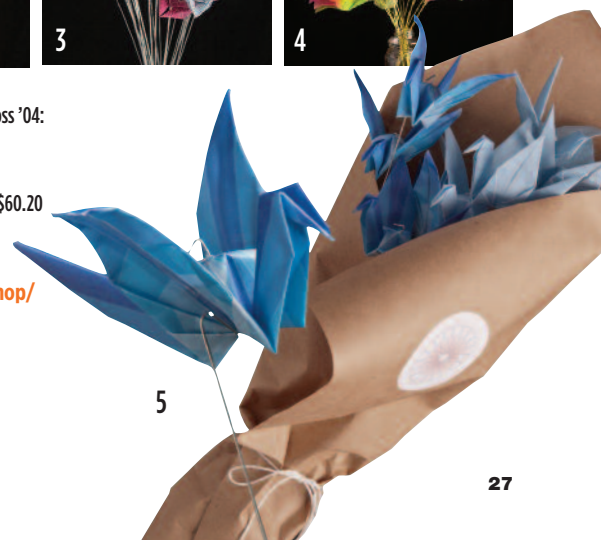
But her love for art and design won out over geographic information systems mapping. Cross also creates DIY origami bouquet kits and spirographic, whimsical note cards. She credits a studio art class taught by professor Linda Stark with igniting a passion for creating art. "I've always given gifts to my family and friends," she says, "but I didn't think it was a business until now."



Origami bouquets by Nikki Cross '04:

1. 24 pink tulips: \$65
2. 16 red poppies: \$45.40
3. 24 mesmerizing butterflies: \$60.20
4. 15 tropical jumbo: \$85
5. 12 bluebirds flying: \$47.20

<http://www.etsy.com/shop/NikkiCrossApplesauce>



## Full Steam Ahead

Perusing [www.frenzyuniverse.com](http://www.frenzyuniverse.com), **KRISTEN MCCARDEL '97** online shop, is like rooting around your crazy great-aunt's attic—if your great-aunt was a combination of Victorian dowager, Marie Curie, and the bioengineered robots from *Blade Runner*.

Gear- and dirigible-shaped cookie cutters, old skeleton keys, tiny 19th-century ceramic dolls called "Frozen Charlottes," and fantastical business-card and cigarette cases are just some of the items she's sold. All of the products, whether handmade, mass-produced, or found, are part of an aesthetic style called steampunk. Featuring brass and copper clockwork, steam-powered inventions, and gothic-inspired 19th-century dress, steampunk hearkens to a science-fiction version of the Victorian age.

Says McCardel, who co-owns and manages Frenzy Universe with her sister, Maureen: "We joke a lot that we're classically trained steampunks. We grew up in a family that's very creative and into creating things with our hands. We're also into history, and I'm a science freak."

Launched in April 2010, online sales have been brisk, and the McCardels also sell their wares at steampunk and gaming conventions around the country. They make some of the items by hand and find others by rooting around antique stores and flea markets, which Kristen likens to a treasure hunt. "Someone may have a cache of old vacuum tubes that we could use, and I'm like, 'Hooray, vacuum tubes!'" she says.

It's a far cry from their previous jobs: Kristen, who graduated from Oxy with a B.S. in geology, was a senior editor for middle and high school science textbooks for Holt, Rinehart, and Winston, while Maureen worked in corporate human relations.

Now, the McCardels work from their warehouse in the historic town of Mount Vernon, Ohio. While Maureen sews bustle skirts and buckleback tailcoats, Kristen hammers out copper cookie cutters and makes jewelry. "We get to do stuff every day that makes us happy," Kristen says.

Pictured, opposite page:

- \* Copper gear- and dirigible-shaped cookie cutters: \$15-25
  - \* Steel wallet/card case: \$22.50-27
  - \* Handmade Christmas tree ornament: \$23-34.99
  - \* Leather world map journal (cruelty-free): \$25.99
- [www.frenzyuniverse.com](http://www.frenzyuniverse.com)



## Of Laundry and L.A.

Graphic designer **LINDA WARREN '81** has a thing for laundry. Her online shop ([www.lindysues.com](http://www.lindysues.com)) includes a “come clean” stain-fighting kit, a heavy-duty denim laundry bag, and a 2-gigabyte clothespin-shaped flash drive containing popular stain-fighting tips. What makes them different is the '50s-inspired design and sense of whimsy.

Initially created as promotional items and gifts for her clients—Warren Group| Studio Deluxe is located, fittingly, in Culver City’s Beacon Laundry building—the products were so popular that she decided to sell them. “I like the science of laundry, of making something dirty into something clean,” she explains. “It just seemed something we could have fun with.”

Warren’s other products—including the Italy-inspired twill aprons and colorful Type A for Amazing magnets (her “ode to great typography”)—also show her strong design sense. The Wilshire Boulevard linen towels and note cards, however, were designed by fashion illustrator Ruth Posner. She worked for high-end depart-

## Liquid Asset

Last year, bottled water consumption totaled 8.75 billion gallons—good news for the industry, but bad news for the environment. With a recycling rate of only 23 percent, the bulkiness and rigidity of water bottles dissuades many consumers from reusing them. “The plastic water bottle industry is incredibly wasteful, and we knew there had to be a better way,” says **BRETT REINKE '84**.

So he and his business partners focused on the bottle and came up with “something different”—a flexible, sustainable, and sturdy innovation called the Vapur Anti-Bottle. Designed to fold flat so you can tuck it into a backpack or purse, the Anti-Bottle expands to hold up to 16.9 ounces of water or any liquid. (It’s even freezable.) Designer variations of the product also feature original artwork, making it seem more like a fashion accessory than humble water canteen.



Vapur Anti-Bottle comes in two sizes: 0.4-liter and 0.5-liter. Colors: orange, white, cool gray, red, cyan blue, true green, and purple. \$9.99 to \$14.99 [www.vapur.us](http://www.vapur.us)

Demand for the Anti-Bottle has ballooned since its introduction in 2009. Vapur sold 600,000 Anti-Bottles in 2010, and expects to sell upwards of 1.5 million this year. With its streamlined architectural design, the Anti-Bottle is sold at the Museum of Modern Art (in New York City and Japan), as well as Eddie Bauer, Macy’s and Sports Authority; national parks gift stores; and 150 colleges and universities nationwide. Made in America, it’s even sold in the White House gift store (although a certain Occidental alumnus has yet to be photographed sipping from one).

An economics major at Oxy, Reinke points out that tap water in the United States is the cleanest and best-tasting water in the world—almost 90 percent of tap water meets or exceeds federal health and safety regulations. Tap water also regularly wins in blind taste tests against the name brands—and, of course, is much cheaper.



ment stores such as Bullocks and I. Magnin, and Posner’s sketches feature slim women in '40s-era outfits and reference Los Angeles landmarks such as Pershing Square and Hancock Park. Says Warren (who came to Oxy from Elko, Nev.), “They are an homage to L.A.”

Top left photo:

- \* Pomodoro al forno twill apron (comes with two matching potholders): \$28
- \* Quick Clip 2 MB flash drive: \$18
- \* Set of 4 Wilshire Boulevard linen tea towels: \$32
- \* Laundry 101 bag: \$38

Above:

- \* Set of 8 2” Type A magnets in a reusable tin box: \$18
- [www.lindysues.com](http://www.lindysues.com)



## The Royal We

**ANDREA ROADY '03's** affordable yet haute couture wool scarves bring to mind Renaissance-era neck ruffs with a modern twist. So it's no surprise to learn that Roady, who graduated with a B.A. in English and comparative literary studies, identifies Queen Elizabeth I as a style icon.

"The Elizabethan look was something I've always loved," says Roady, who took a brief detour through law school before landing at the Fashion Institute of Design and Merchandising in Los Angeles. "My style is the fusion of unexpected elements—masculine and feminine, historical and modern," she adds. "I like to find the beauty that results from combining two disparate elements."

Roady's expertise in sewing ("I've been sewing forever") and penchant for couture served her well at FIDM. Industry professionals were so impressed by her 2008 runway show at Santa Monica's Barker Airport that they gave her FIDM's coveted "Debut" award for most creative collection.

She points out that the pleated scarf pairs as well with T-shirts and jeans as strapless little black dresses. "This is one of those accessories that really span the demographic, from the Silver Lake hipster to society ladies," she says. "It's for the woman who has a sense of whimsy but loves beautiful and luxurious things."

- \* Scarf in polar fleece, in charcoal and black: \$48
- \* Scarf in melton wool (not pictured), in black, purple, and turquoise: \$65

[www.andrearoady.com](http://www.andrearoady.com)

## Birds on a Wireless

Have you ever been on a nature hike and wondered what kind of bird just swooped by overhead, or mused over the wildflowers and other flora dotting the landscape? **DAVID ROBERTS '67** has an app for that—36 of them, in fact. His Woodstock, Vt.-based Green Mountain Digital produces the award-winning nature and wildlife Audubon Guide app series and the Orvis fly-fishing app for various platforms.

The Audubon Guide mobile app series contains more than 22,000 color photos, 2,000 bird sounds, 50 mammal sounds, 3,000 maps, and 6,000 in-depth species descriptions. Users can locate species by ZIP code, state, or region, and users can also create personalized sightings lists, post GPS-enabled sightings, and upload photos of flora and fauna. The Orvis fly-fishing app includes up-to-the-minute conditions at 300 top fishing spots as well as "how to" fly-casting and -tying videos.

A trustee emeritus of Oxy and retired corporate banker, Roberts was at a cocktail party in 2007 when he bumped into Audubon field guides publisher Andrew Stewart. Stewart mentioned that he retained all digital rights to the 20-volume set, and a dialogue between them ensued. "We just started at the ground level and began building," says Roberts. Two years after releasing its first app, Green Mountain Digital is spreading its wings, with plans to make nature and wildlife apps geared to the K-12 education market, national parks visitors, and the California State Parks Foundation. From there, the sky's the limit. □



- \* Audubon Guides series includes A Field Guide to Birds, Mammals, Wildflowers, and Trees; Audubon Birds; Audubon Mammals; Audubon Fishes; Audubon Insects and Spiders; Audubon Reptiles and Amphibians; Audubon Birds and Butterflies; Audubon Owls; and regional guides: free to \$14.99
- \* Orvis fly-fishing app: \$14.99

[www.audubonguides.com](http://www.audubonguides.com)

[www.orvis.com](http://www.orvis.com)



## The Calming Goat

**TANEKA WASHINGTON '05** spent years looking for all-natural and gentle cleansers and moisturizers for her sensitive, problem-prone skin. She often came up empty. "Every time I went to the store, the stuff that's supposedly more natural and less abrasive was really expensive, and still caused problems," she says. "So one day I figured, 'I can do this better.'"

After months of experimenting with various ingredients and recipes, she opened her online shop, La Calmare Capra, which sells natural and sustainable bath and body products: lavender goat's milk soap, natural wasabi deodorant, English rose moisturizer, and mint lip balm. In addition, Washington also sells her products in local farmer's markets.

The homegrown business is a 180-degree turn from her previous career as an administrative assistant for the City of Long Beach Health Department. An art history and psychology double major at Oxy, she left the big city and took up residence in Vader, Wash. (population: 621) last February.

Instead of a cubicle, Washington's workspace is down-right pastoral: She concocts her creams and soaps from a small building on her bucolic six-acre spread, which also is home to half a dozen chickens. The ingredients can't get more local or fresh—Washington buys goat's milk from a neighbor down the way, and most of the herbs are grown right in her backyard garden.

The name of her company stems from her love of all things Italian and a botched attempt at Italian translation. "I meant to translate 'the soothing goat,' but I got the wrong word and got 'the calming goat' instead," she says, and laughs. "But I liked it, so I kept it."

Above photo, from left:

- \* Natural wasabi anti-perspirant/deodorant: \$6
- \* Mint lip balm: \$2.50
- \* English rose goat's milk body cream, 1 oz.: \$3.50
- \* Natural lavender goat's milk soap: \$4.50

[www.LaCalmareCapra.com](http://www.LaCalmareCapra.com)

**BELOW:** Bowie talks pop culture with “Cracked After Hours” castmates Daniel O’Brien and Katie Willard. **RIGHT:** Pat and Lorraine’s adds a little Eagle Rock to the stew. (For a video extra, visit [www.oxy.edu/Bowie.xml](http://www.oxy.edu/Bowie.xml).)

Photos by Marc Campos



sketch comedy,” Bowie says, “and the idea of script and humor writing in general.”

While Bowie and some other Oxy alumni continued to perform sketch comedy after college in a group called the Horrible Sickness, he got a day job testing DVDs, proof-reading subtitles and listening for audio glitches. “I would come in each day, sit down in a leather chair, and watch a movie,” he says—a sweet gig, but “sort of sad as well, because I wasn’t doing anything productive.”

In January 2008, Bowie took a full-time position with Demand, making explanatory videos on odd subjects that interested him (such as “How to Scale Hallway Walls”) for a site called eHow. Demand soon made him an editor, and from there he migrated to Trails.com, an outdoor-oriented site, and gradually over to Cracked.com.

Billed as “America’s Only Humor Site Since 1958,” *Cracked* is a familiar name to generations of readers as a satire magazine that existed in the shadow of the more popular *Mad*. After Demand Media acquired the *Cracked* name in 2006, it published three issues, and then abandoned the print model to channel its resources into Cracked.com.

In competing for eyeballs with higher-profile peers such as TheOnion.com and CollegeHumor.com, Cracked’s editors determined that “lists do really well,” Bowie says. To that end, Cracked.com is rife with such lists as “The 8 Most Misguided Attempts at ‘Sexy’ Videos on YouTube,” “The 5 Most Accidentally Famous Movie Stars,” and “5 Writing Tips for the People Who Send Me Death Threats”—all products of Bowie’s pen, with more than 2.1 million views between them.

Reflecting his popularity in social media, Bowie has more than 2,800 Facebook friends and more than 3,900 Twitter devotees. “I think a lot of them are between 14 and 21,” he admits with a laugh. “They don’t separate between Internet celebrity and real celebrity.”

—DICK ANDERSON

## Cracking Wise

After paying his dues in the dregs of Hollywood, writer and humorist **Soren Bowie '04** finds an audience at Cracked.com

**I**N 2005, EAGER TO JUMP-START HIS acting career, Soren Bowie '04 took a part in a horror flick titled *Are You Scared?* “It’s really terrible,” he says—“maybe one of the worst movies ever made.” In this shameless knockoff of *Saw*, Bowie plays one of six teenagers forced to face their fears under the guise of a sadistic reality show. About 25 minutes into the film (which can be seen in its entirety—if you dare—on Hulu.com), “I end up getting this big drill bit right through my forehead,” he says, shaking his noggin.

Having exorcised his thespian aspirations (despite a resume that includes the part of “Mormon Biker” in a Krispy Kreme commercial), Bowie gets his kicks these days as a writer and editor for the online humor site Cracked.com. And since July 2010, he’s been a viral-video fixture on the site’s monthly “Cracked After Hours” shorts, in which Bowie and his fellow editors dish about pop culture in a diner setting (quite frequently Pat and Lorraine’s on Eagle Rock Boulevard).

“Had I known this job would exist when I was in college, this is what I would have wanted to do,” Bowie says over lunch at Jinky’s Cafe in Santa Monica, not far from the offices of his employer, Demand Media. “It’s nice to be doing something that I’m passionate about. Finally.”

A native of Carbondale, Colo., Bowie majored in English and comparative literary studies and minored in theater. His work bears the fingerprints of his two biggest influences at Oxy, ECLS assistant professor Damian Stocking and theater instructor Jamie Angell: “Both of them made me feel like I was making the right choices in my studies,” he says.

Eager to do improvisational humor at Oxy, Bowie and buddies Aaron Feldman '03, Dan Campagna '04, and Bill Schaumberg '06 started a group called Fantastiprov. Building on that success, they created a troupe named Sketchy People, staging an annual night of filmed and live sketches in Johnson 200. “That’s when I started to fall in love with