

# OCCIDENTAL

SPRING 2011



## A FATHER'S RIDE

Following the loss of his youngest son, Bob Okerblom '77 delivers a message about the dangers of distracted driving

# OCCIDENTAL

OCCIDENTAL COLLEGE MAGAZINE

VOLUME 33, NUMBER 2 SPRING 2011

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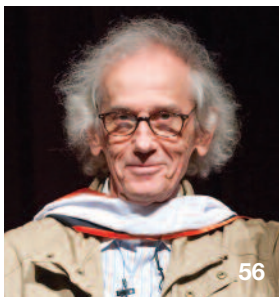


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### 27 READY, SET ... "GO!"

Christen Thompson '90's daughter spoke her first word two months shy of her third birthday. Now Martha is 8—singing in chorus, performing in talent shows, and preparing to find her own special niche in the world.



## Professor, Traveler, Explorer, Friend

Thank you for the wonderful picture of Scott Littleton (“The Man, the Myths,” Winter). It captures his playful spirit, as well as what a kind and generous human being he was. After unsuccessfully stumbling in and out of three other majors, I had a chance meeting with Scott and knew I’d found a resting place. He looked and acted the part of everything I wanted to become.

A pedigree Ph.D (directed by Walter Goldschmidt, arguably the most respected anthropologist of his time) never got in the way of Scott’s approach to students as fellow travelers, explorers, and friends. I still wonder how he could have seen me so clearly, guided me so well, or given me all the rope I needed to hang myself and then caught me. His letters of recommendation, twice, got me appointed professor. Both times, committee members told me they were strongly persuaded by the fact that an undergraduate adviser would remain that keenly attuned to the interests and capacities of a student from so long ago. He helped hundreds of graduates over the years, writing hundreds if not thousands of personalized references. Some of his anthropology/sociology graduates—witness James Mallory ’67—have become world-class scholars in their own right.

Yes, UFO aficionado. Yes, a recognized international scholar. Yes, Sarmatian dude, the California surfer. And yes, sometimes a man roundly mocked. But he was so much more. Many of us are in deep grief at his untimely passing.

**BETHE HAGENS ’68**

Kennebunkport, Maine

## Digital Crusade

I enjoyed “Let’s Get Digital” in the Winter *Occidental*. Having spent a full year working off part of my student loan in the Clapp Library stacks in 1962, the article evoked fond memories of library procedures at that time.

For 28 years, I’ve been a member of the social anthropology department at a public university on the “lower east side” of Mexico City. Our campus library is a disaster, and I’m currently leading a low-profile crusade to

Photo courtesy Occidental College Special Collections



## Preserving Oxy History

Martin Luther King Jr.’s visit to Oxy on April 12, 1967, merited a front-page story and an oversize edition of *The Occidental Weekly* dated April 14. The two copies held in the library and College archives are brittle, fragile, and deteriorating. If you have preserved all or part of that newspaper and can loan it to Special Collections to be digitized, thus helping to preserve Oxy’s history, contact special collections librarian Dale Stieber (323-259-2852, dstieber@oxy.edu).

reform key aspects of deficient services. The program under way you describe resonates with what we are trying to accomplish here, and the Oxy program can be a precedent that leverages our crusading proposals.

**SCOTT S. ROBINSON ’64**

Iztapalapa, Mexico

## Revisionist Nonsense

It saddens me that Occidental never seems to have moved beyond the 1960s in its world view and political agenda. The Winter magazine highlighted professor Thaddeus Russell (“Revisionist Historian”), who joins the ranks of those who dishonor history by attempting to rewrite it for their own glory. What a shame that Oxy embraces such nonsense when we desperately need to reexamine how we have strayed as a country so far from the roots that made us the greatest nation on Earth.

If logic were to prevail at the College, then perhaps the answers to the dilemmas posed in the article “Golden Compass” (Winter) would be to turn Sacramento over to the “louche, lazy, and lascivious” residents of California who, according to Russell, were the ones who made our country so great. Right.

The direction many institutions of higher learning have taken to attempt to push the trendy political agendas of the day has led us as a nation to flounder under the crushing weight of national debt (where we meet the needs of the “louche, lazy, and lascivious” so they can continue their marginal lifestyles) and to create a society where “tolerance” is afforded to those who challenge the mores, values, and leaders of the past but not to those who hold fast to the common sense from which our country was birthed.

I am embarrassed to call myself an alumna of this institution. If there is ever a great awakening at Oxy, I will be the first to cheer and to contribute to a renegade intelligence that bucks the trendy liberal doctrines of most public universities and decides to stand on truth and common sense instead.

**ROSEMARY (WESLEY) HINES ’76**

Lake Forest

## No Apologies

It was disappointing to see the vitriolic, poorly informed, ad hominem attack that Dylan Schwilk ’96 (“Mission Improbable,” Winter) wrote in response to “Over There” (Fall 2010), about my visit to Afghanistan. His accusation that I am nothing more than an “imperial stenographer” who takes his marching orders from the Pentagon is demonstrably false. Had he taken the time to browse the publications written by the U.S. Army Center of Military History, Schwilk would have understood that we historians who work there—all civilians—have absolute freedom to write in the most objective and critical manner, even if it does not shine a favorable light on the Army. The Army, believe it or not, wishes to learn from its mistakes. My own publications reflect that truth.

More than 2 million Americans have served in Iraq and/or Afghanistan, many of them multiple tours. This relatively small segment of American society has borne the brunt of this sacrifice, while most members of the public have gone about their lives only dimly aware of the wars. My job is to preserve and honor the history of these men and women, and their families, who have volunteered for such hazardous duty. I work for them, not for the Army or any other institution. And for that I will never apologize.

**ERIK VILLARD ’90**

Alexandria, Va.

## Bookshelf

**CRAZY U: ONE DAD'S CRASH COURSE IN GETTING HIS KID INTO COLLEGE**, by **Andrew Ferguson** '78 (*Simon & Schuster*; \$25). Why on Earth does college cost so much? That's one of the questions Ferguson sets out to answer in his memoir of the admissions process. From the most expensive private college consultant in the nation to the mysteries of the SAT to the unbearable waiting for the envelopes to arrive, he explores the "surreal rituals" of college admissions while growing a stronger relationship with his son. Ferguson (*Land of Lincoln*) is a senior editor at *The Weekly Standard*. He lives in Arlington, Va.

**BRING ON THE BIRDS**, written and illustrated by **Susan Stockdale** '76 (*Peachtree Publishers*; \$15.95). Stockdale (*Carry Me! Animal Babies on the Move* and *Fabulous Fishes*) introduces young readers to the amazing world of birds in her new picture book, which depicts both exotic and familiar species in their natural habitats. (Her research extended to the Galapagos Islands, where she saw blue-footed boobies perform their lively mating dance and the great frigatebird puff out its crimson chest.) From the broad-tailed hummingbird to the Atlantic puffin, the breadth of bird life will captivate children, while an afterword provides information about each bird for older readers. Stockdale lives in Chevy Chase, Md.

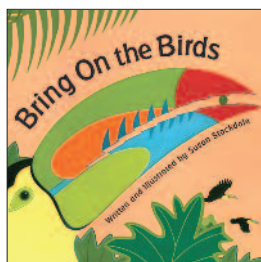
**REMEMBER LITTLE ROCK: THE TIME, THE PEOPLE, THE STORIES**, by **Paul Robert Walker** '75 (*National Geographic Society*; \$17.95). In recounting the events of September 1957 in Little Rock, Ark.—when nine black students faced hostile resistance to their attempt to integrate all-white Central High School—Walker offers a new perspective on this pivotal civil rights event, challenging readers to consider how they would have acted had they been students at Central High in 1957. In addition to examining a wide range of material on the Little Rock crisis, including newspaper coverage, TV footage, audiotapes, books, and manuscripts, he interviewed many participants—white and black—and attended all the events of the Central High Integration 50th-anniversary celebration in 2007.

**THE POWER OF URBAN ETHNIC PLACES: CULTURAL HERITAGE AND COMMUNITY LIFE**, by **Jan Lin** (*Routledge*; \$145; *Google eBook*; \$19.72). Lin examines a spectrum of case studies of Chinese, Latino, and African-American communities in the United States, dismissing perceptions that the rise of ethnic enclaves and heritage places is a harbinger of separatism or balkanization. Instead, he suggests, by better understanding the power and dynamics of urban ethnic places, society will be better prepared to harness the economic and cultural changes related to globalization rather than be hurt or divided by these forces. Lin emigrated from Taiwan in 1966 and has taught sociology at Occidental since 1998.

**JOY FOR BEGINNERS**, by **Erica Bauermeister** '80 (*Putnam*; \$24.95). At an intimate dinner party in Seattle, six women gather to celebrate their friend Kate's recovery from cancer. Kate strikes a bargain with them to white-water raft down the Grand Canyon—a prospect that has always terrified her. But in turn, each of them must promise to do one thing in the next year that is new, difficult, or scary—and Kate gets to choose their challenges. Bauermeister (*The School of Essential Ingredients*) lives in Seattle.

**THE YOUNG NIXON AND HIS RIVALS: FOUR CALIFORNIA REPUBLICANS EYE THE WHITE HOUSE, 1946-1958**, by **James Worthen** '64 (*McFarland and Co.*; \$35). In his second book on California politics, Worthen recalls the rivalry between Richard Nixon and three other politicians with national ambitions: Earl Warren, William Knowland, and Goodwin Knight. Worthen lives in Pismo Beach.

**TRADING ZONES AND INTERACTIONAL EXPERTISE: CREATING NEW KINDS OF COLLABORATION**, edited by **Michael E. Gorman** '74 (*The MIT Press*; \$30) explores a new framework for fostering collaborations among disciplines and expertise communities. Trading zones allow scientific subcultures to develop the common-language equivalents of Pidgin and Creole, while international expertise enlists the language of a research community in ways that are indistinguishable from expert users. Gorman is a professor in science, technology, and society at the University of Virginia.



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**BELOW:** An expert in Russian foreign and military policy, arms control, and U.S. national security policy, Caldwell is the longest-tenured professor in Occidental's 124-year history. **OPPOSITE:** Caldwell in mid-career, after returning from a two-year stint at the CIA in 1983.



## *The World According to* **Caldwell**

After a 44-year career educating generations of students in politics and international relations, professor Larry Caldwell looks to the future

By PAUL WALKER '75 | Photo by MARC CAMPOS

**I**N FALL 1967, a group of Occidental students walked into the Quad and sat in front of a Marine Corps recruiting booth to block access—the first shot in a protracted battle over military recruiters on campus. The following spring, a much larger group of students staged a protest during dedication ceremonies for the new Arthur G. Coons Administrative Center. The 1967-68 academic year heralded the beginning of a highly politicized period at Oxy, and it also marked the arrival of a young political science professor, Larry Caldwell. Amid that tumultuous time, no one—including Caldwell—could have imagined he'd still be teaching politics at Occidental 44 years later.

Like many of his peers, Caldwell was sympathetic to the students' concerns, but the political vision he brought to the College focused on a greater threat than the war in Vietnam or intergenerational conflict: the complex, volatile relationship between the United States and the Soviet Union. As a leading Sovietologist and expert on international security, Caldwell—who will begin a three-year, phased retirement this fall—has helped produce generations of Oxy students who have gone on to make significant contributions in politics and international relations. The fact that one of them is president of the United States is an interesting sidebar; the real story is the many graduates working in foreign affairs and the inspirational role that Caldwell has played in their lives.

Fifteen of these graduates, spanning four decades of Caldwell's unprecedented teaching career, returned to the College on Feb. 19-20 for a weekend symposium titled *Oxy in the World*. During panel discussions, alumni experts explored the post-Soviet U.S.-Russian relationship, current security issues, the effect of media and "soft diplomacy" on international relations, and the global business climate. Both during the discussions and in personal conversations, all of the panelists credited Caldwell with helping them to find their passion for foreign affairs and showing them what it took to pursue that interest successfully.

Roger George '71, a self-described “early Caldwellian” and symposium co-organizer, says that one of the secrets of Caldwell’s success as a teacher is that “he treats his students as future colleagues.” For George—who spent 30 years as an intelligence analyst at the CIA and now teaches at the National War College in Washington, D.C.—that played out in the real world when Caldwell joined him at the CIA from 1981 to 1983 during a leave of absence from Oxy. “At that time, there was a raging debate over the future direction of Soviet military developments,” George recalls, “and the prevailing belief was that it was not really changing that much. Larry disagreed and was not afraid to express his opinion. He didn’t win that in-house debate, but he was on the right side of history. He has demonstrated not only great insight but also the highest standard of analytical integrity. What Larry teaches in the classroom he practices as well.”

Symposium co-organizer Gloria Duffy '75 of San Francisco points to Caldwell’s ability to focus his students’ thinking: “While taking a course from Larry on international political processes, I suddenly realized that there were tens of thousands of nuclear weapons on hair-trigger alert that could end life as we know it. I thought, ‘Somebody needs to do something about this.’” Duffy would later play a leading role in the dismantling and disposition of nuclear weapons in the former Soviet countries as deputy assistant secretary of defense from 1993 to 1995. “Larry helped me understand that it’s not just about reducing nuclear weapons,” she says. “It’s about communications, a hotline, notification of tests, and the whole process of working on the problem.”

Caldwell grew up in Newton, Iowa, and earned his B.A. in political science, economics, and history at the College of Wooster in Ohio. He was a champion debater and class president in high school and college, and a top-notch golfer with a deep competitive streak. Asked why he was drawn to politics, he says, “In my generation, if you were intellectually curious and ambitious, Soviet politics and foreign policy were ‘it.’ I was 17 when the Soviets launched *Sputnik*, and I remember standing out on the golf course, staring up at the sky, and thinking about it up there orbiting the Earth. I graduated from college in 1962, the year of the Cuban missile crisis.”

Despite the fact that the U.S.-Soviet conflict was the dominant political issue of the time, Caldwell did not fully embrace it until his graduate work at the Fletcher School of Law and Diplomacy in Boston, where he met Marshall Shulman, a leading expert on the Soviet Union and former speechwriter for Secretary of State Dean Acheson. “Marshall was the first man in my life who sat me down and said, ‘Let’s talk about your future,’” Caldwell recalls. “Not even my father did that. It’s impossible to overestimate the kind of mentoring he gave me, and that became my model as a teacher. I have that conversation with 20 to 30 students every year.”

While at Fletcher, Caldwell also studied at Harvard with Richard Pipes, Merle Fainsod, and Henry Kissinger, who acted as his second thesis adviser. Shulman, Kissinger, and many others in the Fletcher/Harvard circle demonstrated that an academic political scientist can work in government and directly impact real-world politics, a duality that Caldwell has firmly embraced in his own career. “In our field of international affairs, there’s a real-world test,” he says. “If the work we’re doing doesn’t help the government figure out where to put their aircraft carriers or fly their planes, then it doesn’t pass the test.”

In 1967, Caldwell was one of the first professors recruited by Richard C. Gilman, who had become Oxy’s 10th president two years earlier. “At that time, a large number of our faculty came from West Coast universities,” Gilman says, “and I wanted to bring in more professors from the East.”

Caldwell had taught for a year at Wellesley College before coming to Oxy, and it did not take long to realize he was in a different environment. “I was assigned a late-afternoon Monday, Wednesday, Friday European politics class,” he remembers, “and on the first Friday afternoon there was a group of seniors in the front row wearing bathing suits—women in bikinis and guys in their surfing shorts. They kept looking at their watches, so I asked what it was all about. One of the guys said, ‘It’s Friday afternoon. Surf’s up.’ I knew I wasn’t at Wellesley anymore.”

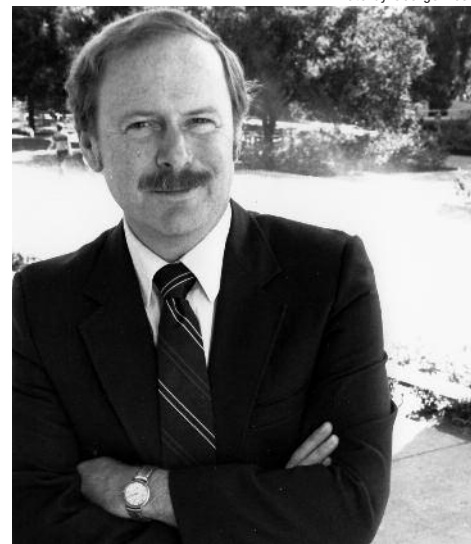
While he laughs at the memory, Caldwell is quick to point out that Oxy’s “coed environment made for more lively and interesting discussions. The SAT scores might have been higher at Wellesley, but the level of discourse was higher here.”

The same year as Caldwell’s arrival, English professor Robert Ryf '39 became dean of the faculty. “Bob Ryf preached three things to faculty members,” Caldwell recalls. “You were expected to be a great teacher, a great scholar, and of great service to the College. It was my goal to be a triple hitter.”

Caldwell’s service to the College includes four stints as chairman of the politics department, one as chairman of the diplomacy and world affairs department, four terms each on the finance committee and advisory council, and two terms on the faculty council. He received the Robert J. Janosik Award for Service to the College in 1996 and was the second faculty recipient of the Fifty Year Club’s Io Triumphe Award in 1997.

His extensive vita includes several books and scores of articles on U.S.-Soviet relations and international security, testimony before Senate and House subcommittees, advisory work with political campaigns, and numerous media appearances. Caldwell has held Ford, Rockefeller, and NATO research grants; taught at the National War College, USC, and the RAND/UCLA graduate program of Soviet Studies; and served on the staff of the U.S.

Photo by George Rose



Army’s Arroyo Center. His stint at the CIA has provoked curiosity from Oxy students ever since—intrigued with the idea of studying with a “spy” or, as Orange County-based attorney Pat Hovakimian '05 put it at a recent dinner in Caldwell’s honor, “the caped crusader of Swan Hall.”

The biggest hit has been his work in the classroom. Along with teaching upper division classes such as National Security and Russian Politics, the interdisciplinary Russian



Photo by Dennis Davis



Caldwell's sons, Trevor, *left*, and Stuart, joined scores of Oxy alumni, faculty, and friends for a dinner in his honor Feb. 19, held in conjunction with the two-day *Oxy in the World* symposium on campus.

Experience course he developed with language professor Gil Alkire in 1972 has been part of the core curriculum ever since, enabling Caldwell to teach freshmen—a level where he experiences the “real excitement of seeing the spark shine in a student’s eyes.”

Those students universally describe him as demanding the highest intellectual standards while reaching out to them as people and helping them find funding for further study. Stephan van der Mersch '06, an international investor based in New York City, points to “the three F’s of Caldwell: freedom, flexibility, and funding,” and adds, “‘A’ grades always felt best coming from him.” Kristina Kvien '87, a Foreign Service officer stationed in London, admits that she was “blown away by the intelligence of Oxy students” until Caldwell pulled her aside as a freshman and gave Kvien the self-confidence to believe she belonged. Businesswoman Natasha Seeley '98, who now works in Portland, Ore., after a decade in Finland, will never forget Caldwell’s kindness in letting her stay at his house during the summer before her senior year after her mother died of cancer.

As he contemplates life outside the classroom, Caldwell—who has done substantial work in the British and Irish national archives—looks forward to completing three research and writing projects: a biography of Sir Ivor Heron-Maxwell, a British military intelligence officer during the Russian Revolution; work on his family history of immigration from Northern Ireland to Wisconsin in the 1840s; and a book on “some period of the Cold War that historians have missed.” Asked what period that might be, he smiles and says simply, “I don’t know yet.” □

Paul Walker '75 (*Bookshelf*, page 3) is a historian and author in *Escondido*.

# The Price of Oxy

With an operating budget of nearly \$85 million and the largest enrollment in its history, how does the College spend its resources?



Illustrations by Patrick Carlson

**W**HEN THE CLASS of 1961 graduated from Occidental half a century ago this June, enrollment stood at 1,488, and tuition, room, and board for students living on campus was \$2,186. As the College approached its 75th anniversary that year, alumni gifts totaled \$216,234, and the total annual budget was \$3.56 million.

In 2009-10, Occidental spent \$1.8 million on electricity alone to keep campus lights on and laptops glowing. At a time when a lagging economy has added new fuel to the debate over rising college costs, campus budgets nationwide are under increasing scrutiny. While few would question the value of a well-lit campus or an effective computer network, the debate has raised tough questions at Oxy about the College’s operating budget (a total of \$84.9 million in 2009-10) and how best to use scarce resources in the face of new demands.

Occidental has managed to avoid the kind of draconian budget cuts seen on other

campuses to compensate for recession-ravaged endowments, says President Jonathan Veitch. Revenue from Oxy’s \$330 million endowment provides just 17 percent of Oxy’s operating budget, as compared to 20 percent at Hamilton (\$488 million), 30 percent at Bowdoin (\$688 million), and more than 50 percent at Pomona (\$1.33 billion). While more limited exposure helped shield Occidental from the worst effects of the market meltdown, the fact that almost three-quarters of the budget comes from tuition and room and board charges has profound implications for the future, Veitch says.

“For the past decade, we have paid the bills with growth while maintaining quality,” he says, noting that the student body has steadily grown from 1,726 in 2000-01 to a record 2,102 this year—a 22 percent increase. “But we cannot continue to grow our way to balanced budgets.” That’s why the College is taking a three-pronged approach that includes a close review of the activities and budgets of all non-academic departments; an integrated planning process—

scheduled for completion next year—to identify Oxy’s challenges, opportunities, and priorities as a basis for future budget decisions (“Mission and Vision,” Fall 2010); and a long-term focus on growing the endowment.

Paying the bills at Oxy means devoting more than 75 percent of budget dollars to the basic functions of a residential liberal arts college: the academic program (including undergraduate research and overseas study) and what are known as co-curricular services, such as running the residence halls, feeding students, operating the bookstore, and the athletics program.

About 9 percent of the budget pays for admission and institutional advancement operations (everything from admission-related travel and recruitment materials to alumni relations, fundraising, and *Occidental Magazine*), which together generate more than 60 percent of annual operating revenues. Institutional support (which includes the business office, human resources, legal counsel, the president’s office, and support for the Board of Trustees) accounts for 10 percent of the budget. (Costs for facilities management and information technology are allocated among the different programs.)

The competition for budget dollars is fierce, both on and off campus. Consider financial aid: Hit hard by the economy, parents and students are demonstrating greater need. While the sticker price—which in itself does not cover the full cost of education—for a year at Oxy is now \$52,000, the reality is that most students do not pay anywhere near that amount. Last year, 79 percent of Occidental students received some form of financial aid. That aid included an average of \$21,324 per student directly from the College, for a total of \$28.8 million. An increasing amount of that total comes from general College revenues. In 2002-03, 30 percent of scholarship spending was generated by Oxy’s more than 300 endowed scholarships; last year, only 27 percent came from the endowment.

Proposed congressional cuts to Pell Grants and other federal aid programs for low- and moderate-income students could result in the loss of more than \$550,000, says Maureen McRae, director of financial aid. “Given the additional funds Oxy has already poured into financial aid to offset the impact of the recession, the proposed

cuts leave us facing two bad choices: Not enrolling as many low- and middle-income students, or abandoning our policy of meeting full financial need,” McRae says.

To generate additional revenue, the College acts as an entrepreneur. The bookstore generated \$1.47 million in revenues last year, more than 40 percent of which came from the sale of OxyWear and other non-textbook items. Occidental rents its facilities to summer programs, many of them for high-achieving youth, and to TV and film shoots throughout the year—provided they don’t interfere with academic programs. Conference services brought in \$514,000 last year; filming added another \$70,000; ticket sales to athletic events totaled \$74,000. Recent efforts to identify operating efficiencies have created some significant savings. And a planned solar array (“Array We Go,” Summer 2010) is expected to cut 11 percent from the College’s power bill.

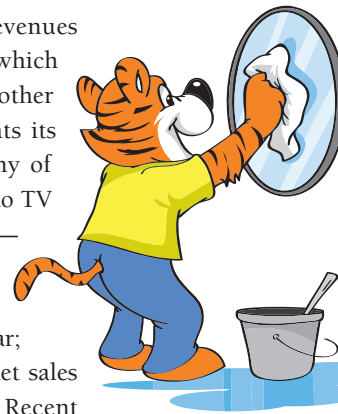
But the \$4.7 million generated by the College’s entrepreneurial efforts amounted to less than 10 percent of the \$49.5 million Occidental spent on salaries and benefits last year—almost 60 percent of the total budget. Adding to the complexity of the situation is the fact that despite the high cost of living in Los Angeles, faculty salaries have lagged behind those at peer institutions—a situation Veitch has pledged to change. At the same time, the president has repeatedly stressed the point that there will be no easy answers for the challenges ahead. Reducing the size of the student body—a move many faculty have called for—will mean budget cuts. “We need to use the strategic planning process, as [geology professor] Margi Rusmore has said, to look at what we do and how we can do it better and create a consensus on which we can base some tough decisions,” Veitch says.

Equally important are plans to push for a substantial increase in Occidental’s endowment. Jorge Gonzalez, vice president for academic affairs, dean of the College, and professor of economics, is fond of saying that Occidental outperforms its assets, when you compare the small size of its endowment with the successes of its students, faculty, and alumni. “Imagine what we could do with

Campus Dining cost of replacing lost silverware: **\$1,840** in lost forks, knives, and spoons in 2009-10 →



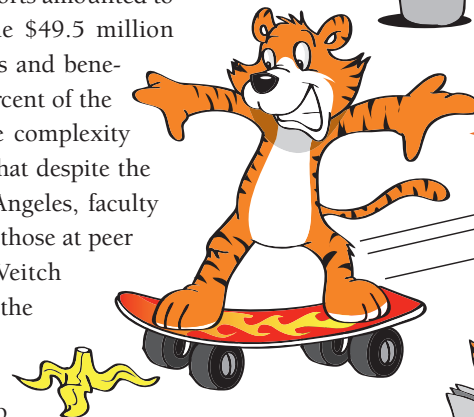
← Cleaning supplies (monthly): **\$9,000**



Annual campus water bill: **\$473,000** →



← Campus liability insurance policy: **\$642,000**



Cost of printing *Occidental Magazine*, per copy: **\$2.10** →



resources comparable to those at some of our peer institutions,” Veitch says.

Adding \$100 million to the endowment would add more than \$5 million to the operating budget each year. “Those are resources that would go a long way in addressing the need to increase student scholarships and improve faculty salaries,” he says. “Oxy is a remarkable institution with an enviable history that has a great deal of unrealized potential. We’re working hard to realize that potential, and I have no doubt we’ll succeed.”

—JIM TRANQUADA



## Newsmakers

■ **Kareem Fahim '93** has been covering the revolutions in Tunisia, Egypt, and Libya as a reporter for *The New York Times*. A diplomacy and world affairs major and English and comparative literary studies minor at Oxy, Fahim later completed his master's at Columbia University's Graduate School of International and Public Affairs. He grew up in Kuwait and Northern California, writing for *The Village Voice* before joining the *Times's* metro staff in 2005. Fahim was still writing cityside stories in January before trekking to the Mideast hot spots.

■ **The Ralph M. Parsons Foundation** has awarded a \$500,000 grant to Occidental for the renovation and expansion of historic Swan Hall, which houses one-third of the College's faculty. The Parsons grant will help preserve the historic fabric of the original Swan Hall, built in 1914 as one of the first structures on Oxy's Eagle Rock campus, and build a new addition that will more than double the space for six academic departments.

<http://www.oxy.edu/x11216.xml>



■ **Daisy Larios '07**, a career and information services library assistant for Drexel University's Hagerty Library, has been named one of 18 winners of the Luce Scholars Program for 2011-2012. A history major, she is the 14th Luce Scholar from Oxy since the award was initiated in 1974, and the College's third winner in three years.

<http://www.oxy.edu/x11215.xml>



■ **Corrine Casey '12** and her women's water polo teammates remained No. 1 nationally in NCAA Division III for a ninth straight week at press time in the Collegiate Water Polo Association's weekly poll. Voted on by a panel of coaches and administrators nationwide, the poll reflects the dominance of the Southern California Intercollegiate Athletic Conference: Seven of the top 10 DIII schools are SCIAAC members.

<http://www.oxy.edu/x11069.xml>

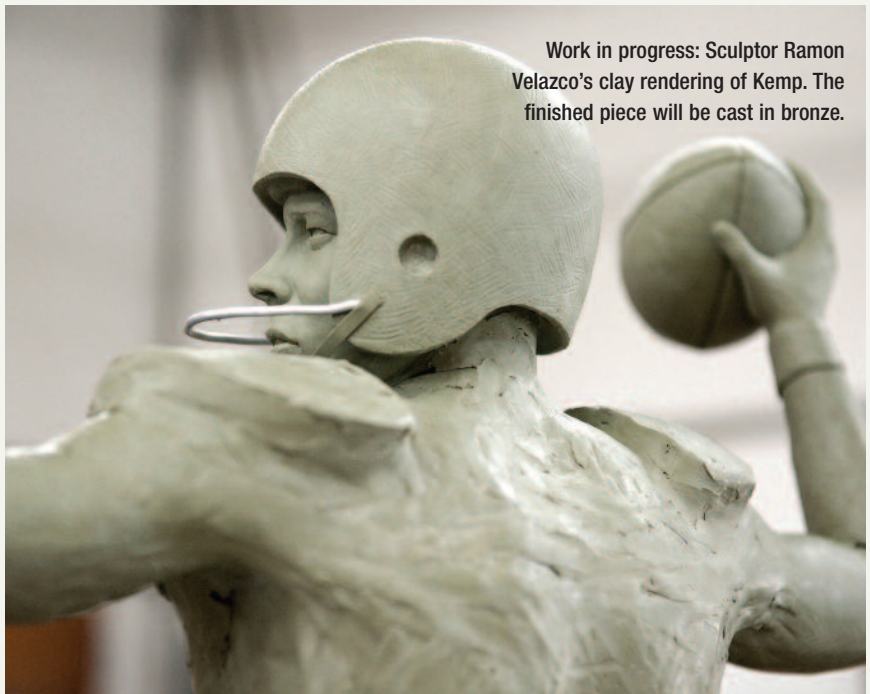
## First Look

# Celebrating Jack Kemp '57

OCCIDENTAL WILL CELEBRATE THE LIFE and career of Jack Kemp '57—the AFL football star whose pioneering support of supply-side economic theory played a key role in the modern conservative movement—with an April 29 statue unveiling on Patterson Field followed by a gala dinner. The events honoring one of Occidental's most illustrious graduates will recognize his accomplishments both as an athlete and policymaker.

The Kemp celebration will begin at 4:30 p.m. on Friday, April 29, with a public reception on Patterson Field, site of some of Kemp's earliest athletic feats. Among those joining master of ceremonies Mike Quint '58 at the Kemp statue unveiling will be wife Joanne (Main) Kemp '58, children Judith and Jimmy, and younger brother Dick Kemp '62, as well as Oxy teammates Doug Gerhart '58 and former NFL coach Jim Mora '57. After his standout career at Occidental, Kemp went on to a 13-year-career in the pros, leading the Buffalo Bills to four division titles and two AFL championships.

For more information about the April 29 celebration, visit <http://www.oxy.edu/kemp>.



Work in progress: Sculptor Ramon Velazco's clay rendering of Kemp. The finished piece will be cast in bronze.

Following the unveiling, a dinner will feature remarks by Dennis Patrick '73, former FCC chairman under Ronald Reagan. Patrick will speak about Kemp's career in public service: nine terms in Congress, Republican presidential candidate in 1988, secretary of Housing and Urban Development for President George H.W. Bush, and Bob Dole's vice presidential running mate in the 1996 presidential race.

## Notable/Quotable

**“I had a wonderful political science class. I still remember the name of the professor: Roger Boesche at Occidental College.”**  
—President Barack Obama ’83



responding to questions from the public in an interview moderated by YouTube’s Steve Grove following his State of the Union Address, Jan. 27.

<http://www.oxy.edu/x11090.xml>



**“It’s amazing how Eagle Rock has retained a small-town atmosphere while at the same time becoming a hotbed of hipsterism.”**

—Roger Guenveur Smith ’77

to writer Dan Kimpel, during his visit to Oxy as G. William Hume Fellow in the Performing Arts. The actor, director, and performer was awarded an honorary degree Feb. 4 following his one-man show in Keck Theater.

<http://eaglerock.patch.com>

**“Our program wins with class and loses with class. Caltech deserved to win tonight.”**  
—Brian Newhall ’83



Occidental men’s basketball coach, following the Beavers’ 46-45 victory over the Tigers on Feb. 22, ending a 26-year, 310-game SCIAC losing streak. The historic win made headlines internationally.

<http://www.oxyathletics.com>



**“Occidental is an important pipeline for JPL, providing us with scientists, engineers, and even members of our executive leadership.”**

—Dr. Charles Elachi

director of NASA’s Jet Propulsion Laboratory, at JPL on March 5 during Oxy’s 40th annual President’s Circle dinner. Elachi was awarded an honorary doctorate from Occidental for his accomplishments in space exploration.

<http://www.oxy.edu/x11090.xml>

## Faculty Longevity: Occidental’s Top Five



Caldwell



Rodes



Cleland



Studenmund



Wyatt

At 44 years and counting, Larry Caldwell has become Oxy’s longest-serving professor, surpassing the 43-year tenure of John E. Rodes (history, 1950-1993). After that, there’s a three-way tie for third, between Robert Glass Cleland (history and political science, 1912-1953) and present-day professors A.H. “Woody” Studenmund (economics, 1970-present) and Jean M. Wyatt (ECLS, 1970-present)—all with 41 years each. The College’s all-time leader among administrators? Clancy Morrison (director of food services, 1944-1989), with 45 years.

## Numerology

# 6,080

Applicants to Oxy for the Class of 2015, eclipsing the 2-year-old high of 6,013.

# \$700,000

Amount of a grant from the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation to support Occidental’s integrated planning process as it enters Phase 2, focusing on curricular planning in the humanities and social sciences.

<http://www.oxy.edu/x11220.xml>

# 8

Number of seniors initiated into Oxy’s Delta of California Chapter of Phi Beta Kappa on Feb. 9. The group includes Ben Burnett (an economics and chemistry double major from Portland, Ore.), Elise Burger (biochemistry; Salt Lake City), Alison Caditz (English and comparative literary studies and Spanish; Mercer Island, Wash.), Sarah Kushner (economics; Portland, Ore.) Leandra Lehmann (psychology; Sacramento), Joseph Mohorcich (politics; Soldotna, Alaska), Kelsey Newport (urban and environmental policy; Sisters, Ore.), and Thomas Stringer (biochemistry; Woodinville, Wash.).

<http://www.oxy.edu/x11167.xml>

# 4

Consecutive SCIAC championships won by Occidental’s women’s basketball squad, which finished 19-9. Senior Stephanie Babij and sophomore Makenzie Brandon were named to the All-SCIAC first team.

<http://www.oxyathletics.com>

# 85

Class agents who have joined the cause to support Oxy’s Annual Fund efforts, with a goal of 40 percent alumni participation.

<http://www.oxy.edu/x10784.xml>





# Raising *the* Bar

By RHEA R. BORJA  
Photos by MARC CAMPOS





**OPPOSITE:** "I love most things about beer," Odell says. **LEFT:** The recently expanded Odell Brewing Co. sits a half-mile from its original location in a converted grain elevator, circa 1915. **BELOW:** The award-winning 90 Shilling Ale and India Pale Ale are two of Odell's "classic" creations.



## Colorado-based microbrewer Doug Odell '75 taps into green technology to craft a better beverage

**D**OUg ODELL '75 MAY well be the Willy Wonka of beer. Inside the walls of a set of modern wheat and burnt orange buildings rising up from the windblown plain in Fort Collins, Colo., he unassumingly indulges his enduring passion for hand-crafted brews, experimenting and innovating with various ingredients and methods. Recent concoctions include Frik, a Belgian-style ale made with 3,500 pounds of cherries and hand-picked local raspberries; and Avant Peche, a traditional porter made with locally grown peaches and wild yeasts—limited-edition beers bottled and corked in caged 750-milliliter Champagne bottles.

That's pretty imaginative stuff for a guy who brewed his first batch of beer out of a friend's Eagle Rock bachelor pad in 1976, when such activity was still a federal offense. (The law changed in 1979.) Like other home brewers, Odell craved the full body and more complex taste of ales and lagers traditional to English, Belgian, and German breweries—a style of beer that was made in the United States before Prohibition. "When I home-brewed beer and brought it to parties, people loved it," he says. "So I kept making it."

Since 1989, Odell has realized his passion in the products of Odell Brewing Co., which has mushroomed from a three-person operation brewing beer with used dairy

equipment to a 64-person, environmentally and socially responsible company selling 16 beers in 10 states and the United Kingdom.

Odell beers such as the 5 Barrel Pale Ale, Cutthroat Porter, and the Scottish-style 90 Shilling Ale—the company's flagship brand—have won a slew of awards at beer festivals and accolades from beer geeks the world over ("The only problem was that it was so good I wanted to pour it on my cornflakes at breakfast," one English beer blogger wrote of 90 Shilling Ale). Odell himself judges beer at international competitions when he's not overseeing the company and contemplating the next new offering.

"We're selling on quality, innovation, and green practices," Odell says. "We're not about lower price. People see more value in a \$9 six-pack of craft brew than a \$6 six-pack of other beer."

By definition, craft breweries are small, independent, and traditional. According to the Brewers Association, an organization of independent American beer makers, they must be at least 75 percent locally owned, offer either an all-malt flagship beer or make 50 percent or more of their volume in all-malt beer, and produce fewer than 6 million barrels a year. When Odell Brewing opened, it was the fifth craft brewery in Colorado. Now 124 such enterprises are based in the Centennial State, which ranks fifth in the

country in craft breweries per capita. Nationwide, 1,600 craft breweries dot the landscape, and Odell ranks among the top 50 craft breweries by volume in the United States and No. 2 in Colorado.

While craft beer accounts for only 5 percent of the U.S. market, sales nationwide increased 12 percent in the first half of 2010—bucking a 2.7 percent decline in overall beer sales, according to data from the Brewers Association. Even though it costs more than the mass-produced light lagers made by Anheuser-Busch and Molson Coors, craft brew appeals to Americans' increasingly sophisticated palates with a variety of adventurous, full-flavored beers produced by Odell Brewing and its peers.

For instance, Odell's Bourbon Stout ages four months in barrels that once contained Kentucky Bourbon, while its Woodcut series showcases premium beer aged in hand-coopered virgin oak barrels. (A writer for the food and drinks site *Slashfood.com* raves: "If you find an extra bottle of Odell's Woodcut No. 4 floating around, snap it up. The results are transcendent: toffee, vanilla, earthy hops, and malty opulence.")

The company also makes a number of seasonal beers—the award-winning Red Ale in spring, the hoppy St. Lupulin extra pale ale in summer, and the malty Isolation Ale in winter. Odell's personal favorite? "I really





1



2

1. Inside the brew kettles lies the wort—a sugar-water mixture that is produced after milled grains and hot water are combined. 2. Odell looks in a brew kettle. The wort will be boiled and combined with fragrant hops, which add a slightly bitter taste. 3. Brewer Brent Cordle rinses out an oak barrel, which will be refilled with beer for aging.



4



5



3



6

4. Packaging technician Johnny Benson keeps an eye on the final stage of production as six-packs are boxed for shipping. 5. Bottles of India Pale Ale move speedily through the labeling machines. 6. Half barrels full of beer are stored in a giant cooler, ready for distribution. 7. Patrons pack Odell Brewery's Tap Room on a late Wednesday afternoon. Live music and a friendly atmosphere make for a must-see stop for people touring some of Colorado's 124 craft breweries, nine of which are in Fort Collins. 8. A sign advertising Odell's 5 Barrel Pale Ale overlooks downtown.



7



8

don't have one," he admits. "It all depends on the time of day and what I'm eating with it. I just see what catches my eye."

While Odell lives in a town that's home to sprawling Colorado State University, Oxy blood runs through his veins. His grandfather, Morgan Odell Sr. '17, was Occidental's chaplain and chairman of the philosophy and religion department from 1931 to 1942 before presiding over Lewis and Clark College in Portland, Ore. His parents, the late Morgan Odell Jr. '42 and Betty (Fletcher) Odell '42, met and wed at the College. And Doug and his older sister, Corkie, grew up a stone's throw from campus, on Ridgeview Road.

"As a kid, Doug was weird," says Corkie, now Odell Brewing's human resources director. "He and a friend would go dumpster diving and come back with all sorts of stuff. Then he would take those things apart to see how they worked."

Odell transferred to Occidental after a year and a half at Menlo College and majored in geology before switching to psychology. Aside from academics, a demanding track regiment and a busy social life ate up his free time. (At 58, Odell still has the rangy build and lithe energy of the track star he was at Oxy—two-time NAIA champ in the 440 hurdles and member of the 1600-meter relay team that still holds the school record of 3:07.6.) He eventually returned to geology, completing a second bachelor's degree at Sonoma State University in 1980.

Not one for a desk job, Odell worked 18-hour shifts as a firefighter for the U.S. Forest Service and cleaned the equipment at San Francisco's Anchor Brewing Co., one of the nation's first craft breweries, before starting his own landscaping business in Seattle. Having brewed his own beer ever since graduating from Oxy, Odell found that living in





The brains behind the beer: Corkie, Doug, and Wynne Odell relax in the company's renovated tap room.

Seattle—a mecca for craft brewing—further whetted his appetite.

In those formative days of home-brewing, it was difficult, if not impossible, to get the malt, barley, and other ingredients needed to make good beer. Forced to use inferior ingredients such as dried yeast and canned malt extract, Odell's early beer looked like a beer should: golden-colored, slightly carbonated, with a head of foam. As for the taste, "It was drinkable—a cross between apple cider and cheap Champagne," Odell says wryly.

But he had made leaps and bounds in his craft by 1989, tinkering with brewing processes and refining recipes until he had settled on the formulas for what would become 90 Shilling and Easy Street Wheat. Then he made the jump into the beer-making business. Together with his wife, Wynne, and Corkie, Doug started Odell Brewing in a 75-year-old converted grain elevator with \$135,000 borrowed from family and friends and an abiding belief in his skill and masterful touch as a brewmaster.

His family had just moved from brewery-saturated Seattle to start their business,

and knew no one in Fort Collins besides Corkie. "People thought we were crazy," recalls Odell, who made those early sales calls and deliveries out of his old mustard-colored Datsun pickup.

Beer-making is hard, backbreaking work. There's a lot of climbing, stirring, lifting, and cleaning. Shoveling out and sanitizing a 50-barrel mash tun—a large stainless steel tub that converts malt or meal and water to wort, a key component in beer-making, will get you in shape faster than any boot camp. Odell brewed the beer, and he and Corkie cleaned the equipment. Meanwhile, Wynne did the books at night and cared for their young children (Corey, now 23, and Riley, now 20) while working a full-time job as a financial analyst at Hewlett-Packard.

The Odells also had their hands full educating restaurants, bars, distributors, and customers about craft brews. "People didn't know what a microbrewery was," Corkie says. "I'd call some accounts about our beer, and they'd say, 'Is that something you concoct in a bathtub?'" Despite the risks, they felt confident the brewery would succeed.

"Doug is the kind of guy you want to get stuck on a desert island with; he's very mechanical," says Wynne, who married Doug in 1986 and now serves as company CEO. "I didn't have any concern that he would fail. I never once thought, 'What am I getting myself into?' We knew what our skills were."

She was right. Odell's beer caught on and word spread throughout the region. In 1990, the company sold 900 barrels, and double that number the following year. By 1994, sales of barrels had more than quadrupled to 8,100, and throughout this time, the beer was distributed in kegs. When Odell started bottling its beer in 1996, its revenue doubled in just one year, and volume grew by 60 percent to 16,000 barrels. Today, Odell's revenues are approaching \$15 million, and the company has expanded its distribution base to encompass Arizona, Colorado, Idaho, Kansas, Minnesota, Missouri, Nebraska, New Mexico, South Dakota, and Wyoming.

In focusing on the Rocky Mountain and Western Plains states, Odell Brewing opted to be a regional brewer rather than a national





**ABOVE:** When it's not snowy or icy, Doug and Wynne Odell commute via bike to company headquarters. Fort Collins is a bicycle-friendly community, with about 30 miles of paved bike trails. **RIGHT:** Odell stands next to 200 photovoltaic panels installed on the brewery's roof.

one because Odell likes the “be local, buy local” philosophy. (California is too far afield and poses other challenges—although that hasn’t stopped fans from buying Odell beer and shipping it back to the Golden State.) “I don’t want everything homogenous here in the United States,” Odell says. “We can’t be everything to everybody. If you go to England, beers are still regional there.”

The Odells believe in consuming resources wisely. So in 2010, when they expanded the brewery from 22,500 square feet to 45,000 square feet, they installed green-energy devices such as Solatubes, which use sunlight instead of electricity to light the warehouse; and 77 kilowatts worth

**“We’re selling on quality, innovation, and green practices,” Odell says—but not on lower price. “People see more value in a \$9 six-pack of craft brew than a \$6 six-pack of other beer.”**

of photovoltaic panels that provide close to 25 percent of the brewery’s peak energy demand. When temperatures dip below 40 degrees, a system turns off the beer-cooling system and blows in frigid outside air instead. Local farmers receive truckloads of spent grains for their animals, and porous paving stones in the parking lot capture and filter rainwater. True to their frugal nature, the Odells also recycled materials such as fixtures, lighting, and cabinets.

“We do have an impact on the environment, so it’s our responsibility to minimize



that as much as possible,” says Odell, who commutes six miles via bicycle to and from the brewing company as weather permits.


Another part of community responsibility is giving back and supporting local nonprofits and schools. Each month, co-workers (a term the Odells prefer to “employees”) choose three charities to receive revenues generated from the beer-tasting trays served in the brewery’s tap room. That amounts to \$1,500 to \$2,000 for each charity. The company also manages a grant program that gives micro-grants of \$1,000 to local nonprofits, and a “growing fund” that supports projects such as buying needed equipment for Colorado State University.

The liberal arts education Odell received from Oxy helps him view the business not just as a moneymaking venture, but also as a vehicle to empower its co-workers. The company holds quarterly meetings with the entire staff and has a five-person business team and a nine-person operations team, each member of whom has gone through a six-month management leadership program. And everyone has the opportunity to create his or her own signature brew through the company’s pilot system, Odell’s “portal

to beer Shangri-La,” the results of which circulate in the tap room weekly.

“I like creating an enormously collaborative team so decisions are not made in a vacuum,” Wynne says. “The involvement of everyone here is key to our culture.” In 2009, *ColoradoBIZ* magazine named Odell Brewing one of the best companies to work for in the state, noting, “In addition to traditional benefits, Odell supplies a weekly beer allotment to each employee.”

If that doesn’t make you want to spruce up your resume, consider this: After five years of employment, co-workers are treated to a week-long trip with the Odells to visit British breweries. The company also pays the education cost of those wanting to learn more about beer-making, and organizes an annual team-building and community trip. Over two days last year, in partnership with the Wildlands Restoration Volunteers, a Colorado nonprofit, the entire staff helped stabilize the banks of the Poudre River, which meanders through Fort Collins.

As Odell and his team continue to grow while experimenting and creating high-end innovative beers to supplement their regular offerings, another building expansion may be in the future. Not that Odell aspires to be a brewery magnate; at the end of the day, Wynne says, he’s still a “laid-back hippie.” 





*They R Who  
They R*

Covering the likes of Katy Perry, Ke\$ha, and Taylor Swift, Oxy sophomores Josh Erdman and Ben Klute have become cultural activists without setting foot outside of their dorm rooms

By DICK ANDERSON  
Photos by MARC CAMPOS





KoverBoyz's videos are shot in Erdman's room—in Erdman—"mainly because I don't want to lug my guitar and microphone around," he says. "It's become our signature," adds Klute, *left*.

**B**en Klute and Josh Erdman have played in front of few small crowds on campus—at last year's Apollo Night, and a few open-mike nights at A Taste of Oxy—but the College sophomores recently faced their most influential audience to date. They were asked to put together a workshop for the Los Angeles Media Reform Summit, held at Occidental on Feb. 26, on the topic *YouTube, Music, and Politics*. It's a subject they know well, as the nearly 1.1 million YouTube hits for their acoustic renderings of Katy Perry, Ke\$ha, Taylor Swift, and their Top 40 kinfolk will attest.

There's a pleasingly unpolished quality to a KoverBoyz video—no Auto-Tune tweaking, no Final Cut Pro finessing. A recording session might last 20 minutes, and songs are often knocked out in a single take. The occasional ambient sound even works its way into their videos, like the siren going off in the background of their "Can't Be Tamed" clip. "It was perfect," says Erdman, who is the

technophile of the two, a student of YouTube and an avid tweeter. He also has an open Facebook account, while Klute prefers to limit that segment of his social network to his real-world compadres. "When fans add Josh, they're able to find me," Klute says, but Erdman wants to keep things just as they are. While they started making KoverBoyz videos on a lark, the two students have become advocates for the LGBT community—and "because of the cause that we are promoting, it helps these teenagers we've never met to know that we are real people," Erdman says.

It was Facebook, in fact, where Erdman and Klute first fostered their relationship. On a page for admitted students for Occidental's Class of 2013, someone posted a questionnaire, and Erdman was the only person to profess himself as gay. After that, "Ben messaged me," Erdman recalls, "and we talked about what we thought the climate would be like at Oxy and other stuff."

Once the school year started, they began hanging out as friends. Then one day, Klute

recalls, "we were doing homework in Josh's room, and he pulled out his guitar and started playing." The videos were Erdman's idea. "You sing and I can play guitar," he said to Klute. "Why don't we start putting covers on YouTube?" They performed "Alejandro," a then-unreleased (but widely leaked) track from Lady Gaga's *The Fame Monster* EP—and posted the video online. It's a performance they quickly hid from public view. "It's absolutely dreadful," Klute says. "We watch it sometimes for comedic relief."

They soon posted better renditions of "Alejandro," as well as Gaga's "Bad Romance," under the name KoverBoyz—and then what began as "a procrastination tactic" started to amass a small viral following. "We got [YouTube user] reviews and subscribers," Klute says. "It was exciting."

As the hits piled up, Erdman and Klute found themselves attracting both admirers and "a lot of hater comments, too, which is cool," Erdman recalls. ("Are you guys dating?" was a frequent refrain. "Most definitely

not,” Klute replied in a video Q&A last March, with Erdman rolling his eyes and emphatically adding, “N-O.”)

And while they initially didn’t discuss their sexuality on their site, Erdman wore a shirt with the words “Legalize Gay” on “Alejandro” 2.0, posted in November 2009—and Klute wore the same shirt for their May 2010 rendition of Perry’s “California Gurls,” which remains their most popular video, with more than 115,000 hits to date. That, and their cover of Miley Cyrus’s “Can’t Be Tamed”—the one with the sirens—“put us on the YouTube map,” Erdman says.

KoverBoyz may well have remained undercover had it not been for an email from a *New York Times* reporter last October. In the wake of a rash of suicides by gay teenagers and young adults, Alex Hawgood began reporting a piece examining pop music. He was looking at a video online for Ke\$ha’s No. 1 single “We R Who We R”—a surprisingly empathetic song from the glitter-eyed pop singer with a party persona—and in the process, he came across Klute and Erdman’s cover version, which included the tag “Legalize Gay ‘cause we are who we are.”

The videos became “one of our biggest avenues to respond to all the tragedies with teen suicides,” Klute says. “We started tagging our videos with ‘Legalize Gay’ before the whole movement became so prominent.”

Hawgood sent them a message through their YouTube account, and they consented to an interview. Three weeks passed, and then they got an email from Hawgood saying the story was slated for publication Nov. 7.

The article went online Nov. 5—and two days later, Klute and Erdman’s picture (a screen capture from a YouTube video) was plastered on the front page of the Arts and Leisure section of the Sunday *Times* under the headline “For Gays, New Songs of Survival.” Klute and Erdman are quoted alongside Ke\$ha; columnist/author Dan Savage, founder of the It Gets Better Project to share stories of positivity with LGBT youth; and even Scissor Sisters frontman Jake Shears, aka Jason Sellards ’00, who attended Occidental as a freshman.

“The first day it came out it was all over Facebook,” says Klute. Ke\$ha tweeted the article to her million-plus followers, and the story was among the most circulated on the *Times* website that weekend. Their YouTube

traffic spiked for a couple of days—total views have nearly doubled since November—and the article had the additional impact of outing them to some family members.

When the *Times* story was published, a number of relatives “called my house and talked to my parents,” says Klute, who is from Eugene, Ore. “Their primary issue was not me being gay, but that they didn’t know about the article so they could look for it.”

“We didn’t know how it was going to be twisted or what kind of light we would be put in,” says Erdman, who is from Fresno. “I was pleased. I got a call from my grandma, and seeing the newspaper as she walked into Starbucks probably actualized it for her. I don’t know her thought process, but she said to me, ‘Well, now you are out to the world.’”

The more intangible effect of the article, and indeed of their videos, is the number of teens who might have been exposed to their message. “We don’t know how many kids might have seen our videos and realized, ‘This means I should be OK with myself.’”

With a few exceptions, KoverBoyz’s song selections have been pop anthems by female artists, reflecting the prevailing trends on the pop charts, where a handful of producers (Max Martin, Dr. Luke, RedOne) are dominating the Top 40. To keep the momentum going, Klute says, “We look for songs that are going to be released”—such as the new Britney Spears or Lady Gaga singles—and try to get their cover versions posted ahead of the curve. (In some cases, they’ve even anticipated the release of potential hit singles, recording “Firework” before Katy Perry’s song found its way to radio.)

Now they have a better microphone, which “makes it a lot easier to record,” Klute says. And they have applied for a YouTube partnership—a way to potentially monetize the traffic to their channel—although the website has a policy of not allowing cover songs into its partnership program “unless the artist has obtained full synchronization and performance rights.”

But a new chapter in the evolution of KoverBoyz began in March, with the posting of “Last First Kiss”—their first original song, which they wrote, produced, and recorded themselves over spring break at Erdman’s home in Fresno. The black-and-white video, with Erdman playing piano to accompany Klute’s vocals, attracted more than 1,100 hits

## Top of the Tops

With their YouTube acoustic catalog of covers, Oxy sophomores Josh Erdman and Ben Klute offer a crash course in pop music over the last 18 months or so. But if you’re new to their tunes (or can’t tell Lady Gaga from Lady Antebellum), where in the name of Ryan Seacrest do you start? Erdman and Klute share their five KoverBoyz favorites:

“Perfect,” Pink  
“We R Who We R,” Ke\$ha  
“Teenage Dream,” Katy Perry  
“TiK ToK,” Ke\$ha  
“Mine,” Taylor Swift

[www.youtube.com/KoverBoyz](http://www.youtube.com/KoverBoyz)

within 10 days—not quite one-tenth the total views for their recent cover of Gaga’s “Born This Way,” but a promising start.

KoverBoyz also has attracted the interest of a music producer for the Logo reality series “RuPaul’s Drag Race.” “He wants to work with us, and get our original content on iTunes,” Klute says. “We’re kind of in the midst of that, but for us, school comes first.”

Both musicians are active in the life of the College. Klute, who plans to major in economics, is a resident assistant in Braun. And as a Telefund manager for the Annual Fund, “I get to talk to a lot of incredible alumni,” he says. “For the most part, calls tend to revolve around what’s going on at Oxy. Politics dominates a lot of conversations.”

In addition to working for conference services, Erdman, who is looking at a major in economics or English, is involved in Oxy’s Queer Straight Alliance and Center for Gender Equity. “Where I went to high school, I worried what people would think of me if I was myself,” he says. “Since day one in college, I decided I was not going to put up with that anymore. I love how you can do that at Oxy.”

“I come from a very liberal and accepting community,” Klute adds, “and the amount of support that I’ve been met with at this institution—both socially and emotionally—has been pretty incomparable to any other system I have been immersed in. It’s shown me how much love resonates on this campus.”

As for the future of KoverBoyz, “It’s really one day at a time,” Klute says. Erdman adds: “If no one watched it, we wouldn’t do it.”



# KNOWING WHERE TO LOOK

By Dick Anderson  
Photo by Kevin Burke

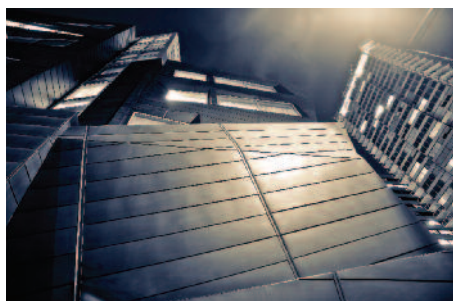
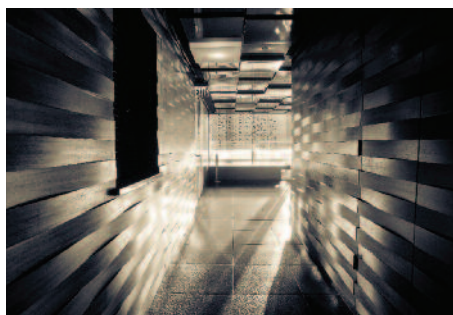






**LEFT:** *Orpheum*, as seen from the roof of the old May Co., located at Broadway south of 8th Street. Photographed on Nov. 7, 2009. Built in 1926, the theater's long and storied history spans a pre-*Oz* Judy Garland 1933 vaudeville performance to a recent location shoot for "American Idol."

Native Angeleno **Barbara J. Miller '68** has scoured the streets of Los Angeles for location shoots for 27 years—and her images for an exhibit examine the metamorphosis of the city's downtown



**T**HE DAILY ROUTINE OF A LOCATION SCOUT is anything but predictable. "It's like being on call all the time to start work immediately," says Barbara J. Miller '68 of Pasadena, who has worked in film, television, commercials, and print since 1983. "In the old days when I started, there weren't cellphones, and you'd always be looking for a pay phone."

For director James Gartner's 2006 feature *Glory Road*—a period piece about the 1966 NCAA national champion Texas Western men's basketball team—Miller looked high and low at everything from motel rooms to restaurants to basketball courts in El Paso, Texas, as well as pre-Katrina New Orleans: "It had wonderful locations that could stand in for various locations around the country," she says. More than a decade earlier, working with Oscar-winning director Francis Ford Coppola, Miller scouted locales for an Oldsmobile spot filmed outside Las Vegas. And long

**ABOVE:** *Old May Co.*, Nov. 7, 2009. View from the roof of the venerable department store, which opened its doors as Hamburger & Sons in 1908, was bought and renamed May in 1923, and was vacated by the retailer in the 1980s.

**TOP LEFT:** *Elevate*, 811 Wilshire Blvd., Nov. 28, 2010. **BOTTOM LEFT:** *Concerto*, Flower south of 9th Street, Oct. 27, 2010.

**OPPOSITE:** Miller goes on location with our own Kevin Burke. Her photos will be included in *Downtown: Incomplete L.A.*, at the Terrell Moore Gallery (1221 S. Hope St., Los Angeles) from April 16-30. For details, visit [www.locationmanagers.org](http://www.locationmanagers.org).





photography that comes with the territory. Her photos were recently selected for *Downtown: Incomplete L.A.*, which opens April 16 for a 15-day run at the Terrell Moore Gallery on Hope Street. The juried exhibit showcases the work of five members of the Location Managers Guild of America, including Miller.

The overriding theme of the show, she says, is “What is downtown Los Angeles going to become?” She trained her camera on many of the city’s landmark buildings, some of which have been transformed into condominiums or loft housing. Her work has given her a new appreciation for the City of Angels: “Before I began scouting,” she says, “my knowledge of L.A. was pretty much limited from downtown to Hollywood and Santa Monica, and then Occidental and Eagle Rock.”

A native Angeleno, Miller studied at John Burroughs Junior High and the old L.A. High School (“some of the city’s classic brick buildings”) before enrolling at Oxy as a prospective math major. After she became friends with an art major and got a few classes under her belt, though, she changed her major to fine arts, with an emphasis on sculpture.

Miller studied under professors Bob Hansen and George Baker, back when the studio was located in the Art Barn (today’s Cooler). In the mid-1960s, though, for a female student to get access to the Art Barn, she would need a male student to unlock it, “because only the men were allowed to check out keys—but they would never show up,” she recalls. Undeterred, Miller would simply climb in the building through a window and go about her work. (Eventually, she adds, women were allowed to check out keys.)

After graduating, Miller rented a small studio space in a building on Eagle Rock Boulevard, working alongside a couple of artists who practiced their craft on the ground floor. “Those were the days before it became hip and cool,” much less legal, “to live in lofts,” she recalls. Miller traveled, studied, painted, and took photographs in Asia and Europe before she turned an avocation into a lifelong career.

Not that scouting was her first choice. “I was thinking of going into art conservation,” Miller recalls, “and it was pretty depressing, because the process was like becoming a doctor. I would have to get a second B.A. in chemistry and go to graduate school in order to compete for jobs in museums at secretarial wages.”



**TOP LEFT:** *Bank District Window*, 4th Street west of Main Street, June 4, 2010. One of Miller’s favorite photos in the exhibit.

**TOP RIGHT:** *New Million*, Old Fire Station 23 on 5th near Los Angeles Street, Oct. 19, 2009.

**ABOVE:** *Old Rex*, Janes Oviatt Building, Olive south of 6th Street, Nov. 28, 2010.

**RIGHT:** Miller relaxes in Busuanga, Palawan, Philippines, in January 2000.

before she worked with filmmaker Tony Scott on *Man on Fire* (2004), she scouted locations for *Tom Mix* and *Pancho Villa*, Scott’s proposed feature about the Hollywood cowboy and the Mexican revolutionary general. (Brother Ridley, coincidentally, was developing his own *Villa* project at that time. Neither film was ever made.)

“Being a location scout is a natural fit for me,” says Miller, who enjoys the scouting, researching, and



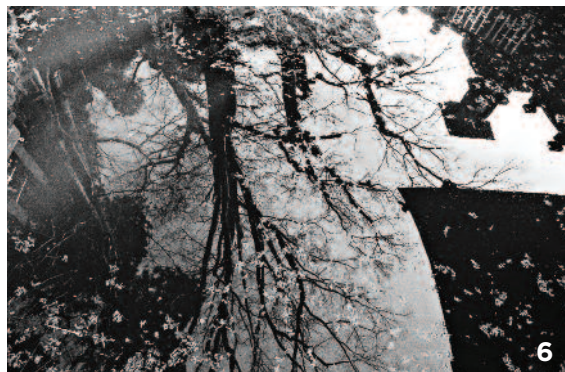
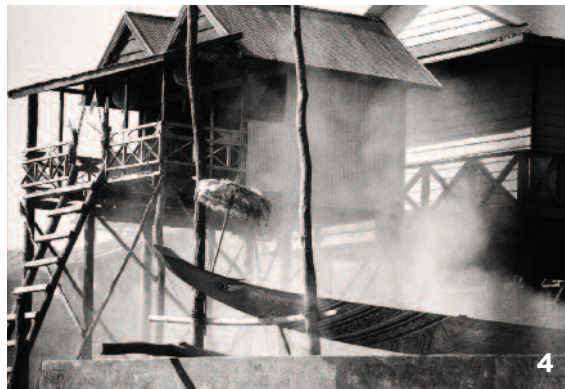


As it happens, though, Miller had a friend whose boyfriend worked as a location scout. He was getting out of that work to complete a documentary about Berkeley in the 1960s, she says, “and he offered to train me as a location scout and began recommending me to his clients. There was a lot of winging it in the beginning, and I would call him asking, ‘Where can I find such-and-such?’ But it worked.”

The 1980s and 1990s were a great time to be in the business, with an abundance of work and initially only a few dozen professional commercial scouts—and out of that group, Miller says, “maybe 10 were really good.” Later the commercial location managers became unionized, which opened the avenues for people who worked in TV and film production to join their ranks. Though more commercials are filmed abroad these days, budgetary constraints have sharply reduced the amount of travel involved to do her job.

*Downtown: Incomplete L.A.* is the third LMGA exhibit to showcase Miller’s camerawork. She was a contributor to *In the Zone*, a 2003 show of photos all shot within the confines of L.A.’s “Thirty-Mile Zone” (the studio-friendly radius fanning out from the intersection of Beverly and La Cienega). For the 2008 show *Concentric Circles: Metro L.A. Revealed*, Miller submitted a collection shot along the city’s Red Line: “Within that sphere of motion and change,” she observed, “we can sometimes find a safe place for reflection and stillness.”

Miller has scouted the Oxy campus numerous times, although the campus has yet to show up in any of her jobs. Of all of the College’s picturesque, Myron Hunt-designed qualities, what stands out most to her? “The steps,” she says—and Miller knows best. □

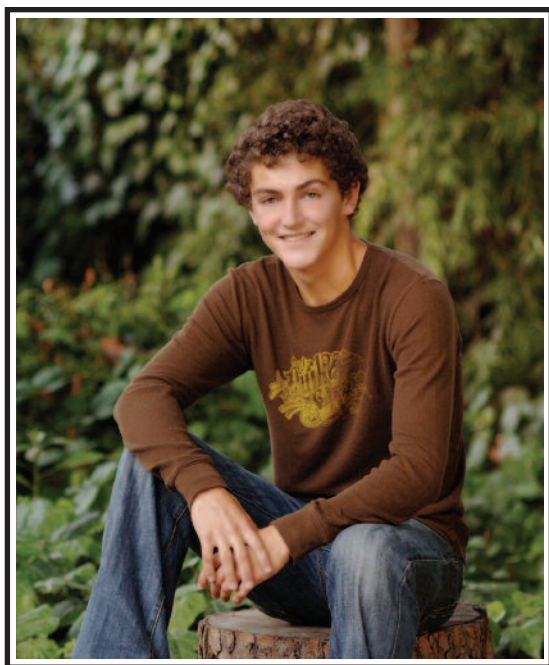


- Miller has done extensive traveling in Asia for both location scouting and pleasure, camera always in hand.
1. *Xiahe 9, Monks’ Room.* Taken while Miller enjoyed yak butter tea with young monks and an old woman in Xiahe, a Tibetan town in China.
  2. *Xiahe 7.* Monks walk outside the temple as a light snow falls in Xiahe. Both photos were taken in October 2002.
  3. *Upper Nam Ou 1.* Traveling back to Muang Ngoi after buying a duck for dinner in Laos (December 2006).
  4. *Kampong Phluk 1* shows buildings on stilts in the flood plain of Tonle Sap, located near Siem Reap, Cambodia (December 2006).
  5. *Ban Nam Yang 2.* Meeting villagers in Ban Nam Yang, an Akha village near Luang Namtha, Laos (December 2006).
  6. *Naritisan 1* captures the reflection in a pond at Naritisan temple on a crisp New Year’s Day (Jan. 1, 2007).



Bob Okerblom '77 will never get over the loss of his son, Eric, who was struck and killed by a distracted driver in July 2009 while riding his bike. But a cross-country odyssey in Eric's memory may spare the lives of others

# Watching the Wheels



BY ANDY FAUGHT  
PHOTOS BY MAX S. GERBER

*Like Dante, in my middle years I have lost my way. The spirituality, harmony, values, and structure of my former life have been swept away by the killing of my 19-year-old son, Eric. I am left adrift on a sea of dark currents and noxious winds. Without direction or destination, I wander the outer circles of hell. Although surrounded by loving family, friends, and community, I am alone in a lonely place. As I begin this journey to honor my son, I hope to also find some way to emerge from this abyss. So from now until the finish, I will pedal for the dead.*

—from Bob Okerblom's blog, Feb. 27

**B**OB OKERBLOM '77 NEVER pictured himself traveling this road. From San Diego to St. Augustine, Fla., he pedals his bicycle—through memories of things lost and vistas of a future he never imagined. In two months he expects to come to the end of a land he hopes will have taken a few moments to listen. The journey, which he started Feb. 27, is a meditation, a plea for tougher distracted driving legislation, and a father's tribute to his late son.

"This is my gig. I have to do something," says Okerblom, a Santa Maria physician who







Okerblom (shown outside his home in Santa Maria on Feb. 22, five days prior to the start of his ride) had Eric's pedals built into his touring bike. **OPPOSITE:** Eilene Okerblom's favorite picture of her late son. "I think you can actually see who Eric was," she writes. "It is true: A picture is worth a thousand words."



**RIGHT:** Bob Okerblom clowns with daughter Jenna and sons Eric and Ryan at their Santa Maria home in a 2007 photo.

**BELOW LEFT:** Eric and his mother, Eilene, before his senior prom in 2008. **BELOW RIGHT:** Bob busses Eric following his graduation from St. Joseph High School in 2008. A sophomore molecular biology major at UC Berkeley, "Eric was committed to improving our world," Bob writes. "He was the rare, enlightened person you would want for a friend."



is taking leave from his practice. "I'm trying to be the type of man my son would have been proud of."

Eric Okerblom, 19, was a Renaissance man in the making. A sophomore molecular biology major at UC Berkeley, he tended carnivorous plants; raised bees; and played violin, piano, and guitar. Twice he aced his SAT verbal exam. He was a National Merit Honor Scholar; friends called him "Yoda" at a young age because of his uncommon wisdom.

Eric was in his third week of training for Berkeley's cycling club and riding on a country road east of his Central Coast hometown when he was struck and killed by a distracted driver on July 25, 2009. "This beautiful young life is gone because someone was doing something stupid behind the wheel," says mother Eilene Okerblom, a hospice nurse who has not returned to work since.

The driver who hit Eric—19 herself at the time of the crash and a former elementary school classmate—pled guilty to misdemeanor vehicular manslaughter and was sentenced to three years of supervised probation and 100 hours of community service. She has not said what caused her distract-

tion, but a later subpoena of her phone records revealed that she had been texting just before of the collision. According to the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, the under-20 group is responsible for the highest proportion of distracted driver deaths: 16 percent.

After the accident, Bob Okerblom went to the young woman's home. Best friend Seth Cohen '77 was there that day, accompanying the family first as they picked up Eric's ashes from the crematorium. From there, Okerblom needed to make peace with the person who took his son's life. Cohen braced his frail friend as they walked to the front door of her home. "I gave her a hug and told her to forgive herself," Okerblom says. "She had taken this tremendous good from the world, and she needed to find a way to replace that."

Cohen regards Okerblom's gesture as sacrosanct. "That was God doing that," he says of the meeting. "I'm a father of two, and if someone took one of my children, I can't quite imagine doing such a thing."

The visit, however, didn't bring solace to Okerblom. "I don't think she heard the mes-

sage," he says. "She's continued to maintain this was an unavoidable accident rather than a human distraction." The incident occurred on a straight road with 550 feet of unobstructed visibility, according to the California Highway Patrol.

Eric's death highlights a growing epidemic on American roadways. In 2009, the NHTSA reported 5,474 deaths on U.S. streets and highways caused by distracted driving. An additional 448,000 motorists were injured by drivers who were using cellphones and texting, or those diverted by in-vehicle technologies and portable electronic devices.

It's a grim story to which Bob Okerblom wants to bring immediate attention, particularly given the escalating nature of such incidents. The same NHTSA report says the proportion of fatalities associated with driver distraction increased from 10 percent in 2005 to 16 percent in 2009. And experts suggest statistics understate the problem because police data often don't cite driver distraction as a crash cause.

To date, only Washington, D.C., and eight states, including California, prohibit motorists from using handheld cellphones while driving. Thirty states and the District of Columbia ban text-messaging while driving, with 11 of those states having enacted their laws in 2010.

Okerblom chose his route in large part because of NHTSA findings that more drivers in Southern states (1 percent) use hand-held electronic devices than motorists in the Midwest (0.2 percent) or the West (0.5 percent). Additionally, most of the states along his route—Arizona, New Mexico, Texas, Louisiana, Mississippi, Alabama, Georgia, and Florida—lack comprehensive legislation targeting distracted driving. Some have none.

Life without their youngest child has been an uneasy adjustment for Okerblom and his wife. The couple married 27 years ago and also have a daughter, Jenna, who is studying biology at UC San Diego. Okerblom has another son, Ryan, by his first wife, Danni McKim '78. Ryan will join his dad for the Louisiana stretch of the ride.

"After Eric died, it's this ordeal," Okerblom says. "You go back to your office, and you're doing the same thing each day. You're pretending your kid never existed. Life just goes on. I needed to do something different, something I've never tried."

A cross-country bike ride made sense. The morning after Eric died, Okerblom had planned on joining his son for a 10-mile jaunt from Santa Maria to Guadalupe, a small town set amid the Guadalupe-Nipomo Dunes. It was to have been his first ride in decades. "I'm a doctor and have worked with death for 30 years, but I have to say I've never understood it until now," Okerblom says. "It's life-changing to lose a child. I have had so many parents whose children I've had to tell had cancer. It's hard to say how this changes you. On one hand, I feel more pain for people; on the other hand, I accept that that's just part of life. It's been difficult.

"It probably makes me a better doctor," he adds. "But at such a cost."

In addition to biking with his dad, Eric was planning to join a high school buddy to hit golf balls at the driving range the day after he was killed. Jeremiah Palmerston and Eric met when both were freshmen at St. Joseph High School in Santa Maria. The pair regularly hung out and frequently discussed subjects ranging from philosophy to calculus—typical guy talk. Once, during a particularly fruitless surfing outing to Pismo Beach, the two sat atop their boards waiting for waves that never came. They passed the time by discussing what kinds of bacteria lurked in the water. "We were pretty much nerds, so we got excited about stuff like that," says Palmerston, a junior cognitive science major at UC San Diego. "For both of us, I feel it was an intellectually stimulating friendship."

On Feb. 27, Okerblom left Dog Beach in San Diego under blue skies and to the encouragement of 20 supporters. He is chronicling his trip in a blog located at [eofoundation.net](http://eofoundation.net), the foundation he and his wife created in their son's name. Joining Okerblom along the way are a handful of Occidental alumni, including Moe Bell '77, a Scottsdale, Ariz., physician who connected with him in Blythe and pedaled more than 400 miles to Lordsburg, N.M. In Arizona, the pair met with U.S. Rep. Steve Farley (D-Tucson). Farley is the author of House Bill 2426, which would prohibit minors from using cellphones while driving, including hands-free devices. He also plans to develop a bill that would put limitations on text messaging. Past efforts have been blocked by Republican opposition.

At Oxy, Okerblom and Bell lived together in Norris Hall along with Roscoe Williams

'78, a Phoenix dentist, and Cohen, a psychiatrist in Seattle, who rode with Okerblom in Arizona from Salome to Globe.

"You shouldn't be texting while driving—it seems so obvious to anyone who can walk and chew gum," Williams says after finishing a 55-mile stretch in Wickenburg, Ariz., on March 5. "But it doesn't seem to be that way here in Arizona. It's a contrary attitude. Bob's a great guy, and he did a great job with Eric. It's an honor to help him."

Bell, a chemistry major at Oxy, also lived with Okerblom when both attended medical school at USC. "Bob's whole life has been totally torn apart by this," Bell says of Eric's

death. "This is his way to do something to honor his son and heal his psyche. I want to support him—to share part of the experience and raise awareness." But he admits to feeling concern for his friend: "Cycling solo across the country is a dangerous thing."

Okerblom has considered the risks, but is undeterred. "I don't have a death wish, but I don't have a fear of death anymore," he says. "I have no fear of someone hitting me. I hope that doesn't happen. I have a daughter and a son, and I have responsibilities." He will only ride during the day and will do so wearing bright clothing. He paid \$5,000 for a custom-made titanium touring bike that



Days before Bob Okerblom sets out on his ride, wife Eilene—Eric's mother—struggles to come to terms with her loss: "Whatever words I can use to express my anger, they just fall short."





LEFT: Day 11 of the ride, on March 9. “The desert has changed a lot since I lived here almost 30 years ago,” Okerblom blogs. “I don’t recognize the place I once called home.” BELOW: Day 18: Leaving Las Cruces, N.M., with a local bike club. “The vast majority of motorists are very considerate of bicyclists,” he blogs later that day, but some drivers are “aggressive and hostile. They try to intimidate and frighten the cyclist. ... While ‘Turn the other cheek’ is a good axiom, on a bike it takes some effort to resist giving them the finger.”



can carry up to 80 pounds of gear. He plans to average 65 to 70 miles a day, sleep in hotels at day’s end, and rest one day each week.

Despite having already enrolled at UC San Diego, Okerblom changed direction and came to Oxy to be with his two brothers, John ’74 and Bill ’75, both of whom also practice medicine in Santa Maria. Unlike his son, who chose Berkeley for its large size, Okerblom preferred the intimacy of Oxy. He says the College shaped who he is today. “There’s no question about that,” he adds. “Having a small-college liberal arts education, that’s who I am.”

**“I’m a doctor and have worked with death for 30 years, but I have to say I’ve never understood it until now.”**

But for now, bringing attention to distracted driving frames his being. Okerblom is armed with statistics he hopes to share with media and others he meets on his ride. “When you’re texting, the average person takes their eyes off the road for 4.6 seconds. Imagine how far you’re going in 4.6 seconds,” he says. “In California right now, 7 to 8 percent of drivers are using a hand-held device. Almost one in every 12 cars is a threat to you, your family, and people you love.”

Viewed another way, distracted driving can be as dangerous as drunk driving. Using a cellphone while driving—even a hands-free device—delays a driver’s reactions as much as having a blood-alcohol concentration of

0.08 percent, according to research by the University of Utah. “How many of us parents would give our 16-year-old kid a six-pack of beer and send them out on the road?” Okerblom asks. “We have to approach this socially, legally, and with technology.”

Since Eric’s death, Okerblom has joined forces with organizations such as Impact Teen Drivers and FocusDriven—Advocates for Cell-Free Driving. He also is advocating software that would prevent motorists from receiving a phone call or text message while driving. And Okerblom is calling for tougher penalties in states with legislation targeting distracted driving. Though California law requires hands-free devices for those who talk while driving, the first-offense fine of \$20 is “gutless,” he says.

Last fall, during a national summit on distracted driving, U.S. Department of Transportation Secretary Ray LaHood shared Eric’s story as a cautionary tale; a video featuring Eilene and Bob Okerblom taped at the summit can be viewed on the DOT website [distracted.gov](http://distracted.gov). “I hate Eric being a ‘poster child’ for distracted driving, but I don’t know what else to do with my anger,” Eilene says.

While she also has recorded a public service announcement about the dangers of texting and driving, Eilene remains lukewarm about her husband’s bike ride. She’s always thought cycling to be a high-risk activity, and she wonders if she could have done more to protect Eric, such as asking him to wear brighter clothing or urging him to take mirrors on his ride. “Everything is a calculated risk, but I do think on a bicycle you’re incredibly vulnerable,” she says.

*Yesterday I completed a thousand miles, or a mil miles. The journey has been good for me, opening my eyes to the love and support of family and friends. It has also been a time to reflect on the fragile and transient nature of our life on Earth. I have pedaled past forgotten ruins, abandoned towns, and disintegrating homes. Just as we use the word mile without thought of Roman military maneuvers, the endeavors of our lives will soon be forgotten. The meaning that we derive from our lives must come from our inner satisfaction and relationships.*

—March 18 (Day 20), from Van Horn, Texas

Bob Okerblom finds comfort in some of his last memories of his son. The weekend before he died, Eric joined his dad for a backpacking trip in the Sierra Nevada’s Virginia Lakes wilderness. Eric grabbed his camera to capture the moment, snapping artistic shots of the forest reflecting off the water. Bob later framed several of the pictures and hung them in his office.

That same trip, as father and son hiked, Bob had an epiphany. “I noticed for the first time that he was so much stronger than me,” he recalls. “Here this boy is 19 years old, and the pupil has surpassed the master.” Somewhere between San Diego and St. Augustine, Bob Okerblom isn’t riding alone. ■

Freelance writer Andy Faught lives in Fresno. He wrote “Golden Compass” in the Winter issue.



Martha spoke her first word two months shy of her third birthday.  
Now she is 8—singing in chorus, performing in talent shows,  
and preparing to find her own special niche in the world

READY, SET...  
“GO!”

By Christen Thompson '90  
Photos by Sara Rubinstein



**M**ARTHA CROUCHES ON THE floor of her bedroom, flipping the pages of a board book compulsively. She barely stops to look at the pictures, and when she gets to the end, she flips the book back to the beginning and starts the process over. Gradually she begins making a sort of low-pitched whine. I'm not sure how to interpret the sound at first, but the more she flips, the more frustrated and insistent it becomes. I try to intervene, reading words, identifying pictures, throwing more and more language at her. My efforts escalate her frustration as she continues to flip the pages.

Ultimately, Martha melts down, fussing and crying, still trying to accomplish something that I cannot figure out. This scene plays out time and again, and no matter what I try to remedy or avert her frustration, it always ends up the same. What I find most upsetting is that I am unable to help my child, unable to make her happy. Eventually my husband Chris and I remove all the board books from Martha's room. That doesn't make her happy, either, but it alleviates my anxiety over just the sight of those books.

That was the first sign Chris and I had that something might be "wrong" with our daughter. She clearly wanted her toys to do something they were not designed to do, and the end result was usually a tantrum that we were unable to fix. We reported this to her pediatrician at her 1-year check-up—and combined with the fact that she wasn't talking, making meaningful vocalizations, imitating us, or pointing, our doctor made the referral to Early Intervention.

At 21 months, Martha was diagnosed with Pervasive Developmental Disorder—Not Otherwise Specified, which falls under the umbrella of Autism Spectrum Disorder. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention estimate that 1 in 110 children in the United States have ASD, whose hallmark feature is impaired social interaction. Other symptoms may include avoiding eye contact, difficulty understanding emotions, delayed speech, repeating words or phrases over and over, and unusual responses to sensory input. There is no single known cause.

Although not a huge surprise, the diagnosis confirmed what we were beginning to

suspect anyway, that our child would never be like other children. Instead of all the dreams we had for our daughter, we would have to face a life of therapy and daily frustration over the most mundane tasks.

A few months after Martha's diagnosis, we moved from Boston to Minneapolis, choosing the suburb of Edina largely based on its excellent public school system. At age 2 1/2, Martha worked with the special ed teachers on something called the Picture Exchange Communication System, where she would use small, laminated pictures to communicate. There was a picture representing the words "I want" that she would have to pair with "juice," "a snack," or "the ball," to get what she wanted.

We used our own pictures at home, taking photos of every imaginable item in our house that she might be interested in, from her favorite water bottle to her "Elmo's World" videos and even the local playground. By tapping each picture or handing it to us, she got her needs met. It was all functional communication, but it served to greatly reduce her frustration when she learned that she had some control over her world.

A week before Martha spoke her first word at 34 months, the speech pathologist had warned us that it was a real possibility she might never talk. The image of my child spending her life hauling around an unwieldy collection of pictures for communication was excruciating. How could her life ever be normal? But one day as she sat at the top of a slide, Chris said to her, "Ready, set ..." In the second that he paused, Martha supplied the word "Go!" And off she went.

Over the next four years we would try out a number of different interventions aimed at different behaviors, including Applied Behavioral Analysis therapy as well as music, speech, and occupational therapy. For two years she attended Pediatric Autism Communication Therapy, a center-based program aimed at developing social communication. We worked for a year with a private consultant on a therapy called Relationship Development Intervention. We even participated in an eating therapy group designed to address her picky eating habits and the intense sensory issues that seemed to prevent her from eating a normal diet.

In addition to the therapies that dealt directly with Martha, Chris and I attended



Christen, Martha, and Chris Dall at their home in Minneapolis.



classes and workshops and read endlessly about ASD and its attendant characteristics and the countless methods for intervention. We learned a whole new language, watching for Martha to practice “joint attention,” to “reference” us in uncertain situations, helping her with “emotional regulation.”

We came to understand what is meant by such terms as social cognition, mirror neurons, and theory of mind. It consumed our lives. There were days when Martha seemed to be making great progress, and others when she seemed poorly connected to her world. On those days I was in a constant state of panic, certain that my beautiful daughter was destined to a solitary life where she would never understand typical emotions and relationships that other people take for granted.

For her last year of preschool, Martha was in a combined class, with half of the students from the family center preschool program and half from the special education program. The children from the special education program had a variety of issues, not just autism spectrum disorders, so the class was a wide mix of kids with varying social skills. I hoped that Martha would learn to imitate some of the more socially engaged children and learn to cope with some of the more disruptive kids.

One day her preschool teacher told me that Martha voluntarily got up in front of the class to sing “On Top of Spaghetti.” She was very giggly about the meatball lyric, which made her classmates laugh, and their feedback prompted her to sing and laugh even more. Looking back on this now, I think it is one of the earliest pictures of who Martha truly is. She loves attention, loves to entertain people and be part of a group. She can be silly and playful, and although she doesn’t always know how to engage with other kids or how to maintain a conversation, I love that she seems to easily draw other kids to her with her happy personality.

The summer before Martha started kindergarten we stopped occupational therapy and the bi-weekly social communication classes. I signed her up for swim lessons and tried to structure her summer with activities that any other 6-year-old would do. I decided it was time to test life without therapies, a life where we just coped with disturbances without a team of consultants.



**LEFT:** Card games are very popular with Martha. **BELOW:** Martha, holding family pet Carson, loves dogs almost as much as she loves music.

In kindergarten, no one would be holding Martha’s hand all day—and in a way, no one would be holding my hand anymore, either. It felt like a test for us both, one that required that I take a huge leap of faith, trusting that she would be able to navigate through a new world, for the most part, on her own. It helped that she loved her newfound independence and was quick to learn. But there were still areas where I knew she was totally unaware of how the world worked, and I was going to have almost no ability to control those situations.

Since Martha started kindergarten 2 1/2 years ago, I have had to replace the detailed progress reports from teachers with my own vague guidelines for assessing how things are going for her at school. I always assume that “no news is good news”—if I don’t hear otherwise from her teachers, everything is fine. Only once in kindergarten did her teacher email me to report a problem.

It sometimes troubles me to know so little about each day’s activities. Martha is not always a reliable source of information about what goes on at school because she doesn’t have the inclination to see beyond the literal. She can tell me what she did on the playground, but offers no details about conversations or feelings. I rely on intuition to figure out her emotional state, whether or not she is anxious about school, and we go through phases when her anxiety is clearly heightened—and I never am sure of the cause.

Generally, I assume if she looks forward to school, then all must be well in her world. I rarely know who she spends time with or how the kids treat her. Martha refers to every classmate as her “best friend,” and while I love that she feels so accepting of everyone, I also worry that if everyone is her best friend then no one is truly special.

Martha’s former therapies have also been replaced with extracurricular activities



typical of other school-age kids. She plays soccer through our city league; she started piano lessons at age 6 and took up violin a few months ago; she participated in a children’s choral group through community education for two years and she enthusiastically entered herself into the school talent show last year, doing not one but two acts. And the minute her acts were done, she started planning her work for this year’s show, including what outfit she will wear. Our family is able to go on vacations and take family outings that would have been impossible when she was a toddler.

The days when our lives revolved around autism seem distant now, and although I am constantly aware of her differences, I also see the potential for her to find a really special niche in the world that will be all her own. Martha may not be the child we bargained for, but she might be better than the one we dreamed of, with or without an autism diagnosis. □

*Christen Thompson '90 is a stay-at-home mom, an avid reader, writer, and gardener, as well as an aspiring triathlete. She studied diplomacy and world affairs at Occidental and received her master's in library and information science from Simmons College in 2003.*



“The work of art is not just the two weeks of exhibition—it’s all the 10 or 20 years leading up to it,” Christo told a Thorne Hall audience Feb. 23.



Photos by Marc Campos

## An Irreplaceable Moment

Through their temporary “works of art of joy and beauty,” Christo and his late wife, Jeanne-Claude, have secured an enduring legacy—and their installations are cause for an Oxy celebration

World-renowned artists Christo and his late wife Jeanne-Claude—whose large-scale, temporary outdoor artworks have redefined the meaning and democratic possibilities of public art—were honored by Occidental on Feb. 23 in front of a large Thorne Hall audience.

“Today we are proud to honor your courage and integrity as artists, your ability to conjure the ephemeral into the iconic, and for inspiring, outraging, and fascinating the world for 50 years,” said President Jonathan Veitch before he and trustee Eileen Brown ’73 awarded the artists honorary degrees.

Veitch hailed the couple’s work as “nothing short of glorious: One discovers—or rather rediscovers—the play of wind and light, form and nature.” The long bureaucratic maze that must be negotiated for each work to be realized creates “a debate about intentions and meaning, discussions about



**LEFT:** Veitch congratulates Christo, a longtime friend of his father-in-law. **RIGHT:** “Artists are totally irrational,” Christo told a class of Oxy students.



art and its transformative capacities,” he said. “Christo and Jeanne-Claude have made that debate the very essence of their art.”

After a brief speech, Christo presented a slideshow of his work and then took questions from the audience. Asked if he was interested in employing computer graphics to enhance his drawings, the artist emphatically replied: “No. I don’t drive. I don’t talk on phones. I don’t use computers.”

Christo and Jeanne-Claude’s installations in urban and rural environments rely on the use of fabric and textiles and combine elements of painting, sculpture, and architecture. The temporary nature of their art—they set up 3,100 blue and yellow umbrellas in Japan and California in 1991 and wrapped Germany’s Reichstag in fabric in 1995—mirrors the temporary nature of human existence.

“The temporary nature of our projects is a very important aesthetic decision,” Christo told associate professor Mary Beth Heffernan’s art class during an hour of give-and-take Feb. 22. “Each one is a once-in-a-lifetime piece. It has immediacy, fragility. ... People are attracted to unique things. They like to know that tomorrow it will be gone.” Each project, he continued, is an “unforgettable, irreplaceable moment.”

Born in Bulgaria, Christo Vladimirov Javacheff met Jeanne-Claude Denat de Guillebon in Paris in 1958. They became artistic collaborators three years later, and in 1964 moved to New York City, where Jeanne-Claude died in November 2009.

But the couple’s work continues. Their current project, *Over the River*, would suspend translucent panels of fabric over almost six miles of the Arkansas River in eastern Colorado, visible to rafters as well as motorists on U.S. Highway 50 traveling between Canon City and Salida. The installation—which, as with past efforts, will be financed entirely by the artists—is tentatively scheduled for summer 2014.

“I like the fluidity of water in contrast to the static energy of the land,” Christo told Heffernan’s class. “The fluidity of the fabric mirrors the fluidity of the water.” Like other projects, the proposed installation has generated controversy, which he considers part of making art.

In his inaugural speech, Veitch called for Oxy to participate fully in what he called Los Angeles’s “artistic ferment.” Christo and Jeanne-Claude join a distinguished list of past honorary degree recipients that includes painter Richard Diebenkorn, photographer Ansel Adams, architect Frank Gehry, singers Ray Charles and Jackson Browne, conductor Zubin Mehta, and dancer-choreographer Bella Lewitzky.—SAMANTHA B. BONAR ’90