

Jack Kemp '57: Lessons From Lincoln

Losing a Friend: Erica Murray '01

OCCIDENTAL

WINTER 2009



A DREAM REALIZED

From 1600 Campus Road to 1600 Pennsylvania Avenue:
The Odyssey of Barack Obama '83

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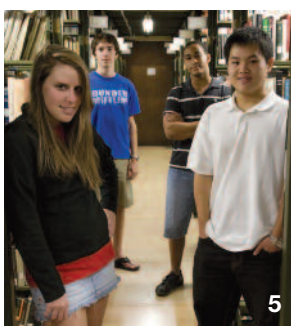
OCCIDENTAL COLLEGE MAGAZINE

VOLUME 31, NUMBER 1 WINTER 2009

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Oxy responds to the fluctuations of the stock market by tightening its belt and taking the long view—while the student investors running the Blyth Fund hunt for bargains. Also: From a mud-covered playing field to meeting Jane Russell—and not in that order—Raisin Bowl memories come flooding back Homecoming weekend.

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Fresh off the trail for fellow Republican John McCain, Jack Kemp '57 reflects on the task of rebranding the GOP—and the challenge of converting promises to prosperity.

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A 4-day-old barn owl with a damaged wing flew into the heart of biologist Stacey O'Brien '86—and their decades-long love story has hatched a best-selling memoir.

Cover photo by Justin Sullivan/Getty Images.

Page 5: Blyth Fund directors Sarah Henderson '11, Andrew Blythe '09, Braylan Carroll '09, and president Jason Kwok '09. Photo by Marc Campos.

Page 20: Emily Deans '09, Margot Seigle '09, and Tessa D'Arcangelew '10 at an Obama rally in Charlottesville, Va. Photo courtesy Margot Seigle.

Page 56: Erica Murray photo courtesy Jamie Murphy '01.

Oxy Wear photo by Marc Campos.

OMG!

When I opened up the article featuring Damian Stocking (“Dock Star,” Fall 2008), I squealed like a teenager who just received the latest copy of *Tiger Beat*. Any man who can recite ancient Greek poetry in *Greek* will make a girl swoon.

In all seriousness, it was so nice to see Professor Stocking getting the credit and recognition he so genuinely deserves. During my time at Oxy, I found his knack for making the classics both understandable and applicable to the iPod generation very refreshing, and I’m glad to see that other students feel the same way.

Now where can I get one of those awesome shirts?

LINDSAY (WHITE) ESTORGA '05

San Diego

Dubious Proposition

As the top comedian of my college years, Steve Martin, used to say, “Excuuuuse me!” I mean, really, what were you folks thinking? You published an article extolling gay “marriage” (“Family Matters,” Fall 2008) during an election year as if it represents the majority opinion of Occidental students, faculty, and, most importantly, the alumni who contribute to the College? Give me a break. Do you really think it was so important that it couldn’t wait until after Election Day, and even so, that it had to be represented on the cover of the magazine?

The timing of the article betrays insensitivity to those of us who are still conflicted about the whole gay marriage issue, and really poor judgment on the part of editorial staff members who are responsible for making such publication decisions.

For many, if not most, of us, *Occidental* is the lifeline that keeps alumni up to date on college life and what’s happening with the graduates. In fact, I express my best wishes to Mr. and Mr. Waters-Voecks. I am just not ready to read about their union as a cover story at this particular time; I don’t think I am alone.

MIKE MALOUF '82

Mission Viejo

That, and the Economy

I cannot imagine a dumber subject to feature and put on the cover (“Family Matters,” Fall 2008). I am sure it will do wonders for alumni contributions in the coming year.

BURT ZILLGITT '52

Corona del Mar

Fast Times

Many outstanding memories surfaced when I read about the death of Bill Parker '50 (Obituaries, Fall 2008). I attended Occidental from 1949 to 1952. Since I was very much interested in track and field and was invited by track coach Payton Jordan to join the Oxy team in 1950, I remember very fondly the huge and very exciting relay race when the Oxy team of Parker, John Barnes '52, Ted Ruprecht '51, and Walt McGibben '52 beat the favored Morgan State team and established the fastest time that year (the world record?) in the 1,500-meter relay race. To correct just one error in your obituary of Parker: The Coliseum Relays that year were run in spring 1950, not 1952.

I remember the years of 1950, 1951, and 1952 as the golden years in the small Occidental track achievements, and the Oxy team placed eighth in 1950 and fourth in 1951 and 1952 in the NCAA track and field championships—attended by all universities regardless of the student body size, unlike it is now. We also came very close to beating USC, the best collegiate track team during those years, in our annual dual meets, and sent two (Barnes and Bob McMillen '53) to the 1952 Olympics—where McMillen, to the surprise of the whole world, achieved the silver medal in the 1,500-meter run, just one-tenth of a second behind the gold medalist.

AARE TRUUMAA '51 M'52

San Diego

Correction

Due to an editing error, the wedding date for C. Ming Saelee '02 and Jeffrey Yin '00 was incorrectly reported last issue. Ming and Jeffrey were married on March 3, 2007. Daughter Alyssa Hsiao-Ling Yin was born on May 8, 2008. The family lives in Maryland Heights, Mo.



From left, Mohamed Nur-Sed '12, Michael Field '11, Ken Sulzer '82, “California’s Gold” host Huell Howser, Amy McDonough '11, and Adam Davis '11 stand outside the Haines Hall room Barack Obama '83 lived in as a freshman at Occidental. Nur-Sed, Field, McDonough and Davis live in nearby rooms, while Sulzer (“Friends of Barry,” page 12) was a neighbor during the 1979-80 school year.

There’s Gold in That There Haines

I watched Huell Howser’s “California’s Gold” and it was fascinating. Much to my surprise it looked to me as though Barack Obama '83’s first room, in Haines Hall, was my room in 1940. I was part of the first group of students to live there. It had just been built. My roommate, Jeanne Maxon, and I were thrilled with it. What I wondered about was the wash bowl, between the two clothes closets, that was missing. Our room was at the end of the first floor hall, on the right side.

The campus looks so beautiful now, more so than ever I think. My “war years” there are a very happy memory, especially the mixers every Wednesday night to the music of the big bands. We had the V-12 Navy Program on campus then so there were always plenty of boys to dance with. The war seemed very far away. How spoiled some of us were.

We all have high hopes for Barack. He seems perfect for the job that is very much needed now. A little bit of Oxy goes with him.

BOBBE LYON HARRISON '44, La Cañada Flintridge

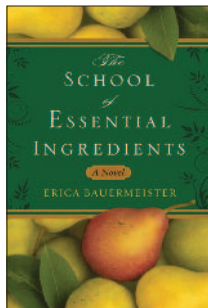
I watched the Huell Howser program on KCET and had to marvel at how Oxy has changed since I was last there (for my 40th, I think). But what really fascinated me was that Obama lived in Haines Hall—something that hadn’t occurred during my time of same-sex dorms, and I also noticed that Haines was much updated from what I remember. My senior dorm room was pretty ascetic, with an iron bed, tired mattress, and minimal space. Nonetheless, I have good memories.

JUDY CARDWELL '61, San Luis Obispo

According to College records, Haines Hall was erected in 1940, enlarged in 1954, and renovated in 1991. Named in honor of donors Mary Orr Haines and the Rev. Francis S. Haines, a Presbyterian minister, Haines Hall was originally built to accommodate 73 women. The 1954 annex added space for 32 more students, and is the section which housed the president-elect as an Oxy freshman in 1979-80. His room is currently unoccupied.

Bookshelf

THE SCHOOL OF ESSENTIAL INGREDIENTS, by Erica (Reictin) Bauermeister '80 (*Putnam*; \$24.95). In her debut novel, Bauermeister follows the lives of eight students who gather in Lillian's Restaurant every Monday night for cooking class. Each one seeks a recipe for something beyond the kitchen—from Claire, a young mother struggling with the demands of her family, to Tom, a widower mourning the loss of his wife to breast cancer. Chef Lillian, whose connection with food is both soulful and exacting, helps them create dishes whose flavor and techniques expand beyond the restaurant and into the secret corners of her students' lives. One by one the students are transformed by the aromas, flavors, and textures of Lillian's food. Brought together by the power of food and companionship, the lives of the characters mingle and intertwine, united by the revealing nature of what can be created in the kitchen. Bauermeister holds a Ph.D from the University of Washington, where she has taught literature and writing. She lives in Seattle.



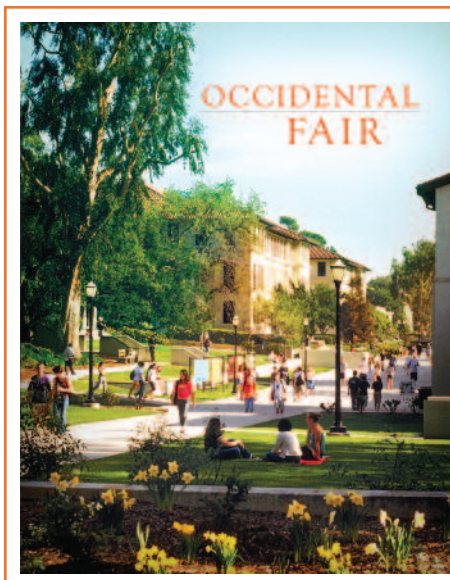
GOVERNOR JAMES ROLPH AND THE GREAT DEPRESSION IN CALIFORNIA, by James Worthen '64 (*McFarland & Co.*; \$39.95). After serving an unprecedented five terms as mayor of San Francisco, businessman James Rolph went on to win California's 1930

gubernatorial election. As a Depression-era governor, however, Rolph severely underestimated the challenges he would face. Ultimately, in spite of good intentions and a love of civil service, Rolph was unable to translate his mayoral triumph, with all its charm and style, into success in Sacramento. Worthen, a former federal government administrator, lives in Pismo Beach.

HELOISE: A STORY OF LOVE, SEX, AND METAPHYSICS IN THE WILD AND MARVELOUS SIXTIES, by Bill Neblett (*University Press of the South*; \$29.95). Set in West Los Angeles and Hollywood in the 1960s, *Heloise* explores intellectual and emotional concepts through the musings of vivid characters. Philosophical choices and answers become the central focus of each of these bohemian's lives as they interact, evolve, travel, and create. Discovering passions in music, theater, and poetry allows the characters to mature and understand more than the theoretical. Unexpected actions and consequences propel the novel as much as the eccentric characters. Neblett is an emeritus professor of philosophy. He lives in Fountain Valley.

Listen Up

MAGICAL TUNES & MARVELOUS TALES (*CD Baby*; \$15), a CD of children's music performed by the Plymouth (Mich.) Canton Symphony Society, includes a composition by Andre Myers, assistant professor of music at Oxy. "Paddle to the Sea" vividly depicts the adventures of a toy boat as it travels the Great Lakes on its way to the Atlantic Ocean.



OCCIDENTAL FAIR (*The Booksmith Group*; \$50). The first-ever coffee-table history of the College, *Occidental Fair* (produced in close collaboration with the Office of Communications) is a 128-page hardcover collection of Oxy memories and milestones in academics, arts, athletics, and student life. With more than 200 photos and illustrations—including many never-before-published images—as well as recollections from generations of alumni and faculty, the book brings the Occidental experience to life. From bonfires, beanies, and barbecues to History of Civ, summer theater, and Howard Swan's Glee Clubs, *Occidental Fair* will bring out the Tiger in you. Revisit Oxy's greatest gridiron wins, the timeless track and field squads of Payton Jordan, and the gender-shattering milestones of women's athletics. An ideal read for a lazy Sunday afternoon, *Occidental Fair* will have true Tigers of all ages shouting "Io Triumph!" (Available at oxy.thebooksmithgroup.com)

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By JIM TRANQUADA

Illustration by PATRICK CARLSON

Tigers *and* Bears, Oh My!

As Occidental stares down the deepest recession since Remsen Bird was president, the College tightens its belt, monitors applications and annual giving closely, and takes the long view

AS VICE PRESIDENT for administration and finance and College treasurer, Mike Groener keeps a firm grasp on the performance of Occidental's endowment. But this fall, amid a market crisis that has wiped out the gains of the last decade, Groener has been monitoring Oxy's highly diversified portfolio far more carefully. It hasn't been pleasant. Like all colleges and universities, the College's endowment, which stood at \$360 million at the end of June, has experienced double-digit losses—24.6 percent as of mid-November. Moody's

Investment Service, which tracks college endowments, is predicting higher education portfolios will have lost as much as 30 percent of their value by the time the end of the fiscal year arrives June 30.

Occidental is no different from any individual investor whose 401(k) or other investments have taken a beating. Ian McKinnon '89 of New York-based Ziff Brothers Investments, chair of the Board of Trustees' investment committee, said at the group's Oct. 20 meeting. "There has been no place to hide."

Despite the losses, Oxy has not experienced the kind of draconian measures seen on some other campuses—layoffs, salary cuts, mandatory furloughs, and mid-year tuition increases. Thus far, there have been few requests from students and their families for new or additional financial aid because of the declining economy, reports Maureen McRae, Occidental's director of financial aid. While 97 percent of Oxy students with loans had to find a new lender this year, none had problems securing loans. Interest in the College remains high, boosted by the historic election of Barack Obama '83, according to Bill Tingley, vice president for admission and financial aid.

But the continuing market turmoil and gloomy economic news have cast a pall of uncertainty over campus. "Next semester will be a very different story," predicts McRae. "We're going to hear from families who have experienced layoffs, and now have only one wage earner. That's when we're going to see the full impact of the crisis." Admission staffers are watching events with an equally wary eye, unsure whether Oxy's record-setting rise in applications over the past decade will continue with the Class of 2013. "We won't know until January's application deadline how we're really doing," says Tingley. Faculty are feeling the uncertainty as well; two professors who had applied to retire at the end of this year have withdrawn their applications.

Because the College has a policy of spending 5 percent of a five-year average return on the endowment, the real impact on this important revenue stream won't be seen for another two years or so, Groener says. (Endowment revenue accounts for approximately 18 percent of this year's \$79 million budget.) Today's circumstances provide a stark example of why the College has such a

The Blyth Ultimatum: "We're Buying"

CAN A 14-PERSON, STUDENT-RUN OXY INVESTMENT group do what the likes of AIG, Washington Mutual, and Bear Stearns could not: survive? The board of directors of the 31-year-old Charles R. Blyth Fund says yes; they might even benefit from it.

Oxy's Blyth Fund, a six-figure portfolio carved out of the College's endowment, has faced a loss of approximately 30 percent this financial year. But they're not being passive. The fund has scheduled emergency meetings, sought professional consulting, done aggressive market research, and started a major reconstruction of personnel and holdings.

"We are absolutely treating this as a potential recession or depression," says Blyth Fund president Jason Kwok '09, an economics major from San Francisco. "This is one of the worst downturns people have ever seen in their lives."

On the first day of class this fall, the Dow Jones opened at 11,416.42. On the last day of classes (Dec. 3), the Dow Jones stood shakily at 8,330.68. The market's volatility has been shocking: down 800 points one day, up 400 the next.

Even so, the Blyth Fund isn't backing out. "There was a motion to sell all the holdings," says Kwok. "But we decided it was not a good idea to sell based on market panic." Conversely, the fund is taking cues from investor Warren Buffett, who sees economic downturns as prime times to buy. "The market has created a number of opportunities for us," says Kwok. "We're trying to take advantage of this as much as we can."

Not only is the fund looking for opportunities to buy, but also opportunities to learn. The student group

policy—to avoid precipitous drops in revenue when the market falters. However, lower short-term interest rates on Oxy's working capital, the economy's impact on alumni giving (the number of gifts is running close to even compared to last year, but the average amount is down \$72) and the anticipated rise in students' need for financial aid all make belt-tightening necessary, Groener says.

As a result, a freeze on all new non-faculty hires and a ban on all supplemental budget requests have been imposed, and a policy of careful scrutiny of filling vacancies put in place. When trustees consider next year's budget at their January meeting, salary and operating budget increases will be modest at best. "We will be considering worst- and best-case scenarios for net tuition, financial aid, and other income to help guide the final proposal," he says. "It is clear we are facing a



sees this downturn as perhaps a once-in-a-decade chance to experience and weather the pitfalls of a financial crisis. "The purpose of the fund is to aggressively pursue opportunities to learn," says Blyth Fund secretary Josh Lu '09, a diplomacy and world affairs and economics major from Portland, Ore. "These market conditions don't happen very often."

Blyth members enlisted the help of Scott Weiner '80, a managing principal of local investment firm Padden & Rygel, in an effort to take the fund in a more professional direction. The fund is actively looking for more input from Blyth Fund and Oxy alumni. Additionally, the fund has opened up applications for next year early. "With these kinds of market conditions, we want the best applicants possible," says Lu.

The applications are usually not available until spring semester, but they have been made available to increase the size and diversity of the pool.

Going forward this financial year, the big question is: How bad will this economic crisis be? "We've probably seen the worst of it," says Kwok.

Only time will tell if he's right. But for now, as Lu says, "We're buying."—CHRIS BEST '12

recession—how deep and how long, we do not know. For the next couple of years the College must be prepared to address the inevitable financial challenges of an economic downturn."

Still, Groener adds, it's important to take a long view. Moody's points out that enrollments at highly selective private liberal arts colleges with national market reach like Oxy are better positioned to weather an economic downturn than less selective institutions and public universities reliant on shrinking public tax revenues. "Occidental survived the Great Depression and every other economic downturn of the past 121 years," he says. "Our fundamentals—outstanding students and faculty, a beautiful, well-equipped campus, and a national reputation for excellence—are stronger than ever. We plan on being around another 121 years." □



1. John Campbell '50 holds the vintage football commemorating the 1948 season. The Tigers rolled over their opponents en route to a 9-0 record. 2. Jim Else '50 played guard for Oxy. 3. George "Bud" Ingersoll '50 (No. 52 for the Tigers) holds the official key to the city of Fresno given to Oxy after winning the fourth annual Raisin Bowl in 1949. The fifth bowl would be the last.

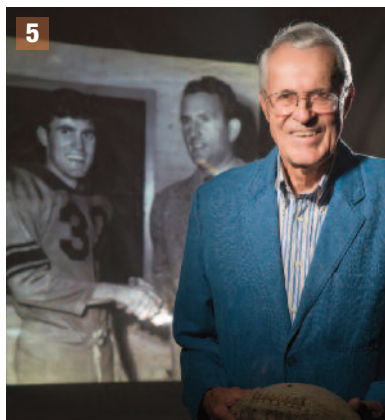


Raisin Redux

Photos by Marc Campos

A playing field covered in mud, a sweat-drenched helmet for two, and a meet-and-greet with Hollywood bombshell Jane Russell: Raisin Bowl memories come rushing back Homecoming weekend

- 4. "Only when I try to move does it feel like it was 60 years ago," says Tigers running back/punter Hugh Tassej '50.
- 5. Steve Smith '50, whose prowess kicking point-afters won the game for the Tigers, shook hands with Los Angeles Rams quarterback Bob Waterfield after the contest. Unable to attend the reunion was future NFL referee Jim Tunney '51, who "warmed the bench" for the '48 Tigers. "The athletes who formed this great team were outstanding," he writes. "I'm proud to be associated with them."



Nearly 60 years after pulling off a New Year's Day upset of Colorado A&M in 1949 at the fourth annual Raisin Bowl—the post-war brainchild of the Fresno Junior Chamber of Commerce—the most vivid memories of that legendary Oxy football team's members are less about precise passes and perfect kicks and more about meeting pin-up girl Jane Russell.

The then-27-year-old actress attended the game with her high-school-sweetheart-turned-husband Bob Waterfield, quarterback of the Los Angeles Rams and a Van Nuys High School teammate of several of the '49 Tigers. He stepped in during the season to assist veteran coach Roy Dennis '33, best known for his ginger hair (his players nicknamed him the "Red Spider") and no-nonsense gridiron fundamentals. Trailing 14-0 at halftime, the Tigers roared back to stun the Aggies with a 21-20 victory.

"They got ahead of us pretty good," says tackle Bob Peterson '51. On the advice of

Waterfield—who was sitting in the stands with Russell—Dennis sent in second-string quarterback Don Ross. His play-action passes, coupled with a 3-for-3 outing by point-after kicker Steve Smith '50, won the game for the underdog Tigers.

"I was really concerned when I was going to kick the last extra point," Smith admits. Oxy guard Bud Ingersoll '50 "had mud smeared all over his face and he had one tooth knocked out. He put a dirty, muddy finger on my chest and said, 'Smitty, nobody's comin' through, so you make this G.D. kick.'" Ingersoll was good to his word.

A less-pleasant memory for Peterson was sharing Bob Chilcott '51's sweaty helmet—the only Oxy helmet big enough to accommodate their large noggins, so they could never play at the same time. Chilcott, a first-string quarterback, would wear the helmet first and then pass it off to Peterson.

At the reunion dinner, nine members of the original squad were treated to a 20-minute highlight reel of their unlikely win



(actual game footage shot by Universal Pictures for the 1949 Donald O'Connor pigskin comedy *Yes Sir, That's My Baby*, which was recently transferred to disk by Occidental's Special Collections department).

The following day, four more teammates joined them to watch the '08 Tigers complete an undefeated regular season with a 48-14 win against Whittier (following page). A good time was had by all—even if Jane Russell was nowhere to be found.

—COLLEEN SHARKEY

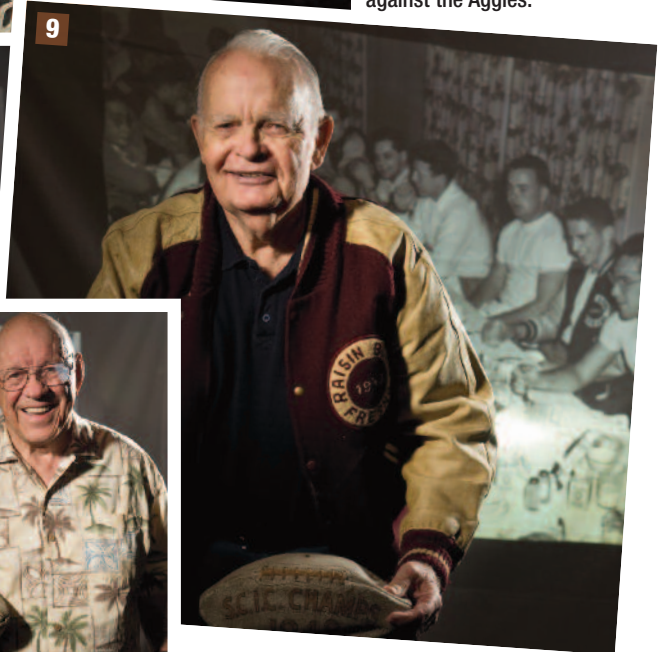
6. Members of the 1949 Raisin Bowl championship squad during halftime ceremonies at Oxy's Homecoming on Nov. 15: *Back row, from left:* John Andrews '51, George Goff '51, Ted Calderone '51, Lloyd "Stan" Stanford Johnson '50, George "Bud" Ingersoll '50, Stephen Smith '50, Theodore Stevens '50, Hugh Tassej '50, Joe Johnson '50, and Bob Sutton '51. *Front row,*



from left: Samuel McClung '51, John Campbell '50, and Jim Else '50. **7.** "Most of the guys on the team were World War II veterans—I was really a young punk compared to them," says Sam McClung '51, who played end. "It was a thrill to compete with people who were, on the average, five or six years older than I was."



8. Quarterback Joe Johnson '50 (No. 26) started the first half of the game for Oxy. **9.** Tackle Bob Peterson '51 wears his original letterman's jacket. **10.** End John Andrews '51 recalls 1948 as a "dream season" for all 47 members of the Occidental squad. Due to bowl roster restrictions, only 37 Tigers were allowed to suit up for the contest against the Aggies.





Fall Sports Wrap-Up

A 9-0 Regular Season for Football; Men's Cross Country Builds a Dynasty

For only the eighth time in Occidental history, the Tigers football team went undefeated during the regular season, claiming its third conference title in five years before falling to the Willamette University Bearcats (ranked sixth nationally) in the first round of the NCAA Division III playoffs. Beginning with a 41-0 road victory over Colorado College, the Tigers followed up with eight more wins to finish the regular season with the Southern California Intercollegiate Athletic Conference crown and a No. 11 national ranking.

Seeded second in the West region, the Tigers traveled to Salem, Ore., Nov. 22 to take on No. 1 seed Willamette, but came up short in a 48-33 loss. Senior quarterback and SCIAC Offensive Player of the Year Justin

Photo by Marc Campos



Goltz went 35-for-50 for 317 yards and four touchdowns, but it wasn't enough. "The bottom line is that we made big plays, but not enough big plays, and they did," says head coach Dale Widolff.

For the season, the Tigers produced 21 All-SCIAC players, including Goltz, his favorite targets—wide receivers and brothers Chris Washington '10 and SCIAC Newcomer of the Year Jordan Washington '12—and punter Alex Groh '10, ranked second in the nation with an average of 43.1 yards per punt. The Tigers' powerful offense scored 50 touchdowns and accumulated 4,616 yards of total offense overall, averaging 38.5 points per game (15th in the nation) on 459.9 total yards per game (eighth in the nation).

Led by freshman phenom and SCIAC Runner of the Year Eric Kleinsasser, the nationally ranked men's cross country team staked out a dynastic claim as well, claiming its third consecutive SCIAC title and narrowly missing a trip to the national champi-



ABOVE LEFT: With Eric Kleinsasser '12, far left, in front, the men's cross country team races toward a SCIAC crown. **ABOVE:** All-SCIAC runner Keith Blumenfeld '09 paced the Tigers at the nationals. **BELOW:** A jubilant Tigers squad hoists "The Shoes" trophy high following its 48-14 Homecoming win over Whittier.

onships. With each runner recording a new personal record, the Tigers finished fourth at the Nov. 15 West Region Championships in Salem, Ore.—just 10 points out of second place, which would have automatically qualified them for the nationals.

Three individual Tigers qualified for the nationals, with team captain and All-SCIAC runner Keith Blumenfeld '09 leading the way to place 70th in the 278-man field with a personal best of 25:22:52 in his final collegiate race. Kleinsasser struggled a bit in his first NCAA championship appearance, crossing the line in 25:47:89, and All-SCIAC pick Clay Hoadley '09 finished close behind, capping his collegiate career with a time of 25:49.68.

Other fall sports produced nine All-SCIAC picks, including men's water polo (fourth in SCIAC, with two All-Conference athletes), men's and women's soccer (both of which finished sixth in conference, with a total of five All-Conference players), and women's cross country (fifth in conference, with two All-SCIAC runners). Under new head coach Mike Talamantes, volleyball finished sixth in the conference.

Presidential Search Update

Up to 3 Finalists Likely to Visit Campus in February

With the search for Occidental's next president on schedule and on target, the presidential search committee expects to formally interview a small group of six to eight people in January before selecting up to three final candidates, according to trustee and committee chair John Farmer. "The committee feels we have a pool of absolutely outstanding candidates, and one that is much larger than we had imagined," Farmer says. "My feeling is this is going to make the final decision very difficult."

The 14-member committee has winnowed the initial pool of 89 candidates down to the individuals who will be invited to interview with the full search committee. Remarkably, because committee members have been active participants in encouraging likely candidates to participate in the search, traveling around the country to do so, most of the candidates already have had some kind of face-to-face contact with Oxy, notes committee member and Faculty Council chair Movindri Reddy. "It's a very rich pool," the associate professor of diplomacy and world affairs told a Nov. 20 faculty meeting. "It's also quite clear that Occidental is well regarded in the national academic community."

Photo by Marc Campos



Hundreds of people on the Oxy campus (including students Miles Painter '10 and Mallory Nezam '09, ducking under computer desks in the library) were among the millions of participants in the Nov. 13 Great Southern California ShakeOut, billed as the largest emergency preparedness drill in U.S. history. The OxyAlert emergency notification system was tested in conjunction with the ShakeOut. The College's newly installed siren system sounded, and students, faculty, and staff received test emergency notification e-mails and voice mail.

Up to three finalists will be invited to visit campus and meet with the Oxy community, provided they can do so without compromising their current jobs, Farmer says. A special meeting of the Board of Trustees in March will be necessary for the board to meet with the entire committee—a new twist—to consider its evaluations and pick the new president. The board's goal is to have Oxy's 14th president start July 1.

Phi Beta Kappa

10 Oxy Seniors Tapped for Fall Semester Induction

Ten Occidental seniors have been elected to membership in the Delta of California Chapter of Phi Beta Kappa, the nation's oldest and most prestigious academic honors organization. They are: Andrew Blythe (an economics major from Gold River), Meredith Burke (sociology, Oakland), Elizabeth Chang (sociology, Taiwan), Erin Conley (English and comparative literary studies and religious studies, Los Angeles), Molly Frolich (psychology, Bellingham, Wash.), Talia Gusfield (sociology, Davis), Wynne McAuley (economics, Barrington, R.I.), Laura Mellem (critical theory and social justice, Bloomington, Minn.), Jessica Simes (sociology, Los Angeles), and Caroline White (biology, Orinda). Oxy's Phi Beta Kappa chapter was chartered in 1926.

Occidental in Brief

Assistant politics professor Caroline Heldman's efforts to help rebuild the lives of women in post-Katrina New Orleans are being recognized by the V-Day Movement with an \$8,000 V to the Tenth Leadership Award. Heldman has been on the front lines since the first days following Hurricane Katrina, traveling there with groups of students who participated in rescue and rebuilding efforts. She serves as director of the New Orleans Women's Shelter and works with Common Ground, a grassroots relief organization. An organization founded by Eve Ensler, creator of *The Vagina Monologues*, V-Day is a global movement to stop violence against women. □ Occidental is one of the country's top recipients of federal research funds among liberal arts colleges, according to the National Science Foundation. The more than \$920,000 in NSF grants Oxy faculty received in 2006-07 place the College in the top 25 nationally, ahead of such schools as Amherst, Swarthmore, and Pomona. □ Seventy-three Oxy students representing the sciences, humanities, and social sciences made presentations at the 2008 Southern California Conference on Undergraduate Research—a contingent larger than all the Claremont Colleges, USC, UCLA, and Caltech combined. The conference was held Nov. 22 at Cal Poly Pomona.

Photo courtesy Jeanette (Babikian) Jeanes '61



Mixed signal: From the *Occidental* mailbag comes this contribution from Jeanette (Babikian) Jeanes '61, whose husband snapped this image at the intersection of President and Smith streets in Brooklyn, N.Y. "During the election campaign, a local artist painted a figure of an Obama supporter on a pedestrian crosswalk signal in our neighborhood," she writes. "To our delight, the city has allowed the altered signal to remain."



O TRIUMPH!

After a campaign season nearly as long as his two years at Oxy, Barack Obama '83 is president-elect of the United States—and Occidental pride is running at an all-time high

by DICK ANDERSON Photo by JEFF HAYNES/Reuters



HIS CAMPAIGN SLOGANS have become national mantras: “Yes, We Can,” “Change,” “Hope.” Yet it was little more than four years ago that he stepped into the political spotlight at the Democratic National Convention with a speech that found a kinship between red states and blue states, between black America and white America and Latino America and Asian America.

Barack Obama has been a member of the Occidental family since he migrated to campus from Honolulu in the fall of 1979. We wish he had stayed a little longer—transferring to Columbia University after his sophomore year, in part, because the lure of the Big Apple was greater than the City of Angels (although, to hear his freshman roommate Paul Carpenter ’83 tell it, he must have missed the surfing). But there is little doubt among those who have followed his campaign that the lessons of Occidental—and professors such as Roger Boesche, Larry Caldwell, Anne Howells, David James, and others—have stayed with him over the last quarter-century.

If Occidental changed Obama, then it must be said that Obama has changed the College as well. Mention that you went to Occidental now, and that “Obama went there,” and a smile crosses many faces (well, at least 68 percent of those faces, if current poll numbers hold). There is a palpable excitement in the Oxy community as the countdown to Jan. 20 draws near. You’ll see it on campus, in the bookstore, with all sizes and iterations of BarOxy Wear. You’ll see it in the scores of alumni who are making the trek to Washington, D.C., to witness history on Inauguration Day. And you’ll see it in the 14 Oxy students who spent most of the fall “empowering individuals and building community,” as Campaign Semester participant Tessa D’Arcangelew ’10, a diplomacy and world affairs major from Charlottesville, Va., put it. (“The moment Barack Obama won Virginia and then the presidency was the most amazing moment of my entire life,” adds Nonda Hanneman ’10, an urban and environmental policy major from Eugene, Ore.)

In his 2004 memoir *Dreams From My Father*, Obama writes: “[I] was accepted into several respectable schools, and settled on

Photos courtesy Eric Moore ’83



Photo by Pete Hisey



TOP LEFT: Obama wears an aloha shirt as he strikes a pose in front of the then-new Lucille Gilman Fountain, which was dedicated in November 1979. The photo was taken by Eric Moore ’83. **TOP RIGHT:** Barack Obama ’83, Mark Anderson ’80, and Romeo Garcia ’80 at a festival in Pasadena’s Central Park in spring 1980. **ABOVE:** Obama on the senatorial campaign trail at a stop in Illinois in 2004.

Occidental College in Los Angeles mainly because I’d met a girl from Brentwood while she was vacationing in Hawaii with her family. But I was still just going through the motions, as indifferent toward college as toward most anything else.” As he went on to say, something changed along the way, and you could argue that the path to 1600 Pennsylvania Avenue started at 1600 Campus Road.

We like to think so, anyway. □

FRIENDS of BARRY

Roommates, classmates, and lifelong acquaintances remember the philosophy, politics, poetry, pride, and promise of Barack Obama's Occidental years

by COLLEEN SHARKEY Photos by MARC CAMPOS



Obama and freshman roommate Paul Carpenter '83 at a 2007 event in Phoenix.

Photo courtesy Paul Carpenter '83

BARACK OBAMA '83 arrived on the Occidental campus on or around Sept. 15, 1979, when residence halls opened for occupancy. Men still outnumbered women on the campus at the time, and the Punahou School graduate was one of 243 men out of a freshman class of 458. He settled into the 25-year-old annex section of Haines Hall, and found himself in a triple with two roommates: Paul Carpenter '83, a political science major from Claremont, and Imad Husain '83, an economics major from Dubai, United Arab Emirates.

The convocation address was delivered by the soon-to- retire Richard Reath, a member of the Oxy faculty since 1947 and the Cecil H. and Louise Gamble Professor in American Institutions (who shared teaching duties with Roger Boesche in the political science course that Obama took that year). While his specialty was constitutional law, the topic of his address was "How To Be Sophisticated"—which *The Occidental* reported as a primer on "how to jump over the hedges of life with worldly wisdom, grace, and a minimum of bruises."

Even though the 1980 election was more than a year away—and the presidential campaign season wasn't nearly as long as it is today—there was a "Students for Kennedy" movement on campus supporting the Massachusetts senator, and a "Democrat-Socialist Alliance" as well. The Soviet invasion of Afghanistan prompted much discussion on campus, as did the possible reinstatement of the draft, which had ended only six years earlier. (Professor Boesche was quoted in *The Occidental* under the headline "New Cold War Mentality Critiqued.") The Student Coalition Against Apartheid was formed at Oxy in late 1978, and divestment would become a bigger issue in days to follow.

While much has been written about Obama's two years at Occidental in the mainstream media, many questions remain: Did he play JV basketball? Why did he transfer to Columbia? Did he have any girlfriends? While we don't have all the answers, a series of interviews with many who knew "Barry" best—some of whom talk on the record for the first time—presents a more personal portrait of a president-elect.

Ken Sulzer '82: Our hallway in Haines was quite diverse—a number of African-Americans, Asians, Hispanics, and Middle Eastern people. There were athletes and poets. That hallway is what Oxy aspired to and eventually became—an ethnically, culturally diverse place. It was a microcosm of what Oxy was to become.

Paul Carpenter '83: We had a really good hallway; there were a lot of interesting folks. A lot of times the doors would be open and people would be milling about. It was a very friendly atmosphere.

Phil Boerner '83: What was different about Haines, for a freshman, was that in contrast to Stewie, the all-freshman dorm, there were students of all classes (freshmen to seniors) mixed together, so Barack and other freshmen there could hang out with cooler, more worldly older students, and benefit from their perspectives on Oxy and the world.

I became very good friends with Paul Carpenter, and through him I got to know Barack (and Imad). So initially Barack was the friend of a friend of mine. My dorm room was directly opposite Barack, Paul, and

Imad's room. My general first impressions were that he was a very nice, easygoing guy. Barack listened carefully to all points of view, and he was funny, smart, thoughtful, and well-liked. It was easy to sit down with him and have a fun conversation.

Tom Moyes '82: I have a fuzzy memory from the fall of '79 of going down to Haines to drink beer and play cards with Vince Coscino '82 on some random weekend. Just hanging out with a bunch of guys. Haines Annex was a great meeting place for people to get together and hang out. Obama struck me as a very ordinary, regular guy. He was ordinary but impressive—like I think Harry Truman was.

Simeon Heninger '82: I lived in a room next to Barry in Haines Annex when I was a sophomore and he was a freshman. We were friends. One thing I always remember is talking to him alone, and asking why didn't

President Roosevelt do more for the poor of this country when he had the chance?

Eric Moore '83: The most profound memory I have of Barack was soon after we met, we were sitting in the dorms chatting and I remember asking him what kind of name "Barry" was for a "brother." And he explained to me where he was from and that his real name was Barack—and because I was imbued with African-American pride I told him, "You should rock Barack! That's a strong African name. I like it better than Barry," and I always called him Barack from that day on. Whereas most everyone else called him Barry, I insisted on calling him Barack, and I think he appreciated that.

Amiekoleh Kimbrew Usafi '83: He was smart and charismatic. Students would go to the Cooler if they missed lunch, dinner, or just to hang out. I recall he would be there sometimes and even then, he would draw

a crowd. If he spoke, people definitely listened. He was perhaps the most confident—not cocky—person I think I've ever met. He certainly was the most confident and relaxed black guy I had ever met. But he was just real cool and laid back, walking around mostly in flip-flops and shorts.

He had a real relaxed demeanor. He did not discuss that he was biracial, and when I was accepted in Crossroads Africa and was being sent to West Africa, he congratulated me on my acceptance but didn't mention his background. Maybe he was trying to figure life out just like the rest of us.

Lou Hook '80: Barry was a guy that you could really see was really comfortable hanging out with black kids and the general population. [*Hook was an active member of UJIMA, formerly known as Black Students Caucus at Oxy.*] At the time, the black students were struggling to keep the civil



ERIC MOORE '83
"I think he's awakened and introduced a whole new generation to politics. My 3-year-old daughter just looks at the TV and says, 'Obama! Obama!'"



**AMIEKOLEH
KIMBREW USAFI '83**

Watching Obama's success during the campaign motivated Usafi to complete a children's book that she had been working on for years. It will be published in January; she hopes to share it with her classmate.

rights movement “feel” to what we were doing. There was sentiment on both sides thinking, “Why is he so comfortable hanging out with those folks?”

After participating in the Crossroads program in West Africa, I got to know a lot of African students here on campus. Their perspective was often that the white students were more open to them than black students. These types of experiences at Oxy forced me to address my own race consciousness, and resulted in a sensitive spot for Barry because of his African roots.

Usafi: A lot of girls liked him, but he seemed to keep himself away from all of that. He could have gotten into a lot of nonsense, but he didn't. He really could have been out there in terms of being a playboy. Occidental is a small campus. He just seemed very centered and focused.

Moore: I never knew him to have a particular girlfriend. Maybe he was just very dis-

creet—or ascetic. I don't recall. He was never just out “on the make”; he used to just love to converse and philosophize with people.

Boerner: We discussed the reinstatement of the draft (“Draft Beer, Not People” was one sign I recall at an on-campus rally in February 1980), the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan, apartheid in South Africa, the hostages in Iran, and the Contras in Latin America, among other current news topics from that time.

Carpenter: We were both poli sci majors, and we discussed the issues that were in the news. We also discussed things that we were learning about in our classes. He was very bright. I knew he would do well, but I had no idea in what direction he would go. In the intervening years, we stayed in contact, and I watched him have one success after the next.

Sulzer: We played pick-up and intramural basketball games. I was not supposed to play because I was a varsity baseball player.

He was a decent, pretty competitive player. He was not on the JV team. We played noon ball, and some of the guys who played on JV would play with us, and they were much better than we were. Neither Obama nor I was up to the college level of play.

Carpenter: Barack liked to go to Newport and Venice beaches, and he's a good body surfer—we used to go to the beach together. I wanted to body surf with him at Sandy Beach on Oahu. I used to go to the Wedge in Newport Beach, and it's my hope someday that we'll get to body surf in Hawaii.

Margot Mifflin '82: I befriended Barry during my junior year, because I dated his close friend, Hasan Chandoo '81, and because I was in a creative writing class with him. The class was small and contained an assortment of characters, from Barry's friend Chuck Jensvold '81, who had developed a fully formed neo-noir prose style, to Mark Dery '82, who was writing surrealist punk poetry,

to Jeff Wettleson '82, a seemingly conventional guy whose writing was anything but. A number of the people in the class were dead serious about being writers, but I don't recall Barry being one of them. Still, he published in the campus literary magazine that year and continued to send his stories to Chuck even after he'd left Occidental.

Our professor, David James, was good at prompting us to drop our pretensions and write about something authentic. I think that happened for Barry with the poem "Pop," in which he describes an exchange with his grandfather, who asks him what he's going to do with his life. Barry didn't tell us that his grandfather had raised him—he just put the poem out there for critique, and I remember recognizing immediately that his relationship with his grandfather was unlike anything I'd experienced with a grandparent. His previous poems had been more abstract and fanciful; this one hit a nerve, portraying not only "Pop" but also Barry himself very intimately.

It was in no way a tribute: The old man has ashes in his chair and a stain on his shorts; he's drinking whiskey and needling his grandson; Barry's yelling at him and imagining him as a spot in his brain that he can squeeze out, then they're laughing and hugging and Barry's putting his child's arms around this titanic figure. The poem captured the feelings of a kid judging and being judged, wanting to step away and enjoying being close, trying to define himself apart from an adult, and failing. The class liked it for its honest ambivalence and because it was so unabashedly personal, especially coming from someone who tended to be reserved. It was also our first window into his unconventional family life.

Heninger: I seem to recall him showing me a picture of his grandparents. It was such a strange thing to see these two white people. Barry was extremely appealing and easy to get along with.

Carpenter: We did have turkey day dinner with my family in Claremont or at Grandma's house in Downey. All those memories are fond. My mother loves him. He was unassuming, easygoing, and good-natured. Those were fun times. He did love my mom's apple pie and her coconut pumpkin chiffon pie.

Chuck Carpenter (Paul's father): He'd come over because he lived a long way away and

you do things with your roommate. ... He was just a wonderful young man. Just a very fine young man. Polite, personable. Occidental made him the man he is today, there's no question.

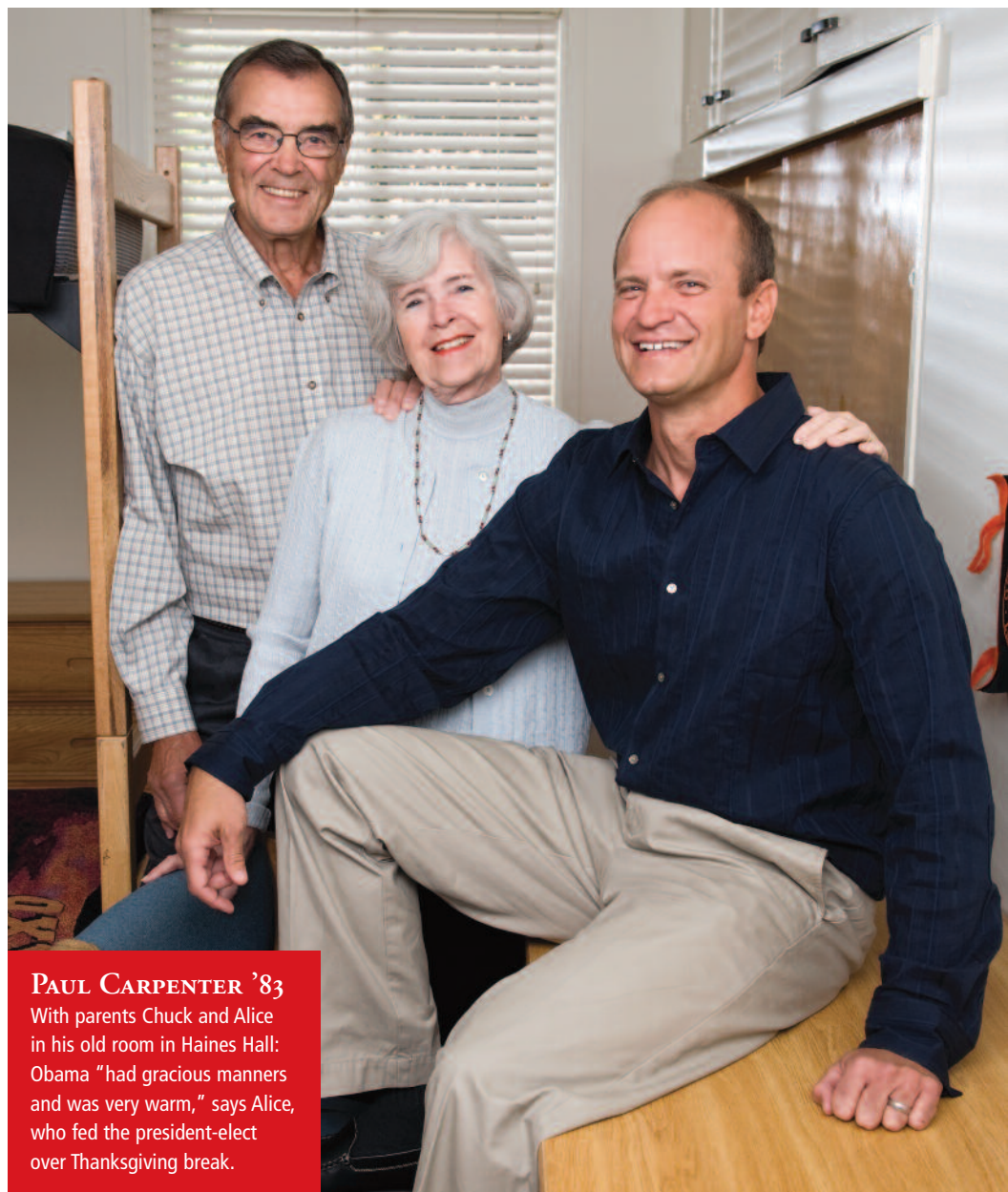
Sulzer: I took at least two poli sci classes with him. There are a lot of parallels to what we learned studying De Tocqueville—communities and people being engaged in their communities. As Americans, we are joiners—one of the things that we were taught by Boesche. Obama became a community organizer, and perhaps he picked up a lot of that from Boesche.

Boesche taught us the intellectual rigor of what's considered a soft science. He was a model for us—giving us the tools to dissect

Freud or Kierkegaard or whomever. That was one thing Boesche left with me and, I'm sure, Obama. Boesche was such a good teacher and a nice man and an amazing intellectual. He was so nice to us and so genuine. Young people really responded to him. Boesche was of the liberal, optimistic, idealistic perspective—similar to Obama's rhetoric.

Carpenter: I had to debate against him, in a team format, in Professor Larry Caldwell's class. I don't know how I sized up against him. It had to do with nuclear disarmament. He was a formidable opponent!

Moore: On one occasion when he was a sophomore, I recall talking to him with a friend of ours, Richard Casey '80 (who went to Harvard Medical School), about his plans



PAUL CARPENTER '83

With parents Chuck and Alice in his old room in Haines Hall: Obama "had gracious manners and was very warm," says Alice, who fed the president-elect over Thanksgiving break.



KEN SULZER '82

"We used to stand outside in the Haines Hall Annex hallway and bull-----, There was an alcove with a little couch, and we'd just hang out and chill and talk."

for the next year. And Barack said he was going to transfer to Columbia. Both Richard and I tried to talk him out of leaving but, needless to say, he didn't heed our advice. He was looking for a greater challenge.

Boerner: We both decided to transfer from Oxy to Columbia in the spring of 1981. We did not decide on this together but independently applied to Columbia and found out that we were both going there after we had been accepted, or perhaps it was at some time during the application process. I also applied to a few other schools, and my application was not part of any joint Oxy-Columbia program.

My reasons for transferring were that I wanted to attend a larger university and I wanted to be closer to home (I was from the East Coast). Oxy had about 1,600 students, which was smaller than my high school, and it felt a little like Peyton Place to me—every-

body knew who was dating who, what they were up to. That can be a positive and a negative. Looking back, I certainly would have been happy if I had stayed at Oxy and would have had the advantage of knowing which professors to take from having attended for two years. When you transfer to a new school, you start that acclimation process all over again. Columbia had something like 4,000 undergraduate students, and was part of a larger university with 17,000 graduate students, and that seemed like a better fit.

Sometime in the summer, Barack had found an apartment and suggested that I room with him. So that is how we became roommates in New York.

The fact that many of our friends at Oxy were upperclassmen may have had an influence on our decision to transfer—they were moving on, leaving Oxy, and we may have felt it was time for us to do that as well.

At Columbia Barack became more disciplined about his studies, and socialized less. This was partly a function of being a transfer student—you miss out on the freshman year when you get to know many of your classmates, and as a transfer student you can't live in on-campus housing. So, it becomes more like attending a commuter school. By necessity, he became more focused on the world outside of the campus and the opportunities there—in New York it's all "in your face," whereas at Oxy you are in this protected cocoon, and have to choose to leave it if you want the experience of the larger world.

Sulzer: My congressman pal, Adam Schiff, is a good buddy from law school. I told him at our 2005 Harvard Law reunion that I was friendly with Obama at Oxy. Schiff was really interested and said he knew and liked Obama.

In September 2007, Schiff's scheduler called me and asked if I wanted to have lunch with Schiff at McCormick & Schmick's in Manhattan Beach. He was doing due diligence—asking me questions about Obama. The talk among many of the Democrats at the time was that Obama had the best chance of bringing their party together, unifying both parties and winning the presidency.

Carpenter: I saw that groundswell of support in the last year in Iowa, with people coming in during the freezing weather to report on their precincts. When the results came in from Iowa, there was jubilation.

Moore: I reconnected with him in Chicago and then another time here in Los Angeles. I was really struck by the fact that—even when surrounded by press and paparazzi—he came up to me, embraced me, and we talked about old memories at Oxy. He is still the same person I knew, very forthcoming, very gregarious. Devoid of ego, just very genuine.

It's unbelievable that he now takes his place alongside all the heroes that we had down through history. We used to discuss Martin Luther King and Malcolm X and civil rights leaders of the time and Bob Marley. We took many of the same classes, same professors. My world outlook is identical to his, and he expresses and articulates those ideas as if they were coming from my heart.

Moyes: My wife, Claire, and I both worked for his campaign. We met up with

Obama in February—Claire gave him a lei (she's Polynesian), which he accepted in front of thousands of people (just after the debate with Hillary Clinton at the Kodak Theater). He was very gracious.

Boerner: We have exchanged a few letters and family photos over the years. The last personal letter I got from him was in November 2004, after he became a senator, and I write to him about once a year. ... Basically, Barack moved to Chicago and I moved to Sacramento in 1990, and we never had a reason to visit each other's city. Had I gone to Chicago, I would have looked him up and been received warmly.

Moore: I heard him say during the campaign that the two most formative years of his life were the ones in L.A., at Oxy, and that's a tremendous testament to the College and the people around him. And I agree with that. My years at Oxy were the most enrich-

ing and valuable. Many of my friends were like Obama—of that caliber. I tell anyone who asks me about him that he's wonderful and remarkable, but not anomalous. That's the kind of quality that Oxy produces.


Carpenter: On election night, I stayed home—I was too anxious to go to a party. I was with my wife (Beth Kahn '83) and some neighbors and friends. When the results starting coming in, we had a bottle of champagne, and then I fielded phone calls from people who were elated, as I was.

Usafi: My son and I are going to D.C. for the inauguration. What an exciting event. I want to experience that energy.

At Oxy, Obama just had that "thing." He thought he was cute. He was cute. And smart *and* had a good education. I was impressed by how well prepared he was. I believe he was raised by a very open and expanded-minded mother who taught him that the possibilities

are endless when you come prepared. That's why I'm taking my son to Washington.

Hook: This election has been a very profound experience for me. Barack Obama is now the leader of the free world—the most powerful man in the world—and his basic training model is what we all experienced. It lifts us and inspires us. ... I just spent a week in Ireland, and the people there are inspired. The United States has always had an Achilles heel: slavery and racism from its beginnings. This election put an exclamation point on the progress our country has made. A taxi driver in Ireland said for a black person to be elected in the U.S., there's no doubt that the people elected him. People are cynical about the power of the people and democracy, but there's no doubt this time.

We need to change in a way that empowers us more. I am confident in Barack's training model and that he can do it. Yes, he can! 

Lou Hook '80

"Oxy offered this diverse experience—the ultimate melting pot—that's really symbolic of what the U.S. is all about. And now we can claim Obama as our own."



RED, ORANGE, & BLUE

For a generation of Oxy undergraduates voting in their first presidential election, Barack Obama's historic win defines a once-in-a-lifetime moment

by COLLEEN SHARKEY Photos by MARC CAMPOS

EVEN IN A CROWD OF SOME 300 students who jammed into Samuelson Pavilion on election night, watching the returns trickle in as polls closed across the country, Derek Mazzeo '11 stood out. The lanky politics major from Yorba Linda and Oxy Students for Obama co-president sprung up like a pogo stick intermittently over his peers—many of them wearing Obama gear and a look of wide-eyed wonderment—but maintained that he was only “cautiously optimistic” in the early going.

As the clock neared 8 p.m.—when traditionally Democratic-voting California polls

would close—many networks indicated that they would call the race on the hour. A chorus of Oxy voices counted down from 30 seconds to the hour, and when the networks posted a digital banner that read “Obama Elected President,” the cheers were deafening. All over the room students hugged, cried, and screamed with joy. Nate Weiss '10, a theater major from Leverett, Mass., stood, jaw agape, silently pointing his finger at the big-screen TV while tears ran down his face.

Many students saw it as a personal victory, not just because Obama shares their Occidental lineage, but because they worked on his campaign or lobbied to register voters. “I’m so proud of my fellow Oxy students, of my country—I can’t describe how happy I am right now,” said Mazzeo, between shouts and high fives.



ABOVE: From left, Bobby Phillips '12, Justin Morgan '09, and Darrell Winfrey '12 flaunt foam fingers outside the Cooler on Oct. 31. **RIGHT:** Sophomores Derek Mazzeo and Justin Choh paper the campus with campaign signage on the eve of election day.



A capacity Cooler crowd goes bananas at 8 p.m. on election night, Nov. 4, as Obama is declared the nation's 44th president. Celebrants include (l-r) Andy Dakopolis '09, Nate Weiss '10, Stephen Bent '09 (jumping), Amy McDonough '11, and Malia Latin '11.

Working with Oxy Democrats, Oxy Students for Obama had an informal goal of registering 90 percent of eligible Oxy student voters. Although neither group has official statistics, Mazzeo says they registered more than 200 Oxy students.

Co-president of Oxy Students for Obama and resident of Haines Hall (Obama's old dorm) Amy McDonough '11 worked for more than a year with the Obama campaign. McDonough shared many duties with Mazzeo including registering voters, planning and going on campaigning trips to Las Vegas, organizing campus phone banks, selling T-shirts, organizing a speech-watching party for the DNC, and making sure students went to the polls on Election Day.

“The support we’ve seen here at Oxy is just amazing,” said McDonough, a diplomacy and world affairs major from Brookline, Mass. “We’ve had students coming up to us every day asking how they could get involved. I think, because of this election, youth in general are going to be interested in politics at an earlier age and hopefully they’ll



LEFT: Derek Mazzeo '11, *right*, and classmate Alexander Kaplan-Reyes '11 make calls to battleground states on behalf of Oxy Students for Obama from Haines Hall on election night. **BELOW:** Sophomores Rachel McCandliss and Alison Pentland break out the red and blue markers as states are called for the candidates. **BOTTOM:** Sophomores Dwight Hobbs, Joseph Mohorcich, and Aly Eber watch the returns come in online.



keep that momentum going throughout their lives.” McDonough was also struck by the camaraderie and cooperative nature of the diverse groups she worked with on the campaign. “For me—I’m only 19—I was seeing all these people who were in their 50s and 60s who had never worked on campaigns before. I don’t have a lot of experience, but I was getting the sense that this was really something different. There’s a sort of energy to the Obama campaign that I’ve never really seen before.”

“Without hyperbole or exaggeration, this is one of the most important elections of our generations in terms of what it did, the message it sent, the sense of pride that first-time voters like myself feel,” said Oxy Democrats treasurer Dwight Hobbs ’11, a diplomacy and world affairs major from Menlo Park. “I’m not sure if it will ever be matched again because Obama was such an inspiring candidate. I hope that this sets a trend for participation in politics in America. I don’t know if it’s going to get any bigger than this; this is huge!”

Obama is only the second U.S. president to have attended a small liberal arts college west of the Rockies, the first being Richard Nixon of Whittier College. While Occidental has often been referred to by college guides as “the Princeton of the West,” Mazzeo offered comparisons to another Ivy League school. “We’re the new Yale,” he said, beaming.

In the days to follow, the Quad was covered in chalk tributes to the president-elect that ranged from “Obama was here” to “Our president is black.” Reporters from the *Pasadena Star-News*, the *Korea Daily*, the *Los Angeles Times*, and TV stations KABC and KTLA all filed “Obama at Oxy” stories. Even KCET stalwart Huell Howser journeyed to campus for the first time ever to tape a typically folksy episode for his “California’s Gold” series (which pre-

miered locally Nov. 13 and will air statewide on PBS in January; it’s also available on DVD at the Occidental Bookstore).

“Barack Obama is president, he’s an Occidental alumnus,” sophomore Melvin Richardson told KABC news reporter Rob Hayes. “If you don’t think that means anything, you’re crazy.” □

AGENTS of CHANGE

As the Obama campaign mobilized volunteers and eager young staffers nationwide, alumni and students brought their talents and energies to the movement

by SAMANTHA B. BONAR '90

POLITICAL MODERATE VELMA McKelvey '55 had wanted to campaign for Barack Obama '83 ever since she read his books *Dreams From My Father* and *The Audacity of Hope*, but wasn't sure how to get started. A chance meeting with the now president-elect at a Los Angeles train station last December motivated her anew.

"I was waiting for a train at Union Station when I saw him at a light waiting to cross the street," McKelvey recalls. "I called

out and said, 'I went to Occidental.' He said, 'Occidental!' and immediately crossed the street and came over and talked to me. He just couldn't have been nicer or more real," she recalls. "I said I was from Claremont, and he said, 'Oh, Pomona,' and made a face. It was a terrific moment."

So when she saw volunteers outside of her neighborhood Starbucks seeking Obama campaign workers soon after, she immediately signed up. McKelvey canvassed neighborhoods, worked phone banks, and helped arrange a gathering with Alice and Chuck Carpenter, the parents of Obama's freshman roommate Paul. The couple shared their memories of Obama, who spent the Thanksgiving holiday at their home when he was an Oxy student.

McKelvey was just one of scores of Occidental alumni of all ages across the country who volunteered for the Obama campaign. Fourteen Oxy undergrads also toiled in six states (Arizona, Colorado, Minnesota, North Carolina, Pennsylvania, and Virginia) as part of the College's campaign semester program, in which students spend the majority of the fall semester working for a political campaign, then write a paper about the experience. (Students had the option to work for the McCain campaign as well, but none chose to do so.) And a number of recent graduates criss-crossed the country in the months leading up to election day.

The pay was low to nil for alumni and nonexistent for current students (who



After a chance meeting at Union Station in Los Angeles last December, Velma McKelvey '55 boarded the Obama for America movement back in Claremont. **LEFT:** On the night before the close of voter registration, Nonda Hanneman '09 takes to the streets near the University of Virginia campus in Charlottesville.

Photo by Marc Campos

received class credit), and the days were long. "Throughout the campaign, the average workday was at least 12 to 15 hours," recalls Katie DeMocker '10, who was stationed in Arizona. "During the last two weeks, we were lucky if a 20-hour day was the norm." However, most of the Oxy workers share DeMocker's ultimate sentiment: "I have never been more proud to be a part of anything in my entire life."

Sara El-Amine '07, a diplomacy and world affairs major from Duxbury, Mass., began as an Obama for America deputy field organizer in Iowa in November 2007 along with Noah Glusenkamp '07 and Brian



Photo courtesy Nonda Hanneman '10



McGrane '06 ("Fired Up, Ready to Go," Winter 2008). "Making sure the right person gets elected as the next president of the United States is the highest calling right now," she said at the time. She headed to Idaho after Obama's surprise Iowa win, and then to Texas, Mississippi, Indiana, and Colorado before finally landing in the battleground state of Virginia after Obama secured the Democratic presidential nomination.

As part of Virginia's Campaign for Change, El-Amine managed 12 offices and more than two dozen staffers, fellows, and deputy field organizers in 22 counties and five cities. She was stationed in "the incredi-

bly red northwest, where we are contesting every precinct for the first time in the history of the state." Her charges included campaign semester participants Tessa D'Arcangelew '10, Emily Deans '09, Margot Seigle '09, and Nonda Hanneman '10—whom she praises uniformly as "professional, hardworking, well-rounded, and competent." "They have brought a new energy to the team and are the backbone of our regional organization," she said in October.

Seigle ran her own office in Luray, a conservative town of fewer than 5,000 in Virginia's Shenandoah Valley. "She has literally run out of calls to make and doors to knock

because she and her volunteers are so hardworking," El-Amine observed prior to the election. Deans and D'Arcangelew worked as deputy field organizers in the college town of Charlottesville, handling swarms of volunteers, managing phone banks, and canvassing launches and surrogate events. Two 2008 graduates, Chris Nelson and Brian Damron, were field organizers stationed in two of the most difficult areas of the state—Nelson in Staunton, Va., and Damron in Shenandoah and Clarke counties.

"I generally feel like I'm going to throw up all day, every day from nerves," El-Amine said two weeks before election day. "I've been



Photos by Andrew Shurtleff

TOP: Deputy field organizers Emily Deans '09 and Tessa D'Arcangelew '10—two of 14 participants in Oxy's campaign semester program—canvass a neighborhood in Charlottesville, Va., in late October.

ABOVE: Chris Nelson '08 and a coworker check the latest field data in Obama's Staunton, Va., office in October.

doing this too long now for it to fall through.” In one weekend alone just before the election, her staff knocked on 16,000 doors. “The field staff out here is incredible. No one has taken a day off or even a lunch hour in months now,” she said. “They stay past midnight meticulously entering our data from the day—hundreds of doors knocked and thousands of phone calls—so that we can have updated lists every morning.”

D'Arcangelew was among a group of four Oxy students and alumni who met Obama at a Shenandoah Valley rally in late October. “He talked about Oxy and about Tommy's Burgers and ‘kickin’ it’ in Eagle Rock,” says D'Arcangelew, who worked the event as crowd control and line manager. “He really likes chili on his cheeseburgers.”

Hanneman, in charge of voter registration and volunteer recruitment at the University of Virginia, hardly slept during the last two weeks of the campaign and stayed up all night Nov. 3. “The few days leading up to the election were insane,” she recalls. “We hung door hangers starting at midnight on Nov. 4. I handled volunteers

all day as hundreds wandered into the office wanting to help. Later in the afternoon I left the office to knock on every single door in every single dorm. In the pouring rain, we ran through the libraries, dining halls, and athletic centers reminding people to vote.”

“When there were no lines when polls closed I was convinced something had gone terribly wrong,” she admits. “However, as Ohio and other swing states came in blue I started to feel more positive.” When Virginia was called for Obama—the first time the commonwealth voted Democrat since 1964—Hanneman was in a room with about 200 UVA students: “There was not a dry eye or a couple of strangers not hugging. It was a blur of screaming, sobbing, and shaking.”

Oxy junior DeMocker, the youth vote director in Arizona, had to swing into frenetic action at the last minute. Because it was long assumed that the state would go to its favorite son—Republican Sen. John McCain—the Obama team maintained just a small staff in the state, with limited resources. Late in the campaign, sensing a possible swing toward the left, the Obama team flexed its



Photos courtesy Nonda Hanneman '09 (left), Sara El-Amine '07 (below)



Photos courtesy Margot Seigle '09 (above), Noah Glusenkamp '07 (below)

muscle. DeMocker was quickly trained on the Voter Activation Network and began coordinating and directing the thousands of volunteers who poured in from across the state to her eight-person office.

“The final week was by far the craziest,” she says. “Our office had phone bankers everywhere. We had tables outside on the grass with people calling, kids coloring signs to hold at street corners, and stations sending groups out for canvasses.” While the Grand Canyon State ultimately stayed in the McCain camp, “We got close,” DeMocker says. “We worked incredibly hard, and we are extremely proud of where it ended in Arizona.”

As the world knows, the ultimate prize



TOP LEFT: Oxy seniors Nonda Hanneman and Emily Deans work the phones in Charlottesville. **ABOVE RIGHT:** Sara El-Amine '07 gets a hug from Michelle Obama on Nov. 10, 2007, at the Iowa Jefferson Jackson Dinner. **ABOVE** Obama poses for a photo opportunity with staffers and volunteers in Harrisonburg, Va., after a rally Oct. 28. Emily Deans '09 is to his right and Margot Seigle '09 is in front. **LEFT:** Noah Glusenkamp '07 (wearing an Obama-Biden shirt) managed a full-time staff of five, 10 interns, and an army of volunteers in Douglas County, Colo.

went to Obama that night. When he was declared president-elect, “I cried for hours,” Hanneman, the Virginia campaigner, recalls. “Not only did the candidate that I so desperately wanted to see as president win, those few months of total stress and exhaustion had paid off.”

“I’m pretty much in disbelief,” Becca Loegering ’10, who was stationed in Colorado, said on election night. “I wasn’t sure this moment would come. We were so proud that Colorado turned blue for Barack Obama. I’m very proud of all the work that everyone

has done on this campaign, and I feel lucky to have been a part of it.”

Assessing the impact Obama’s win could have on Occidental, Loegering says, “I think the fact that Obama started off at Occidental shows that we might not have the Ivy League credential, but we have the faculty and the resources to produce someone who can change the direction of the country.”

DeMocker adds, “Before when I told people I went to Oxy, and that it was a liberal arts college, they didn’t seem to know what it meant. Now when I tell people that

Obama went to Oxy, their eyes light up. I would love to see Barack come back to Oxy now that his campaign is over.”

“I think this whole election has put Occidental on the map,” D’Arcangelew adds, “but more importantly, Barack Obama stands for the same things that Oxy stands for—strong values and beautiful principles about life. I think his win gives a lot of hope to the Oxy students who share his values and beliefs and want to make the world a better place—that they can make a difference with their lives.” □

YES, WE DID! ...Now What?

WHILE THE SELECTION OF BARACK OBAMA ’83 AS president has redefined “morning in America” for many, a number of students who participated in the Campaign Semester are having a difficult time adjusting to life back on campus.

“After working 15 hours every day toward something I was so passionate about, being a normal college student seems insignificant,” admits Nonda Hanneman ’10, who worked for the Obama campaign in Virginia. “I feel very disconnected from students here and almost out of place, even though I love Oxy so much. I think it will just take time to adjust to being back from such a life-changing experience. No matter how long it takes, though, I would not trade the Campaign Semester experience for anything; I am so grateful to have had the opportunity.”

Katie DeMocker ’10, who campaigned for Obama in Arizona, echoes Hanneman’s sentiment. Being back on campus feels “overwhelming and strange,” she says. “It is a good feeling to see everyone again, but at the same time, it is hard to suddenly be taken out of such an intense and amazing experience and jump back into what is an everyday class routine.”

“I have mixed feelings. I miss Virginia a lot,” says Margot Siegel ’09. “I ran an office on my own and got attached to the people I worked with, and to get abruptly pulled away from that was kind of hard.”

Peter Dreier, Dr. E.P. Clapp Distinguished Professor of Politics, explains the returning students’ ambivalence. “They were working 80 hours a week, the adrenalin was flowing, and they were being challenged to do things that they’d never done before and doing them in ways that were exceptional,” says Dreier, who conceived the Campaign Semester last spring. “It was almost an out-of-body experience for them. And then they come back and they’re students again. It must feel a little mundane.

There’s almost no way they can translate what they experienced to their friends in a way that captures the almost spiritual quality of it.”

Campaign Semester students received eight credits for their “field work” in the campaign, during which time they kept daily logs of their activities and wrote weekly journal entries/analyses of the campaign. They also had a weekly e-mail check-in with professors Dreier and Caroline Heldman, who co-teach the seminar the students take upon their return. The next four units are derived from a 25-page paper that each student will write between now and the end of the year. The final four units are based on the class, which is focused on discussions of readings and will include public presentations by each student. (Occidental is the only college in the country that offers a full semester of college credit for working on a political campaign, according to Dreier.)

“I’ve stuffed almost a semester’s worth of reading into four weeks,” Dreier says. “Their academic experience is now pretty intense. But what they went through was a life-changing experience, and I think you just can’t compare that to being a college student.”

“I think it helps that they’re all in the class together, so they can share their experiences,” he says. “I’m also telling them to try to hone a narrative about what they did, so they can tell other students about it. And to journal—it helps them deal with the feelings they’re going through about coming back to school.”

“These students learned a lot,” he says. “They learned how campaigns are run, they learned a lot about other people from diverse backgrounds, and they learned a lot about themselves—who they are, how they can multitask, take risks and survive, walk into strange situations and learn how to cope with them.

“The campaigns don’t give you a lot of time to be self-reflective. One of the luxuries of being back is it gives you that time to think about what they learned about themselves, about politics, and about other people.

“They can’t be too modest about it,” he concludes. “Most of them rose to extraordinary heights.”

—SAMANTHA B. BONAR ’90

Seniors and Oxy roommates Margot Seigle and Emily Deans drive home their love for the president-elect.



Photo courtesy Margot Seigle '09

"All bets on economic growth are off if Obama persists in raising tax rates on investment," says Kemp, left, campaigning with McCain at a rally in Dayton, Ohio, on Oct. 27.

POLITICAL FOOTBALL

Fresh off the campaign trail for fellow Republican John McCain, Jack Kemp '57 reflects on the task of rebranding the GOP—and the challenge of converting promises to prosperity

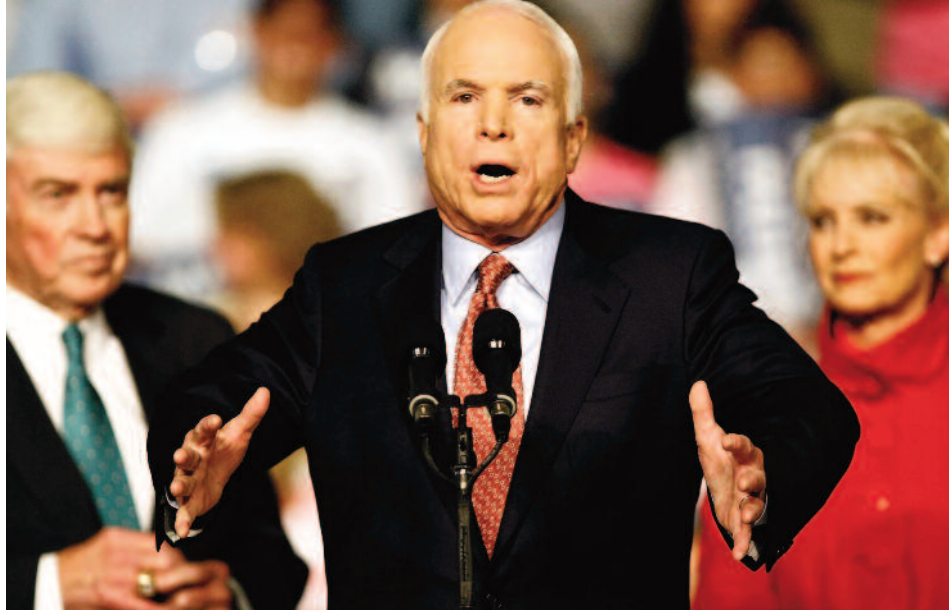


Photo by Chip Somodevilla/Getty Images

IN THE GAME of bipartisan politics, Jack Kemp '57 knows the playbook. The nine-term Congressman (1971-1989), secretary of Housing and Urban Development (1989-1993), and onetime vice presidential candidate (1996) stumped actively for Sen. John McCain in his quest for the White House.

And while the election of Sen. Barack Obama '08 has tilted the balance of power in Washington, Kemp—who runs a strategic consulting firm in Bethesda, Md.—is ready to reach across party lines. “Like all Oxy grads—Democrats, Republicans, and Independents—I wish him well and pray for his leadership of our whole country,” he explains in a Q&A with *Occidental*.

When did you first meet President-elect Obama?

In June 2006 at an event in Washington, D.C., announcing the nation's first Public Internet Channel under the auspices of One Economy, a progressive urban economic development company bringing technology into the homes of all people. The speakers were Obama; Martin O'Malley, former mayor of Baltimore and current governor of Maryland; and me, all of whom are supporters and sponsors of this nationwide effort.

What do you think the hallmarks will be of an Obama presidency?

Racial and ethnic reconciliation, attempts

to heal foreign policy rifts, and an all-out effort to “jump-start” the economy with much-needed infrastructure spending and so-called middle-class tax cuts. I've been critical of raising tax rates on investment capital and especially so during a recession. My hope is the new Secretary of Treasury Tim Geithner will suspend the tax increase for two years or permanently.

Can Obama deliver on his long list of initiatives while maintaining his campaign promise of a tax cut for 95 percent of all Americans?

I believe he will have to scale back his campaign promises and focus on economic recovery.

What steps should Obama take to deal with the housing crisis?

He should, in my opinion, help lower mortgage rates by fiat, through the use of Fannie Mae and Freddie Mac now in conservatorship. Until and unless we get housing prices stabilized and turned around, families will not be able to stay in their homes, to the extent possible, and bank balance sheets cannot recover sufficiently to jump start lending both in housing and commercial lending arenas.

If you could give Obama one piece of advice, what would it be?

Read Gabor Boritt's *Abraham Lincoln and the Economics of the American Dream*.

Obama reads and admires the 16th president immensely, and this book would round out his understanding of Mr. Lincoln's economic ideas that transcend class distinction and emphasize equality of opportunity for all people to rise to their God-given potential.

What will it take for the Republican Party to get back on track?

Read Boritt's *Abraham Lincoln ...* as well and put his ideas of emancipation, liberation, civil rights, social justice, and economic growth back as the political lodestar of a GOP devoted to recapturing the American Dream for all people. The GOP must emphasize by reaching out in a dramatic new way to people of color that it's truly a party of Lincoln—with inclusion, not exclusion, as its predicate.

You're a member of the Abraham Lincoln Bicentennial Board. What would Lincoln (who was born in 1809) make of Barack Obama (inaugurated in 2009)?

Mr. Lincoln (as would Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.) would be absolutely thrilled that we're one giant step closer to their “dream” of a more “perfect union.”

As a fellow Oxy alumnus, what lessons do you think Obama will take from 1600 Campus Road to 1600 Pennsylvania Avenue?

President-elect Obama will take away from Oxy the same lessons as all of us take away: a love of liberal arts, and a reverence for history and its lessons for our future. □

A 4-day-old barn owl with a damaged wing flew into the heart of biologist Stacey O'Brien '86 — and their decades-long love story has hatched a best-selling memoir



WESLEY & ME

By DICK ANDERSON
Photo by MAX S. GERBER



The Southern California Mouse Shortage of 1986 may have gone unnoticed by most, but for Stacey O'Brien '86, it necessitated a plan of action. "I was competing with everyone to find out where the mice were," says O'Brien, who found herself learning pet store delivery schedules in an effort to secure enough rodents for her barn owl, Wesley. She started to feel like a male owl, who is tasked with retrieving more than 35 mice a night to feed a family of seven. "I was always trying to get mice," she says.

But because she kept the owl's existence a secret to most ("There was a real extremist animal activist movement going on"), O'Brien fed the pet stores a little white lie: "I told them I had lots of snakes." And because they believed her, they frequently peppered her with questions about the legless reptiles. "Thank God my dad had studied herpetology and we would go to the zoo a lot," she recalls with a laugh.

Over the course of 19 years, O'Brien estimates that she fed Wesley more than 28,000 mice. Between meals, "Wesley and I made some pretty neat discoveries," she says—and their relationship evolved into *The Remarkable Love Story of an Owl and His Girl*, to borrow the subtitle of *Wesley the Owl*, O'Brien's recently published memoir.

As a child, O'Brien developed a natural interest in biology, turning over rocks to collect and study the pillbugs beneath. "I started getting up before the sun came up and I'd watch the birds and their behavior for hours," she says. "I just had it in my blood to be a biologist." Following a lecture at Caltech by primatologist Jane Goodall, O'Brien, then 8, was so certain that she was going to study chimpanzees in Africa that she convinced her parents to enroll her in Swahili classes.

That phase passed, but O'Brien's education was largely financed by a lucrative childhood career as a singer. "My sister and I could read music and sight-sing when we were really young," says O'Brien, who grew up in a show-business family (her grandfather played drums in big bands, and her uncle is former Mouseketeer Cubby O'Brien).

That led to steady work singing in hundreds of ads, including spots for Little Friskies and McDonald's, and on the scores of many films, including *Rocky II* and *IV* and *Exorcist II: The Heretic* ("Our mom made us turn our backs to the screen" during the sessions, she says).

O'Brien skipped her junior and senior years of high school and enrolled at Glendale College. A midsummer meeting with the head of Oxy's biochemistry program led to an invitation for admission, and she transferred to the College that fall. Professor George Cleland '42 "was a huge influence on me in organic chemistry," she says.

Thanks to the College's exchange program with Caltech, O'Brien wound up taking a neurobiology class as a senior, and that led to a position in the behavioral biology department at Caltech. Soon after, as an assistant in the owl laboratory, she was asked to take home an owlet who was unable to go back into the wild. "His little eyes were still shut, and he had nerve damage in his right wing," says O'Brien, who writes in *Wesley the Owl* that she

was "both thrilled and terrified by the opportunity—scared by the enormous responsibility I would assume for this young life."

With Wesley imprinting on O'Brien as he would his own mother, he related to his keeper as he would another animal. "When I would brush my teeth, and Wesley would try to drink and try to get his face wet," she says. "He thought I was teaching him what to do. He became fanatically addicted to water."

O'Brien talked to Wesley constantly, and her biggest discovery was that the owl with the heart-shaped face not only knew what she was saying, but had developed a language of his own. "It took me a while to figure out what he was doing," she says. Wesley came up with perhaps 20 different calls related to begging. "One would mean, 'I want a magazine,'" she explains. "He'd rip it up, fly around, and jump on it like a kid jumping into a pile of leaves."

In 1998, in her late 30s, O'Brien discovered that she had a brain tumor "that was inoperable but not cancerous," she writes. "I was in a wheelchair for a month and experienced speech and memory lapse, but eventually recovered," although she continues to suffer from narcolepsy to this day. Wesley's

well-being helped her to persevere: "I think he was fine as long as I was around. He seemed to have come to the conclusion that we were growing old together."

When Wesley died in January 2004 of liver cancer, "I went into shock," O'Brien says. "I started writing that very next day." Three weeks later, she had a 400-page draft that she would spend two years refining.

With a first printing of 5,000, *Wesley the Owl* was published Aug. 19 to a starred review in *Publishers Weekly* and a four-star notice in *People*. The book debuted on the *New York Times* hardcover nonfiction best-sellers chart dated Sept. 28, and Simon & Schuster now has some 60,000 copies in print. *Wesley* has since been licensed from the United Kingdom and Korea to Australia and Brazil.

The book's out-of-the-box success "came as a surprise," says O'Brien, who is writing a follow-up, *The Way of the Owl*, which she says will go deeper "into how different species have a certain ethic or certain set of assumptions about that they will and won't do."

In the meantime, Wesleymania continues to spread its wings. In response to popular demand, O'Brien turned to friend Wendy Francisco, a professional soft sculptor, who created a plush Wesley collectible (available at www.wesleytheowl.com). *Wesley the Owl* has attracted "a lot of interest" in Hollywood circles as well, O'Brien says. That means that she and her sister, Gloria, may one day find themselves singing on the story of Wesley and Stacey—or, as longtime friend Keith Murray '85 suggests wryly, "a Lifetime TV movie: *Not Without My Barn Owl*." □

Photos courtesy Wendy Francisco



LEFT: O'Brien and Wesley in 1985. RIGHT: Wesley at 15. OPPOSITE: O'Brien wears a necklace that had belonged to her grandmother, who had a large collection of owl ephemera. Only after her grandmother's passing did O'Brien learn that "She had raised a barn owl just like I did"—an owl named Weisel, coincidentally enough.



BELOW LEFT: Erica and little sister Jaci in 1986.

BELOW RIGHT: Erica in 2005. Contributions to a fund in memory of Erica may be sent to Occidental (please write "in memory of Erica Murray" on the check).

The Elf on the Wall

Erica Murray '01 made a world of friends in her 29 years among us—and we all lost a best friend with her passing

"Is it the fluorescent luminescence that draws me back time and time again? The bone-grinding procedures, the hilarity of my bodily functioning being table talk, or maybe those dang-good-spirited nurses smocks perhaps? No, it is none of these things that find me here again, in yet another room at Stanford Medical Center.

"I'm here because I woke up with a high fever on Thursday, 11/18, and fevers are a good sign that there's some kind of infection in the body. ... So if anyone asks you, How's Erica? you can say that neither she nor her doctors have any idea."

(Erica Murray blog entry, Nov. 23, 2008)

WHEN ERICA MURRAY '01 LOST her nearly three-year battle with leukemia Dec. 4, the news traveled quickly through her many circles of friends. There were those who met Erica as a student at Occidental; those who knew Erica through her work with Oxy's alumni relations office; those who encountered

Erica through her graduate studies at the Fletcher School; and countless others who had their first exposure to Erica through her very public fight to live after her sister, Jaci, launched ericamurray.blogspot.com in February 2006.

"The blog was created to give Erica's loved ones updates on her health and treatment, but quickly took on a life of its own," longtime friend and former roommate Jamie Murphy '01 observed at a memorial service for Erica on Dec. 9 in Redwood City. Through 198 entries by members of "Team Erica" (and countless comments by scattered friends, acquaintances, and total strangers), visitors to her blog experienced the highs and lows of Erica's journey.

"Erica once said to me that she felt like she was a jack of all trades but a master of none," Murphy said in her eulogy. "She knew she was talented and creative but didn't feel like she excelled at any one thing. But I beg to differ. Erica was truly a master of

human relationships. She had the most amazing ability to make everyone she came in contact with feel like her best friend. And she made friends to the very end. She was naturally the most welcoming and friendly person I have ever known, and she brought together people from around the world as her friends."

Soon after her initial diagnosis, Erica created a top 10 list of "the best things about having cancer—leave it to Erica to find the bright side of having cancer," Murphy said—and No. 1 was bringing her loved ones together. "I love it when people from different segments of my life have the opportunity to meet and get to know one another," Erica wrote March 12, 2006.

"Jamie called it my 'elf on the wall' trick (the joke sort of deriving from me being the obvious elephant in the room, but trying to be like a fly on the wall). But many hours of each day were spent in a semi-snooze listening to my Mom get to know my friends, or my sister get to know my graduate school colleagues, or a friend from Japan getting to know a friend from high school. I loved just listening to their precious voices and knowing they were there."

Occidental Magazine shared her story ("Places to Go, Things to Do," Summer 2008) with even more people. Erica herself was "mystified" by her selection, and wrote as much on her blog: "The alumni magazine is supposed to be about people who are out there in the world, kicking ass and taking names," she wrote July 2. "I am currently kicking ass at playing games."

Given her fondness for games, she might appreciate the fact that we are within six degrees of Erica Murray. Her YouTube video she made with Jaci last March, "If I Had a Real Good Donor" (more than 36,000 views through mid-December) will continue to prod mixed-race registrants to the National Bone Marrow Program (www.marow.org). And we'll remember Erica with a smile and with gratitude for having shared her life.

As she concluded in what would be her last blog entry Nov. 23, "Friends and visitors and all the tokens that they send remind me why life's worth fighting for." □