

The Path to Oxy: Magdalena (Arias) Arenas '92

Bill Anderson's Greatest Team

# OCCIDENTAL

WINTER 2010



## COMPLETELY DIFFERENT

Legendary auteur and Monty Python trouper **Terry Gilliam '62** remembers practical jokes, the *Fang Gang*, and creating "the Big Lie"

# OCCIDENTAL

OCCIDENTAL COLLEGE MAGAZINE  
VOLUME 32, NUMBER 1 WINTER 2010

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# Hollywood Ending

Eager to “break out of show business,” **Steve De Jarnatt '74** writes his way into *The Best American Short Stories 2009*

Veteran filmmaker/TV writer/producer/musician Steve De Jarnatt '74 can now add one more slash to his resume: /author. The Pacific Northwest native landed a short story in *The Best American Short Stories 2009*: “Rubiaux Rising,” about a drug-addicted Gulf War vet in New Orleans trapped in an attic during Hurricane Katrina. The story first appeared in *The Santa Monica Review*, a small literary journal—and, remarkably, is De Jarnatt’s first published work. “My luck has gone too well,” he says from his writing retreat in rural Washington state. “I hope it doesn’t jinx me.”

If De Jarnatt’s 26-year career in Hollywood is any indication, his rookie success with fiction is no fluke. As a director, he’s best known for the 1989 apocalyptic thriller *Miracle Mile* (starring a post-*Top Gun*, pre-“ER” Anthony Edwards), which he also wrote. His TV credits include directing episodes of “ER,” “Nash Bridges,” “Lizzie McGuire,” and other series, as well as a slew of scripts.

De Jarnatt decided to try his hand at short stories several years ago, enrolling in the MFA creative writing program at Antioch University in Los Angeles. Unlike movies, he notes, fiction doesn’t require a huge budget, marquee-name actors, and truckloads of recording equipment. Just pen and paper. In fact, he drafts his stories longhand, on a legal-sized tablet.

“I wanted to do something that doesn’t require a million dollars,” De Jarnatt says. “I’ve always told stories, but I always thought, ‘Is there a movie in it?’ Now, I don’t want there to be a movie. I take the craft of prose fiction seriously.”

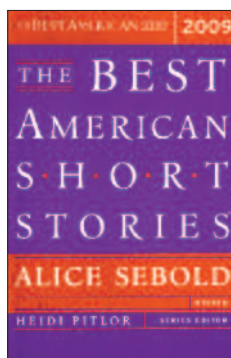
His creativity and drive was evident in his two years at Oxy. Jim Jespersen-Wheat

Photo courtesy Steve De Jarnatt '74



Take off! “Is this the same Steve De Jarnatt who wrote *Strange Brew* [the 1983 “SCTV”-inspired film with Bob and Doug McKenzie]?” one blogger wrote.

'74, who recently joined the College as assistant director of annual giving, remembers a droll series of stop-action animation film



shorts De Jarnatt created using bread and other food filched from the cafeteria. Called *The Bun Movies*, the 15-to-20-second films showed hamburger buns—with olives for eyes, cherry tomatoes for noses, and orange peels for tongues—devour one other, hatch from eggs “laid” by a subway bun, and even smoke cigarettes.

“Steve sees the world in a little bit different way,” says Jespersen-Wheat, who’s been friends with De Jarnatt ever since. “He’s never really grown up.”

While De Jarnatt affectionately remembers his film professors at Oxy—notably the late Chick Strand and Marsha Kinder, now a professor at USC—he transferred as a junior to Evergreen State College, graduating with a bachelor’s degree in film and communications. “In retrospect, I should have stayed,” he says. “But I wanted to make movies, so I went to a school with a lot of movie equipment.”

While he eventually wants to leave the entertainment industry (“I’m trying to break out of show business”), De Jarnatt says his TV and film-writing experience has helped him craft short stories. He’s learned such transferrable skills as blocking a story from beginning to end, breaking it into sections, and writing quickly. “In TV, sometimes you have to write an entire script in five hours,” he says. “I don’t even know what writer’s block is.”

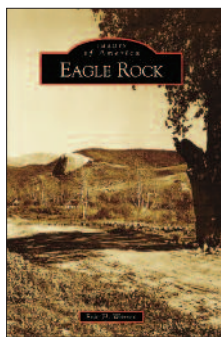
De Jarnatt graduated from Antioch in 2009, and has since had several more stories published, including a second in *The Santa Monica Review*. He’s now setting his sights on bigger and better-known journals and magazines such as *The Atlantic* and *Granta*. “I just want to do the best work I can,” he says. “It’s nice at my age to have potential at something.”—RHEA BORJA

CARL LARSSON: AN ANNOTATED BIBLIOGRAPHY, by Ann (Johnson) Topjon '62 (*Oak Knoll Press*; \$135). Swedish artist Carl Larsson (1853-1919) rose from an impoverished childhood to find the perfect expression for his artistic talent in watercolors, winning medals in France at the Salons. Larsson also was a talented illustrator, a superb portrait painter, a fine graphic artist, and an imaginative muralist who was influenced by the Pre-Raphaelites, Art Nouveau, arts of the Gustavian period, and Japonisme. Topjon, associate professor/librarian emeritus of Whittier College, spent more than 20 years compiling this, the first comprehensive bibliography on Larsson. With approximately 5,900 entries, the 494-page volume encompasses all known works by him, including albums, book illustrations, and all articles he wrote and/or illustrated. The book also features a section of 16 color plates highlighting Larsson’s work.

BERKONOMICS: LESSONS FROM A LIFETIME IN 140 CHARACTERS OR LESS, by Dave Berkus '62 (*University of Illinois Press*; \$25). With more than 50 years of entrepreneurial, management, and corporate board experience, Berkus offers 101 business insights for management and boards of companies of all sizes, served up as concise nuggets of actionable wisdom. Interwoven with more than 50 of his stories describing his experiences, *Berkonomics* is an indispensable guide for CEOs, management, and corporate boards for

sharpening one's corporate vision, strategic planning, product and price positioning, building and leveraging a board, and more. Berkus guides readers through stages of their corporate growth, using his experience and wisdom to point out opportunities and roadblocks along the way. He lives in Arcadia.

**EAGLE ROCK**, by Eric Warren '69 (*Arcadia Publishing*; \$21.95). With a geographic unity and a strong identity that revolved around its namesake promontory, Eagle Rock grew as a small farming community just north of Los Angeles on Tongva ancestral lands that had become the great eastern pasture of the Rancho San Rafael. By 1906, trolleys made for an easy commute to Los Angeles and Eagle Rock, which incorporated as a city in 1911, became increasingly integrated in the urban fabric—a fact underscored by the relocation of *Occidental* in 1914—yet remained defined by its residential nature and small-town character.



In this 128-page visual history of the community and its people, Eagle Rock Valley Historical Society president Eric Warren has combed the society's archives, as well as other public and private collections (including *Occidental's* Special Collections) to illustrate Eagle Rock's steady evolution from an oak-shaded valley into one of L.A.'s great neighborhoods.

**TYLER ALPERN: 30 YEARS IN ART: 1979-2009**, by Tyler Alpern '87 (*Blurb*; \$39.95). Describing his artwork as “technically accomplished narrative painting with a contemporary slant,” Alpern utilizes time-honored painting techniques while portraying a modern-day sensibility. Reveling in and condemning our celebrity-obsessed pop culture and its colorful shortcomings, he also poses timely questions on identity, gender, and beauty in his work, challenging long-held notions on what is pretty, and turning traditional male and female forms on their heads.

Alpern—who lives in Boulder, Colo.—has also published **BRUZ FLETCHER: CAMPED, TRAMPED, & A RIOTOUS VAMP** (*Blurb*; \$24.95), the product of five years of research into an all-but-forgotten writer, composer, and performer, who died in 1941. Born to one of Indiana's wealthiest and most dysfunctional families, Fletcher's life was “a wild and sad story of extremes and incredible plot twists,” writes Alpern (tyler\_alpern@yahoo.com). “Though he killed himself at age 34, Bruz left behind three albums of wonderful songs and two novels that give some colorful and candid glimpses into his own world.”

**Briefly Noted: FEMINIST AGENDAS AND DEMOCRACY IN LATIN AMERICA**, edited by Jane S. Jaquette (*Duke University Press*; \$22.95), examines how women's movements in Latin America have responded to the dramatic political, economic, and social changes of the last 20 years. Jaquette is the Bertha Harton Orr Professor in the Liberal Arts Emerita at *Occidental*.

## CORRESPONDENCE

### Intimate Awakening

I am profoundly grateful to you, Lisa Jack '81 (“When We Were Young,” Fall 2009). To those of us in the early '80s who disbelieved, the only weapon left was our essential happiness. The beatific looks on the mostly familiar faces in your photos brought this back to me with intoxicating clarity.

Corollary to this in a way, and almost as astonishing and satisfying, is the fact that I was never required to despise the many admirable people I knew at *Occidental College* who did not think or vote the way I did.

Part of the title of a Wordsworth poem,

“The Happy Warrior,” was once fitted to Alfred E. Smith, arguably the first outsider American ever to get close to the presidency. I believe it applies to a lot of us who were awakened during those old Oxy days, perhaps especially to a former dormmate of mine in Haines Annex who has since moved to the White House.

I feel certain that the impulses which led you to stalk the intimate world of *Occidental* with a camera still live in you, Lisa, and as certain that you still honor them.

**SIMEON HENINGER '82**

Carrboro, N.C.

# OCCIDENTAL

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# Veitch, Voodoo, and Victory

Occidental's 15th president is inaugurated in a Homecoming & Family Weekend marked by academic ceremony, faculty artistry, swinging tunes, and gridiron heroics

Photos by Marc Campos



**D**URING A SUNNY, JOYOUS weekend that combined academic ceremony with faculty artistry, undergrad ingenuity, and big band sounds in the Quad, the Occidental community turned out en masse to inaugurate Jonathan Veitch as its 15th president. Held in conjunction with Homecoming & Family Weekend on Oct. 23-24, the festivities featured dramatic, musical, and dance performances by students, the opening of the new student-run Green Bean Coffee Lounge, and the unveiling of art professor Linda Lyke's mural *Pentimento Montage* as prelude to Saturday morning's ceremony in Remsen Bird Hillside Theater.

In his address, Veitch made a compelling case for why the liberal arts matter and laid out an ambitious agenda with a series of 12 commitments essential to the College's continuing success. He called for a rethinking of Occidental's core curriculum "to provide our students a purposeful and thoughtful synthesis of what we value most as an institution. To do less is to abdicate our responsibility." Veitch also emphasized the importance of global literacy and advocated "a vision for science in general education that will engender respect for scientific methodology and an understanding of the basic principles of science."

Taking advantage of its location in Los Angeles, Occidental also should further develop its program of civic engagement and form collaborations with the city's leading cultural institutions, said Veitch, who commissioned three new musical works from faculty—Andre Myers, Jennifer Logan, and Bruno Louchouarn—that were performed during the ceremony.

"Occidental must remain committed to [its] historic mission by enhancing its schol-

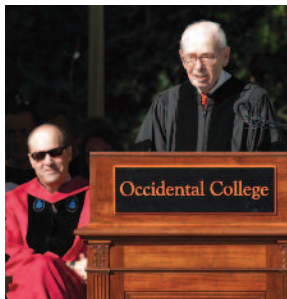


Veitch sizes up the tallest installation of the faculty art exhibit at Mullin Studio on Friday morning.



**TOP:** Veitch and professor of art Linda Lyke unveil *Pentimento Montage* outside of Coons Administrative Center on Oct. 23. **ABOVE CENTER:** Veitch and wife Sarah meet members of the Oxy family in the Tiger Cooler later that day. **ABOVE:** Veitch congratulates the swimming and diving team for its winning Homecoming car parade entry.

**RIGHT:** Eugene Lang speaks to the gathering. **BELOW:** Former Board of Trustees chairs Stephen F. Hinchliffe Jr. '55, *left*, Virginia (Goss) Cushman '55, and Cathie (Young) Selleck '55 applaud Veitch's investiture. **BOTTOM:** Veitch cuts the ribbon on the Green Bean Coffee Lounge on Oct. 23.



**LEFT:** Big Bad Voodoo Daddy lead vocalist and guitarist Scotty Morris. **BELOW:** Jennifer Logan based her composition "I Am One With You" on texts from her music students about their most profound lessons or experiences at Occidental.



**ABOVE:** Composer Bruno Louchouarn conducts "Commencement." **RIGHT:** Big Bad Voodoo Daddy's Glen Marhevka wails on the trumpet. **BELOW:** Biology professor Gretchen North leads the procession into Hillside Theater.



**ABOVE:** Assistant music professor Andre Myers composed the fanfare "This Door, This Day" for the inauguration. **BELOW:** Veitch and Eugene M. Tobin, program officer for the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation.



arship support for first-generation students," he continued. "Colleges and universities have a crucial role to play in safeguarding upward mobility." Recognizing that he presents an agenda that requires not only hard work and dedication, but longevity as well, Veitch pledged that "I plan to be here a long time."

The ceremony also featured remarks by Eugene M. Lang, founder and president of the Eugene Lang Foundation and namesake of the Eugene Lang College of Liberal Arts at the New School; and Eugene M. Tobin, program officer for the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation and former president of Hamilton College.

"Although the liberal arts college sector has had more obituaries written about it than any other segment of higher education, the real challenge facing Occidental and its peers is not extinction or 'relevance,' but rather the necessity of making difficult choices that allow it to remain true to its mission," Tobin

said. "Rest assured, President Veitch ... understands that the liberal arts college sector is a case study of how higher education has grown by adding new things without taking old things away."

In his remarks, Lang asked with a laugh: "Am I a philanthropist by presenting you with Jonathan as the new leader of Occidental College? Or am I a masochist who invited the painful concern of replacing him in New York? Well, no matter! ... Clearly, Jonathan has found a community after his own heart at Occidental, a community where students are challenged to see the connections between their studies and current social issues."

A party in the Quad followed, with lunch courtesy of dining services and entertainment by Big Bad Voodoo Daddy, whose infectious big band swing had students cutting a rug and demanding an encore. The day was capped by a surprisingly close game between



**LEFT:** Alexander Veitch wears his dad's No. 15 Oxy jersey. **BELOW:** With senior Trace Wallace leading the charge, the Tigers take to the field prior to their Homecoming duel vs. La Verne.



the Tigers and the La Verne Leopards, which ultimately ended—as Homecoming games always should—with Oxy on top, 14-13. 📍



Architect's rendering of a renovated and expanded Swan Hall. The estimated cost of the project is more than \$19 million.

# Remastering the Plan

As Jonathan Veitch settles into the neighborhood, Oxy tables its campus-wide specific plan to speed the plow on a few key projects. Top priority: Bringing Swan Hall into the 21st century

SEEKING TO AVOID LENGTHY delays to key projects and responding to community requests for a more comprehensive planning process, President Jonathan Veitch has withdrawn Occidental's application to the city of Los Angeles for a specific plan to govern campus development for the next 20 years. "This is not to say that we are abandoning the idea of a campus master plan, or turning our back on all the planning we have done to this point," Veitch noted in an Oct. 15 campuswide e-mail announcing the decision. "But a great deal depends on getting it right."

Filed with the Los Angeles Planning Department in July 2008, the proposed specific plan mapped out 29 broadly defined "building opportunity sites" that could be used for a variety of different projects totaling 550,250 square feet. The plan also divided the campus into three subareas, each with its own development standards regulating building heights, setbacks, and other issues.

Underlying the plan were five basic principles: restoration and reuse of architect Myron Hunt's original buildings; new construction focused on infill sites to minimize impacts on adjacent residential neighborhoods; the "pedestrianization" of the central campus through the gradual reduction of roads and parking spaces; the integration of sustainability measures into new construction and building renovations; and a commitment to neighborhood-compatible development.

However, a comprehensive academic planning effort launched this fall could have a major impact on future space and facilities needs. Similarly, a process of reconceptualizing Clapp Library and the ways it serves the campus has just begun, and the library was not identified in the specific plan as a potential site for renovation and/or construction. Representatives from the Eagle Rock and Highland Park neighborhood councils and other groups told Veitch at a Sept. 30 meeting that they would like to see a planning

Photo by Marc Campos



Construction of a new, two-story home for alumni relations is planned at 1599 Campus Road, the former Fiji House and Women's Center (shown as it is today).

process that extends beyond Campus Road.

"We share many of the same goals," Veitch says. "We want to see local businesses thriving on York, Eagle Rock, and Colorado boulevards, pedestrian- and bicycle-friendly streets lined with trees and other attractive landscaping, and a greater engagement between the College and the community. Everyone benefits from this approach."

Veitch also questions whether the construction of new faculty/staff housing on part of the undeveloped portion of campus

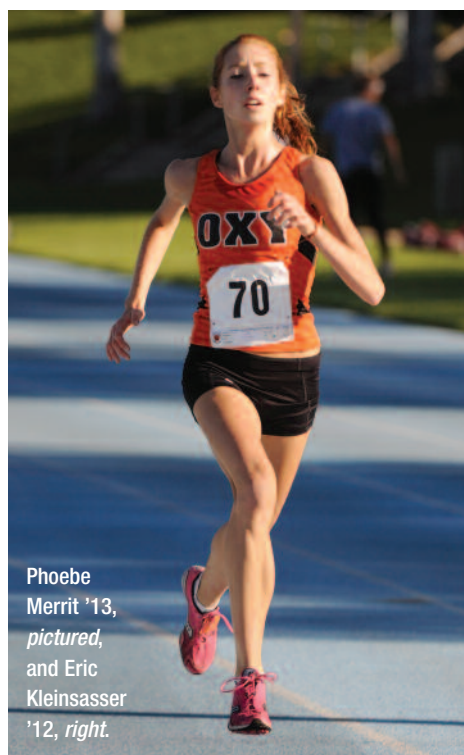
around Fiji Hill is the best solution to the College's housing needs. "I think it's worth exploring the possibility of creating closer ties between the College and the surrounding community by utilizing existing housing in the neighborhood for faculty housing as well as for low-impact office space for administrative departments," he says. "Brown University has used this model very successfully in Providence."

Withdrawal of the application has been greeted favorably by community groups. "There is a new sheriff in town, or at least a new president at Occidental College. So far, we like him," Robert Gotham, president of The Eagle Rock Association, told his homeowner-members. The College is now assembling a small working group of community representatives to begin a conversation about better integrating Oxy and the community.

Withdrawing the specific plan application allows the College to move forward with two high-priority, time-sensitive projects that otherwise might have been seriously delayed by a lengthy approval process. The first is the renovation and expansion of James Swan Hall, voted last year by the Board of Trustees as the College's top capital priority.

Improvements to 95-year-old Swan, designed by Hunt as one of Occidental's three original buildings, have been 50 years in the making. Built as a men's dorm in 1914, it was converted to faculty offices in 1960. Today it houses more than one-third of Oxy's faculty, some of whom work in converted sleeping porches and storage spaces. The project would rationalize the original interior, make it accessible, and add a new wing on its west side to provide badly needed faculty office space and seminar rooms.

The second major project is the construction of a new home for alumni relations at 1599 Campus Road, currently the site of the old Women's Center/Phi Gamma Delta House. The current Alumni House, a two-bedroom home at 1541 Campus Road, is so small and cramped that the bathtub is used for records storage. With a lead gift from trustee emeritus Jack Samuelson '46, the proposed Samuelson Alumni Center will provide almost three times the space for alumni staff and meetings of the Alumni Board of Governors, a suite of guest rooms on the second floor—and, happily, a place to take a shower without dampening important paperwork. ■



Phoebe Merrit '13, pictured, and Eric Kleinsasser '12, right.



## Runaway Successes

Merrit and Kleinsasser go the distance for cross country squads

**W**ITH FRESHMAN SENSATION Phoebe Merrit of Mercer Island, Wash., blazing the path, the women's cross country team captured its second Southern California Intercollegiate Athletic Conference championship in three years this fall. After winning her first college race, a 4,500-meter run, at the Redlands Invitational in September, Merrit seldom slowed down in the months to follow, finishing third at the 2009 SCIAC Championship at Chino on Oct. 31. She was joined by Sadie Mohler '12 and Grace Peck '10 in earning first team All-SCIAC honors in cross country, while teammates Denali Halsey '10, Eliza Dornbush '12, and Megan Lang '13 notched second team honors.

For the men, Eric Kleinsasser '12 of Glendale found his way to the Division III Cross Country Championships in Cleveland, where his 35th-place finish earned him All-American honors. While Kleinsasser was named SCIAC Runner of the Year for the second time in as many years, coach Rob Bartlett's Tigers placed third in the SCIAC after a season plagued by injuries and illness.

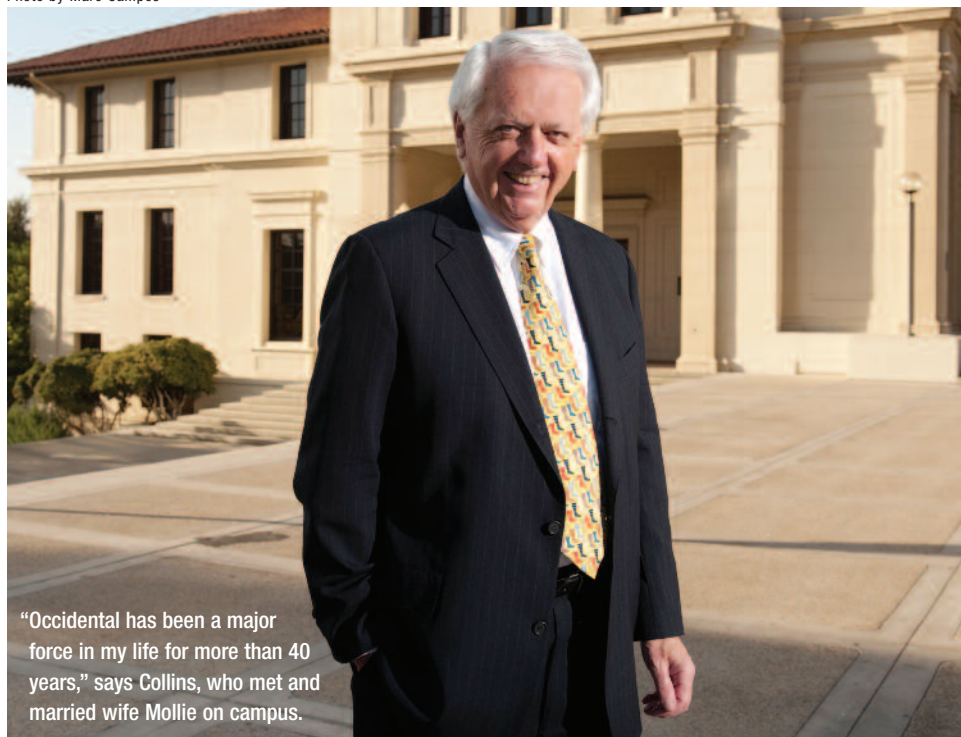
Occidental fell just short of a conference title in football this year, finishing 7-2 overall and 5-1 in SCIAC play, losing only to first-time conference champion Cal Lutheran. Seventeen Tigers won All-Conference honors, led by SCIAC Defensive Player of the Year Alex Wertheimer '10 of Everett, Wash. Coach Dale Widolff's seniors compiled a 32-6 record over their four years at Oxy.

A resurgent women's soccer team finished 7-5 in SCIAC, 10-7 overall. Colm McFeely's squad upset second-seeded Redlands en route to the conference post-season tournament title game, only to fall to Claremont-Mudd-Scripps, 1-0. Marci Kang '10 won first team All-SCIAC honors for the third consecutive year, and teammate Season Falker-Rodriguez '11 was named to the first team for the second year. Men's soccer had a more challenging season, finishing 4-12-1 overall.

Tigers volleyball showed marked improvement in 2009, winning seven of its last nine matches to compile its best record in years (15-15 overall, 6-8 SCIAC). Men's water polo faced choppy waters, going 9-7 overall, 3-7 SCIAC against tough competition. ■



Photo by Marc Campos



“Occidental has been a major force in my life for more than 40 years,” says Collins, who met and married wife Mollie on campus.

## A “Watershed Moment” Veitch Drafts Collins to Take on a New Challenge

No one was more surprised than Dennis Collins himself when he took up the mantle of senior vice president of institutional advancement and external affairs at Occidental in November. Although he’d been involved with the College for the last 46 years—as director of admission, dean of students, Oxy parent (to Lindsey Collins ’94, now a producer at Pixar), and as chair of the Board of Trustees since 2005—Collins and his wife, Mollie, had recently purchased a vineyard in Sonoma with plans to retire there. But when President Jonathan Veitch asked Collins if he would consider a new role at Oxy, it didn’t take him long to say yes.

Having been instrumental in Veitch’s selection as president, “I’m so invested in him and his future and his success here that I just had to do it,” says Collins, who was president and CEO of the James Irvine Foundation from 1986 to 2002. And he and Mollie “determined that our love for, commitment to, and affection for Occidental was just too great not to take on the challenge.”

“Challenge” is the key word, because Veitch—and Collins—have great ambitions for the College, especially in light of the forthcoming capital campaign. “I’ve never

been satisfied that Occidental had fully met its potential,” Collins says. “I think we are a jewel of an institution. We have some qualities that I think we need to be clearer about, to be able to articulate what these are and identify what the vision for the institution is. All of these things are consuming me at the moment as I start thinking about the capital campaign. The fact of the matter is that we have gotten by on our talents, our wits, and our hard work, but we now need resources.”

“Dennis’s longstanding leadership role in the philanthropic world together with his unmatched knowledge of Occidental are tremendous assets for the College,” Veitch said in announcing Collins’s appointment. “This is a watershed moment for Occidental.”

Labeling Veitch “Mr. Idea-a-Minute,” Collins sees his role as partly to help his new boss with “pacing and prioritizing.” “I’m looking forward to accomplishing a lot,” he says. “I wouldn’t have taken this on if I’d thought Oxy was just a sleepy little enterprise where all you needed to do was show up.”

John Farmer, senior director of Goldman Sachs and vice chair of the board of trustees, has assumed the post of board chair. Farmer, an Occidental trustee since 1995, was chair of the board of the American School in London for 11 years and served as a trustee of Washington and Lee University from 1996-2006. His wife Tawna ’64 and daughter Heddy ’96 are both Occidental graduates.

## Phi Beta Kappa

### 13 Oxy Seniors Inducted In Annual Fall Ceremony

The Delta of California Chapter of Phi Beta Kappa—the nation’s oldest and most prestigious academic honors institution—initiated 13 Occidental seniors Nov. 18 in a ceremony on campus. Louise Yuhas, professor of art history and the visual arts and chapter president, presided over the initiation. The professors who introduced each student lauded them for their “astuteness,” “determination,” “self-discipline,” “diverse accomplishments,” “intelligent curiosity,” “clarity of purpose,” “creative scholarship,” and “weapons-grade intellect.”

This year’s initiates are: Jacob Goldstein (a sociology major from San Jose), Kevo Hindoyan (biochemistry, San Marino), Madison Murphy (art history and the visual arts, Seattle), David Panek (biology, Davis), Sharon Park (history, La Cañada), Mark Paulsen (chemistry, Rolling Hills Estates), Tate Smith (physics, San Marcos, Texas), Victor Sowers (history/economics, Washington, D.C.), Veronica Toledo (history, Los Angeles), Laila Tootoonchi (art history and the visual arts, Albuquerque, N.M.), Luca Valle (biology, Spokane, Wash.), Caroline Wade (music, Glendale), and Lisa Warren (cognitive science, Sacramento).

## The Big Read Revisited Jeffers Celebration Stays True to Poet’s Nature

From century-old dances to 21st-century tweets, the Occidental campus was immersed in the poetry of 1905 graduate Robinson Jeffers in a 38-day celebration of the “poet of the American West Coast.” *The Big Read: Robinson Jeffers and the Ecologies of Poetry* concluded on the Occidental campus Nov. 7 with a community festival of poetry readings, nature walks, art exhibits, music and dance performances, and campus art fusing poetry and ecology developed by Oxy students with guest artist Corey Madden.

Jeffers Day at Occidental coincided with an event bringing high school students and their parents to campus sponsored by GEAR UP (Gaining Early Awareness and Readiness for Undergraduate Programs). It was the last

and biggest event of The Big Read, led by Oxy librarians Dale Stieber and Emily Bergman with funding from the National Endowment for the Arts. Former NEA chairman Dana Gioia calls Jeffers “the great prophetic voice of American modernism. He wrote about big ideas and subjects: nature, man’s responsibility in a world not made solely for him, and American culture.”



Oxy also tapped into the community with 15 events presented with local libraries, museums, and nature and environmental centers. More than 1,200 people attended these events. Altogether, nine participating schools, including Oxy, incorporated the poetry of Jeffers in their curricula or tutorial programs, reaching more than 800 students.

The Oct. 1 kickoff on campus featured readings from faculty, staff, students, and President Jonathan Veitch, who read Jeffers’s poem “Rock and Hawk.” Veitch said Jeffers was one of the very first poets he read when he started to study poetry seriously, attracted by what he called Jeffers’s “austere philosophy.” The event supported a Big Read partner, the Wildlife WayStation, which was hit hard by the recent Station Fire in the Angeles National Forest. Representatives from the 160-acre animal sanctuary brought a rescued bobcat to the event, which also marked the opening of the College’s Jeffers exhibit.

Photo by Marc Campos



Members of the Oxy Folk and Historical Dance Troupe (including associate mathematics professor Alan Knoerr and partner Lauren Gunderson ’11, *foreground*) perform a 1908 two step by Scott Joplin—as performed by the composer, preserved on player piano rolls—in front of Coons Administrative Center on Nov. 7 to commemorate Robinson Jeffers Day at Occidental. Professor of linguistics emerita Betchen Barber choreographed the dance.

The exhibit wove together Occidental’s extensive Jeffers collection with materials contributed by community organizations and partners to provide Jeffers’s story, local history, art, sense of place, and activities in nature and sustainability. “He spoke from the heart,” observed exhibit designer Toni Petnunas, who also read at the kickoff.

Community presentations ranged from a discussion at Vroman’s Bookstore and a talk on Jeffers’s life and poetry at a retirement facility, to poetry and nature walks in Debs Park and along the Arroyo Seco. Other events included a Highland Park Heritage Trust walking tour led by Marilyn Robertson ’70 and Curt Robertson ’68, and a series of readings pairing poems by Jeffers with works by 20 area poets, led by Los Angeles Poetry Festival director Suzanne Lummis.

English writing chair Tom Burkdall even presented Jeffers’s poetry using Twitter, stating, “I thought Robinson Jeffers should have an opportunity to express himself using social media.” Burkdall tweeted 33 poems, garnering 72 followers worldwide.

Occidental received a \$20,000 grant from the National Endowment for the Arts to launch its Big Read program, and the College provided matching funds and in-kind contributions. The NEA presents The Big Read in partnership with the Institute of Museum and Library Services and in cooperation with Arts Midwest. For photos and additional highlights, visit The Big Read: Robinson Jeffers on Facebook.

## Occidental in Brief

Jacqueline H. Nguyen ’87 was confirmed by the U.S. Senate on Dec. 1 as a U.S. district judge for California’s Central District. Nguyen is the first Vietnamese-American to serve as a federal judge, as well as President Barack Obama ’83’s first judicial appointment in California. □ Occidental’s athletics programs is one of nine inaugural recipients nationwide of the 2009 NCAA Diversity in Athletics Award for Division III. The honor recognizes athletics departments that excel in diversity as measured in six categories (diversity strategy, gender diversity of employees, racial diversity of employees, value and attitudinal diversity, gender equity, and overall diversity). □ The National Science Foundation has awarded Occidental a \$740,000 grant to help meet the growing demand for more K-12 math and science teachers. The five-year grant will help educate, train, and credential up to 40 OxyMS Teacher Scholars, who will then teach math and science for at least two years in an urban, high-need school in the Los Angeles Unified School District.

Photo by Marc Campos



Professor of English and comparative literary studies Gabrielle Foreman was presented with the Graham L. Sterling Memorial Award, the College’s top faculty honor, at an Oct. 27 reception. Foreman, who joined the Oxy faculty in 1994, teaches 19th-century American literature, African-American literature, and issues in critical race and legal theory. Promoted to full professor were Regina Freer (politics) and Andrea Hopmeyer Gorman (psychology), while newly tenured associate professors Sharla Fett (history) and Caroline Heldman (politics) were also recognized at the event.

Batman © DC Comics



# Back to the Drawing Board

Following the accidental death of her son, comic book artist Seth Fisher, Vicki (Sinunu) Sheridan '69 found solace in his family, friends, and fans—and is using his inspiration and advice to create her first picture book

By DICK ANDERSON  
Photos by KEVIN BURKE

Seth Fisher's talent knew no boundaries. Even when he was in kindergarten, when he was drawing a tree for a classroom mural project, "Seth told his teacher that his tree was bigger than a single sheet of paper," recalls his mom, Vicki (Sununu) Sheridan '69. So she stapled another piece, then another, and so on, until Seth had drawn a tree that was 5 feet tall. "He just always had a vision," says Sheridan, who majored in art at Oxy and studied under Robert Hansen.

Inspired by the likes of French artist Moebius and Japanese manga great Katsuhiro Otomo, Fisher realized his vision as a professional comic book artist for nearly a decade,

in a series of idiosyncratic projects that brought an avant-garde spin to iconic superheroes such as Batman, Flash, Green Lantern, and the Fantastic Four. "Seth took the talent he had and worked and worked it until he could draw anything," Sheridan says. "Then he applied all his wit, imagination, and zest for life into his pictures."

The *joie de vivre* that poured out of every panel of his work made the news of his accidental death in January 2006—from injuries sustained in a fall at a club in Osaka, Japan—all the more devastating not only to those who were closest to Seth, but to those who only knew him through his art. Following the loss of her only biological son, "I was



helpless," Sheridan says. "Then I was astounded how people came to help me. It was something close to miraculous to

me how kind and attentive people were: my friends, Seth's friends, and, wonder of wonders, Seth's fans, who didn't know him and certainly didn't know me, but loved his art."

Nearly four years after his passing, Fisher's legacy continues to manifest itself in his mother's life—and in no greater way than in her own artistic pursuits. "Seth was always encouraging me and giving me ideas how to make my work better," says Sheridan. "I remembered that, but I wasn't very serious about it." But now he has shown her the way.



“Seth was always encouraging me and giving me ideas how to make my work better,” says Sheridan, reviewing pages from a children’s book that tells the Nativity story.

**OPPOSITE PAGE:** Three covers from Fisher’s five-part Dark Knight epic, 2005’s *Snow*. **INSET:** Seth and his infant son, Tofu, who was born in May 2004.



After graduating from Oxy, Sheridan lived in Greece for six months, and later Berkeley, before settling down, getting married, and giving birth to Seth in 1972. (She divorced Seth’s father, Steven Fisher, in 1975, and married Bob Sheridan in 1982.) Sheridan knew her son had talent, but it wasn’t until sixth grade that she got a firsthand idea of his potential. Fisher was enrolled at a school without an art program, and his teacher told her that if it was that important to her to have art in his class, she would have to do it herself.

“So I taught art in his sixth-grade class,” Sheridan says, “and during that time, Seth realized that he had the talent to be an artist. And it was about that time that he decided that he wanted to get into comic books.”

Growing up in San Diego, “Seth went to Comic-Con every year, and he used to meet people in the business,” Sheridan says. He enrolled at Colorado College, took a dislike to the art department, and wound up majoring in mathematics instead.

After college, Fisher migrated to Japan, living on a small island and teaching English through the JET Program for three years. He sold his first professional work to *Heavy Metal*, and later *Cricket*, all the while working up an 8-page pitch for a graphic novel with 19-year-old writer and college student Andrew Dabb, whom he met online. They pitched and sold the idea to an independent publisher. But that company folded soon after, putting the project in limbo. Fisher,

then 26 and newly married, decided to spend the next year drawing that comic on spec—and the resulting 128-page work, *Happydale: Devils in the Desert*, was published in two parts by DC Comics’ Vertigo imprint in 1999. “That was his first break,” Sheridan says.

After a short stint in Italy and back in San Diego (where he did design work for the video game *Myst III*), Fisher moved back to Japan, this time under exclusive contract to DC. He was nominated for an Eisner Award, one of the comic industry’s top honors, as Best Penciler/Inker for his work on *Flash: Time Flies* and *Vertigo Pop! Tokyo*. His young son, Tofu, was a source of inspiration for his last completed project, a four-part series

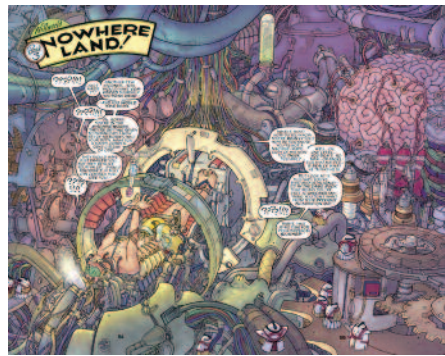


**ABOVE:** Seth Fisher poses with a sketch at San Diego Comic-Con in 2004. **BELOW:** Marvin the Martian was drawn on commission for Georgia collector Terry Maltos. **RIGHT:** *Fantastic Four/Iron Man: Big in Japan*—his last finished work—fused monsters and heroes in what Fisher called a “really fun book.”

Fantastic Four, Iron Man, and Spider-Man © Marvel Comics; Green Lantern and Batman © DC Comics; *Vertigo Pop! Tokyo* and *Happydale* © DC Comics/Vertigo

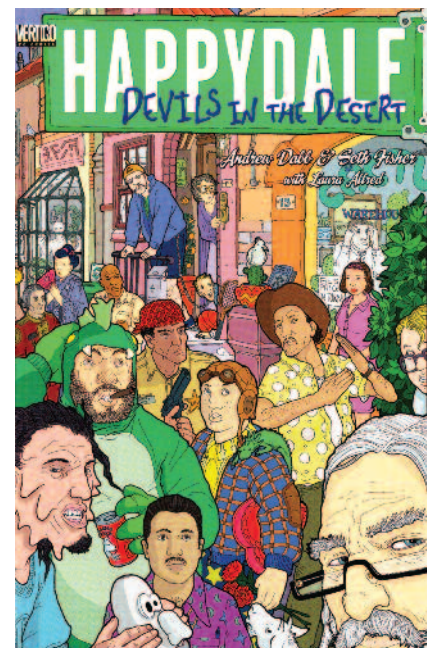
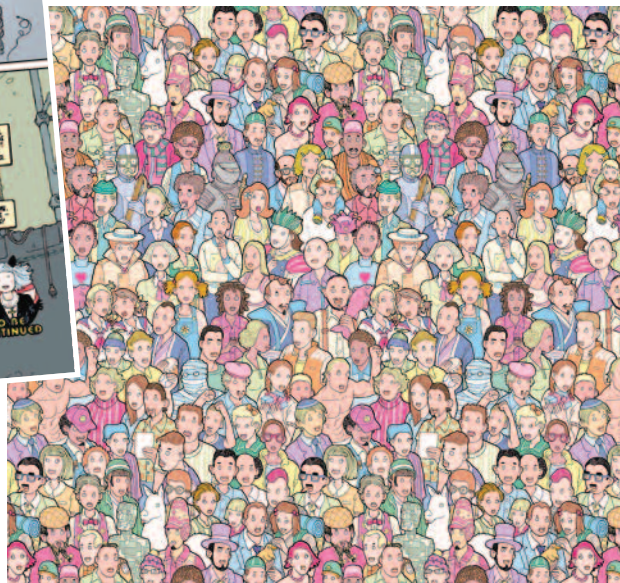


**ABOVE & RIGHT:** With a “conceptual starting point [of] Little Nemo meets Green Lantern,” 2001’s *Willworld* was published as a two-part miniseries by DC. **BELOW:** A *Willworld* spread, before and after coloring. “The colorist makes or breaks my art,” Fisher told writer Mike Jozic.

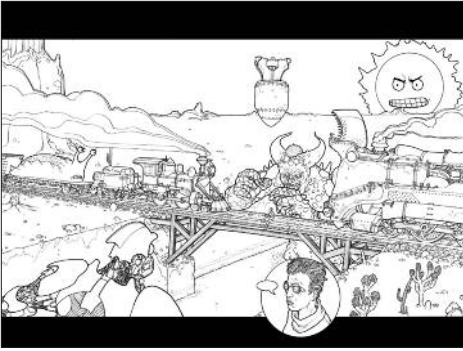


**ABOVE:** For *Vertigo Pop! Tokyo* (2002), Fisher went on a photo expedition to Harajuku Park “to be sure that the backgrounds in his images were Tokyo and nowhere else,” Sheridan writes.

**ABOVE RIGHT:** In a 2005 short—his first work for Marvel—Fisher offered his take on Spider-Man. **BELOW:** “One of the things that is most characteristic of Seth’s work, and most appealing, is that no matter how great the population of a scene, each person has a home life, a personality, and his or her own needs, interests, and quirks,” Sheridan wrote while discussing Fisher’s *Happydale*.



**ABOVE:** On the back of the wraparound cover to *Happydale* #1—his breakthrough work for DC—Fisher drew himself into the crowd, “looking the most horrified of anyone,” Sheridan notes.



**ABOVE:** “I draw the world the way I see it, and it seems really detailed to me,” Fisher said of his work. **RIGHT:** Sheridan works in watercolors and colored pencils.

**BELOW:** The smoke coming from Commissioner Gordon’s ears in Fisher’s 2005 Batman story, *Snow*, is a nod to the manga stylings of Japanese comic books.



titled *Fantastic Four/Iron Man: Big in Japan*. “Some of my monsters in my FF book are based on him,” he wrote. “He thinks he is a kaiju and tromps around enjoying his huge size compared to cats and insects.”

In the months following Fisher’s passing, many of his fans connected with Sheridan through [www.floweringnose.com](http://www.floweringnose.com), his digital domicile, which he had populated with artwork, games, and his own line of designer T-shirts. (“Having a website is like letting people come over and visit your house whenever they want ... and it’s always clean,” Fisher observed in a 2001 interview.)

Eventually Sheridan used the website to try and sell some of Fisher’s original artwork. “That was always something that he was

thrilled to do,” she says. “He always felt like he got paid twice, and the money went to his wife.” Sheridan made a habit out of asking people what they liked about her son’s art—“I never liked the idea of selling his artwork and having it go into the void—and Seth’s fans wrote me these amazingly insightful and interesting and heartfelt letters.”

The idea of Fisher’s website falling into disuse was “painful” to Sheridan—“like a nice house that’s been abandoned where the weeds grow up and the kids start throwing rocks in the windows until it’s not something nice anymore,” she explains. After first playing with the notion of redoing the site following ideas Fisher had left behind, a fan to whom Sheridan had sold a piece of artwork

suggested adding a blog to the existing site instead, and even set it up for her.

Over the last 2 1/2 years, Sheridan has blogged nearly 500 entries on Fisher’s website (under the “News” heading). “I post a page of his artwork and talk about it—anything I know about what went into its execution, its artistic merits, how the parts work together, and so forth,” she says. Somewhere among her son’s papers she found his list of 30 tips for artists (which he titled *Stuff I Wish People Had Told Me a Long Time Ago*). So she studied the list and started posting Fisher’s tips on the website, illustrating each rule with a sample of his art.

“It’s embarrassing to me how little I had actually looked at his work,” Sheridan says.



**ABOVE:** Sheridan reads to her grandson, Tofu, now at their home in Coronado.

**RIGHT:** Sheridan walks with Seth's widow, Hisako, and Tofu along the beach. "I've learned that some of the best things in life you learn only when you are willing to embrace everything, good and bad, that is put on your plate," Sheridan says. "God is generous, but not easy."



"This was a revelation to me, both in learning just how good my son's artwork really is, and also about how to illustrate—something I always wanted to do."

Save for drawing a Christmas card every year, Sheridan had done little with her talent since college. "I had never really put doing art as a priority," she says. "It was always something I did if everything 'important' was finished." About five years ago, while attending a retreat on art and theology with her husband, she saw the 1969 film *Andrei Rublev*, about the famed 15th-century icon painter. "In the movie, Rublev stops painting for years, and someone says to him, 'God gave you the gift. It is a sin for you not to use it.' I heard that, and knew that God also gave me a gift. But it was not until Seth died, and so he was no longer producing his gorgeous art, that I felt the urge to actually start on my own. It suddenly felt like somebody had to keep doing it."

"Seth loved to encourage other artists," she notes—and a fan with whom he had exchanged many e-mails wrote Sheridan and asked if she would like to have the letters that Fisher had written to him about his craft. One letter in particular was a revelation:

"Art is not the end in and of itself," he wrote. "Your art is a reflection of the way you view life, and if you ever settle and decide you have arrived, then you have died." He added: "Do not confuse polish with heart! Polish is the package ... heart is the contents of the box. An empty box wrapped in many bows and ribbons is a waste of time for everyone."

Now, armed with Fisher's instructions and words of encouragement, Sheridan is working on her first picture book. She got the idea after Tofu and his mother, Hisako, moved to San Diego in 2006 to live with Sheridan and her husband. Sheridan went

searching for a nice picture book to read to him to explain Christmas—a simple telling of the Nativity story. "Some people celebrate Christmas in Japan, but it's Santa and presents and trees, but no particular meaning behind it," she says. "I couldn't find anything that I really wanted to read to him. Every book was either Old Masters' paintings and words from the Bible, or it was donkeys, cows, and bears."

Sheridan had been looking for her own book project, "to see if I was really meant to draw. So when I found that the book I wanted to read to Tofu about Jesus's birth didn't exist, I said, 'Well, maybe that's my project.'"

She labored on the book for a year or so, roughing out the entire series of drawings ("I was *really* slow at first") before she started painting them. But, dissatisfied with the results, she tossed them out and started over. "That was Seth's influence, too—to be willing to go to whatever lengths I must in order to make the work something that pleases *me*. I began again, simpler, flatter, and was really pleased this time."

Sheridan spends up to 10 hours a week working on her art now, and she has a new ally and sounding board in Fisher's best friend, illustrator Langdon Foss. "Doing this brings me closer to Seth than I would have imagined, and is, I believe, what I was meant to do all along," she says. "I want

Mr. Hansen to know that after 40 years I am finally doing something with my art."

Fisher's work was recently displayed at the University of Oregon as part of an exhibition titled *Faster Than a Speeding Bullet: The Art of the Superhero*. Back home, Sheridan's favorite page of original art from *Happydale* hangs above her drawing table. "I am not sure, really, why I chose this one," she writes in her blog. "I guess I liked the guys hanging out at the local diner, doing regular things in their loopy Happydalian sort of way."

The page inspires her daily—from the smallest character nuances and the decorative brickwork in the background to the facial and body language of the participants. "The care and precision that has gone into all of it shows me just how very much I still have to learn," she writes. "But the fact that Seth did learn it means that it can be done." □

# MAGDALENA'S LIGHT

BY RHEA BORJA  
PHOTOS BY MAX S. GERBER



Defying her father's wishes, **Magdalena (Arias) Arenas '92** was determined to be the first person in her family to go to college—and Oxy gave her that window of opportunity



**A**S A 4-YEAR-OLD, MAGDALENA (Arias) Arenas '92 was waiting in a crowded county clinic to get vaccinations for school when a group of doctors in white coats strode by. They seemed so smart—so confident and authoritative—that they made a lasting impression on the little girl from a poor, immigrant neighborhood in the southeast San Gabriel Valley. As they swept past the waiting room, she gazed at them and thought, “That’s what I want to be when I grow up.”

Today Arenas wears a white coat herself, with her parents’ wedding photo tucked inside her medical ID badge. A specialist in internal medicine, pulmonary disease, and critical care, Arenas cares for patients at Pasadena’s Huntington Memorial and other area hospitals.

The petite Arenas is a familiar presence in the hallways of Huntington. She’s warm, easygoing, and disarmingly funny. But her bedside manner belies the determination, intelligence, and work ethic that led her from a gang-ridden high school to Occidental and USC Medical School, and ultimately her own private medical practice.

While she carries her parents’ picture close to her heart, college and a career did not figure in her father’s plans for his youngest daughter. Arenas enrolled at Oxy without her dad’s blessing, and the two did not speak for four years. While her family still loved and cared for her, she explains, they did not understand her desire for higher education. College was “uncharted territory for them, and they did not want to see me lost,” she says.

Consequently, she did not go home for holidays or summer breaks: “I didn’t want to be pulled back. I knew my family expected me to fail.” But those expectations were no match for Arenas’s determination to succeed.

The second-youngest of 11 children growing up in La Puente—a conservative, insular Latino community—Arenas was expected to hew to the family line: Graduate from high school, live at home until she got married, start a family. By the time she was a teenager, all six of her sisters were already wed.

By all accounts, Arenas was a model kid. She stayed out of trouble, obeyed her parents, and learned how to cook and keep house.



As an undergraduate, Arenas escorted Rev. Desmond Tutu and Costa Rica President Óscar Arias—Nobel Peace Prize winners both—around the Oxy campus: “Who gets opportunities like that?”

Her family nickname was Cindy, short for Cinderella, because “I always cleaned up after everyone,” she says.

But while Arenas was a dutiful Latina daughter, she also had a very American drive to succeed on her own terms—something that clashed with her father’s Old World sensibility. Armed only with a third-grade education, Cipriano G. Arias left Mexico with his young family to start a better life in the United States. He worked three jobs to put food on the table and taught his children—who were allowed to speak only Spanish at home—to value family and the church above all else.

He was determined not to lose a precious daughter to a foreign, hedonistic culture he did not understand or sanction. Mindful of Magdalena’s safety, he forbade her to take part in extracurricular activities,

ordering her to come straight home from school. Even though Arenas got straight A’s and was named to Bassett High School’s honor society, he also barred her from her high school class’s graduation night celebration and a college-scouting trip she’d paid for by cooking mole verde for hundreds to raise the needed funds. “He thought my wanting to go to college was a whim,” she says.

Undaunted, Arenas applied to a handful of colleges. She became interested in Occidental after her high school English teacher, Patricia Peters M’76, spoke movingly of her own time at Oxy. Occidental accepted Arenas, working out a financial aid package (“mostly loans”) and inviting her to participate in the College’s then-new Multicultural Summer Institute, a monthlong program created to ease first-generation college and some minority students into the college experience.

While other students showed up for orientation with their parents, lugging suitcases, bedding, stereos, and other dorm essentials into the residence halls, Arenas brought only a four-leaf wooden lamp she made in high school wood shop and a picture of St. Jude, patron saint of the hopeless. That's how she felt, those first few days. "Seeing the other kids with all their stuff and their parents, that was one of my darkest moments," she says. "I didn't even have school supplies."

Arenas also saw that she was unprepared in other ways. Most of her peers had gone to suburban high schools that offered Advanced Placement courses and other college-oriented academic programs. By contrast, Bassett High offered no AP courses at the time. The school also couldn't afford to give each student his or her own textbooks, much less supply other essentials. Even though she was a pre-med major, Arenas never had a chance to use a microscope prior to her arrival at Oxy. She felt like she didn't belong. "I honestly thought that I would be discovered, that I had infiltrated the campus and they would send me home," she says.

Money was also tight. Arenas paid her own way through college, working several jobs. She tutored children going to private schools, cleaned houses, and worked in the office of the dean of students as a work-study. To economize, she bought an Oxy dining plan good for only 10 meals a week, which meant often going hungry on weekends. "Top Ramen was my best friend, and I lost a lot of weight," she says. "I was working too much and I got straight C's my first semester."

Overwhelmed, she had a conversation with English and comparative literary studies professor Eric Newhall '67, who got to know Arenas through MSI. She thanked him for the opportunity to study at Oxy, but said that she couldn't afford it and had to leave. He convinced her to stay. "She was a serious person, very bright," says Newhall. "I spoke to [then-president] John Slaughter, and it was clear to both of us that this was a young woman who should have 'A.B., Occidental' after her name."

They talked to Arenas's father, as did David Morgan from the admission office. "If you can be supportive of your daughter at home," Slaughter told Cipriano Arias, "we'll take care of the rest." The financial aid

Arenas consequently received enabled her to better focus on her studies, and her grades went up.

Even now, Arenas is amazed at the outpouring of care and support she received at Oxy. "I had so many angels," she says. "I was so humbled by their generosity." Arenas worked in the dean of students's office throughout her time at Oxy, and one day, dean Brigida Knauer canceled all of her appointments and took Arenas sightseeing. Even though she grew up in Los Angeles County, Arenas had never explored the city. They visited Grauman's Chinese Theater, the Hollywood Walk of Fame, Lawry's Prime Rib, and other L.A. landmarks.

Knauer's secretary, Darlene Tarin, also took Arenas under her wing, bringing her breakfast many mornings and giving her bed sheets and other necessities. "Her enthusiasm and her eagerness to pursue her education impressed me," says Tarin, who is the godmother of Arenas and husband Carlos's daughters, 12-year-old Carolina and 9-year-old Amanda. "She's like a surrogate daughter to us."

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**“Seeing the other kids with all their stuff and their parents, that was one of my darkest moments,” she recalls. “I didn’t even have school supplies.”**

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Arenas learned as much as she could at Oxy. She studied all the time—after work, at night, on weekends. One roommate even snatched her books away from her, locked them in the closet, and told her to relax. "But I was on a mission," Arenas says. "Going to school was like drinking from a fire hose to me. There was so much to learn."

Her hard work paid off. Not only did she graduate with an A.B. in biology and a minor in classical studies, Arenas also received the prestigious Thomas J. Watson Fellowship, a one-year grant to graduating seniors for independent study and travel anywhere in the world. She spent the year learning midwifery at a hospital in Mexico City through the World Health Organization, caring for many poor patients. The same day she found out about her Watson Fellowship, Arenas also got an acceptance letter from

USC Medical School. "It was like I won the lottery," she says.

Arenas graduated from USC Medical School in 1997, and became the first Latina pulmonologist in several Los Angeles-area hospitals. She also spent a year as medical director of Emmons Health Center at Oxy before opening her own practice. Many of her clients, she notes, are "the sickest of the sick": older patients who have suffered from respiratory failure, stroke, or gastrointestinal bleeding.

There are exceptions. "I get to see the president of the College as a patient," says Arenas, who added Jonathan Veitch to her crowded roster after meeting him last summer. "He's very impressive, very personable, and seems like a really good fit for Oxy."

Her story moved Veitch to single her out in his Oct. 24 inaugural speech, which he titled "Magdalena's Lamp." Toward the end of his address at Remsen Bird Hillside Theater, he cited Arenas's metamorphosis as an example of the value a liberal arts education can provide in a student's life and career trajectory. "When Dr. Arenas told me her story, I was

deeply humbled—humbled not just by her drive and determination, but my responsibilities to the myriad other students like her for whom education is as necessary to their lives as oxygen," Veitch said.

Her mother still lives in La Puente, along with the handmade lamp Arenas brought to Occidental. Years ago, she made peace with her family, and her parents even came to her college graduation. "A man like my father never says 'I'm sorry' or 'I was wrong,'" Arenas says. "But I could tell that he was pleased."

Before Cipriano Arias died in 2008, Arenas told him how much he meant to her. "I'm so grateful to be your daughter," she said. "Thank God he gave you to me, because I can deal with any situation." His reply? "He said, 'I'm not sure if that's a compliment!'" Arenas recalls with a laugh. □



# *Curtain Call*

Fifty-six years after sending coach Bill Anderson out on top with a fourth straight SCIAC crown in baseball, the 1954 Tigers recount their remarkable journey

By Dick Anderson | Photo by Marc Campos

For members of Oxy's 1954 baseball team, their "ESPN moment," as pitcher Frank Bennett '54 puts it, came 27 miles from home, on the turf of their archrival, Whittier.

After their first clash of the season on the Tigers' home diamond was called on account of darkness, ending in a 9-9 tie, the Tigers found themselves playing a double-header, on the road, on the last day of the season, with the SCIAC title on the line. Oxy only needed one win to secure bragging rights, and retiring coach Bill Anderson put the ball in the hands of his southpaw ace, Bennett, in the opener. The slow-hurling senior responded by pitching a two-hitter, baffling the Poets with his ball placement and notching his seventh win of the season.

"When you're slow like I was, you had to have it between the ears," says Bennett, who threw a no-hitter against Caltech on April 10, 1954 (just weeks after younger brother Tom tossed his own no-hitter at Wilson High School). "I wasn't big and strong, and I didn't throw hard. I threw mostly breaking things. I didn't walk many and I didn't get hit too often because I didn't want to get hit hard."

For an encore, 6'8" powerhouse Dick "The Stork" Sovde '56 threw a seven-inning no-hitter in the second game, tying the bow on an unblemished SCIAC mark for the second time in three years and capping Anderson's 30-year coaching career with an unprecedented fourth straight conference title.

In Anderson's valedictory season, Occidental overwhelmed the competition, going 8-0 in conference play and 17-3 overall. The Tigers batted .351 as a team, and placed a record 10 players—seven first-string, three second-string—on the All-SCIAC teams. Besides Bennett, who was undefeated in his SCIAC career and 16-2 overall, the other first-stringers were second baseman Gil McFadden '54, who hit a league-leading .431 as a senior; center fielder Murray Via '54, who owns the all-time Oxy records for career (.434) and single-season (.500) batting average; third baseman Jim Burt '55, a career .336 clean-up hitter and two-time All-SCIAC pick; first baseman Kenny Wolters '57, a .364 hitter and three-time first-string All-SCIAC pick; hard-slugging shortstop Ed Marshall '56; and left fielder

Pat Delaney '54, who will be inducted posthumously into the Occidental Baseball Hall of Fame on Jan. 30. (Catcher Jim Hollinger '56, center fielder Gary Hess '56, and right fielder Mike Bell '55 were named second-string.)

"At the end of his career, Bill Anderson said this squad was his greatest team," says Ed Harper '51, who played three years for Anderson and returned as the Tigers' assistant during the team's 1952 SCIAC championship season. "I really held him in awe, as a human being first and as a coach second," Via adds. "I would like to see what he would have been if that car crash had never happened."

A three-sport star in high school (baseball, basketball, and football), Anderson lettered in football for two years at the University of Illinois. He arrived at Oxy as an assistant coach in 1924, taking the helm of the baseball program in 1930 and varsity basketball and football two years later. In 1939, he became director of athletics as well.

Anderson's "greatest victory," as a 1951 tribute called it, came off the field in his native Ohio. In 1941, a truck ran head-on into his factory-new Dodge, leaving the 49-year-old coach shattered and fighting for

Photos courtesy Occidental College Special Collections

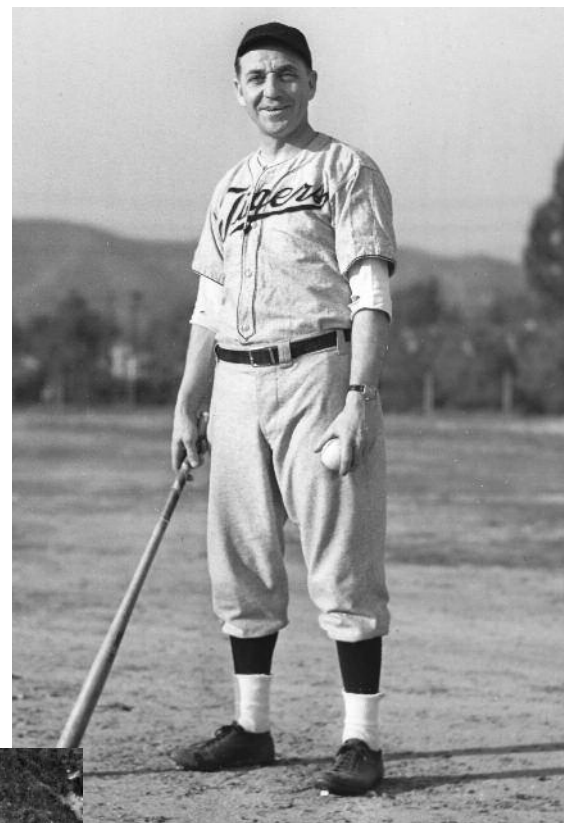


his life. Defying the odds, Anderson not only learned to walk again, he returned to Occidental after a yearlong convalescence.

Even though a nagging limp prohibited Anderson from doing much on the field, his spirit remained intact. His no-frills coaching style made him the object of some good-natured ribbing by his players to this day—he would hold two fists in front of him to make a bunt sign—but he was a leveling influence on his Tigers, many of whom came to Oxy thanks to his best recruiter.

"The reason why you had this collection of winning teams and players is because of Benjamin Hays Culley," says Via, who became

**OPPOSITE:** Clockwise from top left, Mike Lomen '56, Murray Via '54, Gil McFadden '54, Mike Bell '55, and Bill Gelsinger '56, and current Tigers coach Jason Hawkins. **BELOW:** In the "twilight time" of his coaching career, Bill Anderson fielded four consecutive conference champions in baseball, two of which went undefeated in SCIAC play. **BOTTOM:** The 1954 Tigers.



the first Tiger to be chosen first-string All-SCIAC three consecutive years. "He knew all the high school coaches, he had his tentacles out there, and he was a hustler." And while he attended many games, the dean's commitment to the squad went even further: "He had this Ty Cobb glove with no webbing, like

a pancake, and he would throw batting practice with us," Via adds.

Via and Bennett were introduced to Culley by their coach at Wilson High School, Jay Settle. "We were two guys from the other side of the tracks, and we didn't let him down," says Bennett, who grew up in City Terrace and has known Via since childhood. Via made a diving catch in the late innings of Oxy's contest against Caltech to preserve Bennett's bid for a no-hitter, which he counts among his fondest memories. The game ended in a 6-0 win. "Frank's pitching speeds were slow, slower, and slowest, and he would frustrate the hell out of batters," Via says.



**ABOVE:** Anderson's 1953 squad went 6-2 in SCIAC play to finish in a three-way tie for first.

**RIGHT:** Pat Delaney '54, Murray Via '54, and pitcher/outfielder Dick Dreher '57. **BELOW:** For the 1952 Tigers, senior pitcher Bob Ashford "was the ace of aces," says Frank Bennett '54. "After he graduated, we were not the same. But we duked it out."



The players' induction as a unit in 2008 represented a personal victory for Bennett, who had long been pitching the concept of bringing whole teams into the hall. On Jan. 30, coach Grant Dunlap '46's 1962 squad will become the 10th team to be inducted, joining the 1895, 1906, 1927, 1934, 1943, 1952, 1954, 1958, and 1967 Tigers. "Championship teams have more than nine players who make the historical events happen," Bennett says. There are the base coaches, scorekeepers, and the "holler guys" who pick up on the opponents' signals. "The covert activities of the bench are not often seen nor heard, but they make a difference in the scorebook—and they help create champions," he adds.

With the induction of Pat Delaney, the 1954 team will have seven members in the hall, second only to the 1952 squad. Delaney ranks 11th all-time in career batting average (.367) and sixth all-time in RBI production. Via, McFadden, and Bennett will induct Delaney, with members of his family expected to attend. Delaney, Bennett, Burt, and Via


played together throughout their time at Oxy, finishing 8-2-1 as freshmen in 1951. In their three years of varsity play, the Tigers went 15-3-1 (10-0 SCIAC) in 1952, 15-4 (6-2) in 1953, and 17-3 (8-0) in 1954. "Baseball was good to us," says Bennett.

While Anderson made out the lineups in 1954, he left most of the onfield coaching decisions to his assistant, Bill Gelsinger '56. A journeyman player, scout, and coach who worked in the sport until age 45, he enrolled at Oxy at the recommendation of his coach at Glendale High School, former big-leaguer Art "Bud" Teachout '27, and returned as a sophomore in 1954 after 3 1/2 years in the minor leagues. "I got \$100 for doing it, and I needed the money," says Gelsinger, who taped ankles for Jack Kemp '57 and his teammates during football season.

When the team migrated from Patterson Field to the new baseball diamond in 1950, there was no infield grass, no fence, and nowhere to store players' gear between games. "We had chicken-wire cages where we hung our clothes under Patterson Field," recalls

Ed Harper, who slugged the first home run on the new grounds. (Following its namesake's retirement, Anderson Field was dedicated in 1955, while Spencer Field House—honoring donor Paul Spencer '28—was built and dedicated in 1958.)

Harper is waist-deep into research on an exhaustive history of Bengal baseball, which has seen better days. While Oxy has fielded 28 championship teams in its 121-year history, the Tigers last won a conference title in 1982. "La Verne and Cal Lutheran coming into the league [in 1972 and 1992, respectively] was a game-changer," he says. "They began to dominate from the start."

Of all the advancements today's players have over their predecessors—aluminum bats, a grassy infield—the uniforms may make the biggest difference of all. Mike Bell guesses that McFadden—a nationally ranked junior college quarter-miler, and a refugee from Payton Jordan's relay teams—could have stolen an extra 15 bases in a more contemporary fabric: "Anything's better than those old woolies." 



Carla Mortensen '76 takes her passion for pens  
to new heights as an officer, scholar, and author—  
and she has the ink-stained hands to prove it

# Fountain Climber

By SAMANTHA B. BONAR '90  
Photos by FRANK MILLER



**C**ARLA MORTENSEN '76 HAS had a fondness for fountain pens since she wrote her Oxy papers with a Sheaffer, but it took an unexpected inheritance to turn penchant into passion. About 10 years ago, following the death of her father, she was cleaning out his drawers and found a pen that her grandfather had been given when her father was born. Mortensen did some research to learn more about the pen—and the more she learned, the more interested she became.

“When you begin collecting pens, often you feel like you’re the only person in the

world who has this interest,” she says. “And then I discovered that there were online pen communities, and listservs, but it wasn’t until I went to my first pen show that I really caught the bug. At a pen show you can see and touch and feel and play with literally hundreds of pens. More importantly, you meet other pen people and you finally have a chance to share that passion with others. It’s very addictive.”

The Portland, Ore., resident takes her passion seriously. Mortensen recently completed a yearlong stint as president of the Pen Collectors of America—the largest pen club

group in the world—and is currently co-authoring a book on the history of Montblanc pens. In the last few years, she estimates, she’s bought and sold a couple hundred pens in the process of learning about them, mostly at pen shows or from people she’s met there.

“Carla has been a real force in the pen world,” says Los Angeles resident John Mottishaw, who repairs and customizes nibs and helped found the PCA in 1986. He met Mortensen several years ago, and she has helped him at his booth at many pen shows. “She can hear what people want and understands their needs and gets the right pen for them,” he says. “She is a great organizer and an inspiration.”

Mortensen uses fountain pens every day in her job as an English-as-a-second-language instructor at Portland State University, such as for grading papers. “A fountain pen makes you slow down and pay a little bit more attention,” she says. “I like how it connects me with the page and makes me more conscious of what I’m doing. I carry three with me all the time.” Mortensen calls herself “one of the few, the proud” who still writes handwritten notes and Christmas cards.

A self-described “nib person,” Mortensen buys pens for the way they write, not for appearance’s sake. “Some people buy pens because they’re beautiful objects and they’re buying them for investment purposes or just because they like the aesthetic characteristics,” she explains. “But I’m one of the people who buys purely on the basis of how it feels in the hand and how my handwriting looks. The writing experience can be very different from pen to pen.”

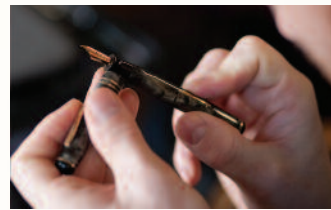
While a typical pen collector is a middle-aged professional man with some disposable income, according to Mortensen, there are three subcategories of penatic. There are the “nib people,” like her; the “tinkerers,” who like to buy pens to fix them; and the “Rolex collectors”—“people who buy expensive pens, who pursue the thrill of owning something that’s expensive, but they don’t even plan to use them, they just go straight into a collection.”

Fountain pen collectors “tend to be very well-educated, very articulate, and a little bit strange,” says Mortensen. And although they are often quite tech-savvy, “We think there’s still a place for connecting yourself with the page. I think if anything, handwritten notes

are now more special than they were before.” And, of course, they all tend to have ink-stained hands, “but we consider that a badge of honor,” she adds.

Mortensen, who once spent \$1,500 on a single pen, currently owns only 10, “but I absolutely adore every one of them.” Her collection was 10 times larger at one point, but she had to sell some during a divorce. But there’s one pen she could not resist buying if she came across it. “The Grail of pens for me right now is a Montblanc 744, with an oblique nib,” she says. “It was only made for a few years starting in the 1950s. In my opinion, it’s one of the best pens that was ever made. It’s gold, it’s beautifully balanced, and it feels good in the hand. It’s the kind of pen where you pull it out and everyone goes, ‘Whoa.’ And it’s very rare.” Approximate price of a Montblanc 744: \$750.

A religious studies major at Oxy, the Apple Valley native first learned about Occidental when her Presbyterian church youth group took a field trip to Los Angeles. “It really stuck with me, seeing the campus,” Mortensen says. When she graduated from



“I really enjoyed using fountain pens at Oxy, but I had no idea how profound that interest was going to become later in life,” says Mortensen, talking (and testing) pens at the Portland (Ore.) Pen Show in November.

## Pen collectors “tend to be very well-educated, articulate, and a little bit strange,” Mortensen says. “We think there’s still a place for connecting yourself with the page.”

high school, she applied to Oxy and USC. While she opted for USC over Oxy because she was “a huge band person” and wanted to be part of the renowned marching band, she found herself disappointed with the caliber of the classes and transferred to Oxy her sophomore year. At Oxy, Mortensen sang in the Glee Club and belonged to a Renaissance music group as well.

After graduating, Mortensen went to Harvard Divinity School with the intention of becoming a minister. She changed her mind about that and became a foreign service officer, and got an MBA from Simmons College in Boston. Later she became a career counselor at Harvard, Duke, and Middlebury. Her third career was as an independent information technology consultant. Mortensen got her third master’s degree at age 53, this one in education from Portland State, which led to her current teaching position.

“What I really took away from Occidental was an unshakeable faith in my ability to do

anything and learn anything,” she says. “Oxy gave me the tools and the conviction that you can constantly recreate yourself in wonderful and imaginative ways. And a lifelong love of learning and curiosity.” A former chair of Occidental’s Portland alumni chapter, she interviews prospective students through the Alumni-in-Admission program.

As president of Pen Collectors of America, which has about 2,000 members, Mortensen ran a monthly teleconference board meeting with people across the country. She also had to go to a certain number of pen shows. The hardest part, she says, was answering the scores of e-mails she would get every day from people all over the world asking her questions about pens—“it would become very time-consuming.” She also wrote a column and articles for the organization’s thrice-yearly publication, *The Pennant*.

Although Mortensen finished her term as president in November, she excitedly talks about the PCA’s latest project, in part-

nership with the Smithsonian Postal Museum in Washington, D.C. “We’re going to help them with their efforts to publicize the history of the Postal Service and stamps,” she says, “and they are going to help us by allowing us to showcase a lot of our pens in their exhibits.”

And she is ready to start working on her history of Montblanc, a German pen company founded in 1906 that is now owned by Louis Vuitton. “I’m going to get to see, photograph, and write about some of the rarest, oldest, and most expensive Montblanc pens in the world,” says Mortensen, who will travel to New York to document “a wonderful selection” of pens owned by a private collector.

There is only one real downside to being a pen collector: losing a pen. “That’s absolutely miserable,” Mortensen says. “I’ve left them behind, and gone back for them and they were gone.” But that is a rare occurrence, she insists. “When you’re using something that’s worth \$200 or \$300, you pay attention.”



Photo by Kevin Winter/Getty Images



# TILTING AT GILLIAM

BY TANYA MEURER

Animator, auteur, and legendary provocateur **Terry Gilliam '62** isn't one to come right out and say, "*Fang* made me the man I am today." You just have to read between the lines



# WALK INTO ANY SEVENTH-GRADE classroom, and you'll hear Terry Gilliam '62.

For the last four decades, his work as a member of the Monty Python comedy troupe has been endlessly quoted by 12-year-olds (mostly boys, and usually with a faux English accent). Having lived abroad for more than 40 years now, Gilliam can be darn tough to track down. Outside of this year's fleeting Python reunion, fans have seen precious little of him, so the news of Gilliam's first-ever appearance at Comic-Con—the mega-Goliath comics and popular arts convention held in San Diego each July—was huge to superfans like me.

And, serendipitously, I held a Comic-Con ticket, an assignment from *Occidental Magazine*, and an all-important press pass.

With countless costumes, poseable action figures, and extra IQ points in tow, 140,000 conventioners descended on San Diego for Comic-Con's 40th year. All of those Monty Python-quoting seventh-graders had grown up, and a disproportionately large number of them attend Comic-Con. My own research suggests that more than 90 percent of attendees can quote Python, and 73 percent will reenact at least one entire Python skit upon the slightest provocation. Trekkies, gamers, manga enthusiasts, ninjas, comics historians, the Steampunk set: Con-goers are a surprisingly diverse group but are united by what I like to call the Python Commonality. (I'm pretty sure that there is a mathematical formula that will back me up.)

For two sweat-filled hours, I dutifully waited near the end of the 6,500-person Gilliam Panel line, the length of which covered several city blocks. The expatriate auteur was promoting his new movie, *The*

*Imaginarium of Doctor Parnassus*, whose lead, Heath Ledger, died in the middle of filming. (The film opened on Christmas Day to some of Gilliam's strongest reviews in years.) My inexplicably useless press pass hung limp around my neck, and I'd foolishly worn heels and decorated myself in orange and black, hoping Gilliam would instantly recognize me as one of his own and grant me at least this one question: What role did Occidental College play in your career?

But, like any other self-respecting Gilliam fan worth his (or her) salt, I already knew the answer. It was *Fang*.

**ABOVE LEFT:** A *Fang* cover from 1961. Of his penchant for antique illustrations, Gilliam told the Comic-Con audience, "I generally use artwork from dead painters because they can't sue." **ABOVE:** In "Blechman" (spring 1961), Gilliam and John Massey '63 satirize "an all-time bad seed" turned "outstanding student" with the passage of time—and the power of philanthropy.



**ABOVE:** A holiday greeting from the Bengal Board in 1960.

Gilliam was head of the student organization as a junior.

**BELOW:** Gilliam's take on Old St. Nick for Dave Berkus '62's short story "Santa Claus Is a Fake!" (published in 1960).



**SINCE ITS FOUNDING IN 1946, FANG HAD BEEN**

many things: a showcase for Tom Trotter '50's signature Tigers, an outlet for high-minded prose, poetry, and art by Oxy students, and home of the *Fang* Queen (pretty coeds sell magazines). A handful of political cartoons were included in each issue, but these were largely poached from other colleges or universities. The content was decent, and sales were modest.

In Gilliam's hands, *Fang* quickly morphed into an homage to *Mad* and *Help!*, publishing six full issues his senior year. "Let's *Fang!*" the magazine brazenly commanded, skewering History of Civilization, *The Occidental* newspaper, administrators' footwear, the Bengal Board, and even the Board of Trustees—all in the first issue. "With new talent, new material, and a new direction we are prepared to take our position among the great humor magazines of the world," an editor's note declares, citing *Punch*, *The New Yorker*, *Isvestia* (an official newspaper of the Soviet government), and *The Morticians Monthly* among its models.

The road from *Fang* to Monty Python was filled with twists and turns, but here are the basics: Before graduation, Gilliam sent a copy of *Fang* to his idol, Harvey Kurtzman, founding editor of *Mad* and subsequently editor of *Help!*, a humor magazine published from 1960-65. He was impressed. Eventually, Gilliam worked for Kurtzman in New York and met English actor John Cleese. When Gilliam left the magazine trade, he moved to England and contacted Cleese, the only man he knew there. Cleese introduced him to Michael Palin, Terry Jones, and Eric Idle. All five, together with the late Graham Chapman, created "Monty Python's Flying Circus" for BBC TV.

Python led to filmmaking, and Gilliam developed into the one of the most idiosyncratic directors of his generation, with a body of work that includes *Time Bandits* (1981), *Brazil* (1985), *The Adventures of Baron Munchausen* (1988), *The Fisher King* (1991), *12 Monkeys* (1995), *Fear and Loathing in Las Vegas* (1998), and *The Brothers Grimm* (2005).

*Fang* was my answer, but I still needed to ask the question.

I eventually made my way through that 6,500-person line at Comic-Con. Ninja-wriggling my way down to the front-left of the auditorium, I made verifiable eye contact with the very man I'd been quoting since age 12. Mere feet separated us. We were breathing the same air, even if I had to share him with 6,499 other souls. The audience was privy to an exclusive unveiling of visual decadence: three clips from *Doctor Parnassus*.

Gilliam spoke of great battles in filmmaking, overcoming adversity and refusing artistic compromise. (His last film, 2005's *Tideland*, "wasn't a great success," he said, "because nobody wants to listen to the kinds of stories that I'm telling anymore.") When question time was announced, I thrust and waved my orange-and-black bestickered notebook high into the air, and Gilliam turned right to me. Me! Euphoria!

But then, following a nano-moment of confusion between the moderator and auteur, Gilliam said, "Got it," and pointed just behind me. I looked over my shoulder, and there stood before me a long line of pre-screened fans, holding written questions.

A few minutes later, it was over, and Gilliam whisked himself away into the cloying darkness of backstage. As I shuffle-scooted my way through thousands of conventioners, I tried to look on the bright side of life. I had snapped some nice photos of my comedy idol and made the whole eye-contact thing. I had brushed right up against victory, scoring extra points for first-hand-in-the-air, and Gilliam knew it too.

Sure, I'd technically failed to complete my assignment, but my quest for the-interview-that-never-was had certainly paralleled Gilliam's own famously doomed 2000 film project, *The Man Who Killed Don*

*Quixote* (chronicled in the 2002 documentary *Lost in La Mancha*). I'm a sucker for life's symmetries, and Gilliam's *Quixote* had just re-entered pre-production, having beaten impossible odds.

Gilliam knows nothing's impossible, and so do I. I kept the faith, and in the end—through a dear friend's friend of a former agent's friend—I caught up with Terry Gilliam, and we exchanged the following e-mail Q&A.

**TM:** Mr. Gilliam, you'll be delighted to know that I've whittled my 930,042 questions down to a modest and more reasonable lot. I'll start with this: Why did you choose to attend Occidental?

**TG:** The sons of the minister of our church attended Oxy. They encouraged me. I liked the smallness of the college.

**TM:** Can you recall any particularly influential professors?

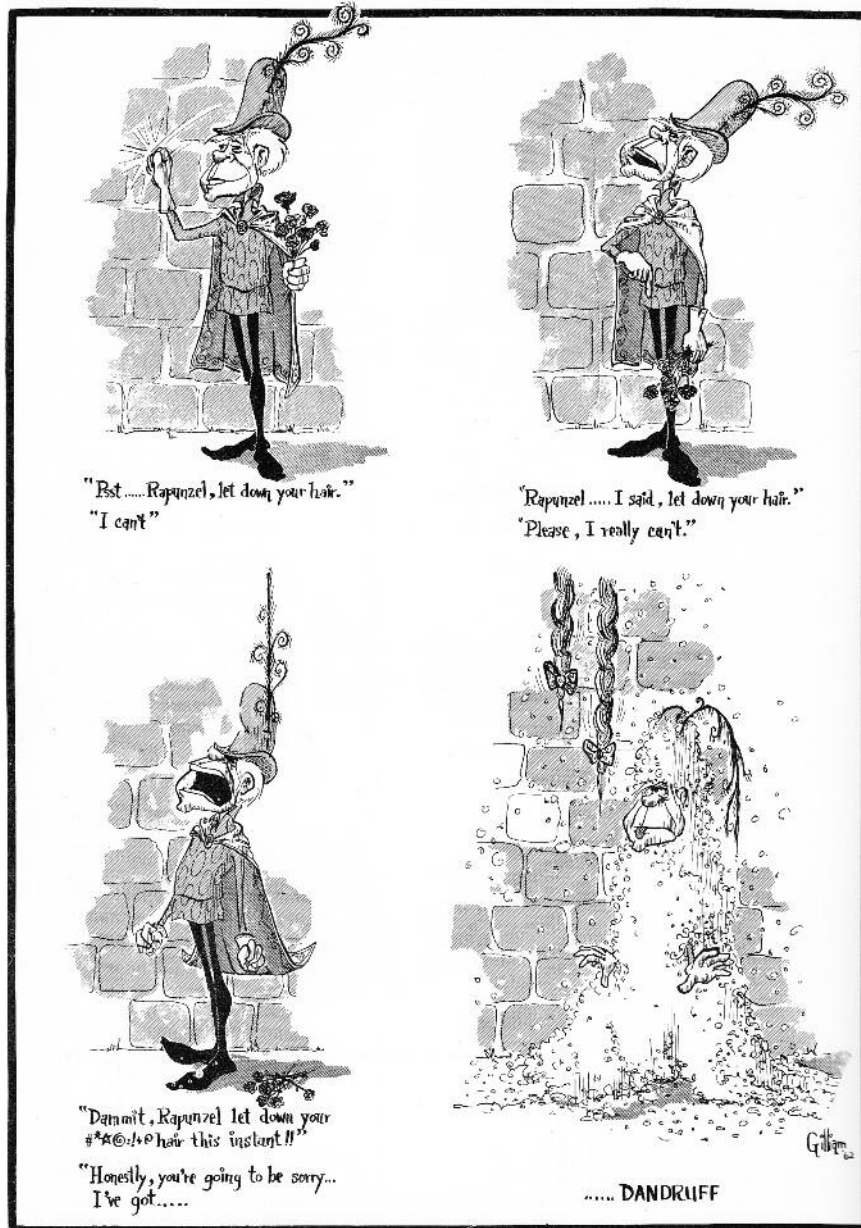
**TG:** Robert Hansen, Raymond McKelvey, and Omar Paxson '48 were the most influential.

**TM:** By all accounts, you seem to have been the All-American teenager, the cultural ideal of the 1950s. The first documented signs of your subversive genius seem to burst out of nowhere in your senior year, when you were named editor of *Fang*. Under your control, *Fang* was transformed into a venomous satire magazine, designed to shock and offend. You were a staunch fan of *Mad* and *Help!*, but even so—this was a bold revolutionary move for the not-so-revolutionary early 1960s. In general, what role did Occidental play in your extreme shift?

**TG:** Many of the students came from wealthy families and, initially, had a far greater sense of confidence (and wild humor) than myself. "RF-ing" was the term used for playing elaborate and difficult practical jokes ... like disassembling a car and then reassembling it in someone's dorm room with the engine running ... or, removing the pins from the hinges of someone's upper-floor dorm room door, tying a rope to the inside door handle, attaching a bed to the other end of that rope, hanging that bed outside of the window, and then waiting for the victim to come home drunk and turn the key in the lock (the only thing holding that door in place), so we could watch the door fly across the room and shatter against the opposite wall. This kind of activity may have been inspirational. It was certainly liberating.

**TM:** What is your favorite or most interesting memory of your undergraduate experience?

**TG:** In my junior year, I was head of the Bengal Board. We invented a series of fake traditions, with which we inculcated the freshmen in a solemn, torch-lit ceremony in the Greek Theater. What was so interesting was this: Not only did the freshmen believe



**ABOVE:** Gilliam tells the story of Rapunzel for the *Head & Shoulders* generation (spring 1962). **BELOW:** *Fang* offers a low-budget twist on *West Side Story* with its 17-page fumetti-style epic, "Homoside Story." **RIGHT:** Covers of the second and fifth issues of Gilliam's six-issue run as *Fang* editor.





Monty Python and the Holy Grail photo © Sony Pictures; Brazil, Fear and Loathing photos © Universal Pictures

**TOP:** Gilliam (foreground) co-directed *Monty Python and the Holy Grail* (1975) with fellow Python Terry Jones (standing, second from right).

**ABOVE LEFT:** It's no stretch to call *Brazil* (1985) Gilliam's most acclaimed film to date.

**ABOVE RIGHT:** Johnny Depp embodied the larger-than-life Hunter S. Thompson in *Fear and Loathing in Las Vegas* (1998).

that the ceremonies were real, but by the end of that same year even the seniors believed that they were real. The Big Lie can be quite effective.

↔ **TM:** Do you hold any of your old student work especially dear? How do you think it's held up over the years?

**TG:** It's all stuffed away in boxes. I never look at it. All I know is that the rats haven't eaten any of it. The question, though, is why?

↔ **TM:** In June 1962, mere days after your graduation, the Ford Foundation gave a walloping \$2.5 million to Occidental—the largest grant west of the Mississippi for that year. Then, in July 1962—just two short months after you graduated—*Time* ran an article extolling the surprising virtues of Occidental, calling it the “Little Giant.” Here's a snippet from that piece: “Occidental has parlayed smallness, smart leadership, and intellectual freedom into a warm, friendly spirit, first-rate teaching, and a taste for the experimental.” Coincidence?

**TG:** Nothing to do with me.

↔ **TM:** Come on! “A taste for the experimental”? You and your super-smart friends at *Fang* surely had something to do with Oxy's sudden visibility.

**TG:** I think that many in the administration were actually embarrassed by us. Perhaps they tried to legitimize our activities by claiming them to be experimental. “A taste for the silly” doesn't sound as good.

↔ **TM:** Have you been back to the Oxy campus since graduating?

**TG:** I've been back a few times, poking around incognito ... except for the time they gave me an honorary degree [in 1987]. There was no hiding that time.

↔ **TM:** Any chance you'll go back for your 50th reunion in 2012?

**TG:** Will I be alive in 2012? If not, I'm afraid I won't be attending the reunion.

↔ **TM:** How do you see the current state of humor magazines? Has the Internet given them a new platform? Do they seem watered down?

**TG:** I know nothing about humor magazines these days. I only know “Family Guy” on TV, but that's not a magazine.

↔ **TM:** You've said, “In filmmaking, talent is less important than patience.” Over the years, your fans have marveled at your chief weapon, a unique brand of tenacious patience. It certainly seems to have served you well. Can you pinpoint one or two additional qualities that will be important to aspiring filmmakers today?

**TG:** Thick skin. Luck (either good or bad ... it's all the same). But, I don't encourage anyone to go into filmmaking. Spot welding would be better.

↔ **TM:** After waiting years and years, you've finally recaptured the film rights for *The Man Who Killed Don Quixote* and are in pre-production. Is *Quixote* truly the Holy Grail-esque project that it seems to be for you? Perhaps a better way to ask this question: If you could only make one more film, would that film be *Quixote*?

**TG:** I just do one film at a time, and, as luck would have it, it seems to be *Quixote*'s turn. It's important to finish it just to spite all the reasonable people who advised me to forget about it and move on. We'll have to see if I survive it. After that, it would be nice to get a couple more titles finished to engrave on the coffin.

**SO, GILLIAM NEVER CAME RIGHT OUT AND** said, “*Fang* made me the man I am today.” No matter. It's all about reading between the lines.

Back in 1961, there were four at the helm of Oxy's humor magazine—the so-called *Fang* Gang: the always-late-for-a-deadline Gilliam, resident grammarian John Latimer '64, go-to artist Art Mortimer '63, and the guy with a key to the photo lab, John Massey '63.

I contacted Massey at Gilliam's suggestion. “He's in a new documentary [*Monty Python: Almost the Truth—The Lawyer's Cut*, which aired on IFC in October], talking about whoever it was that was me



**“I don’t encourage anyone to go into filmmaking. Spot welding would be better.”**

Comic-Con photo by Tanya Meurer; *The Imaginarium of Doctor Parnassus* photo © Sony Pictures Classics



back then. He has a better memory than I do, and he’s a better storyteller.”

I met with the dashing and polite Massey at his yacht club in Southern California. We sat near the docks under an umbrella, poring over old copies of *Fang*. Gilliam was right; Massey has a cracker-jack memory. I felt like a wide-eyed kindergartener at story time. We sat under that umbrella for many hours, shifting our chairs as the sun moved across the sky.

These original *Fang* Gangers lived in and presided over Swan Hall, which was like a fraternity unto itself. Brilliant, creative revolutionaries—living under one roof, at the corner of Hope and Change, on the precipice of potential war while avoiding homework—will manifest the most audacious, enterprising practical jokes known to man. Steam, fire, and hurtling projectiles were involved—though, never all three at the same time. And nobody ever got hurt.

“It’s important to understand that we had no agenda, and this is key. We were just having a good time. Had you been there at the time, almost all of this verges on silly,” Massey says. “I’m not too sure if what took place then would play well in today’s political climate. But what the heck. Today’s political climate is far sillier than anything we ever did.”

*Fang* was an equal-opportunity offender, and any and all groups were ripe for lampooning. Massey explained how the Occidental administration looked the other way, giving Gilliam and company the freedom to be innovative. Some were impressed with the smart humor, he added. Others might have been fearful, unwilling to upset student groups beginning to form on college campuses.

When Harvey Kurtzman left *Mad* and eventually started *Help!*, the major difference between the two

humor magazines was the fumetti, a comic strip format that uses photographs with actors instead of drawings. Reading a fumetti feels very much like watching a really short foreign film. The *Fang* Gang followed Kurtzman’s lead in featuring this new style, reaching its apex with “Homoside Story,” a *West Side Story* parody that ran 17 pages in his final issue. “This must have caught his eye about the issues of *Fang* that Terry sent him,” Massey says.

Weeks later, I got an e-mail from Massey, who had unearthed an old file folder of *Help!* magazines. “I know the *Fang* troops had seen them prior to Terry getting the editorship,” he wrote. “Reviewing them brings to mind how very much they influenced us. Terry took the lead and launched what would become his future. I still contend we were just having a good time as a diversion to study.”

See? Massey remembers. *Fang* was the answer. □

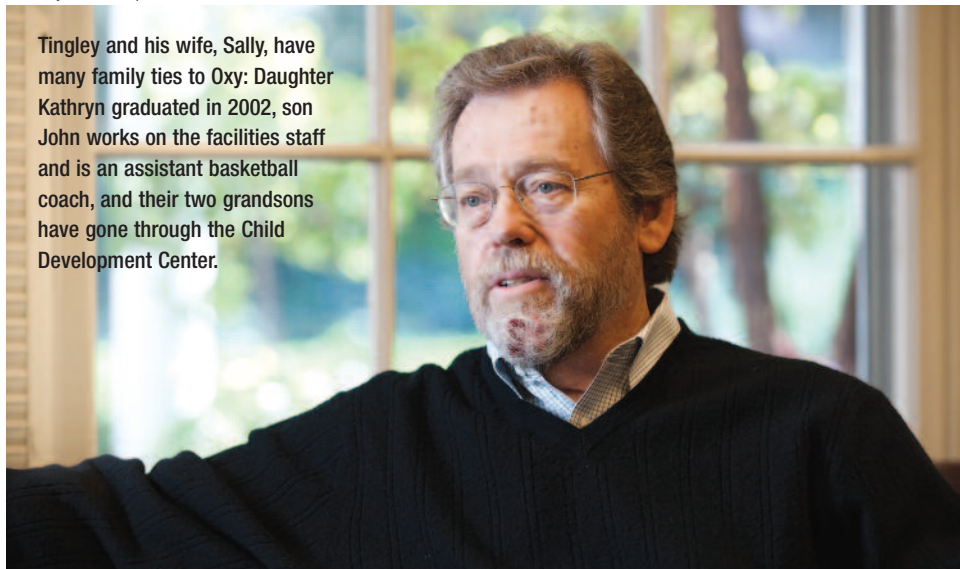
Tanya Meurer is a freelance writer based in Dallas and Los Angeles.

**TOP:** “Whenever I run out of ideas, I don’t sleep,” Gilliam told a euphoric Comic-Con audience last July. **ABOVE:** “He was an exceptional actor and an exceptional human being,” Gilliam said of Heath Ledger, who died in January 2008, midway through filming *The Cabinet of Doctor Parnassus*.

## REFLECTIONS

Photo by Marc Campos

Tingley and his wife, Sally, have many family ties to Oxy: Daughter Kathryn graduated in 2002, son John works on the facilities staff and is an assistant basketball coach, and their two grandsons have gone through the Child Development Center.



# A Tale of Two Oxys

Bill Tingley took charge of Occidental's admission program in 1997—a fallow time in its history. He retires with applications in full bloom

As a lad of 8, Bill Tingley was sitting in the stands in Fresno to witness Occidental's come-from-behind 21–20 victory over Colorado A&M in the Raisin Bowl. Among Tigers fans, the game remains one for the ages—though Tingley says he was more interested in the filming of the Donald O'Connor movie *Yes Sir, That's My Baby* on the sidelines than in the action on the field.

When Tingley announced his retirement this fall as vice president of admission and financial aid—after 12 years at Occidental and a 43-year career in college administration—he closed the books on another remarkable era in Oxy history. Not only did Tingley turn around an admission program that was on life support, he oversaw an unprecedented period of growth that raised the College's admission standards to a level unseen since the 1940s.

"I've always felt that I would want to retire on a high note, at the top of our game," says Tingley, who previously served as associate dean of admission at Stanford, director of admission at Whitman College, director of

financial aid at UC Santa Cruz, and vice president for admission and financial aid at Pitzer College. Last year, Occidental admitted the largest freshman class in the College's history: "What started off as perhaps our most challenging year [due to the recession] ended up being our finest hour."

Tingley took an interest in college administration while an undergraduate at UC Davis, where he was mentored by an admissions officer who gave him his first job after he returned from the Vietnam War, at UC Santa Cruz. When he came to Eagle Rock in 1997, Oxy was in crisis. The previous year, applications had dipped so low (down 30 percent in a five-year period) that the College admitted 77 percent of applicants.

"I had followed Occidental all my career, so I had tremendous respect for the place, but I also saw that it was facing significant challenges," he says. "I felt this would be an opportunity for me to bring everything that I had learned in my other positions to bear on this situation—to try to help Occidental realize its full potential."

Besides filling key staff vacancies and moving the admission office from the lower floor of Coons to what is now Collins House, "We started to rebuild relations with high school counselors throughout the country, and right here in Southern California," Tingley says. Occidental had been through five admission directors in five years, "so we made a concerted effort to reach out to them."

He also worked hard to strengthen the financial aid program. "We wanted to make it very effective in fulfilling the mission of the College and also attracting high-caliber students," he says. In addition, he focused on improving the College visit experience for prospective students and their families—"how they're treated from the moment they drive on campus, come to the admission office, go on tours, are interviewed, and so on." More recently, his department has focused on improving the "electronic visit experience," via Occidental's website.

"We've had a tremendous increase in the number of visitors to this campus. It's been very exciting—over the last 12 years we've seen a 222 percent increase in applications, and therefore an increase in selectivity, and Oxy's academic profile has improved significantly. The fact that we've been able to maintain a strong commitment to diversity and improve academic quality is a real testimony to the strength of the College's mission."

In selecting Oxy students, "We're trying to shape a class that will include not only the brightest students in the pool, but those who will hopefully contribute something to the life of the College," Tingley adds. "That's an important part of our assessment—looking for qualities in students that indicate that they're going to come here and have some kind of impact. I also think it's important to admit some students every year to Occidental whose excellence may simply be goodness, because I think it's crucial in a residential campus community to have some students who have a positive influence on the people around them."

"We've got a terrific staff here, and I feel confident that the College can continue to move forward in a very positive way," says Tingley, who plans to follow Occidental "with great interest in the coming months and years. I think as great as the last 12 years have been, Oxy's best years are still ahead."

—SAMANTHA B. BONAR '90