

tunnel vision

A publication for alumni of student media at Vanderbilt University

ALUMNI

**LIVE!
FROM THE PAST**

A PR executive remembers his days as a WRVU staff member

page 3

NATIONAL PRESS

COVER STORY

WRVU's 50th birthday made the cover of industry journal *CMJ*

page 4-5



BRIEFLY SPEAKING...

AND THEN THERE WERE 10

Two of VSC's newest publications earned full division status during the spring semester. **Slant** staff members met all the goals set forth by the VSC Board of Directors, and the student humor magazine officially became a full division on Jan. 10. **Spoon**, the student art and travel publication, also met all of the requirements to become a full division and was awarded this status on Jan. 31.



**NEW VSC BOARD
VSC Board of Directors
for 2003-04**

Student members:

Andrew Bonderud ★ A&S junior from Germantown, Tenn., *at-large member*

Tim Boyd ★ graduate student from London, UK, *at-large member*

Jennifer Carlisle ★ A&S junior from Jackson, Miss., *media council representative*

Jodi Edelstein ★ Blair senior from Boston, Mass., *at-large member*

Jay Williams ★ A&S senior from Daphne, Ala., *at-large member*

Faculty members:

Tom McGinn ★ classics professor

John Sloop ★ *Board chair* and communications professor

Ex-officio members:

Steve Caldwell ★ associate vice chancellor for student life

Chris Carroll ★ director of student media

Jennifer Peebles ★ state editor for *The Tennessean*

Aleesa Ross ★ assistant director of student media and *Board secretary*

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Vanderbilt Student Communications, Inc.
Celebrating 35 years

THE FACES OF STUDENT MEDIA

Graduation at Vanderbilt

Holly Matlock, from Cincinnati, Ohio, was graduated May 9 with a Bachelor of Arts degree in Communication Studies. She served on the advertising staff of *The Vanderbilt Hustler* for three years. Matlock will begin as a management trainee for the Cintas Corporation with the First Aid and Safety Division in Baltimore, Md., on June 26.

Please see page 2 for a listing of additional student media graduates. ☼



photo by **Houston Ruck**, *Commodore*.

Extra! Extra!...A lively student press at Vandy

by **Matt Pulle** ('94 A&S)
Reprinted with permission from the *Nashville Scene*, March 20-26, 2003.

Vanderbilt University has a not entirely outdated image as a Southern finishing school where well-groomed kids from Texas, Georgia and Tennessee idle their BMWs and Jeep Cherokees for four years before they go to work for Daddy's bank. But if anything is poking a hole in this stubborn stereotype, it's a robust, dynamic and often outrageous student press, which includes a tradition-rich college paper, a pair of ideologically driven alternative rags and a humor publication that's nearly as brilliant as it is tasteless.

That publication, *The Slant*, made local and even national headlines last week when it distributed a mock edition of the school's college paper, *The Vanderbilt Hustler*, falsely

announcing that Chancellor Gordon Gee had died of a heart attack. With a banner headline that read plainly, "Gee Dead," the paper was made to look like a carbon copy of the *Hustler* and was distributed on the paper's news racks. As a result, students and faculty alike thought the popular chancellor had gone on to a tenured position at Saint Peter's gate.

"I started to realize we crossed the line when people picked up the paper and started crying," says David Barzelay, the now former editor of *The Slant*, who took a fall for the prank. "As soon as I realized people did not know it was fake, I started to worry."

In fact, while there were more than enough clues that the issue was fake—including the misspelling of the *Hustler's* name—the news heralded by the grim headline took on a life of its own. Students e-

mailed friends that the chancellor had died, and word quickly spread. One professor was said to have held a moment of silence at the beginning of his class to commemorate the university's fallen leader.

"We had a professor call us in tears, thinking the story was true," recounts a not so amused Alex Burkett, the editor of the real *Hustler*, which initially got blamed for the prank. "Another professor called us and congratulated us on how quickly we broke the story."

The media-savvy Gee reacted kindly to the greatly exaggerated report of his death, even posing for a picture holding up the paper that announced his untimely demise. Playing the press the way Yo-Yo Ma plays the cello, he no doubt enjoyed looking like the

see **VSC**, page 8

Orbis gains national press

Orbis made the lead in a story on "Alternative Voices on Campus" in the Jan. 30, 2003 edition of *The Nation*:

Vanderbilt University in Tennessee is a traditionally conservative school. The majority of students support President George W. Bush, according to Jay Prather, editor of the Vanderbilt alternative newspaper Orbis, and there has been no significant antiwar demonstration on campus since Bush's "Axis of Evil" speech in January 2002. But that doesn't mean there is no voice of dissent. The November 20, 2002, edition of the Orbis led with a story about Iraq's acceptance of a UN deadline for arms inspection, reporting that "the outcome was an achievement of a new form of American assertiveness which is founded as much on military, economic and political dominance as it is with the merit of its arguments or shared principles." Amanda Huskey, an editor at the Orbis and the author of the piece, says she has found a forum for her antiwar sentiments in the paper. "The paper invites different voices to share their views that otherwise might not be represented or heard," she says. "It allows me to write outside the box while hopefully generating public dialogue and debate." ☼

Versus named best magazine

Versus magazine nabbed first place honors in the Best College Magazine category at the Southeast Journalism Conference in Pensacola, Fla., in February.

A total of 57 schools were eligible to enter the competition.

Versus Managing Editor Joe Bass, who attended the conference at the University of West Florida, said he was very proud of this honor.

"The leaders I talked to at the convention that had seen the magazine were very impressed with *Versus*," he said. "They particularly liked the layout and the laid back approach to the writing."

Kate Zabbia, the 2002-2003 editor-in-chief, said this year the staff pushed for more organization, more camaraderie

among the team, and consistent deadlines with good use of time management.

"I believe we have also tried to have a classic year, one that would set standards and traditions," she said. "How cool would it be to have editors of years past look upon our year with fondness, just like we look upon the 'Ana Alfonso' year of the early '90s."

In addition to the Best College Magazine award, Zabbia placed first in the Best Magazine Page Layout Designer category, and Bass won third place in the Best Magazine Writer competition. Also, staff member Christie Myers won third place in the Best News Graphic Designer category. ☼



expanding the tunnel

*a Director's note...***A big fake and a big cake**by **Chris Carroll**, Director of Student Media

A couple of campus events this spring reminded us all of something we instinctively knew: the power student media has to impact lives.

The first came the Tuesday after Spring Break in March when I was surprised, along with the rest of the campus, upon seeing an issue of *The Vanderbilt Hustler* displaying the dramatically large headline "Gee Dead." After a couple of minutes of shock over the loss of VU's Chancellor, closer scrutiny began to reveal clues that the newspaper was a fake.

Students from the staff of *The Slant*, VSC's humor publication, managed to pull off one of the most brilliantly executed hoaxes in recent memory with their parody of the *Hustler*. Unfortunately, the students' efforts brought much more than the reaction for which they had hoped.

The somber news of Gee's death swept campus with results ranging from crying students to faculty cancelling classes out of respect. The Nashville media swarmed the story and were joined by reporters from Ohio, New York and Washington, D.C. as word spread quickly via telephone, email and Internet. We also heard from many of you alumni.

After a swirling week of fallout, some lessons emerged. For the editor who was removed from office by the VSC Board for failing to print *The Slant's* role as creator in the spoof, it was a lesson about accountability. For some it fueled the discussion of what's funny and what's not. And for many, it was a reminder not to believe everything you read, at least until you read critically, apply some common sense, or check out the information yourself. You can read more about this event and see a photo of the very alive Chancellor Gee on page 3.

Later in March we were reminded of the power of student media to positively impact the lives of its practitioners and audience during the day-long concert and other activities celebrating the 50th birthday of radio station WRVU.

Local and national media heralded the birthday and gave the station a much-deserved spotlight of positive attention. You can read a reprinted cover story from the national *College Music Journal* magazine on page 4.

Hundreds of the station's listeners made the trek to Alumni Lawn for the free event. It was clear watching this evolving crowd of high school kids, college students, new-agers, middle-agers, groupies and music fans, that WRVU significantly contributes to the rich musical legacy of Nashville.

Proud recognition of this was served to the station earlier this month when City Councilman and WRVU alumnus Adam Dread presented a resolution adopted by the Metropolitan Government of Nashville honoring the station's 50 years to current and former students.

Included at this ceremony were Pat Nolen ('73), who has a column appearing on page 3 in this issue of *Tunnel Vision*, and Dr. Raphael Smith, who as a student in 1953 was present at the station's first official broadcast. Dr. Smith, now a professor of cardiovascular medicine at Vanderbilt, said he remains proud of what he and the other students accomplished 50 years ago.

It was great fun and a tremendous honor to meet so many former station staffers and hear stories of the Neely days and beyond. Best of all was hearing a genuine reflection in your voices of the value your student media experiences had during your time at Vanderbilt and its influence since.

As we develop *Tunnel Vision* into a VSC tradition, I encourage each of you to keep in touch and build our network. ☺

Board elects 2003-04 leaders

The Vanderbilt Student Communications Board of Directors elected the following media leaders:

JOE BASS*Versus* editor-in-chief

A&S Sophomore from Nashville, Tenn.

"As editor of *Versus* I want to continue what the two previous editors have done, as well as add some new ideas that will make the magazine the best it can be. Right now it's doing very well, but there are still improvements to be made. Goals include: building our staff, developing *Versus'* own writing style, improving copy editing, increasing readership, attracting advertisers, increasing the coverage to include a wider focus on the Nashville area and implementing a subscription service."

MEREDITH BERGER*The Vanderbilt Hustler* editor-in-chief

A&S Junior from Parkland, Fla.

"*The Vanderbilt Hustler* has reached a remarkable level of journalistic integrity this academic year, and it is something that I have been proud to be a part of. The current standards of *The Hustler* are the ones that I will strive to uphold and improve upon. Goals include: changing the size of the paper to make it more consistent with other papers, improving the Web site and increasing mutual recognition between the *Hustler* staff and university staff members."

CARA BOHON*Commodore* editor-in-chief

A&S Junior from Lenexa, Kan.

"My ideas include a lot of planning over the summer. My changes for the next year include a full plan of style, organization of pages, coverage ideas and a plan for smaller, more frequent deadlines so there will not be delays or times when 80 pages must be completed in a few days. To aid in staff motivation, I hope to give rewards to staff members who go beyond what is expected of them. My experience as managing editor of the *Commodore* this year has given me much knowledge about what works and does not work in preparing a good and well-organized publication, particularly one that is published only once a year."

JENNIFER CARLISLE*The Vanderbilt Review* editor-in-chief

A&S Sophomore from Jackson, Miss.

"I would like the *Review* staff to be connected as a whole—a unified staff—rather than a group of separate section staffs. *The Review* should have a broad theme—nothing restrictive, but a general direction which should help tie the work together as a whole, creating a more cohesive reading experience. Because students interested in the *Review* are often writers themselves, I would like to encourage the staff to get together to discuss their own works, which would help develop the staff's artistic sensibilities, thus creating a better environment in which the *Review* could flourish, while continuing to reinforce the staff as a unit."

MEREDITH GRAY*The Slant* editor-in-chief

A&S Junior from Tulsa, Okla.

"My goal as EIC of *The Slant* is to continue to uphold *The Slant's* time-honored traditions, such as journalistic integrity, moral responsibility, flawless design and the faking of administrators' deaths."

JESSICA HEAVEN*Orbis* editor-in-chief

A&S Junior from Somerville, Ala.

"One of the original goals of *Orbis* as I see it was to create a forum for the discussion of ideas that are often missing from the discourse at Vanderbilt University due to its conservative tradition. In the past two years, *Orbis* has definitely succeeded in filling an important niche in this community, and it has certainly sparked and participated in important discussions about a range of topics. I think, though, that we still have a lot of room to grow. Two years of existence have established *Orbis* as a stable presence on campus; now we have the ability to expand that presence. My ultimate goal is for the entire campus to know what *Orbis* is—success in my eyes would be walking through Sarratt and hearing students say, "Hey, did you read the latest copy of *Orbis*?"

DAVE MAYNARD*The Torch* editor-in-chief

A&S Sophomore from Orlando, Fla.

"For the most part I intend to keep the format of *The Torch* the same as it has been these past two years. One change I have considered is to make the associate editor positions more specific...and I would like to involve them more with the production process."

JENNIFER SEXTON

WRVU station manager

A&S Junior from Niceville, Fla.

"Many great things await WRVU in the coming year. I will continue to garner the support of the Vanderbilt community in furthering WRVU's mission. I plan to forge new working relationships between various Vanderbilt student organizations. I would also like to uphold our current working relationships with the Nashville community. I see the possibility of moving towards a 24/7 format for the station."

ROB SHAW

VTV station manager

A&S Junior from Roslyn, NY

"I can utilize my strengths in gaining interest in Vanderbilt Television in order to assure that the student interest will be high for VTV. I believe that by the conclusion of the second semester of the 2004 school year, VTV will have full digital capabilities, which will provide the Vanderbilt students with an impressive option for a media outlet as well as provide entertainment."

HEATHER YOST*Spoon* editor-in-chief

A&S Junior from Knoxville, Tenn.

"I plan to keep this magazine running pretty much the same because I like the way it is done. I also want to try to recruit more students who will help in creating the magazine." ☺

Thanks to our outgoing media leaders, seniors**2002-03 MEDIA LEADERS****Houston Ruck***Commodore* editor-in-chief**Jay Prather***Orbis* editor-in-chief**Laurel Staples***Spoon* editor-in-chief**Michael Mott***The Slant* editor-in-chief**Jacob Grier***The Torch* editor-in-chief**Alex Burkett***The Vanderbilt Hustler* editor-in-chief**Jennifer Casale***The Vanderbilt Review* editor-in-chief**Matthew Saul**

VTV station manager

Kate Zabbia*Versus* editor-in-chief**Jennifer Sexton**

WRVU station manager

2002-03 MEDIA SENIORS**COMMODORE**

Emily Faye Abbott, Jackie Gentry, Frank Lee, Adam Menter, Julia Pirrung, Paul Prasnik

ORBIS

Andrea Alvord, Amy Driscoll, Ayumi Fukuda, Jeff Hossfeld, Amanda Huskey, Erin McVay, Michael Mott, Michael O'Malley, Allison Oubre, Zhubin Parang, Jay Prather, Rebecca Schlessinger, Alex Shoor, Jeff Woodhead

THE SLANT

Charles Mak, Michael Mott, Ben Stark, Joe Wong, Jeff Woodhead

THE TORCH

Jon Levine, Michael Mott, David Park, Ben Stark, Nicholas Wallace

THE VANDERBILT HUSTLER

Emily Faye Abbott, Kavitta Baman, Lena Basha, Alex Burkett, Megan Clancy, Melanie Faulkner, Brad Golder, Michael Gleason, Holly Matlock, Jenny O'Neill, Flynn Tracy, Christina Trangenstein, Hannah Willmann

THE VANDERBILT REVIEW

Dan Goeckermann, Lynn Jacobson, Julie Neumann

VTV

Jason Fernandez, Dan Levine, Jennifer O'Neill, Matthew Saul, Thomas Schoborg, Justin Smith

VERSUS

Adam Cirucci, Tanya Fletcher, Katie Galbreath, William Mayfield, Adrienne Spain, Joshua Spilker, Courtney Wilder

WRVU

Elizabeth Birkos, Elizabeth Cessarini, Tamer Fakhouri, Grant Parker Flowers, Andie Gelhausen, David Killion, Kim Loewen, Timothy Miller, Patrick Nolan, Courtney Wilder, Andrew Wooldrige

CONGRATULATIONS!

VSC would like to congratulate our graduating seniors and thank them for their countless hours of work within student media at Vanderbilt.

Best of luck with your new careers!**tunnel vision**

A publication for alumni of student media at Vanderbilt University

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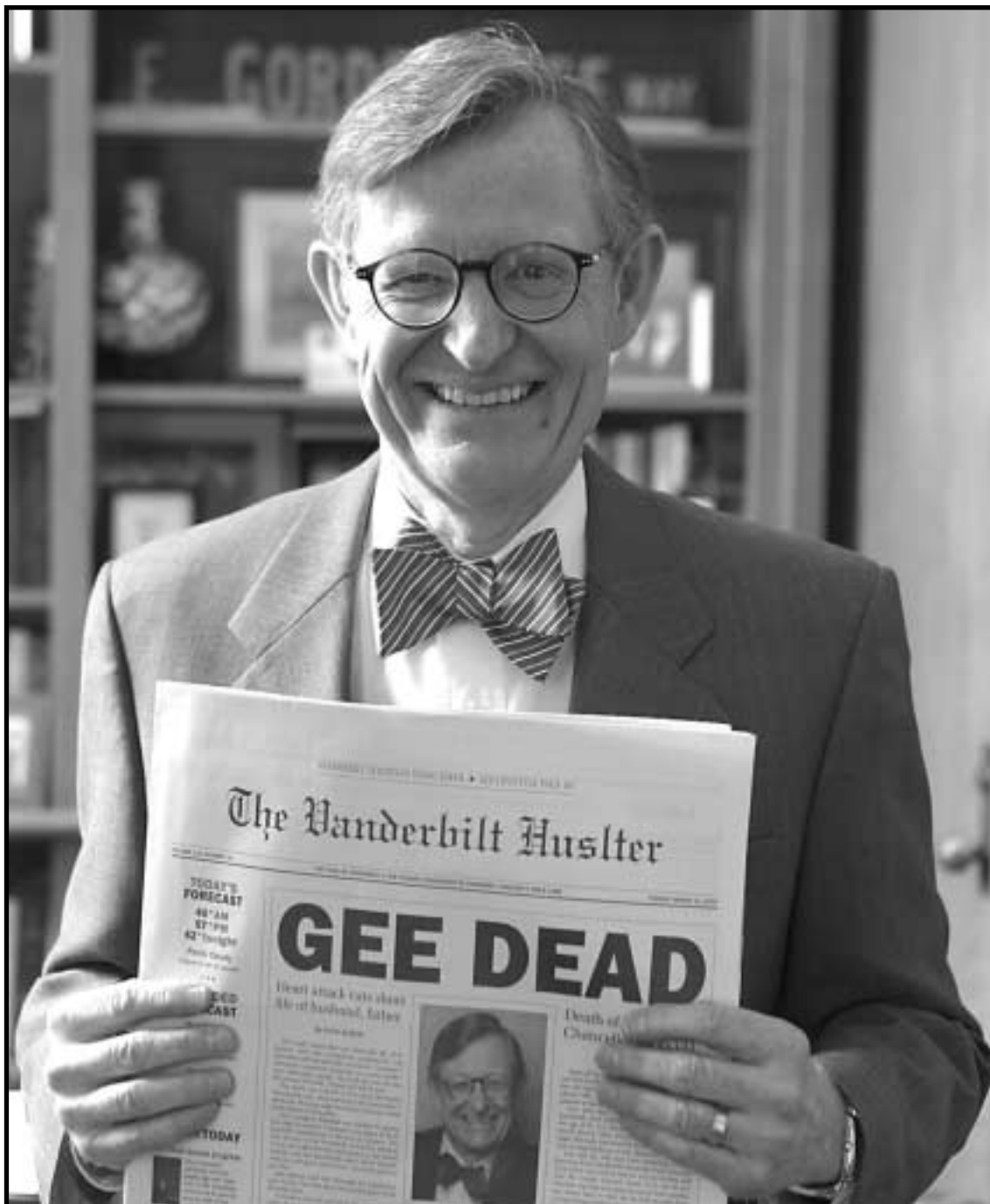
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VANDERBILT
 STUDENT COMMUNICATIONS, INC.
 Student Media at Vanderbilt University



Chancellor Gordon Gee proves he is alive and well March 11.

photo by Neil Brake, Vanderbilt University.

GEE ALIVE

Reprinted with permission from *The Vanderbilt Register*, March 25, 2003.

Vanderbilt Chancellor Gordon Gee is alive and well despite the headlines in a spoof publication distributed on campus March 11.

"Imagine my surprise when I picked up what purported to be *The Hustler*, our excellent student newspaper, and saw the headline 'Gee Dead,'" the Chancellor said in an e-mail sent to the University community the morning the publication was distributed. "I am relieved to tell you that the headline, the newspaper, and in fact, the entire issue, are untrue and were not produced by the real journalists at *The Hustler*."

The publication, which lampoons *The Hustler*, appears with a nameplate that has the "t" and the "l" transposed. The real *Hustler*, which normally publishes on Tuesday and Friday, did not appear

March 11 because students were on spring break the week before. The next edition of *The Hustler* was scheduled to come out the following Friday.

The 12-page paper, printed on similar paper stock as the official student newspaper, included not only front-page coverage and an editorial on the fictional demise of the Chancellor but also what appeared to be an authentic crossword puzzle, cartoons and weather forecast as well as other fictional articles.

"To paraphrase Mark Twain, reports of my demise are greatly exaggerated," Gee said in his e-mail.

Just in case there were still some doubters, the e-mail was accompanied by a photograph (shown above) of Gee holding a copy of the mock publication.

Gee ended his e-mail, "With all best wishes for many more years at Vanderbilt." ✪

Spilker wins 2003 Alexander Award



Josh Spilker
Versus, editor-in-chief
2001-02

Josh Spilker, a senior in the College of Arts and Science, was named the winner of the Charles Forrest Alexander Award in Journalism by the Vanderbilt Student Communications, Inc. Board of Directors.

The Charles Forrest Alexander Award in Journalism is presented annually to a student who has achieved distinction

in Vanderbilt student journalistic projects. The recipient should be active in collecting information, reporting, editing, photography, business

activities and/or administration of a newspaper, magazine, journal, yearbook, television or radio station.

During his years as an undergraduate Spilker, who hails from St. Petersburg, Fla., was a member of the *Versus* staff and a columnist for *The Vanderbilt Hustler*. Spilker was the editor-in-chief of *Versus* during the 2001-2002 academic year.

"I was not so much fascinated with the style of *Versus* as I was, and still am, impressed with the potential—the ability to relay cultural information, essays and literature to a collegiate audience," he said. "My journalistic experience at Vanderbilt has been the most beneficial for me in determining my style of writing and making me more confident in writing about the type of stories that interest me." ✪

bright lights *an alumni column...*

Taking in the air

by Pat Nolan, Class of '73

Preparing for my 30th college reunion this fall (Class of 1973), I realize just how blessed I am by my four years at Peabody College and Vanderbilt University. Like the ad says, what I received as an education is priceless.

There is so much to reflect on: the classes, the teachers, the football and basketball games, the concerts, the life-long special friendships I formed. And, for me, there is something else very special, WRVU.



Nolan.

Located then in the south tower of Neely Auditorium, WRVU is probably where I learned more than any place else on campus (and without a professor in sight). A lot of what I learned there has helped me every day since I left school, during my time as a journalist and now as a public relations professional.

I was a town student, so WRVU was my dorm room and fraternity house. Almost every waking hour on campus was spent at the station (even sometimes when I should have been in class). Some of us spent so much time there, we opened our own general store, providing snacks and other food and drink (at a modest price) for hungry staffers that couldn't or didn't have time to hike up to the "C Room" in Rand Hall for refreshments.

During my four years at WRVU I did it all. I was a disc jockey, a news reporter and news director, a talk show host, even a baseball play by play announcer. It was a great thrill when I called the game that clinched Vanderbilt's SEC championship in 1973. But perhaps the greatest thing that happened me at WRVU is that I met the coed who has been my wife and the love of my life for the past 29 years (and counting).

It took some love, or at least some dedication to work at WRVU in those days. But really, it didn't matter that the studios had no heat or air conditioning. We really didn't care. This was fun. It didn't matter that we had old equipment that sometimes didn't work. We made do. One time, I do remember celebrating when we got a new tape deck for the newsroom. We threw the old one down the steps, almost killing a staff member just entering the studios.

There are so many wonderful memories from those days. One of my favorites is from Dec. 3, 1971, my sophomore year. We were approaching exams and many folks were thinking of heading home for Christmas. But suddenly came the telegram from the FCC. WRVU had been granted its educational FM license to broadcast on 91.1.

Months of hard work and waiting had finally paid off!! We fired up the transmitter at Oxford House and signed on the air immediately. After years of sending our radio signal along the university's electrical system through the steam tunnels on campus (carrier current broadcasting at 58 on the AM dial), WRVU was at last a real broadcast station. Our signal finally came in better on your radio than on your toaster.

WRVU was where I cut my teeth as a broadcaster, a journalist, and as a writer and communicator. In the years I was there we tried to build a news department that covered campus news and sports (we particularly enjoyed interviewing the VU basketball and baseball players after another big win). We also kept our audience informed on international, national, state and Nashville news with our UPI wire machine and our broadcast news line from ABC.

From time to time, we even reported Vanderbilt's news to the rest of the world. When Chancellor Heard was named a special adviser to President Nixon on campus unrest, we taped his comments and sold them to the ABC national radio network (splitting the fee among the news staff). Also when the well known Vietnam peace activist Jerry Rubin came to town for a March Against Repression, we covered that rally and sent his comments to the networks. I learned one other thing that day. If you come straight from Sunday Mass to cover the march, bring a change of clothes. Wearing a suit on such an occasion makes you stick out like a sore thumb (or an undercover officer).

As WRVU celebrates 50 years on the air, I know my memories of the fun and adventure of "working" there are matched by those of literally hundreds of others, including those there today who have the chance to have the same great experiences I did so many years ago. WRVU is a unique institution, offering students perhaps one of their first opportunities in life to work together to decide things their own way with little or no adult oversight or interference. It may seem like little things. Who will take the 9-12 shift? Who will do the news? But the experience and the memories can last a lifetime. So whether you remember it as WVU, 580, as 91 Rock or the Rock of Nashville, the beat goes on...now and hopefully for many, many years to come. ✪

Pat Nolan is a Senior Vice President with Dye, Van Mol & Lawrence Public Relations in Nashville. He is also an on-air political analyst for WTVF-TV, NewsChannel 5 in Nashville.

The student voice of Vanderbilt turns 50

by **Brad Maybe**

Reprinted with permission from *CMJ New Music Report*, April 7, 2003.

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WRVU/Nashville, known as "the student voice of Vanderbilt University," is gearing up to celebrate its 50th anniversary. Considering that the station's history can be traced from its humble beginnings as an illegal broadcast emanating from a student's dorm room, to a fully-sanctioned school organization that was almost shut down by the FCC, it's a remarkable accomplishment.

Officially, WVU, as it was originally known, began broadcasting on March 30, 1953. However, the station's unofficial launch can be traced back almost 52 years ago, when Ken Berryhill, known today as the "world's oldest living disc jockey," then a Vandy junior, set up shop in his room in Cole Hall, a campus residence hall. With an AM transmitter that he purchased for \$15, he began broadcasting with a tape deck, a "decent" microphone and a 79-rpm record player. Berryhill, serving as DJ, would spin popular music for his fellow students, even offering free records to anyone who could correctly name the songs being played.

He even taped and rebroadcast the 1951 World Series for his listeners that had missed the games due to class — and we're pretty sure that he did it without the expressed written consent of the National Baseball League.

Although it may have seemed like a goof put on by a college student, Berryhill was very serious about radio. In addition to his bed-room broad-

casts, he had already worked professionally in radio since the age of 17, having spent time at WDIA/Memphis and WMAK/Nashville. He also aspired to getting Vanderbilt its own fully licensed station and, after a meeting with the school's Chancellor, a committee was formed to investigate the feasibility of setting up a legitimate station on campus. A similar proposal to start a Vanderbilt station was suggested a few years earlier by student William Barry, only to be nixed by the same school administrators.

"At that point, I wasn't really sure if they knew I was already broadcasting out of my dorm room," confesses Berryhill. "I tried not to publicize it too much to the administration."

In the end, however, "the Voice of the Commodore," as Berryhill called his pirate station, was short-lived. As soon as the school discovered the wire he was using as an antenna draped around a large section of Cole Hall, his operation was silenced, but his voice was still being heard.

While working to graduate from Vanderbilt in the summer of 1952, Berryhill was drafted into the Army and the disabled American Vet went on to serve his country in the Korean War. In his absence, the committee he helped spark into action decided that Vanderbilt should have a student-run radio station, even though the school, to this day, offers no formal communications or broadcasting program.

While attending summer classes that same year, two students, Dr. Raphael Smith and Ray Gill, were tapped by the school to officially get WVU off the ground. Gill was given the task of drumming up business for the fledgling station and Smith was given the daunting job of building a transmitter and incorporating equipment that was donated to the school by WSM/Nashville. WSM was a popular radio station that carried the Grand Ole Opry and was owned by the National Life and Casualty Insurance Company, which basically used the Opry as a marketing tool to sell insurance to Tennessee hillbillies.

Soon after the station's first official broadcast, Jim Buchman was brought into the fold as WVU's first Station Manager, and with a skeleton crew of roughly 20 students, WVU was broadcasting classical and popular music, as well as offering news and sports reports. And the rest, however, wasn't history.

The FCC soon came calling and informed WVU that it was exceeding its broadcast range and the station was given two weeks to shut down. With a pretty large investment of time and equipment in the station, some of it purchased personally by Smith and Gill, they weren't about to just give up.

"Our initial set-up went straight into the high voltage wires of the campus power grid and, in essence, created a giant antenna," explains Dr. Smith. "So, we got a lot of telephone wire and ran it underground through the steam tunnels to all of the dormitories and various buildings on campus. We coupled that into the low voltage side of the power grid and we were able to get our signal into the places we wanted without exceeding our limits."

From the very beginning, Smith, now a Doctor of Medicine with Vanderbilt University, knew he was involved in something lasting and special. "The ability of being able to pull together a group of students who had common interests and were willing to devote a great deal of time to an endeavor that became a success was the source of a great deal of pleasure to everyone that was involved," he says. "To this day,



WRVU
50th BIRTHDAY
CELEBRATION CONCERT

1953  2003

MARCH 28, 2003
4-11 PM  ALUMNI LAWN
VANDERBILT UNIVERSITY

★ SPOON ★
★ CROOKED FINGERS ★
★ THE GLANDS ★
★ THE FEATURES ★

Members of the band Spoon closed out the WRVU 50th Birthday Bash on Alumni Lawn.

I am very proud of the number of students who have gone on to use WRVU as a start into the broadcasting field."

WVU would continue broadcasting on its small carrier frequency, mainly serving the campus, for over a decade until it made the switch to 430 glorious watts of FM mono power and adopted its new frequency home of 91.1 and the call letters WRVU.

"I was the one that started the process of getting the power increased from 430 watts," recalls Fred Buc, a 'RVU staffer from 1975 to 1979, and current General Manager of Nashville's Triple-A giant, WRLT.

Unfortunately for Buc, the fruits of his labor wouldn't be realized until six years after his graduation, when the station was upped to 14,500 watts and then later decreased to its current output of 10,500 watts.

By its 25th anniversary, WRVU was working with a staff of about 70 students and spinning the likes of Pink Floyd, Moody Blues and Fleetwood Mac. Even then, Buc understood what an excellent resource the station had become. "WRVU is an excellent training ground. The great thing about the station was, because the school doesn't have a formal communications department, it was handled like a social club," he explains. "That allowed us freedom — of course we had an advisor, but we were able to run it

on our own and make a lot of the decisions for ourselves. That's an excellent way for students to get the experience they need." That sentiment is echoed by many of WRVU's alum, who have used the station as more than a break from their studies, but also as a tool to help them on their career path.

Eothen "Egon" Alapatt decided to attend Vanderbilt in 1996, based heavily on how great he thought WRVU was. The philosophy major knew he wanted to work in the music industry and he knew WRVU would give him that chance.

"I was offered my job as Label Manager of Stone's Throw Records because of the rela-



photo by Houston Ruck, Commodore.

tionships that I fostered at WRVU," says Alapatt. "I think students that really love music just feel inclined to walk into WRVU and self-start, which is what all of us did."

"Everything that I've done since graduating has been a direct result of my involvement with WRVU," says Kristin Whittlesey, who was bit by the radio bug while attending Vanderbilt in 1989. "Now, I'm the editor of a local entertainment magazine and it all came from being given the freedom to figure out what I was into. What I liked musically, what my broadcast style was — that was all a result of WRVU and the people that I worked with there. That atmosphere has prevailed there for its entire history."

For others, WRVU is just an outlet, something they can use to enrich their experience at Vanderbilt and get together with like-minded people who love music, love to talk about it and love to share it with other people.

"We have plenty of students that are very interested in music, but are majoring in things like anthropology and women's studies," says Jennifer Sexton, WRVU's current General Manager. "I'm a science major — that's kind of odd. For most people it's just a hobby that they love to do and we love to have them be a part of the station."

WRVU has even been known to invite community volunteers onto its airwaves to host various shows on the schedule and, even though it has been curbed a bit lately, some volunteers have come from distant communities to help shape the station's sound.

When the English band Departure Lounge set up shop in Nashville to play weekly gigs, it wasn't long before David Cash, one of WRVU's two Music Directors, invited the group to come into the station. Eventually, the band members ended up hosting a weekly Sunday night show, tucked in-between a roots music program and the metal show, that featured most of their favorite songs, interviews with other musicians from the area, as well as some other artists that, like Departure Lounge, were drawn to Nashville because of its rich musical history.

"WRVU is very much a community radio station," says Tim Keegan, Departure Lounge's singer/guitarist. "It's not just for a certain group; it's been embraced by a large

WRVU gains local and national press...

WRVU was featured in a number of publications this spring as its 50th birthday approached. Below are a few headlines:

CMJ

"Happy Birthday to WRVU—
The Student Voice of Vanderbilt
University Turns 50"
April 7 issue
by Brad Maybe

The Nashville Scene

"Old, But Still Tuned In—Vanderbilt's
taste-making radio station WRVU
celebrates 50 years on the air"
March 27-April 2 issue
by Jim Ridley

The Rage

"Fifty Years of Student-Run Radio—
Vanderbilt radio station WRVU
celebrates anniversary with
weekend musical blowout"
March 27 issue
by Ryan Norris and Virginia Shyrock



distant voices *alumni updates...*

A glimpse into a few lives that helped shape student media at Vandy

W.R. BAKER ★

Political Science, A 1953, L 1956
Ashland City, Tenn.
w.r.baker@state.tn.us
Hustler, WVU

I was the business manager of the Hustler and WVU. I met my wife through the Hustler. Both of our children went to Sewanee to college but my son graduated from Vanderbilt Law School. I am a judge.

DANIEL K. BEAN ★

1987
dkbean@hklaw.com
Hustler, Commodore, WRVU

KELLI STAPLES BURNS ★

Math, 1992
Jamestown, N.C.
kburns3@elon.edu
Commodore

Currently teach in the School of Communications at Elon University. Completing Ph.D. from University of Florida. Married with a two-year-old son.

MARTHA PRUEHER CONZELMAN ★

Math, 1962
St. Louis, Mo.
Hustler

I am a freelance writer on recreational bicycling for the St. Louis Post-Dispatch. Also I am Board Chair of Trailnet, a local trails and greenway non-profit group. Married with three grown children.

LARRY B. CRESON, JR. ★

English/LLB, 1958 and 1961
Memphis, Tenn.

larry.creson@ssa.gov
Hustler (cartoonist and illustrator)

My career has been in law, but I did editorial illustrations for the Memphis Business Journal for a year or so.

MEREDITH FLETCHER ★

1998
Atlanta, Ga.
cmfletcher@mindspring.com
Hustler, Versus

Freelance writer

JAY GRAVES ★

1993
Nashville, Tenn.
jay.graves@smartdm.com
Hustler

Co-founded a direct marketing agency (www.smartdm.com) in Nashville in 1995

STEVEN D. HALL ★

Engineering, 1984
Ft. Myers, Fla.
steven.hall.84@alumni.vanderbilt.edu

WRVU

I really liked WRVU. Not only did I work with some great people, but it prepared me, just as much as my coursework, for a career in communication engineering. Presently I work for Nextel Communications.

KIRBY HOPKINS ★

English, 1998
McAllen, Texas
kirbyd14@hotmail.com
Hustler, Review

I went to the University of Texas School of Law immediately after Vandy. I graduated in 2001, passed the Texas bar exam and am working as a briefing attorney for the state's 13th Court of Appeals.

LEE JENKINS ★

American Studies, 1999
Beverly Hills, Calif.
ljenkins@ocregister.com
Hustler

Cover UCLA football and basketball for the Orange County Register. Before that, covered Colorado Avalanche and Denver Nuggets for The Colorado Springs Gazette.

JERRY N. JORDAN ★

Engineering, 1949
jjatty1@airmail.net
Commodore

STEVE KENDALL ★
Political Science, History, Sociology, 1972
Carlisle, Mass.
kendall@gis.net
Versus, Hustler, Commodore

I worked for various organizations during my first 12 years after graduation—a YMCA, a psychiatric hospital, an advertising and public relations agency and a medical and scientific products company. In 1984, I took the big leap and formed my own advertising and PR agency which has been in business ever since. We serve both companies and nonprofit organizations, some with small budgets and some as large as Bristol-Myers Squibb, which for years was our largest client.

JAMIE LANDAU ★

English and Communication Studies, 2002
Norwalk, Conn.
jamielandau@hotmail.com
Versus, Commodore, Hustler

Currently general assignment reporter for the Ridgefield Press Weekly newspaper in Ridgefield, Conn., and copy editor for the Danbury News-Times (daily newspaper) in Danbury, Conn.

MARGARET (MEG) LITTMAN ★

Fine Arts, 1990
Chicago, Ill.
Commodore, Versus

I've been a freelance writer since 1994. My work has

been published in hundreds of magazines, newspapers, web sites and books, including The Chicago Tribune, Glamour, Teen, Business Week, Art and Antiques, Self and many others. My first solo book, A Dog Lover's Companion to Chicago, will be published in Fall 2003.

SHAWN MEREDITH ★

Electrical Engineering, 1992
Kefnersville, NC
shawn.meredith@alumni.vanderbilt.edu
WRVU

IRVIN MUCHNICK ★

irvmuch@yahoo.com
Hustler

IBBY NASMYTH ★

Communications Studies and Psychology, 2002
New York, N.Y.
inasmyth@hotmail.com
Hustler

Graduated from Vandy in May of 2002 after a year on the Hustler ad staff and chased a dream to work in advertising in NYC shortly thereafter. Landed a job at J. Walter Thompson—by the grace of God—in less than a month and began working in account management on brands like lysol, Mop and Glo, Old English and Veet Hair Removal products.

PAT NOLAN ★

A&S, 1973
pat_nolan@dvl.com
WRVU

JOANNA PLUTA ★

Sociology and English, 2000
Highland Park, Ill.
jpluta@aol.com
Hustler

I have just started my third year in a suburban chain of 49 weekly newspapers. My work, largely for the Lake Forester, can be found at www.pioneerlocal.com. I am engaged (to a sports-writer) and am busy planning an October wedding.

ALISON SCHOLLY ★

BS, 1990
Chicago, Ill.
ascholly@tribune.com
WRVU

Since graduating from Vanderbilt I went to Northwestern University's Medill School of Journalism (Masters in Journalism, 1994) and I began working for the Tribune Company in January 1994 in a succession of jobs in online media. I am now the executive producer of Chicago Tribune's three Web sites, chicagotribune.com, Metromix.com and ChicagoSports.com. I am married to John Summy and I have two children: Josie (2) and Bennett (3 months).

ANDREA SIMS ★

Secondary Education and English, 2002
Nashville, Tenn.
Commodore

I am currently teaching English at Fairview High School in Williamson County.

MICHAEL ST. JOHN ★

Arab, Ala.
funradio@hiwaay.net
WRVU

NATHAN THOMAS ★

Philosophy and Computer Science, 1998
Chapel Hill, N.C.
nthomas@baz.com
Versus, Slightly Amusing

After graduating I went to work with Data General in Research Triangle Park, N.C. I stayed with Data General for one year, and then moved to join Red Hat, Inc., where I have remained since. Red Hat is the leading distributor of Linux, an open source operating system that competes with products from Microsoft and Sun. For the last two years I have been the Director of Sales Engineering, a position that has allowed me to help Red Hat grow enterprise sales and achieve profitability. My wife Wendy and I have a daughter, Piper.

MICHAEL VISCARDI, JR. ★

Economics and Psychology, 1998
Bensalem, Penn.
visco17@comcast.net
Commodore

Financial consultant with M&T Bank

SARAH JOHNSON VISCARDI ★

Psychology, 1998
Bensalem, Penn.
sjv14@comcast.net
Hustler

Works with FCF Schmidt Public Relations in Plymouth Meeting, Penn.

ROBERT WALKER ★

A&S, 1977
Santa Ana, Calif.
rlwalker11@cox.net
Hustler

Senior Vice President for First American Corporation; in charge of the technical development and marketing of computer models that value residential homes (on the Internet) in lieu of traditional appraisals for banks.

We would like to hear from you...

To be included in the Alumni Updates section of a future issue of *Tunnel Vision*, please complete the form on the bottom of page 7 and return to VSC.

WRVU, cont. from page 5

cross section of the community. It's a testament to the broadmindedness of the good folks over there, that they definitely have something for everyone."

"There's something about the attitude of the students and the people that work here that's different than anything I've encountered anywhere else," says Chris Carroll, Director of Student Media for Vanderbilt Student Communications. "It's far more cooperative. The students are very upbeat and positive about the role they play at WRVU and there are not a lot of egos involved."

As WRVU's 50th anniversary approaches, the station is staffed by nearly 100 students and run by six that act as the "E Staff," guiding most of the station's decisions. With over 70 different individual shows on the air during the week, WRVU covers every facet of music, from traditional bluegrass to Loud Rock.

"On a typical day, our programming is pretty mixed up," says Sexton. "A majority of the students' shifts hit on all different bases.

We have just about every genre of music represented and for Nashville that is a lot of variety and I'm very pleased with that."

WRVU's appeal, much like any College Radio station, is derived from the staff's passion for what they do. Even

at age 73, WRVU's honorary founding father, Ken Berryhill, still comes into the station once a week to play his favorite classic country music and vintage pop. And though the music currently being played on WRVU has changed dramatically since Berryhill began illegally broadcasting from his dorm room over 50 years ago, so has the station's audience. Once only serving the students on campus, the station's reach now covers the entire city of Nashville. With its growth, however, the station may have lost touch with the reason that it was founded in the first place: the students. Berryhill's initial proposal for a campus station included the possibility of actually teaching classes to students via the radio. Students were the main concern in his vision for the Vanderbilt station, and somehow over the years, students not directly involved with WRVU have lost interest in the station. The current staff, however, is optimistic that they'll be able to turn that around with a big 50th anniversary bash that they have planned.

"The question a lot of students ask is, 'We have a radio station?' They don't know we exist and that's become my focus," says Sexton. "My goal is to get our station out there on campus and to get support from the student population. The 50th birthday concert we're planning is definitely going to help us do that. We've got four bands

all lined up for March 28, and a couple of local bands as well. Spoon, the Features, the Glands and Crooked Fingers will be performing on the Alumni lawn. The fact that it's in the middle of campus on the big lawn, that it's free and it's open to the students and the community — it really puts us out there, finally."

"We're hoping with this lineup, it will be right in their faces and a lot of students are going to see these bands and like them," says Cash. "It will be really nice to get in better with the student community."

Whether it's the diversity of the music, a chance to talk on the radio, an excuse to get out of the dorms, or a burning desire to break into the music industry, throughout its 50 years, WRVU has consistently attracted students that share many commonalities and a drive to make the best-sounding radio station that they can. And as WRVU plans to begin its second half-century getting back in touch with its fellow students, there's already one group that the station has covered.

"We seem to get a lot of letters from prisoners," says Cash. "We've made it an unofficial joke that if you get a letter from prison then you are instantly in the WRVU hall of fame. There are a lot of lonely guys in the joint listening to WRVU." ☺

Help!



Please help us find any student media alumni that may not be receiving *Tunnel Vision*.



shining bright *board spotlight...* Bringing improvements to student media

by **Jacob Grier**
The Torch, Editor-in-Chief
2001-03

To his residents in Mims Hall, where Chad Wilcox just finished working as head resident, Wilcox may not appear to be one of Vanderbilt's most involved students. "Wilco," as they call him, seems to spend almost all of his nights playing spades and dominoes in the building's lobby.



Chad Wilcox
VSC Board of Directors
2000-03

Yet despite appearances, in his four years at Vanderbilt Wilcox has taken up roles in many aspects of university life, including working in the University's Summer Academic Orientation Program, being a graduate intern in the Office of Undergraduate Admissions, and co-chairing and sitting in various committees related to the Residential Colleges Initiative. He also graduated a year early with majors in economics and political science and then entered the Organizational Leadership master's program at Peabody College.

Despite these many demands on his time, however, one of his most active roles has been as a member at large on the board of directors of Vanderbilt Student Communications. Wilcox was elected as a sophomore in December of 2000 and completed his final term in April.

"I joined initially on a whim when I saw an advertisement for the position in *The Vanderbilt Hustler*," Wilcox said. "It was a job that required no prior knowledge of media and looked like a good opportunity to contribute to the university."

And contribute he has. "Since I've been on the board VSC has incorporated four new divisions—*Orbis*, *The Torch*, *The Slant*, and *Spoon*—and undergone a major restructuring," said Wilcox.

The restructuring focused on decreasing the size of the board, which at its peak consisted of 24 voting seats (a number of which went unfilled). The new structure is comprised of only eight voting seats. Three belong to faculty, four to unaffiliated students, and one to a representative of the various media divisions.

Wilcox notes that, "the best part about having a smaller board is that it's easier to discuss issues and give everyone a chance to be heard on controversial votes."

The leaner, more efficient board has also been able to make changes in the workings of VSC, a process in which Wilcox has played a guiding role. The first among these was a major revision of the bylaws that altered the way in which budgets were presented and implemented by the divisions.

"The most challenging thing about the new board structure is that we've never done this before, so a lot of time this year has been spent establishing new precedents," said Wilcox.

This fall Wilcox will complete his masters program and, barring any offers to play spades full time, will probably be looking for employment in policy research or consultation. ☺



photo by **Curt Mayer**, *The Vanderbilt Hustler*

Gene Policinski, deputy director of **The First Amendment Center** (left), and singer-songwriter **Bill Lloyd** perform "Ohio" during the *Freedom Sings* opening session of **MTSPA**.

First MTSPA media workshop a success

Approximately 240 students and 30 advisers from 21 area high schools attended Vanderbilt Student Communications' first Middle Tennessee Scholastic Press Association workshop March 4.

The workshop kicked off with a scaled-down version of *The First Amendment Center's Freedom Sings*. Gene Policinski, deputy director of *The First Amendment Center*, and singer-songwriter Bill Lloyd informed and entertained the attendees with a musical journey through the history, challenges and triumphs of First Amendment rights during the opening session.

After the opening, students and advisers were able to choose three of the 25 breakout sessions to attend. Topics ranged from "That's Entertainment: Writing Reviews" to "What's Hot: Trends in Yearbook Design" and from "Television Storytelling and Videotape Critique" to "Staff Recruitment and Motivation."

The speakers for the breakout sessions included yearbook company representatives, members of the *Tennessean* staff, professional photographers, the former Journalism Education Association president, writers from *The City Paper* and *Nashville Scene*, and NewsChannel 5 staffers, in addition to many others.

Wanda Lloyd, executive director of the Diversity Institute, spoke in the closing session before awards were presented to the contest winners.

"I am literally swamped with applicants for next year's staff, and I got some good ideas at the workshop for questions to ask."
Marvene Woodruff

"The workshop was terrific," said Beth Frerking, newspaper adviser at Montgomery Central High School in Cunningham, Tenn. "My students seemed to especially enjoy the newspaper design, investigative reporting and media law sessions. We are looking forward to it again next year."

Marvene Woodruff, yearbook adviser at Middle Tennessee Christian School in Murfreesboro, Tenn., said she got many great ideas at the workshop and her entire staff is ready to attend the next one.

"I am literally swamped with applicants for next year's staff, and I got some good ideas at the workshop for questions to ask," she said. "I look forward to the 2004 MTSPA workshop." ☺

Truman Scholarship winner



by **Ann Marie Deer Owens**

University junior and incoming *Orbis* editor-in-chief Jessica Heaven was among 76 students selected from across the nation as the 2003 Harry S. Truman Scholars. She was chosen on the basis of leadership potential, intellectual ability and likelihood of "making a difference." Heaven and

junior Ashley Amber Wallin who was also selected, are the first Vanderbilt students to receive the honor in more than a decade.

As associate editor of *Orbis*, Vanderbilt's progressive newspaper, Heaven has helped create a forum for discussion of social justice issues, particularly gender equality.

"It is a privilege to have Jessica as a student in the College of Arts and Science," said Dean Richard McCarty. "She has enriched our university through her efforts in the classroom and her many leadership roles in extracurricular activities. Her

selection as a Truman Scholar is a great honor for her and we applaud her success."

Heaven is a member of both the Women's Studies Club and Vanderbilt Feminists. Heaven has performed in two campus productions of *The Vagina Monologues* and also enjoys swing dancing and intramural sports.

"I've had a strong interest in women's rights ever since I was in elementary school, but I never realized until I enrolled in the Women's Studies Program at Vanderbilt that I could focus my career in the direction of public service and women's rights," Heaven said.

Heaven, of Huntsville, Ala., is majoring in political science and women's studies in the College of Arts and Science.

The scholarship, awarded to college juniors with exceptional leadership potential and a commitment to government or other public service, was established in 1975 as a federal memorial to America's 33rd president. Each scholarship is valued at \$30,000, \$3,000 for the senior year and \$27,000 for graduate school.

Wallin and Heaven were chosen from among 635 candidates nominated by 305 colleges and universities. ☺



alumni updates

Please complete and return via mail or fax to:
Vanderbilt Student Communications
Alumni Updates
2301 Vanderbilt Place
VU Station B 351669
Nashville, TN 37235-1669

615-343-2756 (fax)

Questions? 615-322-6610

Our future issues of *Tunnel Vision* will include information about alumni of Vanderbilt student media. If you would like to be included, please complete the information below:

Name _____
Address _____
City _____ State _____ Zip _____
Phone (optional) _____ E-mail (optional) _____
Years at Vanderbilt _____ Class of _____ Major _____
Which media group(s) did you work with _____

Tell us about your Vandy student media experience, your career since Vandy, awards and honors you've earned and about your family or other news you would like to share*

Yes, please contact me. I would be interested in submitting an **Alumni Column** for a future issue of *Tunnel Vision*.

*Please attach additional sheets if necessary

VSC, cont. from page 1

"cool chancellor" who gets those crazy college kids. Only Gee and his clicking-on-all-cylinders public-relations machine could have turned a stunt like this into a publicity coup.

Meanwhile, the angered staff at the *Hustler* quickly removed the parody issue from their stands within hours. Later that week, the board of Vanderbilt Student Communications, the independent body that watches over student media outlets, removed Barzelay as the editor and censored the publication as well.

Parts of *The Slant's* parody issue were mean-spirited and morbid—especially an account of how Gee's grieving daughter flew from Boston to Nashville to console the chancellor's wife. But there were also passages that brilliantly satirized the mainstream press. More than a cheap knockoff of *The Onion*, the parody issue had all the clichéd staples of tragedy reporting. It had the empty quote from the random stranger: "This is all so unbelievable," went one student. "He was so young and seemed very healthy. We will all miss him." There was the canned statement from the high-ranking official: "Gordon brought so much energy to this job. It is difficult to imagine how devastating this must be for his wife and family..." The issue also had the exaggerated (and in this case fabricated) accounts of the deceased's heroic exploits: "As a colonel in the United States Army, he led his brigade on a charge up San Juan Hill in Cuba and helped to storm the beaches of Iwo Jima in his brief stint in the Marine Corps."

Most of all, *The Slant's* parody mocked the process of instant canonization that the press undertakes in the wake of a major death—not to mention its often clunky efforts to serve as therapist for the masses. "To tell Vanderbilt students not to indulge in a bit of sadness is to tell Hamlet not to worry about his father's death," read the issue's editorial. "But time is a cure, and behind the clouds, the sun is shining.... If anything, Gee's life was a shining beacon on a dark stormy night, illuminating the way to fulfillment, happiness and meaning."

While folks at *The Slant* have played around the margins of respectable satire, two fledgling papers, *The Orbis* and *The Torch*, have helped expose Vanderbilt students to the outer limits of political discourse. Started by an earnest group of young

Democrats in the wake of the 2000 presidential elections, *The Orbis* features stories on how Bush is waging war against women, and why fraternity events like female oatmeal wrestling are degrading. To the paper's credit, it also covers local issues outside the confines of

Vanderbilt—no small service, considering that many students probably couldn't tell you the name of Nashville's mayor.

Still, *The Orbis* doesn't exactly reveal Vanderbilt to be a treasure chest of sharp young liberal minds. The current issue features an editorial suggesting that America somehow figure out a way to redistribute income from professional athletes to teachers, nurses and a laundry list of liberal causes. "The outrageous paychecks pro athletes pull down these days may just be the product of market forces, but markets don't always work for the betterment of society.... Let's feed the hungry, house the homeless and give every child a chance at a first-rate education. Then we can think about paying basketball, football and baseball players millions."

Of course, that *The Orbis* can sometimes make Janeane Garofalo look like Michael Kinsley is not the point. At the very least, the paper serves as a reminder to the school's largely conservative student body that not everybody thinks greed is good. And for the school's liberal students, it's a morale booster, perhaps encouraging them to speak up in an economics class or a one-sided dorm-room debate when they otherwise might bite their tongues.

"We saw this as an opportunity to bring liberal students together," says editor Jay Prather, a senior from Kentucky. "We knew the community is bigger than anyone realized."

The paper's most provocative piece of writing to date came last year, when one of its female columnists offered up an admission: "I am a cocksucker," penned senior Anna Cielinski. "Exactly what is so bad about being a cocksucker?" Cielinski went on to write that the word "cocksucker" is used to castigate people who are "unyielding, selfish and disagreeable." But taken literally, she wrote, the word represents quite the opposite.

Not long after her column, *The Slant* previewed its penchant for crossing the line with gusto when it ran a satirical column examining why the word "mother-fucker" has gotten such a bad rap.

On the other side of the spectrum, *The Torch* features conservative and libertarian views, some of which would make Richard Perle blush. "Need-based financial aid is an unnecessary evil that this school should abolish," read Brett Austin's column in the paper's first edition, in November 2001. "Financial aid is essentially the food stamp of education, claiming that anyone who can get into college can go; yet this is as grossly wrong as thinking that food stamps stop hunger."

There's more: "Financial aid strikes at

the root of capitalism and the work ethic by telling parents that their children can go to college even if they have no money."

Clearly, he was kidding, right? "He was serious," *Torch* editor Jacob Grier says of Austin. "That column made us a household name pretty quickly."

And yet while parts of *The Torch* seem to corroborate people's worst stereotypes about Vanderbilt students, the writers are more playful than their counterparts at *The Orbis*. A recent piece of satirical fiction in *The Torch* poked fun at erstwhile Vanderbilt math professor Jonathan Farley, who is an outspoken proponent of reparations for descendants of slaves. The piece reported that Farley took away grade points from white students and redistributed them to black students. "After decades of beatings, rapes and exploitation in the Confederacy, this policy is perfectly justified," the piece quoted him as saying.

Other recent columns in *The Torch*, which carries virtually no news, include a call to lower the drinking age to 18 and a piece explaining how the Ben and Jerry's franchise sponsors "anti-capitalist" terrorism. "We are probably the only people who came out against Ben and Jerry's," Grier says.

Altogether, there are some 10 student media outlets at Vanderbilt—a remarkable number. The student-run radio station, WRVU-91.1 FM, features the most adventurous playlist in town and will be celebrating its 50th anniversary later this month.

Vanderbilt also boasts a culture magazine called *Versus* and a relatively new art and travel publication called *Spoon*. And while it's not a student publication, the newly revamped *Vanderbilt Magazine*, which goes out to the school's alumni, seems to reflect the university's culture of an invigorated press. Once an innocuous collection of puff pieces, the new *Vanderbilt Magazine* tackles provocative topics, some of which don't always paint the university in a flattering light.

Meanwhile, *The Vanderbilt Hustler* remains a solid, reliable newspaper, breaking its share of stories. Last fall, the *Hustler* was the first paper to report the details of Vanderbilt's decision to drop the word "Confederate" from the Confederate Memorial Hall dorm, prompting *The Tennessean*, *The City Paper* and the *Scene* to play catch-up. Unfortunately, the paper seems to play it safe more often than it should. Like a good Gannett paper, the *Hustler* tells you the who, what, when, where and why, but with little insight or creativity.

Still, perhaps because of its no-frills approach to journalism, the *Hustler* has

proven an amazing training ground for journalistic hotshots. Two of the best sportswriters for *The New York Times*, Tyler Kepner and Buster Olney, learned how to beat a deadline at the *Hustler*. Other *Hustler* alumni include U.S. Sen. Lamar Alexander and *Tennessean* political columnist Larry Daughtrey. The publication's role in nurturing young journalists is especially important, considering that Vanderbilt doesn't have a journalism school.

Not surprisingly, many in the *Hustler* community resent the influx of competing voices. "The proliferation of other publications is pretty disappointing," says Lee Jenkins, a 1999 Vandy alum and former *Hustler* editor who now covers UCLA athletics for *The Orange County Register*. "To be honest, there are just too many publications for a school that size. They should be committed to putting out the best paper, which is the *Hustler*."

One problem with too many voices is that it costs students money. While the *Hustler* is virtually self-sufficient, with revenue from advertising covering nearly all expenses, the university subsidizes *The Orbis*, *The Torch* and *The Slant* through an activity fee the school assesses each student. "When you give money to a publication, you're validating their existence," says Dan Wolken, a former *Hustler* editor who now covers Denver's pro sports franchises for the *Colorado Springs Gazette*. While at Vanderbilt, Wolken opposed the formation of *The Slant*, arguing that it wasn't terribly funny and that it ridiculed minorities. "My theory is that kids running a comedy magazine would not know how to handle it," he says. "I think my viewpoint has been proven correct."

Of course, it's arrogant—and flat-out wrong—to suggest that the *Hustler* can be the only source of information, opinion and humor for the entire student body. Competing voices, even when they are shrill or misguided, can trigger debate—which is no small accomplishment at a historically homogeneous place like Vanderbilt. The *Hustler's* mainstream approach to journalism might be more responsible and certainly a better way to learn the business, but the other outlets can cater to people who want more out of a paper than the latest news about student government.

"I don't think it's a bad thing to have different publications," says Tyler Kepner, who edited the *Hustler* in 1996 and now covers the New York Yankees for the *Times*. "The more outlets people have to express themselves, the better. It's up to the readers to decide what to make of everything." ☆

Alumni subscriptions available at VSC website

Interested in keeping up with events at Vanderbilt?

Many of our media groups offer subscriptions to their publications.

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