

fall 2007

**Big City,  
Cut Me Loose**

*One toddler.  
Two goats.*

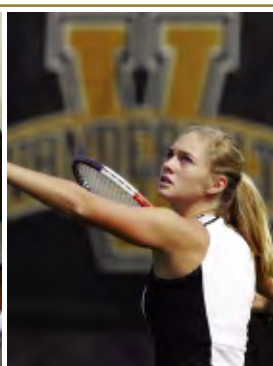
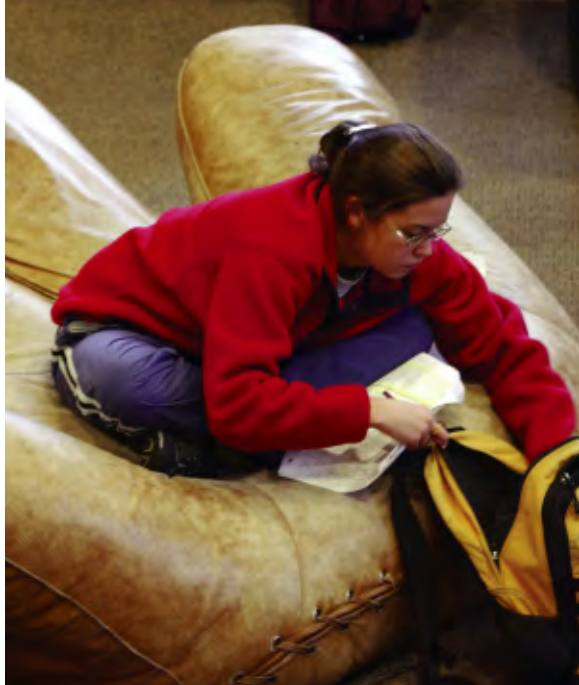
*No electricity,  
running water, phone  
or car.*

*Can this  
marriage  
survive?*

*also:*

**The High Price of No-Cost Health Care Goodbye, Mr. Gee The Residential Campus**





# VITAL

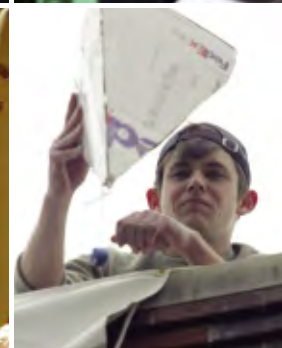
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*Photo of Heather Higginbotham Ward, BA'91, and Logan Ward, BA'88, by Daniel Dubois. Story on page 42.*

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## **All Together Now**

Is the Millennial Generation ready for residential life in The Commons? Vanderbilt is betting \$150 million on the answer. Story on page 52. Photo by Tom Gatlin.

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## Whitney Weeks



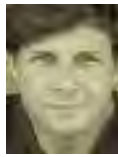
Whitney Weeks, BA'94, served as director of strategic communications for Vanderbilt University's Division of Public Affairs until earlier this year, when she left in order to master the domestic arts and launch her freelance writing career. Both before and after earning a master's degree from Smith College, she has worked in various capacities for Vanderbilt—including but not limited to administrative assistant for the Department of Otolaryngology, undergraduate admissions counselor and speech writer. She lives in Nashville with her husband and their two children.

## Mary Tom Bass

Mary Tom Bass, MEd'85, is the former editor of *Vanderbilt Magazine*, *Vanderbilt Medicine* and the *Owen Manager* alumni publications. During her 16-year tenure at Vanderbilt, she also served as director of campaign communications and director of medical advancement communications. In 2001 she returned to her hometown of Red Oak, N.C., where she lives in the home that has been in her family for more than 100 years. Since 2002 she has been director of public information at Edgecombe Community College.



## Logan Ward



Logan Ward, BA'88, has written travel stories for *National Geographic Adventure*, *The New York Times*, *Men's Journal*, *Popular Science*, *House Beautiful* and other publications. He also writes regularly about science and architecture and is a contributing editor for *Popular Mechanics*, *Cottage Living*, *Coastal Living*, *New Old House* and *Southern Accents*. He lives with his wife, Heather Higginbotham Ward, BA'91, and their two children in Staunton, Va.

## Ashley Rogers

Ashley Rogers graduated from Vanderbilt in May 2006 with a bachelor's degree in international political communication. She grew up in West Monroe, La. During her studies at Vanderbilt, she interned in Thailand and India and spent a semester in France. She established Vanderbilt FREE, a student organization that seeks to raise awareness of human trafficking and modern-day slavery. After graduation she returned to India to volunteer in Calcutta with victims of trafficking. She is now a first-year student at the University of Washington School of Law in Seattle.



## Katherine Miller



Katherine Miller is a sophomore in the College of Arts and Science from McLean, Va. A double major in English and economics, she serves as an assistant editor of the Life section of *The Vanderbilt Hustler* and as an associate editor of the *Vanderbilt Torch*, for which she writes political satire and draws the occasional comic.

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# DoreWays

## From the Editor

### *Hogwarts, Vanderbilt Style*

IN EVERY ISSUE of *Vanderbilt Magazine*, we include an essay written by a student. The most frequent challenge I face as editor of these essays is convincing young writers to share their stories, blemishes and all. One of the first rules of writing is that without conflict, there *is* no story. Yet I find among high-achieving Vanderbilt students a tendency to want to put their best foot forward and present life as near-perfect. Perfection, I tell them, is greatly overrated. It bores the reader and lacks credibility. That's why I found Katherine Miller's essay about her generation's fears (page 66) so compelling.

At some point in their lives, Vanderbilt alumni grow more willing to present their college years as less than perfect. In 20 years of interviewing Vanderbilt alumni, I have been struck by the number of times seemingly well-adjusted, gregarious, successful people have told me, "You know, I never really felt I fit in when I was at Vanderbilt." I suspect that's a common sentiment at campuses nationwide, especially for first-year students. It's one of the reasons I find Vanderbilt's attempt to rethink campus life by investing in The Commons (page 52) such an intriguing story.

Imagine the audacity it took, in this day and age, to envision a residential model of collegiate life closer to the Aristotelian ideal than to *Animal House*.

I was thinking about it a few days ago as I rode an elevator full of students absorbed in their cell phones and BlackBerries, wrapped up in their individual lives. What will it be like for 18-year-olds who've had their own rooms, their own cars, their own music, their own way for their whole lives, to suddenly dive into a life focused on community? Will they climb out of their comfort zones and embrace friendship with students who think, look and act differently? Can professors truly play a larger role in student lives and fulfill the ideal of mentor? Can the focus turn to the joy of learning for learning's sake, even with 21st-century distractions assaulting today's students at every turn?

It will be fascinating to see how nerds and jocks and grade-grubbers and Goths all find their place at The Commons and benefit from this cross-pollenization of ideals and ideas.

Speaking of the student experience: In a future issue of *Vanderbilt Magazine*, we plan to include a story about Vanderbilt roommates. If you have an interesting story to share, we want to hear it. Did you and your roommate keep a ferret in your room and dress it in black and gold? Go an entire semester without speaking? Become improbable lifelong friends? Drop me an e-mail at [gaynelle.doll@vanderbilt.edu](mailto:gaynelle.doll@vanderbilt.edu).

Remember—perfection is boring.

—GayNelle Doll

## From the Reader

### Spring Accolades

IN THE MOST RECENT ISSUE of *Vanderbilt Magazine* was an article about the undergraduate admissions process [Spring 2007 issue, "Getting In," p. 28]. I read it with interest—as I have a rising high school senior and took a "college road trip" with her earlier in the summer—and have a friend who would like to read the article. I can't locate my copy. Can I get another copy of the magazine? Thanks for your help.

DR. STEVEN O'SHEAL, BA'77, MD'81  
*Birmingham, Ala.*

YOUR SPRING 2007 EDITION of *Vanderbilt Magazine* may be the best overall edition I have ever read. Articles covering multiple subjects for the diverse, still scholarly, interests of VU students and graduates were superb. I even benefited with increased knowledge from the article "Wired for Sound" [p. 56] and enjoyed nearly all the other articles.

Thank you!

DR. E. WILLIAM EWERS, BA'46, MD'48  
*Nashville*

I WOULD LIKE TO REQUEST THAT copies of the Spring 2007 issue be sent to two students who are planning to apply to Vanderbilt. The article on navigating college admissions is wonderful, and I know these two young ladies will receive important information from it as they plan and prepare their college admissions applications.

SYLVIA MEDINA  
*Salinas, Calif.*

### Enough with the White Guy Foodies

THE STORY ABOUT VANDERBILT GRADS in the restaurant biz [Spring 2007 issue, "Playing with Food," p. 38] was a good idea, but could you not find a single woman or minority to

A forum for exchanging ideas



profile? They're all white men—not very representative of the university's alumni or student body, or the industry. Why were most of the restaurants profiled in Nashville? Vandy is not a regional school, and its alumni live everywhere.

JENNIFER TINDALL ADAMS, BS'91  
*Alexandria, Va.*

## Not a Member of the Euchner Fan Club

I JUST COMPLETED CHARLES Euchner's Spring 2007 *Vanderbilt Magazine* paean to Marie Collins Wilson ["The Unsinkable Marie Collins Wilson," p. 50], and I now agree with Giadi De Laurentiis's recent comments in *Washington Flyer* magazine that "food really has a way of bringing people together." So thank heavens for Cindy Thomsen's preceding article about outstanding VU alumni chefs ["Playing with Food," p. 38]. Ms. Collins Wilson is undoubtedly unhappy all the featured

chefs are males, but she should just hang in there because President Hillary is just around the corner, thanks to President Bush's inept performance. She should take consolation from the issue's note on page 33 that 58 percent of today's college students are women, thanks to the undeclared war people like she and Mr. Euchner have waged against boys for several decades.

Mr. Euchner, a big supporter of the *Roe v. Wade* Supreme Court decision, which even my fellow attorney liberals have admitted was dreadfully reasoned, must not be too happy with the stories [in the section "The Classes"] about the Multnomah County midwives on page 71 and Jane Stephens' heroic efforts to save Kenyan children for adoption on page 74. As [I am] the uncle of four adopted nieces and nephews, Ms. Stephens' sacrifice is the sort of unselfishness that puts Ms. Collins Wilson's bitterness to shame. Finally, Euchner must not have been thrilled with [former] Chancellor Gee's 2005 commencement remarks, when he complimented Vanderbilt Stu-

dents for Life President Laura Folse [ME'05], now a medical student at Tulane, for working with pro-abortion advocates to save the lives of unborn children in Nashville during Laura's years at Vanderbilt.

It is sad to think how many future Vanderbilt students have been eliminated since *Roe*, and how many more will be eliminated, but Ms. Stephens is certainly giving us hope in that regard. God bless her.

DANIEL M. GRAY, ESQ., BA'78  
*Falls Church, Va.*

## Ford Fizzle

I WOULD SUGGEST THAT THE REASON Harold Ford Jr. did not win the Senate election [Spring 2007 issue, *The Campus*, "Gone in 30 Minutes," p. 13] is that most Tennesseans prefer to have a successful businessman instead of a career politician representing their interests in Washington.

JOSEPH W. SLOAN, MS'58  
*Nashville*

*Date someone who  
knows that a  
Limited Partnership  
is not a  
Stifled Romance*

Date fellow graduates and faculty of  
Vanderbilt,  
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## Women's Lacrosse Players Overlooked

I ENJOY READING YOUR MAGAZINE, BUT wanted to tell you that Vanderbilt also has a women's lacrosse team who happened to be ranked in the top 20 and made it to the NCAA's. This is the second time this team has been left out of a Vanderbilt publication. They are an amazing group of coaches and hard-working women, and you omitted them in your Sports Roundup. Women's lacrosse is one of the fastest-growing sports in the country, and three Southern schools are adding women's varsity sports to their programs.

CATHY MUNDY  
*Ellicott City, Md.*

## Salute to Willie

IN YOUR SPRING 2007 ISSUE, you recognized a former student athlete, Willie "Hutch" Jones, BS'82, who starred in basketball at Vanderbilt [Sports, "Where Are They Now?"]

p. 20]. I don't know what made me smile more ... the story of Willie's great works or the old 1981-82 media guide photo of him smiling broadly.

I have attended many Vandy basketball games over the years, including all of those he played at Memorial Gym. One of the most memorable was his home finale. Vandy thrashed Alabama soundly in C.M. Newton's first season at Vanderbilt. I have vivid memories of Willie taking a curtain call to thunderous applause and cheering as he closed out his career at Memorial Gym. I can still see him at the corner of the court with his long arms raised and bright smile beaming. We were all screaming, "Hutch!" "Hutch!" "Hutch!"

I had always admired Willie's play, feeling that he was somewhat overlooked. That year he finally received the recognition he deserved by being named first-team All SEC. That was especially gratifying to me because I wore his number, 22, on my YMCA-league basketball jersey for years. My bas-

ketball skills were mediocre, even for the Y league. But when I did manage to "make a play," my teammates would voice their approval by calling me "Hutch." I liked that very much.



It is great to be a Vandy fan because we know that the student athletes we cheer on the field and court will one day make us equally proud as contributing members of the community.

Thanks, Willie, for the memories, thanks for being a credit to the university, and thanks for being a wonderful person.

J. MICHAEL (MICKEY) SULLIVAN  
BE'71, ME'79  
*Nashville*


### Letters are always welcome

in response to contents of the magazine. We reserve the right to edit for length, style and clarity. Send signed letters to the Editor, *Vanderbilt Magazine*, VU Station B #357703, 2301 Vanderbilt Place, Nashville, TN 37235-7703, or e-mail [vanderbiltmagazine@vanderbilt.edu](mailto:vanderbiltmagazine@vanderbilt.edu).



## 2008 Vanderbilt Calendar

From Kirkland in fall to the summer gardens at Peabody, enjoy the exquisitely beautiful Vanderbilt campus every day in this stunning wall calendar. Favorite photos from university photographers help you experience the sights that make Vanderbilt an inspiring place in every season. Large grid allows notes to be written. Makes a great gift. \$11.99, plus shipping and handling. Available through Vanderbilt Bookstore, 1-800-288-2665.

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### **Last One In Is a Rotten Ovum**

Just before plunging into their studies, medical students of the Class of 2011 cool off at an orientation party. The 104 incoming first-year medical students come from 30 U.S. states, Canada, Ethiopia, India, Republic of Korea, Poland, Taiwan and Thailand. Photo by Anne Rayner.

# 1,000 Words

*One image frozen in time*



# The Campus

“*The climate crisis is not a political issue. It is a moral and*”

## Gore Wins Nobel Peace Prize

FORMER U.S. VICE PRESIDENT Al Gore was named a winner of the Nobel Peace Prize on Oct. 12 for his work to combat global warming. The 2007 Nobel was awarded to Gore jointly with the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC).

The announcement marks the second time in little over a year that someone with Vanderbilt ties has won the Nobel Peace Prize. Last year Muhammad Yunus, PhD'71, was chosen jointly with Grameen Bank for his work helping the poor through small loans.

“Al Gore has for a long time been one of the world’s leading environmentalist politicians,” the Nobel committee said in a statement. “He became aware at an early stage of the climatic challenges the world is facing. His strong commitment, reflected in political activity, lectures, films and books, has strengthened the struggle against climate change.

“He is probably the single individual who has done the most to create greater worldwide understanding of the measures that need to be adopted.”

Gore has longstanding ties to Vanderbilt. He attended Vanderbilt University Graduate School in 1971–72 and Vanderbilt Law School from 1974 to 1976, when he left to run for



**Al and Tipper Gore earlier this year at the Academy Awards ceremony in Los Angeles, where his film *An Inconvenient Truth* won for best documentary feature.**

U.S. Congress. His wife, Tipper, earned a master’s degree in psychology from Peabody College in 1976. Gore’s late mother, Pauline, was one of the first women to graduate from Vanderbilt Law School. Gore’s late sister, Nancy Gore Hunger, earned a Vanderbilt B.A. in 1960.

Gore has been a friend and frequent visitor to Vanderbilt. From 1992 to 2002, he and Tipper were moderators of the annual Family Re-Union conference.

“I am deeply honored to receive the Nobel Prize,” Gore said in a statement. “This award is even more meaningful because I have the honor of sharing it with the IPCC—the world’s preeminent scientific body devoted to improving our understanding of the climate crisis—a group whose members

have worked tirelessly and selflessly for many years.”

Gore said he will donate the Nobel prize money (about \$750,000) to the Alliance for Climate Protection, a nonprofit environmental group.

Nobel Laureates with Vanderbilt ties include Stanley Cohen, distinguished professor of biochemistry, emeritus, who shared the 1986 Nobel Prize with Rita Levi-Montalcini for their discoveries of growth factors; Stanford Moore, BA’35, winner of the 1972 Nobel Prize in Chemistry; Earl Sutherland, professor of physiology, winner of the 1971 Nobel Prize in Physiology or Medicine for discoveries involving mechanisms that trigger hormone action; and Max Delbrück, 1969 winner of the Nobel Prize in Physiology or Medicine for his part in discovering the replication mechanism

## Partnership to Increase Number of Black Scientists

FACULTY FROM VANDERBILT and South Africa’s University of Cape Town (UCT) are working together to recruit and train more black scientists in South Africa. Vanderbilt and UCT will be core partners in collaborative research and study across several academic disciplines. The universities have agreed to jointly build an automated telescope facility near Cape Town at the South African Astronomical Observatory.

Like African Americans in the United States, black Africans are underrepresented in the physical sciences, particularly in astronomy and space science. Vanderbilt has a program with



**James Dickerson (with a graduate student) says the University of Cape Town’s interests in material physics and nanoscience make for a good match.**



# Fall 2007

*spiritual challenge to all of humanity.* ” — AL GORE, 2007 Nobel Peace Prize winner

historically black Fisk University to help increase the number of minority students pursuing doctoral degrees in the physical sciences. UCT has a similar program with historically black University of the Western Cape.

Keivan Stassun, assistant professor of physics and astronomy, is co-director of the Fisk-Vanderbilt Master's-to-Ph.D. Bridge Program and the Fisk Astronomy and Space Science Training Program. He is leading Vanderbilt's participation in the astronomy research collaborations with UCT.

James Dickerson, Vanderbilt assistant professor of physics, and UCT physicists David Britton and Margit Harting are in talks to collaborate on research to produce novel nanocomposite metals. Other research partnerships in the areas of nanoscience and materials physics also are in the works.

“What makes this partnership so attractive is not only the astronomy and physics research, but the fact that we are developing the next generation of scientists—particularly those from underrepresented racial and ethnic groups,” Stassun says.

The South African government has made astronomy its primary area of science investment and has constructed the South African Astronomical Observatory, which houses the Southern African Large Telescope (SALT)—the largest sin-

## QuoteUnquote

“ **Much of what passes as news and information is in fact fiction, and it falls to novelists, paradoxically, to tell the truth.** ”

— Salman Rushdie, author of *The Satanic Verses* and winner of numerous literary prizes, opening the Chancellor's Lecture Series on Sept. 28.

DANIEL DUBOIS

gle-optical telescope in the Southern Hemisphere. Funding from South Africa's government and grants awarded through the Vanderbilt Initiative in Data-Intensive Astrophysics will help build the universities' joint automated telescope facility near Cape Town.

Joel Harrington, Vanderbilt assistant provost for international affairs, heads the Vanderbilt International Office, which coordinated the partnership with the University of Cape Town. He says Vanderbilt's goal is to establish partnerships with six peer institutions around the world by the end of 2007 and an additional three or four during the subsequent two years. “We

want these to be deep, significant partnerships as opposed to the scattershot approach that often results from having hundreds of university partnerships without much depth,” Harrington says.

For more information about the grant program and the university's international efforts, visit [www.vanderbilt.edu/international](http://www.vanderbilt.edu/international).

### Nurse Midwives Deliver at Nashville General

VANDERBILT UNIVERSITY School of Nursing nurse midwives, who typically help birth more than 700 babies each year, have expanded their reach to

delivering babies at Nashville General Hospital. The arrangement, begun last summer, is aimed at easing capacity issues in Vanderbilt's labor and delivery service as well as providing assistance to the underserved.

Vanderbilt midwives offer prenatal and women's care at both the West End Women's Health Center and the Vine Hill Community Clinic, both nurse-managed facilities affiliated with the Vanderbilt University School of Nursing. The VUSN nurse-midwifery team of 13 is divided between the two clinics and two hospitals in order to offer continuity of care for patients. West End clients deliver at Vanderbilt Hospital >>>

## Inquiring Minds

### Pregnancy May Help Cut Risks for HIV-Infected Women

Women with HIV infection who become pregnant have a lower risk of progression to AIDS and death, Vanderbilt researchers report in the online edition of the *Journal of Infectious Diseases*. They suggest that “the complex set of immunologic changes” during pregnancy may be interacting in a beneficial way with combination drug therapy.



Some previous studies in the developing world reporting higher levels of complications and deaths from AIDS among pregnant women were conducted before drug “cocktails” dramatically reduced death and complication rates. More study

is needed, cautions Dr. Timothy Sterling, the study’s senior author and associate professor of medicine. The study was begun four years ago by first-year medical student Mercy Udoji. Jennifer Tai also made major contributions to the study.

### Multiple Sclerosis Gene Uncovered After 30-Year Search

Researchers have uncovered a gene linked to multiple sclerosis that could pave the way for future treatment options. *Nature Genetics* and *The New England Journal of Medicine* have published studies that report the most significant MS genetic breakthrough since the 1970s. Researchers from Vanderbilt, the University of Miami, the University of California-San Francisco, Duke University, and the University of Cambridge participated in the studies.

The research “provides solid genetic and functional evidence that the interleukin 7 receptor (IL7R) alpha chain gene is associated with MS,” says Jonathan Haines, director of the Center for Human Genetics Research at Vanderbilt. This genetic variation can increase an individual’s risk of developing MS by about 20 percent.

### Mobile Pollution Sensors Could Offer Greater Accuracy

Engineers in the Vanderbilt Institute for Software Integrated Systems have won a research award from Microsoft Corp. to develop a real-time, online, detailed picture of air quality in large metropolitan areas. The mobile air-quality monitoring system will make it possible to monitor air quality more accurately than the current fixed-station system by using car-mounted sensors that measure, process and report emission levels.



Principal investigator is Akos Ledeczki, research assistant professor of electrical engineering at Vanderbilt. Xenofon Koutsoukos, assistant professor of computer science and computer engineering, and Peter Volgyesi, research scientist in electrical engineering and computer science, serve as co-principal investigators.

while Vine Hill clients deliver at Nashville General Hospital.

The nurse-midwifery practice expects to deliver nearly 300 babies at Nashville General Hospital within the next year. Offering prenatal care at Vine Hill and deliveries at NGH may produce healthier babies because economically disadvantaged women may not seek care until the third trimester due to financial reasons or language barriers.

Adding Nashville General Hospital to Vanderbilt’s midwifery service also helps with nursing student placements and preceptorships. The School of Nursing is able to double the number of students per clinical rotation and give them a more hands-on labor experience in a low-intervention birth model.

## Classroom Response System Clicks

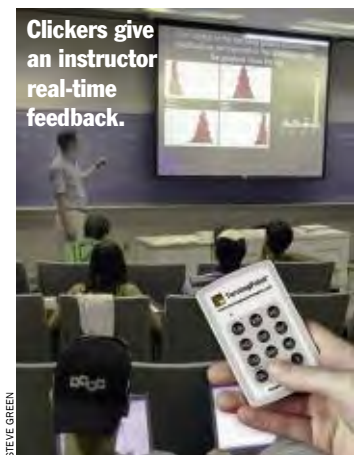
GONE ARE THE DAYS of straight lecturing by instructors and note taking by students. Instead, clickers, which look like small remote controls, are allowing students to become active participants and instructors to gauge how well concepts are sinking in.

An instructor using a classroom response system poses multiple-choice questions to students via an overhead or computer projector during a lecture. Students respond using the handheld clickers, which transmit infrared or radio-frequency signals to a receiver attached to the instructor’s computer. Software reads the responses, compiling data that is seen on an overhead screen.

The technology has taken off in such departments as chemistry, economics, physics

and astronomy, psychology, biomedical engineering, and human and organizational development, as well as at the medical and nursing schools.

“Historically, much of the interest in clickers came from instructors teaching science courses and large lecture classes,” says Derek Bruff, assistant director of the Vanderbilt Center for Teaching and a senior lecturer in mathematics, who has done extensive research on the subject. “As you lead a class discussion with 15 students, you get a sense of what they



are struggling with and can respond appropriately. Once you hit a hundred or 200 students, there are very few options for having that kind of meaningful interaction.

“Clickers scale up very well—the bigger the class, the more payoff, because clickers can be used to organize a lecture in ways that really get students talking to each other, generating ideas, thinking hard about the content,” Bruff adds.

Instructors may pose fact-based questions that serve to keep students on pace with classroom discussion. Students’ responses are shown in real time, allowing the instructor to gauge their understanding and tailor the lecture accordingly.





## The Revolution Starts Here

[www.coolpeoplecare.org](http://www.coolpeoplecare.org)

Sam Davidson, MDiv'09, created this Web site to give users easy, practical resources for making a positive impact on their local communities. The "5 Minutes of Caring" section offers daily 99-word articles featuring practical tips and motivation. The "Act Locally" calendar lists meaningful events, from 5K runs to lectures, in many American cities, and a "Partners" page matches your interests with community organizations. If five minutes a day is too much of a commitment, there are t-shirts (cool, of course) and Fair Trade coffee you can order.

# Virtual Vanderbilt

Or, instructors may ask questions that generate discussion.

One of the best advantages of such a system, Bruff says, is the immediacy of the technology. "I don't have to wait until the end of the semester to determine whether the students are understanding things the way I want them to. Instead, I leave every class with a pile of data that tells me what the students do and do not understand."

For more information about classroom response systems and resources on campus, visit [www.vanderbilt.edu/cft/crs.htm](http://www.vanderbilt.edu/cft/crs.htm).

## Law Graduates Get Political

ONE OF VANDERBILT'S OWN jumped into the presidential candidate ring in September, ending months of speculation. Even before he declared his candidacy, Fred Thompson, JD'67, polled third nationally among GOP presidential contenders. The preferred candidate among many conservatives, Thompson has drawn comparisons to Ronald Reagan for his easy manner and his acting background.

Thompson was named an assistant U.S. attorney only two

years after graduating from law school and at age 30 was appointed minority counsel of the Senate Watergate Committee. He next served as special counsel to both the Senate Select Committee on Intelligence and the Senate Committee on Foreign Relations.

In his first campaign for office in 1994, Thompson was elected U.S. senator from Tennessee, filling the unexpired term of Al Gore, who attended graduate school and law school at Vanderbilt in the 1970s. Thompson was returned to the Senate for a full term in 1996. In addition to his success in

law and politics, he is a well-known character actor who has appeared in more than 20 films and nearly 30 television programs, most notably as District Attorney Arthur Branch on *Law & Order*.

Vanderbilt political scientist John Geer says Fred Thompson will be a formidable presidential contender. "Thompson has never been so ambitious that he is willing to do anything to be president, which could certainly be a plus in the campaign," Geer says. "Of course, one of his greatest strengths is his rapport with the camera."

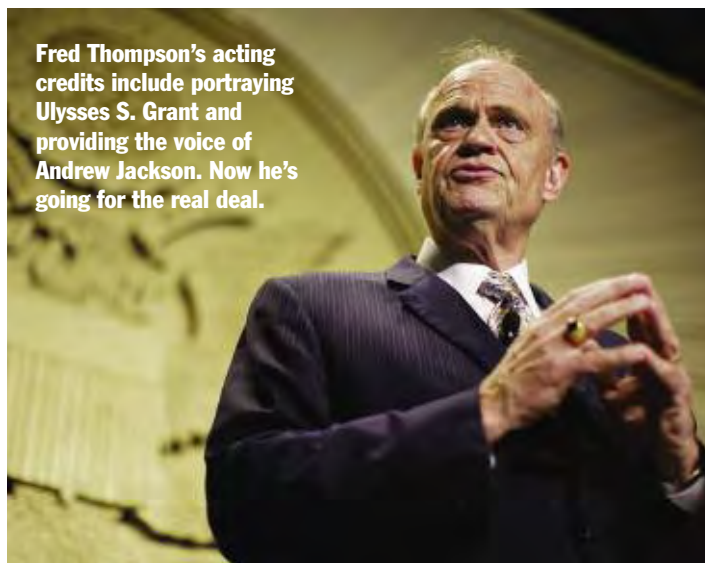
Geer, author of *In Defense*

*of Negativity: Attack Ads in Presidential Campaigns*, says "Thompson has a folksy way and ability to connect with the voters, including the GOP base. He will also attract some Democrats and independents."

Thompson is not the only Vanderbilt Law School graduate making headlines recently. In September, Nashville voters elected Karl Dean, JD'81, to succeed Bill Purcell, JD'79, as the city's mayor.

Dean served as Metropolitan Nashville's law director before entering the mayoral campaign. He was elected Metro Nashville public defender three times during the 1990s before joining Purcell's staff as the city's law director in 1999. He is also an adjunct professor at Vanderbilt Law School, where he teaches trial advocacy. Dean's wife, Anne Davis, JD'81, teaches legal writing at Vanderbilt.

Purcell, who was director of the Vanderbilt Institute for Public Policy Studies' Child and Family Policy Center before serving two terms as Nashville mayor, is now spending four months teaching as a resident fellow at Harvard's Institute of Politics.



**Fred Thompson's acting credits include portraying Ulysses S. Grant and providing the voice of Andrew Jackson. Now he's going for the real deal.**

CHUCK KENNEDY/AGC

## Top Picks

### Chemistry Whiz Awarded NSF Fellowship

Kristin Glab, BS'07, is one of only 22 chemistry majors in the country this year awarded a National Science Foundation fellowship, which will pay for three years of graduate school. Following graduation from Vanderbilt last May, Glab is studying at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology. Last spring the chemistry whiz won the Vanderbilt Department of Chemistry's top awards for graduating seniors, the Outstanding Senior in Chemistry Award and the Donald E. Pearson Award for the senior with the most impressive research record. Glab ripped through the chemistry curriculum at Vanderbilt in just three years, racking up a 3.9 grade point average. "She's the best student we've had in at least 10 years," says Associate Professor of Chemistry Piotr Kaszynski.



STEVE GREEN

### Engineering Dean Radiates Leadership

Kenneth F. Galloway, dean of the Vanderbilt School of Engineering, has won the Richard F. Shea Distinguished Member Award from the IEEE (Institute of Electrical and Electronic Engineers) Nuclear and Plasma Sciences Society (NPSS). The annual award recognizes outstanding contributions through leadership and service to the NPSS and to the fields of nuclear and plasma sciences. Galloway helped found the School of Engineering's Radiation Effects and Reliability Group and the Institute for Space and Defense Electronics. He is an expert on radiation effects in power devices and mobility degradation in metal-oxide-semiconductor (MOS) transistors.



DANIEL DUBOIS

### Volunteerism Recognized with Red Cross Internship

Arts and Science senior Katherine Woods was one of 30 college students chosen nationwide for the Presidential Internship Program this year at the American Red Cross' national headquarters in Washington, D.C. Woods spent her summer working in the Office of General Counsel. As a middle school and high school student, Woods volunteered at the American Red Cross chapter in Martin County, Fla., and has continued her volunteerism with the Vanderbilt Red Cross. The internship program runs a total of 10 weeks, from the beginning of June to the beginning of August.



## The Doctor Is in the Mall

IT'S HARD NOT TO NOTICE something as big as a dead mall. Changes in consumer buying habits have led to the decline of shopping centers in many cities, leaving space up for lease.

Those empty stores can provide a creative solution for a burgeoning medical center like Vanderbilt's, where finding enough space is an ongoing challenge. Vanderbilt University recently leased more than half of Nashville's oldest indoor mall, 100 Oaks Mall off Interstate 65. Officials expect some VUMC staff and faculty to be working at the 100 Oaks location by next summer.

The deal expands Vanderbilt Medical Center's size by almost 440,000 square feet. Some outpatient clinics and offices will move to the second and third floors of the mall, as well as to an adjacent office tower. The first floor will continue to house a retail strip.

Dr. C. Wright Pinson, associate vice chancellor for clinical affairs and chief medical officer, says the move will relieve congestion and take Vanderbilt services to the community in an easily accessible location.

"One Hundred Oaks will be our largest clinic away from our 21st Avenue location—large enough that it will be considered a second major campus for the Medical Center."

The 100 Oaks project will include not only offices and outpatient facilities but also a fitness center and a child-care center for staff and faculty. A shuttle service will run between 100 Oaks and VUMC's 21st Avenue location.

One Hundred Oaks Mall opened in 1967 and has experienced several cycles of rebirth. Its current owners are Dallas-based developers Frank Mihalopoulos and Tony Ruggeri.

## Grease Is the Word

A VANDERBILT STUDENT group's love of nature has led to a project that will produce cleaner-burning fuel on campus. The Vanderbilt Biodiesel Initiative, started by participants of Vanderbilt's Wilskills program, will take used vegetable oil—stuff that cooks fried foods in campus cafeterias—and recycle it into environmentally friendly biodiesel.

Wilskills, an outdoor education program that uses rock climbing, caving, hiking and

**A 1960s shopping mall will house Vanderbilt University Medical Center's second major campus.**



NIEL BRAKE





**Recycled oil from Vanderbilt's cafeterias could fuel campus vehicles such as medical center shuttle buses.**



white-water canoeing to teach wilderness skills, coordinates a six-day orientation experience for first-year students, as well as additional excursions throughout the year. "We have a van that we take out every weekend, and we were using a lot of gas," says Derek Riley, MS'06, a Wilskills instructor and current graduate student in computer science. "We're an environmen-

tally responsible group, we like to think, so we thought we'd look into using biodiesel." Biodiesel is a processed fuel derived from biological sources that can be used in unmodified diesel-engine vehicles. Vegetable oil can be used in any diesel engine that has been converted to burn it, "but you have to pay for the conversion," Riley says. "With biodiesel, if

you convert the vegetable oil first, you can use it in any diesel vehicle." Enlisting the help of other campus groups, proponents of a campus biodiesel initiative set out to acquire processing equipment. "We have a couple of chemical engineers involved, lots of engineering students, just lots of creative people in general," says Riley, who cites Professor of the Practice of Civil and Environmental Engineering James Clarke as chief adviser. "We talked about ideas and came up with a design, which we continued to work on and refine." From the design, the group built a working pilot system that can produce 50 gallons of biodiesel in a batch. Campus-produced biodiesel will be used in plant operations

equipment and possibly in medical center shuttle buses. The Wilskills program has purchased a diesel-engine van that will run on 100 percent biodiesel. "The project is going to reduce the amount of fuel consumed on campus in significant ways," Riley says. "It's going to increase awareness about biodiesel and biofuels, and it's going to reduce emissions." Biodiesel produces about 60 percent less net carbon-dioxide emissions than petroleum-based diesel. "I think there's enough oil supply on campus that we eventually could be converting 500 to 600 gallons a week into biodiesel," says Riley. "Down the road we're looking at potentially making 2,000 gallons of biodiesel a month, which is pretty significant for a student-run project."

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# Sports

A look at Vanderbilt athletics

## Steady as a Rock

Jonathan Goff anchors the Vanderbilt defense and leads by example.

By NELSON BRYAN, BA'73

**T**HE VANDERBILT DEFENSE takes the field and gathers around player number 47. The 6-foot-4, 235-pound middle linebacker sets the defensive formation, and waits for the offensive play to begin and his opportunity to crush it. And when the ball is whistled dead and the bodies are sorted out, number 47, Jonathan Goff, is in the mix and ready to go again.

Goff, a redshirt senior, has anchored the Vanderbilt defense after winning a starting role three years ago. He entered the 2007 season having started 28 consecutive games, the most of any current Commodore. He returns as Vanderbilt's leading tackler and one of the Southeastern Conference's top active tacklers. He was named second-team All-SEC by the coaches last year and was a preseason All-SEC pick this year. He has been named a team co-captain for the second consecutive year and passed up a chance at the NFL draft to return for his final season of eligibility.

"It's a great honor to be elected again by my teammates," Goff says. "I'm really appreciative of the support from my teammates and coaches and hope to be an outstanding leader for this football team."

"He's as steady as a rock," Coach Bobby Johnson says of Goff. "He doesn't talk much and tries to lead by example. If you walked up to anyone in our locker room and asked who works the hardest or who our leader is, they'll say Jonathan Goff." Goff has been named to watch lists for the Bronko Nagurski Award and the Chuck Bednarik Award, honors given annually to the best defensive players in the nation.

Born in Atlanta, Goff moved to the Boston area with his mother and older brother at the age of 2. He started playing football in the eighth grade and played high school football at St. John's Prep, where his team posted undefeated regular seasons in 2001 and 2002, and he was named All-Conference and a Prep-Star All-East pick. "Before that I was a soccer kid," Goff recalls. "In high school I also enjoyed playing basketball and running track."

Goff was recruited by a number of colleges and offered scholarships at Wisconsin, Indiana and Northeastern. He chose Vanderbilt. "Coach Johnson and his support staff seemed like they wanted to get the best out of me as a player, an athlete and a person," he says of his decision. "I thought Vanderbilt would be the best place for me to grow and mature.

"My freshman year I did a lot of learn-

ing. I spent a lot of extra time in the weight room to develop myself physically and learn the defensive scheme. It took me some time to settle down and feel comfortable and understand it completely. My redshirt freshman year, I had the opportunity to start my first game against LSU down in Death Valley. I think it was their homecoming, too," he recalls with a smile.

"The place was packed, and it was more humid down there than any place I ever remember being. It was a real eye-opening experience. There's no other feeling like that. I sort of felt like I was being thrown into the lion's den, if you know what I mean. It was a great experience for me."

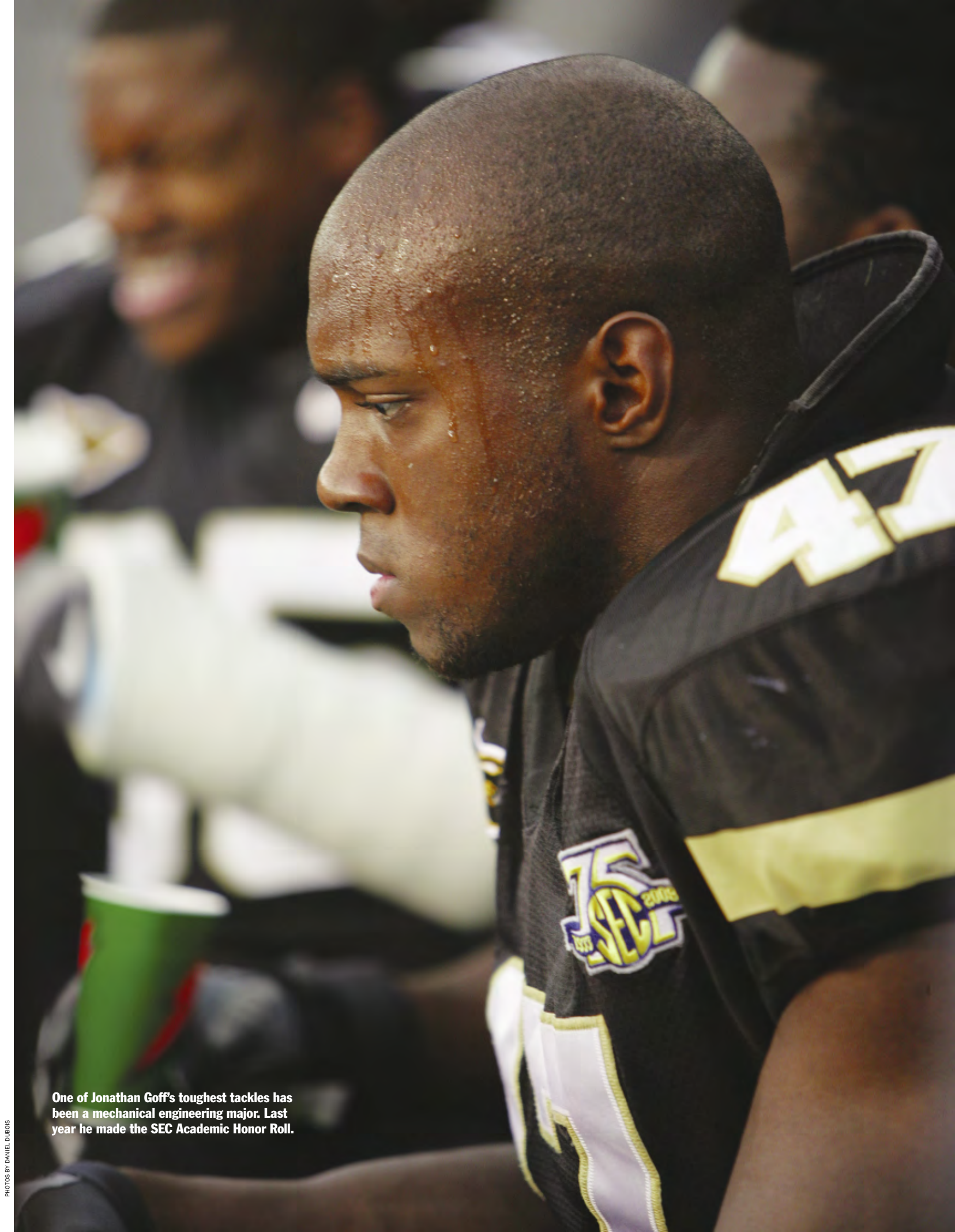
Through the next two years, Goff was getting more comfortable and his numbers reflected his progress. "It felt like the game was slowing down a lot. Just understanding offensive schemes a bit better and understanding where I fit and where my teammates fit into the defensive scheme have helped me a great deal and allowed me to make some plays."

"It seems we have a lot more talent than we've ever had," he says of the current crop of Commodores. "We have a lot of players who've come a long way. I think this is the best team and the best opportunity for us to go to a bowl game since I've been here, at least as far as talent."

Goff graduates in December with a degree in mechanical engineering. "After graduation I'm going to prepare for the next level," he says, "working out and getting in shape for the scouts and NFL combines." ▼







**One of Jonathan Goff's toughest tackles has been a mechanical engineering major. Last year he made the SEC Academic Honor Roll.**



## 2007 Boasts Best-Ever Baseball

Player of the Year and Coach of the Year honors, Southeastern Conference Tournament and regular-season championships, and a fistful of All-American selections showcased 2007 as the best year for Vanderbilt baseball in the history of the program.

The Commodores spent most of the season ranked No. 1 in the nation. During their run the team logged a 20-8 conference record and claimed Vanderbilt's first-ever SEC regular-season championship with a 4-1 victory over Louisiana State University at Hawkins Field before a crowd of 2,685 fans. The Commodores' next challenge was the SEC Tournament, where they became the first team in conference history to come back from a first-round loss (4-6 to Tennessee) and win five straight to claim the crown. It was the first time an SEC team won both the regular season and tournament titles since Alabama in 1996.

"It takes a special team makeup to do what we did, to be the first team in SEC history to come back like that," Coach Tim Corbin said of their tournament trek.

The NCAA rewarded Vanderbilt's season-long performance by naming the Commodores the No. 1 national seed in the 64-team NCAA baseball tournament and host of a regional first round. Hawkins Field, which seated approx-



"There's not one selfish kid in the bunch," said Coach Tim Corbin of his 2007 team.

imately 2,000 fans in its most recent incarnation, expanded seating capacity by adding 1,500 bleacher seats and offering 200 standing-room-only tickets in the patio area in left field. All seats were sold within 36 hours.

Fans witnessed a remarkable series of games that also featured Austin Peay State University, the University of Memphis, and the University of Michigan. The Michigan Wolverines survived the remainder of the field and won the regional in a 4-3, 10-inning nail-biter over the Commodores.

"From a coaching standpoint, I don't think I've ever had as much fun in my whole life,"

Corbin said of this year's Commodores. "They're low maintenance. There's not one selfish kid in the bunch. They're unbelievable, and trust me when I say this: I've never seen a team like this, and I think that's why we've been successful."

The postseason brought accolades and opportunities to a number of Commodores. David Price, a junior left-handed pitcher, garnered the lion's share of honors. He was drafted No. 1 overall in the Major League Baseball draft by the Tampa Bay Devil Rays and signed for a reported \$11.25 million, six-year contract. Price was named Player of the Year by the American Baseball Coaches Association, *Baseball America*, CSTV and *Collegiate Baseball*. He also was named SEC Male Athlete of the Year and SEC Pitcher of the Year, and won the Dick Howser Trophy, Golden Spikes Award, Brooks Wallace Award and Roger Clemens Award. Joining Price on various All-American lists were sophomore Pedro Alvarez, junior Dominic de la Osa, sophomore Ryan Flaherty, senior pitcher Casey Weathers, and freshman pitcher Mike Minor.

Major League Baseball also drafted the following Commodores: Casey Weathers, Colorado; Dominic de la Osa, Detroit; Cody Crowell, BS'07, Toronto; Ty Davis, BS'07, Arizona; Tyler Rhoden, BS'07, Cincinnati; Jonathan White, Milwaukee; Stephen Shao, Colorado; Kellen St. Luce, Florida; Sean Bierman, Cincinnati; and Joey Manning, Philadelphia.

Coach Corbin was named SEC Coach of the Year, *College Baseball Insider* Co-Coach of the Year, and Vanderbilt Coach of the Year. The Commodores finished the season with a school-record 54 wins and 13 losses.

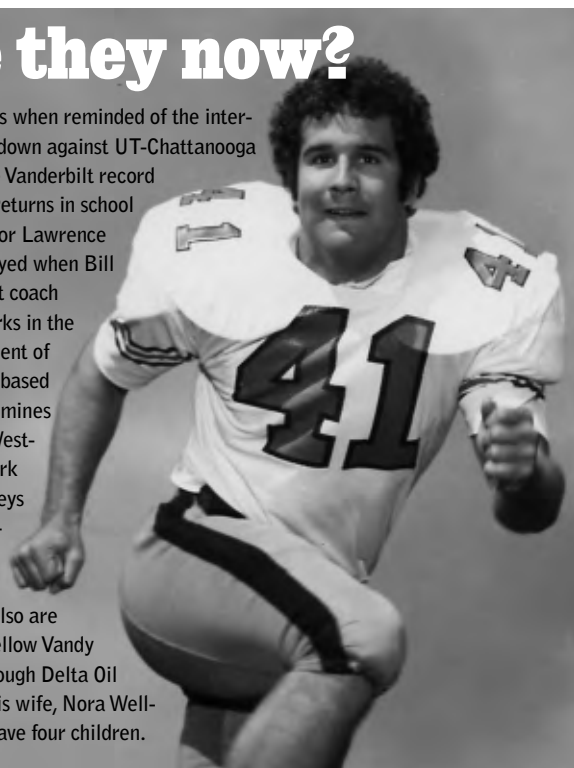
## Where are they now?

**Tate Rich**, BA'76, JD'79, still chuckles when reminded of the interception he returned 35 yards for a touchdown against UT-Chattanooga on Sept. 13, 1975. That play ranks in the Vanderbilt record books as one of the top-15 interception returns in school history. "I tell people I was a prototype for Lawrence



Taylor," he laughs. "I played when Bill Parcells was an assistant coach here." These days he works in the family business as president of Delta Coals, a Nashville-based coal sales agent for coal mines located in Virginia and West-

ern Kentucky. "I've been fortunate to work for the past 25 years with Doug Humphreys [BS'78], another member of the Vanderbilt football team," he says. "He's the owner of a family-operated coal mine in Wise County, Va." Rich and Humphreys also are involved in oil and gas production with fellow Vandy football player David Harber, BE'76, through Delta Oil and Gas, based in Tulsa, Okla. Rich and his wife, Nora Wellman Rich, BE'78, live in Nashville and have four children.





# Sports Roundup

Vanderbilt hosted a Special Olympics Team USA training camp in July, which included a bocce ball competition.



## Women's Golf: Allen Named Head Coach

Greg Allen has joined the Vanderbilt sports community as the new women's golf coach. He comes to Vanderbilt from the University of Arizona, where he had coached the women's team since 2000. During his tenure his teams won two Pac-10 conference championships and finished as an NCAA runner-up in 2002.



Allen

"We conducted an intensive national search, and everyone has good things to say about Greg Allen," says David Williams II, vice chancellor for university affairs, general counsel, and secretary of the university. "His vast experience running a top-10 program, his record as one of the nation's top recruiters, and his down-to-earth personality make him an ideal fit for us at this time." Allen has named former Commodore golfer Nicki Cutler, BS'03, a two-time All-SEC performer, as assistant coach. Allen succeeds former Coach Martha Richards, who accepted the same position at the University of Texas.

## Men's Basketball: Nigerian Post Player Joins Commodores

Coach Kevin Stallings has added a sixth player to this year's class, Festus Ezeli, a 6-foot-11, 245-

pound Nigerian. Ezeli also was recruited by Florida, Ohio State and Georgetown. "I've always told our staff not to worry about who else is recruiting a kid; he's got to be a player in our eyes," Stallings says. "But it obviously validates the young man's potential that other people viewed him the same way we do." At his request, Ezeli will be redshirted his freshman year. This year's signees include point guard Keegan Bell, forward Andre Walker, post player A.J. Ogilvy, forward Darshawn McClellan and wing Charles Hinkle.

## Track and Field: Former Olympian Named Head Coach

D'Andre Hill, a former Olympic sprinter, has been named head coach of the women's track and field program. She comes to Vanderbilt after serving three years as an assistant coach for sprinters and relays at Texas Christian University in Fort Worth. Before joining TCU she was head coach at Dayton University in Ohio. She represented the United States in the 1996 Olympic Games in Atlanta and is the first African American



Hill

head coach of a Vanderbilt sports program.

"We were fortunate to attract our top candidate to Vanderbilt," says Vice Chancellor David Williams II, "and believe D'Andre is the right person to develop the track and field program into a Southeastern Conference and national contender." Hill competed for Louisiana State University during her collegiate years, helping lead the Tigers to three straight national championships while running the 60, 100 and 200 meters as well as relays. She was a two-time NCAA individual outdoor champion in the 100 meters. While she directs the women's track and field program, Steve Keith, BA'81, will serve as head coach of Vanderbilt's women's and men's cross country teams and distance runners.

## Women's Basketball: Vandy 3, Spain 0 in Summer Competition

Coach Melanie Balcomb saw her Commodores log a three-win, no-loss campaign in Spain during the summer. The team concluded its Spanish tour with a 101-59 victory over the Madrid All-Stars. Senior Liz Sherwood led Vanderbilt with 24 points and 17 rebounds. Five Commodores scored in double figures, including junior Christina Wirth and sophomores Lauren Lueders, Jessica Mooney and Amber Norton.



# Collective Memory

Vanderbilt's roots revealed

## Showdown at Kirkland Hall

*They're respectable middle-aged citizens now. But 30 years ago they were one Wild Bunch. By CINDY THOMSEN*

**O**N THE SURFACE, the group of freshmen who showed up at Vanderbilt in the fall of 1973 didn't seem that different from any other. They were bright, to be sure. Eager and excited about starting this new adventure called college. And as they unpacked, settled in, and started finding their way around, they also started finding each other. For seven freshmen, those first days in Nashville would come to affect the rest of their lives.

They came to Vanderbilt as strangers for the most part—David Blum, Mike Bagot, Phil Walker, Margaret Lynch Callihan and Robert Courtney, all BA'77; and Cathy Madigan and Julie Caldwell Huffman, both BSN'77. (Walker and Madigan had been high school buddies back in Fort Lauderdale, Fla.)

They left as lifelong friends. And they left a legacy that is still remembered 30 years later.

"We just literally became fast friends," says Phil Walker, now a San Francisco attorney. "The universe does things that are very interesting. All of us had a personality that was a little challenging to authority."

Remember, these are the days when Richard Nixon was president. The early years of the '70s—before the atrocities of disco and *Saturday Night Fever*—still had a '60s-era vibe. Being leery of the people in suits just came naturally. And that's what makes this group's relationship with then-Chancellor

Alexander Heard all the more remarkable.

"On the very first night of school, the chancellor invited the freshman class to his house for dinner," explains David Blum, now a real-estate broker and developer in Wilmette, Ill., north of Chicago. "He gave a little speech and told us two things: He said that only 50 percent of what you learn in

college comes from the classroom, and he said that his door was always open."

The new friends took that open-door policy seriously, and that is how a group of cocky freshmen became fast friends with the most authoritative person around. At their first meeting the chancellor even named the group. Thirty years later they are still known as the Wild Bunch.

"We were really non-subdued around him," remembers Cathy Madigan. "We were all pretty entertaining, and I think the chancellor was just a little taken aback that we weren't this quiet freshman group sitting there not saying anything. In fact, I'm not sure he had a chance to get a word in edgewise."

Even in those early years at Vanderbilt, the group was assuming leadership roles in student government, various clubs, and in their respective fraternities and sororities.

"We clicked as people first, but we were the kind of people who wanted to contribute and give back and reach outside the normal college existence," says Blum. "We liked having fun, and we liked to embarrass each other."

Madigan, now clinical director of the UNC Heart Center at the University of North Carolina, remembers two examples of the embarrassing behavior. One involved Walker's payback for a perceived slight. "He hung a huge sign from the top of Lupton Hall that read 'Cathy and Julie—for fat girls, you don't sweat much.'"

But another time, Walker was on



**The Wild Bunch rides again at a Reunion Weekend brunch in October hosted by Marty Baither Conrad, BSN'78, and Jim Conrad. Phil Walker, BA'77, is at the right end of the front row (in blue shirt); David Blum, BA'77, is at the left end of the second row (in black and gold striped shirt).**





**Wild Bunch pranksters brandish squirt guns as they kidnap Chancellor Alexander Heard on April Fool's Day in 1977.**

the receiving end. He gave tours to high school students curious about Vanderbilt. During one such tour, Huffman snuck into his dorm room, stripped bare, and got in his bed—knowing full well that he always ended his tours by throwing open the door to his dorm room, telling the prospective student that this was a typical student room. Little did Huffman know that on this particular tour the student's father—a Nashville judge, no less—was also along.

No one remembers whether the student became a Commodore or not.

The group wasn't all about good times. Mike Bagot became president of the Student Government Association, and Bob Courtney became finance secretary of the SGA. Margaret Lynch Callihan was business manager of *The Vanderbilt Hustler*. Cathy Madigan was president of Kappa Delta, and Julie Caldwell Huffman was president of Chi Omega. Phil Walker, after serving as freshman class president, went on to found the Original Cast music group and organized the Campus Capers at Homecoming. David Blum became president of the Young Democrats.

"Vanderbilt gave us the latitude to have fun," says Blum. "It told us exactly where the line was that you couldn't cross. You could put your toes on the line, but heaven forbid that you put your toes *over* the line."

Not crossing that line was just another sign of the respect that the Wild Bunch felt for Chancellor Heard.

"He was really a tremendous influence, especially the way he encouraged using the university as an open forum for the expres-

sion of new ideas," says Mike Bagot. "He was very open to the students and to the idea of self-governance."

As the years passed, the Wild Bunch grew to include several dozen members, but the original seven—the founders—were always at the core. The group wanted to go out with a bang and hit upon the now-famous idea of kidnapping Heard and other university officials, including Senior Vice Chancellor Rob Roy Purdy, Dean James Sandlin, Dean Sidney Boutwell and Betty King, manager of schedules and reservations. On April Fool's Day, with the cooperation of various staff members, the Wild Bunch pulled off the kidnapping and whisked Heard and the others—in a limo owned by Dorothy Mize, friendly proprietress of a Church Street liquor store—to the farm of Battle (BA'24) and Sara (BA'22) Rodes. There they all feasted on champagne and hot dogs and initiated Chancellor Heard into the Wild Bunch.

"We wouldn't pull that off today, for sure," says Blum. "Walking into Kirkland Hall now in commando clothes and squirt guns definitely wouldn't cut it."

It wasn't the group's last act before graduation. On the day of the ceremony itself, each member of the Wild Bunch handed the chancellor a flower. Madigan remembers it was a white carnation. Walker recalls a red carnation. Blum says it was a red rose. In any event, it was the group's farewell to a man—and a place—they loved.

Graduation sent most of the Wild Bunch in different directions. Graduate school and careers became priorities. Bagot claims to

have chosen the University of Texas as his law school because "after four years at Vanderbilt, I had to go to a football school." Regardless of where they landed, the group faithfully journeys back to Nashville every five years for their Vanderbilt Reunion and a "Wild Bunch Brunch." Their 30-year reunion took place in October.

In 1997, Blum chaired his 20-year Vanderbilt reunion. "I wanted the Wild Bunch to do something special, and someone came up with the idea of creating an endowment at the Jean and Alexander Heard Library to buy books," he says. "I proposed it to the group as a way of honoring Chancellor Heard, and they all agreed it was a great idea. We announced the endowment at Reunion and invited Chancellor and Mrs. Heard to come to the event. They were really surprised and very touched."

Alexander Heard, whose own children were college age during the Wild Bunch's time at Vanderbilt, turned 90 in March and lives quietly with his wife, Jean, in their long-time Nashville home on Golf Club Lane. "My father had interaction with many student groups, but he absolutely loved the Wild Bunch," remembers his daughter, Cornelia Heard, professor of violin at Vanderbilt's Blair School of Music. "He stayed in touch with several of them for many years and thoroughly enjoyed it."

In 2005 the group rallied when disaster—in the form of Hurricane Katrina—struck one of their own. Mike Bagot and his family fled New Orleans and ended up in Nashville where Wild Bunch friends opened their homes, businesses and schools.

"I feel like if I'm ever in a catastrophe again, I have friends throughout the U.S. who I can call on at any time and say, 'I need sanctuary. Can you put me up?'" says Bagot, who is now back in New Orleans practicing law. "It's a good thing to know."

It's clear that many factors helped create the Wild Bunch. If the seven had attended Stanford or Northwestern or Emory, would they have found each other?

"I'd like to say we would have," says Bagot, "but it was a singular experience, from the chancellor on down. We felt safe and secure on one hand, yet adventurous on the other." ▼

# Bright Ideas

“The theory is, maybe those early McCoys had adrenal

## Steam Could Power Prosthetic Limbs

**1.** COMBINE A mechanical arm with a miniature rocket motor, and the result is the closest thing yet to a bionic arm. Vanderbilt mechanical engineers have developed a radically designed prototype as part of a \$30 million federal program.

“Our design is closer in terms of function and power to a human arm than any previous self-powered prosthetic device, and it weighs about the same as a natural arm,” says Michael Goldfarb, the professor of mechanical engineering who is leading the effort.

The prototype can lift (curl) about 20 to 25 pounds—three to four times more than current commercial arms—and can do so three to four times faster. The mechanical arm also functions more naturally than previous models. Conventional prosthetic arms have only two joints, the elbow and the claw. The prototype’s wrist twists and bends, and its fingers and thumb open and close independently.

The Vanderbilt arm is the most unconventional of three prosthetic arms under development by a Defense Advanced Research Project Agency (DARPA) program. The other two are being designed by researchers at Johns Hopkins

University in Baltimore who head the program. Those arms are powered by batteries and electric motors. The program is also supporting teams of neuroscientists at the University of Utah, California Institute of Technology, and the Rehabilitation Institute of Chicago who are developing advanced methods for controlling the arms by connecting them to nerves in the users’ bodies or brains.

“Battery power has been adequate for the current generation

of prosthetic arms because their functionality is so limited that people don’t use them much,” Goldfarb says. “The more functional the prosthesis, the more the person will use it and the more energy it will consume.”

Increasing the size of the batteries is the only way to provide additional energy for conventionally powered arms, and at some point the weight of batteries becomes prohibitive.

It was the poor power-to-weight ratio of batteries that

drove Goldfarb to look for alternatives in 2000 while working on another exoskeleton project for DARPA. He miniaturized the monopropellant rocket-motor system that is used by the space shuttle. His adaptation impressed Johns Hopkins researchers, so they offered him \$2.7 million in funding to apply this approach to a prosthetic arm.

Goldfarb’s power source is about the size of a pencil and contains a special catalyst that causes hydrogen peroxide to burn and produce pure steam. The steam is used to open and close a series of valves. The valves are connected to the spring-loaded joints of the prosthesis by belts made of a special monofilament. A small canister of hydrogen peroxide that fits in the upper arm can provide energy to power the device for 18 hours of normal activity.

The steam generated by the device is heated to 450 degrees Fahrenheit by the hydrogen peroxide reaction, so a concern about the device was the need to protect the wearer and others nearby from the heat. Researchers covered the hottest part with special insulating plastic that reduces the surface temperature. Hot steam exhaust is vented through a porous cover, where it condenses and turns into water droplets. “The amount of water produced is about the same as a



Michael Goldfarb's prototype functions more naturally than conventional prosthetic arms.

DANIEL DUBOIS



tumors and that's what helped set them off. ”

—FRANK HANKINS, McCoy descendant

person would normally sweat from their arm on a warm day,” Goldfarb says.

“DARPA has set a goal of developing a commercially available arm in two years,” Goldfarb adds. “Because of our novel power source, the process of proving that our design is safe and getting regulatory approval for its use will probably take longer than that.” If DARPA decides it cannot continue supporting the arm’s development for this reason, Goldfarb says he is confident he can get alternative funding.

## Tumors May Have Fueled Hatfield-McCoy Feud

2 WINNTER REYNOLDS may have within her body a clue to the legendary Hatfield-McCoy feud. The 11-year-old is a descendant of McCoyes who harken from West Virginia and are, according to her grandmother, Goldie, kin to the family known for its long-running clash with the Hatfield family.

Winnter came to the Monroe Carell Jr. Children’s Hospital at Vanderbilt because of a tumor on her adrenal gland. Her grand-aunt and guardian, Rita Reynolds, had similar tumors removed at Vanderbilt a couple of years ago. Winnter’s family has a theory about a

connection between these tumors, which run in their family, and the famous feud carried on by their forebears.

“These tumors can send your moods up and down,” Rita Reynolds says. “They diagnosed Winnter with attention deficit disorder, but I think it’s the adrenal tumor that’s been making her hyperactive at times.”

Winnter’s doctors say the theory that a genetic predisposition for adrenal tumors—caused by a genetic disorder called von Hippel-Lindau disease, which Winnter’s family carries—is a possible explanation for why the feuding McCoy family members were so violent and angry.

“Adrenal tumors cause the release of massive amounts of catecholamines—chemicals like adrenalin,” says Dr. Wallace “Skip” Neblett, MD’71, chair of the Department of Pediatric Surgery at Children’s Hospital and Winnter’s surgeon.

The Hatfield and McCoy feud took place in the mountain terrain of Eastern Kentucky and West Virginia. While some say it started over a pig, historians maintain it began when Southern-sympathizing Hatfields murdered a McCoy



**Shown with her great-aunt, Rita, Winnter Reynolds is a descendant of “Old Randall” McCoy. Winnter has undergone surgery at Vanderbilt for a genetic disorder called von Hippel-Lindau disease.**

treaty was signed by Hatfield and McCoy descendants. Members of Winnter Reynolds’ family have attended Hatfield-McCoy reunions for years and have been swapping stories about their distant cousins all their lives.

“The theory is, maybe those early McCoyes had these adrenal tumors as well and that’s what helped to set them off,” says Winnter’s uncle, Frank Hankins.

“From the scientific point of view, the genetic condition the McCoy family has, von Hippel-Lindau disease, is associated with too much adrenaline and related compounds because of a condition called pheochromocytoma, a type of tumor of the adrenal gland,” says Dr. Revi Mathew, associate professor of pediatrics and Winnter’s endocrinologist.

“It does produce hypertension, headache and sweating intermittently depending on when the surge of these com-

who had served in the Union Army.

That led to the first of many retaliations. In 1878 “Old Randall” McCoy thought he spotted one of his pigs being stolen by Hatfields. An ensuing string of accusations, botched trials and killings took place until the climactic burning of Old Randall’s home and the murder of his son and daughter in 1888.

Before it was all over, 13 members of the families died violent deaths. There was no further violence after the deaths of the two clan leaders, Old Randall McCoy and Devil Anse Hatfield, in 1914 and 1921, respectively.

In 2002 a symbolic peace



PROPERTY OF WEST VIRGINIA STATE ARCHIVES

**The Hatfield clan, with patriarch William Anderson “Devil Anse” Hatfield seated second from left.**

pounds occurs in the bloodstream. I suppose these compounds could possibly make somebody very angry and upset for no good reason.”

Last spring Winnter underwent surgery to remove a tumorous adrenal gland. Because von Hippel-Lindau can cause tumors in several organs during the span of a person’s life, it could be the first of many surgeries.

### Breast Implants Linked to Higher Suicide Rate

**3.** WOMEN WHO undergo breast augmentation surgery are nearly three times as likely to commit suicide, according to a study published in the August issue of *Annals of Plastic Surgery*. This research confirms previously seen links between breast implants and a high risk of suicide, as well as deaths from alcohol or drug dependence.

The study, led by senior author Joseph McLaughlin and Loren Lipworth, both cancer epidemiologists with the Van-

derbilt-Ingram Cancer Center, documented the increased suicide risk. This risk suggests plastic surgeons should consider mental health screening and follow-up for women who seek breast implants.

Lipworth and colleagues performed an extended follow-up study of 3,527 Swedish women who underwent cosmetic breast-implant surgery between 1965 and 1993.

At an average follow-up of nearly 19 years, the suicide rate was three times higher for women with breast implants as compared to the general population (based on 24 deaths). The risk was greatest—nearly seven times higher—for women who received their breast implants at age 45 or older. The average age at the time of surgery was 32 years.

Suicide risk did not increase significantly for the first 10 years after implant surgery. However, the risk increased with time: 4.5 times higher from 10 to 19 years’ follow-up and six times higher after 20 years.

Women with breast implants also had higher rates of death from mental disorders, including a threefold increase in

deaths from alcohol and drug dependence. Several additional deaths, classified as accidents or injuries, might have been suicides or involved psychiatric disorders or drug and alcohol abuse as a contributing cause.

“Thus, at least 38 deaths (22 percent of all deaths) in this implant cohort were associated with suicide, psychological disorders, and/or drug and alcohol abuse or dependence,” according to the researchers.

There was no increase in the risk of death from cancer, including breast cancer, among women with breast implants, reports Lipworth. Increases in deaths from lung cancer and respiratory diseases, such as emphysema, likely reflected higher smoking rates among women with breast implants.

Several epidemiological studies have also found an increased suicide rate among women with cosmetic breast implants. The current study provides extended follow-up data on a previous nationwide study of Swedish women with breast implants, more than doubling the number of deaths analyzed.

The increases in suicide and in deaths related to alcohol and

drug dependence suggest that a “nontrivial proportion of women undergoing breast augmentation may bring with them—or develop later—serious long-term psychiatric morbidity and eventually mortality,” Lipworth and colleagues write.

Because the study includes only deaths, the true rates of psychological and substance-abuse problems among women with cosmetic implants are likely much higher. The researchers conclude, “Such findings warrant increased screening, counseling, and perhaps post-implant monitoring of women seeking cosmetic breast implants.”

### Illegal Immigration Hurts African Americans

**4.** ILLEGAL immigration is hurting African Americans, according to research by a Vanderbilt professor of law and political science. In *Debating Immigration*, a book of essays that Carol Swain edited and contributed to, she says African Americans are losing more jobs to illegal immigrants than other racial or ethnic groups;



STEVE GREEN



yet, low-income black workers don't have political input in the debate.

"African Americans have been left devoid of a strong black voice in Congress on a topic that affects them deeply, given their high unemployment rates and historic struggle to get quality housing, health care, education, and other goods and services," says Swain, citing a study conducted by the Pew Hispanic Center, which found high unemployment rates among African Americans and Hispanics were partly attributed to the large number of low-skilled immigrants in America.

"The greatest competition occurs among people at the margins of society, a multiracial group that includes poorly educated blacks, whites and Hispanics who compete against each other and against new immigrants for low-wage, low-skill jobs." Swain found that cuts in governmental programs like student loans make it harder for low-income African American students to train for higher-paying jobs.

The Congressional Black Caucus, Swain writes, does not list immigration reform as a legislative priority. Some lawmakers in the CBC have large numbers of Hispanic constituents in their districts, which may lead to a conflict of interest, she says. Unless big changes take place within the CBC, there will be no official black representation on the immigration issue, which she believes is hurting the African American community.

## Couch-Potato Tots Need Interaction

**5.** THE TODDLER entertainment market has exploded in recent years: Infants, toddlers and preschoolers in the United States watch an average of one to three hours of video media and television programming per day. But new research suggests parents should choose videos with high interactive content if they want their children to be educated as well as entertained by their time in front of the tube.

The findings were published in the May 17 issue of *Child Development* by Vanderbilt University psychologists Georgene Troseth and Megan Saylor.

"By age 2, children have figured out that other people are a primary source of information about the world, and they use social cues such as facial expression and where a person looks or points to gather that information. As a result, they are more likely to learn from a person on video whom they perceive as a conversational partner," says Troseth, an assistant professor of psychology in Peabody College. "In our study, if a video

was not interactive, children were much more likely to dismiss the information being conveyed."

Troseth, Saylor, and research assistant Allison Archer conducted two experiments to better understand which type of video best engaged toddlers. In the first, they tested differences in learning from video and from face-to-face interactions among 24 2-year-olds. A

found the toy.

In the second experiment, researchers used a closed-circuit video system to make the experience interactive. The woman on the screen could see, hear and respond to the children through conversation and games. After five minutes of interacting with the woman on the TV, children used the information she provided to find the hidden object.

Troseth and her colleagues believe the results indicate that because toddlers understand the difference between their "real" environment and what they see on videos, they are likely to dismiss information offered by someone on television unless that person is clearly interacting with them. This interaction can include tactics such as asking children questions, using their names, or referring to something they can see and touch in their real environment.



EARL F. LAM III/MCT

woman on a TV screen told the children where to find a stuffed animal hidden in another room. She then gave a second group of children the same information in person. The first group of toddlers rarely found the stuffed animal, suggesting they didn't believe or listen to the woman on the screen. The children given the instructions in person usually

Troseth served as a consultant for Sesame Workshop on its new DVD series, which uses Muppet babies and caregivers to encourage and model good social interaction. She is a member of the Vanderbilt Learning Sciences Institute and an investigator in the Vanderbilt Kennedy Center for Research on Human Development. ▼

For more research stories, visit Vanderbilt's online research journal, *Exploration*, at <http://exploration.vanderbilt.edu>.

# InClass

*A spotlight on faculty and their work*

A young man in Sierra Leone had both arms chopped off at the elbows by a guerrilla group of child soldiers. He couldn't imagine a future. Carol Etherington encouraged him to reframe his self-image. "How do you define what's valuable about a human being?" she asked him. With her help, over time, he became reconciled to the idea that while nothing could replace his arms, he still had value as a man and could go forward on strong legs.

A woman in rural Kentucky was brutally assaulted and raped. After she recovered from her wounds, she refused to go to church because in her congregation, rape victims, as well as perpetrators, were thought to have sinned. She didn't want to stand up before her neighbors and apologize for what had happened to her.

Etherington said, "Have you considered that you have every right to go to your church, sit quietly if you want, and find solace in the ceremony? You survived this because of your strengths. If anybody questions that, then they need to ask your forgiveness."

A year ago former Chancellor Gordon Gee was visiting the Mercury Courts program that supports those in Nashville without housing. One formerly homeless man desperately wanted to talk to him. "Go ahead," Etherington urged him. "Your opinion matters." The man mustered his courage and told Gee to ignore his critics, because he had made the right decision in dismantling Vanderbilt's athletic department.

## To Dance, Perchance to Dream

*From Katrina to the killing fields of Cambodia, Carol Etherington helps victims find courage to heal. By LISA A. DUBOIS*

EVER SINCE SHE GRADUATED from Vanderbilt School of Nursing in 1975 with a master's degree in psych-mental health nursing, Carol Etherington has been providing care to people grasping at life in the midst of unfathomable tragedy. She has responded to victims of the killing fields of Cambodia, floods in Poland, civil conflict in Tajikistan, and famines and massacres in African nations. She worked on-site in the wake of the 1994 earthquakes in California, Hurricane Katrina, and the collapse of the World Trade Center towers. She has counseled homeless families, orphaned children and refugees.

To honor such actions of compassion and caring, and in recognition of her work establishing mental health programs and delivering humanitarian aid in the United States and abroad, Etherington, an assistant professor of nursing, has been named the 2007 Vanderbilt University Distinguished Alumna.

"Whether I'm in a war zone or responding to a natural disaster, my goal is to help people move past the incident or incidents so they don't feel permanently stuck in an

event that took away their strengths," Etherington explains. The key, she says, is to help them see beyond a traumatic experience so they won't be "labeled" by it or allow it to define them as a person.

Etherington began her humanitarian activism shortly after receiving her nursing license. Early in her career she realized that once victims of rape, assault and child abuse were treated in a health-care setting, they faced additional traumas as they were processed through the criminal justice mill. Appalled by the insensitivity of existing systems, she founded the Victim Intervention Program within the Metro Nashville Police Department, an innovative project that meshes crisis counseling with law enforcement.

A tall, statuesque redhead with a hearty laugh, Etherington exudes an aura of warmth and determination. "When she walks into a room, you can feel her force field," says Rusty Lawrence, executive director of Nashville's Urban Housing Solutions, an organization that provides affordable housing for low-income individuals and families. Lawrence has worked with Etherington on addressing public health needs of the homeless



JIM HSIEH





**Etherington: "This new era of globalization ups the ante for a university like Vanderbilt. How will students affect the lives of those they come in contact with?"**

and devising ways to “fix holes in the medical system” of this vulnerable population.

“Carol is a very good leader,” Lawrence says. “You feel her confidence, but she is also very clear about her limits—what she is and isn’t able to do.”

Etherington, who joined the faculty of the Vanderbilt School of Nursing in 1995 as a community health instructor, exposes nursing and medical students to the health-care dilemmas faced by immigrants, refugees, victims of crime, the impoverished and the homeless. Aware that many of these students will one day become leaders in community

war, personal loss, and physical illness and injury. You can take care of the immediate medical needs, but unless you also address their core emotional needs, they will still be suffering.”

Etherington pushed the MSF paradigm during her tenure, helping the organization see that mental health should not be addressed as an afterthought, but rather could be incorporated into an acute approach to humanitarian aid.

Nothing is more acute than a bomb launched from a rooftop or a missile attack or a drugged-out teenager wielding an Uzi submachine

tactic of war in Bosnia, she actually spent much of her time helping to establish a mental health program for war-traumatized children.

Because many children were too shell-shocked to discuss what they’d undergone, relief workers had them draw pictures instead. Elementary-aged youngsters colored images of relatives being shot at point-blank range, of houses exploding, of soldiers firing randomly into villages—horrifying acts of savagery rendered in crayon.

After 1996, Etherington revisited Bosnia once more, briefly in 2001. International

“Carol was a constant reminder to focus on the mental health issues of those we were assisting. People are deeply affected by displacement, war, personal loss, and physical illness and injury. Unless you address their core emotional needs, they will still be suffering.”

—*Dr. Darin Portnoy, president of Doctors Without Borders in the U.S.A.*

and international outreach, she is determined to get it right.

“This new era of globalization ups the ante for a university like Vanderbilt,” Etherington says. “Vanderbilt cannot simply be responsible for providing a learning opportunity. It must critically question not only how this experience will shape the lives of students, but also what students will leave behind. How will they affect the lives of those they come in contact with? These people, the recipients of our outreach, have much to teach us if we’re willing to learn. Helping my students understand this has become integral to my humanitarian work.”

Her global vision is a natural extension of her skills as a nurse. Etherington served six terms—two of them as president—on the board of directors of Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF), an international relief organization known in America as Doctors Without Borders.

“Carol was a constant reminder that we needed to focus not just on the medical issues, but on the mental health issues of those we were assisting,” says Dr. Darin Portnoy, current president of the U.S. branch of MSF. “People are deeply affected by displacement,

gun. Several times through the years, Etherington has served in some of the world’s hottest war zones—Cambodia, Tajikistan, Bosnia, Kosovo, Angola, Sierra Leone.

Bosnia holds a special place in her heart. Once a part of Yugoslavia, Bosnia-Herzegovina is a country of breathtaking beauty, with cloud-tipped mountains, quaint villages and cascading waterfalls. Tragically, this same scenic landscape served as a scorched-earth battleground between ethnic Serbs, Croats and Muslims, many of whom participated—some reluctantly, others enthusiastically—in a brutal campaign of ethnic cleansing. Four times during the 1990s, Etherington chose to join others in the trenches to deliver nursing and psychological aid during the Bosnian War and its aftermath.

She first went there in 1993 to offer medical and psychological support as a humanitarian aid worker with the International Medical Corps. She returned for six months in 1994, followed by several visits in 1996 with MSF to help emotionally damaged survivors sort through the carnage they had witnessed and the atrocities they had endured. Although she was an expert in crisis counseling for rape victims, and rape was being used as a

relief, however, works best if undertaken as a long-term commitment. For that reason, and because a unique opportunity presented itself, Etherington returned to Bosnia in July 2007 to explore how a nation absorbs the pain of unspeakable cruelty and devastation.

Her latest journey began through the Institute of Global Health and the Emphasis Program, which allows Vanderbilt medical students to focus on an area of interest for eight weeks during the summer after their first year of training. Medical student Demetrius Tavoulareas expressed an interest in working in Bosnia, so Etherington dusted off some of her old contacts and agreed to act as his mentor for a project examining mental health programs in a post-war society. She requested that she also travel to Bosnia to oversee his work and that she bring nursing student Jessica Van Meter along as well.

In nearly every village, Etherington was greeted like a returning hero. Van Meter says that one man told her, “Carol made very beautiful things happen during the war.”

In fact, the child-centered program she and her team originated, which works towards peace and social reconstruction, is still going



strong and is being used in the schools to educate young children with the hope they will one day rebuild an equitable mixed society.

Etherington says that while she did perceive a renewed hope for the future among her Bosnian colleagues, they are sorely aware of the precariousness of their political situation. Many have come to believe that *all* their politicians, regardless of ethnicity, betrayed them. Even today, she adds, some of those leaders covertly continue to excite tensions between and among the factions. There is a country tied together by a fragile and uneasy peace; people are now queuing up in line at the local market behind the same neighbors who once pointed guns at their heads and threatened to pull the trigger.

Yet, in many cases, Bosnians are not just pushing forward. "They are *dancing* forward," she insists. "They love life. They drink too much. They smoke too much. They stay up too late. And they dance."

Which makes them that much more a part of the global brotherhood. Etherington says, "If you look across borders, class, geog-

raphy and religion, there are basically four things that everybody on the planet wants: They want to live and be healthy. They want someone to love them. They want to have some sense of purpose. And they want to be respected."

Anyone reading this article understands these needs. But so does the young Angolan mother, exhausted by disease, who is nursing not only her own starving infant, but another child orphaned by war. So does a little girl in a frilly blue taffeta party dress, wandering the streets alone after rebel African forces razed her village. So does the widowed mother who brings her children into the humanitarian-aid office to read poetry to the workers because she wants Westerners to know that most Bosnians not only despise killing, but appreciate literature and art.

Carol Etherington also understands. Through the years she has reached out to these very people, encouraging them to be stronger than their circumstances and to cautiously dare to dance forward. ▼

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SZUC.



By JOHN HOWSER

**Big**  
shoulders,  
**Deep**  
pockets,  
**Tightened**  
belts

*In just one year, Vanderbilt  
provided \$240 million in  
uncompensated medical care.  
And there's no end in sight.*



ast winter Shane Thurman, a 42-year-old construction worker from Crossville, Tenn., became one among an estimated 45 million Americans without health insurance when he was dropped from the rolls of TennCare, Tennessee’s state-run Medicaid insurance program. Thurman’s employer didn’t provide health insurance, and his income wasn’t sufficient to meet his other basic needs and pay for medical insurance.

On Jan. 10, 2007, a few weeks after he lost his insurance coverage, Thurman was working on the roof of an old building in Crossville, helping to demolish it, when his body came into contact with an electrical transformer attached to a power pole. In a millisecond, the high-voltage electrical current grabbed his body and held him in its deadly grip for what felt like forever. When Thurman finally broke free from the current, he was thrown from the roof to the ground 30 feet below.



**A construction accident left Shane Thurman a paraplegic— with no insurance to pay nearly \$1 million in medical bills.**

Thurman sustained critical electrical burns to 40 percent of his body. The fall broke most of his ribs and several vertebrae in his back. He was flown by Vanderbilt’s air ambulance, LifeFlight, 110 miles to the Vanderbilt Regional Burn Center where he spent the next 52 days.

“I wasn’t even aware I was alive for 48 days,” Thurman says. “I had eight or 10 skin grafts and four or five back surgeries.”

The accident left Thurman a paraplegic, paralyzed from the torso down. “I’m lucky to even wake up each morning,” he says. “The doctors told my family on several occasions that I was going to die. But I fooled them.”

Total charges for Thurman’s lifesaving care during the 52 inpatient days he spent in Vanderbilt University Hospital: \$919,587.76.

Thurman’s will to survive certainly helped, but the real reason he’s still alive is the comprehensive and highly specialized medical care he received, without consideration of cost.

Vanderbilt opted to write off Thurman’s nearly \$1 million in medical bills. “That tickled me to death,” he says, “because I have enough else to deal with.”

During fiscal year 2007, Vanderbilt University Medical Center provided \$240 million worth of uncompensated medical care to patients.

Across the country, treating patients like Shane Thurman is becoming an ever-greater challenge for academic medical centers that are struggling with unprecedented growth in the numbers of uninsured patients.

“The increase in uninsured patients is placing the entire health-care system in jeopardy, and academic medical centers are especially vulnerable,” says Dr. John Sergent, BA’63, MD’66, professor of medicine and vice chair for education in the Vanderbilt



University School of Medicine. “Our emergency departments are usually the major sources of emergency care for our communities. And we often are the sole providers of critical services.”

In addition to caring for patients like Shane Thurman who face immensely complicated courses of treatment, Vanderbilt University Medical Center each year provides uncompensated care to thousands of other medically uninsured or underinsured patients, young and old, whose health problems span the spectrum of illness and injury.

To put \$240 million worth of free medical care into context, this dollar amount represents approximately 7.4 percent of the medical center’s \$3.2 billion in gross patient revenue for the current fiscal year.

“Teaching hospitals end up bearing a disproportionate share of the cost of treating the uninsured because they are typically the only providers in a marketplace for trauma services, burn services, organ transplantation, and limb amputation due to mismanagement of diabetes,” says Paul Keckley, executive director for the Deloitte Center for Health Solutions in Washington and one of the nation’s leading experts on health-care economics and policy. Keckley helped establish, and is currently a professor in, the Owen

**“The increase in uninsured patients is placing the entire health-care system in jeopardy, and academic medical centers are especially vulnerable. We are often the sole providers of critical services.”**

— John Sergent, professor of medicine and vice chair for education

## State-Provided Health Insurance

### THE DREAM AND THE REALITY COLLIDE

**H**ow did Vanderbilt’s uncompensated care more than double over a two-year period? To a large extent the answer lies with TennCare, Tennessee’s state-run Medicaid program.

Launched in 1994, TennCare’s concept and mission were noble—to allow more Tennesseans access to health care through affordable health insurance. TennCare’s plan was to use state-approved Managed Care Organizations (MCOs), whose responsibility was to provide access to care but also carefully manage costs.

The first two or three years were brutal for the state’s health-care providers. Payments from MCOs to the providers were low and frequently slow to arrive. Many physicians in private practice, and also some clinics and hospitals, did their best to minimize their participation. Some opted out of the program altogether. Across the state the number of health-care providers who would accept TennCare patients shriveled, leaving fewer participating clinics and hospitals to cope with a growing TennCare population. Several of the TennCare MCOs wound up bankrupt, leaving providers such as Vanderbilt to settle for cents on the dollar.

After the state and the remaining doctors and hospitals participating in TennCare struggled through the initial turbulence, problems began to even out for health-care providers—but not necessarily for the state.

The plan developed into a program that was overly generous in some aspects. Thanks to concessions made by the state as a result of lawsuits, patients had unlimited access to prescription drugs. Pharmacy costs skyrocketed.

And because anyone in Tennessee who was denied health insurance by an employer, or denied for medical reasons by commercial insurance carriers, could get TennCare, patient rolls grew tremendously. TennCare was no longer sustainable without drastic changes.

In 2005, Tennessee Gov. Phil Bredesen went on a mission to rein in the state’s TennCare spending. His initial proposal called for a sensible allocation of resources including limits on prescription drugs, an insistence on generic drugs and, in some cases, limits on the number of hospital visits in a given period.

Bredesen’s plan was vehemently opposed by advocates for the poor who insisted on a standard of coverage for Medicaid recipients that exceeded the norms for business health-insurance coverage. In the end the Bredesen administration agreed to their demands to cover their needs with a more generous program of health benefits—at the expense of the working uninsured like Shane Thurman.

The result was program reform that removed (“disenrolled”) more than 200,000 citizens from TennCare’s rolls, drastically curtailed the program’s pharmacy benefits, and closed enrollment to new patients for most adult Tennesseans. That left the state’s essential-access hospitals—a group of six or so key hospitals, including Vanderbilt, that provide the bulk of care to TennCare patients—to shoulder the financial burden.

There aren’t fewer patients since TennCare’s disenrollment—only fewer patients who now have any health insurance.

— JOHN HOWSER



NEIL BRAKE

## High-Ticket Health Care

A sample of 2006 data from Vanderbilt's Department of Patient Accounting and Department of Finance offers plenty of illustrations of highly specialized, highly expensive care provided to uninsured patients:

**Feb. 4 to May 23:**

A 44-year-old man critically injured in a car wreck

TOTAL CHARGES: **\$935,504.50**

**April 4 to May 3:**

A 57-year-old man critically injured in a car wreck

TOTAL CHARGES: **\$830,183.69**

**April 30 to June 16:**

A 24-year-old man critically injured by gunshot wounds

TOTAL CHARGES: **\$566,886.68**

**May 14 to July 10:**

A 23-year-old man critically injured by gunshot wounds

TOTAL CHARGES: **\$639,948.69**

**July 17 to Nov. 11:**

A 36-year-old man critically injured in a car wreck

TOTAL CHARGES: **\$560,548.82**

Because they incurred catastrophic charges, VUMC chose to write off the charges in each of these instances. The uninsured patients met financial criteria based on federal poverty guidelines.

Graduate School of Management's Healthcare MBA Program.

"This type of care happens largely in the world of academic medicine," Keckley says. "And the care of these patients represents one-half the impact of the nation's total uncompensated care pool."

"About 6 percent of VUMC's patients have no form of health insurance," says Warren Beck, VUMC's vice president of finance for the clinical enterprise. "Another 1.5 percent may have insurance but cannot pay their portion of the balance after insurance."

## A Growth Industry

Middle Tennessee's health-care industry is enormous—by most measures Nashville has evolved into the nation's third-largest aggregation of health-care companies.

For the health-care market in which VUMC operates—competing with other nonprofit and for-profit hospitals for its patients—Vanderbilt provides more free care than all other Metro Nashville hospitals combined, including Baptist, St. Thomas, Centennial, Metro General, Summit, Skyline, Tennessee Christian and Southern Hills.

Vanderbilt University Hospital and the Monroe Carell Jr. Children's Hospital at Vanderbilt operate at nearly 90 percent patient occupancy year-round. "One of our primary missions is to provide those unique and essential medical services that no other health-care facility in Middle Tennessee is willing to provide," says Dr. Harry R. Jacobson, vice chancellor for health affairs. "Affording patients access to these services based strictly on someone's ability to pay would be contrary to our philosophy and our mission."

Over the last 12 years, the significant role VUMC plays supporting TennCare, and its commitment to providing care for the uninsured, has positioned Vanderbilt as Nashville's charity hospital and Tennessee's largest provider of Medicaid services.

## The Decline of Employer-Sponsored Health Insurance

While TennCare has presented a significant challenge for Vanderbilt as it copes with a growing population of uninsured patients, it's not the only factor. Compounding the problem are three significant trends that are producing huge numbers of patients unable to pay their medical bills: a decline in the number of employers who provide health benefits; more workers who carry modest health insurance on themselves but not for family members; and an influx of millions of uninsurable immigrants.

As more Americans struggle to find a way to access affordable health insurance, changes in the insurance industry and in employer-based insurance programs are causing more of the cost for health care to be shifted to enrollees. The percentage of Americans who are uninsured keeps rising largely because the percentage of people with employer-sponsored coverage continues to decline.

And therein lies the fundamental systemic flaw in our nation's health insurance delivery, says Keckley—our dependence on employers to provide health insurance. "Only the U.S. and a few other nations such as New Zealand have similar systems of employer-sponsored health insurance. But there is no law in our



country that says employers must provide health insurance.”

Approximately 60 percent of U.S. employers now provide health insurance. The 40 percent that do not offer insurance tend to employ large numbers of hourly workers and have substantial employee turnover.

As health-insurance costs keep rising, so does the number of employers that offer health insurance only for the employee but not for the employee’s family. The average health-insurance premium for a family without employer-provided coverage is about \$1,000 per month.

No wonder half of all the nation’s involuntary bankruptcies are the result of medical bills, says Keckley.

“Horrible traumatic accidents most often happen to the working class,” says Dr. Jeff Guy, director of Vanderbilt’s Regional Burn Center and a member of the team of physicians and nurses who saved the life of Shane Thurman. “Unfortunately, it’s people like Mr. Thurman who are in that abyss and ineligible for health insurance through their employer, or through any other form of assistance.”

## **Vanderbilt provides more free care than all other Metro Nashville hospitals combined, including Baptist, St. Thomas, Centennial, Metro General, Summit, Skyline, Tennessee Christian and Southern Hills.**

As access to various normal avenues to health insurance has dwindled over the last several years, Guy’s burn program has been left to cope with more highly resource-intensive patients with no insurance.

Guy oversees the only dedicated burn-care facility in Tennessee, and the largest burn center in several adjoining states. Burn care is so expensive that many hospitals—including every health-care facility in the state of Mississippi—have backed away from providing this service. Even one patient can make a huge impact on the bottom line, and Guy is forced to deal with the economic challenges of treating several Shane Thurmans each year.

At the same time more employers are opting out of offering health insurance, some states, like Tennessee, are aggressively working to control their Medicaid spending through measures such as denying insurance coverage or capping reimbursement fees.

“We’re at a point where Medicare and Medicaid are now paying less than the cost of care for the lives they cover,” says Keckley.

Reimbursement providers that may not match the cost of care include Medicare, Medicaid, Worker’s Comp and SCHIP (State Children’s Health Insurance Program).

### **Charging Peter to Treat Paul**

“That shortfall in reimbursements, in combination with the growing number of uninsured individuals, is forcing doctors and hospitals to try to make up the difference on the backs of employers who do provide a benefit,” Keckley says. “What we are facing is a perfect storm, a meltdown.”

“We are asking a third of the people who use the system and who have insurance to pay for the other two-thirds, either in full or in part.”

Shifting costs to paying patients is undeniably a part of the budgeting strategy for medical centers like Vanderbilt. But, fortunately for all Vanderbilt patients, recent unparalleled growth has allowed it—so far—to combat major changes in Tennessee’s health-care policy.

In fiscal 2007, VUMC’s hospitals recorded 50,716 inpatient discharges, its emergency departments treated 98,107 patients, and 1,095,559 outpatients were seen in its clinics. Demand for services remains so high that in January, VUMC embarked on a \$235 million construction project to erect a third inpatient tower on Vanderbilt University Hospital. The new tower will add 141 inpatient beds, new operating rooms, procedure rooms and intensive care units.

“For the last two years, we have been dealing with near double-digit volume growth across all major indicators,” says Warren Beck. “Whether it is inpatient admissions, outpatient visits, surgery or emergency-department visits, this growth has allowed us to meet our obligations and improve our ability to conquer diseases like cancer, diabetes and heart failure. If we hadn’t had this growth, we would be in a horrible situation.”

Managerial oversight during the past five or six years also has helped Vanderbilt to cope with a huge increase in uninsured patients. Efforts to add inpatient and outpatient capacity—through new clinic space and the recruitment of new faculty, for example—have allowed new growth. More patients overall means more paying patients to help offset those who cannot.

Operations-improvement initiatives that began in the early 1990s and ongoing efforts to provide the best care in the most efficient manner (called “best evidence medicine” within the industry) have so far allowed the medical center to provide services and still finish each fiscal year in the black. Every year, though, the financial picture becomes more challenging. Changes with TennCare in August 2005 increased uncompensated care by \$87 million in fiscal 2006 and by an additional \$45 million during fiscal 2007. That sort of growth in uncompensated care isn’t sustainable.

Virtually all of VUMC’s clinical programs, says Beck, have seen growth in the number of uninsured patients they treat due to changes TennCare made in 2005. Trauma and burn-care services, cardiology, orthopaedics and general medicine have all felt the impact, with the division of trauma and surgical critical care hit

the hardest. But the medical center has made an effort to ensure that clinical programs shouldering a greater percentage of uninsured patients are not penalized for financial performance based on their predicament.

“In order to recoup a portion of lost revenue, we are placing an emphasis on growing higher-margin services and offering a broader menu of services that brings insured patients into the hospital,” Beck says. “We’ve learned that we’re far better off to have our margin spread across all our services rather than rely on just a few.”

## The Road Ahead

“Clearly, one of our ongoing challenges is figuring out how to better manage the population of uninsured patients,” says Beck. “We need the state to develop a broader network of doctors and hospitals participating in TennCare so patients don’t have to travel long distances to come to Vanderbilt. Another initiative we have pursued is working with Nashville’s Emergency Medical System to

**Approximately 40 percent of U.S. employers don’t provide health insurance. The average health-insurance premium for a family is \$1,000 per month. Half the nation’s involuntary bankruptcies result from medical bills.**

make sure patient transports by Metro EMS are rotated from hospital to hospital—not just brought to Vanderbilt. But implementation can be slow and difficult to monitor.”

At the same time Vanderbilt is taking on an ever-growing number of uninsured patients, Tennessee’s state treasury is sitting on a huge budget surplus. A large pot of money in reserve probably means drastic changes to TennCare are unforeseen for the time being, Beck says.

“And, optimistically, this might indicate a possibility of some form of relief in the TennCare program—perhaps an expansion of benefits offered through TennCare’s new program for employees of small businesses called Cover Tennessee,” he adds. “Something like that might push excess reserve funds back to the hospitals and

doctors that are bridging the gap for so many of the working folks who are uninsured.

“The clinical programs we want to provide are very expensive, high-acuity programs you don’t see in community hospitals. If we are the only provider in the region who offers them, then everyone needs to have access,” Beck says.

Jeff Guy likens his role and responsibility to that of a park ranger in a national forest. “We have to be good stewards of our resources so those resources will be around for all of us,” he says. “We have never denied anyone access to burn care based on their ability to pay, and we won’t.”

Until academic medical centers like Vanderbilt and their patients get some form of relief, says John Sergent, “virtually every doctor I know will continue to be an amateur social worker trying to help uninsured and underinsured patients get the care they need.

“Tax credits, medical savings accounts, purchasing pools for small businesses and other ideas have been floated,” he adds, “but it is unlikely that any of them would have a significant impact on the uninsured.”

Keckley says flatly, “There are no solutions that do not require us to think about funding some level of benefit for those 45 million people who are uninsured.”

Americans already spend more money per capita on health care than any other country, says Vice Chancellor Jacobson. But he doesn’t believe the entire responsibility should fall on the state or federal government. Better cooperation between health-care providers who are focused on patient care and insurance companies who are focused on the bottom line could help. “Eighteen percent of health-care costs goes to insurance companies getting their money, and 2 percent goes to the provider battling the insurance company.”

And more health-care providers need to step up to the plate, Jacobson adds. “Hospitals and doctors need to share more evenly the burden of caring for uninsured patients, rather than leaving it to the academic medical centers. If doctors were true to the Hippocratic Oath they took, they would take care of their fair share of Medicaid and TennCare patients and the load would be distributed more evenly.”

Small employers also should be asked to contribute to the solution somehow, says Jacobson. And patients themselves need to consider how their own behavior is driving up costs. “We overuse the health-care system. We run too many tests and give out too many prescriptions.”

“I don’t think anyone at Vanderbilt would want to say we have to start discriminating on trauma patients or premature babies based on their ability to pay,” says Beck. “Taking care of these patients is our mission, it’s our job, and the thing that keeps us coming to work every day.”

“It is our mission and our responsibility to heal people regardless of their ability to pay,” adds Jacobson. “For the moment, that means we have to work hard and be as efficient as we can be.” ▼



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*Gordon Gee returns to Ohio,  
and Vanderbilt begins writing its next chapter.*

By GAYNELLE DOLL

**G**ordon Gee never was one to follow the playbook. Past Vanderbilt chancellors have always pursued a more or less predictable exit strategy: After a couple of decades leading the university to ever-greater heights, they quietly retire to spend their days serving on foundations and advisory boards, growing more silver-haired and distinguished as chancellors emeriti.

Yet there, on a Thursday last July, was Gordon Gee, only Vanderbilt's seventh chancellor in its 134-year history, speaking before a board of trustees meeting at Ohio State University, explaining his abrupt decision to leave Vanderbilt and return to Columbus, where he previously served as president from 1990 to 1997. He belonged at a public university, Gee said.

"I am following my heart and returning to a place that I consider my home," he had told the Vanderbilt community the day before. "My decision is that simple and that complex."

The announcement came less than three weeks after he had pronounced his "unwavering and unshakeable" loyalty to Vanderbilt when Ohio State—the nation's largest university—had come courting.

By the time students returned to Van-

derbilt in August, the 63-year-old Gee had packed his bags. Vanderbilt had a new interim chancellor, and a chancellor search committee was in place.

Gee has headed more universities than any other American—Vanderbilt, Brown University, Ohio State, the University of Colorado and West Virginia University, where he was elected president at age 37. He has always looked like a college president straight from Central Casting, with his earth-tone tweeds, horn-rimmed glasses, and vast collection of bowties. Never one to shun the limelight, he was beloved by Vanderbilt students. For his first six months at Vanderbilt, he maintained an office in the Sarratt Student Center. He was known for his impromptu visits to Greek Row parties, Vanderbilt's rank-and-file employee workplaces, and Roads Scholars bus trips



'DORE **no** MORE



to outlying areas. He has a remarkable facility for remembering names and faces, exists on little sleep, thrives on grueling travel itineraries, embraces parades and ceremony, and is a gifted speaker and a prolific writer of personal notes.

He also didn't mind ruffling feathers. "If you don't like change, you're going to like irrelevance even less," he was fond of saying.

He has been an outspoken critic of abuses in college athletics nationwide. His decision to eliminate the athletics department at Vanderbilt and make athletes more fully part of the rest of the university drew heated debate but ultimately has been judged successful. He recruited star faculty from other institutions and helped Vanderbilt diversify its student body significantly.

Gee's time at Vanderbilt is noteworthy for its accomplishments, despite the fact that personal issues cast a shadow over his final year here. In September 2006, Gee was the subject of an extensive Page One *Wall Street Journal* piece that carried the head "Lavish Spending by Star Chancellor" and reported on Vanderbilt trustees' efforts to more closely monitor his expenditures. It also revealed a 2003–04 total compensation package that was reportedly second-highest in the nation.

A few months later, in February 2007, Gee and his wife, Constance Bumgarner Gee, announced they would seek a divorce. She remains on the Peabody College faculty as an associate professor of public policy and education.

A native of Vernal, Utah, Gee was graduated from the University of Utah with a bachelor's degree in history and had J.D. and Ed.D. degrees from Columbia University.

His seven-year tenure at Vanderbilt, however brief in comparison to that of his predecessors, is fairly typical of the current state of higher education. The 2007 report of the American College President Study series, conducted by the American Council on Education, found that the average tenure for presidents in 2006 was 8.5 years, and that the average age of presidents has increased from 52 years in a 1986 study to 60 years in 2006. ▼

## Provost Named Interim Chancellor

**T**wenty years to the day after he first arrived in Nashville, Nicholas Zeppos stepped into the role of interim chancellor of Vanderbilt University on Aug. 1. He also serves as provost and vice chancellor for academic affairs and professor of law.

A distinguished legal scholar, teacher and executive, Zeppos has served since 2002 as Vanderbilt's chief academic officer, overseeing the university's undergraduate, graduate and professional education programs and research in liberal arts and sciences, engineering, music, education, business, law and divinity. As provost and vice chancellor, he chairs Vanderbilt's budgeting and capital planning council and leads all fundraising and alumni relations efforts across the institution, as well as overseeing the dean of students and dean of admissions.

Zeppos is only Vanderbilt's second interim chancellor in its 134-year history. The first was Madison Sarratt, who served in the same role briefly in 1946 between the chancellorships of Oliver Carmichael and Harvie Branscomb.



"Provost Zeppos is an extraordinarily talented educator and executive who will continue the great momentum and excitement that can be felt in every part of the Vanderbilt campus," said Martha Ingram,

## THE SEARCH FOR VANDERBILT'S 8th CHANCELLOR

In late July the Vanderbilt Board of Trust appointed a chancellor search committee to be chaired by Dennis Bottorff, Board of Trust vice chairman and chairman of Council Ventures in Nashville. Bottorff, BE'66, also chaired Vanderbilt's last chancellor search, which resulted in the selection of Gee in 2000.

Board of Trust members named to the search committee include Darryl Berger, BA'69; Mark Dalton, JD'75; John Ingram, MBA'86; Orrin Ingram, BA'82; Nancy Perot Mulford, BA'82; Richard Sinkfield, JD'71; Heather Souder, BA'04; and J. Lawrence Wilson, BE'58. Serving as ex officio members of the search committee are John Hall, BE'55, chairman of the Board Affairs Committee; Monroe J. Carell, BE'59, chairman of the *Shape the Future* campaign; and Martha Ingram, chairman of the Vanderbilt Board of Trust.

James Hudnut-Beumler, dean of Vanderbilt Divinity School, heads a chancellor's search advisory committee comprising Vanderbilt faculty, students and staff.

Vanderbilt's last chancellor search, after Chancellor Joe B. Wyatt announced his intention to retire in July 2000, lasted nine months and involved a review of more than 150 candidates.

Read more about the chancellor search: [www.vanderbilt.edu/chancellorsearch](http://www.vanderbilt.edu/chancellorsearch)



chairman of the Vanderbilt University Board of Trust, in announcing the appointment.

Zepos, who is an energetic 53, has led a number of important initiatives at Vanderbilt, including the planning process for The Commons (for more about The Commons, see page 52), a landmark transformation of the first-year experience, the Strategic Academic Planning Group, innovative efforts in undergraduate admissions and financial aid, and the development of new programs in Jewish studies, law and economics, and genetics. With Gee, he has led the university's *Shape the Future* fundraising campaign, which exceeded its \$1.25 billion goal two years ahead of schedule and set a new target of \$1.75 billion by 2010.

Zepos joined the Vanderbilt community in 1987 as an assistant professor in the Law School, where he has won five teaching awards. He subsequently served as an associate dean and then associate provost before being named provost and vice chancellor for academic affairs in 2002.

"When you work on the campus for 20 years, you experience an interesting phenomenon of constantly noticing how Vanderbilt changes and how it's still the same institution. We're building a new freshman campus, the students are diverse, and they dress differently and think differently," says Zepos. "But at the same time, it's still Vanderbilt. Alumni from the Class of 1948 can visit, and even though two-thirds of the buildings have changed, all the professors have changed, and we've built two new hospitals, to them it's still Vanderbilt. We may be following new areas of inquiries, but still there's a mixture of traditions that takes us forward."

Read more about Vanderbilt's interim chancellor:

[www.vanderbilt.edu/interimchancellor](http://www.vanderbilt.edu/interimchancellor)



"I take great pride in the accomplishments of the university, and I have great confidence that Vanderbilt has vaulted into the front ranks of American universities," Gee told the Vanderbilt community on his final day here. "That was not my accomplishment. Any success we have had over the past seven years is due to the spirit and commitment of all members of our community."

Nevertheless, Gee oversaw a remarkable number of major initiatives. During his time at Vanderbilt, the university:

- Completed a \$1.25 billion capital campaign two years ahead of schedule and raised the goal to \$1.75 billion—with an emphasis on endowed scholarships and faculty chairs.
- Grew its endowment by almost 50 percent, to more than \$3 billion.
- Led the country in the rate of growth for academic research, with external funding increasing from \$232 million in 2000 to more than \$450 million today.
- Renewed its commitment to being one of a small number of private universities that admits applicants regardless of ability to pay and meets the full demonstrated financial need so that a Vanderbilt education can be affordable to all.
- Doubled its annual budget for financial aid from \$30 million to \$60 million, reducing significantly the debt burden for graduating students.
- Launched a \$100 million Academic Venture Capital Fund to seed new research centers in life sciences, social sciences, humanities and culture, an initiative that has led to important discoveries and insights and new educational opportunities for undergraduates.
- Experienced a surge in the number of applications for admission, which jumped from 8,000 in 2000 to more than 13,000 in 2007, making Vanderbilt one of the most selective institutions in the country; average SAT scores rose nearly 100 points, and more than 90 percent of incoming students came from the top 10 percent of their high school classes.
- Increased the number of its minority students by 50 percent.
- Completed or began construction of more than \$700 million in new facilities for medical research, student services, studio arts, engineering, law, children's health, diabetes care, performing arts, interdisciplinary work in arts and sciences, tennis, baseball, Jewish life and African-American culture.
- Became the most-preferred provider of health-care services in Middle Tennessee, with the opening of the most advanced children's hospital in the country and new clinical services in a number of areas.



- Began construction of The Commons, a \$150 million investment in the undergraduate experience that will transform student life by creating a "campus within a campus" for first-year students beginning with the entering class of 2008.
- Restructured its athletics program, resulting in unprecedented success, with a national championship title and seven teams ranked in the top 25 during the Spring 2007 season. In June, *Sports Illustrated* named Gee one of its "25 Best Brains in Sports" for his pioneering efforts.

*For everything there is a  
season in 1900 America—  
a time for boeing, sowing,  
sbucking, milking, cburning  
and waiting for rain.*

*By* LOGAN WARD, BA'88

# American RUSTIC

A photograph of a person's arm and hand holding a black pitchfork. The person is wearing a blue and white checkered shirt. The background is a bright, out-of-focus green field under a clear sky. The text 'American RUSTIC' is overlaid on the image, with 'American' in a blue serif font and 'RUSTIC' in a large, brown, distressed serif font.





Logan Ward, BA'88, and his wife, Heather Higginbotham Ward, BA'91, have traveled the world: Logan has taught school in Kenya; Heather has lived in Spain and Guatemala. But nothing compared to their yearlong adventure living the life of Virginia dirt farmers circa 1900. Logan chronicled their experience in his book, *See You in a Hundred Years*, published earlier this year. BenBella Books has allowed *Vanderbilt Magazine* to share these abridged excerpts.

**I**n the City, you don't stargaze. You don't dig through wildflower field guides for the name of that brilliant trumpet burst of blue you saw on your morning walk. You don't hunt for animal tracks in the snow or pause in that same frozen forest, eyes closed, listening for the chirp of a foraging nuthatch. You forget such a creature as a snake even exists. It's as if New York is encased in a big plastic bubble, where humans sit atop the food chain armed with credit cards and Zagat guides. Native wildlife? Cockroaches, pigeons, rats. Disease transmitters. Boat payments for exterminators.

Our story begins in the bubble.

The year is 2000, the dawn of a new millennium. The Y2K scare is barely behind us. Economic good times lie ahead, with unemployment at an all-time low, the U.S. government boasting record surpluses, and the NASDAQ, which raised a lusty cheer by topping 5,000, making everyone rich. At least on paper. Living in the wealthiest city in the wealthiest nation at the wealthiest moment in history,

*Heather and I should be happy. We aren't.*

## BURNED OUT

Like everyone we know in New York, we work too much. Job stress follows us home at night, stalks us on weekends. Heather's work at a justice-reform think tank and mine hustling freelance magazine assignments keep each of us either chained to PCs or traveling. Within the past two years, Heather has flown to every continent but Australia and Antarctica to interview cops and meet with government officials. When she was seven months pregnant, she gave a talk in Ireland, flew back to New York, and left the same day for Argentina and an entirely different hemisphere. We figured that if she happened to give birth prematurely, it was a coin toss whether we'd have a summer or winter baby.

As it turned out, Luther was born more or less on time in Manhattan, in a hospital towering over the East River. By the tender age of 4 months, he was already in the care of a nanny, leaving us feeling guilty for having to hire her and also guilty about how little we could afford to pay her. (We felt guiltier still upon learning from another mother that our nanny was locking Luther in his stroller so she could gab at the park. We fired her and put Luther in day care.)

We spend too much money on housing and not enough time outdoors. We order



**Burned-out urbanites  
Logan Ward and Luther**

dinner from a revolving drawerful of ethnic takeout menus and rent disappointing movies from a corner shop where the owner hides behind bulletproof glass. There's something missing from our lives—from our relationship—and yet we're too busy to confront the problem. At least that's our excuse. So the two of us plod through our days hardly talking. And at night we collapse into bed, kept awake by the sound of squeaking bed-springs in the apartment above but too

exhausted for any bed-squeaking ourselves.

It isn't a physical exhaustion. The beneficiaries of a multigenerational pursuit of the American dream, we have traded the farm and factory work of our small Southern hometowns for education and urban living. Instead of a limb lost in some mercilessly churning assembly-line machine, we suffer the stress-related ills of our times: anxiety, depression, e-mail addiction, debt.

My tipping point came the day my beige



plastic Dell tower—the tool of my trade—whined to a halt. The screen went black. With mounting panic, I punched the keys and poked the on/off button on the front. Nothing. Fingers followed the dusty power cord from wall socket to box. Plugged tight. My mind reeled at the thought of all that accumulated data trapped inside the wiry guts of a machine that I so little understood: pages of research, interview transcripts, an almost-finished article due three days earlier, book ideas, addresses, e-mail correspondence with friends and editors, family photos, business records, tax records. That computer was everything to me. And like a fool, I had not bothered to back it up.

Once I recovered from my initial panic, I thought back to my grandfather, a country doctor and cattle farmer. He was born in 1886, before all this so-called time-saving technology—cell phones that tie people to their jobs 24/7 and computers that keep them answering e-mails past midnight. Could someone whose tools were hand-shaped from iron, steel and wood ever grasp the ethereal nature of lithium-ion-powered digital devices? This was my dad's dad—a mere generation stands between us—and yet he came of age in a world completely different

**We have traded the farm and factory work of our small Southern hometowns for urban living. Instead of a limb lost in some assembly-line machine, we suffer the ills of our times: anxiety, depression, e-mail addiction, debt.**

from the one I know.

It dawned on me that no one yet understands the long-term side effects of Modern Life. Can we really adapt to all this brain-scorching change—the technological advances, the teeming cities, the break-neck pace of daily life, the disappearance of the human hand from the things we buy and the food we eat? Maybe my ambivalence about technology (and dread over my failed computer) was not something to be ashamed of. It was as if something in me shouted, *Hold on a minute! You've been staring at the computer screen too long. When was the last time you dug in the dirt or tromped around a field, not to mention had anything*

*at all to do with producing the food you eat?* Maybe our disconnect with the natural world causes a sort of vertigo, and if so, maybe that explained my recent unhappiness. Or maybe I was just pissed off things weren't going my way. Whatever the reason, on that day I dreamed of escape.

And yet I dutifully called a Dell technician. With a wife and child, and a career to pursue, what choice did I have?

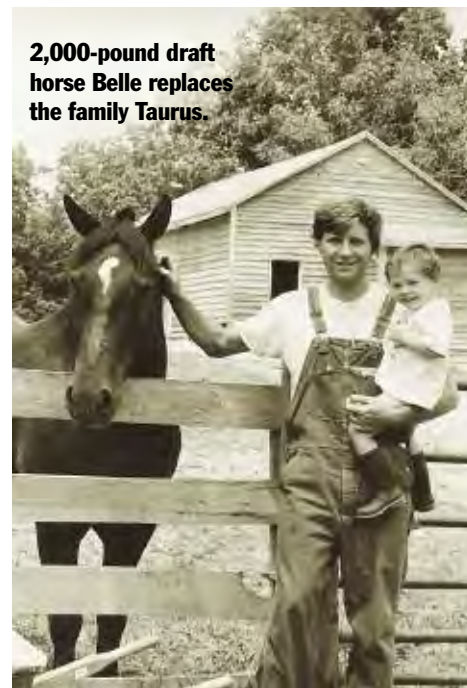
A few weeks later I had a moment of clarity that in a flash changed everything. I was reading a newspaper story about an upcoming PBS show that pitted an English family against the rigors of 1900-era London life. Thinking back to my computer crisis and the question still ringing in my mind—*What choice did I have?*—I realized I had found my answer! Not the reality show itself, but rather its core concept—adopting the technology of the past. If I were so desperate for a change, why not travel backwards in time as a way of starting over?

The year 1900 immediately felt right. I wanted to ditch certain technologies, but I did not want to be a pioneer, having to build a log cabin or dig a well by hand. The year 1900—almost within memory's reach—would serve well. A bit of research bore out

my intuition. In 1900 rural dwellers still outnumbered urban dwellers. In 1900 agriculture was still the predominant occupation, thanks to millions of small-plot American farmers who raised most of what they ate for breakfast, lunch and dinner. In 1900 the motorized car was still a novelty. In rural America there were no televisions, telephones or, of course, personal computers. People still wrote letters by hand. And this was crucial: In 1900 you could buy toilet paper.

I nervously told Heather my idea one Saturday as we juggled our fussy baby in a cramped Brooklyn pub. She smiled, and I remembered why I fell in love with her.

**2,000-pound draft horse Belle replaces the family Taurus.**



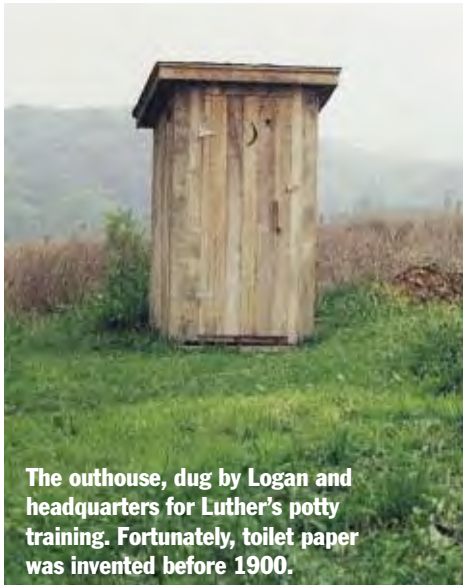
## OLD YEAR'S EVE

After selling our apartment and cutting ties with New York, we begin laying out the practical steps necessary to recreate 1900 and live there for a year. We find a 40-acre farm in the Shenandoah Valley community of Swoope, Va., with an 1885 brick farmhouse fronted by a sweet little porch with scroll-saw pickets.

We begin chipping away at our to-do lists: make house livable *and* period appropriate, dig privy hole, install manual well pump, stock up on old tools, hammer up animal stalls, convert waist-high tangle of weeds into vegetable garden.

By spring 2001, a pair of milk goats nibble grass in the barnyard. Half a dozen chickens scratch around the henhouse with southern exposure. Looming over it is our 100-year-old barn. The outhouse stands atop a freshly dug hole.

In between the sledgehammer and the crowbar work, the wallpaper scraping, the digging, the hacking and hoeing, we begin hitting the books, digesting generations' worth of farming lessons in the equivalent of a college semester: *Do* store carrots in layers of damp sand and apples in a box. *Don't* store them side by side or the carrots will taste bitter. *Don't* cellar pumpkins because they'll rot. *Do* put pumpkins in the attic, but don't let them freeze. The best laying hens, we now know, have moist rectums, though how to use such advice remains a



The outhouse, dug by Logan and headquarters for Luther's potty training. Fortunately, toilet paper was invented before 1900.

mystery.

Since we have no trees, I pay a guy with a “Don’t Make Me Open This [Can of Whoop Ass]!” bumper sticker on his pickup truck to supply enough unsplit rounds of firewood for about 13 cords.

In place of our Taurus wagon, with its missing hubcap and 174,000 miles, we have Belle, a 2,000-pound Percheron draft horse. We stash the telephone in a drawer after canceling credit cards, car insurance, Internet account.

A guy from the power company knocks on the door. “Says here you put in an order to cut power,” he says, sounding confused.

“That’s right,” I say cheerfully.

“You want me to cut the power off?” he repeats, looking past me at a kitchen filled with food, furniture, and other signs of habitation.

“Yep. Cut it off.”

We are almost there. Soon the darkness will fall.

## IN THE DARK

It only takes a couple of days of morning headaches and unintended brunches to realize that if we want breakfast at a decent hour, one of us—me—will have to get up early to start the cooking fire. That means waking before sunrise. Unless the moon lights my way, I am blind for as long as it takes me to strike a match—if I remembered the night before to stash the matches on the nightstand.

On Day Four, I rise in a room as dark as death. No matches. Feeling around for my

shorts and T-shirt, I whisper curses, hoping I don’t rouse Heather or, in the adjacent room, Luther, who has been waking up at night screaming for a nightlight. I feel my way out of the room—*easy now, slow and easy*—hands caressing cool plaster along the wall to the stair landing’s low walnut railing (it hits me just above the knees). I follow my feet slowly down, down, praying Luther did not leave a wooden train car or stuffed bear on the steps. I continue, around the newel post and into the creaking hallway, around the corner and—*oof!*—I bump the ceiling where it slants to meet the stairs. Easing through the doorway into the sparsely furnished living room, I can *feel* the age of the house, my fingers rippling over the wide, hand-planed jamb.

In the kitchen I smell onions and curry, hear the *cranch, cranch* of scraping mice teeth. Our rodent problem started as soon as I began chasing away the black snakes. We find nibbled corners on our cheese, little turds on the kitchen table, hear scuffling claws above us in the ceilings. *Where are the matches?* I want to reach for a light switch. Or feel the reassuring click of a flashlight button beneath my thumb. Instead, I shuffle my feet, letting the vermin know I’m here, while feeling around for the box of kitchen matches. I stick my hands into baskets and cobwebby crannies, feeling for a rectangular box with an emery strip. My blind arms tip cups and bottles. I brush

something off the shelf above the stove. It crashes to the floor with a tinny sound that I instantly recognize as made by one of our oil lamps. I stoop and carefully feel for broken glass. It is whole.

When I find a box in the washroom cabinet, I return to the stove where I righted the lamp and strike a match. The darkness melts.

That night, before bed, I walk through the house like a pyromaniac Easter Bunny, hiding matchboxes on shelves and in dressers in as many rooms as possible, hoping Luther will not find them.

In more than one way, we feel our way along during these early days. Everything is trial and error, from pinning cloth diapers on Luther to battling the green worms devouring our cabbage plants. I learn to feed a new log into the firebox every 15 or 20 minutes to keep it heating consistently. Heather learns to cook all meals in the morning, letting the fire die before the sun beats down with full intensity. We’ve stocked up on the dry goods the typical 1900 family would have been able to buy at a general store—coffee, tea, sugar, oatmeal, rice, soap, baking powder, among other things. And we’ve bought extra, since there is no longer a general store where we can replenish our supply. Using a collection of misfit cookware—cast-iron pots and skillets, chipped enamelware saucepans—Heather makes oatmeal, skillet toast or fried eggs for breakfast. She boils rice, simmers dried lentils



Heather’s vegetarianism required creativity in the kitchen, but 1900 Americans consumed far less meat than their 21st-century counterparts.



or kidney beans, steams collard greens or broccoli from the garden, and bakes cornbread, covering everything and leaving it on the warming shelf until lunch. Dinner is cold leftovers. We drink well water, ladling it from a crock that stands on a table in the kitchen.



## HEADBUTT

“They’re nice goats,” I say, putting down the buckets. “They won’t hurt you. See?” I crouch and put my arm around Luther’s shoulder while petting Sweet Pea’s smooth tan coat. They *are* nice goats, less menacing than most dogs, even though Star, the big black one, did playfully lunge at Luther the day after we brought her home. I didn’t think much of it—didn’t have the time, really—and since then have been trying to abate Luther’s fears. He’ll just have to grow comfortable with the animals. It will be good for him.

“Up, up,” he whines. I ignore him, turning to unlatch the barn door. Suddenly, out of the corner of my eye, I see Star rear up on her hind legs. In half a breath, she cocks her head to one side and thrusts her body forward. Her bony skull meets Luther’s squarely in the forehead with a blow powerful enough to launch him through the air. He lands with a bounce on the rocky ground.

“STAR!” I yell, kicking her hard and running to Luther. His face is scrunched up and red. A scream swells in his lungs and finally bursts from his lips. I scoop him up into my arms and, crazy with rage, chase

the goat, kicking at her while hugging Luther to my chest. Coming to my senses, I stop and run to Heather, who now stands at the garden gate.

“Star butted him!” I say, handing Luther to her over the gate. No blood, no broken bones.

“Why did you put him down in there if she butted him before?” says Heather, scowl-

I sprint after Star, trying to kick her again. She’s bleating her head off, tongue wagging in cartoon desperation. Afterwards I feel horrible for losing my temper. It must be my exhaustion. I can hardly face Heather.

ing at me. Then she changes her tone, soothing Luther with soft words while rocking side to side. He keeps screaming.

“I don’t know!” I say, breathless. “I can’t believe she really did it.”

I sprint after Star, trying to kick her again, swinging my leg so hard I throw my body out from under myself. I hit the gravel with a lung-crushing thud and roll. She runs to the back side of the barn. I follow in a fast-moving linebacker’s crouch. She’s bleating her head off, tongue wagging in cartoon desperation. I move like an animal. She tries to race past me, but I grab her stubby tail and catch hold of her collar, shoving her into her stall.

Sucking air into my lungs, I go to find Heather and Luther.

They are sitting at the picnic table in the shade of the silver maple, Luther calm now but still in Heather’s arms.

“Star butt Luther,” Luther says in a pouty voice. “Daddy give Star timeout.”

“I sure did,” I say, making the words sound upbeat, “a loooong timeout.” But inside I feel horrible—for letting it happen and for losing my temper afterwards. It must be my exhaustion, I tell myself. I can hardly face Heather. I turn and walk back towards the barn. The goats need water, and so does Belle. I need lunch, but that will have to wait.

## BAD POP SONGS

In New York we had music on all the time. Latin dance music, Brazilian Bossa Nova,

REM, Mahler, Miles Davis. But now, with our supply of music cut off, I am a prisoner to every stray tune that pops into my head. Some are personal favorites. Most seem to have been sent only to torment me.

The first tune that sticks is “Red, Red Wine” by UB40. It pops into my head one day while I am cultivating beans, and it

stays there for days. I’ve never liked the song, but something about its simple melody and reggae beat keeps it glued there, the rap-like chorus looping: “Red, red wine, you make me feel so fine/You keep me rocking all of the time.” I can’t remember any other lyrics, so I invent words to go along: “Red, red wine I want to hold on to you/Hold on to you until my face turns blue.” And so on. “The line broke, the monkey got choked/Bah bah ba-ba-ba bah ba-ba-ba. Yeeeah.”

I hum “Red, Red Wine” while hoeing, mouth “Red, Red Wine” under my breath as I kneel to pull weeds, clamp my lips together to keep “Red, Red Wine” from spewing out, and then hear it sloshing around my skull. “Red, red wine make me feel so ... .” Shut UP! I’m worse than the mumbling crazies we left behind in New York. I try to stop the torture by pretending to end the song, playing it out with an overly dramatic “bum-BAH.” But it comes back like the flame on one of those trick birthday candles. The only solution is to swap it for a better song. “Blackbird singing in the dead of night,” I sing through gritted teeth, holding the tune up like a crucifix. I work my way through as much of the Beatles’ *White Album* as I can remember, using “Blackbird” and “Mother Nature’s Son” to part the sea of “Red, Red Wine.”

But freedom is short lived. Other random tunes creep in to fill the void: Aerosmith’s “Walk This Way”—the rap version. The Go-Go’s’ “We Got the Beat.” It’s mad-

dening. Here we are trying to faithfully recreate the year 1900, and while splitting wood or pumping water I *wah-wah* the theme music to *Sanford and Son* or thump out the bass line from *Barney Miller*.

Curiously, most of what sticks is from my childhood—sitcom themes, commercial jingles, songs by the Bee Gees, the Commodores, and KC and the Sunshine Band. It's not period-appropriate in the least. If our story had a soundtrack, it wouldn't be some Ken Burns-style collection of haunting mandolin melodies. It would groove, baby. *Do a little dance, make a little love, get down tonight!*

## NEWS FROM THE FUTURE

I am sitting on the screen porch shucking corn, with Luther at my feet tugging at the husks, tossing hairy, half-shucked ears in with my clean ones.

An engine growls up the driveway, and a Jeep Cherokee skids to a stop. It belongs to Wesley and Crystal Truxell, who live nearby. "Have y'all heard?" Wesley says.

"It's all over the TV," Crystal says. "Terrorists are flying planes into the World Trade Center."

"Man, they're everywhere," Wesley interrupts, words tumbling out. "They blew up the Pentagon. There's a plane down in Pittsburgh. This is big time."

Within 20 minutes, three cars line the driveway and we're huddling with our neighbors, trying to fathom events possible only in a nightmare.

I think of my brother and his wife, and of our friends David and Meryl, who both work within a few blocks of the World Trade Center.

"I bet *this* will make you want to watch television," says Wesley.

Yes. No. Hell, I don't know what I think. This is all so strange.

"Come on down and use our phone," he says. "You don't really care about your little project enough to not call, do you?"

All day long I wonder if maybe Wesley's right. In the shadow of such enormity, the whole project suddenly feels little. Don't we have a responsibility to our families and friends? Are we turning our backs on our own era during a time of need?

Here, we can only imagine what the rest

How can New York be reeling from death and fiery destruction when here all is innocence and calm? Any time we see a New York postmark on a letter, we open it slowly. We read about the smell of burned flesh and the greasy ash that fell like snow.

of the country is going through. We can only live our lives. Which we do, with the same regularity as before, going through the motions feeling empty and strange. The peacefulness of the farm seems pregnant with irony. How can New York be reeling from death and fiery destruction, when here all is innocence and calm—chickens clucking in their nests, cats trailing me for milk as I clink down the path with a frothy pail, Luther jabbing a spade in the dirt?

At night we try to write letters but the words fall flat, and we give up. Instead, we sit opposite one another on the chilly side porch, sipping bourbon and taking turns reading *Pride and Prejudice* aloud to one another.

I'm not sure whether it is resignation or faith, but something helps me abide. I get by without the crutch of technology, the false sense that minute-by-minute news coverage or phone contact puts us in control. I have never been a very patient person. And yet

something in me has changed. Over the past few months, I have been calmed by the lack of 21st-century distractions and humbled by the power of nature. Like the weather, the terrorist attacks were beyond my control. All I can do is cling to the simple assurance of daily chores.

We are relieved to learn from letters that my brother and his wife and David and Meryl are fine. Other mail from New York trickles in. Any time we see a New York postmark on a letter, we open it slowly, not sure of what we'll find inside. We read harrowing details from friends about the smell of burned flesh and the greasy ash that fell like snow.

## FRUITS OF LABOR

Winter marches at us. A few cold nights in September stunned the summer garden. A hard frost in early October knocked it out for good, sending a rich smell rising from the blackened plants like a final breath. We surpassed our goal by preserving more than



Luther, named for Heather's bootlegging great-grandfather





**Logan battles procreating Japanese beetles.**

350 jars of food, including corn, squash, okra, pickled cucumbers, dill-seasoned pickled green beans, and more than 100 quarts each of tomatoes and green beans. We made three dozen jars of blackberry jelly, put up 14 gallons of apple cider, dumped a bushel and a half of potatoes in the bins, stored pumpkins and winter squash and onions. We put up a half gallon each of dried lima beans and field peas.

As the neighbors bring news of war in Afghanistan and anthrax scares, I realize how lucky we are to be together on these peaceful 40 acres. Not only do we now cook, clean, split wood and tend the animals with brisk efficiency, but the pressures of summer have eased. We return from the cellar lugging a basket brimming with food and a half gallon of apple cider, all of it put up by us, feeling proud and secure.

For the first time since my boyhood, I offer silent prayers of thanks without getting hung up on the theological details.

## OLD-FASHIONED ROOSTER-KILLING

“Would you help my friend Dot Makely slaughter some roosters?” asks Liz Cross. “She’ll give you one for every three you kill.”

Liz, who lives with her husband, Jack, on a few acres nearby, stands like a farmer, leaning back, hands stuffed in pockets. In

the middle of her sentence, she shifts her weight slightly and farts, clearly but not loudly, with no blushing or begging of my pardon or comments about frogs, as if passing gas during a neighborly chat is the most natural thing in the world, which, arguably, it is. “Dot’s blind,” she says. “Well, mostly blind.”

I visit Dot Makely’s during the day, pedaling over one afternoon with a pair of canvas gloves in the basket and a nervous stomach. A big, boyish man, probably 40, wearing a grimy mechanic’s uniform, answers the door, scowling. I realize I’m dirty, too, and wild of hair. “Is Mrs. Makely here?” I ask. “I’m your neighbor. I came about the roosters.”

“Mommm!” he calls, turning and shuffling into the cramped house. I follow. He points at a woman sitting at the kitchen table and then plods into an adjoining room. I hear television voices and laughter and see blue flashes, like dull, boomless fireworks, lighting up the dark room.

“Liz Cross said you needed some help,” I say, introducing myself. Unlike her son, Dot Makely is perfectly charming, launching into conversation as if we were old friends and had been sitting over lunch since noon. We talk. Actually, she talks, and I listen. She talks about her chickens and the coyotes that come down from the mountains to stalk them; about her land, which she

and spunky, despite her age and her lack of sight, with a bright, smiling face.

I guide her around a bunch of ankle-twisting walnuts scattered on the ground.

“I was so fond of walnut trees when I was a girl,” she says. “I asked my mother once, I said, ‘Mother, will there be walnut trees in heaven?’ She said, ‘No.’ I told her, ‘Then I don’t want to go.’”

A fowl flutters past with a startled cluck.

“Is that a rooster?” Dot asks.

“I have to admit my ignorance,” I say. “I can’t tell the difference.”

I’m only here because of what I call our “country cred,” which is like street cred, only different. Because we are living off the land, people assume we know more than we do about country life. Not even Liz Cross cooks on a woodstove or drives a horse and buggy, and Liz can do anything—including strip down a car engine to a pile of nuts and bolts and parts and piece it back together (which I know because Jack Cross told me so while wearing a look of pure husbandly pride on his face). But even though I’ve learned some 1900 skills, I still have a hole a mile wide in my country-living résumé. No matter. Liz still comes to me to kill the roosters for the blind woman.

“Oh, the roosters have bigger combs on their heads,” Dot says, matter-of-factly.

**The rooster panics, flapping and flopping in a silent scream. It somersaults, regains its feet, tries to fly. It hops. It spins. Will it never end? It does, and we go after more roosters.**

kept after she and her husband divorced; about her spring, which is still flowing despite the drought. It’s as if her mouth, rather than her ears or nose, has compensated for her blindness. Which is fine with me, since the talking postpones the killing. All I can think of are the neck-wringing stories I’ve heard. Now that I have chickens—and know how big they get—I can’t imagine ripping the head off one.

“Listen to me, gabbing on and on,” she says. “You’ve probably got things to do. Let’s go find those roosters!”

Like a debutante, she takes my arm, and I lead her slowly outside. She’s a tiny woman

“And they’re a lot more aggressive.”

We enter the henhouse, where 20 birds of all sizes, shapes and colors explode in a panicked cackling, beating up a toxic, lung-choking dust.

“Be careful,” she says. “They can be mean.”

Gloves on, I chase what looks like a rooster into a corner, yanking its legs out from under it before it can peck my eyeballs out. I carry it upside down, holding it well out of range of anything it might target below my waist. We walk back up the hill, where an axe leans against a stump.

“Just chop the neck,” she says, holding the bird’s head. “And try not to cut off my

hand.” Gripping the legs in my left hand and the axe with my right, I try to concentrate, but Dot won’t stop talking.

“Roosters flop around so much after you cut their heads off,” she says. “Drop it quick. Otherwise, you’ll get blood all over you.”

I raise the axe, arm wavering under its weight.

“I hope people don’t do that,” she says.

“Do what?” I say, lowering the axe.

“Flop around when you kill them. It would be horrible—in a war or something. You’d see bodies flopping around.”

“I’m pretty sure they don’t,” I say, raising the axe. I lower it again when I realize she’s not finished.

“I hate war. The one we’re in has me so angry,” she says, referring to the U.S. invasion of Afghanistan, now about a month old, which we know because the neighbors have kept us informed. “I can’t really say anything, though, since I don’t vote.”

“Why not?”

“I’m a Jehovah’s Witness. We don’t believe in it.” Determined to finish the job, I stop asking questions. Soon the conversation peters out.

“Here goes,” I say, raising the axe again. The bird, still stretched across the stump, wriggles pitifully. I let the heavy iron head fall. It bounces, as though I’ve just hit a rubber hose. The rooster’s eyes bulge. I raise the axe again. Thud. The head tumbles.

Stepping back, I drop the rooster and the axe, the blade barely missing my foot. The rooster hops away, shaking out its wings in a gesture of freedom as blood spurts from its neck. But then, as if suddenly realizing that something is terribly, irrevocably wrong, the bird panics, flapping and flopping in a silent scream. Spraying blood, it somersaults down the hill, regains its feet, tries to fly. Blind—worse than blind—the bird smacks into a tree and pinballs off in another direction. It hops. It spins. *My god!* I think. *Will it never end?*

But it does, and we go after more roosters. The second one flops, just like the first. I don’t drop the third bird quickly enough, and blood spatters my cheek and pants and boots. Dot is effusive in her thanks, and it’s all I can do to convince her that I don’t need a dead rooster for my services.

## HOME FOR THE HOLIDAYS



With my folks coming for Thanksgiving and Heather’s for Christmas, this holiday season will be our chance to give them a glimpse of our life in 1900.

The typical farm wife 100 years ago couldn’t choose convenience over made-from-scratch. Neither can Heather. At times she’ll stand outside the henhouse tapping her fingers, waiting for an egg to round out a recipe. (Once, while making brownies, she impatiently reached under a hen and was sharply pecked.) Using our limited ingredients, Heather has adapted to the challenge of cooking three meals a day, seven days a week, with energy and creativity. We have never eaten better in our lives.

On Thanksgiving the sight is enough to make everyone—my parents, my brother and his wife, who have joined us from Brooklyn, and our neighbors Peggy and Bill Roberson—gasp. Food rests on every kitchen surface: steaming bowls of corn pudding, roasted potatoes flecked with rosemary, green beans, and rice and gravy; pans of moist cornbread dressing seasoned with sage that Heather planted, harvested, and strung up to dry; pickles, deviled eggs, the Robersons’ cranberry salad and candied yams; Heather’s yeast rolls, including a couple of misshapen ones kneaded by Luther; her two pumpkin pies; and a platter of sliced turkey, which cooked to perfection in the intensely hot, slightly smoky box, the heat searing in the

juices and Heather’s seasoning.

“I had no *idea* the food would be this good,” my mother admits, as we rock on the front porch (there being no televised football game to keep us inside). But it’s not just the food. It’s the lack of hurry and distraction. We have lingered over meals, pressed apple cider, and visited with the neighbors. My mother has taken walks along the gravel road, pulling Luther in his wagon. An artist, she has been sketching the cows, barn and mountains.

A couple of days later, we say our good-byes in the driveway. After hugging Luther, my mother turns to me. “You and Heather have created a wonderful life for yourselves here.”

I no longer fear silence. The bad pop songs in my head are gone. That, along with the lack of technological distractions, leaves me available both physically and mentally to witness nature’s wonders: the nightly march of the stars, muskrats gliding for great stretches beneath the river’s frozen surface, the misty-morning revelation of spiderwebs by the hundreds, glistening like spiral galaxies in the meadow grass.

I am amazed at my sturdy, competent hands and marvel at my patience and drive, a reversal from the run-down edginess that dominated my moods in New York.

Mornings have become my reading time. Once I’ve built fires in both the heating



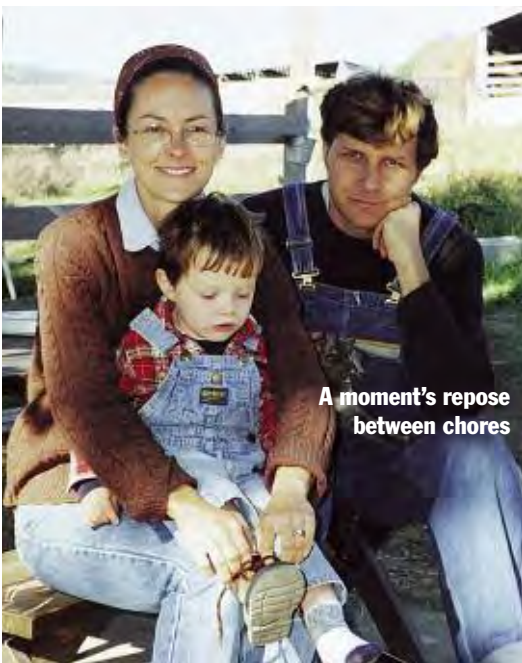
stove and the cookstove, I'll huddle close to the kitchen stove listening to the crackle, soaking up the heat and reading a book. My new powers of concentration astound me: I've raced through Dickens, Hardy, Wilde, Hawthorne, Irving, William Dean Howells, the collected letters of Thomas Jefferson, and several novels published in 1900.

## PREPARING FOR RE-ENTRY

Even though our project is not driven by nostalgia, we find ourselves growing nostalgic for our 1900 experience even before it comes to an end. One day, after we put Luther down for his nap and finish our chores, we tiptoe up to the guest room and sneak under the covers. Afterwards, we are silent, and I sense an unspoken understanding between us that soon this, too, will change. I'll get busy again with work, the phone will ring, we'll spend too much time in the car driving to and from town.

And then there's the nagging reality of how we'll support ourselves. Simmering on the back burner all this time was our idea of starting an artisanal goat-cheese farm. We have the land and the barn. With some training—perhaps a few sabbaticals to France—we could build on Heather's already considerable cheese-making skills. It would be perfect: We'd use what we learned in 1900 to build a new life once we returned to the 21st century.

But there are two problems.



A moment's repose  
between chores

We have proven that a clump of seed-filled envelopes can feed a family for a year. And that an idea—no matter how quixotic—when tucked into the fertile folds of imagination, can grow into a miraculous thing.

They come to light one evening at dinner, when I offer Heather the last slice of an olive-oil-drizzled *chevre* that I have pretty much devoured.

"You can *have* the cheese," she says, an odd smile on her face.

"What's that supposed to mean?" I say.

"I can't eat it."

"You can't *eat* it? It's delicious."

"I can't *stand* it any more. I stopped eating goat cheese a couple of months ago. I stopped drinking the milk, too."

I'm dumbfounded. "I never noticed."

"I kept making it for your sake," she confesses. "I didn't want you to find out. I thought you'd be disappointed."

"About our farm idea?"

"Yeah."

I burst out laughing.

"What's so funny?" she says.

"I've got a confession, too," I say. "You don't like the cheese. I can't *stand* the goats!"

## BACK TO THE FUTURE

What do we do on our last day? Sleep late, take the day off, celebrate? No. We milk, pump, cook, clean, whack weeds, shovel manure, and mulch the garden paths.

We also prepare for re-entry. John Foster drops by and helps me remove the animal nests from the Taurus and splice the chewed wires. We pull enough straw out of the engine to stuff a mattress. He takes the battery and brings it back fully charged. Even though we're not going anywhere—until tomorrow—I can't resist sitting in the driver's seat and giving the key a try. She sputters and starts up. I let the engine run for a while, and then I shut it off and pocket the key.

At the end of the afternoon, Heather throws up her arms in a gesture of triumph. "Woohoo!" she yells. "I did everything on my to-do list today. I think that's a first."

That evening at dinner, in addition to rice and beans, we fulfill my vow to eat fresh English peas before the project's end.

We only share a few forkfuls between us, a meager harvest, I know. But at least we've done it! We planted, cultivated and picked these peas—the first yield in this year's long growing season—so that they may now nurture us. If I take away anything from our 1900 experience, it is a newfound appreciation for the miracle of the seed. Heather and I have proven that a rubber-band-bound clump of seed-filled envelopes can feed a family of three for a year. And also that an idea—no matter how quixotic—when tucked into the fertile folds of imagination, can grow into a complex and miraculous thing.

Later, both of us are on hand to kiss Luther goodnight. We smile down at him and hint at the excitement that awaits us the next morning. Though he doesn't understand the significance, to us this night feels magical, like Christmas Eve.

"I had the craziest dream last night," Heather says, as we brush our teeth out back, beneath the maple tree. "I dreamed it was our last day. I decided to plug in the phone early. *What's a day?* I thought. *I'll just make sure it works.* But then it rang, and I panicked."

"Did you answer it?" I ask.

"Yeah. The voice on the other end said, 'Gotcha!'"

"Creepy."

We climb into bed, dreaming of all we'll do. Basking in our accomplishment, feeling secure at having found a home, we're not worried right now about the future. We have money in the bank for renovations, though less than we had hoped. More important, we have each other. The future will fall into place.

Heather turns to me. "See you in a hundred years," she says, and blows out the lamp.

▼

Since re-entering the 21st century in 2002, the Wards have lived in Staunton, Va.





# GRO

*Vanderbilt's historic emphasis on residential education*





# COMMON UND

*gets a 21st-century retrofitting.*

By WHITNEY WEEKS, BA'94

**From the moment they step onto campus next August, the 1,550 students in the Class of 2012 will be pioneers in one of the most comprehensive changes in Vanderbilt history.**

Each incoming student will live in one of 10 residential "houses" led by a faculty head who lives with students and residential life staff. Collectively known as The Commons, this residential community is the first step in Vanderbilt's College Halls program.

The Commons promises significant new forms of faculty involvement and student learning for undergraduates. Students in each house will dine together, socialize together, and call upon faculty mentors for a range of needs, academic and otherwise. Each house will create its own identity, plan its own activities, and manage its own programming budget.

"As a colleague of mine says, we're about to open Pandora's box," says Associate Professor of History Frank Wcislo, Vanderbilt's first dean of The Commons and a passionate advocate for the program. "But in this instance, the box is filled only with good."



After nearly a decade of planning, Vanderbilt is investing \$150 million in the first phase of College Halls. Much more than bricks and mortar, these projects mark Vanderbilt's leadership in an educational movement that in recent years has been taking root at leading universities not only in the United States

—such as at Princeton, MIT and Northwestern—but around the world.

While The Commons focuses on first-year students, the university's current plan aims eventually to build a series of College Halls for all interested upperclassmen. Early planning for the next two such College Halls, each of which would house about 300 sophomores, juniors and seniors together with resident faculty and graduate students, is already under way.

The residential college movement is “a real generational transformation, and there are at least two motivations behind it,” notes Robert J. O’Hara, an evolutionary biologist who is one of the world’s leading advocates of the residential college movement. “One is a rejection of the mid-20th century’s obsession with bureaucratic centralization, an outlook that treated education almost like an industrial process. Another is a desire to repair the damage done by the self-centeredness of the 1960s. Residential colleges are being established at universities in the United States, Canada, Mexico, Germany and China, and they are joining established systems in Britain, Australia, New Zealand and elsewhere.”

Stambaugh House, one of five new residential houses designed to complement the architecture of the original Peabody buildings



TOM GATLIN PHOTOGRAPHY

This model that is gaining new advocates in the 21st century is patterned after the 700-year-old residential college systems of Oxford and Cambridge universities. Whether referred to as residential colleges, a house system or college halls, the intent is the same at such places as Harvard, Yale, the University of Pennsylvania and Rice: intimate residential-based communities of faculty and underclassmen living together and engaging in social and educational programming. Hogwarts, the school of magic

#### Where Everybody Knows Your Name

With the building of The Commons, notes Dean of Students Mark Bandas, Vanderbilt is finally achieving a long-stated goal that all students, with few exceptions, live on campus.

“Vanderbilt has never had enough housing available, so our insufficient space issues have allowed some students to live off campus,” says Bandas. “Especially as enrollment grew, housing couldn’t keep up with demand.”

That’s about to change. Beginning next

**“When I’ve explained to older Vanderbilt alumni what we’re trying to achieve with College Halls, their response has been that we’re returning Vanderbilt to the way it was years ago.”**

— Susan Barge, associate provost for College Halls



Susan Barge

DANIEL DUBOIS

attended by Harry Potter, provides a literary example of College Halls, minus the moving staircases and talking portraits.

“A residential college experience is absolutely at the heart of what Vanderbilt has always been about,” says Susan Aston Barge, BA’81, associate provost for College Halls. “Even though Vanderbilt’s growth in recent years has meant more students living off campus, it was never in keeping with our mission.”

fall nearly 100 percent of undergraduates will live on campus. Only students requesting to live with an immediate family member whose primary residence is in Davidson County may live off campus. That is a fairly substantial change from recent years, when as much as 15 percent of the undergraduate population lived elsewhere.

The move back toward a residential emphasis began nearly a decade ago when, at the





One troubling finding of their research at the time was data showing that during the previous five years, approximately 8 percent of Vanderbilt first-year students did not return for their sophomore year—a poor retention rate compared to other top universities. It is during the transitional year from high school to college that students face the greatest risk of isolation and benefit most from increased interaction and faculty mentoring.

“Students who are able to find their ‘niche’ at Vanderbilt tend to remain and graduate,” the committee reported. “Conversely, students who do not socially integrate and develop no strong ties to a community, student organization or academic program have a significantly lower rate of retention.”

Soon after the committee released its report, the residential college idea gained momentum from the convergence of three personalities at Vanderbilt: Gordon Gee was installed as the university’s seventh chancellor, Nicholas Zeppos became provost and vice chancellor for academic affairs, and the Board of Trust was chaired by tireless student advocate Martha Ingram.

Zeppos explains how that which is special about Vanderbilt has continuously served as the project’s Polaris. “We asked what Vanderbilt is about,” says Zeppos, “and the answer always was the unique connection between faculty and students and the transformation

young people go through in their college years. Vanderbilt stands for collegiality, vitality, balance and community, respect and caring, and College Halls builds upon all of that.”

Ingram’s own residential college experience during her days as a Vassar student helped her envision such a model at Vanderbilt. “It concerned me that we had students who were bright enough to get into Vanderbilt, who had all the credentials, but



**Old oak chairs from the university’s libraries find new life at The Commons Center.**

request of College of Arts and Science faculty members, former Provost Thomas Burish charged a committee of faculty, students and administrators with exploring the possibility of a residential college system at Vanderbilt. Chaired by then-Associate Provost Nicholas Zeppos (now interim chancellor, provost, and vice chancellor for academic affairs), the committee examined the educational outcomes of learning communities, met with representatives from institutions with residential colleges, and conducted internal research on the thoughts and needs of Vanderbilt students.

who weren’t staying here because they didn’t know how to fit in,” she says. “Helping every student maximize his or her potential is what Vanderbilt is all about, and that means making the experience welcoming and challenging intellectually for everyone who comes here.”

The immediate price the university pays when a student fails to become engaged is loss of that student to another institution. But there are also ramifications if the student stays. Disengaged students make less of an academic contribution to Vanderbilt and become unenthusiastic, disconnected alumni.

“The solution is to make complex institutions into smaller units where students don’t get lost in the shuffle,” says Lucius Outlaw Jr., associate provost of academic affairs and professor of philosophy.

At present, Vanderbilt students have three very different versions of a first year at Vanderbilt depending on which of the three freshman areas of campus they live in—Kissam Quadrangle, Branscomb Quadrangle or Vanderbilt/Barnard Halls. Having all first-year students together will help

## A Brief Glossary of Vanderbilt’s Residential College Community

**College Halls:** The overarching term for Vanderbilt’s long-term plan to provide a system of residential community life for all undergraduates.

**The Commons:** The new living and learning community for first-year students and residential faculty, located on Vanderbilt’s eastern edge across 21st Avenue. The first phase of College Halls, it includes 10 houses grouped around four quads, apartments for faculty heads of house, a dean’s residence and the Commons Center, a recreational, educational, dining and community center.

**Vanderbilt Visions:** A core program for all first-year students that brings them together in small groups with faculty, student peer mentors and educational staff to discuss their intellectual and social transition from high school to university life.

standardize the freshman experience.

By building The Commons, says Outlaw, “we are creating small residential institutions within the institution that decrease our scale and increase our intimacy with students at this critical time in their lives.”

Vanderbilt already has a model of sorts in its existing Living and Learning Centers—Mayfield, McGill and McTyeire. The committee headed by Zeppos found in 1999 that students of these residences had, on average, SAT scores 30 points higher than other entering Vanderbilt students; had high school GPAs higher than other entering Vanderbilt students; and were more likely to receive an honors scholarship.

The 10 houses of The Commons are all located on Vanderbilt’s east side, adjacent to and architecturally harmonious with the historic Peabody College buildings, but within a short walk of the center of campus thanks to two bridges over 21st Avenue. They include meeting spaces for students, seminar rooms, laundry facilities, wireless Internet services, and specially designed apartments for faculty heads of house. Five of the houses were built from the ground up, and five were transformed from residence halls built at Peabody College, most in the 1920s. Also new is The Commons Center, a multipurpose recreational, educational, dining and community center.

That section of campus provided the perfect location for such an enterprise, notes Judson Newbern, associate vice chancellor for campus planning and construction, because it was “a contiguous area that had been under-realized and underinvested in over the years.” The Commons continues the feeling of the original surrounding Peabody structures by using similar architecture. It features four quadrangles and takes advantage of the pop-



**Functioning as a community square, The Commons Center includes a food gallery, fitness facility, and resources for academic assistance. It sits where Peabody’s Hill Center once stood.**

ular green spaces of Magnolia Lawn and the Peabody Esplanade.

Every space was designed with accidental interaction as a goal. Planners found that students don’t like congregating in huge lobbies

—but one place where they *do* hang out is the laundry room. So laundry rooms were placed right off the house lobbies. Small coffeehouse-type spaces also encourage social exchanges.

Certain amenities were omitted in order to foster integration of first-year students into campus life among upperclassmen. Student mailboxes continue to be located in the Station B Post Office, and the Student Recreational Center is still the best place on campus for a good workout and for intramural sports. A five-minute walk gets one to Library Lawn and the Stevenson Center, and in approximately five minutes more, one arrives at the Rec Center, Sarratt Student Center or Greek Row.

“It’s creating a whole new front door to Vanderbilt,” says Wcislo.

### The Professor Next Door

The 10 senior faculty who will serve as heads of house are a diverse mix of empty-nesters and young professors. Faculty heads will interact with students through such formal means as sponsoring lectures and conversations with visiting faculty, as well as informal means—hosting study breaks and afternoon teas and eating meals in the Commons Center dining hall.



**Ten senior faculty will serve as heads of house, living three-year term.**

## The 10 Houses of The Commons

Five existing buildings and five new ones comprise the 10 houses where first-year Vanderbilt students will live beginning next fall. Original buildings dating mostly from the 1920s that have been gutted and refurbished are North House, East House, West House, Memorial House and Gillette House. New buildings are:

**Crawford House**, named for Frank Armstrong Crawford, who is credited with moving her husband, Commodore Cornelius Vanderbilt, toward his only major philanthropy—giving a million dollars in 1873 to build and endow Vanderbilt University.



**Murray House**, named for Walter Murray Jr., BA’70, MMgmt’74, who founded the Association of Vanderbilt Black Alumni. The first African American to serve on Vanderbilt’s Board of Trust, Murray served as managing director of INROADs, taught at Andover Newton Theological School, and later became minister of Zion Baptist Church in Lynn, Mass.



Faculty will live with their families in a university-furnished apartment. These two- and three-bedroom residences each have a separate exterior entrance and interior space specifically for the purpose of entertaining other members of the house and of The Commons.

“I suspect that living and learning in The Commons will redefine life at Vanderbilt, and not only for its students,” says faculty head Greg Barz, associate professor of ethnomusicology. Barz, his wife, Mona, and their two children, ages 12 and 7, will move into North House next fall. “Faculty and staff will be significantly affected by our deep involvement in the everyday lives of our students.”

Mona Barz, a pastoral counselor, adds, “While we expect we may feel a certain loss of privacy, we are looking forward to experiencing everyday life at Vanderbilt. Our children think it will be a lot of fun to eat in the dining center, use the green as their front yard, and get to know the students.”

What faculty will *not* be is some kind of über-RA. “I have no intention of patrolling the hallways,” says Wcislo. “I view this as an opportunity to do more of what I love best—teaching.”

## Visions and Revisions

Underpinning the bricks and mortar of College Halls is Vanderbilt Visions, a first-year core program in which small groups of students, facilitated by a faculty member and a student VUceptor, come together outside the classroom in new ways. Groups will complete at least one community service project, get together for social outings, and discuss dozens of topics in the social and political realms as well as the values and expectations of the Vanderbilt community.

While first-year students won’t move into The Commons until fall 2008, Vanderbilt Visions began in fall 2006.

Stuart Hill, a senior in the Blair School of Music and president of VUcept, the student-led organization that administers the Vanderbilt Visions program, recalls his first year at Vanderbilt. “I knew my professors, and I was getting a great education,” he says. “But I wondered if my friends were more just company rather than the type of fulfilling friends I had envisioned spending time with at college. Becoming involved in summer academic orientation—a precursor to the Vanderbilt Visions program—helped me realize there were other people here and gave me a broader perspective.”

With The Commons and Vanderbilt Visions, that broader perspective could be possible for all students early on. “This isn’t just about making friends,” Hill continues. “Participants of Vanderbilt Visions are getting mentorship about how to become better learners, how to become more active participants in the Vanderbilt community.”

Not every student shared Hill’s enthusiasm for Vanderbilt Visions in its first year. An evaluation a few months into the program revealed that only a third of first-year

students approved of it. Based on that early feedback from student focus groups, discussion topics have since been geared more specifically to the Vanderbilt experience. VUceptors have been given flexibility to think proactively about how their groups adapt the curriculum. And the size of each Vanderbilt Visions group was scaled down from 20 to 15.

“It is the development of relationships we’re really going after,” says Ann Neely, associate professor of the practice of education, who is participating in her second year with Vanderbilt Visions. “This is part of the



**Vanderbilt Visions aims to “blow apart the boundaries between students and faculty.”**

purpose—to create opportunities for students and professors to have intellectual conversations outside the classroom.”

While some students have always managed to make connections with a particular faculty member—an adviser, the instructor of a favorite course, a lab director—many undergraduates find it intimidating to approach faculty beyond the confines of a classroom.

In addition to faculty heads of house, Vanderbilt Visions involves more than 100 faculty section leaders who meet weekly with small groups of first-year students. This program alone has greatly increased interaction between students and faculty.



**in university-furnished apartments for a two- or**



**Stambaugh House**, named for John H. Stambaugh. After a career in business and government that included service in the Eisenhower administration, Stambaugh was appointed vice chancellor for business affairs at Vanderbilt and served in that role from 1956 to 1962.

**Hank Ingram House**, named for Orrin Henry Ingram, a civic leader, philanthropist and former vice president of the Vanderbilt Board of Trust. Hank Ingram’s son, Bronson, served on the board from 1967 until his death in 1995, and he chaired the board the last four years of his life. In 1995, Martha Ingram, Bronson’s wife, was elected to the Board of Trust, then elected its chairman in 1999—a position she currently holds.

**Sutherland House**, named for Earl W. Sutherland Jr., a Nobel Prize winner and professor of physiology at Vanderbilt from 1963 until his death in 1974. Sutherland received the Nobel Prize in 1971 for his discoveries concerning the mechanisms of the actions of hormones. His work has helped researchers today understand how various hormones exert important functions within organisms.

“Students sit down with an engaged, involved upperclassman and a prominent faculty member for an hour a week for the entire year,” says Cara Bilotta, a senior in the College of Arts and Science and current president of Vanderbilt Student Government. “They can pick each other’s brains about Vanderbilt and about the world in a way that isn’t possible inside a classroom. This is where we start to blow apart the boundaries between students and faculty.”

Even with the fine tuning of Vanderbilt Visions, though, some students have yet to embrace the whole notion of their university’s becoming a residential community. “Basically, we are frustrated because we feel like students will suffer in [not having residence options for] price and quality now that the university will not have to be competitive when it comes to housing,” says Taylor Gould, a junior in the College of Arts and Science and co-founder of the Face-

**“I’ve worked with Vanderbilt students who made me marvel at the deliberateness with which they engaged me. This happens far less frequently with freshmen and sophomores. Let’s increase the opportunities for learning in these first two years.”**

**— Frank Wcislo, associate professor of history and dean of The Commons**

book group Students Against the College Halls Initiative. “Everyone is focused on College Halls, which is great, but this shouldn’t mean that no one focuses on current students.”

The rise of The Commons also has fueled rumors that the project will sound the death knell for the university’s Greek system.

“I think Greek life at Vanderbilt will continue to be a major part of the Vanderbilt community, no matter where the freshman class is housed,” counters Erik Johnson, a senior in the College of Arts and Science

and president of the Interfraternity Council. “Any concerns the Greek community may have about The Commons or College Halls stem from fear of the unknown.”

As to charges that College Halls is Vanderbilt’s attempt to copy its Ivy League competitors, says Bilotta, “I think a lot of these concerns stem from a misunderstanding of what College Halls will be. They’ve been designed to adapt to student needs and student wants, and the planning process has involved students from the very beginning. We take a lot of pride in being a great uni-

## Student Interest Drives Green Certification

**F**irst-year students won’t move into The Commons until fall 2008, but already the buildings have a whole lot of history inside them.

“We’ve really tried to think of creative ways to use and re-use building materials,” says Tony Fort, project manager for The Commons and architect for the Office of Campus Planning and Construction.

For its creative approach in building The Commons, Vanderbilt is the first university in Tennessee to be recognized for environmentally friendly construction by the U.S. Green Building Council’s Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) Green Building Rating System.

Old oak chairs from the university’s libraries were reused for seating in the dining center. When the Hill Center, the old dining facility of Peabody College, was torn down in order to build the new dining center, nearly 75 percent of the materials were salvaged, recycled or sold. Sandstone from the Hill Center was used in the patios of the new dining center, and 150 tons of limestone excavated from The Commons construction site was used to create a landscape sculpture at the university’s Dyer Observatory.

“We used recycled glass in the new terrazzo flooring, and the carpeting also contains a high percentage of recycled content,” adds Fort.

LEED is the nationally accepted benchmark for the design, construction and operation of high-performance green buildings. The council awarded the university silver-level certification for Crawford and Sutherland houses, two new residence halls built as part of The Commons.

Vanderbilt’s application for, and achievement of, LEED certification resulted from a partnership between the university’s administration

and students. The Vanderbilt student organization SPEAR (Students Promoting Environmental Awareness and Recycling) was the impetus behind the university’s applying for LEED certification.

“SPEAR was passionate about enhancing the university’s sustainability efforts, and at their urging, we agreed to pursue the certification as an example of the student-faculty-staff partnerships The Commons was designed to foster,” says Judson Newbern, associate vice chancellor for campus planning and construction. “While we regularly incorporate environmentally friendly elements into our construction projects, we had not sought certification for any of our buildings.”

“Not only does the silver certification spotlight benefits to the environment achieved through energy efficiency and material conservation,” says SPEAR President Brent Fitzgerald, “but it also raises awareness at Vanderbilt that being green goes beyond just recycling and saving rain forests.”

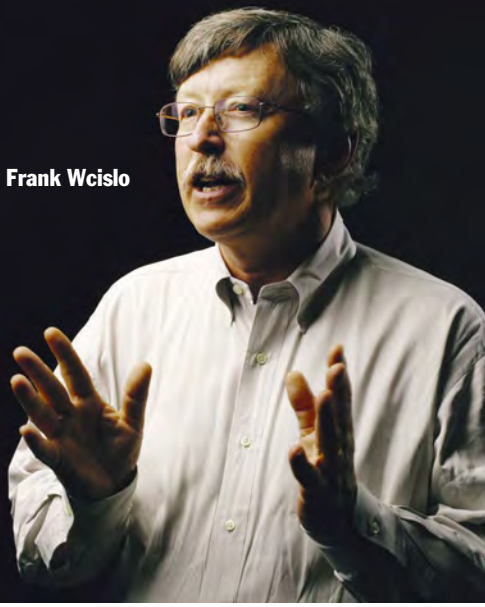
Among the environmentally friendly features of Crawford and Sutherland houses are low-flow or waterless fixtures, state-of-the-art HVAC systems, flooring made of bamboo (a resource that renews quickly), high-efficiency kitchen exhaust systems, natural lighting in atriums and stairwells, motorized window shades to reduce heat and glare, and pervious concrete pavement that absorbs water rather than creating runoff. Most new materials being used in Commons structures have come from vendors located within a 500-mile radius of Nashville in order to conserve energy.

Five other buildings in The Commons also have been submitted for LEED certification. For details about Vanderbilt’s sustainability efforts, visit [www.vanderbilt.edu/sustainvu](http://www.vanderbilt.edu/sustainvu).

— Priscine Lewis



Frank Wcislo



DANIEL DUBOIS

of this place, but I will also always ask what can make us better. College Halls and The Commons are another chance for us to take our unique values forward.”

As Wcislo explains what the university hopes to create with The Commons, he is adamant that the undertaking not be viewed as an attempt to fix something that is broken, but rather that it be seen as a tool that can be used to make that which is good about Vanderbilt even better. With first-year students more engaged with each other and with faculty, the expected byproduct is a general increase in the intellectual atmosphere on campus.

“I’ve worked with Vanderbilt students who made me marvel at their confidence, at their intention, and at the deliberateness with which they engaged me,” says Wcislo. “This type of encounter, though, happens far less frequently with freshmen and sophomores. Let’s increase the opportunities for learning in these first two years.”

Vanderbilt students, faculty and staff have already begun to make the space of The Commons their own. For the last two years, upperclassmen have been breaking in new houses and living in newly renovated halls. The Commons Center opened for business in August and has already hosted a number of campus events. It regularly draws a large lunchtime crowd and coffee lovers from across campus, as well as from businesses on nearby Music Row and Hillsboro Village.

In the more ethereal arena of campus culture, there is an attitude of great anticipation—tinged with a bit of trepidation. “We must have tolerance for ambiguity as this project evolves,” says Barge. “Our goal is to get all the building blocks in place and then step away.”

“What really matters is this complicated, nebulous thing called university culture,” says Lucius Outlaw. “It’s going to take a while to build a Commons culture, and it’s only one aspect of our university’s culture. Changing the housing experience of our undergraduates isn’t going to blow open the doors of intellectual life by itself. It remains to be seen what we can pull off and how many years it will take.” ▼

versity in the South, in our unique Vanderbilt-ness.”

“Some schools claim to have residential colleges and many have faculty who live on campus, but they have little interaction with students,” adds Susan Barge. “We are already unique among other top schools in our commitment to the undergraduate experience.”

So far the effort is bringing Vanderbilt positive press, including mention in a July 2007 *New York Times* profile of residential colleges and a *U.S. News and World Report* citation of Vanderbilt’s College Halls as a “Program to Look For.”

“Vanderbilt has definitely enjoyed increased exposure and interest in the university of late, which can be tied, in part, to The Commons,” says Doug Christiansen, associate provost for enrollment management. “Parents and prospective students really get it when we talk about The Commons as a community of belonging, steeped in academic as well as social traditions and an increased ability for students to explore.”

Christiansen points out that while much of the spotlight is on College Halls, Vanderbilt is being noticed for “its very public and very deliberate focus on the undergraduate experience.”

Ultimately, says Nicholas Zeppos, almost all concerns about The Commons stem from a reaction to change. By their very nature, institutions of higher education are constantly evolving.

“People don’t want things to change, but what they have and love is the product of change,” says Zeppos. “I’ve been at Vanderbilt for 20 years and am fiercely protective

## THINK BACK



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# The Minds

“People don’t go to cities because they have great sewer systems.”

## Books and Writers:

### Hip-hop Study Paints a Complex Portrait

IN HIP-HOP MUSIC and videos, young black women are consistently portrayed as sexually insatiable vixens willing to debase themselves for the privilege of even the shortest ride on the music industry party train. Despite the lack of respect, young black women play an enthusiastic part in hip-hop culture, as do youth of all races who continue to make hip-hop a worldwide phenomenon.

**Tracy Denean Sharpley-Whiting**—

Vanderbilt University professor, young black woman, former model, feminist and hip-hop fan—researched this paradox and

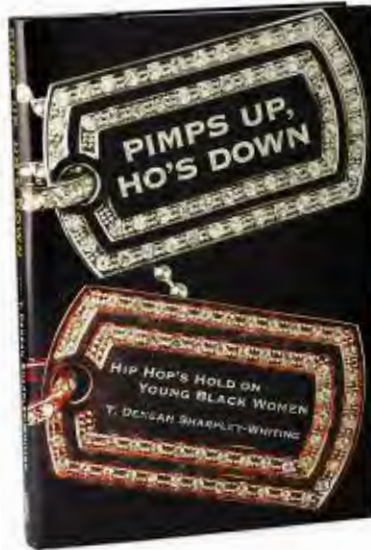


Sharpley-Whiting

responded with *Pimps Up, Ho’s Down: Hip Hop’s Hold on Young Black Women*. The book, published by New York University Press, offers an insightful look into the strip clubs,

groupie culture, and other aspects of hip hop that have given a voice to the disenfranchised while raising troubling questions about what those voices are saying and doing.

“As disturbing as I find some of what’s going on around gender in hip-hop, there are also things we need to celebrate,” says Sharpley-Whiting, who is a professor of African American and diaspora studies and professor of French. “It’s a cultural art form. It’s the soundtrack of black life in the United States, and it’s absolutely astonishing



that it became such a cultural force globally.

“We have to revel in that kind of creativity coming from such a marginalized group.”

The book paints a complex portrait with one constant: Black women are always at the bottom of any pecking order.

“That doesn’t mean I find hip-hop depressing,” says Sharpley-Whiting. “I find the state of gender and

race relationships depressing. Just because aspects of hip-hop may be misogynistic and sexist does not mean that misogyny began with hip-hop. Hip-hop just happens to be the youth culture of the moment and therefore takes the wrath on a lot of issues.”

Any solutions will involve changing society rather than stifling hip-hop’s blunt articulation of what’s going on, she says, adding, “I do urge young women to be more politically conscious about the choices they make and the opportunities they take.”

Sharpley-Whiting is director of Vanderbilt’s African American and Diaspora Studies Program and director of the William T. Bandy Center for Baudelaire and Modern French Studies.

—Jim Patterson

## Recent Books by Faculty and Alumni

*Their Own Receive Them Not: African American Lesbians and Gays in Black Churches* (Pilgrim Press) by **Horace L. Griffin**, MA’93, PhD’95. “*Their Own Receive Them Not* cuts through the Gordian knot of homophobia in the Black Church with compelling, substantive arguments,” comments Sylvia Rhue, director of religious affairs and constituency development for the National Black Justice Coalition in Washington, D.C. “This groundbreaking work has the potential to move hearts and minds toward the more loving and inclusive community for which we have been praying.”



*Speechless: The Erosion of Free Expression in the American Workplace* (Berrett-Koehler), by **Bruce Barry**, professor of management and sociology. While Americans are protected from censorship by the government, no laws exist to protect free speech in the workplace. In *Speechless*, Bruce Barry guides readers through the crucial roles of law, convention and culture in limiting free speech in the workplace. He argues that freedom of speech in the workplace is excessively and needlessly limited, and advocates changes to law and management practices that would expand and protect employee rights without jeopardizing employer interests.



# Eye

*They go to cities because there is great culture.*



**“Believer” by sculptor Kevin Kennedy, on exhibit in November at Sarratt Gallery**

” —MEL ZIEGLER, new chair of Vanderbilt’s studio art department



**“Opus 2006” by Sylvia Hyman**

COURTESY OF CUMBERLAND GALLERY

## Visual Arts:

### Stories Told with Fictional Clay

AT FIRST GLANCE, the basement of Sylvia Hyman’s home looks much like any other clay artist’s studio. A shelf running along the wall holds jar after jar of oxides, silicates, fluxes and other materials used in the preparation of ceramic glazes. A large kiln sits in one corner, and two long work tables stand in the middle of the room. One of the tables holds a seemingly random stack of books: an art history volume, a suspense novel titled *Danger Music*, a copy of Dr. Seuss’ *The Cat in the Hat*. A crossword puzzle book sits nearby, on a neatly arranged breakfast tray.

Peer more closely, though, and you’ll do a double take: These aren’t books at all. They are made entirely from clay.

The art of **Sylvia Hyman**, MA’63 — masterful *trompe l’oeil* sculptures — uncannily mimics objects from real life. Whether taking the form of books, boxes, baskets, printed scrolls, letters or playing cards, each piece skillfully deceives the eye.

To succeed as art, *trompe l’oeil* painting and sculpture must do more than simply replicate an object or scene. In Hyman’s case, her ceramic works convey playfulness and joy, mixed with sly consideration. For her these sculptures operate on a number of levels, but one central conceit is the idea of communication.

“My first ceramic *trompe l’oeil* works



## etc.

During a three-hour session on the changing relationships between audiences and the arts, approximately 700 attendees of the American Symphony Orchestra League’s conference in Nashville in June were encouraged to blog—right then and there—about what they were hearing.

**Bill Ivey** and **Steven Tepper**, director and associate director, respectively, of the Vanderbilt Curb Center for Art, Enterprise and Public Policy, had worked with ArtsJournal.com and conference organizers to create the blog. For two weeks leading up to the conference, 12 bloggers jumpstarted discussion about the upcoming session’s topic with their postings, in hopes of preparing conference attendees for the live blogging session June 21. The blog can be accessed at [www.artsjournal.com/league](http://www.artsjournal.com/league).

“This was a chance to see if audiences could engage more deeply in the conversation if they had the opportunity to react, post questions and note potential contradictions in the middle of listening,” says Tepper.

**Muhammad Yunus**, PhD’71, has been called many things: visionary, world leader, Nobel Prize winner. Now there’s a new addition to the list: rock star. Yunus has teamed with the European musical duo The Green Children in support of their efforts to promote micro-credit, education and health care. He even makes an appearance in a music video, which can be viewed at [www.thegreenchildren.org](http://www.thegreenchildren.org). To date, the group has raised more than \$450,000, which will be used to build an eye hospital in Bangladesh.



**Yunus**



STEVE GREEN

**Ziegler**

**Mel Ziegler** is the new chairman of the studio art department at Vanderbilt. Ziegler had served on the University of Texas-Austin faculty since 1997. He was a member of the City of Austin Arts Commission from 2000 to 2006 and is known for his site-specific public art. Ziegler’s body of work in collaboration with late artist Kate Ericson is the subject of a major exhibit at the Kansas City Art Institute through October, which then moves to the Contemporary Arts Center in Cincinnati from Nov. 10 to Jan. 13, 2008. Ziegler and Ericson worked together on major projects for the Seattle transit system and the historic district of Charleston, S.C.

were done for fun,” she explains. “In the 1960s I made dancing banana skins and partially eaten fruits on brightly colored, glazed plates. Then in the 1980s I made some porcelain birthday cakes, fortune cookies and cantaloupes for gag gifts. The more serious works that began in the ’90s—expanding on the idea that fortune cookies carry concealed information—started with scrolls that imitated diplomas and certificates.

“Now my work has grown to encompass the myriad ways that humans communicate, not only through language, but also with signs and symbols such as musical notes, maps, drawings, diagrams and puzzles. I’m enthralled by the way that humans, through the centuries, have devised ways to convey thoughts by making marks on stone, papyrus, clay, paper, etc.”

For Hyman, achieving precision and detail in her works is the result of a constant learning process. “Almost every piece I make involves trial and error. Sometimes I have to remake parts of a sculpture or even rethink the whole arrangement of the



“Spilled Packages”  
by Sylvia Hyman

COURTESY OF CUMBERLAND GALLERY

various parts as my works become more complex.”

Hyman’s art was the subject of an exhibit at Nashville’s Frist Center for the Visual Arts, which ran through Oct. 7.

Hyman turns 90 this year, and the Frist show was only the most recent honor in an energetic career that has seen her work travel the globe, with exhibitions on three continents. Her ceramic pieces sit in the collections of the Smithsonian American Art Museum, the Museum of Decorative Arts in Prague, and nearly a dozen other institutions.

“Sylvia has kept herself young and engaged in the world of art in a way that transcends generations,” says independent curator and arts writer Susan Knowles, BA’74, MLS’75, MA’86.

“She has been a great role model for other artists here because she stands up for herself as an artist, she’s interested in what’s happening creatively in Nashville, and she’s willing to give her time to things she feels are important. She has a real sense of justice and fair play.”

—Jonathan Marx

(A longer version of this article was originally published July 15, 2007, in *The Tennessean*.)



## Film: Remembering the Chicago 10

The 1968 Democratic National Convention was an iconic event in American history. Young Vietnam

War protestors clashed with Chicago police while millions witnessed their battles on live television. Eight protestors were tried for conspiracy in a circus-like atmosphere.

A new film about the event, associate-produced by **Christopher Keene**, JD’96, opened this year’s Sundance Film Festival. Using archival footage, trial transcripts and animation, *Chicago 10* brings the incident to life for a new generation of moviegoers.

Academy Award-winning director Brett Morgen dubbed the film *Chicago 10* to include Bobby Seale, attorneys William Kunstler and Leonard Weinglass, and the Chicago Seven defendants: Abbie Hoffman, Jerry Rubin, Tom Hayden, David Dellinger, Rennie Davis, John Froines and Lee Weiner.

As a law student, Keene says, he gained tremendous respect for constitutional law after taking a course from James Blumstein, University Professor of Constitutional Law and Health Law and Policy. “It opened my eyes to how lucky we are to live in this country. I’m a huge believer in the right to free speech and the right to protest.”

Keene’s legal training has proven use-

## Upcoming

Musical explorers the **Kronos Quartet** will take the stage at Ingram Hall on March 14, 2008, at 8 p.m. as part of Vanderbilt’s Great Performances series to perform *Sun Rings*, an evening-length, multimedia work in 10 movements that will feature choirs from the Blair School of Music. The piece, commissioned for Kronos by NASA and others, has been performed in London, San Francisco, Calgary, Tucson (Ariz.) and Boston.





ful in film production, which involves negotiating agreements, making contracts, and gaining rights to intangible property. While working on *Chicago 10*, “I tried to find every photo and frame of footage related to this subject and negotiated for the right to include all of it in the film,” he says.

Keene’s first foray into show business came during his second year at Vanderbilt



**Keene**

After stints with a Los Angeles law firm and the Endeavor talent agency, Keene was hired by Morgen to be associate producer for *The Kid Stays in the*

when he interned with Creative Artists Agency’s music division in Nashville. “It showed me how much fun it would be to work in that world.”

*Picture*. A biopic about the rise, fall and rise again of legendary Hollywood movie producer Robert Evans, the film garnered numerous critical accolades, including three Best Documentary awards and recognition as one of the 10 best films of 2002.

As head of the Archer Norris law firm’s entertainment practice, Keene has leveraged his film contacts to build a client list of actors, writers, directors, producers, publishers and media financiers.

“I feel privileged to have the opportunity to help people I admire create great work,” he says. “It’s a wonderful way to spend a career.”

*Chicago 10* is scheduled for release in theaters in February 2008 to coincide with the event’s 40th anniversary.

—Joanne L. Beckham



**Chicago 10 uses both animation and archival footage to recall historic events.**

## Film Shorts

**Richard Hull**, BA’92, is executive producer of the film *Daddy Day Camp*, starring Cuba Gooding Jr. The film was released Aug. 8. Hull’s previous films include the teen hit *She’s All That*.

**Patrick Alexander**, BS’00, has won the 2007 Student Academy Award given by the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences in the Narrative category for *Rundown*, a dark thriller about a television news reporter that Alexander wrote and directed as his thesis film at Florida State University.

**Sam Friedlander**, BA’00, made it into the top four on Fox Television’s *On the Lot*, the Mark Burnett/Steven Spielberg reality show that pitted aspiring filmmakers against one another to win a development deal with DreamWorks Studios.

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| 41 |    |    |    |    |    |    | 42 |    |    |    |

Answers to this puzzle by Byron Walden are found on page 87.

### Across

- Jean and Alexander \_\_\_\_\_ Library
- Former Tennessee Senator who was a faculty member of the Vanderbilt University Medical Center
- \_\_\_\_\_ Louisa Kissam, for whom Kissam Hall is named
- \_\_\_\_\_ Eaters (sophomore honor society)
- Vandy's sports mascot
- Part of m.p.h.
- 2006–07 Distinguished University Professor of the Vanderbilt Divinity School who was notoriously expelled in the 1960s
- U.N. VIPs
- Where 41-Across received his Nobel Prize
- Name of the former Social Religious Building on the Peabody campus, rechristened in honor of a former chancellor and his wife
- "Oedipus \_\_\_\_\_"
- What Vandy's mascot sports
- "Give it \_\_\_\_\_"
- Glowing coal
- Nobel Peace Prize winner Muhammad who earned a Ph.D. in economics from Vanderbilt
- \_\_\_\_\_ Vanderbilt Hotel

### Down

- "Let me think about that ..."
- Corn unit
- Circle segment
- Home to Sugarloaf Mountain
- Decreases the amplitude of
- Magnolia trees and such
- Former Vandy football coach Dowhower
- Skater Midori
- Big \_\_\_\_\_, California
- Mao \_\_\_\_\_-tung
- Country Music Hall-of-Famer Tillis
- Pliers part
- Vandy soccer star Baumann
- Owen Graduate School of Management degree, \_\_\_\_\_ for short
- Superlative suffix
- Took the gold
- Former JFK lander
- Corrida cheer
- Neither's partner
- Gaits slower than gallops
- 100 yrs.
- Do well
- Vandy graduation time, for most
- S. Amer. country
- Number of schools and colleges at Vandy
- Downtown Nashville campus, for short
- Managed care grp.
- U.K. award
- Seat in Benton Chapel
- Soon-to-be alums

## Popular Culture:

### A Convergence of Numbers and Words

It's easy to imagine that crossword puzzles have existed for centuries—that they were an amusing diversion for crusading knights or monks killing time between illuminating manuscripts. But they've been around for less than a century, having first appeared in the *New York World* in 1913. What started as a fad quickly became an accepted component of newspapers around the country, the notable exception being *The New York Times*, which viewed the puzzles as unworthy pastimes. In 1942 the *Times* broke down and finally published its first Sunday puzzle. That puzzle quickly became the standard by which others are judged.

For those who create puzzles, having one published in the *Times* is quite an accomplishment—one achieved by **Byron Walden**, BA'85, with just his second submission. Walden, who teaches math at Santa Clara University, started making his own puzzles about seven years ago.

"A lot of people in the 'numbers' professions do crossword puzzles," he says. "I see



Walden

the words as algebraic objects. To me, it's about manipulating the letters as opposed to something like poetry where you're thinking of words as whole units and trying to put them together."

Puzzles printed in *The New York Times* follow strict guidelines and rules. The puzzles get progressively more difficult during the week, with Saturday's being the most challenging. Walden also is a regular contributor to *The Onion*, which started running puzzles last year. Most puzzle writers submit on a freelance basis and, says Walden, people who make a living creating crossword puzzles number in the "low dozens."

Walden typically creates harder puzzles, sometimes with a theme, sometimes without. He spends six to seven hours on each creation.

"I always like little phrases that have strange letters in them. Someone working the puzzle might think, 'Nothing could go there,' and then once they get it, they think, 'Oh yeah, of course.'"

His favorite clue of all time: "pitched like a girl." The answer: "falsetto."

—Cindy Thomsen



## From Papyrus to Slanguage

There was a time in the not-too-distant past when educators viewed pencils with erasers as crutches for lazy students. In the following years, other advancements like calculators and spell-check raised similar concerns. Now a new trend has found its way from the Web into the classroom. Call it “webspeak” or “slanguage” ... English purists call it a big problem.



DANIEL DUBOIS

But **Kevin Leander**, associate professor of language and literacy at Peabody College, isn't so sure. “Often what happens in education is that there's a huge overreaction to any kind of technology. But literacy and technology have always been tied together in one way or another, ever since papyrus and scrolls.”

In slanguage, the writer uses abbreviations and shortcuts as a matter of course. It is especially rampant in text messaging, where space is limited. “See you later” becomes “CUL8R.” And “NALOPKT,” Leander's favorite,

is “not a lot of people know that.”

Certainly, slanguage is not absolutely correct—but is it wrong? “Surface level correctness is often the feature people focus on when they think about literacy,” says Leander. “So they become more concerned that someone can spell correctly rather than the

fact that the person actually has ideas to communicate.”

Leander believes some of the expressions will end up in the dictionary one day.

“One study talked about how children who send lots of text messages demonstrate increased levels of phonetic awareness and linguistic creativity. From that, one could say that texting on mobile phones makes writers better because they are experimenting with language.”

—Cindy Thomsen

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# S.P.O.V.\*

\* Student Point of View

## Reality Bites

*We saw Oklahoma City at age 7, Columbine at 11, Sept. 11 at 13.*

*Is it any wonder we avoid emotional investment?*

By KATHERINE MARSHALL MILLER, CLASS OF 2010

**T**HE DAY OF THE VIRGINIA TECH shootings, I realized that the weather was gorgeous in Nashville—almost as gorgeous as it was on Sept. 11, 2001, in Washington, D.C.

There's something sick in the fact that I made that comparison. Why couldn't I just focus on the thing in front of me and say, "This is sad, this is awful, this is a tragedy"?

Somehow, I became this sort of meteorological soothsayer weighing one against the other.

I don't think I'm the only one wrapped up in comparisons, though. We end up playing this surreal game of metric relativism with history all the time. Who suffered more, them or us? Which is worse, this or that? It's like we're arguing macabre baseball statistics.

In the days after the Tech massacre, I allowed myself to focus on the sheer amount of information before me, amassing all the facts and details so I didn't have to think about them too much. People I knew tended to dwell on the numbers rather than the stories, or rail against society for the failures of the university rather than face just how ubiquitous student shootings are.

For me, though, that behavior goes beyond the Virginia Tech tragedy. Whether it's my paradigm or a reaction to the times, I tend

to shield myself from becoming emotionally invested in the issues of the day. I hate writing about serious things. I'm more at ease with obscure pop-culture references and dirty puns about well-regarded historical figures. As a generation, though, I think we've learned to compartmentalize and make such incidents impersonal because we know another tragedy lurks around the nearest corner.

Virginia Tech *was* personal for me, though. I grew up in McLean, Va., and I know a lot of people who go to Virginia Tech—probably more than 50. I'm only good friends with half a dozen or so. I only know 0.2 percent of the Tech undergrad population. After the shootings they were all healthy and safe and alive. But they all knew people who weren't.

Caitlin, who's known as an unflinchingly sweet girl, sat in lockdown for two hours in French class in a building

connected to Norris Hall and heard the gunshots.

Heidi—roommate of my friends Abby and Ryan—was shot in the leg.

Adrienne, the elementary school friend with whom I worshiped at the altar of 11-year-old cool—a Backstreet Boys concert—planned on going to the University of Virginia together with her cousin Reema. They'd wanted to go to school together for a long time, apparently. Adrienne got in. Her cousin

did not and went to Virginia Tech instead. On April 16, Reema was shot and killed in French class.

The boyfriend of that girl I never really liked, the one who always talked about the Yankees on the bus during our freshman year of high school—he died, too.

I feel detached from those people, though, like I'm looking at them through some sort of really thick veil. Maybe this is a kind of Facebook curse: The more information out there, and the more quickly it's available about people you barely know and never see, the farther removed you are from them. Or maybe if the tragedy weren't so random, if the shooter weren't frozen in time in that one photo, draped in black, arms outstretched, guns brandished, I'd feel differently. He didn't even know any of them. But what if he had? It wouldn't really change anything. The 33 victims would still be 33 victims.

Our parents live with the paralyzing fear of getting the horrible call those 33 families received that Monday morning in April. This is not the first fear their generation has faced, however. They grew up with the lingering dread of the Cold War and a dark, dismal parade of assassination and war. From Vietnam to JFK, MLK, RFK—the letters begin to run together. How do you aspire to anything when the heroes are falling down? They did, though, and they achieved a lot. They faced tragedy, too, and we shouldn't forget that.

Fears change, however, and our tragedies



JENNY MANDEVILLE





RICK NEASE/INCT

Our parents grew up with lingering dread of the Cold War and a dismal parade of assassination and war. From Vietnam to JFK, MLK, RFK—the letters run together. Fears change, however, and our tragedies are different.

are different. We saw Oklahoma City at age 7, Columbine at 11, Sept. 11 at 13, the Beltway sniper at 14, Katrina at 17. We saw bombings in Kenya, London and Madrid. We saw the tsunami. We have grown up with the idea that it could be us. We're not desensitized to tragedy—at least I don't think we are—but we're not surprised, either.

The moment I knew my friends were fine, I knew that someone else was finding out theirs weren't, someone's parents were finding out that their child was not coming home. How many more of these days will we see? How many more of us will die? Why us?

Those who died weren't perfect; they were just like us. They went to classes and parties. They had career goals and doubts. They had people who loved, liked and hated them. They succeeded and they failed, and they probably didn't want to go to class that morn-

ing. They were us. That was the real horror in the Virginia Tech massacre. We're not perfect, but we didn't deserve this. Nobody does, and yet we're not surprised anymore.

Our generation seems to bear the burden of knowing the unthinkable will happen. Towers, cities, and that sense of security we have will fall at times. Perhaps, though, that idea is also a grace for us. We face impossible issues and problems, but if we've learned anything, it's that the impossible can become reality. We can make the good kind of impossible happen, and when the bad kind jumps out and steals our favorite purse, we've seen that we can survive that, too.

I don't think tragedies like these can be left aside; we need to be stronger, better and kinder after something like the Virginia Tech massacre because we have to make that day mean something. The fallen deserve better;

their families deserve better; we deserve better. We must stick together, adapt, and make sure this never happens again. We're entrenched in the most serious game of Red Rover ever played.

In the end, though, this life is what we have together—with our friends and our families. It's not grand gestures that keep us together; it's the everyday. Small acts of kindness and simple words of gratitude can change a lot. We don't have to be valiant heroes or saints. Just facing and struggling with our weaknesses are enough, to me anyway. We're not all the same, but that can make us stronger if we let it. We share a country, a past, and—I hope—a future together.

At the time of the Virginia Tech tragedy, many people, including myself, repeated over and over again that we were all Hokies and would be for a long time. Now, though, Virginia Tech seems to have slipped from our collective consciousness. The tragedy itself is incomparable, but to forget it, to gloss over our fears and our parents' fears, to simply wait for the next April 16, would be an even greater tragedy. ▼

# A.P.O.V. \*

\*Alumni Point of View

## Up from Slavery

*They had experienced the worst of humankind. But they had something to teach their American visitor about faith and joy.* By ASHLEY ROGERS, BA'06

**W**E NEVER KNOW when one small incident will change lives. It was reading a *National Geographic* article one September afternoon during my sophomore year at Vanderbilt that changed mine.

Reading the article “Twenty-First Century Slaves” in my dorm room that day, I was horrified and heartbroken to learn there are an estimated 27 million slaves in the world today, and that 800,000 to 900,000 are trafficked across international borders each year. I decided at that moment I had to do something.

I began by gathering a group of students and establishing a student organization, FREE, to raise awareness of human trafficking. During months of research I found photos of children and young women who had been rescued from human trafficking.

Two in particular captured my attention. The warmth of their gaze seemed to assure me that they, these girls, were the reason I must continue the anti-trafficking work that by then was consuming my life. The two girls in the photograph had been rescued from slavery somewhere in a town in India known as Allahabad. Suddenly, I felt the need to sketch these girls into a drawing of Freedom.



Each day as I drew, I was surprised at the images making their home on my paper. I noted that of the six figures in my collage, five of them were from India, a land I could only dream of visiting. Little did I know that within only a few months, I would be selected by the U.S. Department of State for an internship in New Delhi, India, with the Trafficking in Persons Office.

When I packed my suitcase, I included a few prints of my finalized drawing. Maybe, just maybe, I would be able to trace the young girls who had inspired me. When I arrived in Delhi in June of 2005, I showed the drawing to my director. She suggested I meet with Joy Zaidi, who ran a shelter home in Allahabad and would be coming to New Delhi the following week.

One week later I sat down with Joy as he told me about the shelter home and HIV/AIDS program he had begun some years before. As he spoke he dabbed his moist eyes, telling me about children for whom he could find no financial support. Many had been abandoned at the train station, or left to begging rackets on the streets, or rescued from forced child labor, or had been victims of trafficking. The small grant that kept the home open had run out. I promised him I would do what I could to find funding for the SOUP (Society of Underprivileged Peo-

ple) home.

Then I unrolled my drawing and handed it to Joy. “Do you know these two girls? Are they from your shelter home?” I pointed to the girl in the center and the girl in the right hand corner. Joy’s eyes filled with tears again. “Oh, yes. Yes, these are my girls! It is my Sunita. And the other, she is our precious Grace Malla!”

A year after I met Joy, I finally had the chance to visit the shelter home. Following my graduation from Vanderbilt in May 2006, I returned to India to work in Calcutta with two organizations, and at long last I could meet the children in the shelter home.

On the way to the shelter from the train station, Joy told me stories about the children: Kajal, a 4-year-old girl found at the train station, had been blinded with acid by her stepmother. Surendra was trafficked for child labor and sold to drug peddlers who cut off his left leg. Rahul had been trafficked for the removal of one of his kidneys.

When I arrived at the shelter, the children greeted me with curious, wide eyes—Rinki, Madhu, Ragni, Rita, Sunny, Gautam, Ramesh, Raoul, Surendra, Kajal. I bent down to take Kajal’s hand, for she was the smallest. Looking at her damaged eyes stopped a beat of my heart.

The children wanted to play in a nearby park. Rinki, Ramesh and Madhu never left Kajal’s side. Not once did they run ahead to climb the slide or join a game without taking her hand and gently leading her so she





**Photos in a magazine inspired Ashley Rogers to make this drawing of children rescued from human trafficking and, later, to work in India.**

too could take part in the fun. The other children took special care to include Surendra in the games despite the limitations of his short wooden leg. They were a family, a team who took care of each other.

While the children slept around me that night, I feared what would happen if we did not find funding quickly. Would they be left to the streets? The rent was months overdue. Funds were so low that the children had no milk to drink.

In the past, worries could pull and push me into a frenzied panic. But these children had, in only one day, taught me a beautiful lesson. If these children who had lived through slavery, abuse, abandonment and pure evil could live each day with a simple faith, finding joy in helping each other, then so could I. My resolve was steadfast, and I was determined to find funding for those children and, if possible, special help for Kajal and Surendra.

A few months later, at Christmas, I once again journeyed to the shelter home. After I had sent out a call for help, family and friends had contributed to SOUP so that overdue debts could be paid in full. Vanderbilt students from FREE raised \$4,500 in three weeks—enough to support the home for five or six months. My mother’s and sister’s Sunday

school classes raised enough money for Christmas presents for the children, and there was enough money left over for Surendra to be standing proud and tall on a new leg specially made to fit him.

Now, a small voice called out to me. “Ashley di-di, English song?” Kajal tugged at my shirt.

Kajal wanted me to sing her English songs because she would be going to America for sight restoration surgery. My e-mail call for help had found its way to Jenna Ray from Nashville, who enlisted the help of Dr. Ming Wang. Dr. Wang had developed exactly the surgery Kajal needed in order to see—a femtosecond artificial cornea transplant. He offered to perform the surgery for free and even obtained a grant from the hospital.

But we still needed \$30,000 to pay for months of hotels, food, transportation, passports, visas and airfare for Kajal and Joy’s wife, Grace, who would go with her as a translator and caretaker. Kajal’s story went out, and help poured in. Within weeks dozens of families in Nashville had offered to take Kajal and Grace into their homes. People donated to the “Kajal Project,” contributing enough for Kajal and Grace to pay for their passports and visas and needs once in the U.S.

Most amazing was how we obtained Kajal’s

and Grace’s airfare. My mother had gone to a Wal-Mart in Monroe, La., to find a USB drive for downloading photos of the children. She did not really know what she needed, but another customer, a man named Curt Gober, offered his help. My mom shared the story of the shelter home and Kajal. Mr. Gober decided at that very moment that he and his family wanted to be part of this project by donating the airline tickets. As he walked away, he turned and said, “Mrs. Rogers, I’m for real, and I am going to do this.” And he did—a stranger from another city passing through town, in Wal-Mart, on the same aisle at the same time as my mom.

My smile was uncontainable that Christmas Eve as I watched Kajal play her favorite game with the other children—creating patterns and networks out of hands. One by one she took the children’s right hands and placed them beside each other before taking their left hands and laying them in a stack. “Ashley di-di, give me your hand,” sang out Kajal. Kajal stood in the middle and began turning so that we all moved in a circle around her.

Kajal is right, I concluded, as I watched her form a web of connections, complete only when she had used both hands from every person in the room. We are all connected, and we all have a part to play, hands to give. While I had worried about how Kajal would find the support she needed to journey to the U.S. for surgery, all I had to do was play a small role by giving my hands and heart, and God did the rest by forming an intricate network of people who gave a “hand” from all over the world.

In July 2007, Kajal had her first reconstructive surgery on her right eye in Nashville. Dr. Wang believes she has a 50 percent chance of regaining sight. Her story has touched many lives, and we hope it may bring help to other children.

Sunita and Grace Malla, the girls whose pictures I had drawn early in my journey, have passed away. Sunita died in June 2006 of a fever. Grace Malla died in 2005 after a battle with AIDS. This is dedicated to them—this article, this project, this lifelong mission. When I drew their picture three years ago, it was not me drawing the story; they were drawing me into *their* story. Thank you, girls. This story is yours. ▼

# The Classes

“Adair Margo, BA'76, led the first U.S. delegation



of federal cultural officials to the People's Republic of China last June. ”



Herschel Gower,  
MA'52, PhD'57  
Dona Gower,  
MA'67, PhD'78

DANIEL DUBOIS

## Classical Revival

After Herschel Gower retired in 1985 as an English professor at Vanderbilt, he figured he'd take it easy and refinish furniture.

"I've done no refinishing at all," Gower says. "Working for one's wife is certainly hazardous."

The two now live in Dallas, where Dona is executive director of the Athena Foundation and her husband is a faculty member. With \$10,000 in seed money donated by teachers and \$12,000 contributed by the Gowers, she established the nonprofit organization in 1996 so that educators from kindergarten through college could immerse themselves in classic literature, both ancient and modern. Tuition for teachers is free.

"There is a profound need in America today for the classics to be brought to the forefront," says Dona, who has spent 35 years teaching.

The foundation operates on an annual budget of less than \$100,000. Athena students (more than 1,600 since 1996) gather in borrowed spaces around Dallas, such as rooms provided by a church, an apartment complex and a nonprofit foundation. The Gowers hope to open a Graduate Institute in World Literature by 2012 that will offer master's and doctoral degrees for teachers.

"Most teachers are students, first and foremost, and that's why they became teachers in the first place," Dona says.

—John Egan

“*Kelley Zelickson, BS'79, vice president and general manager of the tactical systems division*

## Alumni Association News



**Members of the new Vanderbilt Student Alumni Board—Chrissy Baccich, Kristina Hilseimer, Katie Hunter and Steven Elliot—flank Karen Fesmire, BS'80 (center), president of the Vanderbilt Alumni Association.**

### Knowledge Is Power

Remember when you were a Vanderbilt student, not quite sure where you would land after graduation or how you were going to make the transition from the classroom to the work world? Wouldn't it have been great to connect with former students who had at least some of the answers?

This fall the Office of Alumni Relations has launched a series of initiatives to bring alumni and current students together, increase students' awareness of and access to Vanderbilt's alumni network—and build unity and tradition among the classes. The hope is to involve students with the alumni community early on, even as prospective students. Benefiting from the wisdom of those who have gone before, these students will be able to seamlessly transition into engaged alumni once they leave the university.

One of these initiatives is the creation of the Vanderbilt Student Alumni Association. Through the work of student committees representing each undergraduate class, the association seeks to help foster connections between current students and alumni while also building a sense of community among the classes.

Many students are looking to alumni to offer advice on career paths, to demonstrate to them that they are part of a global Vanderbilt community, and to help them understand the connections between academics and life after Vanderbilt. By volunteering with these programs, you can help make a big difference in the life of a Vanderbilt student.

While the initial focus of student/alumni programming is on campus, the Alumni Association will expand these programs into Vanderbilt Chapter cities soon. For more information contact Lauren Schmitzer, associate director of alumni relations, by calling 615/322-2042 or e-mailing [lauren.schmitzer@vanderbilt.edu](mailto:lauren.schmitzer@vanderbilt.edu).



*of Northrop Grumman Corp, briefed the National Press Club last January.* ”

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“*Katleen Ann Becker, BS'82, is now known as Sister Mary Sophia Becker*



Katharine Carroll,  
BA'03

BILL PARSONS/SCENIC CITY VELO

## Bound for Glory

In 2005 Katharine Carroll was beginning her career as a professional cyclist. She just missed a top-10 finish in her first race, the Athens Twilight Criterium, and then placed fourth in the Joe Martin Stage Race. Just two years later—a very short time in the cycling world—she won both prestigious events.

“Once I got that first win, it all started to click,” she says. “You have to learn to win. It was a mental change, and I felt I could win every race after that.”

Carroll’s success caught the eye of the U.S. National team, which selected her to train in Europe last summer. She raced in the mountainous regions of Spain and Italy, getting a taste for competing with the world’s elite cyclists. In September, competing in France and Holland, she won one stage of the Tour Cycliste Féminin International Ardèche.

With several victories under her belt and a sponsor in place, Carroll can concentrate on her next goal—making the U.S. Olympic Team. She says 2008 is a long shot, but don’t be surprised if you see her sporting the red, white and blue on the streets of London at the 2012 Summer Olympics.

—Cindy Thomsen



with the Congregation of Benedictine Sisters of Perpetual Adoration. ”

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“ *John Sheban, BA'89, moved last winter to Baghdad, where he is a psychiatrist*



*...serving U.S. soldiers, DOD/DOS employees and local Iraqis.* ”



**Morgan Harbin (left) with Mary Kay Howard Bowden and Kim Howard Willson, both BS'02**

## **A Spare Pair in Every Purse**

Take three best friends forever. Let's make them blonde, with Southern accents. One night over a dinner of martinis and mini-burgers, the trio happens upon an idea that grows into an international success story—Passport Panties. Turns out tiny pieces of lingerie equal big business. You can find them in more than 350 stores around the world.

Identical twins Kim Howard Willson, BS'02, and Mary Kay Howard Bowden, BS'02, along with Morgan Harbin (a University of Alabama graduate), are the blondes behind the business. These young women aren't just the creators of the product ... they are the brand. A travel and airline theme is carried out in every aspect of marketing—from the packaging to the flight-attendant uniforms the three wear at trade shows. Their Web site ([www.passportpanties.com](http://www.passportpanties.com)) opens with an animated pink airplane emblazoned with the name "Air Force Blonde." Their goal is to grow the business into a full lingerie line all marketed under the umbrella company MMK Brands. Body shapers are the newest offering, and others are planned to follow.

Being in the intimate apparel business has its quirks, says Willson.

"Because of the type of product, our customers seem to think they can tell us all about their personal lives. Sometimes we think, 'We're not doctors—we're just designing underwear!'"

—Cindy Thomsen





### **Alumni Volunteers Boost Student Recruitment Efforts**

This year thousands of alumni assisted Vanderbilt in recruiting top-notch scholars by interviewing prospective students and attending college fairs.

The Alumni Interviewing Program (AIP) allows undergraduate applicants to request interviews with alumni who live in their areas. Students contact alumni directly via e-mail to request and arrange for these interviews, and interview reports are submitted to the Office of Undergraduate Admissions afterward. More than 1,600 alumni participated in the program this year, interviewing more than 2,000 prospective students.

Alumni volunteers also helped promote Vanderbilt by attending college fairs nationwide. Although representatives from the Office of Undergraduate Admissions attend as many college fairs as possible, they rely on alumni to help represent Vanderbilt when they cannot. This year alumni staffed information booths, answered questions about Vanderbilt, and encouraged prospective students to complete information cards, therefore enabling Vanderbilt to have a presence at more college fairs.

If you are interested in learning more about the AIP, visit our Web site at [www.vanderbilt.edu/admissions/AIP](http://www.vanderbilt.edu/admissions/AIP). To volunteer for college fairs in your area, please contact Angelo Lee in the Office of Undergraduate Admissions for more details by e-mailing [arc@vanderbilt.edu](mailto:arc@vanderbilt.edu).

### **Call for Board Nominations**

The Vanderbilt Alumni Association will soon select new members to its board of directors. Do you know the perfect candidate? Someone actively involved in your local Vanderbilt activities? We need your help identifying fellow alumni to serve your interests on the board.

The board includes a minimum of 18 regional representatives, 10 representatives of the largest Vanderbilt chapters, and representatives from Vanderbilt schools and colleges. Rotation of board members, who serve four-year terms, is staggered.

The Alumni Association is now calling for nominations for representatives from:

- Region I: Nashville
- Region II: Tennessee, exclusive of Nashville
- Region III: Southeast (North Carolina to Mississippi inclusive)
- Region IV: Northeast (Virginia and Kentucky northward)
- Region V: West of the Mississippi River
- Region VI: Areas outside the United States (Asia)

Representatives from these Vanderbilt chapters will be selected: Atlanta, Chicago, Memphis and New York. Representatives from the School of Engineering, Owen Graduate School of Management, School of Nursing, and the Blair School of Music also will be selected.

To find out more, visit [www.vanderbilt.edu/alumni/aaboardinfo.htm](http://www.vanderbilt.edu/alumni/aaboardinfo.htm). To nominate an alumnus or alumna, please use the online form at [www.vanderbilt.edu/alumni/aabodnom.htm](http://www.vanderbilt.edu/alumni/aabodnom.htm), or print out the form and submit it to:

Alumni Association Board Nominating Committee  
VU Station B #357735  
2301 Vanderbilt Place  
Nashville, TN 37235-7735

Fax nominations to **615/343-1412**, or e-mail [alumni@vanderbilt.edu](mailto:alumni@vanderbilt.edu). Hurry! The nominations deadline is Jan. 31, 2008.























**Southern Journal** continued from page 88  
 who was typically an older woman.

She tied the handfuls of tobacco on a stick with cotton twine. They were not fastened in knots, exactly, but the string was wound around the bunches in such a way as to hold them fast. When a stick was full, we hung it on a frame. When the frames were full, the strongest and most agile of the young men hung the sticks on rafters in the barn.

Once a barn was full, the process of curing began. The green leaves were dried by heat. Gas-fired stoves with flues for sending

out heat sat on the dirt floor of the barn, and as their heat rose, baking the leaves, they gradually turned from green to yellow-gold. When they were completely dry, the leaves were removed from the sticks and taken to a nearby warehouse, where they were put in piles and graded. Buyers from tobacco companies would walk among the piles and bid on their favorites.

Tobacco warehouses were dim, hot and musty. I can still see the piles of yellow leaves and smell their sweet pungent musk. It always made me queasy, and I seldom accompanied my father to the warehouses because of it.

Aside from the heat, humidity, long days, and sheer boredom of putting in tobacco, it's a grimy crop. Tobacco leaves have short hairs that produce a thick, sticky substance called "gum." After a few hours, black tobacco gum would be glued to your clothes, your hands, and anything you touched. Lava soap and Comet cleanser would take most of it off, but even then, by the end of the week scrubbing was futile—it had to wear off.

I worked in tobacco for just a couple of years. As soon as I was

old enough to drive, I found a summer job in air conditioning, working as a hostess-cashier at a Ramada Inn. It was paradise.

My father died in 1994, and my mother has rented our land to other farmers since. Sometimes they raise tobacco, but usually they grow peanuts, soybeans or, like this year, corn. Everyone is growing corn for ethanol.

I have been thinking recently about why I don't feel guilty about my hand in growing tobacco. There are many reasons: It has been grown for centuries before me, and smoking is a personal choice. Also, I used the product for about 10 years. I fought the war and survived, so to speak. Quitting was tough, but I never swore at tobacco.

It has contributed greatly to my good life. It bought me a horse, sent me to college, carried me to England one summer, and purchased my first car. Tobacco built the region of North Carolina in which I live, and it did the same for other parts of the state. If I were anything other than grateful to tobacco, I would be a hypocrite.

Today when I pass a tobacco field, I don't see cancer and caskets. I see Susie, my favorite looper; Betty Jean, my best childhood friend; and those young men hanging sticks of green leaves up high in the barn. Tobacco is wound



**In eastern North Carolina where Mary Tom Bass grew up, tobacco remains tightly wound into the economy and the landscape.**

DANIEL DUBOIS

SOLUTION TO CROSSWORD PUZZLE ON PAGE 64

|    |   |    |   |    |    |    |    |   |    |    |    |    |    |   |    |   |    |   |    |   |
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| 39 | A | R  | E | S  | T  |    |    |   |    | 40 | E  | M  | B  | E | R  |   |    |   |    |   |
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# Southern Journal

Reflections on the South

## The Crop That Built Carolina

*When tobacco has financed your education and sustained your family for generations, it's not as simple as just saying no.*

By MARY TOM BASS, MED'85

**N**ICOTIANA TABACUM. It's a lovely plant, really—large, bright green leaves on a central stem that reaches 6 feet or more. Mid-season, a fat cluster of nearly white tube flowers crown the stem. It's a hardy plant, too, resistant to both heat and drought. Perfect for the land I call home.

I grew up on a tobacco and cotton farm in eastern North Carolina. My cousins and many of my friends did, too. We never thought much about being part of a community whose fertile heritage included growing a product that has contributed to the deaths of thousands upon thousands. The grownups paid it no mind, either.

Daddy used to say that cotton was king. But the real lord and master in these parts was tobacco.

Flue-cured tobacco, the *crème de la crème*. Grown primarily in the Carolinas, Virginia, Georgia and Florida, it fairs especially well in the sandy loam that distinguishes this western edge of the coastal plain. Our tobacco is grade A prime produce.

Today the tobacco industry is light years from where it stood some 40 years ago when I was girl, but it is by no means a dead or even dying trade. The Federal Tobacco Quota Buyout in 2004 ended a price support system in place since the 1930s that determined how much would be grown where.

Everyone said the buyout would prove the end for tobacco growers. Even though fewer farmers in this part of the state now grow the crop, those who do have increased

their farm size and are growing more. In fact, North Carolina remains the nation's leading producer of flue-cured tobacco.

I am proud to be a member of an ever-shrinking community that worked on a traditional tobacco farm. In those days tobacco was planted, tended and harvested by human hands. Lots of them.

In the late fall we planted tobacco seeds in frames and covered them with porous fabric. By spring of the following year, the seedlings were ready.

Farm workers sat on a tobacco planter, which was four seats wide and hitched to a mule, and dropped the little plants in rows of freshly turned soil. Mid-season, when those pretty flowers were blooming, workers walked up and down each row to cut them off—called “topping”—so that all the nourishment would go into the leaves.

By July tobacco was ready to harvest. When farmers were “putting in” tobacco, other chores were left undone. We worked steadily through the day, every day except Sunday, with a break for lunch. It was grimy, sweaty, hard work, and because of it many a girl and boy came to appreciate that a college education might be useful.

Hand labor for the harvesting of tobacco was considerable. Both whites and blacks worked on our land. The Hispanics who comprise the bulk of farm workers in North Carolina now weren't here then.

I don't remember race being so much an issue as gender and age. The boys and men worked in the fields and picked the leaves, called “priming.” They picked from the bottom up, grabbing just the larger leaves, allow-



JIM HSEIH

ing the smaller ones toward the top to mature a few weeks more.

They laid the leaves in a “slide,” which was a mule-drawn long wooden box that slid down a row just wide enough for it and a mule. A “trucker” drove the mule. I coveted this job because I was horse crazy at the time, and mules were as close to a horse as I could get. But Daddy wouldn't let me be a trucker; I was a girl, and girls just didn't do that.

When the slide was full, the trucker brought it to the barn. Tobacco barns were built in clusters of at least two and often four. One of the barns was usually constructed with a shelter attached, and those not in the field worked under that shelter.

Children, girls (including me) and young women were “handers.” Handers grabbed four or five leaves, clumped them together, and handed them, stems out, to the “looper,”

*continued on page 87*





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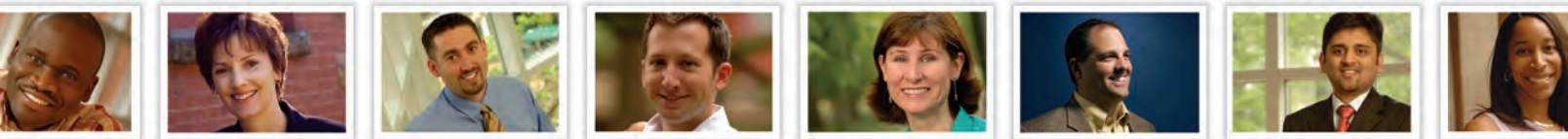
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