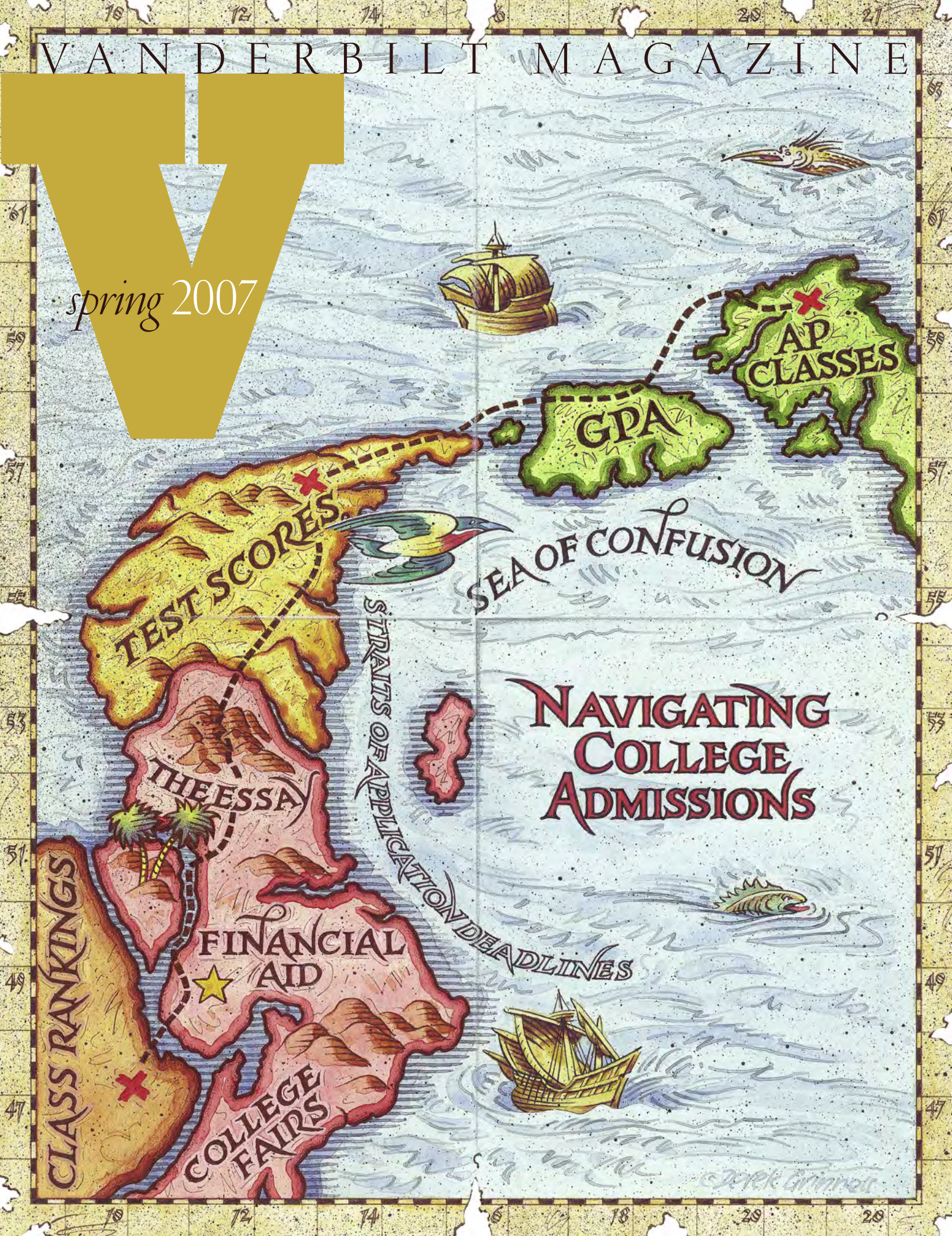
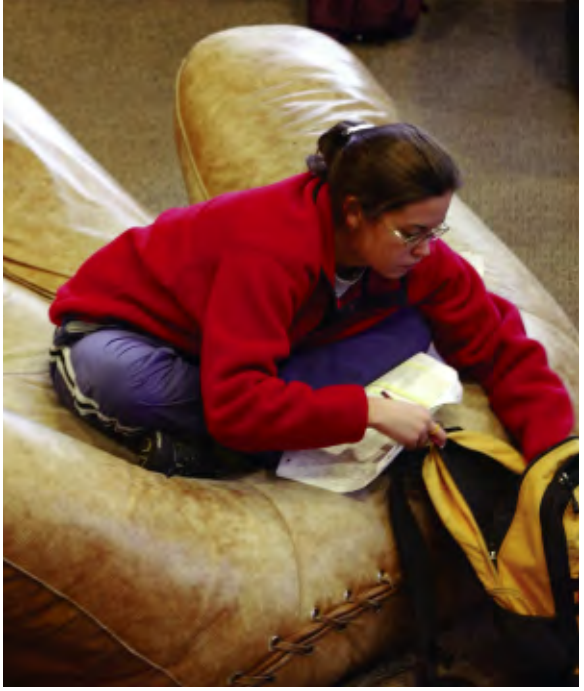
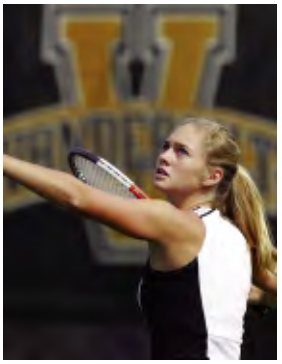
VANDERBILT MAGAZINE

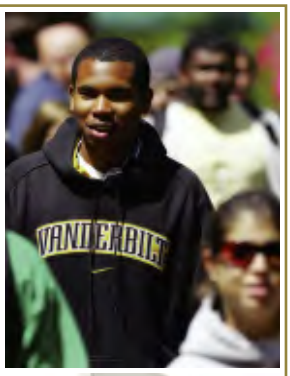
V

spring 2007









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Cover art by Derek Grinnell.

Hot Cuisine

Jon Bonnell, BS'94, puts the finishing touches on Texas-style culinary creations at Bonnell's Fine Texas Cuisine in Fort Worth. To read about more Vanderbilt alumni making their mark in the food world, turn to page 38. Photo by Daniel Dubois.

Contributors

For the Spring 2007 issue

Vanderbilt Magazine is published quarterly by Vanderbilt University from editorial and business offices at 2100 West End Ave., Suite 820, Nashville, TN 37203. Phone: 615/322-2601. E-mail: *vanderbiltmagazine@vanderbilt.edu*. Fax: 615/343-8547. Please send address corrections to Gift Records Office, Vanderbilt University, VU Station B 357727, 2301 Vanderbilt Place, Nashville, TN 37235-7703.

Charles Euchner

Charles Euchner, BA'82, is a writer in New Haven, Conn. He served as executive director of the Rappaport Institute for Greater Boston at Harvard University until 2004, when he left to focus on writing. In 2006 he published *The Last Nine Innings* (named one of the best baseball books of the year by *Sports Illustrated*) and *Little League, Big Dreams*. For most of his career, Euchner has focused on urban politics and policy. He is the author of *Playing the Field* (1994), *Extraordinary Politics* (1996), *Urban Policy Reconsidered* (2003), and *Governing Greater Boston* (2002).

Elaine Lacour Brown

Elaine Lacour Brown, BS'70, MA'71, EdS'73, is director of outreach services and admissions at the Tennessee School for the Blind. Located in Nashville, the school serves K–12 students. Brown has taught deaf, blind and multiple-disability students at the school for 28 years. She also plays a pivotal role in the school's Preschool Summer Evaluation Program, reaching children with visual challenges as early as possible in their educational progress.

Lisa A. DuBois

Lisa A. DuBois has been a freelance writer since 1985 and has penned stories for newspapers, magazines, radio and video. She received a bachelor's degree from the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill and a master's degree in biomedical communications from University of Texas Southwestern Medical Center in Dallas. She recently completed a history of the founding of the Monroe Carell Jr. Children's Hospital at Vanderbilt, *More Than a Place*, which is currently at press.

Frye Gaillard

Frye Gaillard, BA'68, is writer-in-residence at the University of South Alabama. The author of 19 books, he began his career as a newspaper reporter writing about the Civil Rights Movement. He was a reporter and editor for *The Charlotte Observer.* He also was founding editor of the Novello Festival Press in Charlotte, a national award-winning literary publishing company.

Jennie Floyd

Jennie Floyd, EMBA'92, received her bachelor's degree in business at the University of Alabama. Employers during her 20-year business career included AT&T, BellSouth, Nortel Networks, Telcordia Consulting and the Aberdeen Group. Since her retirement in 2000, Floyd has pursued a second career in the arts. In addition to being a working actress, she is a singer/songwriter with one CD released (Harwood Productions) and is a published poet/essayist for which she has won several awards. She lives with her husband and pug in the waterfront community of Foster City, on the west side of the San Francisco Bay.

Additional Contributors: Carole Bartoo, Joan Brasher, Doug Campbell, Kate Carney, Clinton Colmenares, Vivian F. Cooper, John Egan, Fredrick Hilliard, Elizabeth Latt, Jane MacLean, Anne Malinee, Joseph Mella, Melanie Moran, Heather Newman, Ann Marie Deer Owens, Missy Pankake, Jim Patterson, Kathy Rivers, Cindy Thomsen, Amy L. Wolf

DoreWays

A forum for exchanging ideas

From the Editor

Photo Synthesis

This spring *Vanderbilt Magazine*'s office moved from the Baker Building on 21st Avenue to the Loews Vanderbilt Complex a block away on West End Avenue. It was the excuse we needed to clean house and purge ourselves of thousands of old photos dating back to The Leisure Suit Age. We gave them a good home in Vanderbilt's Heard Library Photographic Archives, bless them.

All those forgotten photos got me to thinking what it would be like to work as a professional photographer, knowing most of the shots you capture will never see their way into print. Once the photo shoot is over, the photographer pretty much loses control.

Nowadays the photos you see in *Vanderbilt Magazine* are most often the work of Neil Brake or Daniel Dubois. These terrific university photographers provide images not only for *Vanderbilt Magazine*, but for hundreds of other university periodicals, Web sites, brochures, posters and more. They don't have the luxury of specializing in portraiture or campus scenes or action shots—they do it all, working many nights and weekends. And they must keep reinventing themselves, finding ways to make the same campus and the same buildings look fresh. I asked Steve Green, who schedules photo shoots and also photographs for Vanderbilt, how many shoots their office does annually. "Last year it was more than 1,800," he said. "This year we'll probably reach 2,000."

Dubois and Brake

STEVE GREEN

Sometimes I tag along with Daniel or Neil when they're shooting. Here are three things I've learned about taking photos:

1. You want spontaneity in a photo. But not *too* much spontaneity. Last spring when Daniel shot a *Vanderbilt Magazine* cover image of alumnus Brian Reames, BA'87, involving a wienie roast over a fire of rival-school souvenirs, a gust of wind nearly set greater Pegram, Tenn., ablaze.

2. College students are all photogenic—men and women alike. I don't know whether this is a universal truth or something peculiar to Vanderbilt. Maybe it's the modern miracles of orthodontia and dermatology.

3. Researchers like to demonstrate that their work is a team effort by pulling everyone remotely associated with their labs into the photo. Take the group photo. Then take the photo you need.

Finally, here's something I learned from a freelance photographer whom *Vanderbilt Magazine* no longer employs: Instructing a woman to "lick your lips, baby," while apparently a tried-and-true technique when photographing on Nashville's Music Row, works less well when the subject is a chaired Vanderbilt professor.

Thanks, Neil and Daniel. Your talent shines through in every issue of *Vanderbilt Magazine*.

—GayNelle Doll

From the Reader

When 'Dores Were Undefeated

Gary Gerson's excellent and refreshing article concerning his experience on the 1981 football team ("A Pipsqueak Among Giants," Fall 2006 issue, p. 40) brought back memories of the undefeated "V-Model" 11 of 1943.

In the fall of 1943, the Southeastern Conference was inactive—put on hold because of the Second World War. However, there was enough interest on campus to form a "fun" team coached by Herc Alley and Doby Bartling. This team played such powerhouses as Milligan, TPI, Carson-Newman and Fort Campbell, Ky., and ended the season without a loss.

Like Gary Gerson, I was in my freshman year at Vanderbilt in 1943 and wanted to play. Also like Gary I was quite small, about 5-foot-8 and 140 pounds. Due to the limited number of male students on campus because of the war, I was readily accepted.

During scrimmage each day it was the job of the left guard and the left tackle (each about 200 pounds) to block me out. They accomplished this without much strain.

Each day during the football season of 1943, Fred Russell, '27, of the *Nashville Banner* wrote an article about one of the players. I knew my time would come, but I didn't know what he would say because I was the smallest and the slowest man on the team. Mr. Russell was most generous. He commented that "if everyone tried as hard as David James, the team would do just fine."

I am most appreciative of having had the opportunity to be a part of the last undefeated and untied Vanderbilt football team.

Dr. David H. James, BA'48, MD'51
West Memphis, Ark.

Remembrance of Pipsqueaks Past

The Fall 2006 issue is full of examples of the extraordinary and eclectic legacy Vanderbilt instills in its graduates. There are two articles, "Mysteries and Miracles" [p. 32] and

"A Pipsqueak Among Giants" [p. 40], that I would love to pass along to my kids in digital format. Is that possible?

My daughter has three children, the sweetest and most loving grandchildren my wife and I could ever hope for. All three are autistic to a degree—a statistical improbability, if not impossibility, but nevertheless a reality that my daughter and our son-in-law deal with and endure every day of their lives. Jeanie is very involved in Autism Speaks and its research.

Having played football at Vandy in the late '60s (we even had a winning season my senior year), I knew and played with a number of walk-ons who were adopted and accepted by the team. Truth be told, a couple of them probably had more talent than some of our scholarship players.

How can I get the magazine in digital format? Is it possible to send individual articles, or are there copyright restrictions?

Steven Ernst, BA'70
Layton, Utah

[Editor's Note: *Issues of* Vanderbilt Magazine *dating back to 2000 are available online at www.vanderbilt.edu/alumni/publications/index. Readers are welcome to pass items of interest along to others. Reprinting of articles in other publications, however, requires permission from the magazine.*]

Thinking Globally, Acting Locally

I urgently need at least one, and preferably three, reprints of your cover story on Muhammad Yunus ["Peace Through Prosperity," p. 30] from the Fall 2006 issue, please. A local group in Louisville wants to start a micro-lending program, and this article would give us useful information.

Sadly, your magazine is so good that my wife already cut out the article on autism that began on page 32 of the same magazine, so all I have is page 30.

Your magazine is one I read cover to cover, almost every issue. It's wonderfully written and beautifully executed.

Garrison Cox, MBA/JD'81
Louisville, Ky.

The Magazine Goes to Drug Court

I always enjoy receiving the magazine and sharing interesting information with friends and co-workers. The Fall 2006 issue found me cutting out the article about the freshman class diversity and entrance stats [p. 12] for my high school daughter and her guidance counselor, clipping the article on autism ["Mysteries and Miracles," p. 32] for a friend who parents an autistic child and chairs a local parent support group, and copying the information in "Crystal Menace" [p. 54] and its effect on the Vanderbilt community for my Drug Court staff. It is obvious you are working hard to relate to your readers. Kudos.

Kimberly Winkenhofer Shumate, JD'87
Hardin District Judge
Elizabethtown, Ky.

It Doesn't Compute

You'll want to check the facts contained in the page 12 article on the new freshman enrollment [Fall 2006 issue, The Campus, "First-Year Students Bring Diversity, High Scores"]. It's been almost 45 years since I took calculus and statistics at Vandy, but it does not take a math whiz to quickly perceive statistical inaccuracy. Attesting to Vanderbilt's increasing selectivity, the admissions office asserts that "of the 12,192 applications, 1,590—or 33.9 percent—were admitted." Better instruct your editors to look at that again—my calculator says 13 percent, a considerably more impressive figure.

Dudley Warner II, BA'65
Nashville

[Editor's Note: *We should have included the fact that Vanderbilt sent out 4,128 letters of acceptance—hence the 33.9 percent. Of those, 1,590 chose to matriculate at Vanderbilt. For more about Vanderbilt admissions, see page 28.*]

Autism and the Thimerosal Controversy

Thank you for publishing "Mysteries and Miracles" [Fall 2006 issue, p. 32]. As an alumna and a parent of a child diagnosed with an autism spectrum disorder, I am always pleased to see media coverage relating to alternative treatments and therapies for children suffering from this silent epidemic. However, I was stunned that your magazine printed such unscientific inaccuracies in the article. Lisa Dubois stated that "for a while, some people argued that thimerosal, a mercury-based additive in childhood vaccines, was behind the rise in autism cases—but that theory has not held up under scientific scrutiny. Thimerosal was removed from American vaccines in 1999, and as far as anyone can tell, there has been no subsequent decline in ASD in children born after that time."

These statements are false. The March 10, 2006, issue of the *Journal of American Physicians and Surgeons* published a report concluding that since mercury was removed from many childhood vaccines, the alarming increase in reported rates of autism and other neurological disorders in children not only stopped, but actually dropped sharply—by as much as 35 percent. A 2003 congressional report had previously concluded that thimerosal did pose a risk and was related to the epidemic of autism. According to that report, the epidemic might have been prevented "had the FDA not been asleep at the switch regarding the lack of safety data regarding injected thimerosal and the

sharp rise of infant exposure to this known neurotoxin. Our public health agencies' failure to act is indicative of institutional malfeasance for self-protection and misplaced protectionism of the pharmaceutical industry." Another U.S. study that inadequately examined this issue did not properly clarify comparisons between children receiving thimerosal and those receiving none. Its lead author concluded that "an association between thimerosal and neurological outcomes could neither be confirmed nor refuted and, therefore, more study is required."

Thimerosal has not been removed from all vaccines as stated in your article. Thimerosal-containing Hepatitis B vaccine, RhoGam, and flu shots given to pregnant women and infants as young as 6 months old all result in prenatal or newborn mercury exposures to children. It is not surprising to me that the Vanderbilt alumni magazine would attempt to bury the inconvenient theory that mercury in vaccines has caused the autism epidemic. Only a few weeks ago, Dr. William Schaffner of Vanderbilt University Medical Center told CNN's *House Call* that "we have an abundance of influenza vaccine. In fact, this year we're all working hard to make sure that we use all this vaccine." He recommended pregnant women and children from 6 months to 5 years get not one but two flu shots per year. It is well established that the adult version of the flu shot contains mercury in levels 250 times higher than what hazardous-waste regulations say is safe. Vanderbilt's obvious agenda is to promote vaccines, and promoting the injection of deadly neurotoxins into our children is wrong. I respectfully request that these errors be pointed out to your readers and that those who would like more information please refer to the Web site www.a-champ.org.

Jennifer Talley Keefe, BA'94
Dallas

[Editor's Note: *We asked Michael Aschner, Vanderbilt professor of pediatrics, professor of pharmacology, and the Gray E.B. Stahlman Professor of Neuroscience, to respond regarding the thimerosal issue. His reply follows:*

Thimerosal was introduced as a preservative in vaccines in the 1930s. In 2001 it was

removed from vaccines (U.S. market). An infant vaccinated according to the recommended schedule (American Pediatric Society) will receive doses of mercury exceeding the cutoff levels established by regulatory agencies. However, conclusions on the toxicity of ethylmercury (thimerosal) are predominantly drawn from analogies to methylmercury. This practice is invalid as (1) mercury clears from the body much faster after the administration of ethylmercury than methylmercury, and (2) the brain-to-blood mercury concentration ratio established for methylmercury will overestimate mercury in the brain after exposure to ethylmercury. Sound epidemiologic studies in support of a link between thimerosal in vaccines and autism are not available.]

Inspiration in the Obits

I am repeatedly impressed with the level of journalism exhibited by "our" magazine. At my age, 77, I wish I didn't feel so compelled to pore over the obits. The tomorrows of the magazines are not in the obits, but with the passing of each alumnus I am reminded and proud of the very special people who have spent an important, though brief, part of their lives on the Vanderbilt campus.

Jerry L. Hughes Jr., '52
Altamonte Springs, Fla.

Career Choices

Times may not have changed as much as Audrey Peters thinks they have [Fall 2006 issue, A.P.O.V., "A Fork in the Road," p. 68]. Graduating with a B.A. in 1948, I had the same dilemma she has now about finding a job without a professional degree. Some of my classmates foresaw the difficulty and took education courses at Peabody so we could at least teach school after graduation.

The only teaching job I could find in Nashville was in the country, and not having an automobile, I had to try other options and found employment with Eastern Air Lines in reservations. At that time Eastern required employees to have a college degree.

After I married a struggling young lawyer in private practice (Ralph E. Wilson, JD'49), I taught English and Spanish and was librarian at Osceola (Ark.) High School for many years, and ended up being Ralph's legal secretary for 46 years. Tell Audrey there are a lot of options out there.

Mary Ann Murray Wilson, BA'48
Osceola, Ark.

Smoke, Fire, Lebanon and Israel

I am pleased to hear that students at Vanderbilt are able to experience life in foreign lands. Given Ryan Farha's family history [Fall 2006 issue, S.P.O.V., "Peace to Beirut with All My Heart," p. 66], I also understand his biased position about the conflicts in the Middle East. (My family, too, was forced to leave Eastern Europe during pogroms at the turn of the last century.) But most important, I am saddened by his position about Israel's one-sided guilt with regard to the conflict.

Perhaps Ryan's education and livelihood would be better served trying to understand both sides of the conflict by joining a more balanced organization such as Students for Peace instead of Dores for Palestine. It is the one-sided dogma evident in Ryan's thinking and writing that limit his ability to understand why peace in the Middle East is so complex and elusive.

Mark Fisher, MBA'85
Dallas

Omission

Versus Magazine (a Vanderbilt student publication) was our source for Ryan Farha's S.P.O.V. essay, "Peace to Beirut with All My Heart," which ran in the Fall 2006 *Vanderbilt Magazine*. We regret that we did not give *Versus* credit.

I found Ryan Farha's S.P.O.V. essay very interesting concerning his experience in Beirut during the fighting between Israel and Hezbollah. What was more troubling was his viewpoint that only Israel is to blame. I guess he conveniently forgot that Hezbollah kidnapped an Israeli soldier and had been launching rockets into northern Israel from Lebanon prior to Israel's invasion. I

guess that means it was OK for Hezbollah to attack Israel, but it was not OK for Israel to retaliate. Maybe now Ryan has been able to read more and see different viewpoints on the news, and see who was really to blame for the invasion of southern Lebanon.

Tom Parrish, BE'75, MS'77
Tullahoma, Tenn.

With regard to the S.P.O.V. article by Ryan Farha in the fall issue, I understand that articles do not necessarily reflect the editorial opinion of *Vanderbilt Magazine*. Secondly, I value the free and open exchange of different viewpoints, especially in the setting of a university.

I believe most all people are pained to see bombing of villages, the killing of innocents, or even the loss of combatants. Most all wars are ultimately senseless.

Mr. Farha's article is, in my judgment, quite one-sided. He describes the 15 years of fighting that ceased in the 1980s but fails to note it was principally a civil war between Christians and Muslims. The current crisis in Lebanon is quite similar, and not a single Israeli soldier (except for the two captives) remains in Lebanon. He states that violence penetrated its borders, and that is certainly true. He fails to mention that the penetration of the United Nations-recognized border was begun by the cross-border penetration of Israel by the Lebanese Hezbollah.

Understandably, he was upset by the sound of aircraft and bombing, as were the Israelis by the sounds of incessant rocket attacks from Lebanon into Israel. He states that Beirut pulsates with energy at night. So does Tel Aviv; however, they at all times must be concerned about suicide bombers in discos, shopping malls and buses.

As to the last line of his article, the song lyric: "So how did it come to taste of smoke and fire?" For the answer I suggest he write to Sheik Nasralah, head of the same organization that killed 215 American Marine peacekeepers with a truck bomb in the Lebanese civil war and ordered the rockets and invasion of Israel in the latest conflict.

Dr. Alan J. Brown, MD'60
New York City

Stacking the Deck

The "Southern Journal" article in your Summer 2006 issue ["A Flaw in the Perfection of Inaction," p. 88], reminded me of an experience I had in the summer of 1961. I accepted a job as athletic director and basketball coach at a junior college in east central Alabama. I went to the county seat to register to vote. Unsmiling, the clerk notified me that there were two requirements: a poll tax of $15—5.5 percent of my monthly salary—and the passing of a 25-question test about history, U.S. government and the Constitution. I stated to the clerk that there was no way I could pass it. He assured me that was not true. I repeated my statement. He smiled and said, "Yes, you can." I asked how he knew that, and he smiled and proclaimed, "Because you are white." My first thought was, What have I gotten myself into down here?

Less than two years later, I would find out. While fulfilling my Army Reserve obligation, I had the privilege (obligation?) to visit both Birmingham and Tuscaloosa. While in the armory in Birmingham, the infamous church bombing occurred. That event resulted in our unit's being issued live ammunition and put on alert for possible confrontation with angry civilians who were also armed. As a lieutenant, the thought of live ammo in the hands of sympathizers in the rear made me quite uncomfortable. Fortunately, the order never came to go out. Then it was off to Tuscaloosa, where our unit escorted the two black students to and from classes until things calmed down and I was discharged.

I would have wagered the remaining 95 percent of my salary that no student or professor, past or present, could have passed that voting eligibility test.

Alvis R. Rochelle, BA'57
Guthrie, Ky.

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.*

An Ounce of Prevention

How family, loss and the Cultural Revolution shaped one physician's career. By Dr. Xiao Ou Shu

Fifteen years ago I stepped off a plane from China and into the largest and busiest city in the United States with a scholarship to Columbia University. I had arrived ready to pursue graduate studies in epidemiology but not before serious debate over whether I should practice medicine or pursue research.

I had grown up in China surrounded by a rich and diverse legacy of doctors. My paternal grandfather had practiced traditional Chinese medicine. A kindly old man with a long white beard, he ran a pharmacy with walls full of small drawers filled with herbs and was well respected by the people in his small village, whom he treated with herbs and acupuncture. When I last saw him, I was 5 years old. Probably suffering from a neurological disease, his hand shook so uncontrollably at the dinner table that he was hardly able to pick up any food with his slim chopsticks. In the end, he was unable to cure his own disease and died three years later, which is when I realized that such traditional medicine has its limitations.

My maternal grandfather came from a wealthy family and received formal training in Western medicine from a prestigious medical school. Through an arranged marriage, he wed a beautiful but uneducated girl from a small town. My mother was their oldest child. My grandfather, however, was often absent and did not love my grandmother. He eventually left her and their children at the family compound and married one of his nurses. (Both he and his second wife came down with tuberculosis and died a couple of years later.)

My mother was 12 when her father died. After seeing the suffering of her uneducated mother, she was determined to get a good education and follow her father into the world of medicine. Her wealthy uncles provided a good standard of living, but they refused to support my mother's dream of becoming a doctor because, like most men at the time, they were heavily influenced by the Confucian philosophy that "the woman with no talent is the one who has merit." Unhappy with her comfortable but stilted lifestyle, my mother ran away at the age of 14 to attend a free boarding school for teachers, the only option for education available to her.

Although she never became a doctor, my mother did become the first female teacher in her county and instilled her dreams in my sisters and me. Growing up hearing stories of our grandfathers, we, too, wanted to join the world of heroic white-clad doctors. Everything changed, however, in 1966 when the Cultural Revolution began in China. Most universities no longer admitted students based on academic merit, and students like my two older sisters were removed from high schools or universities and sent off for "re-education" as farmers and workers. For my sisters and me, the door to higher education was doubly closed because my parents came from wealthy families and, thus, we were particularly targeted for re-education.

At the age of 16, I was sent to the countryside for re-education, as my sisters had been. Neither of them ever had the chance to go back and finish school, but I got lucky. One year after I left home, the Cultural Revolution ended and I was able to pursue the

JIM HSIEH

family dream of entering medicine. Facing loads of work I had missed, I struggled for two years to catch up before finally passing the very competitive university entrance exams. The day I received my acceptance letter from Shanghai Medical University was one of the happiest days of my life. I was finally realizing both my dream and my mother's.

However, not long afterward I felt like I had been dropped from a skyscraper when I learned that I had been assigned to major in preventive medicine, not clinical medicine as I had expected. I will always remember the first day we met our professors when, still disappointed, I sat with a crowd of other students in a big lecture room. As we shuffled our papers, a professor, one of the most prominent epidemiologists in the country, told us, "The best doctor is the one who treats people before they get a disease." At the time I thought he was only comforting

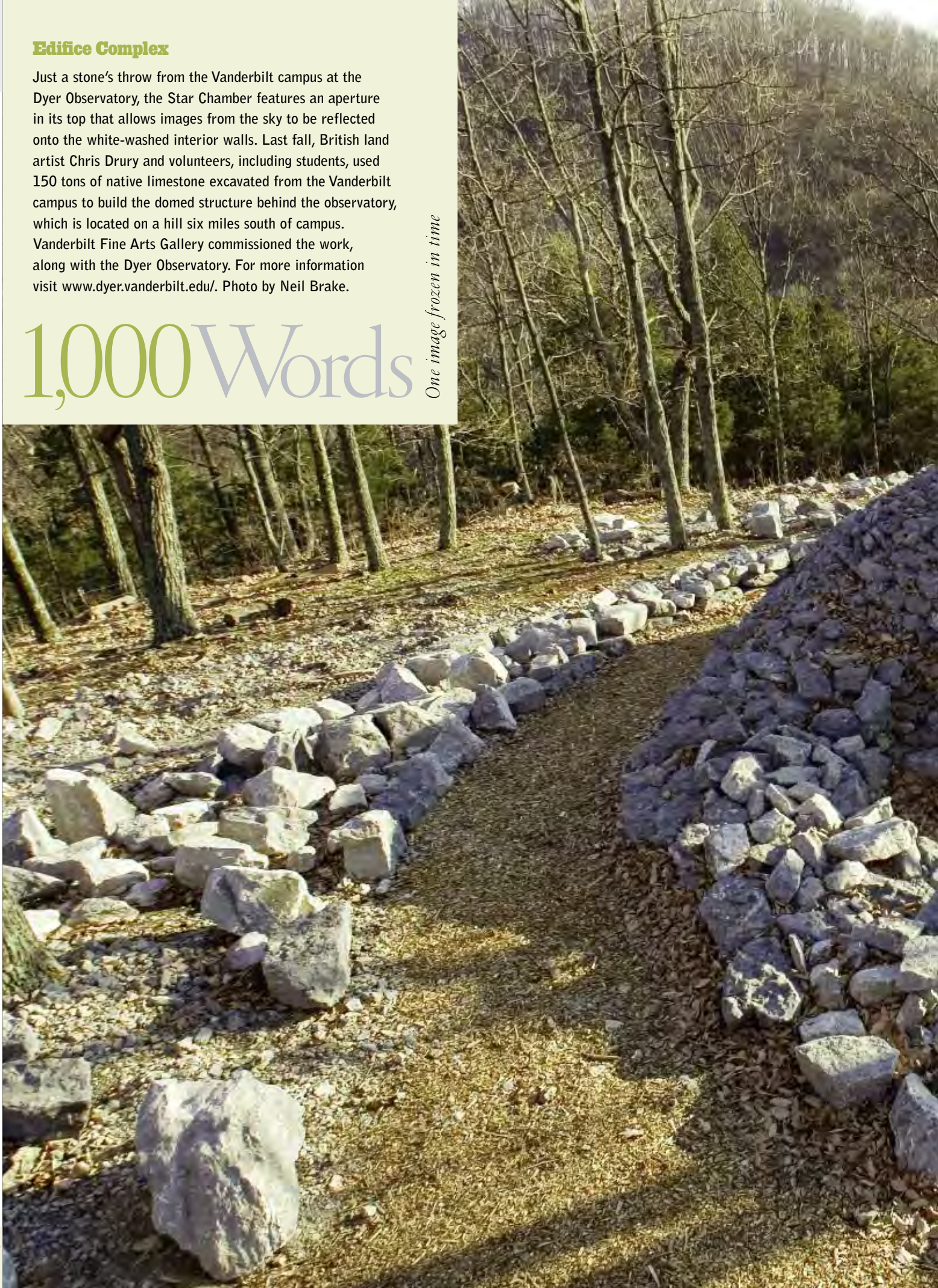
continued on page 85

Edifice Complex

Just a stone's throw from the Vanderbilt campus at the Dyer Observatory, the Star Chamber features an aperture in its top that allows images from the sky to be reflected onto the white-washed interior walls. Last fall, British land artist Chris Drury and volunteers, including students, used 150 tons of native limestone excavated from the Vanderbilt campus to build the domed structure behind the observatory, which is located on a hill six miles south of campus. Vanderbilt Fine Arts Gallery commissioned the work, along with the Dyer Observatory. For more information visit www.dyer.vanderbilt.edu/. Photo by Neil Brake.

1,000 Words

One image frozen in time



The Campus

"Smoking is the single most preventable cause of chronic diseases,

VU 4th in Recruiting African American Students

Vanderbilt ranks fourth among the nation's top universities in the percentage of African Americans who make up this year's freshman class, according to a survey by *The Journal of Blacks in Higher Education.*

With African Americans comprising 9.4 percent of the first-year class, Vanderbilt is tied with Columbia University in rankings released Nov. 7. Only the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill with 12.3 percent, Stanford University with 10.1 percent, and Duke University with 9.5 percent had higher rates.

"Over the past decade the number of black freshmen at Vanderbilt has nearly doubled," the magazine said, noting that in 1995 only 4 percent of the freshman class was black. "Vanderbilt has moved from 10th place in last year's survey to a tie for fourth, its highest level in the 14 years JBHE has conducted its survey."

The magazine based its findings on data provided by the top 30 national universities, as determined by *U.S. News & World Report* magazine in its most recent "Best Colleges" rankings.

Each school was asked to provide information on the number of African American applicants, their acceptance rates, enrollment numbers and yield rates, which measure the percentage of students who eventually enroll in the college at which they were accepted.

Of the 12,189 students who applied for admission to Vanderbilt's freshman class last fall, 853 were African Americans. Vanderbilt accepted 350 African Americans, and 149 enrolled as members of the Class of 2010, which totals 1,590.

"The percentage of black applicants who receive invitations to join the freshman class is a strong gauge of an institution's commitment to racial diversity," the magazine said. "The figure remains the most sensitive of all admissions data. This is particularly true for the very highest ranked institutions."

Web site: **www.jbhe.com/preview/autumn06preview.html**

Nurses Target Patient Tobacco Use

Nationwide, nearly 21 percent of U.S. adults smoke. Tennessee, at 26 percent, is home to the third highest percentage of smokers in the country. Vanderbilt University School of Nursing is teaching its students how to help patients snuff out their tobacco habit.

The school is the first in the nation to adopt a wide-ranging educational program that integrates standardized smoking-cessation strategies into its curriculum for students to use with patients.

"Institutions of higher learning have a responsibility to push the envelope and become catalysts for change," says Linda Norman, senior associate dean of academics at the School of Nursing. "Smoking is the single most preventable cause of chronic diseases, and therefore offers the opportunity for us to make the biggest difference."

The program involves

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and offers the opportunity for us to make the biggest difference. —LINDA NORMAN, *Vanderbilt University School of Nursing*

ISTOCKPHOTO.COM/ANDREI TCHERNOV

expertise and support from the Vanderbilt-Ingram Cancer Center, the Tennessee Department of Health, Metro Health Department, and the National Cancer Institute. The VUSN portion of the program expands tobacco-cessation training for nursing students and incorporates it in targeted care plans. Students are learning how to approach tobacco cessation as a mix of behavioral, emotional and physical changes.

The Centers for Disease Control reports that 70 percent of smokers trying to quit want help, but only 36 percent of tobacco-using patients receive information about how to quit or where to get support.

"Nursing is at the top of the list when it comes to most-trusted professions," says Cathy Taylor, assistant professor of nursing. "Nurses, nurse faculty members and nursing students are well positioned to implement tobacco-cessation efforts in our curriculum and, most important, with patients."

Union Contract Agreement Reached

Following months of negotiations, Vanderbilt University and the Laborers International Union of North America, Local 386, the union representing approximately 600 employees in the custodial, grounds, food service and skilled crafts categories at Vanderbilt, have reached an agreement on a new three-year contract.

The agreement calls for an increase in the base rate of pay to $10 per hour for workers in the lowest pay grade within the next 20 months; a guaranteed across-the-board annual increase of 3 percent in the first year of the contract and an increase of 3.5 percent in the second and third years of the agreement; implementation of a new program that will provide opportunities for lower-paid employees to earn additional increases based on service and performance; and increases in shift differentials and on-call pay.

Compensation for lower-wage employees in academia has been a hot-button issue at a number of universities in recent years. Since 2004, Living Wage proponents, including a coalition of university employees, students, faculty members, community members, religious leaders and labor organizations, have launched a high-profile campaign to push for higher wages at Vanderbilt, taking out full-page advertisements in local newspapers and in *The Chronicle of Higher Education*. The issue has attracted a number of prominent figures to campus, including presidential hopeful John Edwards.

"After lengthy good-faith negotiations and with the help of a federal mediator, we have reached an agreement that both sides are pleased with and that will significantly benefit our employees and the university," says Kevin Myatt, associate vice chancellor and chief human resource officer.

The contract took effect immediately upon ratification, and wages were retroactive to November 2006, when the previous contract expired.

Gone in 30 Minutes

Every professor should be this popular. Less than half an hour after students received notification that a course taught by former U.S. Rep. and Senate candidate Harold Ford Jr. had been added to the spring academic offerings, the class filled to capacity.

Ford, a Democrat from Memphis, had been much in the news the previous semester during his run for U.S. Senate. He lost the closest Senate race in Tennessee's history to Republican Bob Corker after a contest that gained considerable national attention, in part because of controversial television ads placed by the Republican National Committee.

DANIEL DUBOIS

Ford

Appointed a visiting professor of public policy at Vanderbilt, Ford led a seminar titled Foundations of American Political Leadership for undergraduates. He also was one of the speakers for Vanderbilt's Impact Symposium in March, which also featured former Speaker of the House Newt Gingrich and journalist Lou Dobbs.

Ford, who served five terms in the U.S. House of Representatives, was keynote speaker for the 2000 Democratic National Convention.

Inquiring Minds

Piling on Pounds? Maybe It's Your Math

ISTOCKPHOTO.COM/KEVIN EDGE PHOTOGRAPHY

Difficulties with math and reading are limiting consumers' ability to understand nutrition information presented on food labels, according to a study by Vanderbilt University Medical Center researchers.

Two-thirds of 200 patients surveyed could not correctly calculate the amount of carbohydrates in a 20-ounce bottle of soda that held two and a half servings. Just over half could calculate the amount of carbohydrates in half a bagel when the serving size on the label was listed as a whole bagel. The study was published in the November 2006 issue of the *American Journal of Preventive Medicine*.

"We found that, while a lot of the people we tested had decent literacy skills, many of them had poor numeracy skills," says Russell Rothman, assistant professor of medicine and pediatrics.

Raindrops Pack a Wallop

When billions of raindrops fall on bare soil, they strike like tiny hammers. Over time, rain splash has played a major role in sculpting the features of mountains and cliffs. Splash erosion causes an estimated $27 billion in on-site economic losses in the United States annually.

Using a high-speed camera, researchers from Vanderbilt and Arizona State University have analyzed interaction between individual raindrops and soil particles and produced a theoretical model for the way momentum carried by raindrops is transferred to sand grains that are blasted away from impact sites. Their work was published Jan. 16 in the *Journal of Geophysical Research*.

"The more we understand the basic physics of the splash-erosion process, the better we can become at controlling it in the farmer's field," says David Furbish, professor of earth and environmental sciences at Vanderbilt, who directed the study.

Lighter, Taller Immigrants Earn More

Professor of Law and Economics Joni Hersch has found that legal immigrants in the U.S. with lighter skin tone make more money than those with darker skin. Hersch used data from 2,084 men and women who participated in the 2003 New Immigrant Survey. An interviewer reported the person's skin color using an 11-point scale.

Even taking into consideration characteristics such as English language proficiency, work experience and education, Hersch found immigrants with the lightest skin earned, on average, 8 percent to 15 percent more than those with the darkest skin. The effect persisted among workers with the same ethnicity, race and country of origin.

"I was surprised and dismayed at how strong and persistent the skin-color effect was even after I considered a whole series of alternative interpretations and explanations," Hersch says. Her research also found that taller immigrants earned more, with every inch adding 1 percent more in wages.

Business, Faith and Fighting Poverty

What happens when creative M.B.A. and divinity students put their heads together? Divine inspiration on how business can end poverty.

Project Pyramid, one of the first classes of its kind in the country, is using the teachings of Nobel Peace Prize winner Muhammad Yunus, PhD'71, to inspire students as they design ways to invest in the poor.


RICK NEASE

More than 50 students from the Owen Graduate School of Management and Vanderbilt Divinity School enrolled this semester in the course Project Pyramid: Business Applications and Innovations for Alleviating Poverty, which used Hyderabad, India, as a model for studying poverty alleviation. Bart Victor, the Cal Turner Professor of Moral Leadership at Owen, taught the course and challenged students to create plans that would do well financially and use Yunus' philosophy that combines business, faith, and hope for the future. The class analyzed microfinance, supply chain management, marketing and innovation as case topics.

In March, 21 students traveled with three faculty members to India for a 10-day study of poverty. The group tracked its trip on a video blog: **www.projectpyramid.org.**

"I believe most students think of the two schools as opposite ends of the spectrum, that you serve God or serve money, but you can't serve both," says Graham Reside, Divinity School assistant professor. "So it's an interesting endeavor to bridge."

"One of the questions brought up in class was, Are we going in to make money, or are we going in to better lives? Really, the answer is yes, but which way are you leaning toward?" says divinity student Elizabeth Nicole King. "Within the global world we are now in, even I must admit that I have to embrace the business world and the desire that people have for money. If I don't, I'm the one who loses out in my initiatives toward empowering the poor."

The Vanderbilt students are hosting an international case competition in October, focused on the theme "Changing the World from the Bottom Up."

"If we can bring profitable business to impoverished areas throughout the world, we can help raise the standard of living for people who have long been forgotten, those at the bottom of the pyramid," says Owen student and Project Pyramid co-creator Rehan Choudhry.

Not Your Father's Summer Camp

If bored teens at your house are balking at the prospect of another summer of archery and campfire songs at Lake Skeeter, here's an alternative.

Through Students' Eyes

www.insidevandy.com

Vanderbilt Student Communications Inc., the organization for student media on campus, recently launched InsideVandy.com, a Web site and online community. The site delivers breaking news and content produced by Vanderbilt student media, including news, features, commentary, photos, videos and more from *The Vanderbilt Hustler* newspaper, *Versus* magazine, the *Commodore* yearbook, the *Vanderbilt Review* literary journal, Vanderbilt Television and WRVU radio.

Virtual Vanderbilt

At Vanderbilt Summer Academy, rising eighth- through 12th-grade students have fun while also flexing their intellectual muscles. The program offers challenging curricula in math, science and the humanities, integrating resources from the university's research programs. Held during June and July, it includes residential programs ranging in duration


NEIL BRAKE

from one to three weeks. Depending on the course, students will learn about robotics, nanotechnology, or other cutting-edge fields and will spend time in laboratories and research centers. Young writers can learn from published authors. Courses are designed to exceed high school courses in breadth and depth.

On weekends and after classes, students will enjoy social and recreational activities, including Tae Kwon Do, yoga classes, and offerings ranging from Polynesian dancing to African drumming. They also will have access to the Vanderbilt Student Recreation Center's swimming pool, running track, basketball courts, tennis courts, athletic fields and indoor rock wall.

The Summer Academy is part of Vanderbilt's Programs for Talented Youth, begun in 2000 with the aim of identifying and aiding academically talented youth from diverse educational, racial and economic backgrounds by providing academic enrichment and challenge while fostering balance and healthfulness in their lives.

Web site: **http://pty.vanderbilt.edu/vsa.html**

Networking, Hollywood-Style

Chad Gervich, BA'96, knew from the time he was in preschool that he wanted to write for a living, but he never imagined he would write and produce television in Hollywood. After graduating from Vanderbilt with an interdisciplinary major in creative writing, film and theater, he headed for graduate school at the University of California in Los Angeles. Thanks to a mentoring program for graduate students, he met Warren Littlefield, the man responsible for the development of such blockbuster series as *Cheers, Friends, ER* and *Will and Grace*. Littlefield, the former president of NBC's entertainment division, hired Gervich to help develop and produce television shows through Littlefield's own company.

Gervich continues to work with the Littlefield Co. as well as independently as a producer. And he has started a group called Vandy-in-Hollywood. "The group focuses primarily on people with Vanderbilt ties living in Los Angeles and working in television, film, music and theater, but we have active members across the nation," he says. "They range from top execs of national theater chains to agency department heads to Broadway composers and musicians." The group has a password-protected Web site. Those interested in joining should e-mail Gervich at cgervich@littlefieldco.com.

ISTOCKPHOTO.COM/SUSARO

The organization grew out of a project Gervich did for Sam Girgus, professor of English. "I first thought of inviting Chad, a former student of mine, to do a workshop titled 'Vandy in Hollywood' as part of our new Film at the Vanderbilt Commons [project]," Girgus says. "It has grown into an expanded program that can work on many levels, including more workshops, internships for students in Hollywood, and visits to Vanderbilt from Hollywood film and television people."

At a Vandy-in-Hollywood launch party last Oct. 26 at Holly's in the heart of Hollywood, approximately 65 alumni turned out, representing all facets of the entertainment industry.

Gervich returned to campus for Reunion/Homecoming Weekend last fall. He conducted a workshop for the America on Film: Art and Ideology class taught by Girgus. He also met with the leaders of Vanderbilt

Student Communications to explore ways to build connections between Vandy-in-Hollywood and the campus media and entertainment outlets, and was part of a panel discussion during the weekend.

Another goal of the organization is to establish a summer internship program with Vanderbilt focusing on areas such as production, television development and music scouting.

"So many people coming out of college believe that all it takes to be successful in Hollywood is to be young and talented," Gervich says. "Students don't realize that the entertainment industry is a business, just like any type of sales."

Freedom Ride 2007 Retraces History

Forty-six years ago Freedom Riders protested segregation by boarding Greyhound and Trailways buses bound for the South, where racially integrated seating was still against the law despite a contrary ruling by the federal government. The riders—many of them college students—often were met with brutal beatings, arrests and imprisonment.

In January 2007 four busloads of students, faculty and staff rode from Nashville to Montgomery and Birmingham, Ala., retracing the Freedom Rides of 1961. Several of the original Freedom Riders joined the group to share their experiences.

The idea to retrace the Freedom Rides in a two-day rolling seminar was sparked by Ray Arsenault's book *Freedom Riders: 1961 and the Struggle for Racial Justice*. The trip, hosted by Vanderbilt's Office of Active Citizenship and Service and The Commons, attracted students and faculty from several area colleges. Vanderbilt Chancellor Gordon Gee, Fisk University President Hazel O'Leary, and Tennessee State University President Melvin Johnson were among those who made the trip. Also on hand were Freedom Riders Diane Nash, Jim Zwerg, Bernard Lafayette, C.T. Vivian, and Democratic Rep. John Lewis of Georgia.

Participants enter the Dexter Avenue King Memorial Baptist Church in Montgomery.

DANIEL DUBOIS

The group visited the Birmingham Civil Rights Institute and the Montgomery bus terminal where the original Freedom Riders were attacked. They heard a panel discussion at Dexter Avenue King Memorial Baptist Church, where Martin Luther King Jr. served as pastor.

James Lawson, a key proponent of the Civil Rights Movement while a divinity student at Vanderbilt, shared his experiences with students. His involvement in the movement earned him expulsion from Vanderbilt in 1960. Lawson's association with Vanderbilt came full circle last fall when he returned as Distinguished University Professor.

"The nation that needs nonviolence the most right now is the United States," Lawson told students. "The religious group that needs the most help in practicing nonviolence is my own, Christianity. We must not return evil with evil."

Gbemende Johnson, a Vanderbilt first-year graduate student in political science from Atlanta, said meeting the Freedom Riders left her awestruck. "When I try to put myself in their place, it seems so scary—going somewhere, knowing you may die," she said. "When you listen to what they have been talking about, you don't really have an excuse not to get involved. Caring is not enough. You have to do something."

VUSE Joins National Cyber-Security Initiative

Vanderbilt School of Engineering is joining the University of Memphis Center for Information Assurance and Sparta Inc. of Huntsville, Ala., to create a cyber-security training program. The goal is to prepare information systems professionals and law-enforcement officers to identify, prevent, protect against, respond to, and recover from cyber attacks at the federal, state and local level.

The University of Memphis is the lead institution in the program, to be funded by a $4 million grant over three years from the U.S. Department of Homeland Security (DHS) under the Competitive Training Grant Program (CTGP).

Vanderbilt School of Engineering will work with the University of Memphis to develop online courseware, using advanced learning technologies pioneered at Vanderbilt. Senior Research Scientist Larry Howard from the Vanderbilt Institute for Software Integrated Systems and Ken Pence, assistant professor of the practice of engineering management, will co-direct online, interactive aspects of the project.

The U.S. government has instituted a strong information assurance program to protect against attacks on the nation's computing infrastructure and provides funding for training initiatives that further DHS's mission to prepare the nation to prevent or deal with incidents of cyber terrorism. Partners in the new national training program intend to plug cyber-security gaps using

a multitrack, multilevel training program that will arm information system professionals with the understanding and tools they need to beef up their computer security systems.

Eligible professionals will be able to log in to an online program that first assesses their level of expertise and then delivers course material appropriate to their needs. The courseware will be interactive and designed according to state-of-the-art learning science, enabling learners to understand and retain information quickly and thoroughly and to build skills efficiently. The cyber-security courseware also will be designed so that it can be updated as new threats and solutions emerge.

The program is expected to train approximately 6,000 professionals throughout the U.S. during its three-year existence.

Federal Payment Helps Relieve Charity Costs

Vanderbilt is by far the largest provider of charity health care in Middle Tennessee and is the second largest in the state, trailing only Memphis Regional Medical Center. In fiscal year 2005, Vanderbilt's total uncompensated care—comprising charity care, medically indigent care and bad debt—stood at $98.7 million. That figure jumped to $195.2 million last year.

Congress in December approved a measure to provide $131 million this year to Tennessee safety-net hospitals, including Vanderbilt, that provide the bulk of the state's charity care. Based on past history it's possible that Vanderbilt could receive approximately 10 percent of that total, or more than $13 million.

The move restores—for one year—federal disproportionate share (DSH) payments that have not been in place since TennCare, Tennessee's healthcare insurance program, was implemented 12 years ago.

"These payments will assist us in our ability to continue providing the best possible care to the state's most financially vulnerable individuals," says Dr. Harry Jacobson, vice chancellor for health affairs.

It is hoped the one-year payment could open the door to future discussions with federal lawmakers about extending yearly DSH payments to Tennessee hospitals. These were suspended in 1994 when the state was allowed to create TennCare to replace the federal Medicaid program. While

KATHY HAGEDORN

TennCare has since been scaled down, the need to care for the state's most financially at-risk citizens continues to soar.

Tennessee is one of only three states that do not receive annual DSH payments. According to the Tennessee Hospital Association, states with similarly sized enrollments receive about $430 million per year under the program.

Top Picks

Graduate Student Wins UNESCO Internship

Monica Gibson, a Peabody student working on her master's degree in public policy, is one of two Americans to be offered internships this spring at the U.S. mission to UNESCO in Paris. UNESCO, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, promotes international cooperation among the United Nations member states in the fields of education, science, culture and communication. Gibson became interested in international relations after working with Vanderbilt Medical School's Institute for Global Health. "If people know about other cultures, then they'll learn to appreciate and value the people," she says. "It's a message we need to embrace here in the U.S. as well."

VU Professors Testify Before FCC

Froeb

Two Vanderbilt professors took on country music celebrities in a debate over media ownership during a Federal Communications Commission public hearing Dec. 11 in Nashville. Country music insiders contended that media consolidation hurts the industry, while the professors said new media ownership rules could help keep the radio music industry alive. "The greatest strength of the U.S. economy is elasticity," said Luke Froeb, William C. and Margaret M. Oehmig Associate Professor in Entrepreneurship and Free Enterprise at the Owen Graduate School of Management. "Over-regulation could change that."

Yoo

"Established players … who have a great deal invested in the status quo often resist regulatory and technological change," added Christopher Yoo, professor of law and director of the Technology and Entertainment Law Program.

Shedding Light on Energy Consumption

Vanderbilt chemists whose work could make the light bulb passé and cut electricity consumption by half are among the recipients of *Popular Mechanics* magazine's 2006 Breakthrough Awards. The awards recognize individuals, teams and products that are helping to improve lives and expand possibilities in the realms of science, technology and exploration. Associate Professor of Chemistry Sandra Rosenthal was honored with graduate students Michael Bowers and James McBride for discovering a way to make solid-state lights that produce white light. Rosenthal's group accidentally discovered that microscopic semiconductor crystals, called quantum dots, can absorb the blue light produced by light-emitting diodes (LEDs) and emit a warm white light. If the researchers can figure out how to get the quantum dots to produce white light more efficiently, quantum-dot-coated LEDs could replace light bulbs.

Rosenthal

Sports

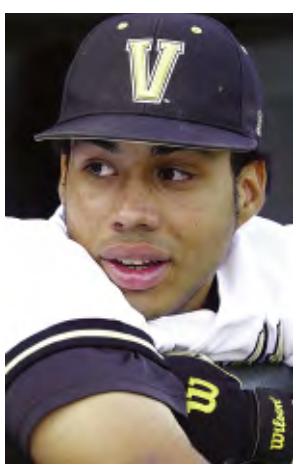
A look at Vanderbilt athletics

Made in Manhattan

Hard work and dedication follow All-American Pedro Alvarez from New York City to Nashville. By Nelson Bryan, BA'73

"New York City is my home," Pedro Alvarez says in an almost reverent tone. "I wouldn't trade it for any other place." The city was playground and proving ground for Vanderbilt's sophomore third baseman, last season's National and SEC Freshman of the Year.

Among many accolades in 2006, he was picked as a first-team All-American and All-South Region player by *Baseball America* magazine. Commodore Head Baseball Coach Tim Corbin has seen even better performances from Alvarez in his sophomore season. "Pedro is counted on to be a major power source again," Corbin says. "He has continued to improve and mature a great deal."



"Growing up, 95 percent of my friends I met through baseball," Alvarez says. "It's something I've been doing, my dad says, since I was 3 and a half. By the time I started elementary school, every day I was going to a field, practicing with my dad."

His trainer had him practice with kids five and six years older. "It gave me that competitive edge to keep coming back and wanting to excel."

Alvarez lived in Manhattan but attended Horace Mann High School in the Bronx, a school renowned more for academics than athletics. "A lot of people wanted me to go to a powerhouse high school where baseball was one of the top programs, but my dad was big on education.

"I had the opportunity to go to a couple of Yankee games," he adds. "Shea Stadium also wasn't so far from where I lived. Funny thing is, I was a Red Sox fan."

Alvarez got his affinity for the Red Sox through his father, who hails from the Dominican Republic. "He follows a lot of players from the Dominican Republic, and three of them were Red Sox," Alvarez says. "Baseball is a big part of our culture in the Dominican Republic. Down there, if there's even a little patch of grass, you see people playing ball somehow—even with a stick if that's what they have."

Alvarez was a 2005 Louisville Slugger All-American, the Gatorade and Louisville Slugger New York High School Player of the Year, the 97th-ranked pro prospect in the country by *Baseball America*—and was drafted by the Boston Red Sox. His high school team went on to win the 2004 Ivy League Championship, finishing in second place in the nation, and he now holds school and career records in batting average, home runs, RBI and slugging percentage. His club team, the Bayside Yankees, won the 2005 NABF National Championship.

"A couple of Vanderbilt guys played for Bayside," he says. "Like Nick Christiani, Jay Moreland. My junior year we came to a tournament at Hawkins Field, and I got a chance to meet Coach Corbin." After occasional talks with Corbin—and taking into consideration his draft status with the Red Sox—Alvarez committed to the Commodores.

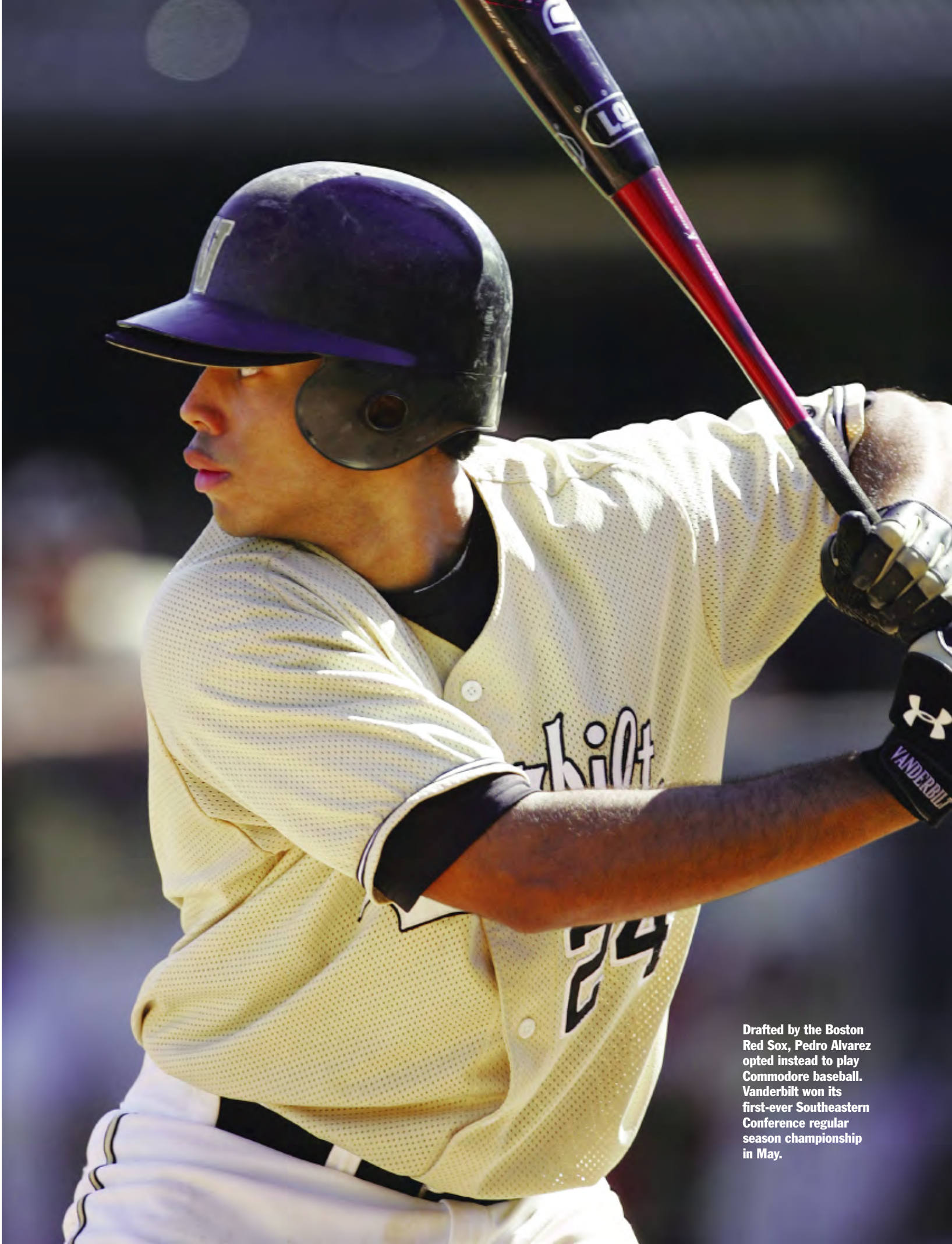
"I thought at the time that Vanderbilt was the right choice. And now that I'm here, I know I wasn't ready to start playing pro baseball right away."

Alvarez was named National Freshman of the Year by *Baseball America*, *Collegiate Baseball* and Rivals.com. He was named SEC Freshman of the Year after finishing with a .329 batting average and a school-record 22 home runs and 27 RBI in SEC play. He also was named to the SEC Freshman Academic Honor Roll and to the NCAA Atlanta Regional All-Tourney Team.

A guy's got to do something in the off-season, so Alvarez joined teammate David Price (a then-sophomore pitcher) on the USA Baseball National Team, with Coach Corbin taking the reins as the team's manager. Team USA logged a 28-2-1 record and won the gold medal at the World University Championship in Havana, Cuba, last August.

Alvarez is majoring in economics in preparation for life after baseball. "I need a backup plan. What better plan than a degree and a profession? In terms of baseball, God willing, if I can play as long as I can—that means till I'm 50 or 60—then I will," he says with a smile. "That's something I want to do for a very long time." V

PHOTOS BY NEIL BRAKE



Drafted by the Boston Red Sox, Pedro Alvarez opted instead to play Commodore baseball. Vanderbilt won its first-ever Southeastern Conference regular season championship in May.

PHOTOS BY NEIL BRAKE

CHRIS LIVINGSTON

Bowlers Strike First with National Championship

The women's bowling team has become the first team in the history of the university to win an NCAA national championship.

The Commodores defeated the University of Maryland Eastern Shore in the last five frames of the seventh and deciding game to win the NCAA Championship on April 14.

"Our student-athletes worked so hard, our coaches worked hard, and this victory on national television is validation that the effort was worthwhile," said Head Women's Bowling Coach John Williamson.

The Commodores, 74-14 on the year and the tournament's No. 3 seed, jumped out to a quick 2-0 lead in the best-of-seven format. UMES came back to tie them with wins in the third and fourth games. Vanderbilt regrouped to win game five, and the Hawks took game six, setting up a pressure-packed seventh game.

"During the last television timeout in the seventh game," said Williamson, "our kids said they wanted to finish their year by throwing five good balls. And they did."

Freshman Josie Earnest, named Tournament Most Valuable Player, iced the game with two crucial strikes in the 10th frame. "I knew that I had wanted to be in that moment the entire season," Earnest said, "and when I got there, I focused on making good throws and then hoped and prayed those pins would fall." Sophomore Michelle Peloquin joined Earnest on the five-person All-Tournament team.

Dee Davis Closes Collegiate Career

For Dee Davis, Vanderbilt women's point guard for the past four years, the road to success passed through three states. From Indiana, through Ohio and ultimately to Tennessee, she has fought for and found success at every stop.

"I used to watch the NBA all the time," she says of her formative years in Indianapolis. "Basketball was something that came naturally to me. In elementary school we didn't actually have a girls' basketball team. We had a boys' team, so I played on that for a while."

Indianapolis also was the beginning of her days playing Amateur Athletic Union ball. "I started playing AAU with older girls, and that got me exposure," she says.

At the age of 13, she moved to Cincinnati, where she caught the eye of Vanderbilt Head Women's Basketball Coach Melanie Balcomb, who was then coach at Xavier University. "She had seen me at every tournament, every camp, every shootout," Davis recalls. "If I had stayed in Indianapolis, I have no idea where I would've ended up playing ball."


Davis
NEIL BRAKE

A combination of Balcomb's recruiting and proximity to family led Davis to Vanderbilt. "I had a lot of family in Nashville and Clarksville. I used to be the one who had the largest fan section of family. They wore 'Dee Davis #10' shirts in the stands."

In her freshman year as a Commodore, she led the team in assists. As a sophomore she was named second-team All-SEC, and by her junior year she had earned first-team All-SEC honors. Her senior year came full circle when she and fellow seniors Carla Thomas and Caroline Williams led the team to the SEC Tournament Championship, a feat the Commodores last achieved when the trio were freshmen. Davis scored a team-high 19 points in the 2007 championship game.

Davis looks toward the WNBA to extend her career. "I haven't decided for sure what I want to do after that," she says. "I want to use my communications major for sure. I want to do something where I could work with kids. I'll probably coach later down the line."

PHOTOS BY NEIL BRAKE

Where are they now?


PHOTO BY DEREK GEE

Willie "Hutch" Jones, BA'82, is the pride of Buffalo, N.Y. The 6-foot-8 center earned first-team All-SEC honors in his senior year at Vanderbilt. More recently, he earned the Father Baker Service to Youth Award in Buffalo for the work he has done to enhance the lives of the less fortunate and challenged. "Willie has been and is selfless in his time and in his talents for young people and the families of Western New York," said Msgr. Robert C. Wurtz (now deceased) in making the presentation last fall. In 1984 Jones founded the Willie "Hutch" Jones Sports Clinic, which has evolved to include other sports and academics in its free programs. He also has been a teacher in the Buffalo Public Schools nearly 20 years and coaches the Burgard High School basketball team. "One person cannot do something this big," Jones said in accepting the award. "It takes a lot of people to make success. When we have children in mind, it's a beautiful thing."

Sports Roundup

Taka Betrand in action during the Florida match on April 6

Women's Basketball: SEC Tournament Champs

Vanderbilt's women won the SEC Tournament Championship in a 51-45 victory over LSU on March 4. The Commodores were rewarded with a No. 2 seed in the NCAA Tournament, defeating 15th-seed Delaware State in the first round and losing to seventh-seed Bowling Green in the second. The team finished with a 28-6 season. Along the way they set an NCAA record Feb. 3 by netting a 76.2 percent shooting average in a 91-51 SEC victory over Alabama. That's the highest single-game field goal shooting percentage in NCAA history.

Women's Soccer: Griffin Named All-American Senior Goalkeeper

Tyler Griffin wrapped up her collegiate career as a first-team All-America and first-team All-Central Region selection by *Soccer Buzz*, a Web site devoted to the coverage of collegiate women's soccer. She also was a second-team All-SEC pick in 2006, finishing the season with a goals against average of 0.60, 86 saves, and a 9-4-7 overall record. The most decorated soccer player in school history, she finished as Vanderbilt's career shutout leader with 31, and posted a 31-11-10 record with a goals against average of 0.66 and 224 saves.

Griffin

Senior defender Monica Buff, a four-year, 67-game starter, was a second-team All-Central Region pick by *Soccer Buzz* and a first-team All-SEC pick this season.

Football: Postseason Accolades

Defensive back D.J. Moore was Vanderbilt's lone representative on the Southeastern Conference Coaches' All-Freshman Team. Cornerback Darlron Spead was named to the All-Southeastern Conference Freshman Team by *Sporting News*. Sophomore wide receiver Earl Bennett was named first-team All-Southeastern Conference by the Associated Press and third-team All-America by Rivals.com.

The Commodores held their postseason banquet in December, where three players received the team's top honors. Redshirt senior Steven Bright, who saw action at quarterback, fullback and tight end, received the Vanderbilt Dedication Award from Head Football Coach Bobby Johnson and his staff, while redshirt sophomore safety Reshard Langford was voted by teammates to receive the Captain's Award. Redshirt senior Funtaine Hunter, a reserve linebacker, received the Commodore Hustle Award, also awarded by the players.

Moore

Men's Basketball: Awards Highlight Sweet Season

Senior Derrick Byars has been named SEC Player of the Year, and Head Men's Basketball Coach Kevin Stallings has been named SEC Coach of the Year by the Southeastern Conference coaches. Byars ranked as the league's second–leading scorer, averaging 19.1 points per game. Stallings guided the team to a 22-12 season, finishing second in the SEC East and advancing to the Sweet Sixteen round of the NCAA Tournament.

PHOTOS BY NEIL BRAKE

Bright Ideas

"As someone involved in the Christian religion,

Parental Discipline Gets Tough Self-Appraisal

1. Almost a third of parents say they don't think their methods of disciplining children are working very well, and many of them report using the same discipline their own parents used. Those findings come in a study authored by Dr. Shari Barkin, chief of the Division of General Pediatrics at the Monroe Carell Jr. Children's Hospital at Vanderbilt.

In a broad cross-sectional survey of parents from 32 states, Puerto Rico and Canada, Barkin found a strong association between the discipline parents experienced as children and the methods they reported using with their own children.

MCT/KIRK LYTTLE

Forty-five percent reported using time-outs, 41.5 percent reported using removal of privileges, 13 percent reported yelling at their children, and 8.5 percent reported the use of spanking "often or always."

About 31 percent of parents surveyed responded they either "never" or "sometimes" perceived their methods to be effective.

Barkin

"There was actually an inverse relationship between self-reports of yelling at children and perceived effectiveness of discipline," Barkin says. "But we strongly suspect that both yelling and spanking might be underreported, because we know when parents perceive their methods are not working, as a third reported, then emotions can quickly escalate."

More than a third of parents (38 percent) reported using the same methods of discipline they experienced when they were children. But those who reported using the same methods as their parents often considered their approach "ineffective."

By the time children reached the 6- to 11-year-old age range, parents were about 25 percent less likely to report using time-outs and spanking as they were with younger children (ages 2 to 5). When children reached school age, parents reported a heavier use of taking away privileges and yelling. But even in the older age range, perception that the discipline might not be working persisted.

"Discipline is a central issue for parents, yet providers engage parents in limited ways on this topic," says Barkin. "In this study we altered the manner in which we asked families about discipline. This created a shared dialogue rather than a lecture."

Barkin's study, titled "Determinants of Discipline Practices: A National Sample from Primary Care Practices," was published in the January issue of the journal *Clinical Pediatrics*.

Hang Up and Drive

2. Think you can drive safely while talking on your cell phone? Neuroscientists Paul E. Dux and René Marois offer compelling new evidence that your brain can't handle it as well as you may think.

Researchers have long held that a central "bottleneck" exists in the brain that prevents us from doing two things at once. Dux and Marois are the first to identify the regions of the brain responsible for this bottleneck, by examining patterns of neural activity over time. Their results were published in the Dec. 21 issue of *Neuron*.

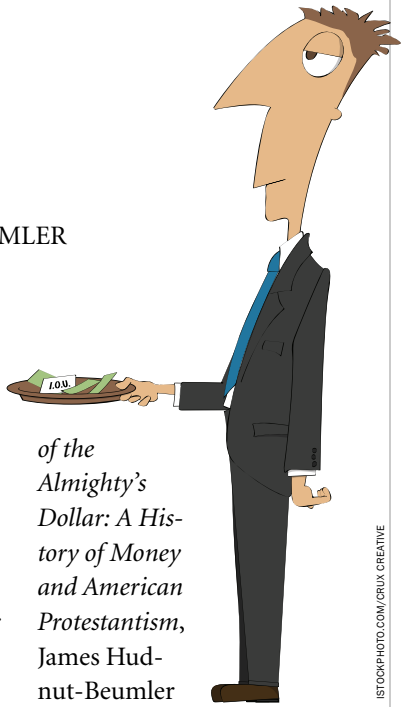
"In our everyday lives, we seem to complete so many cognitive tasks effortlessly," says Dux, a postdoctoral research associate in the Department of Psychology. "However, we experience severe limitations when we try to do even two simple tasks at once, such as pressing a button when a visual stimulus appears and saying a word when a sound is presented."

"While we are driving, we are bombarded with visual information," says Marois, associate professor of psychology. "People think they are safe if using a headset with their cell phone while driving, but they're not because they are still doing two cognitively demanding tasks at once."

Identifying the information bottleneck responsible for this dual-task limitation required use of functional magnetic resonance imaging, or fMRI, an imaging technology that reveals the brain areas active in a given mental task by registering changes in oxygenated blood concentration in these regions.

While fMRI is an excellent tool for identifying a particular area in the brain involved in a given task, it generally provides limited information about how

some of this made me squeamish. — DIVINITY DEAN JAMES HUDNUT-BEUMLER



ISTOCKPHOTO.COM/CRUX CREATIVE

that area responds over time. To overcome this limitation, Dux and Marois rapidly sampled brain activity using fMRI while subjects were performing two demanding tasks. Evaluation of data produced by this rapid sampling method allowed them to characterize the temporal pattern of activity in specific brain areas.

MCT/GUILLERMO MUNRO

The two tasks involved pressing the appropriate computer key in response to hearing one of eight possible sounds and uttering an appropriate syllable in response to seeing one of eight possible images. The results revealed a central bottleneck caused by the inability of the lateral frontal and prefrontal cortex, and also the superior frontal cortex, to process the two tasks at once.

"We determined these brain regions responded to tasks irrespective of the senses involved, they were engaged in selecting the appropriate response, and, most important, they showed 'queuing' of neural activity—the neural response to the second task was postponed until the response to the first was completed," Dux says.

"Neural activity seemed to be delayed for the second task when the two tasks were presented nearly simultaneously within 300 milliseconds of each other," Marois says. "If individuals have a second or more between tasks, we did not see this delay.

"This temporal delay is the essence of dual-task interference for tasks that require actions. By using time-resolved fMRI, we can see its signature in the brain," he adds. "These findings allow us now to really focus on this set of brain areas and to understand why these areas cannot process two tasks at once."

The researchers believe their work has implications for people performing complex tasks. "It may be possible to look to the sort of tasks people must do in a very complex environment, such as flying a plane, and find out under what circumstances these tasks may be less vulnerable to dual-task interference," Dux says.

The research was supported with funding from the National Institute of Mental Health.

For the record, neither Marois nor Dux uses his cell phone while driving. "I'm Australian, and it's illegal there, so I'm trained not to," Dux says. "Even so, I would never do it. Dual-task costs can be up to a second, and that's a long time when you're traveling at 60 miles per hour."

Protestants and the Almighty's Dollar

3. Doing spiritually inspired work for the Lord usually begins with the tricky job of persuading someone to donate cold hard cash.

In his new book, *In Pursuit of the Almighty's Dollar: A History of Money and American Protestantism*, James Hudnut-Beumler surveys how American Protestants have gone about collecting and spending money from the 1790s to the present.

Congregants have been persuaded to pay for a choice pew reserved for them during services. They've used dated envelopes so their contributions never missed a week, even if they did. They've been asked to sell Christmas wrapping, cookies and most other products to raise money for the church—even laxatives and lingerie. Sometimes the preacher simply asks for money from the pulpit, occasionally with a significant dollop of guilt doled out to those who resist.

One method in the 1930s involved a mock trial titled "The Church v. John Doe," where a fictional church member is prosecuted for insufficient giving.

"As someone involved in the Christian religion, some of this made me squeamish," says Hudnut-Beumler, the Anne Potter Wilson Distinguished Professor of American Religious History and dean of

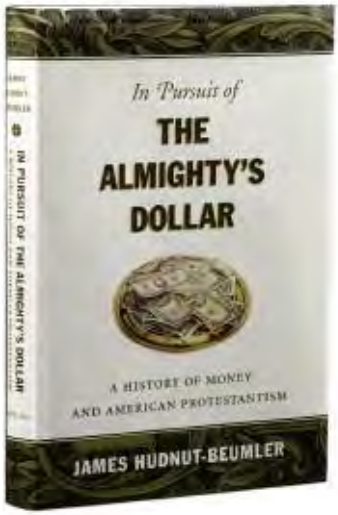
Vanderbilt Divinity School.

"But stepping back from that as a historian of American religion, I see the undercurrents of mutual anxiety. Religious leaders see that great things can be done in the religious world with money, and also fear what happens if the people don't pay enough to keep it going. On the other side, people who have money don't necessarily want to part with it, even when they know it's for a good cause."


Hudnut-Beumler

DANIEL DUBOIS

In Pursuit of the Almighty's Dollar also looks at how that money is spent, with pastoral talent and facilities at the top of the list. Congregations generally build new facilities upon their founding or after a tragedy such as a fire, says Hudnut-Beumler. They usually build or renovate once per generation thereafter—needed or not. "Why do people keep



building and rebuilding when they have a perfectly usable building?" he asks. "I think there is something about building and dedicating a space to God that represents the work of people's own hands, their best efforts of the moment, which drives this compulsion."

Pay for preachers is a particular concern to Hudnut-Beumler, since Vanderbilt Divinity School trains many students for careers in the ministry. In the book he says Protestant ministers have been on a "centuries-long slide … from near the top of colonial-era communities to a tenuous hold on middle-class status today."

Colombian Migration Provides Cancer Clues

4. NePelayo Correa had been researching stomach cancer for more than 20 years when Hurricane Katrina's floodwaters made their way into his lab at Louisiana State University, destroying decades of work.

"My heart went to the floor," says Correa. "Most of my work from Colombia, South America, my biopsies, blood and serum were all in the building in the medical school. I was in New Orleans close to 32 years."

Correa's work was well known at Vanderbilt, and his colleagues rallied to help the researcher move to Nashville and resume his research here. "His work has had a profound impact and contributed to our understanding of the major cause of gastric cancer," says Raymond DuBois, director of Vanderbilt-Ingram Cancer Center. "I felt we had to do everything possible to get him back into a laboratory quickly so he could maintain his research program and regain some momentum."

At Vanderbilt, Correa has been named the first holder of the Anne Potter Wilson Endowed Chair in Cancer Research. He has begun picking up the pieces of his work on stomach cancer while making several trips back to Colombia, his homeland, to gather new samples. "We still have the patients there and a lot of epidemiological data on them," says Correa. "We have documentation on the evolution of each patient for 20 years or more."

Correa's research focuses on *H. pylori*, the bacteria known to lead to stomach cancer. The population in Colombia is at high risk for developing the disease.

"The infection is spread from person to person in childhood. In many other countries we see very high rates in crowded spaces," explains Correa. "This is the second leading cause of death from cancer worldwide; 50 percent of the population worldwide has the infection."

Correa started a cancer registry in Cali, Colombia, in 1964, after a large migration brought thousands of families from other parts of Colombia to the area. He found that a region in the south of the Colombian Andes, Narino, had an exceptionally high incidence of gastric cancer.

The researcher is looking at how the infection leads to stomach cancer for some, while other people infected with *H. pylori* never develop stomach cancer. Correa's work in Tumaco, Colombia, documents this puzzling trend.

"They have a prevalence of infection just as high as that of the high gastric cancer risk population, starting also very early in childhood, but they do not develop gastric cancer. We are comparing the two populations and exploring the reasons for this intriguing discrepancy. If you understand how this is produced, you can understand how to prevent it."

Correa is also studying whether antibiotics to kill *H. pylori*, in combination with the dietary supplements vitamin C and beta carotene, may reduce damage to the DNA of cells produced by the infection and, in turn, slow the progression or possibly cure the infection.


NePelayo Correa (front right) with Vanderbilt colleagues

For more information about stories in Bright Ideas,

GETTY IMAGES/CHRISTA KIEFFER

Smart and Smarter

5. Who will be the next Albert Einstein? The next Stephen Hawking? The complex mix of factors that creates intellectual leaders includes cognitive abilities, educational opportunities, investigative interests, and old-fashioned hard work, according to a new report.

The report is based on 35 years of research from the Study of Mathematically Precocious Youth, a 50-year study that tracks individuals identified as exceptionally gifted at a young age across their lifespan. Begun at Johns Hopkins University in 1971, the study is now based at Vanderbilt's Peabody College of Education and Human Development and is led by Camilla Benbow, Patricia and Rodes Hart Dean of Education and Human Development, and David Lubinski, Peabody professor of psychology. The current report reflects data collected from more than 5,000 study participants. It was published online in December 2006 by the journal *Perspectives on Psychological Science*.

"We found that mathematical gifts and a variety of aptitudes have a significant impact, but that special educational opportunities and commitment can dramatically increase this impact," Lubinski adds. "These students are intellectually gifted, and those gifts are best fully realized when they have the full support and understanding of their teachers, their parents and their social network."

While the students as a whole had exceptional mathematical ability, they were far from homogenous, with a great diversity of talent and interests. These differences have had a direct impact on participants' future career choices and success, some of which were outside traditional scientific and mathematic fields.

"Exceptional verbal ability is characteristic of participants whose favorite courses, college majors and occupations were in the social sciences and humanities, whereas higher levels of mathematical and spatial abilities characterize participants whose favorite courses, college majors and occupations were in engineering and math or computer science," the authors write. "Given the ever-increasing importance of quantitative and scientific reasoning skills in modern cultures, when mathematically gifted individuals choose to pursue careers outside engineering and the physical sciences, it should be seen as a contribution to society, not a loss of talent."

Benbow and Lubinski

DANIEL DUBOIS

The findings contradict a widely held belief in educational literature that there is an "ability ceiling"—in other words, that differences are moot among the very top students. Lubinski and Benbow compared groups scoring progressively higher on the SAT—from the low- to mid-500s to above 700—at age 12 or 13. By age 33, 50 percent of the top scorers had earned a doctorate, compared to 30 percent of the group scoring closer to 500. Only 1 percent of the general American population earns a doctorate.

"Individual differences in the top 1 percent do make a difference," the authors say. "More ability is always better, other things being equal."

The study identifies another, perhaps obvious, factor of these students' success—a willingness to work extremely hard. A majority of the highest performers at age 33 indicated a willingness to work more than 65 hours a week.

Though they found no differences in overall ability between the sexes, researchers did find marked differences in types of ability and interests. The report finds female participants more likely to prefer organic subjects and careers, such as the social sciences, biology and medicine, and men more likely to prefer inorganic subjects and career paths, such as engineering and the physical sciences.

The research is supported by funds from the Templeton Foundation, the National Institute of Child Health and Human Development, the Vanderbilt Kennedy Center for Research on Human Development, and the Strong Research Board. V

SUSAN URMY

visit Vanderbilt's online research journal, Exploration, *at http://exploration.vanderbilt.edu.*

InClass

A spotlight on faculty and their work

Living History

Lewis Baldwin witnessed history in the making. Now his task is keeping it real for today's students. By FRYE GAILLARD, BA'68

History is a part of becoming truly free.

—JOHN HOPE FRANKLIN

LEWIS BALDWIN REMEMBERS the day in 1965—Feb. 15, a Monday afternoon, chilly perhaps and just a bit cloudy, though some of those specifics are beginning to fade. But there is still the mental picture of the crowd, right there in the heart of the Alabama black belt, where the Civil Rights Movement was then in its infancy. Several hundred African Americans, including himself, had gathered on the lawn of Antioch Baptist, coming together at the little wooden church to listen to the words of Martin Luther King. King was speaking that day in the village of Camden, telling the people who had turned out to hear him that they were living on the threshold of history.

For many it was a curious message even then, for they were residents of Wilcox County, just a few miles south of Selma, and this was a part of rural Alabama where the white minority had grown frightened and hard. The movement that was gaining momentum in Selma was spilling over now to the counties around it, and almost everybody understood the stakes. The issue in 1965 was the right of African Americans to vote—a revolutionary demand in a part of the South where that privilege had long been denied.

Dr. King promised there would soon be a change. They were on the move, he said, and would not be defeated, for the arc of justice was on their side. Looking back on the moment after more than 40 years, Baldwin understood that King and his followers were only a few months away from winning their fight. He came to see that clearly as a King biographer and professor of religion, a 20-year member of the Vanderbilt faculty who studies the history and theology of the movement. But at the time it was happening, he was only 15, standing with his brother at the back of the crowd, and seeing everything through a teenager's eyes.

KEYSTONE/GETTY IMAGES

Martin Luther King Jr. speaks to civil rights marchers in Selma, Ala.

He noticed, oddly, that King was short, not even as tall as Baldwin's own father, a Baptist preacher who traveled back then from one country church in Alabama to another. The elder Baldwin, also named Lewis, was a passionate believer in civil rights, willing to let his own children march, particularly the boys, and the younger Lewis was often in the ranks. Like many others he was emboldened on the day King came to town, seeing this man, so small and unimposing in stature, confronting the sheriff of Wilcox County.

Sheriff P.L. "Lummie" Jenkins had a fearsome reputation—a small-town lawman with an overbearing style. But now here he was shaking hands with King, responding politely to King's overtures on behalf of black citizens who were seeking to vote. From Baldwin's position near the back of the crowd, he couldn't hear much of what was said, but he remembered King's poise and attitude of calm, and many years later he knew this was a part of the triumph. The movement was confronting the old culture of fear, all those years of domination by whites, when the slightest misstep could cost a black man his life. The fear was crumbling as the people came together, and with the passage of the Voting Rights Act, 1965 became a watershed year. It was the moment when the balance of power would change, and African Americans in the segregated South would take on greater control of their lives.

continued on page 86

DANIEL DUBOIS

Lewis Baldwin was, like Martin Luther King, a preacher's kid from the South. Baldwin's emphasis on the great influence of King's black Southern roots sets him apart from most white King scholars.

By Lisa A. DuBois

Getting in

Building each new class of Vanderbilt undergraduate students takes innovation and a large dose of humanity.

In November of 2002, Anita Aboagye-Agyeman faced a wrenching decision. She had just received the kind of offer most of her 900 fellow seniors at Francis Lewis High School in Queens, New York, could only dream of: a full-tuition college scholarship. Through a program for multicultural teens from urban high schools, Aboagye-Agyeman would be attending DePauw University in Indiana.

Aboagye-Agyeman had never been to Nashville, never seen the Vanderbilt campus, nor met anyone who'd gone there. She had been raised by her grandmother in Ghana, Africa, and then joined her parents in New York when she was 15.

But she had thoroughly researched Vanderbilt, fallen in love with it online, and harbored a gut instinct that it was the right school for her. Did she dare turn down a sure thing?

With her parents' permission, and with fingers crossed, she turned down the scholarship to DePauw, applied to Vanderbilt, and waited.

Incoming undergraduate students at Founder's Walk festivities last August

NEIL BRAKE


Group
47
HURLEY

Four long months later Aboagye-Agyeman stood in her family home holding her breath as she opened a thick envelope and read the cover letter. It began: "We are pleased to offer you admission to Vanderbilt University … ." Aboagye-Agyeman screamed so loudly that her mother rushed into the room to see what was wrong. "I got into Vanderbilt! I got into Vanderbilt!" her daughter shouted. Vanderbilt was also offering her a generous financial aid package. Her huge gamble had paid off.

In May, Aboagye-Agyeman graduated with a major in political science and has begun work for a Manhattan public relations firm. She has no doubt she made the right decision four years ago by risking everything to get into Vanderbilt.

For students like Anita Aboagye-Agyeman, deciding whether to accept a full scholarship to another school or hold out for your top choice can be agonizing. In her case, it paid off.

DANIEL DUBOIS

Each year millions of American high school students take part in a high-stress rite of passage — applying to college. And their questions are legion: Should I apply to a dozen schools or focus on my dream school? Should I go the early admission route or hedge my bets? How does a lower-cost public university compare in real dollars with a private school that offers more financial aid? Will I be happy attending a university halfway across the continent where no one else from my high school has ever been accepted? What if I have no idea what I want to do to support myself for the rest of my life?

Were she to apply to Vanderbilt now, Aboagye-Agyeman would be taking an even greater chance. As the university has risen in prestige and prominence, it has become tougher for students to get in. Slightly more than 30 percent of students who apply to Vanderbilt receive offers of admission, and if trends continue, the percentage will drop even further.

Newsweek last year named Vanderbilt one of its 25 "Hot Schools," identifying the university as one of the "new Ivies," schools that provide great academics and first-rate faculties. In the World University Rankings by *The Times* of London, the most respected worldwide rankings of universities, Vanderbilt jumped from No. 114 in 2005 to No. 53 in 2006. And for the fourth year in a row, Vanderbilt is ranked among the top 20 national universities in the influential *U.S. News & World Report* annual "Best Colleges" rankings — 18th among 4,200 undergraduate institutions in the country. (It is the 19th consecutive year Vanderbilt has been chosen by the magazine as one of the top 25 national universities.)

And in another crucial way, Vanderbilt is in rarified company with a small group of select institutions that include MIT, Yale and Harvard: Once a student is accepted, Vanderbilt will meet that individual's entire calculated need by offering a financial aid package that might include a combination of grants and scholarships, loans, and work-study programs. Vanderbilt treats every application as need-blind, meaning students' level of financial need does not impact whether or not they are admitted. More than 60 percent of the student body receives some form of financial aid, belying Vanderbilt's past reputation as a school that caters primarily to privileged kids. This commitment to need-blind admissions and meeting demonstrated need, along with a growing number of applicants from all economic backgrounds, means that Vanderbilt now budgets more than $120 million a year for financial aid.

In step with Vanderbilt's rise in prominence, however, comes a parallel rise in confusion among parents and children: Which students will be accepted, and how are those decisions made? With increasing numbers of high schoolers aiming to get into the most competitive institutions and with nearly every university doggedly seeking the nation's top students, the college admissions process has become more mysterious to the general public, says Douglas Christiansen, Vanderbilt's associate provost for enrollment and dean of admissions.

"I have seen the stress high schoolers take upon themselves in trying to be in dozens of clubs and activities," says Christiansen, "when what we're looking for is students who have had meaningful experiences that will translate to a positive impact on the campus culture. We're building a class, a set of learners, an environment."

"Vanderbilt admissions officers have two primary questions in mind when reviewing an applicant," says John Gaines, director of undergraduate admissions. "Will he or she enrich the Vanderbilt community? And is Vanderbilt the best university to stimulate the intellectual, social and emotional growth of this person?"

Admissions officers set about to make those determinations in as fair, ethical and respectful a manner as possible, given that they must select a class of 1,550 freshmen out of about 12,800 candidates. Reviewers must essentially mastermind an "ideal" freshman class from thousands of outstanding high school seniors. This can make for an intense process. Every single application will be reviewed at least twice — sometimes as many as five or six times — before an admission decision is made.

Explains Chancellor Gordon Gee, "Vanderbilt's goal is to provide the best undergraduate experience in the country. And we are getting there; we might even already *be* there.

Reaching Students When It Counts

Talk about hitting the ground running. When Douglas Christiansen arrived at Vanderbilt last August as the university's new associate provost for enrollment and dean of admissions, the latest crop of freshmen were just filing in, learning their way around campus, and figuring out the intricacies of drop-add. Christiansen, who'd spent the previous 11 years at Purdue University, hardly had time to give these newcomers a passing nod before launching headfirst into admissions decisions for high school students clamoring to get into Vanderbilt for fall 2007.

Christiansen brings a compelling philosophy to the Vanderbilt admissions process: a firm belief that universities have a social responsibility to improve the nation's K–12 educational system by helping prepare bright students for life beyond high school and by boosting their access to the opportunities a college education provides.

"We want to help change lives, and education is a major factor in that," Christiansen says. "So we need to be connecting with individuals at earlier ages to make them understand that they have as much right as anyone to attend a highly selective institution—but they have to be prepared academically. That means we must expand our pipelines to reach these students."

Christiansen has a Ph.D. in higher education administration from the University of Utah in Salt Lake City and more than 20 years' experience working in university admissions and higher education. Under his leadership as assistant vice president for enrollment management and dean of admissions at Purdue, the number of undergraduate applications submitted to the West Lafayette campus increased by 48 percent. He has served as an enrollment management consultant to colleges across the United States.

"When I made the decision to leave Purdue a year ago," he says, "one reason was the selection process here at Vanderbilt—one of the top 10 in the United States in terms of fairness, looking at the depth and breadth of individual students on their own merits. Can we continue to get better? Of course. But do we have a fair and equitable system that looks at each applicant individually in terms of who they are and what they can bring? Yes, 100 percent."

When former admissions dean William Shain moved to Bowdoin College last year, the Vanderbilt administration began reexamining the structure of the admissions and enrollment offices. Those offices have now been realigned to enhance student learning, increase student satisfaction, and boost student retention and graduation rates. In fact, admissions is now only one-eighth of the dean's responsibilities. Today all offices concerned with undergraduate student enrollment are coordinated under one umbrella to serve the needs of prospective, incoming and continuing students.


Christiansen

DANIEL DUBOIS

On the side that deals with recruitment and marketing, Christiansen is revamping the system by streamlining recruitment efforts and marketing to a younger population of future undergraduates. The goal is to identify middle and high school students from across the country who have the brains and the chutzpah to excel in a rigorous university environment, even if they come from a low socioeconomic background or attend schools that normally don't graduate high numbers of college-ready students.

Vanderbilt already has initiated several programs to catch prospective students earlier in their educational lives and help them embark on the right academic track. In this outreach effort many new programs are being developed such as Black and Gold Days, which are half-day programs designed to introduce high school juniors, sophomores, freshmen and even eighth-graders to Vanderbilt and to the college-search process. Vanderbilt also offers opportunities throughout the university such as a summer program for academically gifted students in grades eight through 12 known as the Program for Talented Youth.

> **"If all the highly selective universities are just competing for the same top students without expanding the number in that pool, then we're not doing anybody any good. But if we start looking at access, affordability and preparedness of students for college, we can start to expand that pipeline."**

"If all the highly selective universities are just marketing to the same pool and competing for the same top students without expanding the number of students in that pool, then we're not doing anybody any good," says Christiansen. "But if we start looking at access, affordability, and preparedness of students for college, we can start to expand that pipeline. At the end of the day, these kids may not choose to go to Vanderbilt, but we'll still have more highly qualified individuals going to college and growing up as great citizens of their community."

Vanderbilt's Office of Enrollment Management comprises:

- Office of Undergraduate Admissions
- Office of Student Financial Aid
- Office of Honors Scholarships, ENGAGE (Early Notification of Guaranteed Admission for Graduate Education), and Chancellor's Scholarship Programs
- Ingram Scholarship Program
- Office of Undergraduate Honor Scholarships
- Office of the University Registrar
- Vanderbilt Institutional Research Group (VIRG)

But to do so we need to attract the most talented student body in the country — not by the numbers, not by SAT scores or GPAs, but by building our class one person at a time."

The wheels that lead to Vanderbilt are set in motion when an application hits the desk of an admissions officer, who pores through thousands of forms and letters from prospective freshmen each year. For months on end, admissions officers gather to review applications and advocate for students, trying to construct the best possible class. They search not just for the obvious superstars, but also for people who will blossom within Vanderbilt's environment. They sift through students with a variety of interests—philosophers who are also interested in medicine, aspiring engineers who also play the cello, debating whizzes who are also athletically gifted—students who share a common desire to learn across academic boundaries and to take advantage of the intellectual resources of a university like Vanderbilt. They look for students who will add to the cultural life, who will bring divergent social and political views and pursuits to campus, and who will relish and thrive in the kind of environment Vanderbilt offers. They look for students who will add to the cultural life at Vanderbilt, who will bring divergent social and political views and pursuits to campus, and who will relish and thrive in the kind of environment Vanderbilt offers.

The qualities that successful applicants have in common, says Nicholas Zeppos, provost and vice chancellor for academic affairs, are that they "are curious intellectually, curious about meeting people from different backgrounds, curious about pushing the boundaries of what they know, and curious in ways that connect across disciplines."

Students are not ranked against each other. Each candidate is viewed as a whole, based on academic performance in high school, test scores, extracurricular activities and letters of recommendation, essays and personal statements. Viewing all these factors together, the committee tries to piece together a comprehensive profile of the applicant. Some students are then admitted. Others are denied, deferred or wait-listed.

One factor *not* considered during the admissions process is financial need. Students whose parents can afford to pay full tuition have no leg up on those from less wealthy families. Nor do children of celebrities and politicians or even of alumni. Legacy applicants — those whose parents or grandparents are Vanderbilt alumni—are considered in the same pool as others who hope to attend. A greater percentage of legacy applicants receives offers of admission because as a group they are generally well prepared and competitive. Being a legacy does not guarantee admission, however — for one thing, it would be impossible to admit them all. Of total applicants to the freshman class entering in 2007, 1,700 students, or 13 percent, were legacies. Because the entire class is only 1,550 students, it's easy to see the problem.

Casting a Wide Net

Every high school in America has its own personality, its unique klatch of young men and women ready to embark on further academic adventures. To tap this talent pool, Vanderbilt admissions officers hit the road from September through December and again in the spring. Their mission: to tell the Vanderbilt story and to find students who'd like to become a part of that story. Because there are enormous differences in the quality of education among post-secondary schools, the admissions staff casts a very wide net.

Vanderbilt is among the three dozen or so top universities that can draw the sharpest students from the most highly regarded high schools in the country — schools like New Trier Township High School, a large public high school in a Chicago suburb.

New Trier is acclaimed for its academically rigorous curriculum and consistently ranks as one of the top public high schools in America. Every fall Joel Hart, Vanderbilt assistant admissions director, makes a visit there. It is one of Vanderbilt's biggest "feeder" schools.

Nearly 99 percent of New Trier students matriculate to four-year colleges, many to highly selective universities. Out of a senior class of more than 1,000, each year Vanderbilt receives upwards of 50 applications. After review the university sends out about 17 offers of admission, and between 10 and 12 New Trier students accept.

Typically, only 10 to 12 students sit in on Hart's recruitment session, but, he says, "Once classes get out, 25 more kids will run by briefly to say, 'Sorry I couldn't come to your talk, but I didn't want to miss my AP biology class, and I've got to hurry to AP physics.' They'll ask a quick question or tell me they're applying to Vanderbilt and dart off."

This fall Hart was sifting through the stack of early decision applications and saw that one of them was from the senior class president at New Trier. "I was ecstatic," Hart admits. "He's not just a great student, but a great person. We were excited that he wanted to come to Vanderbilt badly enough to apply early decision. We admitted him, and are sure he'll be a visible member of our community."

A few weeks later admissions officer Brad Weiner is on the road to speak at a panel discussion at a large public high school in Alabama. Located in a suburb 10 miles from Huntsville, the community is filled with engineers, rocket scientists and computer scientists associated with the NASA Space Center and nearby high-tech industries. In a class of more than 600 seniors, 98 percent of the students are college bound — 75 percent heading to four-year schools and 23 percent to two-year programs. The top 10 percent of these seniors are vying to get into the nation's most competitive universities.

Hundreds of students and parents have gathered in the school cafeteria. Weiner gives a two-minute talk on the topic

PHOTOS BY DANIEL DUBOIS




Admissions officer Brad Weiner hits the road to spread the word about Vanderbilt. Here he visits a large high school near Huntsville, Ala., where, in a community filled with NASA engineers and scientists, 98 percent of the student body is college bound.

"Admission to Highly Selective Universities," touting Vanderbilt's holistic review process and need-blind admissions policy.

After a panel discussion attendees disperse to speak to various representatives. A long line forms in front of the Vanderbilt table, with students and parents waiting patiently to ask Weiner questions.

As he is packing up to drive back to Nashville that night, Weiner comments, "These students are terrific. Having access to NASA makes a huge difference. I get the same kinds of students from Seattle, whose parents work in the aerospace and computer technology industry. Those Microsoft students are amazing, too."

Not every school can offer students access to a wealth of college-prep and advanced-placement courses. Yet, Vanderbilt admissions personnel are determined to reach the best and the brightest from lesser-known schools as well. Vanderbilt needs students from households unfamiliar with the admissions maze as much as it needs kids from elite schools who began preparing for college in kindergarten.

On a stormy day in late fall 2006, Heather Shows, director of scholarships, drives to a high school in rural northern Georgia for a college fair. The gym has been entirely devoted to College Fair Day, and all students from grades nine through 12 will eventually wander through. Most of the recruiters are from small local and regional colleges, junior colleges, technical and vocational schools, a few large state public schools, and all branches of the military.

Fifty-eight percent of today's college students are women. College fairs illustrate one reason: Bands of four or five girls stop by the Vanderbilt table, empowering each other. The boys who stop by in groups tend to make fun of each other.

At this school 60 percent of the senior class will go on to two- or four-year colleges, vocational-technical schools or the military. For the rest, formal education will end with high school. In a school of 1,600 students and 350 seniors, the senior class college counselor has her work cut out for her. Many of the students are on the free and reduced-price lunch program, which qualifies them for fee waivers for the SAT and ACT college admissions tests—*if* they meet the application deadlines. "Pushing these students to understand deadlines is the hardest part of my job," she says. "They have to learn to stay on top of scholarships and to match up with schools that can offer financial aid."

During the course of the morning, several seniors venture over to the Vanderbilt table and mention that they haven't yet taken the SAT or ACT. It's mid-November. Most regular-decision applications are due in a month and a half.

In contrast to generations past, 58 percent of today's college students are women. This college fair illustrates one reason for this phenomenon. These types of events held in schools where the majority of students come from working-class backgrounds play to the strengths of young females. Bands of four or five girls stop by the Vanderbilt table, asking questions: Do you have a nursing major? (The answer is yes, but it's a graduate program only.) Does Vanderbilt have a women's varsity volleyball team? (Not yet.) The girls talk about their chances, empowering each other, feeding off the group dynamic, handing each other pamphlets and contact forms.

Among the males the dynamic is less supportive. Groups of guys pass by the table several times, glancing over without stopping. Time and again, one boy peels off from his peers, comes over to the Vanderbilt table by himself, and fills out a contact form without saying a word. He drifts back over to the group, leaving the brochures on the table.

The boys who do stop by in groups tend to make fun of each other. "You can't apply to Vanderbilt. That's a school for doctors," one teases another. Another young man comes by the table. "I'm not smart enough to get into Vanderbilt," he informs Shows.

"You shouldn't sell yourself short," she responds sincerely. She leaves the fair later that morning with a 6-inch-high stack of contact information forms. Scores of high schoolers in Georgia have big dreams.

For Christina Webb, associate director of undergraduate admissions, meeting amazing kids from both public and private schools is her favorite part of the job. "I enjoy working with the students on all levels—whether it's at an open house, at a citywide college fair, or in their high schools—and helping students who may not have even considered college navigate the search and enrollment process, even if they won't be applying to Vanderbilt," she says.

Speaking for the entire Vanderbilt admissions staff, Webb adds, "We're not here for the riches. We're here because we care about what we do, we believe in Vanderbilt, and we find this job fulfilling, important and worthwhile."

Says Christiansen, "We value that our alumni were here and that they want to carry on the Vanderbilt tradition with their children and grandchildren. We take that very seriously as a factor in our holistic review process. We are clearly becoming one of the most competitive higher-education institutions in the United States, and as the value of the Vanderbilt degree continues to grow exponentially, so does our pool of applicants from among the very best students around the world."

Ultimately, there is no secret formula for getting into Vanderbilt. Strong high school performance, however, is critical. In the fall 2006 entering class, for example, the average student who matriculated at Vanderbilt ranked in the top 6.5 percent of his or her high school class. And 77 percent of last year's entering class was in the top 10 percent of their high school class. The mid-range SAT scores of students enrolled in 2006 were between 1300 and 1470 (discounting the new writing portion of the test) and between 29 and 32 for the ACT. Students whose test scores and rank fall below that (and 25 percent of applicants' do) are not automatically removed from consideration. Numbers matter, but they are only part of the equation. Admitted applicants tend to be those who have excelled academically and outside the classroom in high school, demonstrated leadership skills, and shown an interest in local and global issues.

Once a student is accepted, Vanderbilt will meet that individual's entire calculated need by offering a financial aid package that might include a combination of grants and scholarships, loans, and work-study programs. Students' level of financial need does not impact whether or not they are admitted.

Beyond that, admissions officers make note of students with interesting hobbies and talents; students from public and private high schools; applicants whose parents or grandparents attended Vanderbilt; home-schoolers; athletes who want to participate in varsity, club or intramural sports; ROTC candidates; students from underrepresented racial and ethnic groups; kids from rich, poor or middle-class families and from rural, urban and suburban communities; techies, singers, dancers, artists, musicians and poets. Every attribute is fair game, and no single one trumps any other. All are factored into the review.

In many ways the Vanderbilt admissions office operates as a universe unto itself, and while admissions officers willingly take recommendations from alumni, donors, and members of the administration and faculty, in the end it is their responsibility to craft a freshman class from thousands of high achievers. Like the university itself, the admissions officers—26 in all—comprise a mix of ages, races, ethnicities, religions, educational backgrounds and life experiences.

"I have worked in the higher-education admissions arena for more than 20 years, and I've never worked with a collection of individuals more committed to the outcome and benefit of the student," says Christiansen, who came to Vanderbilt last year from Purdue University. "Looking at both the tangible and intangible sides of the file, they are ready to present each student's case in a way that will set that student apart. I am impressed by their ability to humanize the application beyond what's on paper."

This compassion and advocacy is at least partially due to the fact that the admissions officers have been out there in the trenches, spending weeks on the road during the summer and fall, fanning out across the country to nearly all 50 states and countries abroad, speaking to high schools, setting up tables at college fairs, meeting prospective applicants face to face, and talking up Vanderbilt as a great place to spend the next four years.

These extensive road trips, Dean Christiansen says, help establish relationships with underrepresented groups at Vanderbilt—students, for example, from tiny schools in the rural Midwest and huge urban schools in California. "We are trying to make sure everybody has the same information and the same ability to know what Vanderbilt can offer them—not just those with greater access. We want to even the playing field."

At the same time, the admissions staff works to maintain connections with those select high schools, public and private, whose students regularly apply to the country's top colleges.

Just because Vanderbilt reaches out to a student does not guarantee admission. Every applicant must go through the same

To Find Out More

"Our job is to help students understand the possibilities," says Douglas Christiansen, dean of admissions. "Call. Come and visit. Let us be a part of your journey."

- Call **615/322-2561**.
- Vanderbilt's comprehensive—and newly revamped—admissions Web site (**www.vanderbilt.edu/admissions**) provides information about application deadlines, financial aid, visiting campus and much more. It offers sections for parents, alumni and guidance counselors as well as prospective and newly admitted students.
- To find out more about financial aid, go to **www.vanderbilt.edu/admissions/financing**.

3 Ways Alumni Can Get Involved

1 Alumni can help promote Vanderbilt by taking part in **college fairs** in their region of the country. Vanderbilt sends admissions officers to as many fairs as possible, but relies on alumni as well. Contact Angelo Lee in the Office of Undergraduate Admissions at arc@vanderbilt.edu for details.

2 The **Alumni Interviewing Program** (AIP) allows students who have applied for admission to speak with a Vanderbilt alumnus. More than 1,600 Vanderbilt alumni in 22 countries have already registered to participate. Contact Tricia Blumenthal in the Office of Undergraduate Admissions for assistance at tricia.blumenthal@vanderbilt.edu.

3 Every April, **Vanderbilt hosts events** in cities around the country for students who have been admitted. Many are still making their final college decision, and others have already decided to attend Vanderbilt. Usually, events are held at a public venue. To become involved in a local "Vanderbilt & You" event for admitted students, contact the Office of Alumni Relations at alumni@vanderbilt.edu.

admissions process, which is another attempt by the university to be impartial. Applicants who are not known to Vanderbilt, perhaps because their high schools are unknown to admissions personnel, are given as fair a shake as anyone else.

Critics may argue that because the university is already turning away so many qualified applicants, it shouldn't be expending so many resources on attracting more. The recruitment push, they claim, is a tactic for schools to bolster their acceptance rates so they look better in annual college rankings.

"We are not driven by that," insists Gee. "If we were, our numbers, which are high, would be even higher."

Ben Wildavsky, formerly editor of *U.S. News'* "America's Best Colleges" and now a senior fellow in policy and research at the Ewing Marion Kauffman Foundation, contends that rankings are simply a way to codify a pecking order that's been out there a long time. For more than a century, the major Ivy League schools—Harvard, Princeton and Yale—have stood atop the heap in terms of perceived prestige. Yet, what that actually implies, he says, is that all the other 4,000-plus institutions have a fighting chance to be measured against each other.

"If you are an institution like Vanderbilt, and if you want to break into the national top tier, having an outside yardstick can be helpful. Rankings can be your friend," Wildavsky says. "That doesn't mean that rankings are perfect or that rankings can't be improved or that rankings aren't sometimes gamed. But if you're a school that is trying to rise in the rankings, and in order to do that you start lowering your class size, improving your graduation rate, and increasing how much you spend on research, arguably, those are all good things that are good for the institution and good for the students."

The next frontier in rankings, Wildavsky says, will be to develop valid measurements of how effective one's college education turns out to be. "Not just who gets admitted and what do they learn, but do they learn what they need in order to be productive members of society?"

In any case, now that Vanderbilt is on the admissions bullet train, there's no jumping off. The kind of top-notch students who list Vanderbilt among their college prospects are demanding an environment that values diversity, says Christiansen. They want to interact with people from various backgrounds and to gain exposure to original ideas and new visions.

Political science professor Bruce Oppenheimer, for one, has noticed a change in the campus zeitgeist in the last five years or so. "In the past, if I had a student in my class from Chicago, other than geographically he wasn't much different from the students who came from the South or from Manhattan," he says. "But now I'm noticing changes in my class in all measures of diversity. In the fall I taught a congressional elections seminar, and it was the best class I've had in my 35 years of teaching. These students were super. They came from all over the country—from cities, suburbs and rural areas. They were ethnically and politically diverse, and they were very engaged. Although they were good natured and tolerant of one another's views, they didn't hold back. And the papers they presented were of professional quality."

Almost a third of the 2006–07 freshman class is made up of racial and ethnic minorities. For 2007–08, total applications are up by about 500—nearly 400 of which are from minority students. More than half are from regions of the country outside the South—from all 50 states and from more than 50 countries worldwide. Christiansen is making a concerted effort to increase the presence of highly qualified international students on campus, aiming for a goal of 8 percent of the freshman class.

"So many of our graduates are working all over the world that we need to expose them as undergraduates to international cultures, beliefs and businesses," he says.

These very intentional changes will only enhance students' lives in the long term. May graduate Anita Aboagye-Agyeman, for instance, not only is working for a PR firm; she is studying to take the LSAT exam. After attending law school she wants to enact policy changes to the educational systems in Ghana and in the U.S. The insights she gained at Vanderbilt have made her all the more determined to give back to both countries.

"I consider myself lucky that I've been able to experience the best of both worlds," Aboagye-Agyeman says. "Vanderbilt has given me so much, and I'm very grateful for the amazing four years I had there. I hope that whatever I do, I become very successful financially so I can give a ton of money to the school." She pauses and allows a grin. "Actually, I dream of Vanderbilt putting my name on a building, and I can sit there and watch as students come through and try to pronounce my name." **V**

Contents Under Pressure

THE JOURNEY OF A COLLEGE APPLICATION

Between the months of October 2006 and January 2007, 12,850 high school students dropped packets in the mail, launching their college applications toward the netherworld of the admissions office at Vanderbilt University, entrusting their futures to a process over which they had little control. They knew only that for the next several months, they would be forced to sit back and wait for a decision.

Once it leaves the sender's hands, every undergraduate application embarks upon a journey of checks, balances, and a large dose of humanity, beginning the moment it arrives in the Vanderbilt admissions office.

Every year the admissions office receives around 1,300 early decision applications, and from this round admits about 550 students, or fewer than a third of the freshman class. The early decision agreement is contractually binding, and students who are admitted agree to attend Vanderbilt and withdraw applications to all other schools.

The vast majority apply through regular decision, giving them more time to choose among schools where they've been accepted and to compare financial aid packages. Most applications arrive at the office in disparate parts. One application might contain as many as 10 different pieces of mail—including part two of the Vanderbilt application, SAT and ACT scores, recommendation letters, academic records and transcripts, and financial aid request forms. From Dec. 26 through Jan. 5, the admissions office receives anywhere from 20 to 35 buckets of mail a day filled with assorted elements of undergraduate applications.

Students may also opt to submit the "common application" online. Accepted by more than 300 post-secondary schools, the common application has made it easier for students to apply to multiple universities.

After all pieces of the application are pulled together, they go into a folder tabbed for a particular Vanderbilt undergraduate school—the College of Arts and Science, Peabody College, Blair School of Music or School of Engineering. At that point the file undergoes a process known as "blue sheeting." Blue-sheeters translate all the academic transcripts, including courses taken, grades received and class ranking, into a single standard. In this way the reviewer can get a quick assessment of a student's performance.

Standardizing the transcript has become crucial to the process. As more high schools across the country have incorporated honors, advanced placement (AP), post-AP, international baccalaureate and independent study classes into their curricula, the scale for judging performance in those classes has metamorphosed. A student from one school may have a 5.2 grade-point average, another a 12.3, and another a 4.0. The child with the 4.0 may actually be the strongest student.

"When people ask the average GPA of our incoming classes, I tell them I can't answer that question because it's not fair," says Christina Webb, associate director of admissions. "At some very academically rigorous schools, a 3.8 could be in the middle of the class. In some high schools a 3.9 could be awful."

Once the application is blue-sheeted and has all its necessary component parts, it is filed according to territory. The admissions officer who covers that geographical area or school type will read it first, followed by a second reader. From February through mid-March, reviewers spend nearly every waking hour buried in applications, tunneling through stacks of folders, reading essays and evaluating transcripts, many times agonizing over their decisions.

If both readers strongly believe a student should be admitted, the application is sent down one pathway. If they think he or she is so phenomenal as to be considered for a prestigious scholarship, the application follows a different track. Those who clearly are not going to be

From left: Reading applications; a "stripping party" calls for all hands on deck as admission packets leave Vanderbilt and go into a waiting mail truck.

PHOTOS BY DANIEL DUBOIS

accepted travel a separate route. The bulk of applications enter a pool for the "probables," meaning they will be put up for discussion by the admissions committee.

By late February the admissions committee cranks into high gear, meeting three times a day, five to seven days a week, for three full weeks. In committee, individual admissions officers campaign—even crusade—for certain students from their territories to be given the remaining coveted slots.

"The regular-decision committee meetings can be extremely brutal," says Webb.

"We're getting into rarified air at this point," admissions officer Heather Shows adds. "All these kids are fabulous."

For these students the quality of the application can make or break an acceptance decision. As Shari Sutton, assistant admissions director, explains to prospective students, "Our job is to be your advocate, but you need to give us the information to put up a good fight. When writing your long essay, your goal should be to make somebody feel like they know you when they've never even met you."

While a well-written, fascinating essay may not be enough to propel a student into consideration, it definitely helps committee members distinguish among impressive candidates.

When it comes to the weight and value placed on high school AP courses and extracurricular activities, Vanderbilt admissions staffers are less engaged by students who have taken a slew of AP courses and joined a gaggle of after-school clubs, if they appear to be padding their résumés. What counts is a genuine pursuit of interest and a willingness to tap into the most challenging courses offered by the applicant's high school.

Committee members look for upward trends in a student's grades. They are more likely to give a break to students whose GPAs were brought down by their ninth-grade report cards than those who did well at first but let their grades drop during their upper-class years, says Douglas Christiansen, dean of admissions.

Once all decisions are made, Vanderbilt prints thousands of letters informing students whether or not they have been admitted—whereupon everyone in admissions switches gears and goes through a procedure of checking and double-checking to ensure that the right letter goes to the right person. Finally, they hold a "stripping party" to peel away the protective strips and seal the envelopes. On the Monday of notification, everybody forms a fire brigade, passing buckets of packets through the mailroom and out to a waiting mail truck. Once the truck is loaded, they join together for a celebration and go home early for the first time in months.

After long and grueling deliberations, the university will send out about 4,000 admit packets, anticipating that 1,550 students will accept and enroll. About 8,000 applicants will receive the thin envelopes signaling that they will not be coming to Vanderbilt.

April is the cruelest month for admissions officers. Parents begin calling, upset that their children did not get in. Admitted students, unaware that admissions officers championed them in committee and went to battle on their behalf, might be angry they weren't given a selective scholarship. They have no way of knowing that in a pool of terrific applicants, they were not the stars they might be at their high schools. Others will phone to thank the admissions officers for their efforts but say, "I'm going to Yale instead."

After long and grueling deliberations, the university will send out about 4,000 admit packets, anticipating that 1,550 students will accept and enroll. About 8,000 applicants will receive the thin envelopes signaling that they will not be coming to Vanderbilt.

"That's like a stab in the heart," says Heather Shows. "I'm thinking, 'I fought so hard for you! You'd be perfect for Vanderbilt!'"

In the end the rewards for the admissions team are enjoyed each fall when a fresh crop of extraordinary freshmen arrives on campus. For the next several years, every time a student scores a game-winning goal, or has a provocative article published in *The Hustler*, or participates in groundbreaking research, somebody in the admissions office takes a victory lap.

"Hey, look!" one admissions officer will say to another. "That's *my* kid!"

Playing with FOOD

A pinch of creativity. A drop of business sense. And a dash of pure madness.

By Cindy Thomsen | *Portraits by* Daniel Dubois

There's something about chefs and restaurateurs that isn't quite normal. They thrive on working 70 or 80 hours a week. They live for the organized chaos of a busy kitchen. Sharp knives, open flames and raw meat are the tools of their trade.

And they wouldn't have it any other way.

The five Vanderbilt graduates featured here left with degrees in elementary education, history, economics, history and business administration. But they each wanted something more than a 9-to-5 day job … something with more spice.

Fortunately, they each discovered a passion for food. And their timing couldn't have been better. Thanks to the Food Network's celebrity chefs, state-of-the-art home kitchens, and the widespread availability of gourmet ingredients, food people are hot. As Jon Bonnell, BS'94, says, "It's the most fun time in the world to be a chef."





The restaurant life isn't for everyone, but for these guys, nothing tastes better. They absolutely love what they do. And judging by the popularity of their establishments, so do their patrons.

Jon Bonnell

Taming the wild taste of Texas.

When Jon Bonnell, BS'94, was teaching school, summers were pure hell. And it had nothing to do with the Texas heat.

"I was bored out of my mind," Bonnell says. "The Food Network was just getting started, and I got hooked on it."

He had always cooked but never considered it as a profession. But then a chef on television mentioned culinary school, and Bonnell was intrigued. He spent two years at the New England Culinary Institute where he honed the concept that was to become Bonnell's.

"Texas has really interesting flavors, and I wanted to help define that. I designed the place around what the local farmers and ranchers had available that's high quality, hand crafted and organic."

Almost every item on the menu, including the game, seafood and cheese, has Texas origins. From the beginning, Bonnell knew his concept would work because he knows Texas and Texan taste buds. His family has been in Fort Worth for four generations.

Today one of his passions is in sharing his craft. He calls himself the chef with no secrets. "When I was growing up, the restaurant kitchen was a place you weren't allowed to see. Dishes had names like beef Wellington and chicken Kiev, but you weren't allowed to know what was in them." Bonnell shares his recipes with anyone who asks.

He makes appearances on local television, has been featured on ABC's *Nightline,* and has cooked with Bobby Flay on the Food Network. Don't be surprised if you see him on *Iron Chef America* one day.

"It's the most fun time in the world to be a chef," says Bonnell. "I'm just an average guy who grew up around here and can cook pretty well. Now I've got friends I knew at summer camp calling to say they saw me on TV."

Bonnell's Fine Texas Cuisine
4259 Bryant Irvin Road
Fort Worth, Texas
817/738-5489
www.bonnellsrestaurant.com

Chef/owner:
Bonnell's Fine Texas Cuisine,
Fort Worth, Texas
What to get if you go:
elk mini taco with green
chili cheese grits
What he won't touch:
coffee

Partner: Margot Café and Bar and Marché, Nashville
What to get if you go:
Who knows? The menu changes daily.
What he won't touch: cooked carrots

Jay Frein

How a restaurant changed the face of a neighborhood.

Back in June 2001, there was a buzz in Nashville about a new restaurant in town. It wasn't in any of the neighborhoods where you'd expect to find fine dining. And it was in an old gas station. From the day it opened, though, Margot Café and Bar has enjoyed a reputation for excellence. Legions of food lovers have found their way across town to the building once known as Fluty's Service Station.

Early on, Jay Frein, BA'92, and Chef Margot McCormack recognized that well-heeled, well-traveled homebuyers were flocking to East Nashville for its large older homes and lower prices. "We were fortunate in that we had a captive audience of neighborhood folks who are all progressive," Frein says. "They are educated people who just want good food. They embraced what we were doing from the get-go."

Margot Café specializes in rustic French and Italian cuisine. Last year the pair opened a second venture, Marché, which serves breakfast and lunch and also sells specialty items. It's an extension of the Margot concept, with fresh seasonal ingredients as the basis for everything served.

"We have people who eat breakfast and lunch at Marché and then come back for dinner at Margot," says Frein. "People keep coming back because our menu keeps changing. It's the best way to counter all the big chains where you always get the same steak."

Today East Nashville is home to an eclectic collection of restaurants and bars, and the one that started the trend is staying put. "People always ask us about opening in other locations," says Frein, "but our goal has always been to stay in the neighborhood."

Margot Café and Bar
1017 Woodland St.
Nashville, Tenn.
615/227-4668
www.margotcafe.com

Marché Artisan Foods
1000 Main St.
Nashville, Tenn.
615/262-1111
www.marcheartisanfoods.com

Jeremy Barlow

Original. Creative. And fiercely independent.

Two years working at a high-end corporate steakhouse might have stifled the creativity of some chefs. There's not much room for personal touches when the rib eye in Nashville has to taste the same as the one in St. Louis, which has to taste the same as the one in San Diego. But Jeremy Barlow, BA'95, watched and learned and put his time there to good use.

"I learned how to manage, but there's no creativity. Consistency is the key to corporate America," says Barlow, who blames the chains for "dumbing down" the American palate.

"People stand in line for hours to go to the Cheesecake Factory. They could go down the frozen food aisle at Kroger with a menu and see the same stuff."

A graduate of the Culinary Institute of America, Barlow is adamant that his restaurant and menu remain unique. If he hears another restaurant is doing a dish similar to one of his, he'll quit serving it. He is determined that Tayst be in a niche all its own. He also demands the best from his suppliers.

"I use as many local farmers as possible, even if it costs more. If it's not perfect, I'm not going to pay for it. And I'm not going to charge someone else for it, either."

Barlow admits that Tayst has had some rough spots—especially when 3,500 new restaurant seats opened in the market in the past year alone. But he remains passionate about food and cooking.

"The dream is always to own your own restaurant. Sometimes it turns into a nightmare, but mostly it's still a dream."

Tayst
2100 21st Ave. S.
Nashville, Tenn.
615/383-1953
www.tayst.info

Chef/owner:
Tayst, Nashville
What to get if you go:
beef short rib and foie gras
What he won't touch:
mayonnaise—"the sauce of the devil"

Owner: The Acorn, Nashville
What to get if you go: chorizo and potato-encrusted halibut
What he won't touch: honey-glazed ham

John Leonard

Entrepreneur first. Restaurateur second.

Some people are attracted to the restaurant industry because of their passion for food and cooking. Others want a job that doesn't involve a desk. But John Leonard, BA'00, saw it as the means to achieving a lifelong dream of owning his own business.

"I contemplated law school after graduation," says Leonard. "Then I got my license as a financial planner. But at the ripe old age of 23, I made a pact with myself to try the restaurant dream."

He wrote a business plan and followed age-old advice that encourages entrepreneurs to turn to the three F's when raising money: family, friends and fools.

Leonard was also searching for the right property and the right chef. All the pieces finally fell into place, and The Acorn opened in December 2002. Business at The Acorn has always been good, but Leonard has had his share of high-anxiety moments. One occurred when a gentleman arrived, declaring he had booked the restaurant's private dining room for a party.

"The person he had talked to on the phone apparently hadn't written down the reservation anywhere," says Leonard. "Fortunately, the room was available and we scrambled to set it up. Ultimately, we pulled off a party for about 25 people and he never knew about the mix-up."

That experience, along with some missed invoices, convinced Leonard it was important for him to be there during the day instead of all night. Today the restaurant is not only popular, it's prosperous. But it's just the beginning of his entrepreneurial career.

"We are now at a place where we can start thinking about what's next. The key is having patience, being smart about it."

The Acorn
114 28th Ave. N.
Nashville, Tenn.
615/320-4399
www.theacornrestaurant.com

Rick Elliott

Bringing Florence, Italy, to Florence, Alabama.

Around Florence, Ala., Rick Elliott, BS'76, is almost as well known for his alter ego, Ricatoni Valentino, as for the Italian dishes he serves up at his restaurant, Ricatoni's.

Elliott opened Ricatoni's in 1996, and a few years later Ricatoni Valentino, world famous lip-sync artist, made his television debut.

The commercials rarely show food and don't tout specials. Instead, the character takes on the Italian chain restaurants springing up in the area. In one he advises getting rid of an unwanted girlfriend by taking her to a chain instead of Ricatoni's. The character also has been seen as a boxer, a psychic with his own hotline and a swimsuit designer.

Elliott didn't plan to spend his life in the restaurant business. But after college, a friend asked him to help out at a Steak and Ale in Louisiana. One week in the kitchen, and Elliott knew this was the industry for him. During the years that followed, he worked for several chains including Bennigan's, Rafferty's and Princeton's Grill.

If Ricatoni's commercials bring customers in, it's the quality and atmosphere that bring them back. "I have this core group of things I'm fanatical about," says Elliott. "Product quality, execution and service. Our guests know we're genuinely interested in their well-being. There's a feeling of comfort and warmth. They like to come down here because it's fun and they have a good time."

Elliott offers free Italian lessons, too. Just listen carefully when you're in the restroom.

Ricatoni's Italian Grill
107 N. Court St.
Florence, Ala.
256/718-1002
www.ricatonis.com

Owner:
Ricatoni's Italian Grill, Florence, Ala.
What to get if you go:
tagliarini piace pellerossa
What he won't touch:
rutabagas

The *un*sinkable

By Charles Euchner, BA'82

When Marie Wilson talks, she leans forward, opens her eyes, and sways with her audience, whether it's one person or a crowd of 1,000. On this bitter-cold night in Manhattan, speaking at a party at Sotheby's, she rocks behind the podium. She stretches her arms out, punches and chops the air, throws her head back in laughter or mock surprise, twists her eyes to convey annoyance, holds her hands together as if praying.

Her hair perfectly coiffed, wearing a vibrant black suit with an electric pink shirt, wrapped in a huge scarf filled with reds and pinks and oranges, she looks like she could be the president.

Appearances, she says, matter. Electing a president requires redefining America's vision of what a president looks like.

Wilson, '62, is founder and president of the White House Project, started in 1998 to increase women's leadership in politics and corporate life. The nonpartisan project, working to advance a diverse critical mass of women into leadership positions, combines everything Wilson has learned over the years—networking, civil rights, women's rights, leadership, research, training—to inspire women of all generations to confront their fears and get involved in politics or become more visible leaders at their companies.

DANIEL DUBOIS

Marie Collins Wilson

Grassroots, grit, and visions of Madame President.

Government, contends Wilson, will only respond to the problems of women and families when women provide leadership alongside men.

ISABEL CHENOWETH

As a Vanderbilt student during the Civil Rights Movement, she became involved in the signature issue of the 1960s when the university expelled James Lawson for staging sit-ins at Nashville's lunch counters. The Lawson case offered important lessons that Wilson carries with her to this day: Recruitment and training are essential. You can't count on elites to lead change. History can be hurried up with persistence, discipline and stubbornness.

Wherever she goes, Wilson emphasizes this point: Government will only respond to the problems of women and families—living wages, health care, child care, public safety—when women provide leadership alongside men.

She spends most of her days with political and corporate elites. She raises money, plots awards dinners for film and TV stars, travels overseas for inaugurations, moves easily among leaders in Washington, confers with academics on polling and other research.

Wilson is the quintessential nonprofit leader. She tosses off arguments with a Southern drawl flattened by the years she lived in Iowa. She draws from a vast store of policy research. Before a radio interview and public speech, she hones her talking points with a young staffer. They speak in code. "You might want to do the courage thing at the end of the speech," the staffer, Lindsay Clinton, says.

"Oh, that's perfect!" Wilson says. She scribbles a note on a memo. The Marie Wilson talking points on women in American politics go like this:

Point 1: Women in America hold more positions of authority than ever before, but still trail other nations. "Do you know we're 69th in the world in women's leadership?" she says, pointing to recent elections of women in Chile and Nigeria.

Point 2: To win a fair share of leadership positions, women need to change the image of what a president looks like. That's why Wilson pushed Hollywood for years to do a TV show depicting a woman president; the acclaimed (but short-lived) *Commander in Chief,* starring Geena Davis, was finally produced. That's why she pushed Mattel to produce a new doll depicting the curvaceous Barbie as president. That's why the White House Project gives annual awards to culture changers for positive depictions of women leading in film, television, theater, art and advertising.

Point 3: The only way to give a woman a real chance to get elected and succeed as president is to create a vast pool of progressive women in elected office. If a president comes from a shallow pool, she will become a token who must "be man enough for the job" to survive. The deeper the pool, the better the choice of presidents and the greater her support structure. That's why the WHP trains women across the country. In a little more than a year, the program trained 800 women to run for political office.

The White House Project backs up its activism with research, commissioning five research pieces and four polls. The most-quoted research explores the imbalance in guests on Sunday morning chat shows. Only 14 percent of the guests were women on programs like *Face the Nation* and *Meet the Press.* Wilson sighs at the invisibility of women, quoting Marion Wright Edelman, president of the Children's Defense Fund: "You can't be what you can't see." To combat the problem, the White House Project has compiled a directory of women policy experts called SheSource.org.

Wilson learned how to do politics as the only child of a working-class Atlanta couple. Growing up in public housing in her early childhood, Marie learned how to create networks by watching her mother. She learned how to hold things together from her father, who buffered her mother's mood swings. And she learned about injustice from their African-American housekeeper, her constant companion.

From a young age Marie worried about surviving without a man in the house. She remembers waiting for her father to get home from World War II, always knowing he might die in combat.

When Albert Collins returned home, he took a job as a typesetter. Marie's mother, Myrtle—known to everyone as Collie—worked as a dental assistant and later became social director at Peachtree Presbyterian Church. A game of "Six Degrees of Collie Collins" could link Atlanta's political, business and church elites.

With both parents working, young Marie developed a close relationship with Liz Brown, the housekeeper and nanny. (Even working-class families employed housekeepers in those days.)

"We had that intimacy that's very characteristic of the South," Marie remembers. "Liz was the one I came home and told my stories to, and showed my drawings to, and got under the bed with when lightning came. She put tobacco on my bee stings. She was the one I cried with." Liz taught Marie how to work hard and to find sustenance in spiritual life.

Collie Collins occasionally lashed out in anger, and Marie and Al had to buffer her

from her own rage. "My mother was a beautiful, smart woman who had grown up orphaned in different homes, very hard and very poor," Wilson remembers. "She had never been parented, so she didn't know how to do it. She worked for people who should have been working for her. I knew when she got angry it wasn't about me. I tried to please and keep things calm, and rub her back. My father would say, 'We just need to do this.' It was teamwork. She was a woman worth protecting."

After the storms, life was an adventure. After work and school, they went swimming, picnicking, walking. They danced and sang. Wherever they went, people knew them.

The center of Marie's life was the church. When Al and Collie and Liz didn't have enough to give Marie, people from the church gave more. They were all accepted for who they were. What mattered was that they showed up.

Popular in high school—cheerleader, homecoming queen, a top student who got a scholarship offer from Duke—Marie took a stand when boys took their cars to black neighborhoods and terrorized people. And she didn't like the school's cliques. She sided with the plain-looking girls in their ages-old struggles with the Heathers.

She went to Vanderbilt because of a crush on a student she met on a weekend visit. She fit in right away, pledging the Kappa Alpha Theta sorority, where she rose to vice president.

If high school taught her about race and cliques, Vanderbilt taught her about class and politics. When her friends talked about their debutante balls, she was confused. *Debut? What's that?* Eventually, she tired of polishing silver and got angry when a friend was refused a bid to the sorority. She studied philosophy and, for the first time, read the daily newspaper.

Marie and another student, Lamar Alexander, got involved when the university expelled James Lawson from the Divinity School. Lawson had come south at the suggestion of Martin Luther King Jr. Lawson recruited and trained hundreds of protesters in nonviolent tactics. When they staged sit-ins at Nashville's lunch counters, Lawson's troops became the biggest and most disciplined of the movement's protest groups.

Collins and Alexander took a stand for Lawson. (Alexander, BA'62, would later become governor of Tennessee, U.S. secretary of education, presidential candidate and U.S. senator.)

"I remember Marie very well," says Alexander. "She was elegant and smart and committed and well respected, and those are not the words that usually come to mind about a 20-year-old college student. We didn't think much about what people would be doing in their 40s and 50s back then, but it's no surprise that she's been so creative and innovative in her work for the status of women."

Marie Collins left Vanderbilt in 1962, after completing her junior year, to join her future husband, Eugene Wilson, in the Civil Rights Movement. He took a position as choir director at West Presbyterian Church in Wilmington, Del.

"I couldn't be a minister," she says. "All I could be was a Christian educator, and that didn't appeal to me. Here was a man who was going to do the work of justice. Why not do that with him? The choir was someplace people could make a common cultural connection. We worked on what I work on now—the power of culture to make change. We had people sing together who couldn't talk together."

While completing her B.A. at the University of Delaware, she organized a youth center. She also got an education in the northern dimensions of racial inequality. Young women got pregnant at early ages. With limited options, they found succor in making babies.

For years she and countless other women served the men in the movement. But the ideals of the movement did not extend to women. The cause espoused equality, but she couldn't choose her own career or control her body. Like many children of the Civil Rights Movement, Marie Wilson had never applied the movement's principles—equality of opportunity, respect for difference, removal of formal and informal barriers—to women.

if a president comes from a shallow pool, she will become a token who must "be man enough" to survive. The deeper the pool, the better the choice of presidents and the greater her support structure.

After a couple of years, Marie and Eugene left for Pittsburgh. Her doctor's advice on birth control notwithstanding, she was pregnant for the fourth time in five years. She already struggled to keep the household together on her husband's meager church salary.

She vividly recalls sitting in a bathtub in their Pittsburgh home almost four decades ago, wondering whether she should venture into the Hill District scarred by race riots. If she wanted an abortion, she would have to go to the black neighborhood where illegal abortionists worked.

"The Hill District is burning," she remembers. "I've had pleurisy and I'm not well. I can't take care of these children, and we have no money."

Roe v. Wade, the landmark Supreme Court ruling protecting a woman's right to have an abortion, was still years in the future.

There was no guarantee that the procedure would be safe.

She decided against the abortion—the prospect of their children losing their mother weighed heavier than the additional burden of another child to feed—but Wilson felt a roar as she contemplated her choices. Remembering the moment now, she lets out the same sound as the lion at the beginning of MGM films.

"All of a sudden, I'm sitting in that bathtub thinking, 'This is not fair to women! Wait a minute!'" Her voice rises, the drawl of her native Atlanta still alive. "'I should be able to determine how many children I can take care of. I know what children need.'"

She didn't discuss her moment of truth with her husband or anyone else. She didn't know how to connect her insight to something bigger. The idea that "the personal is the political" had not become a rallying cry for feminism. But Marie Wilson's life had changed forever.

After a year in Pittsburgh, the Wilsons moved to Des Moines, Iowa. Marie continued her community work. She lobbied the state legislature for the American Association of University Women. She earned a master's in education at Drake University and ran the university's women's programs. She worked for the Iowa Bankers Association.

When Wilson recruited women to go to Drake, she didn't outline tips for juggling school, jobs, parenthood and housework. She called women in front of the room and challenged them, like a preacher, to confront their fears: "Come stand with me, and tell me what's holding you back."

The problem went beyond logistics. The problem lay deep in the psyche.

"We are scared of women's desire, women's wanting," Wilson says. "Freud was wrong on that. It's not what do women want; it's what *can* women want?"

Then, another epiphany: Elaine Szymoniak, the only woman on the Des Moines city council, called her in 1983 and asked her to run for an at-large seat. Being the only woman on the council was starting to grind Szymoniak down. She needed a colleague. "Do it or I'll quit," Szymoniak told her.

Wilson beat 10 men for the council seat and dreamed of running for statewide office someday. Then the Ms. Foundation for Women advertised for a new president. Friends dared her to apply.

Marie and Eugene Wilson had split up. She was building a new life, living in a new house, contemplating her own deepest desires. She landed the Ms. job, left Iowa after 15 years, and settled in New York. She brought her son Martin, while her son David finished school in Iowa. The other children had already moved on to college.

When Wilson took over the Ms. Foundation, the "founding mothers" still dominated the organization. To Jean Hardisty, Wilson's greatest strength was that she could stand up to strong-willed women like Gloria Steinem and Marlo Thomas.

"I remember saying that if we hired Marie, things are going to change dramatically around here," says Hardisty, a Ms. board member and the president of Political Research Associates. "Everyone laughed and said, Well, that might not be such a bad thing. We were breaking with tradition by hiring her. She became the greatest rainmaker we ever had. More important, she turned the foundation into a force for the movement, as opposed to just a funder."

Then Collie Collins' daughter put her own networking skills to work. She increased the foundation's budget from $400,000 to $8.6 million, with an endowment of $16 million.

In 1993, as an initiative of the Ms. Foundation, she started the Take Our Daughters to Work Day, which now brings 16 million young people to their parents' offices every April. The idea was like a lot of Marie Wilson's ideas: Change people's practices by changing their perceptions.

Research showed that girls start to slip behind boys during early adolescence. They begin to question their own brains and reduce their goals, while boys embrace greater ambitions. Part of the problem, research by Jill Kerr Conway showed, was that parents told their daughters little about the challenges and rewards of work. Boys heard about the excitement of careers, while girls heard about how tired the parents were when they got home.

Take Our Daughters to Work Day encouraged girls to take a day off from school to go to work with a parent or family friend and see for themselves the opportunities outside the home. Seeing women in a different place could help them to imagine themselves taking charge in government, corporations, small businesses, schools.

The program originally was open to girls from 9 to 15 years old. Boys were added in 2003, with the more inclusive goal of challenging all kids' stereotypes about who does what and where.

At the Ms. Foundation, Wilson also funded a number of research projects and started a fund to support organizations that meet the needs of women with HIV/AIDS. She developed programs for public safety.

And she rebuilt her personal life. She met Nancy Lee, vice president for business

in 1993 she started the Take Our Daughters to Work Day. The idea was like a lot of Wilson's ideas: Change practices by changing perceptions.

One Ms. Foundation board member calls Wilson "the greatest rainmaker we ever had."

DANIEL DUBOIS

development for the New York Times Co. "I ended up loving a woman," she says. Wilson and Lee are still together, living in a cozy East Side Manhattan apartment and spending a couple of weekends a month in Woodstock.

Bella Abzug, who loudly represented New York in Congress and once ran for mayor, pushed Wilson for years to train women for electoral politics. But when Abzug pushed in her gruff New York way, Wilson declined in her elegant Southern way.

Eventually, though, Wilson had another epiphany: "If we don't get these women into power, we're going to spend all our time fighting regressive legislation. I would give anything if I had listened to Bella, because the truth is we will never change anything unless we get women in public office."

Now everything in Marie Wilson's life is oriented towards getting women into leadership, including the U.S. presidency.

Not everyone believes that electing a woman should be the Feminist Movement's primary goal. "I'm interested in electing the best president for women's issues, not just a woman president," says Aileen Hernandez, chair of the California Women's Agenda. Still, Hernandez applauds the idea of recruiting record numbers of women for offices at every level of the system.

At a weekly staff meeting just blocks away from the site where George Washington was inaugurated as the first president, Wilson sits at the middle of a makeshift conference table at the Wall Street office of the White House Project. The organization has outgrown its space—and will move by the next week—so staffers meet in the lobby area. Wilson lets the 10 other women and one man do most of the talking.

At one point Wilson waves the front page of the *New York Times* to underscore their crusade's relevance. For the first time in American history, one headline reports, 51 percent of all women live without a spouse.

Another *Times* story reports Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice's pragmatic approach to Egypt and the Middle East. Wilson considers Rice a prime candidate for president. She recoils at Rice's role in the Iraq war, but says she's a "work in progress." Whatever else, Rice has contributed to a sharpening image of women with power.

Wilson gets a report from a weekend training session in Wyoming. Women hold almost a quarter of the legislature's seats but have been shut out of key leadership and committee assignments. Those grassroots lawmakers might include a future presidential candidate. But if they can't confront the male power structure, they won't rise through the system.

The White House Project has helped teach women from both parties how to position themselves better in the legislature. As the most viable woman candidate for president, Hillary Clinton is clearly Wilson's favorite. But she talks up other women—especially Arizona Gov. Janet Napolitano and Maine senators Susan Collins and Olympia Snowe—as viable candidates for at least the vice presidency. In her dream scenario, Clinton gets the Democratic nomination for president and one of the Maine senators gets the Republican nomination for vice president.

Someone at the meeting mentions that Illinois Sen. Barack Obama has announced his intention to run. Obama, who would be the nation's first black president, could pose Hillary Clinton's greatest barrier.

Deep breaths around the table follow a period of jolting silence.

"OK, so what happened with those legislators in Wyoming?" someone asks to break the pause. Back to work. ▼

By Kate Carney

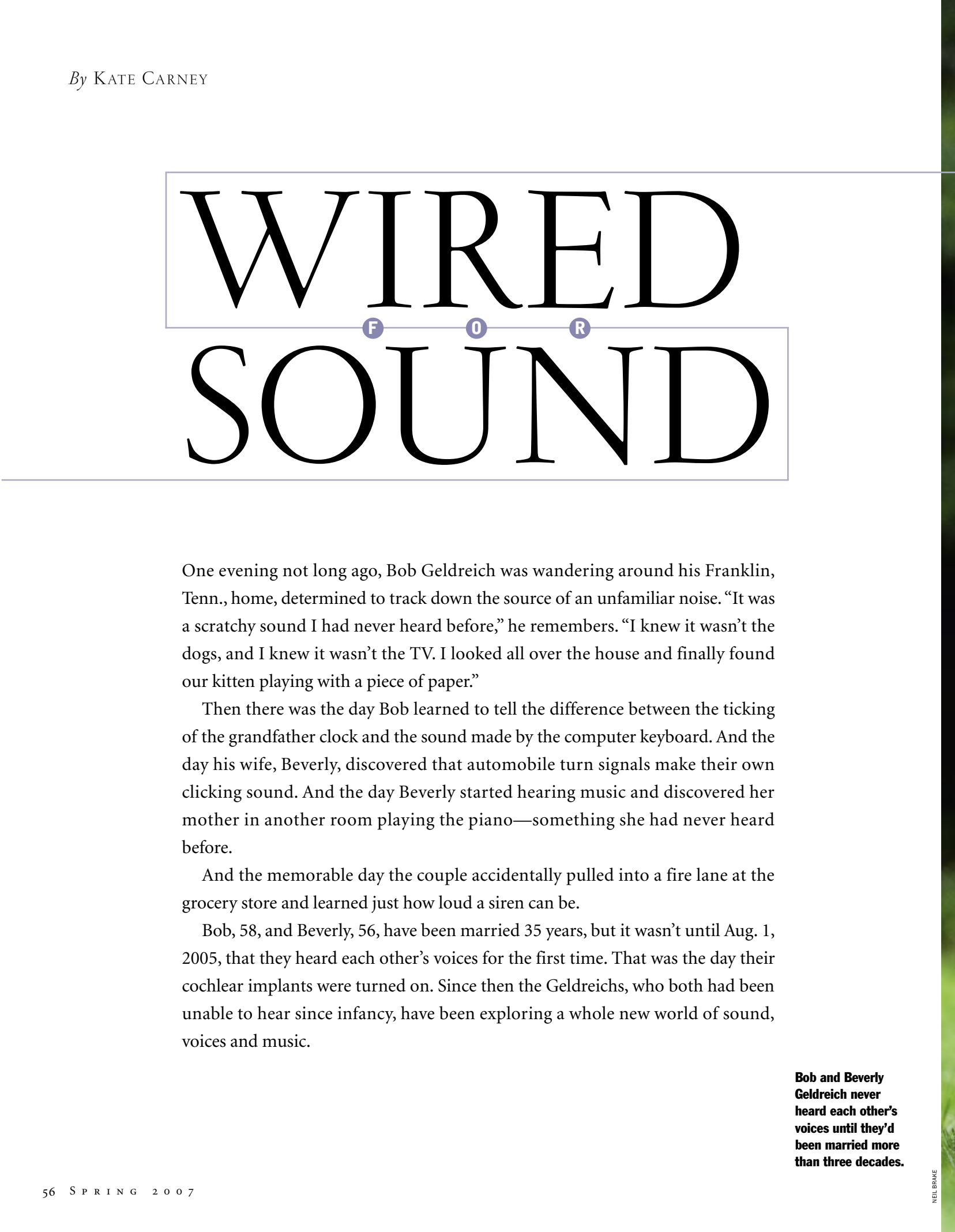
WIRED FOR SOUND

One evening not long ago, Bob Geldreich was wandering around his Franklin, Tenn., home, determined to track down the source of an unfamiliar noise. "It was a scratchy sound I had never heard before," he remembers. "I knew it wasn't the dogs, and I knew it wasn't the TV. I looked all over the house and finally found our kitten playing with a piece of paper."

Then there was the day Bob learned to tell the difference between the ticking of the grandfather clock and the sound made by the computer keyboard. And the day his wife, Beverly, discovered that automobile turn signals make their own clicking sound. And the day Beverly started hearing music and discovered her mother in another room playing the piano—something she had never heard before.

And the memorable day the couple accidentally pulled into a fire lane at the grocery store and learned just how loud a siren can be.

Bob, 58, and Beverly, 56, have been married 35 years, but it wasn't until Aug. 1, 2005, that they heard each other's voices for the first time. That was the day their cochlear implants were turned on. Since then the Geldreichs, who both had been unable to hear since infancy, have been exploring a whole new world of sound, voices and music.



Bob and Beverly Geldreich never heard each other's voices until they'd been married more than three decades.

NEIL BRAKE

From cochlear implants to language training, the Bill Wilkerson Center offers help and hope to the 10 percent of Americans with hearing problems.

NEIL BRAKE

A cochlear implant is an electronic device that is surgically placed in the cochlea—the part of the inner ear that, in typical hearing, picks up sound vibrations and transmits the signals to the auditory nerve. In many people who have hearing loss, part or all of the cochlea is damaged and no longer transmits those signals naturally. The cochlear implant is essentially an artificial cochlea that converts outside sounds to electronic signals and transmits them directly to the nerve of hearing and the brain.

Vanderbilt otolaryngology surgeon Dr. David Haynes performed the Geldreichs' surgeries on the same day. Implanting a husband and wife on the same day was a first for him. "They're both doing very well," Haynes says. "They can hear in what we consider a normal range now, and their speech is much more understandable."

Haynes is part of a much larger team of physicians, audiologists, teachers, speech-language pathologists and researchers working to find new treatments for hearing loss at the Vanderbilt Bill Wilkerson Center for Otolaryngology and Communication Sciences. The center comprises Vanderbilt's Department of Otolaryngology and Department of Hearing and Speech Sciences. Vanderbilt's audiology program is ranked No. 1 in the nation, and its speech-language pathology training program is ranked No. 6 in the latest graduate school rankings by *U.S. News and World Report* magazine. The Department of Hearing and Speech Sciences boasts one of the largest faculties and staffs in the country, numbering more than 100.

For people who have been deaf from birth or infancy like the Geldreichs, the road to hearing well with a cochlear implant can be lengthy. Small children who receive implants are young enough to learn hearing and speech on an almost typical schedule, and the plasticity of their brain development helps them soak up language like a sponge. Adults who lost their hearing as adults are also ahead of the game; they have a memory of sound and an existing knowledge of speech sounds to work with. But adults who have been without any useful hearing for 40 or 50 years must work very hard to decipher and put meaning to the new sounds they are hearing.

"We used to tell people they could only get an implant if they had no hearing at all. Now we're considering people who may still have some hearing but aren't getting any benefit from hearing aids."

— Dr. David Haynes, otolaryngology surgeon

DANIEL DUBOIS

Although the Geldreichs could hear sounds as soon as they were hooked up, they say it took six to nine months to get to the point where they understood immediately what the sounds were. At first, the sheer quantity and variety of sounds could be overwhelming. Now they can make the distinction between the organ and hand bells at church, they hear birds and their pets, and they can hear the voices of their children and each other.

Being able to hear so well does have its drawbacks. Bob says he can't hear the TV when Beverly is using the blow dryer. Beverly argues with him about the volume. And they still have difficulty localizing sound. Recently, they spent two or three days trying to find a humming noise only to discover they had left the vent fan on over the stove.

The Geldreichs are developing more understandable speech, which is exciting to them and their family. Their daughter, Ginger Jones, is a speech-language pathologist at the Bill Wilkerson Center who specializes in speech and language development in individuals with hearing loss. Her parents received formal speech therapy for a while after they were implanted, and Jones has worked informally with them since that time.

"My dad has made the most improvement," says Jones. "Both my parents developed very good spoken-language skills as children, but my mom's speech was always easier for unfamiliar listeners to understand. Having the implant has motivated my dad to work hard on making his speech more intelligible."

Bob is a part-time personal assistant to a man who is both deaf and blind. They communicate by signing into each other's hands. Beverly stays busy with home, family and Jazzercise (she says she enjoys being able to hear the music now), and they both are active in the local chapter of Hearing Loss America. "A couple of friends in Hearing Loss America had received implants and loved them, so we decided to try it," she remembers. "What would I tell others who were thinking about implants? I'd tell them to go for it."

Bob Geldreich has come full circle. He was one of the first children with hearing loss to receive speech therapy at the Bill Wilkerson Center in the 1950s. He remembers hours of speech therapy there with other children, passing headphones and microphones around the table.

A speech-language pathologist, Ginger Jones helps her parents improve their speech.

NEIL BRAKE

Better Implants, Safer Surgery

The Bill Wilkerson Center came into being in 1956 (see sidebar "Who Was Bill Wilkerson?"), but not until 1997, when it lacked the physical and fiscal resources to provide for needed growth, did the center merge with its longtime neighbor, Vanderbilt University Medical Center.


DANIEL DUBOIS

Despite one name and one big organizational chart, Bill Wilkerson's programs were fragmented geographically, housed in several buildings around campus until 2005, when the center moved into 139,000 square feet of space on five floors of a $61 million, nine-story building adjacent to Vanderbilt Hospital. Space in the new Vanderbilt Bill Wilkerson Center for Otolaryngology and Communication Sciences is designed to encourage interdisciplinary collaboration and research in all of the speech, language and hearing sciences, and otolaryngology specialties. It has been hailed as the first of its kind in the world to create space where medical and therapeutic intervention are used in partnership to treat communication disorders.

The center handles more than 50,000 patient visits a year, treating people challenged by the entire range of communication-related and otolaryngological diseases and disorders like deafness, autism, head and neck cancer, accidental brain injury, vocal disorders, sinus diseases, speech and language delays, balance disorders, and other debilitating conditions of the head, neck, ear, nose and throat.

Hearing loss is the third most prevalent health problem in the United States, with more than 10 percent of the population having some hearing problem. New developments in cochlear implants are enlarging the demographic of people who can be implanted. "We used to tell people they could only get an implant if they had no hearing at all," says Haynes. "Now we're considering people who may still have some hearing but aren't getting any benefit from hearing aids. Anyone of any age who is not doing well with a hearing aid could be considered a candidate for an implant." As technology improves, speech processing in the implant improves and users get better results.

On the horizon are implants that have a shorter electrode array so that surgeons are able to create better hearing—but also preserve hearing that is left. Currently, the electrode array on a cochlear implant is long enough to obliterate all the "nerve endings" of the hair cells of the inner ear. If all the hair cells are nonfunctioning, this isn't a problem. But if some of the lower frequencies are still viable, a shorter electrode array will enable hearing in the higher frequencies that no longer work and leave natural hearing in the lower frequencies. This new technology may again increase the number of people who are good candidates for the device.

Researcher Dr. Rob Labadie, assistant professor of otolaryngology, is trying to create a way to make cochlear implants less invasive and more appealing by developing image-guided techniques for ear surgery. Surgeons have been using scans and markers in other types of surgery for years, but commercially available systems aren't accurate enough for the complicated and delicate area around the ear. Because of the close proximity of vital systems—auditory and facial nerves, vascular structures—accuracy in ear surgery must be within a millimeter, a level that standard image-guided techniques can't achieve.

"The key," says Labadie, "is linking the patient to the X-ray with immobile markers [on the body]. Stick-on markers don't work because skin moves too much for the accuracy level we need." Labadie and colleagues have developed a marker system that attaches to patients via a dental bite block—similar to an athletic mouth guard.

"Mounting the marker system on the dental guard allows placement of the markers surrounding the ears, which allows accuracy to be within a millimeter," he says. Trained in both engineering and medicine, Labadie is also exploring the idea of using computer-guided robotics to assist in ear surgeries. "If

Who Was Bill Wilkerson?

The Bill Wilkerson Center has been around 51 years. That's more than twice as long as its namesake, who died in 1945 at age 19.

The son of Wesley Wilkerson, a Nashville eye, ear, nose and throat doctor, Bill loved history and archaeology. He knew the location of Civil War trench lines around Nashville, and where Native American tribes had lived and traveled. Many days found him riding horseback through Lealand Hills, south of Nashville, collecting musket balls, mini cannon balls and arrowheads. For Christmas when Bill was 16, his parents gave him a folding shovel, one he could carry on his horse to dig for relics.

In 1943, when he was 17, Bill volunteered for the Civil Air Patrol. He graduated from Hillsboro High and took a few classes at Vanderbilt. He enlisted in the Army and volunteered to be a forward observer in the largest ground battle of World War II, the Battle of the Bulge. Bill Wilkerson was one of more than 19,000 American men to die between Dec. 16, 1944, and Jan. 28, 1945.

"Mother and Daddy would not speak of Bill after he died. It was devastating to them," Bill's sister Nancy Fawn Wilkerson Diehl remembered in a 2002 interview with the *Vanderbilt Reporter*.

Since the 1930s, Dr. Wesley Wilkerson had lobbied and pushed for a center for hearing and speech sciences. When it finally came to fruition, the board surprised Wilkerson by voting unanimously to name the center after Bill.

When ground was broken on the original building a few blocks east of the Vanderbilt campus in May 1956, Wesley used the folding shovel that had belonged to his son.

In 1997 the Bill Wilkerson Center merged with Vanderbilt University Medical Center and became the Vanderbilt Department of Hearing and Speech Sciences. Partnered with the Department of Otolaryngology, the combined departments are now known as the Vanderbilt Bill Wilkerson Center for Otolaryngology and Communication Sciences.

When ground was broken for a new state-of-the-art building to house the center on the Medical Center campus in December 2002, Bill's sisters, Jane Wilkerson Yount and Nancy Fawn, dug that same spade into a pile of sand.

— CLINTON COLMENARES

Oral Tradition

At the Mama Lere Hearing School, most of the 30 or so preschoolers were born with little or no hearing. Half have cochlear implants, and the other half wear traditional hearing aids. About a third have multiple disabilities. But all are learning to talk and listen without using sign language, and a few of the 5-year-olds are beginning to read.

Housed in the Bill Wilkerson Center, the Mama Lere Hearing School is part of the National Center for Childhood Deafness and Family Communication (NCCDFC), which was started at the Bill Wilkerson Center about three years ago with the idea that the center would renew its historic commitment to helping children with hearing loss become oral communicators.

The school works to develop spoken language and help children communicate independently and effectively. It is the only option in Middle Tennessee for preschool children with hearing loss to receive intensive training in spoken language.

Preschoolers at Mama Lere tune up for Morning Music.

DANIEL DUBOIS

Walls and ceilings at the school are acoustically treated, and doors create a seal so that background noise is lessened. Even the children's playground was carefully planned: The slides are made of coated metal instead of plastic so that children with cochlear implants do not risk creating a static charge that could damage the implant.

The Mama Lere Hearing School is a direct descendant of the Mama Lere Parent Teaching Home that was established by the Bill Wilkerson Center in 1972. It was named for Mrs. Valere Potter—called "Mama Lere" by her children and grandchildren—whose foundation provided funding.

Like the original, the new school is family oriented. "Our philosophy is that parents are their child's best teacher," says Tamala Bradham, director of the school.

Music plays an integral role in the children's advancement. "It helps us get the wiggles out and our listening ears on," says Bradham. "Teachers, audiologists—sometimes even the surgeons who performed the cochlear implant surgery—come help us dance, clap and sing along." All sorts of guest artists have attended "Morning Music," and the children have been introduced to everything from Native American flute tunes to classical instruments.

Children also spend the day on learning activities, vocabulary and concept development, one-on-one time with speech pathologists, and pre-reading skills. They also have self-directed time when they are encouraged to play and interact.

The children at Mama Lere are part of the first generation of children with hearing loss who are growing up with such good technological and therapeutic intervention that learning to talk is the most natural communication option for many of them. Last fall many of the previous year's kindergarteners headed off to first grade ready to listen and learn with the rest of the class.

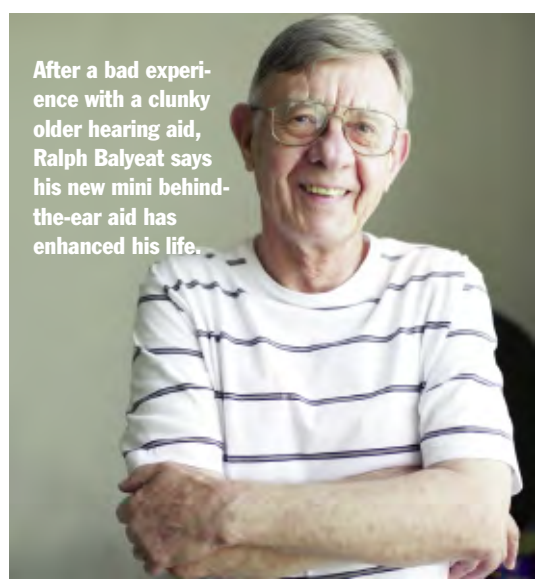
we can make these techniques available in rural areas or developing countries where specialists are rare, we hope to improve the safety of the techniques and allow surgeons with less training to do more sophisticated surgeries."

Using an image-guided directional device, Labadie is working on developing a less-invasive cochlear implant surgery that avoids the mastoidectomy (a surgical procedure to remove an infected portion of the bone behind the ear) and possibly general anesthesia. He is leading a multisite investigation with teams from the University of North Carolina-Chapel Hill, the University of Texas Southwestern Medical Center, and Case Western Reserve University. "We hope to decrease operative time from two or three hours to 15 minutes," says Labadie. "If we can perform the surgery under local anesthesia, we can test the cochlear implant before we close the incision. That gives us the option of adjusting where the implant lies within the cochlea in order to get better overall sound perception from the implant."

Hunting, Harleys and Hearing Loss

Typical hearing loss begins in the higher frequencies as we age and the ears accumulate years of exposure to noise. The cochlea can recover from one exposure to loud noise, but after multiple exposures the hair cells start to deteriorate and hearing becomes less acute.

Generally, the first frequencies lost are in the upper ranges. Although a person may not notice he can't hear a watch tick anymore, he might start noticing when he can't hear the soft, high speech sounds like "s," "th" and "sh"—when words like "fishing" and "sipping" become indistinguishable.



After a bad experience with a clunky older hearing aid, Ralph Balyeat says his new mini behind-the-ear aid has enhanced his life.

DANIEL DUBOIS

Ralph Balyeat, now 71, grew up in Ohio and Michigan, hunting and riding a Harley for fun. "Between the two," he says, "my hearing was probably pretty bad by the time

I hit high school.

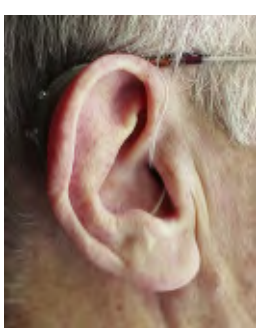
"You first accuse people of mumbling," he adds. "Then you fuss because the minister drops words on the ends of sentences. It's always something or someone else—they play the background music too loud. Then you finally realize you need some help."

Balyeat's hearing loss was more moderate than the Geldreichs'; he didn't need a cochlear implant. But his experience with a hearing aid a decade ago had not been successful. He has a small ear canal that causes problems with an in-the-ear fitting.

Last summer he visited the Bill Wilkerson Center and tried one of the new open-ear fittings so as not to block the canal and maximize the hearing he still has. "The old hearing aid was huge," Balyeat says. "But the new one is very small."

"I tell people these are high-tech Band-Aids for their ears," says Dr. Bill Dickinson,

Generally, the first frequencies lost are in the upper ranges. Although a person may not notice he can't hear a watch tick anymore, he might start noticing when words like "fishing" and "sipping" become indistinguishable.



DANIEL DUBOIS

assistant professor of hearing and speech sciences and director of the hearing aid dispensary. "We're not fixing the ears, but we're fixing the lifestyle of the person the ears belong to."

2006 was one of the largest hearing-aid growth years ever, and patients at Vanderbilt far exceeded the national rate for hearing aid purchases. The newest type is a mini behind-the-ear aid with an open-ear fitting. The high-performing technology fits behind the ear with only a tiny, clear tube and an ear bud extending into the ear canal. Open fittings like this do not plug the ear canal, which allows any residual natural hearing to keep functioning.

The technology includes automatic or adaptive microphones that can analyze the sound environment and adjust its processing to fit. Stored in the hearing aid is a database of hundreds of different acoustical environments to choose from, and some hearing aids have programs that will evolve as it "learns" the user's typical environments and preferences.

And audiologists like Dickinson are becoming more exact with hearing-aid fitting. "With software, we can create a prescription to match the hearing loss and then measure whether that prescription is being met at the eardrum."

Balyeat uses some of the adaptable functions occasionally, particularly in noisy restaurants, but for the most part he lets the hearing aid do its job. "It's a big help in terms of conversation with your spouse," he says. "There are not as many misunderstandings. You pick up more of what your grandchildren say, especially if they are young or have soft voices, because that's the hearing you lose first. It definitely enhances my life."

One floor above the audiology clinic, in the Dan Maddox Hearing Aid Research Lab, researcher Todd Ricketts works to keep up with rapidly changing technology. "Engineers are building new technology into microprocessors and releasing it before researchers can fully evaluate it," says Ricketts, associate professor of hearing and speech sciences. "By the time we get a fairly complete picture on one circuit, it's been replaced by new technology."

One question heard over and over again in the clinics and research labs at the Vanderbilt Bill Wilkerson Center is, "How does this work in the real world with real people?" Real people like the Geldreichs and Ralph Balyeat are examples of how research, technology and hands-on treatment work together to make radical improvements in quality of life for individuals with hearing loss. So as technology continues to improve, more and more people will have an opportunity to take advantage of Beverly Geldreich's advice to "go for it." **V**

The Arts

"The great thing about great literature is that it takes us out of the present and

Theatre:

"Bursts" of Theatre

There was a lot of drama on the Vanderbilt University campus each day at high noon during the week of Jan. 22.

Through Sunday, Jan. 28, the Vanderbilt University Department of Theatre staged short plays written by Pulitzer Prize-winning playwright Suzan-Lori Parks at various sites on campus. The performances, which were free, were part of the ambitious 365 Days/365 Plays National Festival. The festival, billed as the largest collaboration in American theatre history, is an attempt to perform all 365 plays written by Parks between November 2002 and November 2003—one a day—in a year-long stretch that began Nov. 13, 2006.

More than 600 theatres around the country are participating in the 365 National Festival. The plays performed at Vanderbilt—ranging from two to five minutes long—were directed by Vanderbilt undergraduates and featured actors from the Vanderbilt community.

"It was kind of crazy logistically because so many people were involved," says Brielle Bryan, a student coordinator and a senior major in theatre, communications studies and sociology. "We had more than 40 actors and 10 directors at eight different locations."

Performances took place on the Benson Science Hall steps, the terrace of Wilson Hall, the lawn next to Rand Wall, Fleming Yard, the Library Lawn, Rand Terrace, and in front of Neely Auditorium.

DANIEL DUBOIS

"We did them so quickly all over campus; we wanted them to be little bursts of theatre that people would see and maybe stop for," says Bryan. "It was always interesting to see what kind of crowd we'd get. We averaged about 15 to 20 [during the week]. Sunday we performed all 10 plays outdoors when it was bitterly cold, but there was a crowd of about 50 or 60 toughing it out."

Parks wrote the extremely short plays—some with titles like *The Arrival of the End, Inaction in Action,* and *Barefoot and Pregnant in the Park*—as "a daily meditation, a prayer, celebrating the rich and strange process of an artistic life," according to the 365Days/365 Plays Web site.

"Four other theatres around the country participated the same week we did," says Bryan. "As far as I know, there hasn't been anything like this before. When [Associate Professor and Co-director of Vanderbilt University Theatre] Terryl Hallquist found out about it, she jumped on the opportunity before anyone else even knew what it was."

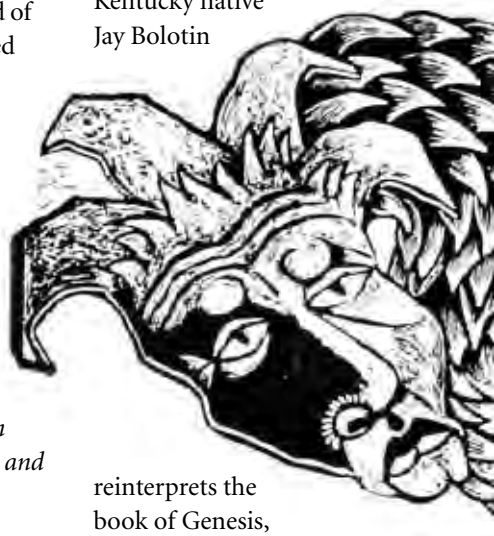
For more information about the 365 National Festival, go to www.365days365plays.com.

—Jim Patterson and Bonnie Arant Ertelt

Visual Art:

The Jackleg Testament

The Jackleg Testament, an animated, operatic film in which Kentucky native Jay Bolotin reinterprets the book of Genesis, came to Vanderbilt in late winter to land several places on campus. The film screened at Sarratt Cinema on Feb. 22 and moved to the Fine Arts Gallery on Feb. 23 to be shown concurrently with an exhibit of the same name, while more of Bolotin's work was shown at Sarratt Gallery. Both exhibits and the film ran through the end of March.



Perhaps the first woodcut motion picture in the history of filmmaking, the artist used his prints as source material and then employed digital

Culture

simultaneously brings us into it. —JANE SMILEY, *novelist*

photography and motion picture software to add textures, atmospheric effects, sound and movement. Sarratt Gallery exhibited two portfolios of Bolotin's woodcuts that inspired *The Jackleg Testament,* while the Fine Arts Gallery exhibited the final prints he used to create the images in the film. Bolotin, a noted singer/songwriter, also composed the score and libretto for the film, a fusion of modern classical and folk music sung by British tenor Nigel Robson and American pop singer Karin Bergquist of the band Over the Rhine.

—Joseph Mella

Music:

A Chinese New Year

They flew thousands of miles and maintained an exhausting schedule. Once, they had to be on the bus at 3 a.m. to make it to their next performance. They played a magnificent 10,000-seat concert hall, as well as other venues that were less than magnificent. Their families had to do without them over the winter holidays. Occasionally, they had a day off to take in the sights.

In short, the Vanderbilt Orchestra ended 2006 and began 2007 as professional traveling musicians. They had a gig that many musicians twice their age never experience: touring China.

"It was a wonderful trip for a number of reasons," says Robin Fountain, professor of conducting at Vanderbilt's Blair School of Music and director of the Vanderbilt Orchestra. "The students embraced it to the fullest possible degree."

The opportunity for the tour came about through Fountain and his previous two tours of China leading the Russian Tomsk Siberian Orchestra. Officials with the Chinese governmental cultural offices contacted him for a third tour, and this time talk turned to bringing an ensemble from Vanderbilt.

MARK McINTOSH

Mark Wait, dean of the Blair School, was consulted and agreed to help with funding. "This performance tour is part of a rapidly growing international program at the Blair School of Music," Wait says. "We are committed to a focus on the global musical experience as an essential element of a full university-level education."

The final orchestra numbered 70, including several alumni. After a very short December break, they convened Dec. 23 to rehearse, then left for China on Christmas Eve.

"We took 11 flights in 13 days," Fountain says. "We played in six cities, and despite the incredible amount of time traveling and the stress associated with that, the orchestra played very well. The music highlight was a concert in Shanghai. The concert hall was absolutely superb and the acoustics magnificent."

The orchestra played a mixed program incorporating American and Chinese music, finishing with a generous dose of Johann Strauss.

Typical of any music tour, there also were venues Fountain recalls as "dubious." He's proud that the students gave their best in situations where they were cold or dealing with poor acoustics.

Some time was spent seeing sights such as the Great Wall of China and meeting some local people.

"We found that anyone who could speak English was dying to speak with us," Fountain says. "Some of the Blair students found some students in Hohhot to play basketball with. They were showing them around their university in Hohhot and exchanging e-mail addresses. It was lovely."

Students got a true taste of the musician's life on the China tour, Fountain says. "It's at once a very exciting life and one that really takes it out of you. You can't do it all the time, but you can do it in bursts. If you have the opportunity, you should seize it, because it's a wonderful life."

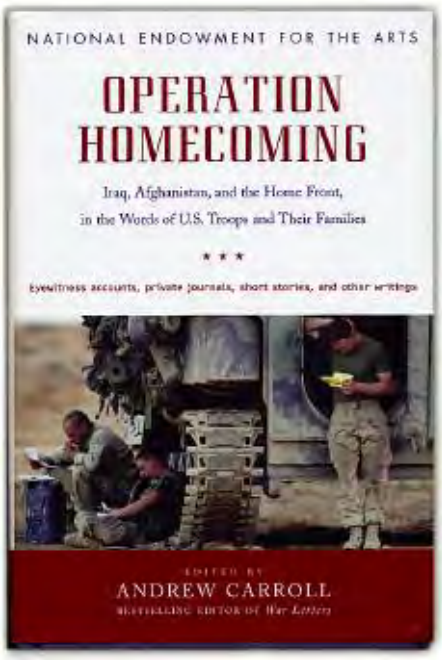
—*Jim Patterson*

Books and Writers

Operation Homecoming

A mother recounting her stages of grief after her only child is killed by Iraqi insurgents. A staff sergeant's letter to her unborn baby about what it will mean to grow up with a single military mom. A letter home by a captain describing the men and women who will accompany him on missions into Iraq.

These are but three of the 100 or so personal narratives, journal entries, short stories and other writings contained in *Operation Homecoming: Iraq, Afghanistan, and the Home Front in the Words of U.S. Troops and Their Families,* published in late 2006 by the National Endowment for the Arts through Random House and edited by Andrew Carroll, editor of *War Letters.* Behind the project is Jon Parrish Peede, BS'91, who was chosen to direct Operation Homecoming in 2003, shortly after coming on board as counselor to NEA Chairman Dana Gioia.



"For years at Mercer University Press, I edited Civil War books, so I had a grounding in the literature of war," says Peede, whose undergraduate major at Vanderbilt was English. He holds a master's degree in Southern studies from the University of Mississippi.

"I run a lot of small projects for the [NEA] chairman, and this was going to be another small project. Instead, it consumed the next four years of my life."

What was originally planned as 10 writing workshops on five bases in an effort to help troops and their families express their wartime experiences turned into 50 workshops with 34 writers—including Tom Clancy, Bobbie Ann Mason, Jeff Shaara, Barry Hannah and Tobias Wolff—about 15,000 pages of writing, two documentaries, plays, and a 34-city book tour. Peede was involved with all aspects, attending 46 of the 50 workshops and going to 25 bases in five countries and the Persian Gulf.

The resulting book is, as NEA Chairman Gioia states in his introduction, "not about politics, but about particulars." He says, "The volume comprises a chorus of one hundred

Recent Releases by the Blair Faculty

IVES: String Quartets Nos. 1 and 2 (Naxos) by the Blair String Quartet, featuring Chris Teal, Connie Heard, John Kochanowski and Felix Wang with notes by Jim Lovensheimer, assistant professor of musicology

A Day in the Country (Soundart Recordings) by Butch Baldassari, adjunct associate professor of mandolin, a collection of old-time/bluegrass and original tunes, with Nashville pickers

Singing for Life: Songs of Hope, Healing and HIV/AIDS in Uganda (Smithsonian Folkways) compiled by Greg Barz, associate professor of ethnomusicology

voices heard as much in counterpoint as in harmony."

"It was never [about] the government saying, 'Here's the voice of the war,'" says Peede. "That's why it was important that Andy [Carroll] edit it and not me, because we didn't want a government employee selecting content." Carroll, who also taught some of the workshops, and 19 other workshop leaders read the submitted material, then met as a panel put together by Peede to decide which submissions to include.

The volume encompasses all kinds of writing, including letters and e-mails. One purpose of the project was to preserve more ephemeral writing that might otherwise have been lost, while the writing workshops were meant to encourage the troops and give them the mechanics to take what they had experienced and put it on paper. Peede believes two things in particular will make this war's literature different from that of the past.

"We've moved in the last century and a half from Sherman's and Grant's memoirs—basically what the generals thought the war was—to what the grunt in the field is experiencing. But the new aspect is instantaneous communications, and when you're in a longer war, such as we are now, those instantaneous communications enter the public dialogue and will, if there is a sufficient number of them, shape the public dialogue.

"That's new on two levels—the idea that the cumulative effect of the experiences of the enlisted could have weight and that it could happen while the war is going on."

Peede's time with the troops over the past four years has affected him greatly.

"When you're trying to do something for people at war, no matter how much what you're doing consumes your life, you're never doing enough. It's your nights and weekends, but it's never enough when you think of what they're going through."

—Bonnie Arant Ertelt

Before Aaron

Captain Teague and Gunny Sergeant Velasquez brought Aaron's things to me on June 30, 2004. ...on bent knee, [they] took out a smaller box from within the larger, and handed over to me Aaron's watch, the one removed from his body at the time of death—it is to these men that I owe so much. ...

I began to wear Aaron's watch, which was still on Baghdad time. His alarm would go off at 3:28:24. Then again at 3:33:20. Aaron was always, "Give me five more minutes, Mom ... ."

At times, I go back in my head before there was an Aaron. I'll listen to music from the sixties or seventies. I'll try to recall that I had a life before Aaron. But in the end, this does nothing.

Words like Forever and Eternity really mean something to me now. Before, when I would read these words, I wouldn't really concentrate on their true definition, on their real essence. I guess I thought they were for later. Now, I have a real need, a down to the white sand of my bones aching need, to know that forever and eternity started long before my time, way before Aaron, before the Marines came to my home That Day, and then later, brought me his watch. Every day there are gifts. And every day, things are taken away.

Aaron's watch stopped somewhere between late afternoon on the twenty-eighth of November and noon on the thirtieth. I learned that when the battery goes dead on a digital watch—it's gone. Blank. Not even a zero. The watch now rests in an Americana chest in his bedroom.

—This excerpt of "Timeless," a personal narrative by Christy De'on Miller, from the book Operation Homecoming, *edited by Andrew Carroll, is reprinted by arrangement with The Random House Publishing Group.*

In Amber Shadows: Electro-acoustic Music (Albany Records) by Stan Link, assistant professor of the philosophy and analysis of music, featuring acoustic and computer music written by Link

Tudor Organ Music (Naxos) by Carl Smith, senior lecturer in music composition and theory, featuring Tudor-era church music, including works by John Redford, Thomas Tallis and Thomas Tomkins

Cello Prayers by Julie Tanner, adjunct artist teacher of cello, a collection of her solo arrangements of hymns along with works by Bach, Rachmaninoff, Vaughn Williams and Nashville songwriter Jamie Huling

S.P.O.V.*

*Student Point of View

Sixth Man on the Women's Team

Behind every successful women's team are a few good practice men.

By Fredrick Adonis Hilliard, BE'07

Every time I walk into the gym for practice and hear shouts of "Hey, Mr. C!" I am reminded of the reasons I have been dedicated to the practice squad for the Vanderbilt women's basketball team for the past two years. The coaching staff gave me the nickname "Mr. C" ("Mr. Commitment") early in my tenure with the practice squad because they knew I would show up whenever I was needed. As a male practice player with a women's team, I believe I serve a vital role that allows newer players to learn, enables starters to remain healthy, and provides coaches with a new teaching tool.

DANIEL DUBOIS

I learned about the opportunity to be a practice player when I saw a flyer in my dorm at Vanderbilt. The chance to be a part of the women's basketball team came at a time when I had a great deal of course work as a bioengineering major and little time to do things for myself. But I viewed being a practice player as an opportunity to do something I enjoyed in a structured environment, fitting it around my hectic schedule. With a simple phone call, a physical, and a few days of intense practice with other young men interested in the practice squad, I became a member of the Vanderbilt women's basketball team's practice squad.

When I decided to become a practice player, I knew that every practice, every play and every moment would be a challenge that would require me to perform my best. I had witnessed on a number of occasions the competitive nature and tenacity of women basketball players. One of my first coaches was a woman who is very close to me—my mom. To this day I think my mom has the best jump shot in my family, although I am getting closer every day. When I was very young, she would come outside while I was playing and challenge me to a game of "HORSE." Frequently, she was victorious.

I began playing organized basketball during middle school in Birmingham, Ala., and continued through high school. In elementary and middle school I grew quickly: By age 13, I was 5-foot-7, wearing a size 13 shoe. Coaches and family members thought I was destined to be 6-foot-2, maybe even 6-foot-5, with a large wing span—the ideal basketball player.

To my disappointment, I stopped growing during my sophomore year of high school. As a member of the junior varsity team, I was still tall enough and broad enough to play center and power forward, but my coaches often reminded me that if I wanted to continue playing, I would have to improve my shooting and dribbling abilities.

After my sophomore year I transferred to a boarding school that specialized in honing math and science talents, the Alabama School of Math and Science. While I was dedicated to performing well in school, I still wanted to be part of a team. So I tried out for the basketball team and was designated as a back-up point guard, shooting guard and small forward. I worked diligently to develop my speed, dribbling ability and shooting skills. During my senior year I played solely small forward. However, my senior season was cut short when I tore my anterior cruciate ligament. Though recovering from this injury was arduous, I continued to enjoy other athletic activities—cross country, soccer and golf, which I still play when my time and Nashville's weather permit.

Throughout my five years of experience, I played every position on the team from point guard to center. Playing each of these positions is like riding a bike: One never forgets. The skills and abilities I attained during five years of organized basketball have allowed me to be a versatile presence during practices at Vanderbilt. I have been called

NATALIE COX MEAD

upon several times to play as a point guard and a center during the same practice session.

On average, I participate in three practices a week. Each lasts approximately two hours. As a male practice player, I am often required to learn the plays and tendencies of the coming opponent. One of the key lessons I learned at a young age is that to be an effective part of a team, you must know the plays before you can actually contribute. The male practice team is able to learn these plays and allow newer players to actively observe the skill sets that experienced players use against each play. The coaches also use male practice players in many of the drills during practice. Instead of coaches being actively involved in every drill, we enable them to watch and critique the players so they will be able to improve the specific skills that are targeted by these drills.

It is often said that if you want to learn the fundamentals of basketball, you should watch a women's basketball game. In my experience, playing against women is more challenging than playing against other guys because of the way women fight for rebounds or steals and stop their opponents from taking shots. Women's teams are so competitive and determined that even practices are hard-fought battles.

Through my experience with the women's team, I have improved my knowledge of a sport I love and have become more involved in the Vanderbilt community. In addition to my education and community-service ventures, this has been a most rewarding experience.

One of my goals in life is to coach a youth league team. Often young children place an immense amount of pressure on themselves to achieve the status and skill set of a Michael Jordan or a Cynthia Cooper. It is my hope that more children will understand the importance of an education and realize sports are an *addition* to one's educational career. My experiences will make me a better coach and mentor by increasing my overall basketball IQ and emphasizing the importance of team cooperation. I will use these tools to positively impact young minds and sharpen athletic skills among generations of students, building in them the same great sense of pride, dedication and honor that my coaches instilled in me. ▼

A.P.O.V.*

*Alumni Point of View

My Second Life

How illness and injury uncovered new talents—and purpose.

By Jennie Floyd, EMBA'92

On the surface, 1998 should have been the best year of my life. I married my soul mate in a beautiful ceremony overlooking the Pacific Ocean in April, I had a prestigious job as the regional manager of a telecommunications consulting company, and I was living in the beautiful San Francisco Bay Area, in a home on the west side of the bay. Yet, an invisible enemy that had been stalking me for years finally caught up with me in November of that year, when I collapsed on a business trip. Within two weeks my doctor told me that if I continued my current lifestyle, I would not live five more years. I was 40 years old.

Poor health was nothing new for me. I had suffered a series of serious illnesses in my life, including mononucleosis at 5, meningitis at 14, and viral pneumonia during my third semester at Vanderbilt's Owen School in 1991. I also suffered from a prolapsed mitral valve of my heart, for which I had been hospitalized in 1984 and for which I was on medication. But the illness that struck me down in 1998 was something different, extremely difficult to diagnose. In 1993 I had begun suffering from mysterious crushing fatigue and severe pain in my arms and legs, which felt like they were leaden weights. By 1996 I was experiencing migraines nearly weekly, and many of my joints had begun to swell and ache. My physician, a traditional general practitioner, ran numerous tests to rule out MS, AIDS and brain tumors, but in the end could only tell me to reduce my stress.

I did lead a hectic and stressful lifestyle, but I was convinced that I had a real illness. In November I saw a new doctor, one who practiced both Western and alternative medicine, who ordered me to take a three-month medical leave. He began intensive treatments and tests, including acupuncture for my pain and migraines, a diet based on my newly discovered food allergies, vitamin and herbal supplements, homeopathic remedies and chiropractic manipulation, as well as Western allopathic treatments such as antidepressants to reduce my pain. However, gradually it became clear that I was not going to get well in three months, or six, or nine, if ever. In 2000 I was finally diagnosed with lupus, a potentially fatal autoimmune disease in which the body essentially becomes allergic to itself and for which there is yet no cure, and I retired in October on full Social Security disability.

In a way, it was a relief just to get a firm diagnosis. Finally, I knew what was wrong with me, and that it was not just "stress" or "all in my head," as I had been told by too many Western physicians. But the challenges of going from a highly functioning, well-paid, respected executive to a homebound disabled person were considerable. I faced severe depression initially over the loss of my job and the status it carried with it, the reduction in income, and the loneliness of staying home alone.

Friends couldn't easily comprehend how ill I really was, since lupus is not a disease that makes you look "sick." My husband and family were in denial for years, sure that I would be able to return to my old life. It was not until I had an accident in 2000 and ruptured a disc in my lower back, followed by a ruptured appendix later that year, combined with the lupus diagnosis, that my family and I finally gave up on the dream of our lives getting back to normal. We had to learn to live with a "new normal."

My husband and I had to take steps to keep our marriage strong, and I had to work on slowing down and keeping up my self-esteem. Some of these steps included psychotherapy, a support group for me, getting a pug dog (my first pet as an adult), hiring help with housecleaning and gardening, and purchasing a recumbent bike so I could still exercise. I had always been very active,

NATALIE COX MEAD

Friends couldn't easily comprehend how ill I really was. My husband and family were in denial for years, sure that I would be able to return to my old life. We finally gave up on the dream of our lives getting back to normal. We had to learn to live with a "new normal."

and initially I was too ill to do much of anything. Daily walks with my puppy were lifesavers, and we still go to the dog park every day, where I have a regular group of friends, most of whom are old and/or disabled. They understand what I have gone through and have been invaluable to me, since most of my old work friends have drifted away, unable to relate to my life as it is now. But my best therapy has been the arts—singing, dancing, writing and acting.

I have been singing since I was 3 years old, semi-professionally since age 20. Early in my retirement, as I searched to find a new purpose for my life, I formed a jazz band with local musicians. We self-produced a CD and played a number of gigs for about two years, but there was not enough work to sustain us. Toying with the idea of getting a degree in music, I decided to take a course in musical theatre at our local community center. My teacher encouraged me to audition for *Little Shop of Horrors* at our community theatre, and even though at 42 I thought I was too old to start acting, I got a part and have been working steadily ever since.

I felt like I had come home when I began to act. I loved the theatre, the acting community, the applause—everything except the hard work, which was very difficult for me physically. So I took up working in film, which is generally much easier on the body—no months of rehearsals, no singing and dancing, no long runs. Since 2001 I have appeared in more than 50 shorts, feature films and TV shows, including *American Wedding*, *Grey's Anatomy* and *Arrested Development*. I have just been cast in my first lead in an independent feature film, *The Attorney*, to begin shooting in the Bay Area in September.

My journey has not been the one I expected when I graduated from Owen in 1992. But the obstacles posed by illness have taught me lessons about patience, perseverance and compassion that I cannot imagine learning any other way. Being an active part of the creative community has fulfilled my lifelong desire to be a performer. The arts have restored joy to my life and allowed me to feel that I am still able to contribute to society, though not in the way that I expected to. New treatments continue to be developed for lupus and other autoimmune illnesses, some of which have allowed me to regain much of my old strength and to manage my pain and fatigue, although my disease is not yet in remission.

I hope a cure for lupus will be found, and that new research will enable my spinal-cord injury to be repaired. But even if I am able to return to work full time, I no longer have any desire to return to my old "normal" life in the corporate world. I hope one day to be able to combine the skills I learned at Owen and during my 20-year business career to pursue full-time work in the arts community, but for now I am content to work part time as an actress. I have reached a place of acceptance and believe that now is truly the best time of my life, and I can't wait to see what the future holds.

Doing is not more important than just *being*—we all have intrinsic value as human beings no matter what we do for a living. ▼

The Classes

"John Martin, BA'68, is president-elect of the

Alumni Association News

Alumni Interviewing Program Needs Volunteers

The Alumni Recruiter Program allows alumni to help Vanderbilt recruit the best and brightest students by representing the university at local college fairs and by serving as official alumni interviewers. For the 2006–07 application season, the Alumni Interviewing Program expanded from a handful of domestic cities to a worldwide effort. Approximately 1,700 alumni in 49 states, the District of Columbia and 22 countries conducted more than 2,000 interviews nationwide—a 100 percent increase from the previous season. Last fall alumni recruiters attended nearly 60 college fairs in 16 states. If you are interested in helping Vanderbilt meet its goals of increasing the number of alumni interviews and attending 300 college fairs, please volunteer as an alumni recruiter by e-mailing arc@vanderbilt.edu and asking for more information.

F. CLARK WILLIAMS JR.

Come Tailgate with Us

Join our Commodores on the road this fall. The Vanderbilt Alumni Association and the National Commodore Club will sponsor tailgates at all four football away games this year. Mark your calendar for these 2007 SEC contests: Oct. 4 at Auburn, Oct. 20 at South Carolina, Nov. 3 at Florida, and Nov. 17 at Tennessee. Check www.vanderbilt.edu/alumni/tailgates for continuous updates and reservation information.

nation's largest organization of civil defense attorneys.

Jody Lindwall, Lauren MacKenzie and Christine Barlow, MSN'02

STEVE HAMBUCHEN

Midwives of Multnomah County

When they set out on separate pathways after graduation, they didn't expect to be in practice together five years later. But Jody Lindwall, Christine Barlow and Lauren Schmidt MacKenzie—all MSN'02—work together as certified nurse midwives in Portland, Ore.

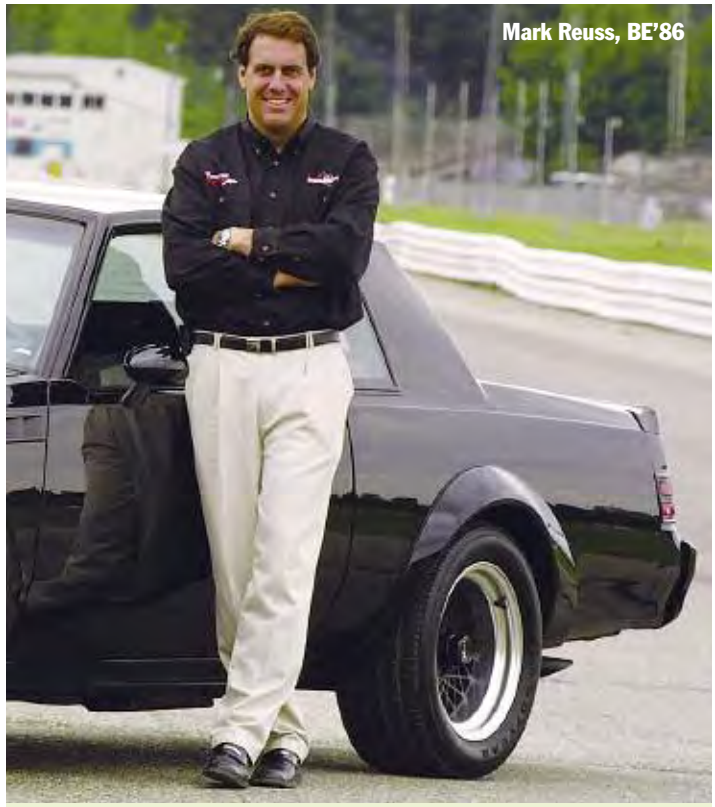
Each worked other places before converging on the Pacific Northwest. MacKenzie ventured as far as the Congo to volunteer with Doctors Without Borders.

Now they work together at Women's Healthcare Associates (www.whallc.com), which has three sites in the Portland area. While at Vanderbilt the three, like the handful of other students in their program, learned to "catch babies." They and their colleagues in the practice deliver around 4,000 babies each year. Since they practice full-scope midwifery, they also see their patients before and after births for everything from family planning to the flu.

The practice is working like a magnet for Vanderbilt graduates. Danielle Dion, MD'03, will join them this summer after completing her residency at Vanderbilt University Medical Center. "I was trying to choose between two practices to join," says Dion. "When I asked myself where I would rather go if I were going to have a baby, I knew this practice is where I'd want to be."

—Jane S. MacLean, MSN'03

“Phillip Yeager, BE’86, designed the robotic vehicle


Mark Reuss, BE’86

Peak Performance

For some people, cars are just a way to get from point A to point B. But to others, they are endlessly fascinating machines. Mark Reuss definitely falls into this category.

Reuss, BE’86, is executive director for global vehicle integration, safety and virtual vehicle development at General Motors.

“We engineer the parts and pieces that go together to create what is really the soul of a vehicle,” Reuss explains. “How it sounds. How it rides and handles. How it steers and brakes.” He also has responsibility for safety performance.

With customers demanding more options than ever before, something as seemingly insignificant as a cup holder can carry quite a bit of weight.

“How the machine interfaces with the human being is very important,” says Reuss. “The competition is extremely intense, and we have to earn the right for people to buy our vehicles.”

It stands to reason that a person who is into cars this much would also be an excellent driver. Reuss is a certified industry pool test driver for the famed Nürburgring Nordschleife (North Course) track in northeast Germany, a feat very few Americans have accomplished.

—Cindy Thomsen

"JackBot" for the Great Robot Race as part of the DARPA Grand Challenge.

Jerry Kennon, EMBA'95, has flown several combat missions

Jane Stephens, BA'75

Saving Kenya's Abandoned Children

In 1999, Jane Stephens, her husband, Chad, and their four teenagers left North Carolina for a six-month visit to Kenya. Chad planned to treat patients and train a Kenyan physician to run a 36-bed hospital, and Jane was to write her dissertation, the last leg of her Ph.D. requirements at the University of North Carolina. A few weeks into their stay, Jane and their son John visited the labor room and met Wambui, who was about 20 minutes old—"a bright-eyed, beautiful child," Jane says—and whose mother died of a hemorrhage hours after giving birth.

After two days watching the infant's condition deteriorate, the Stephenses took her home and stayed up all night taking turns feeding her drops of formula through a tube that Chad inserted through her nose. She was too weak to drink from a bottle.

They then began the process of adoption, which led them to New Life Home in Nairobi, where they found a brother for Bui—11-month-old Joseph Amani. Since returning home they have established the Amani Children's Foundation (www.amanichildren.org) to raise funds for abandoned infants in Kenya through New Life Home, which has saved 900 babies abandoned in the hospitals, pit latrines and ditches of Nairobi. Most have been adopted by Kenyan families.

Jane is a professor and former chair of the English department at High Point University.

in Iraq and has been appointed judge advocate general of the U.S. Virgin Islands.

Michael Kearney, MS'01, won a

Alumni Association News

Former Astronaut Wins Faculty Education Award

Rick Chappell, Vanderbilt's director of science and research communications, research professor of physics, and executive director of the Dyer Observatory, has received the Faculty Alumni Education Award, presented by the Alumni Association Board of Directors in March. First given in 1982, the award includes a cash prize of $2,500 and an engraved julep cup.

Chappell has shared his passion for science, technology and space with alumni on many occasions. Alumni and friends in both Dallas and Jacksonville, Fla., last year heard his lecture "Exploration—America's Untold Story." This spring he visited the Cincinnati Chapter and also traveled on a Caribbean cruise with the Alumni Association's Travel Program. In 2003, Chappell hosted the Nashville Vanderbilt Club Board, GOLD (Graduates of the Last Decade), and the Alumni Association Board of Directors at Dyer Observatory. He wowed a Reunion 2003 audience with his presentation about civilians and space. Since 2004 he has spoken annually at the admitted students reception at Dyer. In 2005 he addressed the Vanderbilt Aid Society and gave a presentation at Reunion.

Thanks to Chappell, Vanderbilt students can major in the communication of science and technology for the first time.

Chappell received his bachelor's degree in physics from Vanderbilt in 1965 and his Ph.D. in space science from Rice University in 1968. Before returning to Vanderbilt he was associate director for science at NASA's Marshall Space Flight Center. He worked with Vice President Al Gore to create an innovative K–12 science education program known as GLOBE (Global Learning and Observations to Benefit the Environment). He also founded the Aspen Global Change Institute together with John Denver's Windstar Foundation.

Chappell served as alternate payload specialist for space shuttle mission STS-45, carried out in 1992. From 1976 to 1985 he was mission scientist for Spacelab 1. He has published more than 150 scientific papers.

DANIEL DUBOIS

Chappell: author, educator and astronaut

$100,000 gold jackpot in an America Online interactive game.

Hayes Schildwachter, BS'06, teaches

Lindsay Miller, BA'06

Bubblicious

Lindsay Miller is bathing in the media spotlight after her winning commercial in a Dove ad contest premiered during the Oscars in February. The 22-year-old has appeared on *Good Morning America, Access Hollywood,* and the MySpace home page since her 30-second spot for Dove Cream Oil Body Wash was selected from more than 1,000 entries to be the newest ad in Dove's "Real Women" campaign.

"The media attention has been amazing," says Miller, whose ad, titled "Knowing You're Beautiful," features the 2006 graduate sudsing, singing and dancing in the shower at her parents' home in Sherman Oaks, Calif. Her mother filmed her. "She turned into a ruthless director," says Miller. "She was screaming, 'Suds! More suds!'"

Miller beat out two other finalists to win the competition's $8,500 prize.

Now an assistant production coordinator at a television production company in Santa Monica, Calif., Miller was a station manager for Vanderbilt Television as a student. "VTV taught me well," says Miller, who hopes her win will open up more career opportunities in video editing. "It's certainly a good point to put on my résumé."

See Miller's winning ad at http://www.dovecreamoil.com/finalist/.

—*Anne Malinee (reprinted from* The Vanderbilt Hustler*)*

English in Hunan Province, China.

Alumni Association News

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VJournal *continued from page 9*

disappointed students like me. I was determined to switch to clinical practice after completing my medical education.

It was not until my internship in my fourth year that my desire to practice medicine started to change. Sitting in a hot, crowded clinic one day, I realized I was seeing patients over and over again with the same avoidable diseases, such as gastritis, hypertension and diabetes. Frustrated with constantly having to treat these conditions, I remembered what my professor had told us on that first day and started thinking how much better it would be to prevent these diseases instead of treating them again and again.

During my final year of medical training, with the idea of switching majors still lurking in my mind, I took courses such as epidemiology, biostatistics, environmental health, and childhood nutrition and development. After learning how the cause of cholera was discovered and that cigarette smoking was linked to lung cancer, I was hooked on epidemiology. Epidemiology appealed to the part of me that had been so frustrated by my experience in the clinic; out of its focus on finding causative answers, doctors might prevent patients from getting sick in the first place. I also found that I loved the detective nature of epidemiology; everything was a puzzle with solutions to be found by good observation, critical analysis and well-planned experiments.

After receiving my medical degree, I entered a graduate program in public health and majored in cancer epidemiology. I conducted my first epidemiological study on childhood leukemia and had the opportunity to visit the National Cancer Institute (NCI) in Maryland. Working with several world-class cancer epidemiologists at NCI, I published my first paper in the journal *Lancet*, linking chlorampenica, a drug commonly used to treat infectious disease in developing countries at that time, to a risk of childhood leukemia. This exciting experience was the spark that started my research career, and three years after obtaining my master's degree in public health, I arrived in New York to start on a doctoral degree in epidemiology. I received the Anna C. Celman Award for Excellence in Epidemiology upon graduating.

The experience of having lived in two countries with immensely different lifestyles and cultures gave me a deep appreciation for how those differences could affect health. Witnessing a rapid increase of cancers, diabetes and cardiovascular disease among the Chinese as their lifestyles became Westernized led me to investigate the factors that are part of a traditional Chinese lifestyle—such factors as dietary soy intake, ginseng use and Tai Chi, commonly used in China to help prevent these Western diseases. My research has naturally extended to the investigation of how genetic susceptibility contributes to cancer and other chronic disease.

My research has been very rewarding for me both professionally and personally. Projects I have been involved with have found, for example, that adolescent soy consumption may reduce the risk of breast cancer in later life, and that soy food consumption in women may reduce coronary heart disease as well as bone fractures in postmenopausal women. In addition, my research has shown that ginseng use may improve survival and quality of life for breast cancer patients. These findings are satisfying professionally in that they are likely to have significant impact on the prevention of these diseases. But they also are satisfying in that they provide a link to the wisdom of my paternal grandfather and the values of traditional Chinese medicine.

I have been very fortunate that my husband, also a professor of epidemiology, has been at my side to lend wisdom and professional and emotional support throughout my career. It is my hope that our two children will carry on the legacy to become doctors who "treat people before they get a disease." **V**

Dr. Xiao Ou Shu, who joined the Vanderbilt faculty in 2000, is a professor of medicine in the Division of General Internal Medicine and Public Health in the Department of Medicine, where she studies the epidemiology of cancer and other chronic diseases. This essay is adapted from the book What's Past Is Prologue: The Personal Stories of Women in Science at the Vanderbilt University School of Medicine, *edited by Dr. Eric G. Neilson, Hugh J. Morgan Professor of Medicine and chair of the department.*

In Class *continued from page 26*

As a high school sophomore, Baldwin was too young to really understand it—not reflective enough to look for the larger meaning of the moment. Instead, he simply scrawled in his yearbook, "I saw Dr. King."

But two years later, when he finished high school and went away to Talladega College, he began to grow serious about the history he had witnessed. Talladega was the first black college in Alabama, founded in 1867 by a pair of former slaves, William Savary and Thomas Tarrant. On the walls of the library were murals depicting the Amistad rebellion—a slaveship uprising in 1839 led by Cinque the African, a Mende tribesman from Sierra Leone. Baldwin learned the story during orientation, and it blended easily with the civil rights dramas he had lived through.

He developed, he says, a "growing sense of black history," and before he finished his time at Talladega, he began to consider his own contribution. He was fascinated by Martin Luther King, and he came to believe that understanding King's movement could become, in a sense, a final piece of liberation.

"I began to ask myself," he says, "How can I contribute to the ongoing struggle? More and more the answer seemed to be that I would devote myself to scholarship and teaching. My first semester at Talladega, I took Black History under Dr. Harold Franklin, and he was a major source of inspiration. He was tall and impressive, a dark-skinned man about 6 feet 1, and a very serious teacher in class. On the first day, he scared the devil out of all of us. But I began to think about what I was learning, and to put it into the context of my own life—my father, for example, this man who had a fifth-grade education, driving people to the polls to register to vote.

"He used to pastor four little churches, getting paid $10 and a sack of corn, and sometimes he would preach about the social gospel, about the need for justice in the here and now. I remember he would show us the lynching trees, where terrible things had happened in the past. He wanted to see a change. He had a deep interest in civil rights."

Even now, says Baldwin, his scholarship is driven by a combination of memory and academic study, which continued to grow as he finished his history degree at Talladega and set out for Crozer Theological Seminary—the place where Martin Luther King had studied. In 1973 Baldwin earned an M.A. in black church studies and, in 1975, his master of divinity degree. In 1980 he finished his Ph.D. at Northwestern and four years later joined the Vanderbilt faculty.

In the years that followed, he became more convinced that despite the growing body of work on King, he could make his own mark. In many ways he admired the work of other King scholars—David Garrow, for example, who won the Pulitzer Prize for his King biography, *Bearing the Cross*, or Taylor Branch, who followed soon after with *Parting the Waters.* But these were white authors, and in Baldwin's mind there was a certain myopia at the heart of their work.

They tended, he thought, to underplay the importance of King's black Southern roots—to emphasize, for example, the simmering tensions between King and his father, rather than seeing King's family as a "bulwark." In studying such things, Baldwin discovered that he often confirmed his own intuitions, for he, like King, was a preacher's kid from the South—a black Southern Baptist who saw the church as an extension of the family. It came as no surprise, therefore, that King drew heavily on the strength of his raising, and was moved by the lessons of his childhood faith.

There is a balm in Gilead
To make the wounded whole;
There is a balm in Gilead
To heal the sin-sick soul.

That old Southern hymn, which traced its roots all the way back to slavery, embodied Dr. King's understanding of the church. It was a place of optimism and hope, where people came together in the midst of their despair, knowing that better times were ahead. It was true that his thinking evolved over time and he chafed, for example, at the fierce fundamentalism of his father. But in the end, all the new notions he absorbed in his life only served to deepen the identity of his youth. "It was part of the air," says Baldwin, "part of the ground on which he stood."

As a result, Baldwin wrote, "Black southerners recognized King as one of their own—one who shared their cultural roots and experiences, spoke their language, reflected their profound spirituality and rhythmic consciousness, possessed their gift for storytelling and deep laughter, embraced their festive and celebrative approach to life. … The black experience and black Christian tradition were the most important sources in the shaping of King's life."

In his classes at Vanderbilt, Baldwin talks to students about such things, pacing behind a broad wooden desk, his lecture notes scattered across the top. His classes are nearly always full; 41 students in 2007 registered for his Martin Luther King Jr. and the Social Roles of Religion course. They are divided equally between black and white, listening intently to the lecture, which, for most of the hour, echoes the cadence of a black Baptist preacher.

Baldwin tries not to deify King, tries to keep him "real," as one student puts it, but he also talks about King's vision. During 13 years on the public stage, from 1955 to 1968, King crusaded successively against segregation and in favor of the vote, and then turned his attention to poverty and peace. There was danger at every step of the way, as Baldwin himself had seen in Alabama—policemen swinging their clubs with such force that the skin was torn off a protester's skull. But in the final years of his life, when King shifted focus to the American economy, the stakes and the dangers increased exponentially.

"When you start talking about people giving up wealth and power," Baldwin told his students, "they are going to kill you."

After one class session in late January, a few of the young people waited behind, debating the lessons among themselves. "In my formal education," said Dante Bryant, a master's-degree candidate in theological studies, "King was presented almost like a messiah. He becomes untouchable. But in this class we are learning about him in a much different way—his faults, his honesty. I come away thinking, 'I'd follow him.'"

Baldwin smiles when he hears such things. It carries him back to his own college days and the doors of the mind that were opened for him then. It was a time when King and the movement grew real, and that is a quality he wants to preserve. Too often in the popular culture, he says, King's legacy is sanitized into irrelevance. But a deeper understanding can still change the world—or at least prompt a few young people to try. **V**

Southern Journal *continued from page 88*

rienced no outrageous hate incidents that first day of integration. We later found out Mother Alice had made it clear to the other students that they would either accept the change or move on. During the two years we spent at St. Joe's, a sense of community emerged. We felt connected and accepted. We all got over our fears, got to know each other and dispelled myths. Many of those relationships endure. Last spring 11 of us relived our senior trip at a 40-year reunion in New York City.

After graduating from the academy, I went to Louisiana State University, where I sometimes felt I had gone back down the staircase. Racism was alive. I always had a whole row to myself in classes. No one dared sit next to me. I stayed the year because I still believed that persevering would make it better for posterity.

One day while studying in the library, I happened across a Peabody College handbook. The special education section was the largest one I had ever seen. The vision of the playground stirred.

That next year, in the fall of 1967, I came to George Peabody College for Teachers. After meeting me at the train station and helping me unload my bags at the dormitory, my white roommate was asked if she wanted to change rooms. Until then the dorm staff had been unaware that I was black. To my roommate, it was no surprise—we had already corresponded, and we roomed together through our junior year.

I later became student president of that dorm. My husband, Toyo, MME'68, and I shared the role of head resident for six years.

During my sophomore year the campus was abuzz when I announced that I would go through the rush process. The occasion of joining what had been an all-white local sorority was cause for a gigantic *Tennessean* newspaper article. I pledged and enjoyed my "sisterhood."

I also became a gymnastics team member. I fully participated in campus activities. A sense of community grew at Peabody. As mostly aspiring teachers, my fellow Peabody classmates shared a philosophy of helping students realize their potential. We struggled through the assassination of Martin Luther King, the subsequent riots, busing for racial equality. Another of our great struggles was getting the college to allow women to wear pants on campus!

A community also formed with our black brothers across the street at Vanderbilt, who had a bit harder road to tread. The pioneering efforts of legends like the Rev. James Lawson, '71, and my contemporaries, Perry Wallace, BE'70, and the late Walter Murray, BA'70, MMgmt'74, helped us all endure some of the back stair steps. But at Peabody a far greater task of educating children remained our connection, our common interest.

Just as the sense of community was fundamental during the Civil Rights Movement, it remains a necessity for many minority communities today, and it is vital for visually impaired students.

Peabody gave me the skills I would need in the classroom. It fueled my passion to teach. And I learned Braille, the phenomenon I had first encountered on that playground back in Baton Rouge. I have three degrees from Peabody. My adult life began there. I met the man who would become my husband, I landed my first teaching job at the Kennedy Center, and I had my first two children while Toyo and I directed North Hall.

Then with great faith I took the next step. The Tennessee School for the Blind was starting a program for students with multiple disabilities in addition to blindness, and I was hired to begin one of the new classes for students with deaf-blindness. For 28 years I watched the program for multiple disabilities grow from two classrooms to a whole new building complex, cottage, and a specialized curriculum for those students. In 2003 I took another step and became the outreach and admissions director. I now touch the lives of visually impaired students across Tennessee.

In my new position I host tours for groups, including a twice-a-year visit from Peabody Professor Sharon Shields' Health Services to Diverse Populations class. We also partner with Project PAVE (Providing Access to the Visual Environment), which ensures students have access to low-vision devices.

Just as the sense of community was fundamental during the Civil Rights Movement, it remains a necessity for many minority communities today, and it is vital for visually impaired students. At Tennessee School for the Blind, our students feel secure in a stable environment. We teach them to access resources and ease their transition to the broader sighted world. For students with severe disabilities, I like to think the lives of their parents are also changed by our relieving their feelings of devastation and helping them realize a greater potential in their child. Their sense of community, too, is widened.

I have climbed many stair steps and, just as Martin Luther King could see the mountaintop, I can just about see the top of the staircase. I am growing old, and I know there are others who will follow. I say to the young people out there, keep climbing. Have faith that mankind will someday realize Martin Luther King's beloved community. To paraphrase one of his speeches: Let us be dissatisfied with vestiges of racism and discrimination in any form; let us be dissatisfied until no child is hungry and all people are sheltered. Work toward equal employment, a fairer society and worldwide peace. Keep a sense of history and whence you have come. If we are not aware of what we owe to the past, we are less aware of what we owe to the future. **V**

This essay is adapted from a Jan. 25 speech made by Elaine Brown at Peabody College on the occasion of her receiving the 2007 Changing Lives Award, which is presented annually by Peabody's departments of psychology and human development and special education to recognize exceptional service by an African American citizen to his or her community. Brown has served on both the Peabody and Vanderbilt alumni boards of directors. She and her husband, Toyo, MME'68 (Peabody), are charter members of the Association of Vanderbilt Black Alumni.

Blind Faith

In the segregated Deep South, a young girl peers through a tall fence and finds her life's work.

By Elaine Lacour Brown, BS'70, MA'71, EdS'73

Faith, said Martin Luther King, is taking the first step even when you don't see the whole staircase. His words convey the essence of who I have become. Throughout my life I have taken steps not knowing where I would end up, but feeling it was the right thing for me to do.

As a young girl I knew I wanted to be a special educator. I attended elementary school at the Southern University Laboratory School in Baton Rouge, La. Our playground was divided by a fence that must have been 10 feet tall. On the other side of that fence was the Louisiana School for the Blind for Negroes. I would talk to the kids through the fence and watch in awe as some read their Braille books. I wanted badly to know more about how they learned. Once we completed the sixth grade, we no longer used that playground, but the image of those kids on the other side of the fence was imprinted on my mind.

My father, a law professor at the university, provided our family of seven children with comfort, security and an education. My mother, who holds a bachelor's degree in French and a master's degree in social work, was a housewife who helped us believe we could do whatever we wanted.

Nevertheless, we lived in the Deep South, the segregated South. I experienced racism and discrimination early. I remember going to Sears downtown and sneaking drinks from the whites-only water fountains. I remember having to buy burgers at a special window at drive-ins—there was no sitting inside. There were "colored" waiting rooms at doctors' offices and a Negro baby ward at the hospital. But it was the circus coming to town that was the occasion for my biggest disappointment.

The TV advertisements showed acrobats on tightropes, elephants standing on their hind legs, and all the excitement that surrounds a circus. I had read about such an event in our basal readers, which showed pictures of white children at the Big Top. The circus was to be held at the municipal stadium, and we would have to sit in a designated section.

To my parents, that was not an option. You either sat where you wanted or you did not go. I was 36 years old before I saw my first circus.

JIM HSIEH

Not being able to move freely in society, my family did not take long trips involving hotel stays and restaurants unless relatives or friends lived along the way. When we visited grandparents, my mother packed a lunch. When it was time to eat, my dad purchased soft drinks at a gas station while the rest of us waited in the car. Instead of using the usually filthy "colored bathrooms" in rural Louisiana, my brothers went behind a tree. My mother, sister and I used open car doors as a privacy screen. I am eternally grateful for rest stops, airports and hotels.

Such degradation could have forced me to feel malformed because I was hated. Instead, we grew stronger because we had a sense of community knitted together by shared emotions, shared interests and values, mutual support and common enemies. Baton Rouge offered a few advantages because of the influence of the black university. We had our own black theaters, swimming pools, golf course, arts, doctors, lawyers and schools. The sense of community was strong and sheltering and enriching.

When the Civil Rights Movement began, I was too young to demonstrate, but not too naïve to realize that history was happening before my very eyes. Boosted by the movement and faith in the efforts of its leaders, I was inspired to make integration a reality no matter the sacrifices. I was one of four black girls accepted at the all-white, all-girl Catholic high school. It was a monumental step not just because we were making history, but because it was important for someone to clear the road that had been fought for.

At St. Joseph's the other girls welcomed us. Under the leadership of a liberal mother superior, we were the only school that expe-

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After earning her Vanderbilt Executive MBA, Corbette Doyle was promoted to a senior management role at Aon, where she grew the Healthcare Industry Practice from $40 million to $200 million in seven years. She currently heads up the company's diversity strategy for an employee base of 46,000 people in 500 offices in more than 120 countries.

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