

THE ALUMNI MAGAZINE OF THE SCHOOL OF GENERAL STUDIES

COLUMBIA

THE

OWL



FINANCING A COLUMBIA
GS DEGREE

2009

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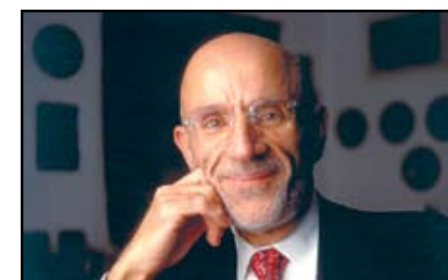
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Letter from the Dean



This issue of *The Owl* explores what it means to be a nontraditional student who is trying to finance an Ivy League degree in the 21st century. As our alumni know well, the sacrifices are significant, and the efforts, at times, Herculean. For many GS students, paying for a Columbia education is the most serious challenge they will face during their time on Morningside Heights. In the current economic environment, the challenges are more daunting and the difficulties greater than at any other time in the history of the School of General Studies.

Fortunately, GS is positioned well to withstand these difficult times. The School continues to solidify its place as the nation's premier undergraduate college for nontraditional students. For much of its history GS has been a well-kept secret, with a student body drawn primarily from the New York metropolitan area; now, however, GS is truly a national school, with all 50 states represented in an increasingly select, exceedingly diverse and talented student body. At no other elite university are nontraditional students—now estimated to comprise roughly 73 percent of all college students—so fully integrated into the larger undergraduate community, a distinction most evident in the classroom.

The enhancement of the GS undergraduate experience has been accompanied by a corresponding increase in financial aid. Seventy percent of GS students receive financial aid, and the amount of institutional aid given yearly to GS students has nearly tripled over the last decade. For the current academic year, GS announced a 17-percent increase in financial aid that targeted students with the highest demonstrated economic need and substantial loan debt. Yet, even with this considerable increase in funding, our students must still find external, and frequently expensive, ways to supplement their GS scholarship.

As The Columbia Campaign aims to enhance financial aid to meet these challenges, I am reminded that it is only with your ongoing support and generosity that we can continue to attract the best and brightest nontraditional students regardless of their financial circumstances. As a concrete sign of the progress we are making, I am happy to announce that two GS families—Larry Lawrence '69 and his wife Sally, and one family that wishes to remain anonymous—have pledged 3 million dollars as a matching challenge fund for new GS scholarships. Our gratitude to these alumni is immense, but we also need each of you to help if we are to achieve our goal, the dramatic enhancement of financial aid. Enjoy the 2009 issue of *The Owl* and thank you for your continued support.

With warmest regards,

Peter J. Awn

FINANCING A COLUMBIA GS



DEGREE IN THE 21ST CENTURY

BY ALEXANDER GELFAND
ILLUSTRATIONS BY ROB WESTERBERG

P.J. Bodnar knows something about responsibility and sacrifice. The 34-year-old former police officer from Half Moon Bay, California, was wounded in the line of duty and suffered permanent nerve damage in both arms. Unable to serve, with three children under the age of five and a wife in graduate school, Bodnar knew he needed to complete his education if he wanted to support his family and pursue his dream of re-entering public service. That's why he enrolled in 2007 as a full-time student in the School of General Studies, the finest liberal arts college in the country created specifically for students with nontraditional educational backgrounds.

That's also why he's so frustrated — not with the uncontrollable circumstances that led to his forced retirement from a job he loved, but with a financial aid system that seems intentionally designed to make his life even harder than it has to be.

Like 70 percent of General Studies students, Bodnar receives financial assistance — from the university, from the federal government, and from private lenders — to pay for his education and living expenses. And, as it is for many GS Students, that assistance is simply not enough.

Like anyone else seeking financial aid, Bodnar submitted a Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) form that was used to determine his financial need. But last year, he came up nearly \$20,000 short, and had to put roughly \$10,000 on his credit cards, which charge interest at a rate anywhere from 18-30 percent. This year, despite receiving one private loan, one federal loan, one federal grant, and an institutional scholarship, Bodnar figures he'll be another \$12,000 in the hole — in part because the financial aid system is geared toward helping traditional students aged 18-22 years old who enjoy parental support, rather than nontraditional students like him.

"They don't take into consideration any of the extra expenses that

I have," he says, the exasperation rising in his voice. "They don't take into account that diapers are expensive, child care is expensive, commuting is expensive." (Bodnar's wife is earning a PhD in molecular biology at Cold Spring Harbor Laboratory, and the family rents a home in Long Island.) At this rate, he expects to be \$80,000 in debt by the time he graduates; not a great place to be for a family man in his late 30s with plans for law school and a career in public service.

Bodnar is not alone. A series of events — some welcome, like the full integration of General Studies into the Columbia undergraduate curriculum; some not, like the skyrocketing institutional expenses that have inflated college tuition costs across the country — have conspired to make a Columbia undergraduate education more expensive than ever before. Despite the tremendous strides that GS has made in improving the overall educational experience for nontraditional students at Columbia, the financial aid and fundraising mechanisms that make such an education possible for adult and returning students have not

kept pace with the changing economic environment. As a result, student debt loads are ballooning, and many students face unappealing choices.

Some, like Bodnar, fear that pursuing a first-rate education may mean that they won't be able to afford to send their own kids to college. For others, it means that other dreams will have to be deferred. This spring, General Studies Student Council President Brody Berg

expects to graduate with a degree in computer science — and somewhere between \$100,000 and \$150,000 in debt. A former software developer for Microsoft with a passion for literature, Berg looked forward to broadening his intellectual horizons at one of the world's premier liberal-arts institutions. Yet his academic options are tightly constrained by his looming debt obligations. "The debt load has an effect even as I register for classes, because I know that I'm

**"They don't take into account
that diapers are expensive,
child care is expensive,
commuting is expensive."**

-P.J. Bodnar

going to need an enormous income to pay off my loans,” he says. “I’m attending one of the best universities in the world, and all of my choices are determined by what’s going to get me a job.” The terrible irony here is that, early in his Columbia career, Berg helped found hungermaps.org, a nonprofit that provides software to organizations that fight hunger nationwide. Yet Berg doubts that he will be able to pay off his debts on the income he makes helping hungry people find sustenance. “I am not alone in being forced to make the trade-off between paying loans and doing what I feel is the powerful moral imperative with my skills — to help those in more need than myself,” he says. “Many students are also caught in this dilemma or even in the troubling quandary of being an older student forced to delay parenthood even longer while they pay back loans.”

“Without a doubt, graduating with that kind of debt is going to affect the choices you are going to make regarding what to do with your degree,” says Susan Feagin ’74, executive vice president for development and alumni relations. Like many General Studies administrators, Feagin, who is herself a GS alumna, acknowledges that GS students face financial hurdles that many other Columbia students do not. Yet she also points out that the reasons for this are complex. And while remedies are at hand, they will require time, effort — and a great deal of money.

At the heart of the problem lie two interrelated issues: the unique nature of the School of General Studies, and the equally unique nature of its students.

Historically, adult education programs segregated their nontraditional undergraduate students from the traditional undergraduate student body. That was the case with Columbia’s own University Extension program, which offered nighttime profes-

sional courses to working adults beginning in 1904. Following World War II, the G.I. Bill transformed the model of a closed undergraduate system, as older students began entering college in record numbers. The School of General Studies had its origins in that revolutionary moment, and it became a freestanding college with its own faculty, admissions, and advising structure. Initially progress was gradual: “When I was going through General Studies 40 years ago, it was more like a continuing education kind of feeling rather than being a full-fledged undergraduate at Columbia,” Feagin recalls. But by the 1980s, most General Studies students were taking the same basic curriculum as Columbia College students. In the 1990s, the School of General Studies shed all of its nondegree continuing education programs except for the Postbaccalaureate Premedical Program, and began moving toward closer academic alignment with Columbia College, offering an identical curricular experience to nontraditional students — a process that Peter Awn, dean of the School of General Studies, describes as being 95 percent complete. “No other Ivy League university has a freestanding college that fully integrates nontraditional students into its undergraduate program,” he says with obvious pride.

Yet that integration has come at a cost. General Studies students now attend the same classes as other Columbia undergraduates and enjoy access to the same world-class faculty. As a result, they are also being asked to pay the same tuition — just over \$1,200 per credit hour, or roughly \$36,000 annually for a full-time course load. (This does not include living expenses, which the University estimates at over \$18,000 per year, but which might reasonably be far higher for many nontraditional students, who are not guaranteed University housing and who of-



ten have families to support.) At first glance, this seems only fair: you get the same education, you ought to pay the same money. But in this case, financial parity is an illusion and the true cost of a Columbia education is often much higher for nontraditional students than for traditional ones.

To begin with, the amount of institutional aid available to General Studies students — the amount of money that Columbia itself contributes to their financial aid packages — is far lower than the amount available to their traditional counterparts. On the surface, the reason for this is simple: while Columbia College enjoys a \$200 million endowment, the School of General Studies has only \$30 million in reserve. That’s hardly surprising; Columbia College has been around for 250 years, while the School of General Studies has been in existence for only 60.

Furthermore, as Feagin explains, the University has not always done all it could to reach out to General Studies alumni for support. “For a very long time,” she says, “there was a presumption shared by both the

university and GS that once they graduated GS alumni were not going to behave the way that other alumni would,” at least in terms of donating money. As it turns out, that presumption was entirely wrongheaded; alumni surveys overwhelmingly demonstrate that GS students feel passionately about the transformative power of General Studies. Nonetheless, says Feagin, the school has only recently begun to build a development organization that is as “concerted and effective” as the one employed by Columbia College.

The relative paucity of the GS endowment has a direct impact on financial aid, since less money is available to GS students in the form of institutional grants and scholarships. Financial aid professionals use the term “discount rate” to describe the amount of tuition funds that is returned to students in the form of aid. According to Curtis Rodgers, dean of enrollment management and communications, the discount rate is roughly 40 percent for Columbia College students, but only 22 percent for General Studies students — a discrepancy that is principally, but not

entirely, due to the relative size of the colleges’ endowments, since tuition revenue also contributes to the discount rate. In both areas GS is focused on achieving parity with Columbia College; at present, however, GS students must shoulder a larger portion of their educational costs — and unlike most traditional students who are expected to receive financial support from their parents, they must typically do so alone, often while supporting families.

Not surprisingly, that discrepancy is a source of consternation to many General Studies students. Given the fact that they now enjoy the same education and pay the same tuition fees as other Columbia students, many wonder why they shouldn’t also have access to the same pool of funds. As Bodnar puts it, “If we are going to have to pay the same for credit hours, we should have access to the same endowment.” Unfortunately, as Feagin explains, sharing the wealth between colleges is not so easy. “Virtually all of those endowment funds have been designated by the donors for very specific purposes,” she

says. “Almost every financial aid donation is made to the school from which the donor graduated. Because of those donor restrictions, it’s not a University decision that we are shutting GS out.”

As important as the discount rate is, however, it is not the only factor affecting General Studies students. There is also the matter of how student financial aid is calculated in the first place.

The Department of Education uses the Free Application for Federal Student Aid, or FAFSA, to determine the amount of money that a student’s family can be expected to contribute to their education. The financial aid office then subtracts that sum from the estimated cost of attending college in order to determine the student’s financial need. So far, so good — for a traditional student, at least. The FAFSA works well when the applicant is 18 years old, has virtually no income or expenses, and can expect at least some parental support. For a thirtysomething student with his or her own kids to feed who must abandon a paying job in order to attend

P.J. Bodnar, Brody Bery (Photos by Alan Orling)



classes, however, the FAFSA offers only a glimpse of an exceptionally nuanced picture.

With fewer institutional funds available to them and a raft of hidden or unrecognized costs, many General Studies students must turn to private lenders to cover their expenses. Yet as the current financial crisis worsens, more and more private lenders are pulling out of the educational loan business, further restricting students' options.

Attending part-time is an attractive solution for some, since it allows students to spend more time earning money. But it, too, has its pitfalls. Although part-time enrollment makes it easier to manage educational expenses, extending the time spent in school creates additional costs: in addition to the increase over time of the secondary and tertiary costs associated with being a student (rent, books, health insurance), by working and studying part-time one forgoes both a full-time income and a full-time courseload (which would allow for a quicker graduation date and quicker entry into the full-time work force).

And, as Maxcina Njoroge, a 36-year-old former dancer and part-time student considering a major in film studies or creative writing points out, less federal aid is available to part-time students than full-time ones. Moreover, taking the slow track — Njoroge first enrolled in 2005, and has so far racked up only two-thirds of the credits she will need to graduate — does not guarantee that one won't wind up deeply in hock: Njoroge expects to accumulate approximately \$56,000 in loans, some of them from private lenders. In the meantime, she works two or three jobs at a time, and shares an apartment with two roommates. "I'm not living the kind of life I'd like as an adult who's been out there in the working world," she says.

Finally, there is the issue of how the financial aid office itself determines financial aid eligibility. Columbia College students, for example, are awarded aid according to a "full-need" funding model, meaning that merit does not enter into the equation, and all of a student's possible funding sources — most notably, their parents — are considered. Yet according to Awn applying the same full-need model to a nontraditional General Studies student would be "unworkable."

"What do you do with a 30-year-old student with two kids whose parents are still alive — ask the parents for tax returns?" he asks. Ignoring parental income entirely wouldn't work, either; doing so could mean raiding the school's limited endowment to provide support for a "25-year-old who makes \$10,000 a year working part-time, but whose parents are worth millions."

Historically, the financial aid office has attempted to circumvent this problem by evaluating General Studies students primarily on merit, thereby sidestepping the thorny issue of assessing nontraditional student need. As debt loads have swollen, however, it has become clear that this merit-based model is not working, either. "The system is broken, and needs to be fixed," says Bodnar.

And therein lies the ray of hope in this otherwise bleak financial picture. The system is indeed broken, and it does indeed need fixing; but students and administrators alike are doing just that, seeking solutions at both the national and local levels.

Bodnar, for example, traveled to Washington, D.C. last spring with a delegation from the office of the President of the University to lobby Congress for increased federal financial aid. He intends to return next year for the same purpose. Similarly, Matan Ariel '06, a former representative to the University Senate who graduated

Although Columbia College and General Studies share centralized resources such as faculty and buildings, most financial aid funds are drawn from each school's endowment and from gifts that are school-specific, which means that increasing the GS endowment by giving back to one's alma mater is a task that alumni may accomplish personally.

with more than \$90,000 in debt and now works for Google, helped spearhead the drive to pass a National Tuition Endowment Act. The NTEA was designed to generate additional student aid by eliminating waste within the federal financial aid system — for example, by ending subsidies to private lenders. While the NTEA never made it through Congress, "almost all of the various loopholes we identified were addressed by other legislation passed in the past year and a half," Ariel says.

Closer to home, Awn says that the administration is working to improve the way in which it evaluates student need. Within a year or two, he expects there to be a more sophisticated hybrid model in place that awards aid to nontraditional students on the basis of both merit and need. Meanwhile, Susan Feagin, who oversees all of the fundraising programs that collectively comprise the \$4 billion Columbia Campaign for Undergraduate Education, wants "to bring to GS some of the energy that already exists in Columbia College fundraising." A year ago, she formed the Columbia Campaign Council for Undergraduate Education (CCC), a volunteer committee made up of General Studies and Columbia College alumni who have donated six figures or more, with the goal of encouraging other General Studies alumni to become involved in the crucial task of growing the school's endowment.

For Larry Lawrence '69, BUS '71 and one of the CCC's three co-chairs, the committee is indicative of the collaborative spirit that exists across the divisions of the University. "Today I think that the understanding of GS's mission and the acknowledgement that it can enhance and diversify the rest of the undergraduate population is something that's well understood from top to bottom in the administration, which is something that's historically unique," Lawrence said. "We're all working to find the best way to deliver the message about what's going on at the University and what alumni can do to help."

Still, as Lawrence points out, although Columbia College and General Studies share centralized resources such as faculty and buildings, most financial aid funds are drawn from each school's endowment and from gifts that are often school-specific. As a result, increasing the GS endowment by giving back to one's alma mater is a task that alumni may accomplish personally, as Feagin exemplifies: 10 years ago, she established the Susan K. Feagin Scholarship Fund, and she's been contributing to it ever since. With some \$100,000 in the kitty, it now provides approximately \$5000 a year in funding for a GS student.

Endowed scholarships like Feagin's have allowed General Studies to increase its financial aid budget by 17 percent for the 2008-2009 academic year, pumping an additional \$1 million into the pockets of continuing students with the highest demonstrated economic need and substantial student loan debt. Which is not to say that the job is done; far from it. Feagin wants to raise \$15 million in endowed scholarships and another \$10 million in annual funds for the School of General Studies by 2011, and after two years of effort, the current tally stands at \$7.5 million. "We're a little behind where we would like to be," she says. Still, she remains optimistic — as does Awn, who knows better than most what GS alumni can achieve when they put their minds to it.

"The future is enormously bright; it's just a matter of getting there. And the commitment is there up the food chain," he says. "But these things don't happen overnight." 🍀

GS COMMUNITY

PETER J. AWN APPOINTED DIRECTOR OF MIDDLE EAST INSTITUTE



As of July 1, 2008, Dean of the School of General Studies (GS) and Professor of Islamic Religion and Comparative Religion in the Department of Religion Peter J. Awn began a three-year appointment as director of the Columbia University Middle East Institute. In his new role, which he will hold while continuing to serve as dean of GS and acting dean of the School of Continuing Education, Awn is responsible for shepherding the Institute's mission of fostering an inter-regional and multi-disciplinary approach to the Middle East region, focusing on Arab countries, Armenia, Iran, Israel, Turkey, Central Asia, and Muslim Diaspora communities.

Appointed by a consensus of senior faculty and the dean of the School of International and Public Affairs (SIPA), Awn represents faculty, advocates for interdisciplinary course work in Middle East studies, and acts as a liaison between departments of the University. Additionally, along with an executive board made up of senior faculty members, he will facilitate discussion series and visits by guest speakers. He will also host international visitors to Columbia and address journalists requesting expert commentary on the Middle East.

Since its founding in 1954, the Middle East Institute has acted as a national resource center for Middle East issues as well as a source of funding for Columbia graduate students conducting research and composing dissertations on subjects related to the region. The Institute is funded by a U.S. Department of Education grant, the Faculty of Arts and Sciences, and donors, and one of Awn's primary responsibilities as director is to raise money for its programs and lead its advisory board.

"We are thrilled that he accepted the position," said the Institute's assistant director Astrid Benedek. "Peter is an excellent advocate for faculty, and he possesses great talent for managing the public relations aspects of this post." 🍀

BENJAMIN ROBISON

ACTS ON THE FACTS

Postbaccalaureate Premedical Program student Benjamin Robison, along with his collaborators Josephine Dorado and Hugo Berkeley, was granted a \$72,000 John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation Knowledge Networking Award in March 2008. Robison is using the grant, awarded as a part of the first-ever Digital Media and Learning Competition, to develop a web application that matches news stories with opportunities for social activism and community service called, "Fractor: Act on Facts." "Facts" and "Acts" will be organized on a single page where every news story is linked to real-world actions that users can pursue.



Since last March, attorney David Miller has been working with Robison pro bono, as a part of the Lawyers Alliance, to assist in the 501(c)(3) process of incorporating "Fractor: Act on Facts." By next year, Robison is confident Fractor will provide a positive outlet for response to both daily events and major news, like natural disasters or wartime conflicts.

"I think people genuinely want to help others, and Fractor gives them a simple tool to do so. This empowerment helps create communities centered on giving and hope. Our goal is that the website will become a marketplace for citizens and nonprofits who seek to meet community needs," Robison said.

Robison's idea for "Fractor: Act on Facts" formed after the Sept. 11 attacks, when he became more civically active.

"I was invited to a U.N. Millennium Development Goals conference along with congressional leaders, youth organizers, and high school students. Through the discussion of international needs, it struck me that it was one thing to expose people to what's going on in the world, but another thing to give them a way to feed into the system, to interact," Robison said.

"Fractor: Act on Facts" is just one example of Robison's commitment to altruistic endeavors. In 2001, as a classical violinist and doctoral student in musical arts, Robison founded the Musicians' Alliance for Peace, which has sponsored more than 350 charity concerts in 30 countries. A number of concerts raised money for hospitals, which contributed to his decision to apply to and enroll in the Postbaccalaureate Premedical Program. He decided to take his successes using music for community outreach and apply them to understanding how he could physically heal people.

"I am very interested in human creativity and its positive impact on individual and community health. Creativity through music has positively motivated me for the past 30 years, and now I am looking forward to learning about how the human body's biological response to creativity can heal," Robison said. 🍀

LISTEN, MAC: TAXI DRIVING AND THE SCHOOL OF GENERAL STUDIES

BY ROBERT AST

In 1967 Brian Leary, editor of *The Owl* (then a student newspaper), wrote a column informing the public about the methods his colleagues used “to get the most money with the least effort in the most devious way.” Leary was not exposing a web of corruption or revealing the professional secrets of con artists; he was a New York City cabdriver.

Many of the tactics for increasing tips that Leary discusses are fairly innocuous: casually remarking on how cheap the last fare was, or the operation a fictitious brother is about to undergo, though terrorizing the fare into tipping appropriately by driving like a maniac can also be effective. Of course, any approach that successfully combines navigating the city and engaging passengers requires a certain degree of skill and intelligence¹; it should come as no surprise, then, that many GS alumni have spent some time in New York’s most iconic profession.

With no boss and a flexible schedule, cab driving held obvious appeal for students. Another former *Owl* writer, Ken Linden ’71, left a career as a freelance writer and part-time director-producer to drive a cab while returning to school at GS; former Senator Mike Gravel ’56² applied for a license after hearing that Jonas Salk put himself through medical school by driving a cab. In short, hacking—a term derived from hackney, or for-hire, carriages—was, as Christopher Gray ’75 puts it, “a wonderful, classical, mid 20th-century entry-level job, unless you were a convicted felon. I just showed up at the Brechtian-titled ‘Terminal Cab Company,’ and a fat old guy with a cigar said ‘Yeah, kid, whad mages ya tink ya kin take out a car?’”

“Kid”—although hardly applicable to most GS hacks (both Leary and Linden had served in the Army, as had Gravel a decade earlier)—is no exaggeration: in 1969 the minimum age for a hack license was lowered from 21 to 18, resulting in an influx

of young, part-time drivers (including many with long hair, to the delight or consternation of their fares, as *The New York Times* reported). As Graham Russell Gao Hodges records in *Taxi! A Social History of the New York City Cabdriver*, the history of cab driving is a series of demographic shifts: the first cabdrivers (or proto-cabdrivers) were African-Americans who operated hackney carriages; by the 1840s they had been almost

in age or ethnicity, but education.

Ken Linden’s statement that “there were more PhDs driving cabs than were employed at Columbia” is only a slight exaggeration; Hodges remarks that the drivers’ ranks were full of well-educated people who had turned their backs on the corporate world and finds similarities between the so-called “hippie cabdrivers” and the Depression-era “virtuosos,” former professionals who turned to



Production still from the 1971 film *Jennifer on My Mind*, in which Robert DeNiro portrays a gypsy cabdriver.

entirely displaced by Irish immigrants, a phenomenon that helped establish cab driving as a path to acculturation for later immigrant groups. The “taxi renaissance” that occurred during the late ’60s and early ’70s, the period when most GS students were driving, was also due to a demographic shift— not

hacking to eke out a living. Linden concurs: “I don’t believe we were defining the job, as you might say, in our own image.... We were trying the preserve the job as it had always been—a very special relationship between rider and driver.”

By the late ’60s that relationship had be-

come rather frayed. Robberies were common and murders not infrequent; many cabdrivers refused to travel to predominantly African-American neighborhoods, which led to a major increase (from 300 to 8,000 over the course of the decade) in unlicensed gypsy cabs, known for traveling everywhere. Some younger drivers, like Paul Gibb ’70 (another *Owl* writer) made it a point to counter the trend.

“There were even African-American and Latino drivers from my garage who would not go in some neighborhoods,” he recalls. “I was out to prove everybody wrong and spent 70 to 80 percent of my time in those neighborhoods.”

As Gibb points out, the “scariest thing was not neighborhoods,” but the state of the cabs themselves. Linden agrees: “There were more drivers injured by tires falling off, or blowing up, or brakes that failed, or steering that malfunctioned, than were killed or robbed by drug addicts.” Still, rather than improving the cabs, the newly formed taxi drivers’ union focused on having bulletproof dividers installed in cabs, against many drivers’ wishes. The protective shields “cut off your connection with the customer,” Linden notes. “Rather than sharing the space, we were each isolated in our private space. ... It affected our income in a major way. Once we could no longer establish a personal rapport with the customer, the tips became smaller.”

Time has only increased the alienation: today any interaction between driver and fare must transcend the newest imposition, a TV screen in each taxi, as well as cell phones and the probable linguistic barrier (according to the 2000 census, less than 10 percent of cabdrivers were born in the U.S.). But the sense of fascination with cabdrivers continues. Cabdrivers occupy a special place in the national mythology, as inside sources on the “real” New York or amateur philosophers always ready with advice. They have been (and continue to be) portrayed on film and television far more than any other service industry profession. While cabdrivers have primarily been supporting characters, stars like John Barrymore, James Cagney, Harold Lloyd, and Spencer Tracy all had lead roles as cabdrivers, and *Taxi Driver*’s Travis Bickle remains one of the most vivid characters ever committed to celluloid. Cabdrivers appear with similar frequency and variety throughout American literature,³ and hack memoirs, reborn as hack blogs, have remained a popular genre.

At the end of the day, however, cab driving is simply a job, a fact that David Barrett ’75 recalls clearly. “My favorite customers were the prostitutes at the end of my shift who I would pick up on my way back to the garage and take them (two or three usually) back home in the Bronx or Brooklyn,” he says. “They were as happy to be finishing their shift as I was, and they always gave me a decent tip.” 🍷

Endnotes

1. In an influential study, Eleanor Maguire, a researcher at University College London, found that the posterior section of the hippocampus, a section of the brain devoted to memory and spatial navigation, was larger in London taxi drivers than the general public—proof that driving a cab can actually increase the size of one’s brain. There was, however, a corresponding decrease in the anterior section of taxi drivers’ hippocampi—most likely caused by the stress of driving a cab.

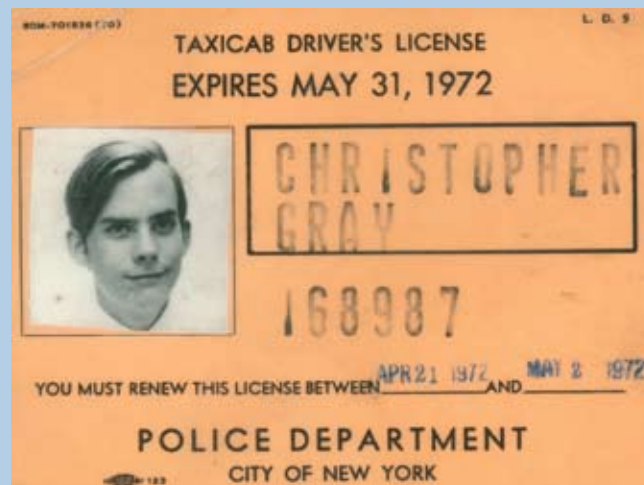


2. During his campaign for the Democratic Presidential nomination, Sen. Gravel returned to Columbia behind the wheel of a ’50s-era Checker cab for a segment on the “Today” show. Unfortunately the cab, supplied by NBC, did not have functioning brakes; neither he nor his passenger Jonathan Alter were injured.

3. Clifford Odets’ groundbreaking play *Waiting for Lefty* was inspired by the violent 1934 taxi strike and remains the most vivid portrait of the Depression “virtuoso.” J.D. Salinger’s *The Catcher in the Rye*—in which Holden’s quest to find out what happens to the Central Park ducks in winter pits him against cabdrivers with preposterous explanations—also offers a fairly accurate, though far less flattering, picture of contemporary cabdrivers.

Ten years after *The Catcher in the Rye* was first published, a trade publication conducted a survey of cabdrivers to find out what they actually thought happened to the Central Park ducks. Many came up with scenarios that surpassed Salinger in ridiculousness. In fact, nothing happens to the ducks—they simply stay in the park—but perhaps the most appropriate response was given by one driver: “Listen, Mac: this license is to drive a cab—not to be no information booth, for Christ’s sake.”

DISPATCHES



"There are 'wide street' people and 'narrow street' people. Some people fear being blocked in on a narrow street and do not trust their own skills to avoid it; they take the (generally slower) wide crosstown streets. Other people trust in their own skills to avoid getting blocked in by some school bus or whatever, and anyway figure whatever happens is God's will. I go for the narrow streets; Allāhu Akbar!"

—Christopher Gray '75

"I was driving south on Eighth Avenue and about 120th Street. A young black couple was in the back of my cab and they had been kissing the whole way. Suddenly they ducked down, which caused me to think they were getting really passionate—when I suddenly realized buildings were on fire all around me. A man dressed in a purple suit was desperately trying to wave me down as I stopped at a traffic light. He ran towards the cab and came close enough to see that I already had passengers, so he ran back to the curb. I heard a voice say, 'Is that a white?' I decided at that instant not to panic and did not roll up the window or lock the door—assuming, perhaps correctly, that a display of fear would only make me more of a target. The light turned green and I sped down Eighth Avenue and Central Park West and dropped off my passengers. That was when I turned on the radio and learned that Martin Luther King Jr. had been assassinated in Memphis."

—Paul Gibb '70

"I picked up a middle-aged couple in the theatre district one evening. They wanted to go to the Upper West Side, through Central Park. I entered the park at 57th Street and proceeded to drive it at a very brisk speed taking each turn and curve with perfect pitch so that the passengers were not jostled or tossed about in any way. The wife asked that I slow down, but her husband said, 'Let him drive.' We got to their address without a stop, (my timing on traffic lights was flawless), and the husband congratulated me, in spite of his wife's protest, for a superb driving job. I was grateful for the compliment—most people would have sided with the wife—so I asked him what he did for a living. 'I'm the movement coach for the Metropolitan Opera,' he answered. 'That was incredible driving.'"

—Ken Linden '71

To read more Dispatches, visit OwlNet at www.alumni.gs.columbia.edu



ALUMNI REUNION WEEKEND 2009

GENERAL STUDIES
ALUMNI OF CLASS YEARS
ENDING IN 9 AND 4
ARE INVITED TO
ALUMNI REUNION WEEKEND
JUNE 5 – 7, 2009

GS alumni will participate alongside
Columbia College, Barnard College,
and Engineering alumni
in a weekend of activities.

For more information, contact
Erich Erving '06,
assistant director for alumni relations,
at ebe2001@columbia.edu or (212) 851-7485
or for details visit www.gs.columbia.edu/reunion

ALUMNI SPOTLIGHTS POSTBAC PREMED ALUMNUS

JEFFERY OESTREICHER '07 PBPM

BY ANNA O'SULLIVAN

Postbaccalaureate Premedical Program alumnus Jeffrey Oestreicher spent his glide year producing Dr. Mehmet Oz's "Oprah and Friends" show on XM Satellite Radio in addition to writing and researching for Dr. Oz's appearances on the "Oprah Winfrey Show."

The Owl: *Why did you decide to study medicine after completing a degree in political science?*

Jeff Oestreicher: I always felt medicine was ultimately where I would end up when I graduated from college. There were, however, a handful of other things I was interested in, and I wasn't ready to commit my life to any one single thing such as medicine.

I loved history and politics, and my first job post-college was researching for a series on the History Channel. My second job was working for a Congressman in Washington, D.C., around the time of the 2004 Presidential Campaign. My boss was kind enough to help me get a job on John Kerry's campaign, which was one of the greatest experiences I've ever had.

Why did you choose Columbia University Postbaccalaureate Premedical Program? How has it helped prepare you for what's ahead?

I wanted to live in New York City, and Columbia's Postbac Program had the best reputation in the country. After visiting the campus and speaking with current students, I learned the Postbac Program was the oldest program of its kind and by all accounts prepared you extremely well for med school. A handful of Postbac alumni even told me that the first two years of med school were significantly easier for them than some of their classmates because the second year of biology covers an entire year of biochemistry, which is unique to Columbia.

How did you attain the position working for Dr. Oz?

I received a forwarded email from one of the Postbac advisors advertising a producer position for Dr. Oz. They were looking for a writer with a deep interest in science and medicine. I vividly remember getting the email at 11 p.m. on a Sunday night and writing

him a letter that same night explaining how I worked as a writer before starting the Postbac Program and hoped to pursue medicine.

The job appealed to me because it combined writing, which I loved to do, with wellness, medicine and public health; areas I hoped to pursue in the future. Everything happened very quickly. I met him the following Friday, and I was hired the next week.

Describe your role working for Dr. Oz.

I am employed by Harpo, Oprah Winfrey's production company, and I produce Dr. Oz's "Oprah and Friends" show in addition to writing and researching for Dr. Oz's appearances on the "Oprah Winfrey Show."

I read and write a lot; I scour newspapers, medical journals and book reviews looking for people with important and fascinating new ideas and insights into wellness, medicine, science, healing, etc. After deciding on a particular guest, I help Dr. Oz prepare for the show by distilling ideas and insights in ways that make it easier for the audience to incorporate new ideas and practices into their own lives. We love these actionable items, things someone can implement into his or her own life after turning off the show such as a new food, a new approach to thinking about spirituality, an exam they request from their doctor, or a new mind-body practice like tai chi, for example.

What is something interesting about your position people may not realize?

I get at least 10 new medical or science books a week in the mail to review. Additionally, people are always pitching me, some a bit crazier than others. Like the guy who founded a new principle of quantum physics that he claimed could instantly solve the world's pollution problem.

What was your favorite project you worked on for Dr. Oz?

One of my favorites was about bringing global medicine to America, where we searched



the world for indigenous healing modalities that might enhance health and prevent illness. The research for these shows was fascinating; I met with Peruvian shamans, medicinal plant and herb hunters in the Amazon, South African healers, or sangomas, and traditional Chinese medicine doctors. We searched every corner of the world for secrets.

Aside from producing the show, to which events did you accompany Dr. Oz?

I loved going to some book-tour stops with him when his last book came out. It was fun to meet some of the Oprah/Oz audience. An older woman approached me at one event to say her husband and two sons refused prostate screenings until all three learned from an Oprah show that prostate cancer is nearly 100 percent survivable if detected early. I don't know if it was the prostate exam discussion or the image I had of three men watching Oprah together, but for some reason that's a vivid memory of mine.

Is Dr. Oz someone you look up to? Will you still stay in contact with him while studying at Columbia?

I can't overstate the respect and admiration I have for him as a person, and his mission to empower people around the country to be their best health advocates. I feel very lucky to be a part of it. He has more energy and passion than anyone I've ever met—I mean that very literally. But he's also so kind and decent, someone you just love to be around.

I sincerely hope to stay in touch with him, and I'm excited that we'll be at Columbia together. I think he'll even give some cardiovascular lectures to my class. 🙏

Oestreicher is currently a student at the College of Physicians and Surgeons at Columbia University. To read the extended interview visit www.gs.columbia.edu/postbac

A Life OF MIXED MEDIA

BY ALLISON SCOLA



FOR ALL I AM
AND STILL HOPE TO BE
YOU WERE MY GUIDE
YOU WERE THE KEY
THAT OPENED THE DOOR
TO THE FEAST OF IDEAS

- EVELYN KANDEL



"This line is for veterans," was a comment Evelyn Crumlish Kandel '58 often heard as she waited at Columbia's Veterans Affairs window in University Hall to collect her GI benefits. "I am a veteran," she would reply, much to the surprise and delight of her fellow servicemen-turned-students. It was the mid-1950s, and Kandel felt proud that she was one of the only women at Columbia University who could proclaim "Semper Fi," and own it.

Kandel recalls a chaotic childhood of moving from place to place, wherever her father's work took them. Despite her interest in painting and an inclination to be an interior decorator, upon graduating from Scarborough High School in Briarcliff Manor, N.Y., she lacked the funds for college tuition, so she decided to enlist in the Marine Corps and see some of the world. The military suited Kandel: "I liked the spit and polish aspect of the service," she says. "So much so, I would buff my shoes until they were like glass."

Kandel completed basic training in Parris Island, S.C., and was stationed in the office of the Commandant of the Marine Corps in Arlington, Va. She started as a clerk-typist, but eventually was tapped for public relations and recruitment work. In 1952 her portrait was featured on a Marine Corps recruitment poster, a veteran affairs brochure, and a stamp commemorating women's 10 years in the Armed Forces.

"One of the posters appeared in Times Square, and I was one of a handful of women interviewed for a television spot about our time in the service," Kandel professes.

Eventually at age 22, Kandel was ready to re-enter civilian life. She returned to New York, where she enrolled in the School of General Studies and paid her tuition with funds from the GI Bill. While at GS she studied psychology and took advantage of the broad liberal arts education the college offered.

"I took anthropology with Margaret Mead, music with composer Vladimir Us-



sachevsky, and writing with poet Marianne Moore," she says. "It was an exciting time with a packed schedule. I worked very hard for four years." Columbia gave Kandel the opportunity to revisit her interest in sculpture and painting as well as discover a new talent for writing poetry; however, upon graduation in spring 1958, she put her poetry and art into a portfolio and took a job with the Girl Scouts of America, training volunteers to lead troops around the region.

Later that year Kandel married. Life seemed to be settling down, yet within two years, after the birth of her daughter, Kandel's husband was stricken with cancer and died. The Marine in Kandel rose to the occasion, and in order to support her infant daughter she started teaching second grade at a Long Island school.

A year later she married Robert Kandel CC '52, her late husband's business colleague. The new couple had two sons together, and the stability of family life enabled Kandel to revisit childhood and college interests. She started to paint as a hobby and studied privately and enrolled in classes at the Art Students League and the School of Visual Arts. Once her children were old enough, Kandel returned to school for a master's degree in school psychology, but after earning 15 credits she realized she really wanted to immerse herself in art classes in order to become an art teacher. She landed an internship at the Metropolitan Museum of Art's parent-child program and began teaching at local community centers and the YMCA to gain more experience.


In one year, Kandel took 30 credits of art courses. Creating a self-imposed boot-camp, she threw herself into learning how to teach art history and various media: sculpture, print making, and painting. She eventually received her teaching certification, and in 1985 she began a position at Portledge School in Locust Valley, N.Y., where she taught seventh to ninth grade and served as the chair of the art department. Her career as an artist and a teacher of art took flight, and Kandel went on to teach at Portledge School for 14 years.

In 1990 Kandel earned an MA from Long Island University and received a Skidmore College High School Art Teacher Fellowship. For the next 13 years, she returned to Skidmore for three weeks each summer to make art alongside other teachers from around the country. The resources at Skidmore – studio space and feedback from colleagues – enabled Kandel's art to flourish. She created sculptures, artist's books, masks, paintings, and assemblages. Over time, evoking the talent she discovered while at Columbia,



she was inspired to write words and phrases on her pieces. Eventually the phrases turned into poetry, and the poems moved away from the artwork and onto paper.

Today, Kandel exhibits her art in many shows and is also a published poet in various journals and anthologies. She is often invited to read her poetry at venues throughout Long Island and is the host of monthly poetry readings at the Graphic Eye Gallery in Port Washington, N.Y. A lifelong learner, Kandel continues to take poetry courses and is a member of two writing groups.

"The Marine Corps gave me the discipline to take advantage of the education afforded by the School of General Studies and, importantly, the GI Bill, which made it possible for me to afford it," she says. "The School of General Studies opened my mind to the intricacies of a symphony, to a clear understanding of chaotic modern European history. I marveled at the brilliance of a philosopher's thoughts and created stories and poems, one of which was just accepted for publication (50 years later!). GS made me curious to know, to learn and experience all the hidden joys only a well-educated mind can know." 

PAIN

ON A CHART OF SMILEY FACES,
INCONGRUOUS ON THE DOCTOR'S WALL,
ONLY ONE IS SMILING BROADLY
THE OTHERS SLOWLY LEAK THEIR SMILES
UNTIL THE LAST FROWNS IN GREAT PAIN.

MY PAINFUL OLD KNEE
HAS MOVED DOWN THE CHART
UNTIL IT IS NEXT TO THE LAST FACE
WINCING AND FROWNING,

YET IT SEEMS IMPOLITE
TO FOCUS ON THIS FIXABLE JOINT
WHEN THERE IS MUCH GREATER PAIN
ROBBING BODIES, TORTURING MINDS.

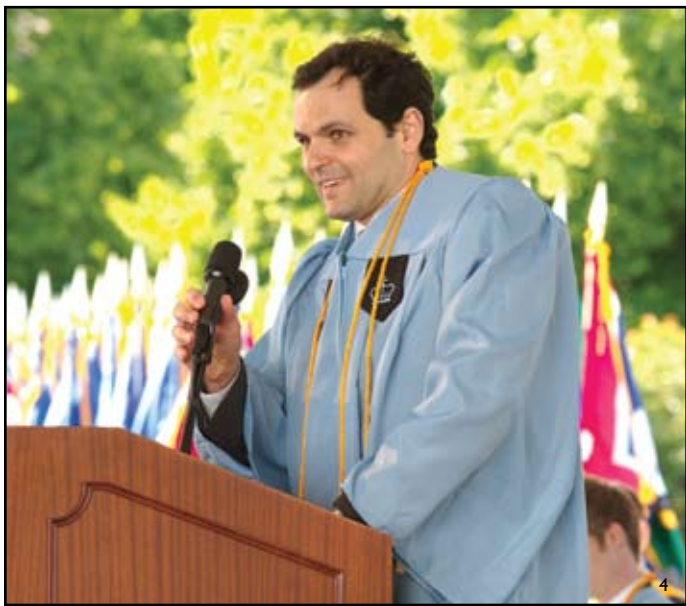
THIS WORLD IS FILLED WITH LEFTOVERS -
SOLDIERS FROM OLD AND NEW WARS
LIVING IN A WORLD THAT WOUNDED THEM
LEAVING THEM TO LOOK AT A CHART
OF SMILEY FACES
MOCKING THEIR PAIN.

-EVELYN (CRUMLISH) KANDEL

Published in Lucidity, 2005
Honorable Mention: International Contest

CLASS DAY 2008

PHOTOS BY DAVID WENTWORTH



1. Grads cheer on their fellow classmates as they receive their diplomas.
2. Dean's Citation winner Stephen Harris.
3. Dean Peter Azon with Dean of Students Mary McGee.
4. Salutatorian Aviel Marrache.

1. Jacqueline Wayans and family.
2. Reunion classes representatives Heather Byrne '88, Marcia Wunsch '93, Jackie Cesarz-Bodnar '93, Hermia Nelson '98, Eli Casdin '03, and Craig Harte '98 processed into the ceremony.
3. Lauren McFall and family.
4. GS Class Day Speaker and 2008 Columbia University Medal of Excellence winner Alicia Graf '03.
5. Valedictorian Joel Beal.
6. Grads march onto South Lawn.

All alumni are invited to celebrate Class Day on May 18, 2009.
For more details, visit www.gs.columbia.edu/classday.

GS ANNUAL GIVING

The School of General Studies continued to experience record giving to the GS Annual Fund during the 2007-2008 fiscal year. Gifts totaled \$523,332, an increase of 30 percent over the previous year. The GS Class of 2008 also set records, donating a total of \$15,400—nearly \$4,000 more than the previous year.

The GS Annual Fund is the school's primary vehicle for alumni giving and an important way for alumni to commemorate their GS experience. Each gift is appreciated, no matter the size. Gifts to the GS Annual Fund may be designated to the following areas:

- General support to underwrite the dean's top priorities
- Financial aid
- PALS (Program for Academic Leadership and Service)
- Postbaccalaureate Premedical Program

CLASS DAY REUNION COMMITTEE

| | |
|-------------------------|--------------|
| Jennifer Beaumont | '83 |
| Heather Byrne | '88 |
| Jackie Cesarz-Bodnar | '93 |
| Eli Casdin | '03, BUS '03 |
| Christine A Chapman | '78 |
| Edward Coll | '73, BUS '76 |
| Anne Cook Conze | '73 |
| Victor Fidel Escamilla | '03 |
| Patricia Gaven | '63 |
| Judith Gerberg | '63 |
| Reverend Dorothy Greene | '68 |
| Craig Harte | '98 |
| Whitney Kelting Keen | '73 |
| Lawrence David Kopp | '03 |
| Brian Leary | '68 |
| Barbara Voorhis Levy | '48 |
| Nancy Lewis | '78 |
| Hermia Nelson | '98 |
| Betty-Jane Scheff | '53 |
| Lawrence Spector | '63 |
| Marcia Wunsch | '93 |

GSVOLUNTEERS

| | |
|-------------------|-------------|
| Elizabeth Beerman | '98 |
| Bettina Bepler | '67 |
| Arthur Bingham | '84 |
| James Connolly | '01 |
| Katie Daily | '03, TC '05 |
| Isabelle Dufour | '04 |
| Patricia Gaven | '63, LS '65 |
| David Gorman | '94 |
| John Howard | '92 |
| Shannon McDonald | '99 |
| James Mageras | '91 |
| Guy Maurice | '99 |
| Eleena Melamed | '06 |

| | |
|------------------------|--------------------|
| Abi Mesick | '91 |
| John Talmage Moore | '92 |
| Iroweghi Nieros Oyegun | '04 |
| Lucille Roussin, Esq. | '69, GSAS '71, '85 |

RECENT ALUMNI LEADERSHIP COMMITTEE

| | |
|------------------------|--------------|
| Matan Ariel | '06 |
| Dina Bateman | '07 |
| Mason Beard | '04 |
| Torah Bontrager | '07 |
| Robert Caldwell | '07 |
| Jimmy Chiu | '05 |
| Aileen Crowley | '03 |
| Katie Daily | '03, TC '05 |
| Marguerite Daniels | '05 |
| Stephen Davis | '06 |
| Nicole Gallant | '00 |
| Karma Hara | '05 |
| George Hodge | '07 |
| Elizabeth Hollister | '07 |
| Tal Keinan | '04 |
| Sherie Kogon | '07 |
| Eleena Melamed | '06 |
| Chad Miller | '07 |
| Irogwehi Nieros Oyegun | '04 |
| Christopher Riano | '07 |
| Emilio Rodriguez | '07 |
| Porat Saar | '01 |
| Amy Shadden | '07 |
| Richard Space | '05 |
| Jessica Thompson | '07 |
| Douglas Webb | '05 |
| Justin White | '05, BUS '07 |
| Beatrice Winner | '07 |
| Akiva Zablocki | '07 |
| Jessica Negron Zoppoli | '06 |



PHOTO GALLERY

Photos from events including the April Thank You Reception at the Colony Club, the Recent Alumni Leadership Committee party, Class Day Reunion, and the Tavern on the Green Annual Fund event.



1. Chef Jacques Pépin '70 (standing) hosted a luncheon at the French Culinary Institute to thank Dean Peter Awn (center) for his ten years of service to the School of General Studies. Joining in the celebration from left: fellow chef and friend Jean-Claude, Senior Associate Director for Development in the Arts & Sciences Sandra McNutt, Anne Conze '73, Larry Lawrence '69, and Associate Director for Development in the Arts & Sciences Scott Meserve.
2. Josh Gordon '04, Hermia Nelson '98, Rene Aubry '95, BUS '03, LAW '03, and Steve Eyraud '98.
3. Recent alumni gathered for a festive reception on February 13, 2008.
4. Friend of GS Brandon Blaylock, Marilyn Charlot '96, and guest Joel Ruffin.
5. Katherine Slazak '80, Christel Bieroth-Rock AL '70, '81, Phyllis Shirokane '74, and Deborah DeMaria '93.
6. Barbara Levy '48 and Erich Erving '06.
7. Class Representatives Betty-Jane "Bj" Scheff '53 and Jack Effron '58.
8. Patricia Gaven '63, Brian Leary '68, and Reverend Dorothy Greene '68.
9. GS Reunion Chairperson Anne Cook Conze '73 and Whitney Kelting Keen '73.
10. Christine Chapman '78 and Nancy Virginia Lewis '78.
11. Jennifer Beaumont '83 and Heather Byrne '88.
12. Marcia Wunsch '93 and Jackie Cesarz-Bodnar '93.
13. Hermia Nelson '98, Craig Harte '98, Eli Casdin '03, and Victor Fidel Escamilla '03.

(Photos 4-13 by David Wentworth)



GS PLANNED GIVING

MEET THE MORTONS



Brian Morton '58 knows how powerful a Columbia education can be for nontraditional students. As a Korean War veteran looking to earn his college degree, he chose the School of General Studies, even though it meant that he had to work odd jobs and continually search for cheaper housing in order to cover the cost of attendance.

But his belief that the educational opportunities were worth the struggle was so strong that in 1963 he convinced his future wife, Jacqueline, to leave her secretarial job and pursue a master's in French—even though she was a young single mother. Both Brian and Jacqueline Morton went on to receive their PhDs from Columbia in French and Romance philology.

Thanks to a generous donation by the Mortons, the struggle for older students—single parents, in particular—will now be easier for future generations who seek to continue their studies, and change their lives, at GS.

For years, the Mortons have planned to establish a scholarship fund for single parents through a bequest of retirement assets, which, because of tax benefits, allows them to increase the size of their gift without greatly affecting bequests to family.

"It can be a real turn-around time," Jacque says of the decision to go back to school. "If you're alone with a child and you want to do something new, it's very difficult. We thought this scholarship fund would be a very worthwhile thing to do."

As a graduate student Jacque taught both GS and Columbia College students and holds a special fondness for GS students. "They never ask if something's going to be on the exam," she notes.

"They're so happy to be learning. They've made the decision to get their own education, and they get so much out of it." 🏰

Where There's a Will...

If you have included Columbia in your estate plans, the Office of Planned Giving would like to invite you to join The 1754 Society.

Contact the Office by telephone at (212) 851-7873 or (800)338-3294 and by email at gift.planning@columbia.edu.



THE 1754 SOCIETY

THE 1754 SOCIETY

The 1754 Society honors and acknowledges alumni and friends of Columbia who have made plans for the University through trust, estate, or other future gifts. Named for the year in which King's College was established, the Society recognizes the vital role benefactors have played over the centuries in Columbia's emergence as a preeminent educational institution and the role they play today in ensuring its continued excellence.

Columbia welcomes you to the 1754 Society if you have:

- included Columbia in your estate plan through a will or living trust;
- created a charitable remainder trust, administered by either Columbia or another trustee, which names Columbia as the remainder beneficiary;
- entered into a charitable-gift annuity agreement with Columbia or invested in one of Columbia's pooled income funds; or
- named Columbia as the beneficiary of a life insurance policy or retirement plan.

1754 SOCIETY HONOR ROLL:

Carrie and Steve Adelman '83
Anonymous
Patrick J. Aquilina and Richard R. Gray (friends)
Dr. Gloria S. Brundage '51, '52 JRN
Edna D. Borea '55
Sue Cassidy Clark BC '81, '89
Harry G. DeMeo, M.D. '76
Jean Willard Foss '81
Dr. Frances P. Galton '66, '78 GSAS
Thomas M. Garrett '60
Charles Gruppe '54
Mrs. Vernon W. Hughes '70, '77, '80 GSAS
Alexander Jovicevich '53, '55 GSAS
Joan P. Kain '59
Jacqueline W. Kinsolving '83
Dr. Rudolph '49, '53 PS and Mrs. Barbara Klare
Brian Leary '68
J. Nina Lieberman, PhD '58, '64 GSAS
Nancy Falkin Lynn '96
Nina Marano '06
Charlotte Mayerson (friend)
Murray L. Nathan '41
Mildred and Paul M. Rafaj '47, '49 GSAS
Charlotte Roth Rotkin '72, '74, '77, '80 GSAS
Sylvia Ruckens '64
Irene A. Schmied '72
Douglas Sloan '85
Wendy Power Spielmann '74
Howie Vactor '50
Deanna Wagoner '75, '76 GSAS

Did we leave you out? If you qualify for membership in this prestigious society please let us know so that we can invite you to special member-only events and add your name to our Honor Roll. Please contact Sonja A. Carter at 212-851-7873 or 1-800-338-3294 to officially join the 1754 Society, or to discuss any other questions you have about gift planning at Columbia University.

GS ON CAMPUS

GS AND THE CORE

Few eyebrows were raised by the 1946 announcement that University Extension would become the School of General Studies, Columbia's newest undergraduate college; stories in both the *New York Times* and the *Columbia Spectator* were little more than copies of the same press release. Five years later the official establishment of the General Studies Faculty received much more fanfare: the *Times* stated that Columbia's "more or less neglected child" would finally "attain maturity," while *Time* magazine ran a story on "the most ambitious institution of its kind."

The GS Faculty was composed of the same individuals who had been teaching in the school for years, so the differing reactions likely owe more to Louis Hacker—who became GS's first dean in 1951—and his flair for publicity than to any substantive change. Still, the new formal organization did elevate GS's standing both inside and outside the University, while at the same time insuring that its students would follow academic paths that were similar to, but ultimately distinct from, those of Columbia College students.

Instituting separate faculties for each school also created an obvious redundancy, particularly since many professors held appointments on multiple faculties and students were able to cross-register for courses, and by 1957 the University had already begun to investigate the administrative overlap. Later, four decades of reports culminated with the decision to merge the faculties of Columbia College, General Studies, the Graduate School of Arts and Sciences, and the School of International and Public Affairs to form the Faculty of Arts & Sciences, which held its first meeting in 1991.

With the unification of the faculties nearing its 20-year mark, the evolution of a more coherent academic experience for all undergraduates has come far indeed, with departments now offering one standard for undergraduate majors. But one famed curricular difference remains.

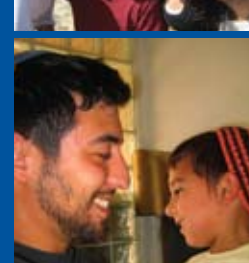
"We remain open to the usefulness and beauty of the Core Curriculum and its power to help shape an intellect," said Andrea Solomon, associate dean of academic affairs for GS, "but we're still mindful of the fact that most of our students arrive at Columbia with some college experience. It can be unfeasible to complete the Core and the requirements for a major without going over 124 credits. Also, many of our students have cultivated sophisticated perceptions unique to their more mature experiences—in the military, on stage, on Wall Street—and they can be in a considerably different phase of their intellectual development."

In acknowledgement of these differences, the current GS Core is designed to be flexible, with distribution requirements that students may fulfill with a number of courses in specific disciplines rather than particular courses. All GS students, however, have the option to take the closely defined CC Core, and many have embraced the opportunity. "The GS sections of Lit Hum and Contemporary Civilization are full every semester," Solomon said. "It would be interesting to see, as a pilot program, if the same demand is there for several more sections."

Like the establishment of both the GS Faculty and the Faculty of Arts & Sciences, the closer academic alignment with CC is both a significant benchmark and a matter of course. "Our mission of educating nontraditional students is the same as it's always been—but it evolves over time, as the population we serve changes, as technology changes, and as society changes," Solomon said. "We remain committed to providing the richest, most vigorous education that prepares and inspires." 🏰



A YEAR OFF? NOT EXACTLY



A gap year—a year off between high school and college—is often presented as a time of discovery, an opportunity for participants to learn more about themselves by encountering the new and unfamiliar. This description, however, tells only part of the story for students in the Joint Program between Albert A. List College of the Jewish Theological Seminary and the School of General Studies of Columbia University.

Joint Program students who spend a gap year in Israel immerse themselves in a society that shares their religious and cultural heritage but which is also very different from the American society they have left behind. Nearly 20 percent of the Fall 2008 entering class took a gap year in Israel, with most participating in formal programs such as Nativ (Hebrew for "path") or Young Judaea, which offer the opportunity for exploration within a structured environment.

As part of the Nativ Program, Simeon Cohen '11 spent four months in the Negev desert in the south of Israel in the town of Yerucham, an impoverished settlement composed largely of Russian and Moroccan immigrants. Cohen notes that the influx of young people volunteering in schools and working at soup kitchens was "not only extremely beneficial to the town in terms of what we actually contributed, but it truly boosted the town's morale. ... It was undoubtedly one of the most rewarding undertakings I have ever had the privilege of participating in."

New surroundings can also help to clarify academic interests. Andrea Werhof Schwartz '04 split her gap year between working on a kibbutz and living in Jerusalem, where she volunteered at Hadassah Hospital. Now a medical student at Mount Sinai School of Medicine, she says that the experience helped her discover the "intersection of medicine and Jewish studies," which she hopes to explore further through her specialization in geriatric public health and preventive medicine.

Of course, simply taking a break from academia can be helpful, too. Jody Zellman '11 remarks that it was important for him to "blow off the steam that had accumulated over the past twelve years of education," making him "more motivated to learn and work" when he entered college.

But a gap year's greatest success may lie in equipping participants to reach outside their own community.

"I was entering college as someone who was no longer solely a product of a typical middle-class, Jewish, suburban upbringing—I was now someone with some real life experience," Cohen says. "When I met other GS students and heard their incredible life stories, I felt that I could at least hold my own, since I had had some incredible experiences myself." 🏰

Alumni NOTES

EDITED BY ROBERT AST



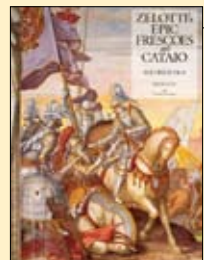
1955

HENRY NIESE is a painter, photographer, and former art professor who retired from the University of Maryland in 1996. For the last two decades, his creative activity has been directed toward the making of on-site ceremonial structures inspired by Native American culture. He has studied Native American traditional medicine and is the author of *The Man Who Knew The Medicine: The Teachings of Bill Eagle Feather*.



1958

MIRIAM JOYCE (formerly Joyce Miriam Siegel) is a professor of history at the Calumet campus of Purdue University. Her fifth book, *Anglo-American Support For Jordan: The Career of King Hussein*, was recently published by Palgrave Macmillan.

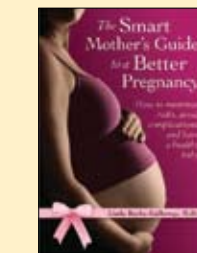
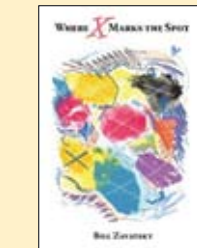
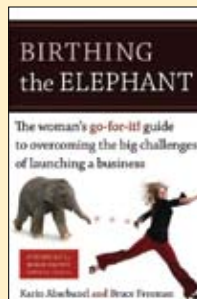


Zelotti's *Epic Frescoes at Cataio: The Obizzi Saga*, the most recent book by retired Fordham University Professor **IRMA B. JAFFE**, was published in February by Fordham University Press. Although highly regarded in his own time, the artist Giovanni Battista Zelotti is unknown today in large part because his greatest works had remained hidden from view for centuries. The Obizzi family commissioned the fresco cycle—which illustrates the family's heroism throughout the Middle Ages and Renaissance—for their private residence, the Castle of Cataio, which was only opened to the public in the mid-1990s. At the age of 86 and urged by her co-author Gernando Lombardo, Jaffe traveled to Italy to conduct research at the castle; now 91, she's published the first major study of the fresco cycle.

1970

ROBERT CURRY—also BUS '76—has launched a new business, Turning Point For Leaders, a coaching and consulting firm providing substance abuse treatment to senior executives and professionals. His firm brings to the client a team of project managers, executive coaches, psychologists, physicians and social workers. "We are pioneers who are raising the bar on substance abuse treatment," Curry says. "We immerse ourselves in the client's world to create a Circle of Accountability using an integrated holistic approach."

Curry has had an ever-evolving career in



financial services and executive coaching addressing and solving behavior-based personal and business issues. Now he is focusing on helping senior executives and professionals live happy, healthy, and productive lives free of addictions.

Curry lives in New Canaan, Conn. with his wife Helen, an interior decorator. They have three adult daughters. Ann manages the elementary public school program for autism in New Canaan, Emily graduated from Columbia Business School in May 2008, and Hilary is doing a semester in the outback of Australia and living with the Aborigines.

Robert can be contacted at robertc@turningpointforleaders.com.

1972

KARIN ARBABANEL runs a marketing communications firm and served as Avon's spokesperson for its "Corporation to Cottage" initiative. She is the author of *Birthing the Elephant: A Woman's Go-for-it! Guide to Overcoming the Big Challenges of Launching a Business*, as well as the earlier books *How to Succeed on Your Own* and *The Art of Winning Foundation Grants*. She speaks frequently about women entrepreneurs, small business, and career trends, and lives in Montclair, N.J. with her husband and son.

1974

BILL ZAVATSKY has been awarded a Guggenheim Fellowship for 2008-2009 to write poetry. His most recent book, *Where X Marks the Spot*, is available from Hanging Loose Press.

1982

The Smart Mother's Guide to a Better Pregnancy: How to Minimize Risks, Avoid Complications, and Have a Healthy Baby, a new book by **LINDA BURKE-GALLOWAY, MD, MS**, was published in September.

1986

STANLEY TRYBULSKI has published three new novels: *The Gendarme*, an international thriller set in post-Sept. 11 America; *The Ides of June*, a mystery revolving around a series of unsolved 30-year-old murders; *Forty-Deuce*, a mystery-thriller ranging from "the seamy streets of New York City to the staid mansions of Newport." All are available from retail and online booksellers. A trial prosecutor in the Brook-

lyn district attorney's office before going into private practice, Trybulski now divides his time between France and "two acres of Connecticut tranquility."

1989

KATHLEEN MOLES is the new curator of the Museum of Northwest Art in La Conner, Wash. She previously served as the curator of the Whatcom Museum of History and Art in Bellingham, Wash., and as the program coordinator at the University of Washington's Art Media Center.



1990

MARA COHEN IOANNIDES' first novel was named a finalist for the 2007 National Jewish Book Award for Children's and Young Adult Literature. Set in 15th-century Greece, *A Shout for Sunshine* explores the interactions of two distinct Jewish communities through its dual protagonists, a refugee from post-Inquisition Spain and the son of a wealthy Greek Jewish fabric merchant. Excerpts are available on the publisher's website (www.jewishpub.org).

1960

BARBARA PROBST SOLOMON



"Let me make one thing clear," the writer Barbara Probst Solomon says, "in that era there was no such thing as finding yourself or following your own path. You were a dropout, you were not distinguished in any way."

Coming of age in New York as World War II was ending, after high school Barbara Probst did not follow her classmates to college; instead, she went to Europe with somewhat indefinite plans—until she met a young novelist named Norman Mailer. "Youngish, buoyant, and idealistic ... in the triste Babylonia of après la guerre," as she later recalled, Mailer invited her to "uh, sort of, spring a few people from a Franco jail in Spain."

Probst leapt at the opportunity. "For a little girl who wanted to see postwar Europe, I knew I had arrived at the right café," she said. The escape attempt succeeded and was quickly followed by other exploits, including an excursion to the American Occupation Zone in Germany, all detailed in her memoir *Arriving Where We Started*.

Ultimately, however, it was her everyday life in Paris that exerted a more profound influence. "You don't learn anything in two weeks on some kind of extraterrestrial adventure," she said. "It was what came after that was important: seeing the exiles and refugees, watching the old Anarchist leaders die. By the time I got back to America I was myself plus somebody else."

The McCarthy-suffused America to which she returned in the early 1950s was also markedly different from the one she had left: many of her friends were married, and fear of reprisal kept most of the American Left quiet. "Jesus Christ, what a time to be 21," as she wrote later. She began to circulate petitions and do "various ad hoc protests," she said. "What could they have done to me? I had no job to lose. My father was even a Republican. I wished that those investigators were tapping my phone—then they would have to listen to my silly conversations about Saks Fifth Avenue."

She also attempted to resume her education but quickly discovered that "there were not that many options if you were a little bright and off the beaten track," she said. And, though she was only a year or two older than most college students, her life experience clearly set her apart: "I had seen Dachau—I was not exactly equipped for Barnard."

An acquaintance told her about the School of General Studies, and she immediately registered. "General Studies was just what somebody like me needed," she said. During her time at GS she married, gave birth to two children, and made the most of her opportunity by talking her way into graduate courses. "I went up to Federico De Onis, who was the chair of the Spanish department—which was the best in the country, or one of the best—and asked if I could take his class. He said, 'What are your qualifications?' I said, 'Well, I was in the Spanish opposition,' and he said, 'Come, come!'

"That's how it was then, not very formal. But it was an amazing place, if you had a clue what you were looking for. I had a better education than my contemporaries had had at Radcliffe or Bryn Mawr."

In fact, it was the informal atmosphere of GS's early days that fostered classroom interactions that would have been impossible elsewhere—particularly in the writing workshops given by Martha Foley, one of the founding editors of *Story* magazine. "Martha Foley had discovered Norman Mailer, Carson McCull-

ers, Terry Southern, and Malcolm Lowry, and she was absolutely incredible with her 1920s lorgnette and cigarette holder," Probst Solomon said. "Carson had been her student, and Martha would drag her in to talk to the class. Carson was sort of shy, so she would drag in Tennessee Williams. At some point Arthur Miller wandered in—who could have more riches than that?"

"This was a totally unfashionable school that, if you knew where to look for it, had the best of the best of the best. None of this was recognized at Columbia—we were just seen as the money cow—but look what was going on there.

"It's interesting because what's been acknowledged has been Columbia College of that period, people like Norman Podhoretz and Lionel Trilling. They suffered from a kind of 'we happy few' ethos: they weren't quite Ivy League, not Harvard or Yale; they wanted to be white-shoe, and they didn't recognize that what they had in their grasp was a dynamic, changing New York culture that would have, as part of it, more Jews."

After GS Probst Solomon continued to work as a journalist, keeping one foot in the U.S. and another in Europe and gaining renown for her prescient analysis of post-Franco Spain. She also began to teach writing and is currently on the graduate faculty at Sarah Lawrence College, where, following the example of Martha Foley, she forces her students to bring in one rejection a week.

This year she became the first North American to be awarded Spain's most prestigious journalism prize, the Francisco Cerecedo Prize. But, upon mention of this or her other recent awards (United Nations/ Women Together, 2006; Antonio de Sancha Prize, 2005), she quickly points to those who are not being honored. "You don't plan these things, you know," she said. "The narrative was just right. One thing I learned was that the butcher, baker, and candlestick maker who're thrown in jail don't enter history—they're not writers. But writers can become known. History's not fair."

1976

MARVIN McFEATERS

Marvin McFeaters nostalgically recalls the moments after his School of General Studies admissions interview in January 1969. “I remember sitting in the Iron Horse Bar of Pennsylvania Station after my interview, having a beer and waiting for the train to take me back to Washington, D.C.,” he says. “I was wearing a three-piece charcoal-gray suit that I had had made in Hong Kong when I was there on R & R. I knew that Columbia’s acceptance of me had changed my life forever, and for the better.”

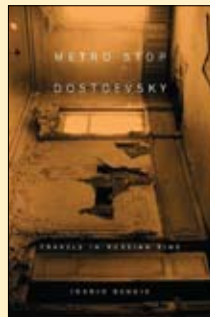
A veteran of the Vietnam War, McFeaters served with the United States Navy River Patrol Force in the Republic of South Vietnam from May 1967 until December 1968. As a boy he had lived in Bangkok, Thailand and Beirut, Lebanon, where he studied at the American Community School. Before going to Vietnam, he had visited Columbia and knew that the education the School of General Studies offered, along with the resources of New York City, would complement the excellent college preparatory curriculum he had experienced in Lebanon and the discipline he had learned in the Navy. “I was struck by a phrase in the School of General Studies catalogue: ‘The excitement of liberal arts well taught in small classes,’” McFeaters recalls.

“Columbia always had an influence on me, no matter what I was doing,” McFeaters says. “I met my future wife, Evelyne, at International House. My military veteran friends at the Business School helped to frame my thinking. I discovered the poems of World War I poet Wilfred Owen at Butler Hall and read them on my own. The creative writing courses I took at Columbia included a good deal of military fiction. The interfaith tradition on campus helped me to grow spiritually. And the student movements such as SDS provided a counterpoint to my own experiences in Vietnam.”

After seven years of attending classes part- and full-time, while also working in business and serving in the U.S. Naval Reserve at the Brooklyn Navy Yard, McFeaters earned a Bachelor of Arts degree with honors in English Literature. He and his wife relocated to Washington, D.C. where, in addition to working as an insurance and investment broker, he has been an active member of the Columbia alumni and U.S. veterans’ communities. In 1980 he chaired a University fundraiser, and from 1981 to 1983 he served as vice president of the Columbia University Club of Washington, D.C. In 1982 and again in 2008, he marched with other veterans to celebrate the dedication and 25th anniversary of the Vietnam Veterans Memorial, respectively.

McFeaters has been an active member of a number of veterans’ groups, including the Catholic War Veterans of the USA, Inc., for which he is the national Deputy Executive Director; the Greater Falls Church Veterans Council, for which he is the chairman; and the Catholic War Veterans Post 1652 in Falls Church, Va., for which he serves as the commander. On Memorial Day in 2006, in recognition of his involvement with veterans’ service organizations, he was honored by President Bush at the White House.

“I was deeply moved to read *The Owl’s* accounts of the experiences of the men and women who are coming back from Iraq and Afghanistan and enrolling at Columbia School of General Studies,” McFeaters said. “We are all part of the long line of veterans who have stepped forward for more than two centuries to answer the call of our country. We are also part of the long line of Columbians who have been formed by this extraordinary university for more than two centuries.”



1991

KATE MELLOR has launched a new company, Kate Gibson Lingerie (www.kategibsonlingerie.com). The company specializes in hand-made, made-to-measure lingerie, exclusively for petite women. The company is based in Dorset, in the UK, where Kate lives with her husband Rob Gibson, a professional sailor, and their two sons.

1996

INGRID BENGIS PALEI is the author of *Combat in the Erogenous Zone*, which was nominated for a National Book Award in 1972, and *Metro Stop Dostoevsky*, a memoir of life in Russia during the collapse of the Soviet Union that was published by Farrar, Straus, and Giroux in 2003. A former Fulbright scholar, she also served as Distinguished Professor in Writing and Comparative Literature at St. Petersburg State University.

ED NAPIER is a playwright and screenwriter. His first play produced in New York, *Junior Prom*, was directed by Herbert Berghof. He has written for the CBS drama *Criminal Minds* and has served as a Teaching Artist in the New York City public schools and on the faculty of the Columbia High School Summer Program.

1998

DANIEL ROY CONNELLY is the new director of the Drama department at the British International School in Shanghai. His wife Natalie (they were married in August) is the new head of the English as an Additional Language department.

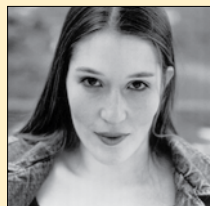
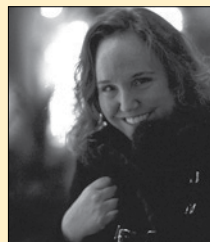
2000

ALTHEA VIAFORA-KRESS has produced a new “Collectors’ Forum” for WPSI Art Radio. Her Spring 2008 program featured anthropologist David Graeber, who discussed the psychology of the object.

2001

REBEKAH (KNOLL) MAGGOR performed her one-woman show, *Shakespeare’s Actresses in America*, at Boston’s Huntington Theatre for a two-week run in January and February 2008.

In May **JORDAN ROSENBLUM** graduated from a PhD program in religious studies at Brown University. During the Fall 2008 semester he served as the Belzer Assistant Professor of Rabbis at the University of Wisconsin-Madison. For the Spring 2009 semester he moved to Cambridge, Mass., to serve as a Starr Fellow at Harvard University.



2001

DEOGRATIAS NIYIZONKIZA

“Hell in paradise” is Deo Niyizonkiza’s description of his home country of Burundi, which was named the world’s poorest country by the World Bank in 2006. A place of striking natural beauty, Burundi has endured colonization, decades of misrule by dictators, and, most recently, a 13-year civil war between Hutus and Tutsis that, by its conclusion, had resulted in over 300,000 deaths and the displacement of nearly a million Burundians. The war also had disastrous effects for the country’s economy, and over half of the population now lives on less than a dollar a day. According to the World Health Organization’s latest figures, the average life expectancy for a woman is 47; for a man, 42.

Following the 2006 ceasefire, however, a few bright spots have emerged—perhaps none more encouraging than Village Health Works, a health center that Deo founded in his hometown, the rural village of Kigutu, in 2005. When he left 11 years earlier, fleeing the civil war, Deo had no idea if he would ever return, or see his family again. “We were separated when the war started,” he says. “I had no idea where they were. It’s one of those situations where it’s every man for himself. The people with me, we were all just running away.”

Deo found his way to New York via Rwanda and Paris and wound up homeless on the streets of Harlem. Through the intercession of some new friends a family adopted him as a surrogate son, and he worked a series of odd jobs and delivered groceries to chip in. “Working 15 hours a day, or even being homeless, I didn’t feel that it was that bad, given what I had just come from,” he says.

In his spare time he studied English and eventually enrolled in Columbia’s American

Language Program before applying to the School of General Studies. At GS he majored in philosophy and took premed courses. After graduation, he attended the Harvard School of Public Health, where he connected with Dr. Paul Farmer, one of the founders of Partners in Health, a public health organization known for its community-based approach. Deo began to work with Partners in Health in Haiti and, later, Rwanda, Burundi’s northern neighbor. “I was the only person in the group who knew the language and culture, and how to talk to patients and bring them to the clinic,” he says.

It was during a trip across the border to visit his family that the seed for Village Health Works was planted. “I knew that the country was miserable but had no idea that it was so bad,” he says. “It deeply affected me.” Citing a 2005 World Health Organization report, Deo notes that the total expenditure on health in Burundi is only 3 percent of its GDP, which in 2004 amounted to less than \$20 per person. On average there is one doctor for every 34,000 inhabitants (the U.S. figure is 192 for the same number of citizens), and most hospitals lack even the most rudimentary equipment; many have even become de facto prisons, where armed guards detain patients unable to pay their medical bills—a direct result, Deo argues, of the user-fee policies set by the World Bank and International Monetary Fund, which require countries accepting their aid to charge even their poorest citizens for services like health and education. As a result it is not surprising that many impoverished Burundians turn to traditional folk medicine practitioners, who rarely alleviate and often exacerbate their conditions.

Clearly a new model was needed. After consultation with Dr. Farmer and his colleagues at Partners in Health, Deo founded Village Health Works, foregrounding the idea of community partnership in the center’s



name. Three years later, the center is an unqualified success, treating more than 16,000 patients in just its first nine months.

Twenty-two local women sit on a steering committee, and a group of former soldiers are building roads and bridges to connect the center to the rest of the country; after observing Village Health Works, Dr. Farmer, recipient of a MacArthur “genius grant” and the Conrad Hilton Humanitarian Prize, found “an unparalleled level of community participation.”

Of course much still remains to be done. Already demand for services outstrips the center’s capabilities: maternity and pediatric wards are sorely needed, as is an ambulance. Deo hopes to be able to expand the center into a full-fledged hospital and splits his time between Burundi and the United States, where he raises funds and works to forge connections with universities and other institutions. But Village Health Works—which some Burundians refer to, only half in jest, as “America”—has already brought a new spirit of hope to the country. “For so many children born during the war, all they know is misery, pain, and blood,” Deo says. “It’s such a wonderful thing to see people kept apart for so long because of ethnic divisions coming together. Burundi is a place where there’s been no shortage of war, no shortage of misery—but it’s a perfect place where people who really want to do good can make a huge positive and lasting impact.”



With a grant from the Puffin Foundation, **RENÉE E. D’Aoust** is currently completing *Travels with Truffle: A Canine Tour of America*. D’Aoust was also awarded a 2008 National Endowment for the Arts Journalism Institute for Dance Criticism Fellowship at the American Dance Festival. She received “Notable Essay” mentions in *Best American Essays* (2006 & 2007) and won second place in the 2007 essay contest sponsored by New Letters. Recent publications include *Cadillac Cicatrix*, *Open Face Sandwich*, *Redwood Coast Review*, and *Reading Dance*, edited by Robert Gottlieb (Pantheon 2008).



2002

STEVE HOFSTETTER’s new album, *The Dark Side of the Room*, is available in stores or may be downloaded from his website (www.stevehofstetter.com), on a pay-what-you-want basis. In August he made his late-night TV debut on the *Late Late Show with Craig Ferguson*. In March he earned his first byline for the *New York Times*, with a humor column about Project Franchise, an initiative that would allow fans to collectively own a professional sports team.

KEVIN ERIC LANEY was featured in a University ad campaign. A lifetime Harlem resident, he has been employed at Columbia for 18 years and is currently an administrative assistant at



2007

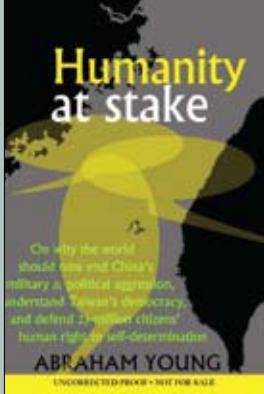
Abraham Young

Postbaccalaureate Premedical alumnus Abraham Young recently released a book entitled, *Humanity at Stake: On why the world should now end China's military & political aggression, understand Taiwan's democracy, and defend 23 million citizens' human right to self-determination*. Young's book exposes China's threat to human rights and reviews the misconceptions about Taiwan. Set in a bookstore, *Humanity at Stake* follows a real-life conversation between three young men who are American, Chinese, and Taiwanese. The dialogue highlights beliefs about the tumultuous relationship between China and Taiwan held by each of the young men.

Humanity at Stake is Young's first book, and its publishing is part of a larger effort to further The Humanity at Stake Project, an organization whose mission is "to stand against China's missiles, and to stand with Taiwan's democracy and self-determination." According to Young, "the book has led to a grassroots campaign to educate and mobilize the American public about the Taiwan cause."

Humanity at Stake is available for purchase online through Amazon.com and on the book's website, HumanityAtStake.com. One dollar of every purchase will be donated to Human Rights Watch, a nonprofit organization dedicated to protecting human rights worldwide.

Young wrote his book during his glide year in the Postbaccalaureate Premedical Program, and he is currently a first-year medical student at SUNY Downstate College of Medicine.



new business venture 18 stories below the streets of Moscow—a renovated, pre-Stalin bunker that now hosts tours, cocktail parties, and concerts in over 75,000 square feet of tunnels.

2006

ERICH ERVING displayed a series of prints incorporating erotic imagery and the Polari translation of the King James Bible in the 4th annual Harlem Open Artist's Studio Tour at the studio of Noreen Dean Dresser.

2007

EMILY BELLI is a development writer at Bennington College. She remains active in the world of poetry, and her work can be found in the *Spoon River Poetry Review*, the *Iodine Poetry Journal*, the *Columbia Review*, the *Poetry Salzburg Review*, *Absinthe: New European Writing*, and *International Poetry Review*. She is one of the founders of *Fawlt Magazine*, an online literary journal that devotes each issue to a different human fault (www.fawltmag.com).

TORAH BONTRAGER was recently interviewed about her escape from a restrictive Old Order Amish community by Timothy Ferriss, author of *The 4-Hour Workweek*. The interview appears on his blog, www.fourhourworkweek.com/blog. Torah is currently working on a book about her experience in addition to running the organization she founded, TKB Ventures, an opportunity agency that works to connect individuals, businesses, and organizations in mutually beneficial situations.



DAVID FRIEDLANDER has launched a monthly event series called Lucid NYC. The events find their inspiration in such conferences as TED, EG, Pop!Tech, as well as the symposia and lectures Mr. Friedlander attended during his time at Columbia. He wanted to create a similar intellectual and altruistic energy in a social, informal, ongoing basis (he affectionately calls it "a nightclub for nerdy do-gooders"). The events are anchored by an hour of 12-minute presentations; speaker topics range from futurist architecture to minimalist guitar to how to market in the age of non-consumerism. The rest of the evening is devoted to mixing with like minds—other people who think watching lectures with a glass of wine constitutes a perfect night out. For more information, visit www.lucidnyc.com, or email David at dfriedlander@lucidnyc.com.

Correction

An alumni note in the Spring 2008 edition of *The Owl* misstated the job title of Shanna Hocking '01. She is Director of Leadership Gifts for the University of Alabama.

IN MEMORIAM

RICHARD ABOUCHAR '53

Richard Abouchar passed away in November 2007. He earned a degree in economics from GS, then served in the Army from 1953 to 1955, spending most of his time in Korea. After his tour of duty ended, he worked toward a PhD in economics at New York University before joining J. Abouchar and Sons, a family business founded by his father Joseph in 1927. He served as president until the firm was sold in 1999.

JERRY FORD '57

Jerry Ford, co-founder of Ford Models, passed away in August. With his wife Eileen, Ford helped transform modeling from a somewhat disreputable, largely ad hoc assortment of individual jobs into a professionally run industry. The pre-eminent New York modeling agency for three decades and still one of the top agencies today, Ford Models was responsible for many of the industry's most significant innovations. Ford popularized the voucher system, in which an agency guaranteed its models' earnings, paying them on a weekly basis (previously models often waited long periods, even years, for payment). Ford was also the first agency to branch out into Europe, and, in the 1970s, secured the first exclusive brand contract (Lauren Hutton for Revlon), which helped precipitate the wave of escalating fees that crested in the early 1990s. Most significantly, however, the Fords pioneered a family approach to modeling, with many of their models staying in the family's East Side townhouse. "A generation of mothers and girls owe [the Fords] a debt," Carmen Dell'Orefice, a Ford model for six decades, is quoted as saying in Michael Gross's book *Model: The Ugly Business of Beautiful Women*, which terms the Fords the "moral exemplars of modeling." Born in New Orleans, Jerry Ford played football at Notre Dame before World War II intervened; he attended the US Naval Reserve Midshipmen School of New York, which moved to Columbia in 1942, and returned after the war to study accounting. He attended classes while running the agency, earning a B.S. in 1957 and an M.B.A. from the Business School in 1980.

EZRA MINTZ '59

Ezra Mintz, entrepreneur and philanthropist, passed away in March 2008. Born in the Bronx in 1932, Ezra attended DeWitt Clinton High School but dropped out to join the Navy at the age of 16. Upon returning from service, he earned his G.E.D. and enrolled at the School of General Studies, where he studied economics. After graduating he worked for Goldman Sachs and moved to Atlanta in 1962, working as a financial consultant. In 1981 he founded Colorgraphic Communications, a computer company that pioneered the use of multi screen display. He ran the company for two decades without being computer-literate and supported many Atlanta cultural institutions, as well as the Smithsonian and the Simon Wiesenthal Center, and endowed the Fannie Mintz Scholarship for Economics at GS, honoring his mother.

STEWART MOTT '61

Stewart Mott, a self-described "avant-garde philanthropist," passed away in June. He founded the first branch of Planned Parenthood in Flint, Mich., heavily bankrolled the Presidential campaigns of Eugene McCarthy and George McGovern, and was included on Richard Nixon's enemies list.



Known for his eccentricities—such as living on a Chinese junk and cultivating a miniature farm on the roof of his Manhattan apartment building—Mott was born in Flint in 1937. His father, Charles Mott, was a director of General Motors for 60 years, as well as its largest individual shareholder; throughout the '60s Stewart Mott famously drove a red Volkswagen with yellow flower decals and protested GM's tacit support of the Vietnam War. After three years at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, where he studied engineering, he hitchhiked around the world for a year and subsequently enrolled at the School of General Studies. He earned degrees in business administration and comparative literature and was elected to Phi Beta Kappa. He endowed the Harold Pagliaro Scholarship at GS, honoring one of his former literature professors.

MARGARET RIPPERGER MILBRATH '74

Margaret Ripperger Milbrath passed away in January 2008. She grew up in Brooklyn Heights and married Robert Milbrath, her husband of 68 years, in Buenos Aires, Argentina, one of the many Latin American locales in which they lived. A former dancer with the Martha Graham Dance Company, she also worked as sculptor in clay and stone and was an active member of Connecticut's Inland Wetlands Committee and the Colonial Dames of America. Four years after her daughter, Dr. Susan M. Pelliza '70, graduated from GS, Margaret graduated *magna cum laude* with a degree in Spanish studies.

KATE McREYNOLDS '85

Kate McReynolds, a writer on youth and educational issues, passed away in September. While earning a PhD in clinical psychology from the City University of New York, she served as a lecturer and was "widely regarded as one of the most inspiring teachers in the department and college," according to former department chair William Crain. She served as the director of the City College Gateway Academy, the college's orientation and advising center from 2005-2006. A regular contributor to the journal *Encounter: Education for Meaning and Social Justice*, she was named its associate editor in 2006. Born in Kansas City, Mo., she graduated *magna cum laude* and was elected to Phi Beta Kappa.

ALUMNI REUNION WEEKEND 2009

GENERAL STUDIES ALUMNI
OF CLASS YEARS ENDING IN 9 AND 4
ARE INVITED TO
ALUMNI REUNION WEEKEND
JUNE 5 – 7, 2009

GS alumni will participate alongside Columbia College, Barnard College, and Engineering alumni in a weekend of activities.

For more information, contact Erich Erving '06, assistant director for alumni relations, at ebe2001@columbia.edu or (212) 851-7485.



the Harriman Institute of the School of International and Public Affairs.

The Wackness, a film produced by **FELIPE MARINO** and starring former GS student Famke Janssen, received the Audience Award for dramatic films at the Sundance Film Festival in January 2008. The film was also screened at the Tribeca Film Festival and released commercially in July 2008.

2003

DANA RUTTENBERG performed in "Ladies' Night" at the Tmuna Theater in Tel Aviv in June 2008. A dancer and choreographer, she was artistic director of the New York dance troupe The Red Hill Project before returning to Israel.

LEILANI JOHNSON was recently in Kenya, working to foster peaceful relations between warring factions. She also worked on the film *Pray the Devil Back to Hell*, which chronicles the women's peace movement in Liberia. The film won the Best Documentary award at the 2008 Tribeca Film Festival and was shown around the world on International Women's Day.

2005

On July 12, NBC Nightly News aired "What Lies Beneath," a human interest segment reported by **YONATAN POMRENZE** regarding a



ANTHONY CARTER grew up in a large family in inner-city Newark, N.J. After high school, he became a licensed professional electrician and served as foreman to a team of electricians who restored rail service to lower Manhattan after the September 11 attacks. Prior to attending GS, Anthony attended Union County Community College. Throughout his tenure at GS, Anthony was a Program for Academic Leadership and Service Scholar. He volunteered with the General Studies Student Council and provided a variety of outreach to the Harlem community. Carter, a father of two, is enrolled at Harvard University Graduate School of Education in pursuit of a master's degree. In the future, he would like to form an educational institution that cultivates a positive environment for underprivileged youth.



LYNDON PARK emigrated from Korea to Los Angeles when he was 10 years old. Prior to attending GS, he was heavily involved in screenwriting and attended Johns Hopkins University. At GS, Lyndon founded a group called the Blue Notebooks, which hosts panel discussions with literary figures and artists. Lyndon and his wife also had two daughters while he was a full-time student. Lyndon plans to take a year off to finish his novel, and apply for law school. He would like to study international law at Columbia and eventually teach.



One evening prior to starting classes at NYU, **MIA RAMOS** was assaulted after leaving her job at a NYC Footlocker store. Following the assault, she suffered from depression and posttraumatic stress disorder. After being involved with the criminal investigation, Mia shared her story on ABC's *The View* and in

Teen People magazine. Mia eventually returned to school and attended Orange County Community College in Newburgh, N.Y. where she became very involved in Phi Theta Kappa, an honor society for community college students, as an officer of her local chapter, as well as on the national and international level. During her tenure at GS, Mia stayed involved with Phi Theta Kappa, and eventually founded the Columbia University Phi Theta Kappa Alumni Association, the first senior chapter of Phi Theta Kappa in the Ivy League. Additionally, she was very involved in the community through NYCares, and she also held a job at Columbia Law School. Mia is taking a year off while she applies to law school. She would like to attend George Washington University to study public interest law.



Born in New Hampshire into a working class, Irish-Catholic family, **THOMAS REARDON** is one of 18 children. As a teenager he was a math wiz who took master's level courses at MIT. After high school he moved to North Carolina where he met Bill Gates through a social contact—an introduction that led to an eight-year tenure with Microsoft. While working on Windows 95, Reardon conceptualized the idea for Microsoft Internet Explorer, which led him to direct the team that built the web browser. As a result, he is credited as the main creator of Internet Explorer and has been hailed as the architect of Microsoft's involvement in internet and web technologies. In his role on the World Wide Web Consortium (W3C), he has been instrumental in the development of programming tools XML and CSS. Consequently, he holds six U.S. patents. During a sabbatical from the technology world, a



lunch meeting with physicist Freeman Dyson inspired Thomas to return to school to study classics. Thomas is enrolled at Duke University in a doctoral program in neuroscience.

In 1994, **AKILLAH WALI**, originally from rural central Florida, enrolled at Florida State University, but decided she was not yet ready for college. She decided to join the U.S. Army where she served as a chaplain assistant for five and half years. After she left the military, Akillah moved to California and held positions working with youth at the YMCA and at a local high school. As a GS student, Akillah was a Program for Academic Leadership and Service Scholar, and took part in a variety of volunteer projects through NY Cares, the Star Learning Center and Girls on the Run. Akillah is taking a year off of school, but plans to apply for master's programs in either public or educational policy.



After serving the FDNY for more than 20 years, **DAVID DRURY** set his retirement date for September 12, 2001 with plans to begin his studies at GS. After the Sept. 11 attacks, Dave gave up his plans for an education to help with rescue efforts with FDNY Rescue Company 3 at the World Trade Center. Determined to return to school, in 2004 he re-enrolled at GS. In 1998, he remarried someone who he calls "the most incredible woman I've ever met," but she passed away suddenly during final exam week in 2006. Throughout his tenure at GS, Dave assisted the GS Office of Admissions as a tour guide for prospective students and student-taught at a Bronx high school. A father of three and grandfather of one, Dave is enrolled at St. John's College in Santa Fe, N.M. in pursuit of a master's of liberal arts.



At 16 years old, **NAOMI SOLOMON** left high school, received her high school equivalency and set off to train for a professional ballet career in London. Naomi's enrollment in the Central School of Ballet kick-started a five-year career where she performed throughout England, Ireland, Scotland and the U.S. In 2001, after a 15-year break in her education and much success as a professional dancer, Naomi enrolled at GS where she studied abroad in Paris through the Reid Hall program and continued to dance as a part of the Adam Miller Dance Project. After graduating in May, Naomi began working as a paralegal at the top New York City law firm, Skadden, Arps, Slate, Meagher & Flom LLP and Affiliates. In the future, Naomi plans to continue her education and work towards a doctorate in comparative literature.



In 1996, **DONALD TAYLOR'S** life was spinning out of control. Shortly before his graduation from high school, Donald's father beat him so badly he ran away and took to the streets. Donald pulled the pieces of his life together by employing his strong work-ethic and drive to overcome adversity. While working at Malcolm X Community College, his supervisor said she liked his creative writing and recommended he apply to GS. After one rejection, and focused work to strengthen his credentials, Donald was accepted to GS, and worked five jobs simultaneously to pay his expenses. Things changed when he was offered the Program for Academic Leadership and Service scholarship (PALS); the scholarship enabled him to work only one job. During his tenure at GS, Donald became what he calls a "Malcomologist" through research he conducted under Professor Nahum Chandler, an expert on Malcom X. Donald was accepted to Eastern Illinois University and is pursuing a master's in history.



In 1981, one year after **INSAF ABDULLAH** immigrated to the United States from Palestine by way of Jordan, she gave birth to her first and only child, a daughter named **ZAYNAB**. After Zaynab was grown, Insaf decided to enroll at GS part-time while continuing to run her insurance business full-time. Shortly thereafter, Zaynab, who worked with her mother in the family business, also enrolled at GS. In May, both Insaf, a political science major, and Zaynab, a Middle East studies major, crossed the stage together at the 2008 GS Class Day. Today Insaf continues to run her insurance business and, in the future, would like to continue her education at SIPA. Zaynab, who was recently married, moved to the Middle East to be with her husband.



Stephen Harris

On January 4, 2008, Stephen Harris boarded a plane crammed with 60 suitcases full of medical supplies and 24 Mount Sinai doctors, nurses, and medical students bound for a medical mission to Liberia. As a part of the mission, Harris spent two weeks filming more than 140 life-threatening surgeries in the city of Monrovia and Bong County, Liberia under some of the most dyer conditions.



Stephen Harris (third from left) and the Mount Sinai medical team pause to pose for a photo with the Liberian President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf (second from right).

In Monrovia, Harris filmed the medical team at John F. Kennedy Memorial Hospital; once the premier hospital in West Africa it was destroyed during the 14-year civil war. Partially rebuilt, the hospital's conditions were still dire—no electricity from 12-6 p.m. daily, surgeries performed in almost complete darkness, and medical instruments sterilized over open fire.

"The needs were so great, and doctors kept running out of IV fluids and blood for surgeries. Instead of giving up, doctors would literally empty their pockets to pay for more units of blood and IVs. It was truly a labor of love," Harris said.

In Bong County, Harris filmed the medical team at the Phebe Clinic where only five years earlier more than 160 doctors were killed in a massacre during the civil war. The hospital had no electricity or running water and most of the surgeries were related to fertility and gynecological issues. It was here that Harris had a realization of his own.

"I was filming all of these women having these radical hysterectomies, bladder reconstructions, and massive tumor removals, and I realized that, had there been more medical care, these surgeries would have been totally preventable—there are only about 38 doctors in Liberia caring for more than 2 million citizens. Although I knew I wanted to work with underserved communities, it was here I realized I wanted to study gynecological oncology," Harris said.

In January 2009, the film's crew minus Harris, who is a medical student at Mt. Sinai College of Medicine, did a follow-up on featured patients, including one patient who had a complete bladder reconstruction and who was later rejected by her village after the surgery. Upon completion, the film will be featured at the Tribeca Film Festival.



The Phebe Clinic in Bong County, Liberia.

Events CALENDAR

MARCH

March is Women's History Month.

12, THURSDAY

Women of GS: Business
New York, NY
6:30-8:30 p.m.

Sponsors: Columbia Alumni Association and the School of General Studies.

This evening we honor businesswomen with a panel discussion featuring alumnae who are at the vanguard of the business world. All are welcome.

26, THURSDAY

Women of GS: Arts
New York, NY
6:30-8:30 p.m.

Sponsors: Columbia Alumni Association and the School of General Studies.

This evening we honor women in the arts. Mix and mingle with writers, dancers, visual artists, singers, musicians, and performers. All are welcome.

28, SATURDAY

CAA: Columbia Community Outreach Day – National and International
New York City and other participating cities
9 a.m.-3 p.m.

Sponsors: Columbia Alumni Association and Columbia Community Outreach (CCO)

Columbia Outreach Day is a student-organized, student-run community service day designed to promote volunteerism. CAA and various school alumni offices and alumni regional clubs will participate to help bring an alumni service component to the day.

28, SATURDAY

Tenth Annual GS Gala
Low Rotunda, Low Memorial Library
9 p.m.-1 a.m.

Sponsors: Columbia Alumni Association & General Studies Student Council

Dessert, coffee, and cocktails will be served while you dance the night away with GS students, alumni, and friends. Tickets are available at <http://gslounge.com>

APRIL

26, SUNDAY

Health and Wellness Series: High Tea Luncheon at The Carlyle
New York, NY
1 p.m.-4 p.m.

Sponsors: Columbia Alumni Association

The CAA Health and Wellness Series launched in 2006 with the mission of connecting Columbia's alumni community with its leading doctors and researchers. Previous topics include autism, caring for aging parents, infectious diseases, and mental health.

30, THURSDAY

Perspectives on the President
New York, NY
4-6 p.m.

Sponsors: Columbia Alumni Association and the School of General Studies

What are the electoral politics that went into the change of administration? What is the role of mass media in policy representation? What is the connection between political psychology and foreign policy? Professors Robert Shapiro and Robert Erikson will be discussing perspectives on President Obama and his election. Come hear the opinions of these two experts on public opinion and policy as they discuss issues of political behavior, political leadership, and the presidency.

MAY

15, FRIDAY

Postbaccalaureate Premedical Program Certificate Ceremony
Location: TBA
5-6:30 p.m.
Join GS as it celebrates the newest class of Postbac alumni.

18, MONDAY

GS Class Day
South Lawn, Morningside Campus
5-6:30 p.m.
All alumni are encouraged to come and celebrate the Class of 2009.

20, WEDNESDAY

Columbia University's 255th Commencement
Low Plaza, Morningside Campus
10:30 a.m.

JUNE

5-7, FRIDAY-SUNDAY

Reunion Weekend
Celebrate and reconnect with classmates and friends from your graduating class. Alumni with graduation years ending in 4 and 9 are invited back to campus for a fun-filled weekend of events. Contact Sheila Brogan-Testa, sab143@columbia.edu, for information about serving on the Reunion Committee.

ONGOING SERIES

Columbia Literary Society
606 Lewisohn Hall
4-5:45 p.m.

Sponsors: School of General Studies and Columbia Alumni Association

The CLS meets monthly on Sundays in Lewisohn Hall to hold intellectually stimulating discussion on relevant literary works. For further information, email TheLeoSchmidt@msn.com. Refreshments served. Donations of \$5.00 are appreciated. Open to all.

March 30 *Billiards at Half-Past Nine* by Heinrich Boll

April 26 *A Handful of Dust* by Evelyn Waugh

May 17 *A Doll's House* by Henrik Ibsen

Columbia Alumni Arts League (CAAL)

The Arts Initiative at Columbia University was created in 2004 by President Bollinger to re-invent the role of the arts in the University, and the University's role in the arts. This effort now spans the campus, unconstrained by venue, department, field, or program, and reaches out into a diverse international culture. CAAL plays a vital role to share this resource with alumni. To join, visit CAAL online at www.cuarts.com/membership, or sign up in person at an event.

Friday, March 13 *Brazilian Stories* with Paquito D'Rivera

Tuesday, March 24 London Symphony Orchestra conducted by Valery Gergiev

Tuesday, March 31 Yo-Yo Ma, Emanuel Ax, and Itzhak Perlman

Alumni Travel Study Program

The Alumni Travel Study Program allows Columbia alumni to combine learning and pleasure through domestic and international travel. The travel-study experience is often enriched by the participation of Columbia faculty members. For more information on trips, visit http://alumni.columbia.edu/attend/s4_1.html.

March 20-April 3 *South Africa by Sea* with Professor Marcia Wright

May 28-June 8 *Hidden Treasures of Eastern Europe* with guest lecturer Dr. Charles King

June 22-July 4 *Baltic Sea and the Norwegian Fjords* with Professor John Micgiel

August 1-8 *The Great Lakes: A Voyage through North America's Magnificent Inland Sea* with Professor Kenneth Jackson

October 24-November 11 *North Africa's Mediterranean Coast through the Centuries* with Dean Peter Awn

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Remembering Columbia's Fallen

On December 12, 2008 Columbia University dedicated a memorial to Columbians who lost their lives in the military service of our nation. The initiative to create the memorial and the website that complements it gained new momentum when past and present members of the U.S. Military Veterans of Columbia University (MilVets), an on-campus student group, approached Provost Alan Brinkley about the project in 2007. Pictured here are current MilVets board members Peter S. Kim '09, Erika Gallegos '09, Angel Quiles '10, and Sean O'Keefe '10.

To learn more about the memorial visit www.warmemorial.columbia.edu. (Photo: Char Smullyan)

