Opinions & Expressions

President Schapiro seeks change in higher education. … Peter Britton ’56 decries mountaintop removal. … Letters from readers.

Scene & Herd

News of Williams and beyond.

Life of the Mind

Math Prof. Edward Burger explores creativity. … Alex Fradkin ’57 on Wallace Stegner and the West. … Books and more.

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Ephvolution
A century of Class Notes explains the unique anthropology of Williams College.

Safeguarding Our Schools
Former Secret Service psychologist Marisa Randazzo ’89 discusses the nature of school violence and how to prevent it.

The View From Up Here
An interview with President Morty Schapiro at the successful close of The Williams Campaign.

Sweet
Who would have thought planning a location to bake honeybuns would be key to Paresky Center’s design? Pretty much any Eph.

On the cover
Math Prof. and Gaudino Scholar Edward Burger’s “What I Didn’t See” (2008). Life lessons hidden throughout the Williams seal are a metaphor for the Williams experience.
A Spirit of Change

The spirit of change sweeping through our social, cultural, political and economic institutions needs to include higher education as well.

U.S. higher education may be the strongest in the world, but to help produce the future leaders we need and to secure our economic future, it must adapt to new realities.

The biggest challenge is posed by swift changes in the college-aged population. The number of students from communities who traditionally attend college is dropping, while the fastest-growing segment is composed of students from families and communities with no experience of college—how to choose one, how to apply, how to pay and how to thrive once there. Many are from low-income families; many are children of immigrants.

America mostly did well in absorbing previous waves of new populations. But back then a high-school education was enough to lift them into the middle class; now they need college. To an alarming degree, though, our higher education system doesn’t seek out these students, isn’t affordable for them and fails to offer the academic and personal support they need to succeed once on campus.

Both government and individual institutions have roles to play in turning things around.

By word and example, President Obama can persuade members of these communities that they can attain higher education. Congress can make the federal financial aid system easier to understand and generally more supportive of low-income students. State governments, even as budgets tighten, can put a priority on making their campuses more affordable for those in need.

At the same time, colleges and universities must adapt, often in ways counter to the instinct to pursue higher institutional rankings and to boast about ever-rising SAT scores, falling admission rates and the like. Almost every useful step involves suppressing institutional self-interest for a broader public good. For instance, merit aid can enhance the status of a college or university at least in the short run, but—since aid dollars are finite and merit awards often go to students who would attend college anyway—the overall result is usually less affordability for low-income students. The many such students who have been under-prepared bring lower test scores. Meanwhile, the special support they need while on campus costs institutions money.

In tough financial times it will be even harder for schools to look beyond their narrow institutional interests. But both the mission of every nonprofit college and university and the broad support that taxpayers provide for higher education, public and private, compel us to pursue the social good.

For our part, Williams has made great strides in recent years. Almost one-third of the members of the Class of 2012 identify themselves as U.S. students of color. Almost one-third have at least one parent without a bachelor’s degree. And over the last 10 years the number of students who qualify for grant aid that covers at least three-quarters of the cost of attendance has grown from one in 20 to one in five. At the same time, we’ve expanded support services for these students so that their experience at the College can better mirror that of students from backgrounds more traditional for Williams.

It’s clear, though, that we can do more to find such students, convince them that they can afford Williams and make sure that we have in place the programs they need to take full advantage of what the College offers. If we allow current financial challenges to keep us from these goals, we will be doing a great disservice to our wonderful college.

U.S. higher education has long been an engine for social mobility. But to remain so it will have to adapt, and fairly quickly, to the new social and economic realities, and Williams needs to be at the forefront of this effort.

—Morty Schapiro
The account by Caroline Cgetti ’06 of her Olympic Trials marathon experience (“Quite the Crowd,” January 2009) was a delight on two counts: She writes beautifully; and she captures—with all the power of a simple story, well told—the extraordinary nature of the bond among graduates of Williams. Thanks to her and also to Ernie Imhoff ’59, whose two contributions to the January issue (“Victory at Sea” and a letter to the editor) provided fascinating glimpses into the history of my college and my hometown.

—Dennis O’Shea ’77, Baltimore, Md.

Six years ago, my firm designed a memorial to Liberty Ships and the South Portland, Maine, shipyard that built 266 of them during WWII. Our extensive research included visits to both remaining ships, the SS John W. Brown (while in dry dock in Toledo, Ohio) and the SS Jeremiah O’Brien in San Francisco, but I had not heard of the SS Williams Victory until seeing the magazine. I hope it is no more than a coincidence that I graduated from Williams in 1969, the year the ship was scrapped.

—Richard Renner ’69, Portland, Maine

Reading the January issue I was struck by the 1963 photo of Robert McNamara at Williams to address the graduating class (“Covering a Century”). Sadly, McNamara, one of the “whiz kids” of the Kennedy administration, well educated, genius IQ, a former brilliant executive, was soon to become one of the key charlatans of the Vietnam War. Whatever McNamara told the graduates that year, better advice might have been: Beware of intelligence without wisdom, brilliance without honesty, hubris without introspection. And when you’re emperor, always listen to what that slave behind you keeps whispering in your ear.

—Richard Eggers ’60, Niwot, Colo.

That’s me on the stern of the six-man bike in the picture just to the left of the very first Alumni Review cover (“Covering a Century”). Hank Flynt ’44 owns the bike and is the steersman. The rest of the members of The Berkshire County Wheelmen were Ted Emerson ’43 (#2), George Lawrence ’43 (#3), Tom Leary ’43 (#4) and Bill Rosell ’45 (power seat).

We had to keep all our pedaling in concert. There was no coaster brake, and we had to slow down by carefully riding the pedal on the return upstroke. We took the bike to Northampton for a Smith College orientation outing at Look Park in August 1942 by putting it in the baggage car of the Boston & Maine passenger train headed east. We unloaded in Greenfield, pedaled south on U.S. Route 5 and were stopped by a nifty state cop who couldn’t believe what he saw. When we threw a chain, he got us help from the mechanic at the police barracks so we could continue on.

We arrived at a little hilltop overlooking hundreds of Smith girls, and on our way down a substitute #4 man, Lon Hill ’43, lifted his feet off the pedals and stuck his legs out, kicking off his chain and eliminating our braking power. We hurtled down the slope, sped wobbling over the bridge and came to a horrendous cropper ass over tea kettle! What an entrance!

We did better riding in parades and on the track at football games. One of our honorary members was Anne Baxter (Phinney Baxter’s ’14 wife), who was a great sport and a very good crew member.

—Malcolm MacGruer ’43, Madison, Conn.
Years ago when I heard “West Virginia” I would think coal, hillbillies and bluegrass music, mystery, mountains and moonshine, Daniel Boone, Homer Hickam and basketball’s Jerry West.

Not anymore. Now I think mountaintop removal, the horrifying destruction of 300-million-year-old hills to get black gold in the cheapest, fastest way. You must fly low over the area to grasp what is happening: total devastation of some 500 mountains.

Seven years ago I’d driven through West Virginia to check out Cabin Creek, the home of the hoops legend. My map indicated a road south to the town of Dorothy and hence to Nashville. I’d heard of mountaintop removal and would keep an eye out for it.

Then came Kayford Mountain. The road I followed back then, now gone, turned to dirt, began climbing and became treacherous. Through the foliage came sounds of construction, I thought, and glimpses of rocks and hillsides stripped bare. Mountaintop removal.

Scattered mentions kept that memory alive. In 2005 I called a Mountaineer lawyer. He put me on to the Ohio Valley Environmental Coalition, which sent me to a remarkable woman whose home place in Bob White was under siege. Maria’s family lives at the foot of a hollow across a stream and a railroad track. One-hundred-car coal trains pass a half dozen times a day. Up the hollow, ammonium nitrate/fuel oil blasts send dust and flyrock onto her property. A mountaintop in view slowly disappears. Occasional floods of blackwater wash out her stream, poison her water, deplete her land.

She told me of her Cherokee ancestor fleeing the Trail of Tears in the 1830s to hide in a West Virginia hollow. Of her grandfather who mined coal underground and built the house she lives in. Of her father, who died in an ATV accident back up the hollow because of a trail aborted by mountaintop coal operators. And she told me of the constant fear and dread that hovers over all these little coal towns south of Charleston. Fear of losing one’s limbs or lungs or life in the mines. Fear of disease from air or water. And dread of uncontrollable blackwater floods like the ones in Buffalo Creek and Aberfan that together killed 269 people, mostly children.

Maria caused me to recall my part in all of this. In 1992 I was researching a story on “clean coal.” I went to the United Nations to scope out the world situation. An interview with Earth Summit Secretary-General Maurice Strong, a Canadian energy man, left me with one quote ringing in my ears. “The Cold War is over; the coal wars are just beginning.” A longtime journalist, I had to write.


The result of this devastation is chaos and death. But this is big business, and it runs the state. The only hope for the future is the law. And there’s the rub.

Maria has become a coal community organizer and recently a spokeswoman for the lawsuit to stop the operation behind her hollow. Coal-originated floods washed out her bridge; those responsible called it an “act of God.” But the plaintiffs won a temporary restraining order against the Callisto Surface Mine. And Maria, who became the scapegoat for the 39 laid-off workers, was labeled by their bosses an “anti-coal activist.” She’s not. She’s for justice and the environment and truth.

Since the federal judge’s ruling, overt threats—“sometimes houses just catch on fire and people die in them”—and other hostile acts have caused her to hire guards for her house and kids. Now she’s building a fence around her property.

She wears a bulletproof vest while doing housework. She has a trained guard dog. The FBI is investigating the threats. And Maria continues to fight.

The Coal Wars have, indeed, begun.

Peter Britton ’56 has been a freelance writer since 1960. He is currently at work on a “coalback/bluegrass” musical called HollowGirl concerning mountaintop removal. The music can be sampled by doing a Web search of “Peter Britton” or “CoZal Train to Amos,” or by visiting CDbaby.com.
CLAIMING WILLIAMS DAY ENGAGES CAMPUS

It was a daunting schedule: 26 lectures, forums and performances taking place over the course of 12 hours, all exploring the theme “Examining privilege, building community” during Claiming Williams Day on Feb. 5. But the campus community responded in droves, from the athletes who ended practice early for a 9:30 a.m. lecture by sports guru Peter Roby to dining services staff who came out en masse for the standing-room-only talk by activist writer Tim Wise.

Claiming Williams Day brought speakers, facilitators and performers from all over the country to Williams for a frank discussion about privilege, leadership and inclusiveness. It was also the start of what many hope will be an ongoing and sustained dialogue campus-wide.

The idea for the jam-packed day, for which classes and other campus activities were canceled or rescheduled, evolved over the past year in response to an incident of derogatory graffiti in Williams Hall E last February, something writer Dorothy Allison noted in her talk, “Making Home Among Strangers,” which packed the ’62 Center’s MainStage. “Let us be grateful for the act of screwing up,” she said. “You have to give each other permission to screw up and remake.”

PRESIDENTIAL SEARCH UNDER WAY

Following President Schapiro’s announcement in December that he would move to the presidency of Northwestern University this summer, the Williams Board of Trustees has formed a Presidential Search Committee. Its 16 members (trustees, faculty, staff, students and alumni) are charged with recommending a short list of finalists to the board, which will make the appointment.

To support the process, the committee retained the services of the well-known international search firm Isaacson, Miller.

“The first step has been to hear from as broad a cross-section as possible of faculty, staff, students, alumni and parents,” says Greg Avis ’80, who chairs both the search committee and the Executive

They Said:


“You come to college to be among people who are remaking themselves. … You come to this place where you are not safe but have to pretend every day to be so.” — Dorothy Allison, award-winning author, feminist and editor of early lesbian and gay journals, in her talk “Making Home Among Strangers.”

“One of the principal difficulties that white people have with discussing race is worrying about the language that might pop out of them—how to talk about these things—and worrying ‘What will people think?’” — Peggy Diggs, former Williams studio art lecturer, on her public art project “Face,” which involved the creation and distribution across campus of more than 35,000 brown napkins printed with messages about race during the week following Claiming Williams Day. Record, 2.11.09

“A community made up of leaders can move forward. It will be enriched by communication, empathy, fairness, consistency, openness and kindness.” — Peter Roby, Northeastern University athletics director and director of the university's Center for the Study of Sport in Society, during his talk “Diversity and the Appreciation of Difference in 21st Century Leadership.”

“The words ‘black’ or ‘feminist’ or ‘immigrant’ or ‘lesbian’ might intimidate on paper, but when you meet me, I’m just a down-to-earth poet with a pocket full of stories to tell. I feel collective laughter is a bridge to collective understanding, so I lace the painful truths with humor.” — Lenelle Moïse, performance artist and self-proclaimed “culturally hyphenated promosexual poet,” on her solo show “Womb-Words, Thirsting.” Record, 2.11.09
TAConIC GETS A FACE-LIFT

The College’s historic Taconic Golf Course is getting a face-lift, in part to return it to the form it was given by architects Wayne Stiles and John Van Kleek in their original 1927 plans. Most of the work being done will be completed by late spring and includes felling trees, restoring bunkers, redefining the edges of greens and adjusting the width of fairways. The tees on a handful of holes are being rebuilt. And several fairway bunkers have been repositioned and a few new ones constructed in order to return the element of strategy to the longer tee-shot patterns in today’s game.

Taconic, which is operated on land leased from the College with special playing privileges for students, faculty, staff and alumni, has been widely covered in the nation’s golf publications and is 89th in Golfweek’s list of “The Classics.” For information on playing at Taconic, visit the club’s website at www.taconicgolf.com or call 413.458.3997 during the golfing season.

Committee of the Board of Trustees. “In addition to focus group meetings and open forums for those on campus, we have reached out to all alumni and parents, asking them to identify the issues they think Williams will have to deal with in the short and long run, the attributes they believe we should stress in evaluating nominees and the individuals they recommend we consider.”

This input guided the writing of a prospectus to describe the College at this point in its history and articulate the attributes the committee will value most in candidates.

The committee is operating on the possibility of having a new president in place by this summer. If at some point that seems unlikely, the board will make interim arrangements.

You can follow the progress of the search at www.williams.edu/admin/president/search.

TUTORIAL FUND HONORS FUQUA

One of John Foster’s ’80 few regrets about his Williams education was that he shied away from forming close relationships with his professors. But he fondly remembers Charlie Fuqua, who taught one of Foster’s first college classes, as “the man who introduced me to education at Williams in a generous and thoughtful way.”

And so, as part of a $1 million gift commitment to The Williams Campaign, Foster has chosen to celebrate that experience by endowing a tutorial fund named in Fuqua’s honor.

“I was an ill-prepared rookie who was learning quickly that the water at Williams can be deep,” Foster says of his time as one of only eight students in Fuqua’s survey of the poetry of Catullus and Propertius. “Had Charlie been of a mind to do it, he could have blown me away. Instead, I remember a man who loved his subject and infected those around him with it.”

Foster thus focused his gift on tutorials, which involve intensive weekly sessions between a professor and two students, because “there is no doubt in my mind that a relationship with the instructor is going to be formed. So if Williams is able to offer more tutorials, I want to support it.”

Fuqua, the new fund’s honoree and the Garfield Professor of Ancient Languages, emeritus, agrees. “And the very best part about John’s gift,” he adds, “is that it’s coming from a former student and is going to help current and future students.”

A DIAMOND OF AN ANNIVERSARY

The Ephs and Lord Jeffs will square off on May 3 for a scheduled league game commemorating the 150th anniversary of the first-ever collegiate baseball game. The 1 p.m. match-up, to be held at the original Wahconah Park site in Pittsfield, Mass., will be televised nationally on the ESPN-U network.

The weekend will also feature a free youth clinic and historical exhibition—both sponsored by the College Baseball.
RECREATIONAL READING

Williams students aren’t the only ones on campus with stacks of books at their bedsides. Here’s what faculty were reading during the long winter months in Billsville.

**Julie A. Cassiday,** professor of Russian and chair of German/Russian. *Anna Karenina* by Leo Tolstoy, because “I always find some new detail, insight or connection that makes [re]reading [it] fresh and exciting.”

**Charles B. Dew ’58,** Ephraim Williams Professor of American History. *Dreams from My Father* by Barack Obama: “The most fascinating autobiography ever penned by a president-to-be.”

**Karen Merrill,** dean of the college and professor of history. *Arctic Dreams* by Barry Lopez: “Essential reading for anyone engaged with environmental issues … and also deeply a book about human behavior and human choices.”

**Leyla Rouhi,** chair and professor of Romance languages. *Digging to America* by Anne Tyler: “A novel about the many intriguing ways in which people belong to family and country.”

Compiled by the Office of Public Affairs

Hall of Fame—as well as a special three-inning throwback game featuring Williams and Amherst alumni playing with vintage equipment and under the rules of that era.

The original game ended in a 73-32 Amherst victory after 25 innings. “That sounds like a football blowout score,” current Williams baseball coach Bill Barrale says with a laugh. “Hopefully, our pitching and fielding will be a little better than that.”

**“Kevin exemplifies what being a student-athlete at Williams is all about—excellence on and off the court. He will certainly leave the program better than how he found it, and I can’t imagine where we’d be without him.”**  
— Men’s basketball coach Mike Maker on guard Kevin Snyder ’09, who was named to the All-Academic District Second Team by ESPN the Magazine in February.

“*If Mika misses, it doesn’t faze her. She just keeps shooting. She’s a very steady player who doesn’t ever get too high or too low.*”

— Women’s basketball coach Pat Manning on guard Mika Peterman ’09, who on Feb. 6, during a game against Colby College, became the 12th player in the program’s history to reach the 1,000-point career milestone. As a first-year student, Peterman was teammates with four other women who hit the 1,000 career points.

“This team is so deep that we have been able to go undefeated a good portion of the time at less than full strength. Even though we have had some people sidelined at times, I would say this is the deepest and strongest team I have had in my 10 years at Williams.”

— Women’s swimming and diving coach Steve Kuster on the Ephs extending their dual-meet winning streak to 13 contests through an undefeated regular season.
Ephvolution

A century’s worth of Class Notes helps explain the unique anthropology of Williams alumni.

By Hugh Howard
Illustrations by Susan Farrington
The latest issue of *Williams People* arrives in your mailbox, and you dive into the notes for your class. You probably browse nearby pages devoted to the years around yours. Maybe you scan the news of your parents, children or other kin who attended the College. Depending on your age and interests, you might check out the couplings and new additions or peruse the list of passings.

You’re hardly alone. According to a 2006 survey, nearly 100 percent of Williams alumni typically read or at least skim their own Class Notes, and nearly 90 percent usually pore over even more of the alumni news published three times per year in *People*.

Such intense interest is not unique to the College—across the country, alumni news is the most widely read portion of college and university magazines. But the sheer volume and scope of Williams’ offerings are remarkable. Not many alumni magazines threaten to surge past the 144-page mark, exclusive of other college news and feature stories.

Paragraph by paragraph and year by year, Class Notes offer an informal but detailed look at the history and character of Williamsfolk. To get a better understanding of this phenomenon, and in continued celebration of the Alumni Review’s centennial, it seems appropriate to take a retrospective glance at the tens of millions of words that have been devoted to keeping Williams alumni connected to each other and to their college.

Class Notes have come a long way from relatively modest beginnings. The first ones in Vol. 1, No. 1, consisted of barely a dozen entries—a column and a half in total—that looked rather like an afterthought. News, generally consisting of individuals’ career updates, was brief and to the point. All of it was written by then Editor Talcott Miner Banks, Class of 1890.

1939 was a momentous year for the Class Notes. For the very first time, and without any fanfare, class secretaries’ names appeared in the February issue. Forty years later, the first woman debuted as a class scribe. And technological developments opened the role to even more people, allowing teams of secretaries and folks living overseas to effectively gather and disseminate news. Secretaries’ tools also evolved—the handwritten giving way to the typed, hot type to cold, snail mail to e-mail—but through it all, the volunteers’ commitments of time, energy and affection for their peers remained constant.

In good times and bad, Class Notes have served as a unifying force, a way for people to keep up with one another and reckon with the events of the day. Consider World War II. Within months of graduation, readers learned, 80 percent of the Class of ’42 was serving in the armed forces. Class Notes rang with consistent turns of phrase: received his commission, reported wounded, got

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**LAPSING INTO A COMMA**

To proofread *Williams People*, the editors consult a bookshelf full of style guides, dictionaries and other resources. Still, class secretaries tend to have styles all their own. What follows (with all due respect and affection) is some of the more colorful language the editors have come across in reading Class Notes.

**Sports & Recreation**
- Thereby completing the geriatric trifecta...
- The trifecta of parenthood
- Tinkle the ivories
- Nancy continues to pot avidly.
- Once a hockey puck, always a hockey puck.
- Efforts to save his right leg failed, but he reports new vigor and energy and a new slant on life.
- He is manfully striving...
- They are full-time seasonal residents...
- Holy T-shirt

**Anatomy 101**
- Betsy’s new knees are doing well.
- My prostate’s just yummy.
- Aerotic aneurysm
- They were the heart and sole...

**Potpourri**
- Miss O’Brien, bride-elect
- Babies on the brink
- Spice (plural of spouse)
- We followed squishingly...
- Old foggies
- It was a delight to experience his rye sense of humor.
- It was getting a mite nippy.
THE PEOPLE BEHIND WILLIAMS PEOPLE

Though they share a passion for the Purple Valley and their fellow alumni, the hundreds of men and women who have volunteered to serve as class scribes are as unique as snowflakes. The Thurston Bowl, created in 1977 and awarded annually during Reunion Weekend for best performance as class secretary, celebrates their individuality. Some wisdom gleaned from winners past:

Never miss a deadline. Theodore “Ted” K. Thurston ’12 missed only one in his 65 years as secretary. (And that time he wrote his column; he just forgot to mail it.) For his outstanding track record, the Thurston Bowl was named after him.

Remind classmates to write, and they won’t put up a fight. Erstwhile Spanish teacher Peter W. “Pedro” Stites ’49 uses Romance language, rhyme and purple prose to grease his classmates’ pens. Exhortations such as “MOOchas GRASSias y’all, and please stay on the ball” yield pages of juicy news.

Get ’em where they live. With his 50th reunion approaching, Bill Ryan ’62 is visiting every single one of his 252 classmates, providing a fascinating travelogue along with news of dozens of Ephs who managed to escape the notes until Bill (literally) came knocking.

Threats can be effective. Chris Lovell ’77 warned classmates that if they didn’t write in, he might “resort to the lowest tactic of a beat reporter: inventing your stories.” Subsequent columns were chockablock with news of classmates from New York to Nepal.

Celebrate individuality. Wendy Webster Coakley ’85 paid attention to how different groups of classmates were expressing themselves and gave everyone a voice—leveraging the notes to build better class communication and unity. Her work paid off: When she returned to the job four years ago after a decade-long hiatus, she thanked her class for making her job an “easy peasy lemon squeezie.”

Appeal to their right brains. To solicit news, Brian Carpenter ’86 once sketched a series of images, stringing together the state of Iowa, an ant, a female sheep, the number 2, a nose sniffing a flower, the word “me,” and a noose.Crudely translated: “Iowa antewe two scent me noose.”

And while they haven’t been honored with the Thurston Bowl (yet), several “rookies” are setting good examples:

Form can be functional. In their two years as co-secretaries, 1982’s Will Layman and Kolleen Rask have crossed genres, from dime-store detective novel to Star Trek screenplay to campaign stump speech, to impart classmates’ news, always providing a fun read.

Embrace nontraditional tools. Bahia Ramos Synnott ’97 lived overseas until recently and, like many ex-pats, relied on her class’s e-mail list server to get the job done. Meanwhile, Katie Kelly Gregory ’01 uses a Facebook group to solicit and share news from afar. And younger alumni aren’t the only ones using technology to get more bang for their Class Notes buck. 1960’s Ron Stegall is posting edited notes and encouraging classmates to share news on his class’s secure website. And Gates Helms ’46 used e-mail to alert at least a half-dozen other class secretaries about a multigenerational gathering of Ephs to honor his late brother Richard ’35 last spring.
his wings, taken prisoner of war, killed instantly. Ships and stations were cited before, at last, the gradual shift back to civilian life, post-war employment and graduate education.

Likewise, nearly every single page of Class Notes in the fall/winter 2001 issue referenced 9/11. Alumni rallied around their New York, D.C. and Pennsylvania brethren, offering support, expressing relief and remembering the three alumni lost in the World Trade Center collapse. In subsequent issues, some writers humbly shared their stories of harrowing escapes or their work volunteering or counseling firefighters and grieving loved-ones. The aftermath of Hurricane Katrina was no different.

There’s a larger record of the American century writ between the lines. One early alumnus, Telford Taylor ’28, was the prosecutor at the Nuremburg war crimes trial. Another lost his wife in the polio epidemic. The post-war era came to be referred to as “the atomic age,” as more Ephs continued to serve their country—and to die for it—in Korea. Later notes would bring news of deployments in Vietnam, Desert Storm, Afghanistan and Iraq.

A closer look at any graduation year suggests how class histories span the decades. 1939 again is a good example. At graduation, seniors John E. Sawyer and James MacGregor Burns each delivered an address to their classmates. As time went on, readers learned, Jack Sawyer went to war, serving in the Navy and in the OSS in Europe, while Jim Burns won a Bronze Star Medal for his work as a combat historian in the Pacific.

Readers followed the men’s life stories back to Williams. First came Burns in 1947 as an assistant professor of political science, laying the foundation for his future designation as the father of leadership studies. Sawyer’s debut as president of the College came the same year another Jack was sworn in as president of the United States.

Meanwhile, the character of Class Notes in the late 20th century underwent a sea change, in part as a result of the radical social and cultural transformations of American society. Just as important, however, the College welcomed women for the first time. (The first seven received Williams B.A. degrees from President Sawyer in June 1971.)

A gallery of wedding images has since become a fixture in the magazine, as have lists of births and adoptions, but the affect of the secretaries’ reports has shifted, too. Male and female scribes of all ages, representing a variety of ethnic, geographical and cultural backgrounds, were soon taking a more conversational approach, employing a chattier tone and tenor to impart more varied stories of MLEs (major life events, as one young secretary coined them) and everyday concerns. Marriage and childbirth, news from kindergarten and the PTA, gay and lesbian partnerships and even “the world of babys dolls, mary-jane shoes and twirly dresses,” as another secretary dubbed it, became news fodder. The change informed earlier classes, too, with candid admissions of cancer diagnoses, career reinventions, new spouses and newly blended families, all of which became basic to the news of Williamsworld.

While Class Notes have always been a place to learn of graduates’ varied accomplishments, they’ve also become a vehicle for life’s little details. By the late 1990s, stories of third-grade children losing sleep over decimated rain forests were noted along with ponies and pets and the perennial hope that a new baby was destined to someday become an Eph. No longer did anyone intone as Geo. T. Washburn, Class of 1855, did in 1921 when he wrote to the editor, “As for myself, the College did more for me than any institution outside my home; and I should be something less than a man, if I did not cherish a filial love for Old Williams in my inmost heart.” The sense of indebtedness surely survives, but the stilted mode of expression has disappeared. The tone became much as one class secretary recently commented in Class Notes after a 25th reunion: “We join one another no longer guarded, and with honesty and compassion we share our stories.”

The decades bring the new and revisit the old. References abound to the Peace Corps, Vietnam, the Amherst game, the Alumni Fund, sideburns, marathons, reunion, Afros, the Amherst game, rivers rafted, mountains ascended and descended, Teach for America, books published, the Amherst game, prizes won, 9/11, Hurricane Katrina, the economic crisis, trips taken and the Amherst game. The deaths of alumni and of much-loved spouses and partners are mourned, and many births and adoptions are celebrated. Jokes are shared (usually at the expense of one or another classmate).

As the American presence has grown more global, Williams’ leadership role is evident (in part, thanks to technology that requires merely hitting the “send e-mail” button from almost anywhere to keep in touch). A randomly chosen 2005 issue of Williams People is a virtual gazetteer, reporting young alumni at work in Lima, Croatia, the Solomon Islands, Shanghai, Uganda, Berlin, Barcelona, Iraq and many another foreign clime.

For a century, Class Notes have offered evidence of the survival of strong ties between Ephs, of the connections that reach across generations and borders despite the passage of time. The tiny glimpses of life they offer constitute a veritable encyclopedia of the Williams diaspora. To the insider and even to the uninitiated, Class Notes, perhaps better than any other resource, help explain the unique anthropology of Williams College.

Hugh Howard’s latest book is The Painter’s Chair.
It seems counterintuitive, but school shootings are rarely the acts of deranged murderers who just “snap” one day and show up with a gun. In fact, according to Marisa Randazzo ’89 and others who study targeted violence, many such tragedies could have been prevented if someone had intervened in time.

It’s one of the messages Randazzo imparts as she travels the globe advising, training and consulting with educators, law enforcement officers, security personnel and a variety of corporations and high-profile individuals through her company, Threat Assessment Resources International. Her goal: to help her clients better understand the nature of targeted violence and put in place the mechanisms to prevent it.

The chances of a student being killed in school are rare—one in 1 million to 2 million—but shootings like those in Littleton, Colo., Pearl, Miss., and Bethel, Alaska, were lightning rods for public attention. And little was known beyond the headlines.

Enter Randazzo, who spent 10 years as chief research psychologist for the U.S. Secret Service and co-authored the landmark “Safe School Initiative” report in 2002 before launching her company. A native of New York City, Randazzo became fascinated with criminal psychology at Williams, where she had a dual major in psychology and religion. She remembers, in particular, a class on psychology and the law taught by Saul Kassin. “His passion for the topic was contagious and got me excited about the field,” she says.

The “Safe School” study—sparked by the 1999 Columbine High School massacre—examined 37 shootings from 1974 through June 2000. Randazzo personally interviewed five of the 41 shooters, including Luke Woodham of Pearl and Evan Ramsey of Bethel.

She also examined research indicating that youth who commit murder, as opposed to nonviolent crimes such as theft or harassment, were less likely to have a history of prior arrests, prior mental health issues or problems with school adjustment. She pored over case files, read students’ diaries and examined bloody book bags—“anything we could look at or uncover,” she recalls, to better understand the shooter’s motivation. “It was tremendously sad
Safeguarding our Schools

because these were not kids who were psychopathic. They were by and large depressed kids who made terrible mistakes.”

Randazzo also interviewed school shooters who were prosecuted as juveniles and completed their sentences. “A number of them got out of the juvenile system and made something of their lives,” she says. “They’re functioning in society.”

Apart from having better access to weapons and exhibiting more signs of depression—most shooters appeared to be suicidal before carrying out the attacks—there were few similarities among the assailants Randazzo studied. So identifying characteristics of students who might be more likely to carry out a school shooting, a practice called prospective profiling, is impossible.

Among the “Safe School” study’s other findings: A precipitating event often can be tied to a shooting (Ramsey, for example, began to feel hopeless about being teased after his efforts to seek intervention from school officials failed). The assailant has a target in mind (in Ramsey’s case, the student who had been harassing him). There’s a plan in place well in advance of the attack. Shooters often confess their plans to fellow students. And, in the majority of shootings studied, at least three adults, often including teachers, witnessed very troubling or concerning behavior by the assailant prior to the attack.

Take the case of Seung-Hui Cho, who killed 32 people on the Virginia Tech campus in April 2007. He had undergone treatment for a severe anxiety disorder diagnosed in middle school and had submitted plays and other writing in his college classes that referred to violence (including Columbine). Prior police reports had been filed against him concerning harassment of female students.

“Many different people in the perpetrator’s life had pieces of the puzzle,” says Randazzo. “But there was no one person who knew everything. Nor was there a central mechanism to pull all of this information together.”

So, Randazzo advises, instead of purchasing “profiling” software, investing in security cameras and metal detectors or hiring more police officers, K-12 schools and universities should create professionally trained teams that can assess threats and reports of worrisome behavior by students (or employees, in the case of higher education). Not only can such an approach thwart an attack, but it can also help the potential assailant find support and assistance.

Such teams have proven successful. In New Bedford, Mass., three teens were arrested after a girl told a teacher she overheard them talking about bombing the high school, supplies to make the bombs were found near school grounds, and a janitor found a letter outlining the teens’ plans. According to The New York Times, which reported on the 2001 incident, other shootings have been averted in Twentynine Palms, Calif.; Fort Collins, Colo.; San Jose, Calif.; Hoyt, Kan.; and Elmira, N.Y.

Randazzo points out that many of the school shooters she studied were at a point of desperation when they carried out their attacks. Many felt that violence was the only option they had left—a fact she says was not surprising, given that most shooters were in their teens through early 20s, a period when the brain’s frontal lobe is under significant development and the ability to think through options and consequences is often diminished.

“We often talk about having the threat assessment team—or someone that the student trusts—to help serve as an ‘external frontal lobe,’” Randazzo says, “meaning we help the student see his or her problem differently, to fully understand all the non-violent options they have and help them to think through and understand the potential consequences of any future actions.”

Denise DiFulco is a freelance writer and editor in Cranford, N.J.
Just as Columbine cast a spotlight on safety in K-12 schools, high-profile cases such as the Virginia Tech shootings in April 2007 (as well as disasters like Hurricane Katrina) have prompted college campuses to look at their own emergency response plans.

Williams was expected to release the first overhaul of its 1996 plan early this year. The update will address “the issues of today, such as the active shooter or hostage situation,” says Jean Thorndike, director of campus safety and security.

Among the new features is the addition of Connect-Ed, an emergency notification system that uses e-mail, text and voice messages to communicate alerts to faculty, students and staff. The College also has installed a siren notification system to reach the campus and surrounding community. When the new plan is in place, the College plans to conduct additional mock disaster “table-top” exercises in coordination with local agencies and emergency responders to ensure readiness for an actual crisis.

As it is with K-12 schools, targeted violence at colleges and universities can be prevented under the right circumstances, Marisa Randazzo ’89 writes in The Handbook for Campus Threat Assessment and Management Teams, published in 2008 by Applied Risk Management. But there are some differences that Williams’ plan takes into account.

“When we talk about incidents of campus violence, we are talking as much about workplace violence as we are about student-perpetrated violence,” Randazzo says. “In addition, in the cases we’ve examined, there appears to be more mental illness involved in college settings than in school settings.”

A new study under way by the Secret Service, the U.S. Department of Education and the FBI to investigate college shootings will provide more concrete answers to the question of mental health. But its role in campus violence is “not unexpected, because late adolescence and early adulthood are critical time periods when a lot of major mental disorders first develop,” Randazzo says.

At Williams, members of the student life staff communicate with each other weekly about students who are dealing with a variety of problems, from adjusting to life away from home to mental health issues. In the rare case that someone might be a threat to his or her own safety or the safety of others, the At Risk Committee, which includes a dean, the director of health services and one of the directors of Psychological Counseling Services (PCS), convenes to evaluate that student. “Once we determine that the process should be engaged, we first seek the voluntary compliance of the student,” says Karen Merrill, dean of the College. “If that doesn’t happen, we can require that the student go through the at-risk process.”

Within a day, a psychological evaluation is completed (if the College doesn’t already have one) and a recommendation is made on whether the student should be allowed to remain on campus. The At Risk Committee also can meet with parents and others to gather additional information about the student’s behavior. “Typically, if we do allow the student to stay, we attach conditions to his or her remaining on campus, such as working out a plan to get support from PCS and from other offices,” Merrill says.

Faculty and staff identified as potential threats are referred to the College’s Employee Assistance Program for psychological services and can be mandated to receive evaluation and/or treatment, says Martha Tetrault, director of human resources. “We can and have involved campus security and police,” she says.

Williams remains a very safe community, according to statistics compiled in accordance with Uniform Crime Reporting procedures and federal law. For a copy of the 2007 report, visit www.williams.edu/admin/security/crimes/.

— Denise DiFulco

Virginia Tech students watch as police infiltrate an area where Seung-Hui Cho opened fire in April 2007. (AP Photo/The Roanoke Times, Matt Gentry.)
Climb far.
THE WILLIAMS CAMPAIGN

THE View FROM Up Here
THE WILLIAMS CAMPAIGN came to an end in December $100 million beyond its original $400 million goal. Shortly after the books were closed, the Alumni Review sat down with President Morty Schapiro to celebrate the College’s success and discuss how the campaign has made a great college even better.

Alumni Review: So The Williams Campaign ended in December, the final numbers are in, and we’ve surpassed our original five-year, $400 million goal by $100 million. How, especially given the current financial climate, do you account for such wonderful success?

Morton Owen Schapiro: We knew going into it, at the tail end of the dot-com bust in 2003, that our goals were ambitious. But they were based on a sound strategic plan developed by the faculty and agreed upon in 2001 by the entire campus community. With the help of so many people—professors, staff, students, trustees, alumni and parents—we spread the word about the campaign initiatives and how important they were to our great college. The momentum just built, to the extent that we reached our original goal 18 months ahead of schedule, thanks to incredible support from so many people. But a campaign is a work in progress, and not all of our strategic initiatives were fully funded as of May 2007, so we decided to continue fundraising until the official end date. The past year has been wracked by such tremendous economic turmoil that I never thought we’d go $100 million over our initial target! Once again, though, our alumni, parents and friends helped us over the top.

AR: Let’s recap the highlights of the strategic plan and the changes that have taken place as a result of the campaign. Starting with financial aid.

MOS: Financial aid was really the cornerstone of this campaign. So many campaign donors understood that if we want to educate Williams students for the world into which we’re about to send them, then they must broadly represent that world, not just a narrow geographic, cultural or socioeconomic slice. Thanks to campaign contributions, Williams now aids students across 95 percent of U.S. family incomes, from those at the poverty level to families that earn more than $200,000 per year. We aid half of all students (up from 40 percent in 1999), and we’ve extended need-blind admission to all international students. Since richly diverse students are what our applicants are looking for, expanding our aid policies has in more ways than one also placed us in an even better position to attract the very best.

AR: Another set of initiatives had to do with students learning from faculty. What changes have occurred to the academic program?

MOS: We increased the size of the faculty, and all else followed. Before the
campaign, we had 200 full-time tenured or tenure-track professors. Now we have 250. That allows us to get closer to the Mark Hopkins-student-log paradigm by making sure that three out of every four courses at Williams happen around a small conference table. Before the campaign, we offered about 20 tutorials, almost entirely for juniors and seniors. Now we offer about 70, many to sophomores and some even for first-year students, a way to engage students even earlier in their Williams careers. I’ve always felt that to truly understand a topic it’s advantageous to approach it from a variety of different perspectives, so I’m delighted that we’ve invested in interdisciplinary programs, including Latina/o studies, maritime studies and cognitive science. Our new requirements in writing and quantitative reasoning have secured these essential skills. Many of our students are actually engaged in creating new knowledge by partnering with their professors in professional-level research projects, and many others are applying classroom learning in real-world settings through extensive summer and Winter Study internships.

AR: How about student life initiatives, the “students learning from students” portion of the campaign?

MOS: Our new Paresky Center is the greatest thing that’s happened for Williams students outside the classroom. Baxter had its charms, but it wasn’t functioning as a student center and hadn’t been for several decades. You go into Paresky on a Saturday night, and it’s packed with literally a thousand students watching a movie in the auditorium or grabbing food at the dining hall, snack bar or pub, or working at the Record or College Council or on community service projects. Or just hanging out in the main space we call Baxter Hall, the living room for the entire campus. When students are at Paresky they’re all together, which makes it easier to step out of their usual groups and meet new people.

AR: The campus map has certainly changed, with the addition of Paresky, the ’62 Center for Theatre and Dance, and the North and South Academic Buildings since the start of the campaign. Was all the construction necessary? And what happens next regarding Sawyer Library and the Weston Field project?

MOS: I said when we launched the campaign that if all you needed to teach Williams students was Mark Hopkins and a log, then we’d have logs all over campus, which would be much cheaper and much less complicated. But the truth is that it takes more than logs. You need the right technology, the right classrooms, educational facilities that support the very best work of our students and professors. We’ve talked about the Paresky Center. It’s equally great to have the ’62 Center for Theatre and Dance up and running. Just go by the ’62 Center any week, and you’ll see visiting artists engaging with the community in the classroom and on the stages, you’ll see the Dance Program and the Theatre Department with all their great performances, and then you’ll see students who are working on shows that are entirely their own. It’s gratifying but not surprising to see how many students are now attracted to Williams because of this amazing facility, and every visiting artist who’s worked there has come up to me and said, “I can’t believe this is on a college campus.” The ’62 Center has helped transform performance at this college and brought it closer to the heart of a Williams education.

It’s also wonderful to see our faculty in the humanities and social sciences together for the first time in generations and very happily ensconced in the North and South Academic Buildings. These
buildings found their model for close student-professor interaction in our enormously successful Science Center, and the faculty offices in them are especially designed to support tutorial teaching. The North Academic Building also houses a long-overdue, state-of-the-art language lab as well as Williams’ first archaeology lab.

As a result of the economic downturn, we’ve had to slow down two major projects: construction of the new Sawyer Library, which is the next-to-last stage of the Stetson-Sawyer project, and major improvements to the Weston Field facility. Excellent planning work continues for both, which I believe will yield even better versions as soon as things turn around.

AR: You’ve answered this question before, but it deserves asking again, especially since The Williams Campaign succeeded in raising a half a billion dollars. With so many legitimate, good causes out there competing for support, what motivated donors to keep giving to Williams?

MOS: People who give to Williams understand that the buck doesn’t stop here. Our college achieves its highest mission by launching 500 graduates each year, every one of them equipped to serve a world deeply in need of citizens who are informed, skilled and aware. People who make gifts to Williams know they give to our collective future, to the world whose problems these amazing students will be well equipped to address.

AR: Obviously the Alumni Fund and Parents Fund were central to the campaign. How were these funds used to support campaign initiatives?

MOS: We are very conscious at Williams that our students are here for just four years. To come up with a great strategic plan and say we’ll implement it in five or six years just isn’t acceptable. During the campaign, we saw record-breaking levels of Alumni Fund and Parents Fund giving by tens of thousands of contributors. Because these annual gifts may be immediately spent, during the campaign we often could use the funds to move rapidly from planning to implementation on some essential strategic priorities such as financial aid, increasing the size of our faculty, curricular initiatives, even early planning on the major building projects. Then we asked individuals with extraordinary capacity to underwrite those efforts through gifts to the endowment and for infrastructure. Going forward, we’ll continue to rely on Alumni Fund and Parents Fund gifts to sustain the campaign’s achievements and enable Williams to invest in new educational opportunities as they arise.

AR: What is the most important message you’d share with Alumni Review readers at the close of the campaign?

MOS: A message of thanks. The vast majority of Alumni Review readers support Williams so generously and consistently that we’ve nearly run out of ways to say thank you. You literally make this college. Because of what you have done, Williams is beautifully positioned to continue to succeed in the future. Despite an economic downturn that will alter college operations, the heart of the Williams experience remains intact. Our students will continue to go out there and change the world. That’s what we do at Williams College, and we do it because of the support and the love of so many. Thank you all for the tremendous success of this historic campaign.
SWEET

BY JENNIFER GROW

PHOTOGRAPHY BY STEPHEN ROSE
Bob Volpi, director of dining services since 2002, learned that honeybuns were “a sacred thing” at Williams during planning for the Paresky Center. The question of where the confections would be made was key in the building’s conception. Today, a room in the basement of Paresky is stocked with mixers, “dough sheeters” and a donut fryer specifically for making honeybuns.

Contrary to lore, the recipe isn’t a secret. The ingredients are straightforward—flour, sugar, baking powder, eggs, water, yeast. After the dough is rolled out, it’s washed with eggs and covered (not sprinkled) with a liberal amount of cinnamon before being shaped, sliced, left to proof, fried and glazed. Cinnamon is the key ingredient here, or rather the amount of cinnamon—ordered by the five-pound pail. Each year Williams bakers use 340 pounds of cinnamon. In an average week, the four bakers in Paresky make 27 (baker’s) dozen honeybuns—more than 18,000 per year.

The honeybun has an all but fabled history at the College. Alumni of a certain age still write about the treats in their Class Notes, and during Reunion Weekend the baking staff works overtime to produce triple the weekly batch to ensure there are enough to go around. Honeybuns are requested by student groups for events, and they even made an appearance in one of President Morty Schapiro’s holiday cards.

Start to finish, the process of making a honeybun takes five hours, but for just $1.25, one 480-calorie honeybun, sliced in half, buttered and grilled, can be eaten in just seconds.

Chef Mike Walker, one of four bakers who create honeybuns in the basement kitchen in Paresky, with a finished batch before they’re sent up to the Lee Snack Bar.
Failing to Learn

by Zelda Stern

Mathematics professor and Gaudino Scholar Edward Burger wants more Williams students to fail. Not to flunk, of course, but rather to take creative risks that may not pan out.

Hence the unusual course Burger offered last fall, “Exploring Creativity,” which brought together 12 students, three majors each in art, philosophy, mathematics and music. By producing original works in each field, Burger says, students were encouraged “to take risks, experiment, push their imagination beyond their limits and explore consequences of failed attempts.”

Upending the traditional classroom dynamic, the students—grouped into teams by major and using criteria set by Burger—took turns teaching from lesson plans developed under the guidance of Burger in math, Mike Glier ’75 in art, Will Dudley ’89 in philosophy and Ileana Perez Velazquez in music. Burger, meanwhile, did all the homework and projects.

Students’ assignments were judged on process rather than final product—something that “goes against the typical Williams grain,” Burger says. They also “moved beyond their comfort zone with the attitude that failing and making mistakes is … a sign of an original thinker.”

Before long, “The 13 of us created an environment in which you could say anything you wanted or even sing anything you wanted,” he adds. “Everyone was encouraging. Everyone was looking not at the product but at how far the person had traveled.”

To judge from their final reflections on the course, the students, selected from more than 50 applicants, seemed to agree. Wrote Harris Paseltiner ’09, “It was remarkably liberating to fail and continue powering through without looking back.”

Added Beth Links ’09, “Creativity is, above all, an exercise of self-trust. … When I allowed myself to risk failure, to look with my heart, to get naked, to be ridiculous: that was when innovation occurred.”
For Burger, "Exploring Creativity" was the realization of a vision he had more than 18 years ago. In fact, when he first came to Williams, he presented a detailed plan for the course to the board overseeing the Robert L. Gaudino Memorial Fund, established by alumni a quarter of a century ago to carry on the legacy of experiential education and "uncomfortable learning" exemplified by one of Williams’ most beloved professors. The Gaudino Board was so impressed with Burger’s proposal that he was asked to teach the course. But Burger didn’t believe he was ready.

“I was just starting my career, and I was way too young, not just in age, but in terms of my own creative work as a scholar,” he says.

In 2008, Burger, by then the author of numerous books, articles and video series and the recipient of many national awards for exceptional teaching, was named Gaudino Scholar. Instead of taking the course release that comes with the position, he decided to offer his interdisciplinary one.

He also organized last semester’s series "The Gaudino Dialogues”—live, unscripted interviews with alumni who shared with Burger their life stories, highlighting their failures as well as their successes. And this spring, Burger is bringing together faculty for lunchtime discussions about the role of creativity in education and how faculty might inspire students to become more creative and original thinkers.

“The hardest question we can ask ourselves as educators is this,” Burger says. “Ten years from today, what are my students going to retain from my class? In my case, it’s not going to be calculus. My goal is to change lives. If you’re in education and you’re not in the business of changing lives, then perhaps it’s time to do something else.”

ARE YOU CREATIVE?

For each team of students teaching a unit in "Exploring Creativity," communicating the core concepts of their subject in language their classmates could understand—and then coming up with assignments that would spark a creative response—became the ultimate task. Here are four challenges drawn from the many each team assigned to the class:

**Studio Art**
Rachel Ko ’09, Beth Links ’09, Fiona Worcester ’09
Draw 22 1/2 images of any one shoe, from all possible vantage points. Draw the shoe happy and draw it sad. Draw the shoe as if it wishes it were human. Draw the shoe in love with another inanimate object. Draw it with your non-dominant hand. Draw it in an uncomfortable location. Try drawing it using your favorite and least favorite techniques from our class. Think of other permutations—remember you are producing 22 1/2 drawings of the same shoe.

**Philosophy**
Jeff Kaplan ’09, Julian Mesri ’09, Emanuel Yekutieli ’11
Someone was in a car accident and, as a result, all of his higher brain functions cease. That is, his conscious memories, thoughts and personality traits are gone. Is that individual dead? Give a two-sentence answer (and no longer!).

**Music**
Ruth Aronoff ’09, Caroline Kan ’09, Sam Kapala ’09
Spend 15 minutes in each of three different locations and consciously and carefully listen to all the sounds around you. Create a short piece of music that captures what you hear.

**Mathematics**
Mary Feeley ’09, Aroop Mukharji ’09, Harris Paseltiner ’09
What is the fourth dimension? Write a two-sentence definition and then create an artistic representation of a four-dimensional object or of four-dimensional space.
While researching the papers of his latest subject, Wallace Stegner, author Philip Fradkin ’57 was surprised to come across a file with his own name on it at the University of Utah archives. The two met briefly in the late 1970s when Fradkin, then an editor for Audubon, interviewed the legendary Western writer and conservationist for an article in the magazine. They maintained a correspondence for years afterward.

Inside the folder, Fradkin found some of his own letters along with another written by Stegner—one that Fradkin never knew existed. “I didn’t realize he nominated me for a MacArthur Fellowship, what they call a ‘genius grant,’” Fradkin says. More than a decade after Stegner’s death, Fradkin had received
“I ALWAYS HAVE IDEAS, AND I’LL DIE WITH A NUMBER OF UNCOMPLETED IDEAS—AND THAT’S ALL RIGHT, TOO. AT AGE 73, THAT’S NOT A BAD LIFE: TO STILL BE EXCITED BY IDEAS.”

the greatest sort of approbation from the “dean of Western writers”—a man who won both the Pulitzer Prize for fiction and a National Book Award.

Fradkin himself is an award-winning journalist, author and environmentalist. Unlike Stegner, who lived almost exclusively throughout the Western U.S. and Canada from his birth in 1909 until his death in 1993, Fradkin was born and raised in the East—Montclair, N.J., to be exact. But his passion for the romantic and rugged terrain has been no less intense. When Fradkin was a teen, his father took him on a trip by train, limousine and bus through the American West and Canadian Rockies that sparked a lifelong love affair with the region. After graduating from Williams and serving two years in the Army, he loaded up his Volkswagen Beetle and headed to California in 1960.

Following stints at small newspapers in central and northern California, Fradkin joined the staff of the Los Angeles Times, where he shared a Pulitzer Prize with the metropolitan staff for its coverage of the Watts racial conflict. He was later named the newspaper’s first environmental writer. He worked briefly as assistant secretary of the California Resources Agency under then-Gov. Jerry Brown before joining Audubon magazine as its first Western editor.

Apart from that one interview for Audubon at Stegner’s Palo Alto Hills home, Fradkin admits he avoided crossing paths with his subject thereafter. In large part, it was because Fradkin didn’t want his own writing to be unduly influenced by that of Stegner, who was founder of the Stanford Creative Writing Program.

After Stegner’s death, however, Fradkin received a letter from Stegner’s son Page, who was compiling a volume of selected letters from his father. Unfortunately, Fradkin had lost about a dozen pieces of their correspondence in a 1988 house fire. Many were written while Fradkin was in Utah conducting research for one of his 11 books, Sagebrush Country: Land and the American West, and contained Stegner’s lyrical reminisces of his youth in Salt Lake City.

“I e-mailed [Page] back,” Fradkin says, “and the proverbial light bulb went on—what about a biography of Wallace Stegner?”

Only one posthumous biography had been published previously, in 1996, which Fradkin says was “overly praiseful” due to the involvement of Stegner’s widow, Mary. Page, Fradkin says, “made it clear he did not want another hagiography. He wanted someone who could perceive his father as a whole person.”

Fradkin began to shop the idea around, but publishing houses initially took a pass, telling him repeatedly that literary biographies had limited interest. The book finally sold to Alfred A. Knopf, through an editor Fradkin had pitched the idea to several times. When that editor retired, a fellow Eph, Andrew Miller ’96, shepherded the book through the rest of the process.

The biography Fradkin finally published, Wallace Stegner and the American West (Alfred A. Knopf, 2008; University of California Press, 2009), turned out to be far more than just an overview of a writer’s life, since Stegner’s influence so greatly transcended his published works. Not only did Stegner give voice to the experience of the American West for his generation and those to follow, but he also fought tirelessly to protect the authenticity of that experience through his environmental advocacy. At times, Fradkin says, Stegner’s legacy as a writer and conservationist were one and the same, “especially in his nonfiction, in the sense that it gives a wonderful description of the landscape of the West and the need to preserve it.”

The outcome of the Stegner biography was somewhat ironic, considering how Fradkin views Stegner’s role as a literary figure. “What he did for all writers in the West was legitimize the West as a worthwhile subject in the eyes of editors, who, for the most part, have been raised and schooled in the East and have never left the narrow edge of the Atlantic Ocean.”
Williams professors and others weigh in on the issues of the day. For a complete listing of media appearances, visit www.williams.edu/admin/news/inthenews

A Feb. 1 New York Times Magazine article on the growing number of women who choose to be single mothers includes research by economics professor Lucie Schmidt, who says, “What’s striking is how fast the birthrate to the college-educated group has increased.”

“I think we have come almost full circle,” economics professor Ken Kuttner says in a Jan. 16 American Public Media Marketplace report on a proposal for the U.S. Department of the Treasury to buy up billions in troubled assets from banks—an idea that had been rejected last fall.

As foreign language programs are undergoing serious reviews of their missions, requirements and offerings, it’s important to ask “controversial and difficult” questions, such as whether new media ought to be taken seriously and how to balance language, literature and culture, says chair and Stanfield Professor of Asian Studies Neil Kubler in the Dec. 29, 2008, edition of Inside Higher Education.

A birdsong is “a behavior frozen in time,” says biology professor Heather Williams in a Jan. 31 ScienceDaily article on how research in that field may lead to refinements of Darwinian theory.

“A lot of people arrive in Africa [only] to assume that it’s a blank empty space and their goodwill and desire and guilt will fix it,” says Binyavanga Wainaina, Sterling Brown ’22 Visiting Professor of Africana Studies, in the Dec. 4, 2008, broadcast of American Public Media’s Speaking of Faith, which discussed the ethics of aid to Africa.

FROM THE BOOKSHELF


Amazing Kitchen Chemistry Projects You Can Build Yourself. By Cynthia Light Brown ’83. Nomad Press, 2008. The complexities of chemistry are brought to the level of readers ages 9 to 12 through hands-on activities that kids can do at home.

Discover National Monuments: National Parks, Natural Wonders. By Cynthia Light Brown ’83. Nomad Press, 2008. Introduces readers ages 8-12 to the history and science behind some of the most amazing natural sites in the U.S. that have been named national monuments.


Federico Barocci: Allure and Devotion in Late Renaissance Painting. By Stuart Lingo ’84. Yale University Press, 2008. A study of how Barocci’s art, which combined sensuous allure with religious devotion, helped reconcile art and the church to transform the theory and practice of painting.


ON CD


Udentity. By the Denman Maroney Quartet, including Denman Maroney ’71. Clean Feed, 2009. A composition in seven parts for a quintet in which Maroney plays hyperpiano.

ART BEHIND THE SCENES

Ever wonder what it would be like to examine a Rembrandt etching through a magnifying glass? Or analyze different states of a Whistler print? Or pore over sketchbooks that reveal the creative process of Maurice Prendergast? This summer, you can, thanks to “Behind the Scenes at the Museum,” a series of workshops presented by the Williams College Museum of Art. Workshops are held in the Rose Study Gallery, which is the museum’s classroom, and are led by experts who teach with artworks from the permanent collection and exhibitions. While this year’s schedule is still being finalized, it’s likely to incorporate the exhibition “Prendergast in Italy,” which is expected to draw some 50,000 visitors and will tour internationally. Last year’s “Behind the Scenes” program included:

Visions of the Past: A discussion of antiquities including Cuneiform tablets from circa 2500-2100 BC, vases from ancient Greece and a Roman brick with a stamp giving the date and location of its creation—a clue as to how monuments such as the Pantheon have been dated.

The Political Landscape in Contemporary Art: An exploration of the questions that contemporary artists raise about cultural identity through artworks focused on landscape and environments.

Drawing out the Story: Literary Connections: An investigation of works that use image and text to tell stories or have fascinating stories behind them.

To find out this summer’s schedule visit www.wcma.org

HELP FILL THE BOOKSHELF!

To have your work listed in Life of the Mind, please send relevant information to the Alumni Review, P.O. Box 676, Williamstown, MA 01267-0676 fax: 413.597.4158 e-mail: alumni.review@williams.edu
What does it take to make a great college even better?

125,751 gifts
27,754 donors
- 19,917 alumni (76% of all alumni)
- 3,299 parents of current students and alumni
2,000 volunteers
$500.2 million

To everyone who helped make The Williams Campaign such a great success, from students and professors now and for years to come...

Many thanks!

“Let history one day note that our community had the courage to seize the moment.”

—President Morty Schapiro, Inaugural Address, Oct. 22, 2000
“We are Williams
Imagine the Place where
we became Women
while warriors, mothers and friends.
We wrote, we read, we laughed and cried,
we learned, we loved, we grew.
We dared to be first.
We changed …
the landscape
forever!
Williams is Us!”

JACQUELINE S. MEADOWS ’75
AND SUJI SUTLER ’74

“My name is Michael G. Drzyzga, and I am Williams. I’m from Chicopee, MA, and I’ve lived there all my life before coming to Williams. I’m the first of four children. I plan to be a chemistry major, heading into pharmaceutical R&D. In my spare time I write fiction. My family provides lots of inspiration.”

MICHAEL DRZYZGA ’10