Well, we made it. After our time in the Purple Valley, we are about to enter the outside world. Most of you got through in four years; it took me 20. But then I’ve always been a little slow. I trust that we are all well prepared to thrive in every way. Educators love to talk about critical thinking skills; the ability to write and to speak clearly and effectively; to be adept quantitatively; to be adaptable, creative and farsighted—all of these are hallmarks of a Williams education. You have met the challenges presented to you and taken advantage of the opportunities that have been available. So many of you took tutorials, wrote honors theses, worked in our science labs and prospered in our many small seminars. So many of you demonstrated leadership in College Council, Lehman, Gargoyle, the Record, the MCC, as JAs and tutors, and in more clubs and organizations than I could possibly mention. So many of you devoted considerable hours to athletic success. And in this world where the ability to embrace new cultures and experiences is so important, you’ve been educated at a campus where diversity has become a cornerstone of what defines us. It isn’t easy to go outside your comfort zone, and you could have chosen a place that would have challenged you less, but you didn’t, and I’m confident that will pay dividends throughout your life.

As I think about my own Williams education, I’m so grateful to the 1,351 students I have taught here over two decades. (I counted.) You have pushed me to be a better teacher: to listen more closely, to question my beliefs and to work continuously to keep up with advances in my discipline. But even more importantly, you have reminded me that humility, service and empathy are three of the most important qualities in life. I trust that those attributes mean as much to you as they do to me. It’s humility that enables self-reflection; service that warrants the large investment that’s been made in our development; empathy that gives life much of its value.

I have great confidence in the Class of 2009. At convocation last September I applauded all that you’d achieved during your time at Williams and pointed to what you could accomplish during your senior year. I have not been disappointed. You are great representatives of a magnificent new generation—one that doesn’t just talk about such things as inclusion and environmental awareness but makes them fundamental to your lives.

That fall day I introduced you to six men and women we honored as representatives of an alumni group you will shortly join. You might remember them. What a remarkable group—representatives ranging from the Class of 1946 to the Class of 2000. These magnificent folks went into nonprofit agencies, business, government service, law and the arts. Each has made a mark on the world.

History suggests that a handful of you may one day be recognized on this stage for similar achievements. But that isn’t the mark of a great class. The real question is how all of you do in the world. How many of you succeed in business, education, medicine, law—you name it. And by succeed, I’m not just talking about one day running your firm or agency, or even your college. I’m talking about living full and effective lives that include contributing to your local community; being a good friend, spouse, partner, parent or colleague; and inspiring others to do the right thing.

You have been fortunate to get to where you are today—on the cusp of graduating from one of the world’s great educational institutions. Tomorrow, you’ll have a chance to thank your teachers, your friends and most of all your family. Do it. Without the aid of so many, there is no way you would be here today.

But now I want to thank you. It’s not easy to extricate myself from a place I love so much, my home for 20 of my 55 years, where all three of my children have been raised. But I am very proud to be “graduating” with the great Class of 2009. It’s been a real privilege getting to know many of you personally and watching many more of you succeed so impressively. As we enter new worlds, I bet you share my apprehension but also my excitement at embracing new challenges, confident that this special place has prepared us well and left its indelible mark on us all.

—Morty Schapiro
Thanks to Peter Britton ’56 for his eloquent opinion piece on mountaintop removal coal mining in West Virginia (“Houses Burn, People Die,” March 2009). Readers who would like to help end this brutal practice should ask their congressional representatives to sign on as co-sponsors of the Clean Water Protection Act (HR 1310). The bill was re-introduced in the new Congress on March 4, 2009, by U.S. Reps. Frank Pallone Jr. (a N.J. Democrat), John Yarmuth (a Kentucky Democrat) and Dave Reichert (a Washington Republican), with 147 carryover co-sponsors (as of May 5). For more information, see www.ilovemountains.org/resources/#mtncwpas.

—Hugh Rogers ’65, Kerens, W.Va.

Thank you very much for printing Peter Britton’s ’56 opinion piece about mountaintop removal in the March 2009 issue. This is a grossly under-reported issue in which all of us who participate in U.S. economic life are implicated.

—Lynne Garrett ’98, Washington, D.C.

I read with interest the interview with Kathleen Merrigan ’82 on organic foods (“Food for Thought,” January 2009). We live on a small farm where we raise dairy goats, and my daughter Brianna Casey Lyons ’11 helped me research last summer how we could set up a lane/roadside stand and sell some of our garden veggies. I am an avid canner and have a suggestion for what to do with bitter melon (which Merrigan mentioned in the interview). My Ball Blue Book of Preserving has a recipe for “Spicy Melon Pickles” (yield: about seven half-pints):

- 3 cups vinegar
- 1 tsp. slivered whole nutmeg
- 2 cups water
- 13 cups 1-inch slices of melon
- 2 sticks cinnamon
- 4½ cups sugar
- 2 tsp. whole cloves
- 1 tsp. whole allspice


—Kathy Lyons, 2011 parent, Olney, Md.

I really enjoyed the article you ran about the family who had seven children and they were managing (“Seven under Seven,” March 2008). I sometimes feel out of touch with Williams because my husband and I did not go into law, medicine or investment banking. We are not winning research grants or awards or on the boards of anything fancier than our children’s preschools because we’ve been busy paying off student loan debt, raising children and going into fields such as teaching and nursing and small business. I’d like to read more stories about people who went into social work, public school teaching, stay-at-home parenting, the military and farming.

—Kirsten Hassing Howard ’92, Charlottesville, Va.
In the fall of 1965, I was a sophomore at Williams for the second time. The year before, I had left to work as an organizer for Students for a Democratic Society (SDS). It was an exciting time to be in college. Black students in the South were at the forefront of the civil rights movement. Their courage had set an example for the world to admire. In the North, the (mostly white) student leaders of SDS had begun a movement of their own for social and economic change. The Port Huron Statement of 1962 was their manifesto. It described with passionate clarity the gap between America’s ideals and the realities of racism and poverty and summoned my generation of students—“bred in at least modest comfort, housed now in universities, looking uncomfortably to the world we inherit”—to close it. The war in Vietnam was on the horizon. The campuses of America’s colleges and universities were beginning to stir with an energy they had not seen since the 1930s. By the time the decade was over, these stirrings would grow into the most powerful student movement the country has ever known.

With my parents’ strained support I left Williams at Thanksgiving in 1964 and a month later was living with four other organizers in a small apartment in a poor white neighborhood on the north side of Chicago, hoping to help start what we called “an interracial movement of the poor.”

The work in Chicago was hard—long days of ringing doorbells and handing out leaflets, followed by evening meetings to take stock and make plans. Our goal was the creation of a union of neighborhood residents mobilized to press their landlords and the city for cleaner buildings, safer streets and, ultimately, a greater voice in their economic and political fates. Most of the residents were former coal miners from Kentucky and West Virginia who had come to Chicago looking for work when the mines gave out. They understood the value of a union. They were polite but suspicious of the well-spoken kids who knocked on their doors and tried to persuade them that a union of neighbors is the same as a union of workers and that a rent strike is no different from shutting down a mine.

After seven months, with not much more to show for my efforts than one failed rent strike and a sidewalk protest at the office of our city councilman (where my fellow organizers and I outnumbered the other protesters), I had begun to doubt whether my next 30 years of organizing would produce results to justify a lifetime of labor.

My parents never said “Go back to school,” but when I came home to Los Angeles that summer and told them I wanted to return to Williams, their relief was physical. I enrolled that fall in a seminar taught by Nathaniel Lawrence, who was then chair of the philosophy department. The seminar was titled “Existentialism.” Most of the other students were juniors and seniors, and I felt a bit over my head. We met once a week in Professor Lawrence’s home at the end of Main Street. Each session lasted three hours. We broke in the middle for tea, and there were always fresh cookies (courtesy of Mrs. Lawrence).

The discussions were animated, often passionate. It seemed to all of us that much was at stake. At the heart of the seminar was the question of how best to live, of what to care about and why, the question of the meaning of life. I made a discovery in that class that has been a central conviction of mine ever since: The meaning of life is a subject that can be studied in school.

There are many things to study in a college or university. The question of what constitutes a life of significance and value is only one of them. What I discovered in Professor Lawrence’s seminar 40 years ago was that an institution of higher education is one of the places where the question of what living is for can be pursued in an organized way. I had left Williams looking for a place where the question has more reality than I thought it ever could in school. What I found when I returned was the place for which I had been searching. It has been my professional home ever since.

Anthony Kronman ’68 is a professor at Yale Law School. This excerpt was taken from his 2008 book Education’s End.
WAGNER NAMED INTERIM PRESIDENT

Anticipating that a new Williams president won't be selected by the time Montgomery Schapiro's term ends on June 30, the Presidential Search Committee has named Dean of the Faculty Bill Wagner as interim president, effective July 1.

Wagner joined the history faculty 29 years ago as a specialist in Imperial Russian and early Soviet history. He served as a department chair, director of the Williams-Exeter Programme and chair of several faculty governance committees before being named dean of the faculty in 2006.

According to College Law, the dean of the faculty assumes presidential responsibilities between presidencies. Should Wagner's duties extend beyond Sept. 1, computer science professor Andrea Danylik will step in as acting dean.

In a letter announcing the appointment, Greg Avis '80, chairman of the Executive Committee of the Board of Trustees and head of the Presidential Search Committee, thanked Wagner and Danylik for their service.

"Williams is fortunate to be able to turn to someone as knowledgeable, experienced and respected as Bill," Avis wrote. "The board is confident that this arrangement will provide the College with continuity and excellence in leadership until the next president takes office."

COMMENCEMENT FEATURES ALL-STAR ROSTER

A Fortune 500 CEO, a foreign correspondent for NPR, a historian, a musician, an author and an astronaut all were awarded honorary degrees at Williams' 220th Commencement on June 7.

Members of the Class of 2009 and their families and friends participated in a weekend packed with activities. Highlights included a dialogue with astronaut and U.S. Sen. John Glenn, a baccalaureate address by NPR foreign correspondent Anne Garrels.

For more information on any of these stories, visit www.williams.edu and enter the topic into the search field.

They Said:

"If I were to grade—and I'm a tough grader—I'd give housing a C minus, athletics an A, the classroom experience an A minus, the increase in diversity and intellectual vitality an A minus, improvements in the drinking culture a C."

—Monty Schapiro, evaluating changes at the College during his nine years as Williams president, Record, 5.13.09

"I read blogs, the Web, I listen to the radio and get my information from different places."

—Shayla Harris '97, New York Times video journalist, on how she considers herself informed even though she doesn't read the newspaper every day. Harris was one of five award-winning journalists to participate in a Williams forum about the new media in a post-print world, organized to honor the memory of Jeffrey Owen Jones '66, Record, 4.29.09

"I just remember thinking that if we were a beverage right now, some athlete could drink us and run for five days."

—Taaamika "Prim" Singbura '71, coeditor of Gusto!, about the energy and turnout for the online magazine's first planning meeting in April. Gusto!, aimed at food lovers, was one of as many as five new student publications planned for the spring and fall, Record, 4.29.09

"Among the many steps taken to reduce spending this year, we've frozen all faculty and staff salaries, reduced the number of faculty and staff positions through attrition, delayed major capital projects, lowered spending on building renewal and cut managers' budgets by 15 percent. These changes, while painful, have protected the College's highest priorities of maintaining our financial aid program, avoiding layoffs and continuing the high standard of our academic program."

—Monty Schapiro, Williams president, in a letter to campus announcing that the board of trustees approved a $205 million operating budget for the coming academic year, 4.20.09
Donors and friends gathered on April 17 to celebrate the naming of the new south academic building in honor of President Morty Schapiro. Pictured are (left to right): Ray Henze ’74, Bob ’60 and Martha Lipp, Jack ’61 and Susy Wadsworth, Greg Avis ’80 and Anne Ricketson Avis ’81, Morty and Mimi Schapiro, Karen and Bob Scott ’68, Paul Neely ’88, Frank Rice, Richard Hollander P’10, and Joe Rice ’54.

a dialogue with singer and songwriter James Taylor and a commencement address by Darden Restaurants CEO Clarence Otis Jr. ’77. The four received honorary degrees along with Tracy Kidder, who is a Pulitzer Prize-winning nonfiction writer, and James M. McPherson, the George Henry Davis 1886 Professor of American History, Emeritus, at Princeton University and a Pulitzer Prize-winning author who has written 18 books.

For speeches and photographs from the weekend, visit www.williams.edu/home/commencement.

NEW JOURNALISM FELLOWSHIP CREATED
Molly M. Hunter ’09 has been awarded the inaugural Jeffrey Owen Jones ’66 Fellowship in Journalism.

Hunter, a political science major with a leadership studies concentration, plans to travel to the Middle East this summer to report on the Iraqi refugee crisis. She hopes to freelance her stories to a variety of news outlets and through the digital media.

Prior to graduation she wrote for the Williams Record and was co-chair of the Stanley Kaplan Program in American Foreign Policy. The Kentfield, Calif., native also was an eco-representative for the Zilkha Center for Environmental Initiatives, and she student taught at the Williamstown Elementary School.

The $10,000 fellowship was endowed by a group of friends and family to honor Jones, a print and broadcast journalist who died of lung cancer in 2007. The fellowship is awarded to a student who exemplifies the qualities for which Jones was widely admired: integrity, talent, independence of mind, wit, strength of character, skepticism of authority and concern for others.

TRACK & FIELD TAKES 6TH REGIONAL TITLE
The men’s track and field team took its sixth regional crown, amassing 136.67 points at the Div. III New England Championships and besting runner-up M.I.T. by 28.67.

Williams moved to the front of the pack with 10 points in the decathlon after wins in the 400-meter hurdles (Stew Buck ’09), 400-meter (Taylor Fitzgerald ’11) and 1,500-meter (Macklin Chaffee ’09) and a slew of other placements. The win followed the Ephs’ ninth consecutive NESCAC title a week earlier in New London, Conn.

CREW TEAMS MAKE HISTORY
The women’s and men’s crew teams were the talk of the New England Championships in Worcester, Mass., after the women swept every race and the men’s first varsity captured its first title in 13 years.

The two squads took the overall team trophy with 179 points, ahead of second-place Trinity College (165 points). The Eph women finished first in the three varsity eight races as well as in the two varsity fours. All three men’s eights placed as well, with the 2V taking a medal for the first time in a decade and the 3V successfully defending last year’s silver medal.
ON THE JOB

Imagine spending the summer researching solar markets and attending Congressional hearings on behalf of the U.S. Department of Energy. Or working on costume construction, wig making and millinery for a Texas arts foundation. Thanks to the College’s 13 alumni-sponsored internship programs, 90 students representing nearly every academic discipline will spend the summer exploring careers, developing skills, networking and performing public service—often in cases under the guidance of Williams alumni. Students receive a $3,200 grant to cover transportation, housing and other living expenses, and they are required to submit a report about their experience to the Office of Career Counseling. Among the opportunities this summer:

Reading and reporting on scripts for director of development Guy Danella ’03 at Los Angeles-based Gold Circle Films;

Developing reports, recruiting patients and shadowing emergency department doctors at New York Presbyterian Hospital;

Helping with all aspects of running a Minor League baseball team, from concessions to advertising to finance to media relations, for the Daytona Cubs in Florida;

Writing grant proposals and Web articles, acting as a translator for volunteers and teaching basketball to the children of migrant workers for the nonprofit CAI in Beijing;


Information provided by the Office of Career Counseling
Still Purple after All These Years

Photograph by Kevin Kennefick

Stories have been edited for clarity and space but appear online in their entirety at www.williams.edu/admin/president/. Send your own story about Morty Schapiro to news@williams.edu.
Morty Schapiro announced he’d be leaving Williams after nine years as president—and a total of 20 as an economics professor—good wishes and remembrances flooded in from every corner of Ephdom. There were also more than a few jokes about the weather (worse than Williamstown’s) and school colors (still purple) at his new gig as president of Northwestern University. With his departure for Evanston, Ill., on the horizon, we asked members of the Williams community to share their own stories about Morty.

People reveal a lot about themselves on the golf course, and Morty Schapiro is no exception. The first time we played together, he greeted me with a broad smile and happily announced: “I’m terrible at skiing, but I’m much worse at golf.” Morty played with determination, but the ball stubbornly refused to bounce his way. Nonetheless, his spirits remained high throughout the round, and on the 18th tee he declared, with firm resolve: “I’m getting it done.” Before I could ask what he planned to accomplish, he answered my question: “I haven’t made a par yet. I’m making a par.” He promptly launched his best drive of the day and strode down the fairway as if the U.S. Open were at stake. His second shot left him with a chance, but a wayward third dashed the dream. Disappointed but undeterred, Morty insisted, “Let’s play again next week!”

A few days later, I saw him taking a lesson from the pro, and afterward I congratulated him for getting advice on his game. “Oh,” Morty replied, “I won’t be doing that again.” “Why not?” I asked. “Because I don’t like being told what to do!” And he burst into laughter. Morty the golfer is a lot like Morton Owen Schapiro, president of Williams College: focused, optimistic, resilient, proud, enthusiastic, independent and quick with a laugh at his own expense.

– Will Dudley ’89, philosophy professor

My senior fall, I was lucky enough to nab one of the six spots in Morty’s tutorial “The Strange Economics of College.” During discussions—often of his own work—Morty would stop one of us and say, “Sure, that’s my argument, but isn’t there a chance that I’m wrong?” Questioning each other’s ideas was a two-way street, and the product of that openness was a challenging tutorial that I remember for its vibrant discussions and comfortable atmosphere.

What added even further to our class—and what certainly isn’t captured in a course catalog—was Morty’s easy sense of humor. He poked fun at himself as often as he did at anyone else, and he pushed us to think seriously and engage in debate, but not to take ourselves too seriously.

– Alexandra Roth ’08

When Morty Schapiro announced he’d be leaving Williams after nine years as president—and a total of 20 as an economics professor—good wishes and remembrances flooded in from every corner of Ephdom. There were also more than a few jokes about the weather (worse than Williamstown’s) and school colors (still purple) at his new gig as president of Northwestern University. With his departure for Evanston, Ill., on the horizon, we asked members of the Williams community to share their own stories about Morty.
Having Morty as our president really means having the entire Schapiro family as part of our Williams experience. As Morty and Mimi open up their house to the College community, whether through hosting dinners or Halloween trick or treat, we have the privilege of getting to know his family and playing with their dog Cha Cha. Their hospitality has a trickle-down effect that has made Williams a more open environment.

Another thing that I love about Morty is how real he is. Perhaps that is why we feel at ease calling him “Morty.” When he agreed to speak at Story Time last fall, he opened up to us. When I accidentally arrived late to my first day of class with him, he did not hesitate to send evil stares my way and poke fun at me for the rest of the semester. And yet when someone made a good argument in class, he also let that person know immediately and encouraged more. When I approached him with College-wide or personal concerns, he always responded with compassion and a great deal of faith and support.

– Rachel Ko ’09

I have seen firsthand Morty actively listening to students on many different occasions. During College Council meetings, he would call out students by name and knew at least one activity each was involved in. While sitting on the floor of my entry with some freshmen during Sunday snacks, he listened to their suggestions on how to improve college initiatives. In his tutorial, when we were presenting our papers that he seemed ever so interested in, he would always ask us our opinion, even on research that he is an expert in.

– Sura Tilakawardane ’07

One of the first things that struck me about Williams as I arrived in the summer of 2000 was the remarkable collection of sacred spaces that dot our campus. Before long I began to think we should consider another site a part of that collection: 936 Main Street.

It quickly became clear that the Schapiros’ annual invitation to the extended family of the Jewish community into their home to break the Yom Kippur fast would be just one of countless occasions of hospitality we’ve all come to associate with that house—and with Morty’s and Mimi’s embrace of the extended family of Williams itself. But when, in December of 2001, Muslims at Williams marked their first Ramadan fast since the catastrophe of 9/11, the Schapiros hosted not just an iftar (the joyful meal that comes at the end of each day of the month of daylight fasting) but also the maghrib, the evening prayer.

Since that evening, religious communities that had to wait a century or more to be welcomed into the Williams family have feasted on the bounty of the Schapiros’ soul-warming hospitality. We’ve almost, but not quite, come to take for granted the sense of welcome that Morty and Mimi embody. But I think the image of Muslim prayer rugs spread out in the president’s house—in the family room of a Jewish home—deserves to be remembered as a giant step that Williams took, following the lead of a faithful servant of this institution, into a very new century.

– The Rev. Rick Spalding, chaplain to the College and coordinator of community service

I first met Morty in 1980, when he came to teach at Williams. He and his family settled into a home on Prospect Street, which placed them as our new “back door” neighbors. They proved to be very friendly and cordial, and we were sorry to see them leave the area in 1991 for bigger and better things in California.

In 2000, when I sold my business on Spring Street and my wife planned an open house to thank our customers, lo and behold there he was on his very first day as president, with other William’s presidents, to pay his respects, wish us well and express how sorry he was to see the business close.

When I joined the College buildings and grounds crew, I decided to make an appointment with him right away to solve a problem that I felt he might be able help me with. His secretary informed me he was leaving town for a week and was probably too busy, but she would give him the message and get back to me. I got a 15-minute appointment with him the next day. He and I ended up talking for an hour—with me answering many questions about his old neighborhood. I told him I ought to leave because I was only to have 15 minutes. He said, “Art, we don’t take the time to just talk, and I enjoy it, so do not worry about it.” Typical Morty.

– Arthur L. Lafave, former Williams custodian and longtime owner of the B&L Service Station

A classmate and I were in President Schapiro’s office for a Williams Record interview. At the conclusion of the interview, I remember asking, “Mr. President, how do you feel about Krispy Kreme?” At the mention of the donut chain, Morty looked straight at us and said, “Krispy Kreme will kill you! In-N-Out will inspire you.” Which begs the question—why hasn’t In-N-Out (a California-based burger chain) come to campus yet?

– Sergio Espinosa ’02
My first real understanding of who Morty Schapiro was as a person was at his inauguration in September 2000. I will never forget his words and the spirit he invoked to those gathered in Chapin Hall. He encouraged all in attendance to seize the moment, as it was an opportunity to move the College and community forward. Morty seized that moment and every moment for the next nine years as he opened the doors of Williams to the entire Northern Berkshire community. His fingerprints are on so many great things that have happened in my city of North Adams.

– John Barrett, North Adams mayor

It was midsummer; the sun hot in the sky, a perfect July day. My son was going to camp, and so was Morty’s. They were born a month or so apart. Their moms had bonded over the exhaustions of babyhood; the boys had been friends their whole lives. What could be more innocent fun, piling in Mort’s car and taking them to camp?

Here is the lesson: the Mort Effect is a Powerful Effect, and it turns out the Mort Effect is amplified to positively overwhelming levels if it is encountered in an enclosed space.

The trip over there, about an hour and a half, was just a warm-up.

On the way back, Mort stealthily advanced his secret agenda. “Gee,” he said, “I was talking with our mutual friend Nancy Roseman the other day about the possibility of teaching a class together. Kind of a neat idea! It would be about society and disease.” What did I think of that?

“Oh,” I said, not really focusing. “Sounds great! A lot of work, though…”

“Well,” Mort said, his voice getting that special Tone, his eyes developing that special Glint, “would you like to get involved?”

The rest of the trip is a blur. Suffice it to say that when we arrived back in Williamstown I was not only team-teaching a class called “Culture, Society and Disease” with the president and the dean of the College, but I had also—and I swear I have no idea how this part happened—volunteered to be secretary to the faculty, a position which is way less impressive than it sounds.

The Mort Effect! That’s how all this great stuff happened at the College over the last nine years. It’s irresistible.

– Peter Murphy, chair and professor of English

Last fall the president sent a message to students about the financial crisis’ toll on Williams’ endowment. The next day, my College Council co-president, Peter Nurnberg ’09, and I decided the issue warranted a town-hall meeting in which students could ask questions about the College’s financial situation. We e-mailed President Schapiro at 11 p.m. asking if he would lead one. He responded within a half hour saying he would.

At the meeting, not only was he willing to go off script and take questions on a difficult topic, but he was able to reduce the complicated economics of college financing to a 15-minute explanation that was clear, informative and surprisingly entertaining. A friend on the school newspaper warned me that President Schapiro would never share the exact amount the endowment had shrunk with students—let alone with an entire assembly of them. He was wrong. The president gave its current size without a flinch and mollified concerns about how the College would respond. Without a doubt students left that meeting considerably calmer and more assured than when they came.

– Jeremy Goldstein ’09

When I walked into President Schapiro’s office for a tutorial my senior year, little did I know that the next four months would be one of the most defining and pivotal moments of my time at Williams. His probing questions truly challenged me, his thoughtful comments on my writing enriched me, and his interest in my entire experience at Williams was refreshing. He had a flawless memory for the results of my crew race from the weekend before, and he was always eager to know how it was going to go the coming weekend. He valued the education of the whole person, as he encouraged my academic and athletic pursuits with equal enthusiasm. His passion about his subject matter, the economics of higher education, was so infectious that I sought out opportunities after graduation to work in the college endowment investment industry. What I most remember is that during those afternoons in his office it felt as if there was nothing more important to Morty than the paper in front of us and what the four of us were going to learn. And in that way, Morty personified what he loved most about Williams: the power of a professor at one end of a log and a student at the other.

– Abigail Wattley ’05
A CENTURY OF Change

The story of the evolution of the Williams community—as told in the pages of the Alumni Review

Compiled by Hugh Howard
Additional research provided by Williams Archives & Special Collections

One hundred years ago, the Williams College Alumni Athletic Association published the very first Alumni Review. Subscriptions were available to anyone connected to the College, but the audience was decidedly male.

Over time, the sons of Williams were joined by the daughters, the privately schooled made room for the publicly schooled, and—in terms of race, ethnicity, culture, socioeconomic status and sexual orientation—the College became a place notable for its inclusiveness.

The Review also evolved. In some cases—coeducation, say, or the Afro-American Society’s occupation of Hopkins Hall—coverage of the changes was frank and extensive. In others, such as the abrupt resignation of President Tyler Dennett in 1937, it took decades for the story to unfold. (Dennett’s call for a more diverse student body to avoid “provincialism and insularity” angered many alumni—something the Review addressed 40 years later.)

The pages that follow offer a look back at how far the College—and its alumni magazine—have come.

“There is hardly a phase of campus life left unperturbed by the newcomers; many of the girls have even jumped headlong into extra-curricular activities.”
—Jean Jobson, wife of Edward R. Jobson Jr. ’45, December 1946

As one of the first colleges in the country to provide campus housing to students returning from war and their families, Williams made national news for its “progressiveness.” Jobson’s account of Williams wives participating in the life of the campus—taking courses, working in offices, writing for the Record and joining Cap &
Bells— noted how married students were “absorbed” into the College as “an integrated part of the whole.”

“Just as the football coaches want boys who are willing to block and to tackle, the teachers want boys who will throw themselves at an idea and not merely slap it as it goes by.”

—President James Phinney Baxter 3rd ’14, May 1950

Baxter answered the question posed in his Review essay “What Kind of Boy Does Williams Seek?” by stating:

“The Admissions Committee at Williams does not confine its choice to boys in the top quarter of the rank list. We take many boys from the second quarter ... [but] we do want the boy to be in the top quarter of his school in force of character, capacity for leadership and willingness to work and to take responsibility.”

Jewish Students ... [and] Negroes do not have an Equal Opportunity for membership in any Williams Fraternity.

—Williams College Council Committee on Discrimination, led by Chairman David C. Phillips ’58, July 1957

An 11-page reprint of the Phillips' Report shared the undergraduate committee’s numerous recommendations. One was “to rid the fraternities of unwritten agreements ... with national groups [which] are just as effective in perpetuating discrimination ... as the written clauses.”

“It is important to have variety in the student body, both geographically and in terms of school distribution.”

—Admission Director Frederick C. Copeland ’35, February 1960

In one of his periodic Review updates, Copeland remarked: “The post-war population explosion now bedeviling secondary education and soon to be flooding the admissions offices ... has coincided with efforts on the part of higher education to achieve a broader geographical distribution and to take more boys from the public high schools, which now contain 97 percent of the students in secondary school.”

Clockwise from top: The opening of the Jewish Religious Center gave members of Williams’ Jewish community “their own place of worship with a clear Jewish identity,” said Norman Redlich ’47, who helped raise money for the building.

Boon I'tt and Galus Charles Bolin, both Class of 1889 and pictured here with sophomore members of the football team, were the first students of color to graduate from Williams.

The all-College picnic in 1979 reflected the growing racial diversity of the student body.
[The Angeline Report] has proved to be the biggest thing to hit the campus world since the invention of the alumni fund.

—Gannett News Service Special Correspondent David Beetle, February 1963

A four-part Gannett series reprinted in the Review examined fraternities at upstate New York colleges and universities in the wake of Williams' 14-page Angeline Report, presented to the trustees the previous year. The report concluded, Beetle wrote, "that Williams fraternities so dominated college life that they interfered with the educational process and that the college had no choice but to take over their rooming and dining operations." One fraternity member quoted by Beetle said, "We fought discrimination against Catholics in the '30s, Jews in the '40s and Negroes in the '50s." Meanwhile, in an attempt to minimize exclusionary practices, there "was born the phrase 'total opportunity,'" meaning that "the fraternities on a campus agree to divvy up everyone who wants to join. ... Under such a system no one can be a non-fraternity man except by choice."

It would be a disservice to enroll a Negro student here who does not have the qualifications to succeed in earning a degree.

—Admission Director Frederick C. Copeland '35, May 1967

Having "admitted more than half of the living students and alumni" at the time, according to the Review, Copeland shared the challenges of shaping his 21st class. As the magazine pointed out: "In the past several years Williams has made advances in contributing to the education of minority groups. This is especially true of Negro students, where the proportion who are qualified is now small and the number who are aware of Williams perhaps even smaller."

With most of our boys coming from coeducational high schools, with many of them leaving home for the first time and coming to us from all parts of the country, our single-sex identity seems to many an anachronism.

—Trustee John E. Lockwood '25, August 1968

In 1967, the trustees created a special committee, led by Lockwood, to "study ways of fusing new strengths to old and to answer the questions raised by rising costs, co-education and urbanization." In this interim report, described by Lockwood as "a personal statement," he wrote, "If we should welcome women at Williams it is fundamental that we do so with quality, style and distinction. Our purpose must be to enhance the total educational experience for all—not just to improve and diversify our recreational opportunities."

Activities of the College should be open to all members of the undergraduate community on the basis of their interest, talents and capacity to contribute as individuals, not reserved to any closed national or local self-perpetuating social organization.

—Board of Trustees, November 1968

With a new residential life system in place, the trustees issued a statement requesting that the six fraternities remaining on campus discontinue rushing and phase out other activities upon the graduation of the Class of 1970. The statement, printed in the Review with a student reaction by Robert Whitton '69, read, in part: "In times changing as rapidly as ours, and in years when young people should be reaching out for the fullest exposure and response to all that a modern college offers, the preconceptions and restrictions of such societies have come to seem anachronistic on this campus."

We gathered not as professors and students but as concerned human beings, talking with each other about tough problems: how can Afro-Americans, proud of being black, also be proud of being at Williams? What part should Williams play in the racial revolution that is sweeping the country? How deep are white prejudices and has this been a racial college?

—History Chair Robert G.L. Waite, spring 1969

Extensive coverage of the Afro-American Society's peaceful four-day occupation of Hopkins Hall in April and the campus-wide discussions about race that imme-
It's hard to be Wendy to all the guys.

—Assistant Dean Nancy J. McIntire, quoting a female student, fall 1971

In her essay on “The Rationale of Educating Women at Williams,” McIntire wrote of the challenges posed by the arrival of the fully coeducational freshman class: “Frequently women have been expected to be sisterly, motherly, charming, friendly, at times frivolous, at other times competent, but never threatening. And any one woman cannot provide such a variety of responses.”

The 15 percent elitist minority who once went to college has grown to more than 50 percent of secondary school graduates.

—President John W. Chandler, fall 1973

In his induction address, printed in the Review, Chandler stated: “Williams and similar colleges have played a major role in the growth and democratizing of higher education by supplying a disproportionately

From left: Black Student Union coordinator Gregory Witcher '80 spoke at a rally after a cross was burned in front of Perry House—the first of several race-related incidents that led to an all-campus forum.

Mid-winter and year-end fraternity parties like this one at Sigma Phi in 1929 drew as many as 200 “fair visitors” to campus, according to the Record, which for several years ran lists of guests’ hometowns, which often were more diverse than those of the incoming freshman class.

A 1993 rally for queer students on the front porch of Chapin lawn was a far cry from the clandestine meetings held in the 1970s by the founding members of the College’s first gay and lesbian group.
Following World War II, professors like Frederick L. Schuman welcomed returning soldiers and their wives. (Sixty-nine of the 1,060 Ephs enrolled in the fall of 1946 were married.)

Today women make up 51 percent of the student body, compared with 8 percent in 1969 and 1970, when Williams began accepting female exchange and transfer students. Seven women graduated in 1971, a few months before the first four-year coeducational class arrived.

The large percentage of the teachers and research scholars who have met the college enrollment demands.

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Who knows all about blacks in predominantly white colleges? Unfortunately, no one does. Comprehensive national data ... never has been gathered.

—William Boyd ’63, executive director, Educational Policy Center, spring 1974

An EPC survey of black college students at largely white institutions found that “racial discrimination has not been a part of the experience of 51 percent of the [black] students. Fifty-three percent have no concerns about their ‘ability to meet the costs of ... college education.’”

Nearly $1.7 million will be spent this academic year to help a great diversity of Williams students who couldn’t otherwise afford to be here.

—Financial Aid Director Henry N. Flynt Jr. ’44, spring 1976

Highlights of “today’s program for making Williams accessible to young men and women from all segments of society” included budgeting for “enough funds for the equivalent of full tuition assistance for 30 percent of our students.”

“A perfect condition in college would be a community in which there would be lacking none of the constituents of the American people.”

—President Tyler Dennett, Class of 1904, quoted by former history professor Philip L. Cantelon, fall 1977

Dennett’s “stormy” three-year term ended with his resignation in 1937, with little explanation in the Review. Forty years later, Cantelon endeavored to “peel back a bit of the mystery” surrounding the details, including how the president, who once charged that there were “too many nice boys at Williams,” cleared out faculty deadwood and drove Williams toward a more diverse student body, laying the groundwork for today’s college.

At 10:20 p.m. on Saturday of Halloween weekend, as many homecoming parties were in progress, a 2-foot cross was set on fire on the lawn of Perry House. Next door … the members of the Black Student Union were to gather at 11 p.m. for a party.

—Review, fall 1980

Details of the incident were still unfolding as the Review went to press, but the magazine provided a detailed chronology, extensively quoting President John Chandler on the campus response: “The Williams community has been unified rather than polarized as a result of..."
these distressing incidents. ... On the campus there is an overwhelming sense that ... Williams will emerge as a stronger and better college than it was before.”

More black alumni of Williams College than had ever before gathered in one place were on campus for Reunion Weekend 1989 ... to mark the anniversary of the graduation of a man only one of them had ever known.

—Review, summer 1989

Reunion coverage highlighted the climax of the year-long centennial of Williams’ first black graduate, Gaius Charles Bolin. His grandson Lionel Bolin ’48 spoke to trustees about “the courage [Gaius] showed in following the advice of a high school principal and alumnus of Williams to come here to school. This despite the fact that no black had ever gone here before and no one else in his family had even gone to college.”

—President Francis C. Oakley, winter 1991

The Review captured the weekend-long celebration in photographs and words—including those of Dara R. Eizenman ’93: “Judaism means different things to every person at Williams, and the Jewish Religious Center is a tangible expression of that diversity.”

The fact that we are now able to fill one-quarter of our classes with minority students who are among the most talented students in the country results from clear and unambiguous ... institutional commitment.

—President Francis C. Oakley, winter 1993

Prior to his resignation as president and the start of the College’s third century, Oakley granted the Review a wide-ranging interview delving into topics such as changing demographics, curricular reform and how Williams was faring amid gloomy reports on the future of higher education.

Members of the audience remarked on how the situation for lesbian and gay students had improved over the years. Alumni noted the contrast between the clandestine meetings of the College’s first gay and lesbian group (founded in the early ’70s) and the inclusion of lesbians and gay men as part of a celebration of diversity at the College.

—Review, fall 1993

The College’s bicentennial included a weekend celebration focused on Williams’ “history of multiculturalism and ... gains in cultural, social and economic diversity.” The Williams College Gay and Lesbian Alumni Group, founded a few years earlier, worked to bring back members of the classes of ’41 to ’93 for a panel discussion on lesbian, gay and bisexual issues at Williams.

The spring of 1947 had brought with it several problems that the college community never before had to contend with. But these were issues that would soon thrust the campus into the throes of the racial conflicts that were sweeping the nation.

—Tori-Ann Thomas ’03, summer 2004

Publication of Black Williams: A Written History, a 79-page document by 13 members of the Black Student Union, gave the Review an opportunity to cover historical moments that previously hadn’t been mentioned in its pages. One example was the “Barber Shop Incident” of 1947, when a black student and a white student exposed a Spring Street barbershop’s practice of charging blacks three times more than whites for a haircut.

Selective schools are selective in order to produce a better education.

—Economics Professor Gordon Winston, summer 2005

About his study of how students’ academic performance is affected by the qualities of their peers, Winston, director of the Williams Project on the Economics of Higher Education, wrote in the Review that “there are socially valuable benefits of that selectivity—the improvement of education ... [and] schools are being selective in admissions in recognition of the role that student peer quality plays in producing educational quality, a role like that of good faculty and facilities and lab equipment.”

Today, Williams faculty and staff are single, are single parents, are dual-career couples, are commuting couples, are gay and lesbian partners.

—Assistant to the President for Affirmative Action and Government Relations Nancy McIntire, June 2006

When McIntire first arrived at Williams in 1970, “Most of the faculty were men, and they were married to very talented women who also stayed home and raised the family.” Thirty-six years later, as she prepared to retire, McIntire told the Review that the change in faculty composition was “exhilarating, but it is also challenging.”

Hugh Houwald’s latest book is The Painter’s Chair.
Steve Birrell '64 was 13 years into a career in teacher education when he decided to make the switch to university development. "I found almost immediately that I enjoyed fundraising," he wrote in his 25th Reunion Class Book, "because the results were clearly measurable."
He didn’t have to travel far—literally across campus. But when Steve Birrell ’64 decided to leave his job as director of teacher education at the University of New Hampshire to take over corporate and foundation relations there, the gears were set in motion. At a conference in Boston, he ran into Jim Briggs ’60, Williams’ director of alumni relations and development, who shared plans for a major fundraising effort to mark the College’s bicentennial. Steve was lured back to the Purple Valley as director of the 25th reunion program and parent giving and has since made an indelible mark on the Office of Alumni Relations and Development, serving the past 14 years as VP. (We’ll try to ignore the four years in the early ’90s when he temporarily “defected” to Amherst.) On the eve of his retirement on June 30, Steve discussed the changes he’s witnessed in an area of College life critical to Williams’ continued success.

Alumni Review: Let’s get the toughest question out of the way first: What, in your experience, is the biggest difference between Amherst and Williams alumni?

Steve Birrell: [Laughing.] One of the things that really surprised me was that Amherst alumni feel every bit as strongly about their school as Williams alumni do. I had assumed that Williams cornered the market on this kind of loyalty. It’s not unique in higher education, but I think the attachment of Williams and Amherst alumni to their schools is unusually strong. The competition between our schools brings out the best in each. But there are noticeable differences in institutional cultures. At Amherst, for example, the relationship between the faculty and the administration is more adversarial.

And there’s the geography. The enforced intimacy born of our rural location fosters a strong sense of community and encourages a high level of civility.

AR: You mentioned the attachment and affection Williams alumni feel toward their alma mater—something you’ve coined Williams’ “Second Endowment.” That’s not a common term in the field of alumni relations and development. Can you explain how you thought of it and what it means?

SB: After I came back to Williams from Amherst, the Executive Committee of the Society of Alumni was meeting in Naples, Fla. They were discussing their mission, and I thought, you know, there is this other endowment that we have, and it’s an extraordinary resource. Basically, it’s a way of objectifying the collective loyalty, affection, love, devotion, generosity and goodwill that Williams alumni, and to a certain extent parents and friends, feel for this place. The alumni relations program is particularly responsible for making sure that this endowment grows and is protected. The point I make often, and it’s proving to be only too true at the moment, is that the financial endowment can take a hit, but you can bring it back. The Second Endowment is different. If that ever sustained a serious hit, it would be much more difficult to rebuild that trust. So it’s the role of the Executive Committee and the alumni relations and development office to be the principal stewards of the Second Endowment.

AR: Your office oversees alumni volunteers numbering in the thousands who give generously of their time and expertise. In what ways do Williams alumni participate in the life of the College, and why is that so important?

SB: We rely heavily on volunteers for all of our alumni relations and development programs. Their support has always been essential in terms of promoting Williams in the high schools. They’ve been absolutely indispensable to generating financial support for the College. But our alumni also serve in untold other ways. They act as class officers and leaders of regional associations and affinity networks. They organize Williams-Amherst game telecasts in 50-some locations every year and welcome faculty to their cities and towns for seminars through Williams’ RoadScholars and other regional programs. They gather Class Notes for Williams People and offer career mentoring to undergraduates and fellow alumni. They serve as trustees and community service volunteers. The value of this service to Williams is incalculable.

What a Difference 25 Years Makes

The alumni body has grown significantly over the past quarter century, so, too, has the Office of Alumni Relations and Development in terms of its size, scope and capability.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>1984</th>
<th>2008</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total Alumni</td>
<td>15,388</td>
<td>25,522</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% Male/Female</td>
<td>83/17</td>
<td>66/34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alumni Fund Volunteers</td>
<td>500</td>
<td>1,600-plus</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yearly Alumni Gifts*</td>
<td>$12,921,130</td>
<td>$53,702,981</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total AR&amp;D Staff</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>72</td>
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*cash in hand
AR: Why has the number of volunteers for the Alumni Fund, in particular, increased so dramatically from about 500 when you arrived in 1984 to more than 1,600 today?

SB: In the mid-1980s, the average undergraduate class size doubled to more than 500, so it became too much for one class agent, even with associate agents, to keep up with fundraising among all his or her classmates. Another factor is the rise of two-career families and the hectic pace at which most of us live. Our alumni have less time to offer the College, so we need more volunteers.

AR: The number of employees in alumni relations and development also has increased since 1984.

SB: Yes, the work of our office has increased dramatically, in part to better assist the growing pool of volunteers, as is the case with annual giving. We also support new programs. For example, in 1986, as we were heading into the Third Century Campaign, I became director of major gifts. It was the first formal fundraising program at the College dedicated exclusively to large gifts, and it was labor-intensive—more reliant on staff than on volunteers. Our staff also work with an alumni body that is much more widely dispersed geographically and disproportionately younger. Younger alumni tend to be much more mobile, which makes it more challenging for our office to keep in touch with them.

AR: Technology must play a larger role than it ever has.

SB: Here’s just one example. Let’s say you’re a class agent, and you want to make some fundraising calls to your classmates on a Saturday afternoon. But you don’t know if Mary has made her Alumni Fund gift yet. You can log in to our secure system and find out the answer, in real time, along with her contact information and the amount of money she’s given in years past. We developed these online tools after discussions with the Alumni Fund vice chairs, who pushed us in a very positive way to get better, and now other schools are emulating them. I should add that the highly personal requests volunteers make of their classmates have kept us among the top in the nation in terms of percentage of alumni making at least one gift per year to the College. We’ve consistently been in the 60-plus percent range, and more than 75 percent of alumni made at least one gift to The Williams Campaign that just ended. There are only about four or five schools in the country that can claim that level of support. The national average is about 20 percent.

AR: What challenges might your successor face in maintaining that level of participation—not just in regard to fundraising, but also in terms of volunteerism?

SB: We’re already seeing demographic and technological changes that affect how alumni relate to the College. With the advent of social networking, for instance, we no longer play an exclusive role in keeping alumni connected to one another. So we’re developing an application to allow us to engage them through their own Facebook profiles, and

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**CAREER AT A GLANCE**

1964: Bachelor’s degree with honors in American history & literature, Williams College
1966: Master’s in teaching, Wesleyan University
1967-69: U.S. Navy lieutenant, junior grade
1969-77: Administrative positions in the Master of Arts in Teaching Program, Brown University
1977-82: Director of teacher education, University of New Hampshire
1980: Master’s in public administration, University of New Hampshire
1982-84: Assistant director of development for corporate/foundation support, University of New Hampshire
1984-86: Director of the 25th reunion program & parent giving, Williams
1986-91: Director of major gifts, Williams
1991-95: Director of development (and later alumni relations and public affairs), Amherst College
1995-2009: VP for Alumni Relations and Development, Williams

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In 1984, Williams was just transitioning from keeping biographical and financial information on thousands of index cards to a computerized system called Advance. Advance streamlined alumni record-keeping and donor tracking for the Office of Alumni Relations and Development, and the software the company developed at Williams has gone on to lead the industry.

**Measurable Results**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ALUMNI RECORDS</th>
<th>1984</th>
<th>2008</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Paper files, in linear feet</td>
<td>280</td>
<td>620</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Computerized, required disk space</td>
<td>300MB</td>
<td>20GB</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| ELECTRONIC REPORTS AVAILABLE TO VOLUNTEERS | 0 | 38 |
| ELECTRONIC FINANCIAL TRANSACTIONS        | N/A | 26,515 |
| ELECTRONIC ALUMNI CONTACT REPORTS        | N/A | 59,974 |
In years to come, the Williams alumni population will become increasingly diverse as a result of the College’s efforts to recruit the best students regardless of their geographic location, background or ability to pay. Here’s a portrait of the alumni body as of January 2009:

<table>
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<tr>
<th>GEOGRAPHIC DISTRIBUTION</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>New England</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>West</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New York</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mid-Atlantic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Midwest</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Southwest</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Foreign/Other</td>
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<tr>
<td>Non-contiguous</td>
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<table>
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<tr>
<th>ETHNIC DISTRIBUTION</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>White</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Did not report</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black/African-American</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asian/Pacific Islander</td>
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<tr>
<td>Latino</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mixed Heritage</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Native American</td>
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<tr>
<th>DECADE DISTRIBUTION</th>
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<tr>
<td>1920s</td>
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<td>1990s</td>
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<td>2000s</td>
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I’m sure we’ll have to continue to adapt as social media evolve. Also, some of our most powerful programming—reunions, annual giving, etc.—has been organized by class year. Now alumni are organizing themselves according to their own particular interests, including clubs, sports and majors, so it’s possible that the class year will recede in importance. Another trend that will undoubtedly affect how our office operates is the increasing diversity of our alumni population. As the College continues to recruit the best students from various countries, regions and socioeconomic backgrounds, we’re looking at a very different alumni body in the coming decades. One size will no longer fit all. We’re going to need to intensify our efforts to understand more fully how alumni want to relate to the College and what they need from us to do that, rather than saying, “Here’s the way we think you ought to do it.” It’s a logical part of the evolution of Williams, and it will involve a lot of listening and willingness to adapt. We’ve made the cognitive leap, but how does that translate programmatically?

AR: What would you say is the biggest difference in the Office of Alumni Relations and Development between your first day of work at Williams and now?

SB: When I got here, Williams had a smaller, more homogeneous alumni body. More than 80 percent were male. Most had come to Williams from the Northeast. So it was a much narrower universe. But for me the similarities between then and now stand out: an unwavering commitment to quality, the sense of place, the intimacy of scale, the shared values of a liberal arts education that retains at its center the centuries-old symbol of Mark Hopkins and the log. Williams remains an intensely personal, people-centered place. More diverse, to be sure, and striving to be inclusive. Williams tries harder than any institution I’ve ever known to live up to its ideals. No wonder we all love it so much.

AR: What do you look back on most fondly as you prepare to retire?

SB: To be able to spend the majority of one’s professional career as a part of the Williams community, working with and for Williams alumni, faculty, students and staff—especially the extraordinary group in the Office of Alumni Relations and Development. It’s been a rare privilege, one for which I am deeply grateful.

Interview conducted by Denise D’Iulio, a freelance writer and editor based in Cranford, N.J. Data provided by Advancement Information Systems.
The first collegiate baseball game to make the record books did not, in fact, involve bases at all. Instead, four stakes driven into the ground at the corners of a square infield marked the setting for a "vintage" game commemorating the match-up between Williams and Amherst 150 years ago.

Back then Williams lost to Amherst 73-32 after taking a 9-2 lead early in the game. And so began one of the oldest rivalries in baseball—at the birthplace of college baseball, Pittsfield, Mass.

This past May, just a few blocks from the site of that first game, the Ephs and Lord Jeffs met up again for a 45-minute exhibition at Wahconah Park. This time around, the squads were composed of alumni (Williamsfolk spanned the classes of 1979 to 1989).

For anyone used to modern baseball, including the players themselves, it took some time to adjust to the baggy 19th century uniforms and old-time equipment (which did not include gloves) used in the commemorative game. Even more confounding were the so-called "Massachusetts Rules"—the underhand pitching, the one-out-per-side innings, the ability to strike out a runner by pegging him with the ball and the fact that the entire field was considered fair territory.

Though Amherst scored seven runs in its first at-bat, Williams soon caught on to the rules, scoring four homers during an 11-run fourth inning.

The Ephs ultimately swept the weekend, winning the exhibition game 19-17, a varsity men’s baseball match-up 8-5 (the last scheduled game of the season) and a commemorative 150th anniversary chess match.

"Any time you see that 'A' on the other guys' jerseys, it gets the competitive juices flowing again," said Williams outfielder Rob Coakley '86, who hit a grand slam to cap the Ephs' big inning and made a bare-handed catch in left field for the final out of the game. "It felt like we exorcised some demons today."
“Violent” is a word frequently used to describe the content of Laylah Ali’s ’91 artwork. But the Williams professor dismisses that characterization: “Given what sort of violence is commonplace in popular culture, I think what happens in my paintings is relatively calm.” Perhaps it is more accurate to say that her paintings and drawings, though straightforward and intense, are informed by complex emotions and ideas. Her body of work is comprised of contemplations of race, power, gender, ambition, human frailty and murky politics. Pieces that at first appear cartoonish quickly lay bare their weighty concerns.

Her bold choices both of topic and technique have earned Ali solo shows at MoMA in New York, ICA in Boston, MCA in Chicago and the Contemporary Art Museum in St. Louis as well as international recognition at the 2003 Venice Biennale and 2004 Whitney Biennial.

A dual major in English and studio art, Ali found herself increasingly engaged by her art coursework during her undergraduate study at Williams. “I could bring my other interests—whether they were literary, political or personal—into my studio work,” she says. “That combination worked for me.”

Ali’s career took flight with her long-running series the Greenheads, completed between 1996 and 2005. Typical of her distinctive amalgam of medium and message, its nearly 90 paintings depict a variety of what she calls “emaciated, brown-skinned superhero types with large, green heads.” Their comic-strip features belie their serious subject matter.

While many aspects of her personal life have informed her art over the years, Ali doesn’t discuss the particulars. “I ask questions or make commentary about stories that I understand to be happening in the world,” she says. “The things that are from me and my history work together with the larger narratives. Hopefully the work gains by having a personal resonance as well as an energy that’s focused outward.”

From time to time, however, she does pull back the curtain ever so slightly. Ali says she was strongly influenced by both the physical and social environment of her native Buffalo, N.Y. The daughter of an African-American father and a white mother living in an all-white, working-class neighborhood, she became attuned to social and racial dynamics at an early age. And the city’s brutal winters left her shifting between “the harsh reality of dealing with the cold and an inner refuge of the mind,” she says. “What does one do for those seven months? I developed a kind of elaborate indoor creativity.”

That inventiveness was on full display in her recent “Notes/Drawings/Untitled Afflictions,” an exhibit of 40 drawings that incorporate text in her work for the first time in over a decade. The pieces were shown in fall 2008 at the DeCordova Museum and Sculpture Park in Lincoln, Mass., accompanied by the catalogue Note Drawings. In an interview with Ali prior to the exhibition, the Boston Globe called the words and lists she employed “as odd and provocative as the characters Ali depicts,” citing one drawing where an androgynous figure with a beard and blond ponytails bolts across the page over written lines such as “Women who have been burned up” and “Those who previously had a knife held to their throat.” The bullet-point items—both the inflammatory and the innocuous—have a variety of origins, Ali explains. Some are bits of overheard conversation and news from strangers or the media, while others are random thoughts.

The common thread throughout all of Ali’s works remains the underlying tension. “I am more interested in what leads up to a violent act and the aftermath than in the violent act itself,” she says. “More than anything, I think my work has been focused on the witness—those who witness violence and what is done with that kind of horrible knowledge.”

She currently is working on a series of paintings for 303 Gallery in New York, which represents her along with Miller Block Gallery in Boston. However, she isn’t quite ready to reveal her latest undertaking. When asked what she has planned next, Ali is as cryptic as she can be on paper: “Landscapes, maybe.”
LINGUA FRANCA

by Jim Mulvihill

Like most great nonfiction writers, Michael Erard ’90 has a knack for making readers care about topics that aren’t even on their radar screens. In the case of his first book, Um…: Slips, Stumbles, and Verbal Blunders, and What They Mean, the topic is verbal miscues that are often so minor, most of us don’t even register them. Yet he and other linguists make a strong case that these missteps can be as revealing as people’s intentional words.

In Um…, Erard explores studies of verbal blunders throughout history, “from Freud’s fascination with the slip to Allen Funt’s Candid Camera,” Publisher’s Weekly writes. But what keeps readers moving through the book’s nearly 300 pages are the frank stories of Erard’s own struggles with language woven throughout the narrative.

One endearing example of his openness comes early in the book, when he describes proposing to his girlfriend “as a blathering mess.” Though a smooth, rehearsed delivery might have sounded better, he says, it also might have obscured honest emotions that communicate feelings more effectively—a linguistic Catch-22.

His willingness to put himself at the fore, warts and all, makes Erard all the more effective at “trying to communicate academic ideas to non-academic audiences.” And yet, “The things I put in like that were things that I had to fight for,” he says. “The editor … was really very adamant that people weren’t interested in me and that I shouldn’t be writing about my own errors.”

Erard’s passion for words comes through not only in the lovely arrangements on paper but also in the time and effort he puts into the process. “The nonfiction writers that I admire are people who do long, ‘hang-out’ style kinds of reporting,” he says, noting that Lafcadio Hearn and Joseph Mitchell are two of his favorites. “That was not only the tradition I wanted to honor but the kind of writing that I wanted to do.”

Erard has been writing since around the age of 7. When he was 14, he started contributing to The Haverhill Gazette in Massachusetts. He majored in American studies at Williams and received a master’s degree in linguistics and a Ph.D. in English, both from the University of Texas, where he wrote for the Iowa-based North American Review and The Texas Observer, among other publications. Though he was offered an assistant professorship at University of Texas upon completing his doctorate, he made the difficult choice to turn it down.

Since then, Erard has built a career writing strictly about the topics that most interest him. His contributions to The New York Times have covered everything from an obscure linguistics blog (Language Log) to science-themed rock music (inspired by the band Artichoke, fronted by Timothy Sellers ’90). Recently Erard won a prestigious Dobie Paisano fellowship from UT-Austin, which awards two writers a full academic year of rent-free living in a secluded cabin on a 254-acre ranch as well as a healthy stipend. The fellowship, Erard says, is one more way he is able to preserve the autonomy he prizes “most of all.”

A desire to not be bound by the word counts of periodicals led Erard to pen Um…, and now he’s at work on a second book, about “the upper limits of the human ability to learn and speak languages.” Erard again is at the heart of the narrative, on a personal quest to meet the world’s most prolific language learners and understand to what extent their ability is inherited versus developed.

“That’s the hardest question to get at and one that presents the biggest challenge for Americans in general,” he says. “We have this natural distrust of aristocracy and this belief that anyone can do anything they want, so talking about some people being more gifted than others is a problem for us.” ■
FROM THE BOOKSHELF


SPRING BREAK STUDIES

These days, an increasing number of Williams students are using their two weeks of spring break to further their classroom studies by traveling (with or without faculty) to do fieldwork. Some of the recent destinations:

Washington, D.C.: Students in political economy professor Jim Mahon’s “Political Economy of Public Policy Issues” are required to travel to the nation’s capital during spring break to conduct interviews as part of their semester-long research projects.

Galapagos Islands: As part of their spring tutorial “Galapagos Islands Field Geology and Biology,” geosciences professors Markus Johnson and Paul Karabinos took students to “ground level”—the site that inspired Charles Darwin—to observe how regional tectonics, volcanoes, species dispersal and evolution relate to each other.

A Reggae Concert: Political science professor Neil Roberts strongly encourages students in his “Rastaforall: Dread, Politics, Agency” course to “observe their chosen artist in action to assess his or her impact on the audience” as part of a group project on lyrics and politics.

New Orleans: Students in the political science/Africana studies course “Race, Culture and Incarceration” traveled south with Joy James, the John B. And John T. McCoy Presidential Professor of Humanities and College Professor in Political Science, in 2006 to take part in Hurricane Katrina recovery work.

List provided by the Office of Experiential Education.
Jim: “I am experiences/ideas/feelings gathered over 71 years that grow in a field—like flowers/grasses/trees over the seasons of life. Some of the seeds were planted at Williams in the early ’50s. New seeds are being planted today.”

Ed: “Upstate New York small-town boy who returned to his rural roots as a country lawyer and judge. Father, husband and lover of wilderness. Descendant of Ephraim Amidon, a private at the Battle of Bennington.”

THE REV JIM SYMONS ’56 (LEFT) AND ED AMIDON ’56

“As a student: agitating for change, for queer students, for women, for students of color. In the classroom: transformed by new ideas. As a professor: teaching queer theory, women’s and gender studies, tutorials on Whitman and Dickinson. Working to sustain community. Mother, avid cook, yard sale, and, recently, disabled. Never forgetting how hard it was.”

KATIE KENT ’88, WILLIAMS ASSOCIATE PROF. OF ENGLISH AND CHAIR OF WOMEN’S AND GENDER STUDIES, WITH HER DAUGHTER RUTH WEAVER, AGE 3