T.C. Boyle shares his obsession with the written word.

PLUS: USC College professors and best-selling alumni authors invite us into their worlds.
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BY M.G. LORD
It’s all about words, words and more words.

Silent screen star Norma Desmond, played by legendary actress Gloria Swanson in the classic movie *Sunset Boulevard*, did not much care for them. She bashed the new “talkies,” claiming words would “strangle the business.” Her prediction completely missed its mark.

Words are powerful: They can be daggers, they can take hearts away, they can start and end wars, and they can be arranged in an endless combination of nuanced ways.

In this issue we feature stories about and by several of the most masterful writers and poets in contemporary times, including both distinguished professors and superbly talented alumni. Whether writing fiction, nonfiction, poetry, news stories, blogs or translating the written word to stage, words are fundamental to human communication and connection.

Great writers make their craft look easy, but it is an art of continuous revision in striving for perfection. Even the masters can anguish over language. Ernest Hemingway wrote multiple endings to *The Old Man and the Sea*, the novella for which he won the Nobel Prize in Literature, before settling on the final one.

As you will read inside this issue, writers approach their own work, both practice and process, based on their temperaments. Some write early in the morning, some write at night, some outline their plots in meticulous detail, and some may be surprised at the twists, turns and endings of their stories.

Expertise in writing across disciplines has grown in importance in the past few decades, especially in science and technology. With the ongoing transformation of news media today, we see an explosion of blogs and new social networking channels emerging, which calls for a need to establish writing standards and best practices for the Web. Whatever the medium, great writing is great reading.

This issue’s theme is most fitting as 2009 celebrates the 125th anniversary of USC College’s first magazine, *The College Review*. We hope you enjoy the latest issue of this longstanding tradition.

Are you ready for your close-up?

—Susan Andrews and Emily Cavalcanti, Office of College Communication

On the Cover

T.C. Boyle, USC Distinguished Professor of English, looks out the window of his Frank Lloyd Wright home toward a serene wooded landscape that presents as a rugged and stunning garden. The effect of humankind’s interaction with nature and the environment is prominent in many of the prolific writer’s works.

Read more on page 32.

PHOTO BY PHIL CHANNING
Read a great book lately?

A new year brings a new edition of our award-winning *USC College Magazine*. I must confess to a special satisfaction in turning the spotlight on this extraordinary collection of writers, many of whom are on our faculty and others who were taught by our faculty.

Great writing can transform the world, construct civilizations, educate populations and entertain the masses. Great writing is still the best measure of clear thinking and the most effective instrument of rational persuasion.

In my own personal experience, great writing allows us to reflect on the most fundamental questions of human existence, and maybe more importantly, come into intimate association with the mind and soul of another person.

We all hope for many pleasures in life, but for me, outside of family and work, my life has been most enriched by encounters with the works of great writers.

I was a teenager at a time before computers and cell phones, and it was natural, even expected, that I would always be reading. My parents were not in a position to spoil me too much, but they promised that they would always buy me a book if I wanted one. And I always wanted one.

I still use certain books and writers as mile-markers for my life: Salinger as a teenager, then in college the canonical group of American novelists, and then the discovery of my favorite writer, Vladimir Nabokov, then Tolstoy, Proust, Roth, Milosz, Stevens, Ford, Austen — too many to mention.

Nothing makes me happier than discovering a new writer whose work I love. (Last summer it was Aleksandar Hemon.) If you haven’t done it in a while then I highly recommend it, and I am happy to say that some of the best candidates for writers that you will love (if you don’t already) are featured in these pages.

You will also read about Chinese fossils, dinosaurs, environmental solutions, international student experiences, new leadership for the USC Shoah Foundation Institute, foreign policy, Theological Monk, elections and polls, comic books, California history — even a College Ph.D. graduate who created a fictional tribal language for a Hollywood blockbuster. You’ll hear about internationally renowned anthropologist and conservationist Jane Goodall, and you’ll be introduced to some amazing students and faculty who joined the College community this year.

There is one other story that I want to highlight. Working closely with Dan Schnur, director of the Jesse M. Unruh Institute of Politics, and faculty in the Department of Political Science, I entered into an agreement with the Los Angeles Times to conduct a series of polls between now and the November state election. The University of Southern California College of Letters, Arts & Sciences/Los Angeles Times Poll will be big news throughout 2010. It is a great opportunity for College faculty and students to address important questions facing the state, and to conduct innovative research on political participation and elections. But I also support this project because I hope that we might be able to contribute to resolving some of the serious challenges facing California. So keep an eye out for the poll, and when new results are announced and discussed, please take pride that it is the USC College community that has made it possible.

One final reminder: Even though in this issue we honor the power of the written word, we also have a wonderful (and also award-winning) new Web site, containing engaging multimedia. Please visit college.usc.edu regularly. And if you see, at the end of an intriguing magazine story, a reference to an accompanying video, I would urge you to check it out. You won’t be disappointed!

Happy New Year and Happy Reading,

HOWARD GILLMAN
DEAN OF USC COLLEGE
ANNA H. BING DEAN’S CHAIR
Howard Gillman, dean of USC College, appointed a new leadership team for the USC Shoah Foundation Institute for Visual History and Education.

Dr. Stephen Smith became the institute’s new executive director in August. Kim Simon, who served as interim executive director this past year, became the new managing director.

“As one of the world’s leading advocates for Holocaust education and prevention, Stephen possesses the leadership qualities, scholarly credentials, and personal dedication necessary to make the institute a global force in promoting its mission to overcome prejudice, intolerance and bigotry — and the suffering they cause — through the educational use of the institute’s visual history testimonies,” said Gillman, who chaired the search committee.

Smith joins USC after serving as founding director of The Holocaust Centre, Britain’s first dedicated Holocaust memorial and education center. He also chairs the United Kingdom’s Holocaust Memorial Day Trust, and has been involved in memorial projects around the world, including the creation of the Kigali Memorial Centre in Rwanda.

As the institute’s managing director, Simon administers programs, oversees research and documentation activities, and provides guidance on strategic planning and fundraising activities.

“Kim has done extraordinary work for the institute, both as program director and as interim executive director this past year,” Gillman said. “Her appointment as managing director ensures that the institute will benefit even more from her extensive experience and strong leadership.”

Simon has been with the institute since its inception. After coordinating the institute’s efforts to collect interviews worldwide, she established its office of global partnerships and international programs, creating and developing its international agenda, and overseeing its work in 17 countries. She also guided its global communications efforts and served as executive in charge of production of the institute’s two most recent documentary films.

Postdoctoral Distinguished Teaching Fellows Program Launched

In a step designed to further enhance professionalization opportunities for outstanding doctoral students, USC College has created a new Postdoctoral Distinguished Teaching Fellows Program.

The fellows — selected for their outstanding achievements and promise — will each teach three courses annually while completing their dissertations for publications. In addition to ongoing mentoring by departmental faculty, the fellows will work with the College’s directors of faculty development to ensure that they are equipped to enter the tenure-track job market.

“We want to give our most outstanding Ph.D. students every opportunity to develop as scholars,” said Howard Gillman, dean of the College. “We also want to make sure that they are well-prepared to compete in an increasingly challenging job market.”

Courses proposed for the program must fulfill a prior established need for undergraduate enrollment. Each fellow will be given a distinguished title honoring a former College professor.

“Sharon Withell of the Institute of International Education on USC College’s inclusion in its Top 20 list of campuses with the most international students in 2008–09, and its Top 20 list of campuses with the most students studying abroad in 2007–08.”
There Is Hope: The Proof Is in the Plume

JANE GOODALL ADVISES: “TAKE ADVANTAGE OF EVERY OPPORTUNITY AND NEVER GIVE UP.”

Dr. Jane Goodall, internationally renowned anthropologist and conservationist, filled Bovard Auditorium on Oct. 6 with both a capacity crowd and, more importantly, a renewed sense of hope for a world in need.

Goodall has been a distinguished adjunct professor and co-director of the Jane Goodall Research Center at USC College for 19 years. She also is an adjunct faculty member in USC’s Division of Occupational Science and Occupational Therapy. Goodall began her career in Gombe Stream National Park (Tanzania) in 1960.

At her USC talk, Goodall discussed her long history of studying chimpanzees. “With the discovery of the chimpanzee genome, we learned that our DNA differs from theirs by only 1 percent,” she said. “Chimpanzees can use computer touch pads, solve complex mathematical problems, and learn more than 400 signs in American Sign Language.”

Having traveled and spoken to people in 64 countries about her research, Goodall shared several of her unique experiences that paint a vivid image of a world environment in peril.

Goodall said that in her travels 300 days a year, she encounters incredible people with passion in their hearts. She told the Bovard crowd, “You need to know that you should never give up.”

In telling a few success stories, Goodall emphasized the difference that each person or a small group of people can make in saving other creatures. She brought this point home in a story centering on the California condor, which was quickly approaching extinction in the 1980s, when only three remained in the world. As a result of a few passionate people, 300 of these amazing birds now fly freely in California, Arizona, Utah and New Mexico. She held up a big feather that showed the proof is in the plume.

Her protégé and collaborator of 19 years, Craig Stanford, professor of anthropology and biological sciences, and co-director of the Jane Goodall Research Center at USC College, said, “Jane Goodall is not only a pioneering scientist, she is also a world-renowned environmental activist. USC is very fortunate to have the long affiliation with her that we have enjoyed, and from which our students have benefited.”

VIEW THE ONLINE VIDEO at college.usc.edu/goodall

“Each student returned a different person. And in the future, they may become more involved activists or better-informed policymakers. They now clearly understand the impact of global politics on millions of people’s lives.”

KOSAL PATH, LECTURER IN USC COLLEGE’S SCHOOL OF INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS, ON HIS RETURN TO CAMBODIA WITH 10 UNDERGRADUATE STUDENTS TO RESEARCH THE 1975 TO 1979 GENOCIDE. THEIR OBJECTIVE WAS TO ASSES WHETHER THE UNITED NATIONS-BACKED TRIBUNAL MET CAMBODIAN SURVIVORS’ EXPECTATIONS FOR JUSTICE AND NATIONAL RECONCILIATION. THE TRIP TOOK PLACE UNDER THE AUSPICES OF THE PROBLEMS WITHOUT PASSPORTS PROGRAM, WHICH INCLUDES SIX FIELD-RESEARCH COURSES IN WHICH STUDENTS TRAVEL TO VARIOUS COUNTRIES TO EXAMINE ISSUES FIRSTHAND.

VIEW THE ONLINE VIDEO at college.usc.edu/cambodia
The Los Angeles Times and the University of Southern California College of Letters, Arts & Sciences are jointly sponsoring a series of six, statewide public opinion polls that began on Nov. 8 and will continue throughout California’s crucial 2010 elections for governor and U.S. Senate. This is the first such cooperative venture of this magnitude between a major newspaper and a major research university in the state of California.

The University of Southern California College of Letters, Arts & Sciences/Los Angeles Times Poll will be taken at regular intervals through December 2010, and will survey California residents’ attitudes on a wide range of political, policy, social and cultural issues.

“We are extremely pleased to team up with The Times to offer in-depth insight and analysis of the historic 2010 campaign,” said Howard Gillman, dean of the College. “The partnership will provide unique experiential learning opportunities for USC College students, and will also enhance the ability of our faculty to address issues that are critical to California’s future.”

Several undergraduate and graduate classes within the College will include discussions relating to the drafting, analysis and dissemination of the poll. In addition, a working group of faculty from the College’s Department of Political Science will coordinate with The Times as the project moves forward. Dan Schnur, director of the College’s Jesse M. Unruh Institute of Politics, and professor of political science Jane Junn will coordinate the on-campus aspects of the poll. Other professors of political science who will be involved include department chair Ann Crigler, Ange-Marie Hancock, Ricardo Ramirez, Nick Weller and Janelle Wong.

“The Times is pleased to join forces with the College to provide our readers with a deep understanding of the candidates and issues that will shape the state’s future,” said Times Editor Russ Stanton. “In a state as large and diverse as California, accurate and timely polling is a key tool to allow people to learn what their fellow Californians think about major issues. Making that sort of information available is a central part of our journalistic mission.”

At The Times, the process of preparing the polls will tap a team of experienced editors and reporters who have deep knowledge of the state and its politics. In addition, ‘Times’ editorial staffers will speak at a series of College-based events currently being planned.

“Dinosaurs are old and bizarre; they had weird head gear; they were fearsome predators; and they were of colossal size. We are fascinated by what scares us; yet, we feel safe within the confines of a museum.”

LUIS CHIAPPE, DIRECTOR AND CURATOR OF THE NATURAL HISTORY MUSEUM OF LOS ANGELES COUNTY ON WHAT IT IS THAT FASCINATES US ABOUT DINOSAURS. CHIAPPE AND DAVID BOTTJER, PROFESSOR OF EARTH AND BIOLOGICAL SCIENCES IN USC COLLEGE, HAVE TEAMED UP TO ESTABLISH THE COLLEGE’S CENTER FOR CHINESE FOSSIL DISCOVERIES. THE CENTER’S MISSION IS TO SEEK NEW PARTNERSHIPS WITH CHINESE INSTITUTIONS, AUGMENT THE LEVEL OF RESEARCH BASED ON CHINESE FOSSILS, AND DISCOVER NEW WAYS TO CONDUCT INCREASED RESEARCH AND INVOLVE MORE STUDENTS.

VIEW THE ONLINE VIDEO at college.usc.edu/fossils
A Slice of College Life
USC COLLEGE GIVES HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS A FLAVOR OF THE SCHOLARLY WORLD DURING SUMMER SEMINARS.

Inside a science lab at USC, two high school students stared at a preserved sheep kidney on a tray. Looking like a giant chili bean, the organ is roughly the size of a computer mouse.

Wearing blue rubber gloves, April Watts held the scalpel over the specimen, then hesitated.

“Do you want me to slice it?” asked Jessica Gonzalez, her lab partner.

“Go ahead,” Watts replied, sounding relieved.

Mindful of their career choice, the teenagers laughed at their squeamishness. Both want to become doctors. They knew the exercise in the lab of Albert Herrera, professor of biological sciences in USC College, was meant to give them insight into the human kidney—a crucial organ that keeps the blood flowing and regulates fluid in the body.

Called “BodyWorks: Human Physiology in Health and Disease,” the course was offered to high school students as part of the annual USC Summer Seminar series. It was among five USC College courses offered last summer that gave high school students a taste of college academic life.

Each three-unit course—also involving humanities and social sciences—can be used toward an undergraduate degree at USC or another major institution.

“High school students applying to colleges have to show that they’re engaged in learning and that they’re using their summers to develop their interests and passions,” said Susan Kamei, associate dean for advanced and professional programs in the College. “The program also helps students explore various career paths they might be interested in.”

Last summer, the four-week program for the first time was open to Los Angeles-area high school students, who commuted to and from campus. National and international students stayed in residence halls on campus.

“We want to start teaching our younger generation early to be innovative and to think aggressively,” said Suh-Pyng Ku, vice provost of continuing education and summer programs. “This is what college is about, to think the impossible and to make it happen.”

The Power Is Theirs
THE WRIGLEY INSTITUTE FOR ENVIRONMENTAL STUDIES REACHES OUT TO SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA YOUTH.

Edison Challenge
What if you had to walk miles for a sip of clean water?
Six Gabrielson High School students and teacher Michael Winters considered this question and took action. They collected 250,000 glass containers and aluminum cans, and used the recycling money to purchase LifeStraws, hand-held water purifiers that function like straws. The filters, which last up to a year, will be sent to developing countries.

The group took first place in the 2009 Edison Challenge, the environmental science competition that is a partnership of the USC Wrigley Institute for Environmental Studies, housed in USC College, and Edison International.

The other winning team, from Eastshore Elementary School in Irvine, Calif., built a composter from a 30-gallon trash can, and developed a program at its school to gather and compost green waste from student lunches.

“A wonderful aspect of Edison Challenge is that it engages students to think about novel solutions to vital issues such as water and energy that greatly impact society,” said Wrigley Institute Director Donal Manahan of the challenge that began in 2006.

This year’s competition attracted 160 teams comprising more than 600 students and 80 teachers. First-place teams won a week at the USC Wrigley Marine Science Center on Catalina Island.

QuikSCience Challenge
The Wrigley Institute sponsors a science challenge in partnership with Quiksilver, Inc., and the Quiksilver Foundation. The QuikSCience Challenge is a competition for teams of middle school and high school students who create projects and portfolios on an ocean science subject.

The QuikSCience Challenge for 2010 has registered teams from 37 high schools and 32 middle schools, primarily from school districts in Los Angeles and Orange counties. The recruiting effort for this year’s challenge attracted 36 schools that had participated in previous competitions and another 33 schools that are fielding teams for the first time.

All in all, this year’s QuikSCience Challenge has attracted more than 580 students on 98 student teams. Winning teams will earn trips to the USC campus on Catalina Island.
The College Commons, a unique series of programs, talks, seminars and events organized by USC College faculty, has entered its third semester of programming. The series’ new theme, “Maps and Measures: On the Boundaries of What We Know,” asks: How do we measure and understand the world around us? What are the limits of the human? Where are the frontiers of knowledge? And how do we know when we are crossing them?

Launched in January 2009, the series provides a means of collaboration across disciplines and invites experts from around the world to join the College’s own resident academics in thought-provoking discussions.

“The College Commons, a signature College program now in its second year, continues to bring College students, faculty and alumni together as a community through innovative, diverse and creative programming,” said Howard Gillman, dean of the College.

“The excitement that everyone at USC feels about ideas is palpable in every one of our gatherings.”

Fall 2009 events included a series of informal lunch conversations about the Nobel Prizes; a talk by Dame A.S. Byatt, author of *Possession*, who spoke of the connections between religion, Darwin and fiction; a discussion with novelist Russell Banks and film director Atom Egoyan, who collaborated on the film *The Sweet Hereafter*; and a party celebrating the anniversary of the publication of *The Origin of Species*.

In Spring 2010, The College Commons will host events such as an interdisciplinary discussion on intellectual property; a talk by Lorraine Daston, director of the Max Planck Institute in Berlin; and a reading from Robert Pinsky, former United States Poet Laureate.

“It’s been a joy to direct this program, if only because I get to attend such amazing events,” said Hilary Schor, professor of English, law and comparative literature, and director of The College Commons.

Schor cites the wide range of engaging topics and speakers as a foundation of the series. “We’ve had the chance to learn about the Nobel Prize winners from our own physicists, economists, chemists and literary scholars; to see slides of Vietnamese spirit rites in Orange County and Victorian railway maps; to listen to writers and artists,” she said. “The excitement that everyone at USC feels about ideas is palpable in every one of our gatherings.”
“Taking a person’s cultural background into consideration is no different from judges taking into consideration a defendant’s gender, age and mental state.”

ALISON DUNDES RENTELN of political science in a July 2 Wall Street Journal article about a defendant’s cultural background gaining traction as a legal defense.

“Right now, outbursts are getting a lot of attention, but sooner or later, Congress will have to work together.”


“Hollywood films are being distributed in China, but Hollywood isn’t making a profit out of it.”

STANLEY ROSEN of political science in a Sept. 23 Los Angeles Times article about China appealing a World Trade Organization ruling that it broke international rules by restricting imports of movies, music and books.

“[W]e’ve shifted from single-earner to dual-earner families. We’ve shifted from a manufacturing to a 24/7 service economy. As we’ve shifted, the things that were set up no longer work.”

LYNNE CASPER of sociology in a Sept. 29 Washington Post article about work-life balance.

“The problem has always been sequencing. Both sides agree the deal is nukes for normalization; the problem is who goes first.”

DAVID KANG of international relations in an Oct. 6 Christian Science Monitor article about North Korea’s new readiness to return to stalled international talks about its nuclear program, provided prior negotiations with the United States go well.

Faculty Opinion

“The challenge for U.S. policy in the Americas is to identify, nurture and pursue shared interests with the countries of the region and to reduce and manage conflicts of interest.”

ABRAHAM LOWENTHAL, Robert F. Erburu Professor of Ethics, Globalization and Development, and professor of international relations, in his Aug. 25 Huffington Post op-ed on how the United States should respond to the ouster of Honduras’ president.

“I felt so violated when Gerber apparently plucked pieces of my hard-won narrative off the history tree. Most galling were the quotes from long-dead sources presented ... as if they had risen from the grave.”

M.G. LORD of the Master of Professional Writing Program in her Aug. 30 L.A. Times op-ed about plagiarism and author Robin Gerber’s failure to cite Lord’s book Forever Barbie.

“Important progress can be made now on health care; after the most significant reforms in a generation are signed into law, [Obama] can still come back to the negotiating table and continue to move forward.”

DAN SCHNUR, director of the Jesse M. Unruh Institute of Politics, in his Aug. 30 Washington Post op-ed on ways for President Obama to regain his political footing.

“Simply put, explorers fascinate children (and other nonacademic readers) but rarely make their way inside the walls of the university.”

PETER MANCALL of history and anthropology in his Sept. 14 Chronicle of Higher Education op-ed on how schoolchildren likely know more about Henry Hudson than adults do.
Nothing routine

USC College’s new group of freshmen, the Class of 2013, is extraordinary. Some are entering the university already world travelers. They are not only intelligent but talented; they are dancers, singers, actors and musicians. They live life with gusto and have an unquenchable thirst for knowledge. Many have one common characteristic: They are young philanthropists. Take Damaris Garcia, who helped build a water pipeline in Guatemala. Or Erik Peterson, who volunteered in the slums of Ecuador. Or Scarlett Royston, who taught children about public health in the Dominican Republic. These students and three others profiled are among 1,800 incoming freshmen and transfer students, the newest members of the Trojan Family. Of 18,331 freshman applicants to the College, 24 percent were admitted.

JAYME “MEA” TSUTSUSE:
A Savvy Sojourner

Jayme “Mea” Tsutsuse knows what live termites found deep in the Ecuadorian Amazon taste like. A little like pine.
She also knows the taste of Ecuadorian ants. Lemony.
While hiking the Amazon jungle, her Ecuadorian guide pointed out termite and ant nests. The students did what local indigenous people have been doing for ages. They ate the tiny creatures.
“I’ve always been pretty adventurous,” the second generation Trojan said. “And I find a lot of happiness traveling.”

But Tsutsuse’s monthlong trip last summer wasn’t only about hiking, climbing icy Cotopaxi, white-water rafting and swing jumping off bridges. She traveled with International Student Volunteers, Inc.
Staying with a family in Machalilla, a fishing village midway along the Ecuadorian
coastline, she and others taught children English and educated them about a clean environment.

Here’s one reason Tsutsuse feels strongly about preserving a beautiful environment: She was raised in stunning Hawaii. She and her family moved from Oahu to El Dorado Hills in Northern California five years ago.

Prior to living in California, where her father, Wayne, is a dentist, the family resided in Hawaii. There, her parents worked in a family tourist business. Wayne Tsutsuse, who graduated from the USC School of Dentistry, was born and raised in Hawaii. His family migrated from Japan and Jayme is half Japanese.

Harris took the advice and at 18, became the youngest member in the committee’s history.

“I learned how many boards and committees it takes to get one thing passed,” said Harris, who, as his high school’s student body president, had spoken before the City Council regarding the committee’s proposed environmental protection plan.

“And I learned how, frankly, inefficient government can be.”

He also learned he enjoyed fighting for green causes. The experience inspired him to major in environmental studies. He’s long been interested in preserving the environment. Prior to his committee appointment, he founded a recycling task force at his school.

Right now, he’s considering becoming a paleontologist, environmental attorney or starting his own green business. Or a doctor or dentist.

“I’ve loved going to the dentist all my life,” he said. “My mom suggested I think about med school.”

His mother is good at persuasion, he said. When he was six, she got him to take tap dancing lessons, which he continued for years.

“It was intimidating being in a class full of girls,” he said. “But I liked tapping, it was cool. I feel that I have a bit of rhythm in me that I can express with my feet.”

He went on to dance and sing in several school musicals. He also plays the piano. He was a dancing saltshaker in Beauty and the Beast, and landed the lead role of Bobby Strong in Urinetown, a performance that earned him the 2008 MACY Award for Highest Achievement.

By his first week at USC, he had joined the rowing club.

“I’ve always wanted to be in the Olympics,” he said. “Maybe I can do that if I train hard enough.”

Jayme “Mea” Tsutsuse bundles up in the chilly weather outside a cathedral during a Sunday morning Mass in Baños de Agua Santa in the central Ecuadorian Andes.
ETHAN RUBIO:

Book Smart and Street Smart

At 18, Ethan Rubio has been a world traveler for half his life and to date has visited 40 countries.

His empathy toward the downtrodden began at age 11 when he watched young children begging on the streets of Israel’s West Bank.

“It was such a shock to see so much poverty,” said Rubio of Palos Verdes Estates, Calif. The gypsy children in Eastern Europe also broke his heart. “The children my age wearing rags, looking malnourished, really got to me.”

In high school, he became a regional representative for a volunteer youth coalition and helped to organize a festival for low-income children in the South Bay.

Rubio wants a service-oriented career and may have narrowed it down to becoming a doctor or lawyer. Right now, he’s majoring in philosophy and biology.

Judging by his past, he may be a statesman in the making. In addition to volunteering, Rubio was co-secretary general for his school’s Model United Nations, vice president of the Junior Statesmen of America, and a pretrial lawyer for the mock trial team.

So what would someone as ambitious as Rubio do in his spare time?

Build computers from scratch.

He’s quick to add that he also plays basketball, but don’t even think he shoots hoops to mask his intellectual image.

“I don’t care what other people think about me,” Rubio said. “I never live my life by other people’s standards.”

The only people who influence him are his parents, who have worked hard for all they have. His father, Edmundo, emigrated from the Philippines to the United States, where he met his mother, Aurora, whose family had migrated from Mexico. In the Philippines, Edmundo Rubio’s parents were farmers and storeowners. Edmundo, the first in his family to attend college, is a doctor. Aurora Rubio is a nurse.

“My parents came from humble beginnings,” Rubio said. “That has always made me appreciate things all the more.”

DAMARIS GARCIA:

Giving the Gift of Health

The daughter of a Guatemalan handyman, Damaris Garcia grew up in Inglewood and attended the rough-and-tumble Lennox Middle School.

Her high California Achievement Test scores drew the attention of volunteers from Richstone Educational Enterprise Project. The organization mentors bright students from Lennox, which has a 65 percent dropout rate.

They help exceptional students enroll in the area’s top private high schools.

By ninth grade, Garcia was taking a bus across county to Palos Verdes Peninsula to attend the elite Chadwick School, where she was one of three Latina students.

“It was a culture shock,” Garcia said. “I came from a school where 95 percent of students were Hispanic.”

When Garcia sought out the school’s Hispanic Culture Club, she learned that the group’s only Latina was its president.

“She said to me very bluntly,” Garcia recounted. “You have to join the Hispanic Culture Club and in two years when I graduate, you’ll be president.”

And she did. As president, Garcia organized an “International Peace for Kids” festival for foster children. Her love of children and caring nature prompted her to major in biological sciences as preparation to become a doctor.

Her career choice gelled when she volunteered in Guatemala a few summers ago. She traveled to a village of 300 people, a 40-minute drive from San Mateo Ixtatán, in the region of Huehuetenango. There, she helped build a water pipeline.

She chose Guatemala to connect with her father’s roots. Her mother had emigrated from Honduras.

In the village, there was no electricity or running water. There was one road and no one had a car. The closest town was a two-hour walk, the closest hospital a six-hour drive. For water, people walked an hour to the natural springs.

“There were so many little children running around,” she said. “It’s a very high altitude, very cold. Technically, we were inside a cloud. The children were barefooted; their lips and cheeks, chapped.

“Seeing these children and their lack of health care affected me. I thought the best way to help them would be to help give them health.”
ERIK PETERSON:

In It Together

Erik Peterson was volunteering in the slums outside Guayaquil, Ecuador, when he spotted something that made him feel as if he were living in a parallel world.

Visiting a home, he watched as an indigenous woman opened her oven packed with pots and pans. The homemaker pulled out a cast iron pan—or *comal*. It was a small but significant likeness to the habits of his mother, who stores her cookware inside her oven and has the same *comal*.

But he and his family live a very different life, 4,208 miles away in the Portland, Ore., suburbs.

“If not for fate, this woman could have been my mother,” Peterson said. “I realized that fundamentally, regardless of culture, economic status and beliefs, we’re all the same.”

Peterson had been volunteering this past summer for the Catholic organization Rostro de Cristo. The new Trojan, whose mother’s family emigrated from Spain and Italy, speaks Spanish. He wants to merge his triple interests in Spanish, traveling and humanitarianism.

He raised the money for his Ecuador trip through violin performances. He’s been playing the violin since age 8 and was a member of the Metropolitan Youth Symphony in Portland.

At Jesuit High School, Peterson was president of the Spanish National Honor Society and Global Perspectives Club, and was a Model United Nations member. For a week, he lived on the streets during an educational homeless immersion program.

He’s also an actor and singer. He performed in high school and community theater productions, among them *Cats* and *The Secret Garden*.

You’re probably wondering, but can he dance?

Yes. He’s been ballroom dancing for years: swing, waltz, tango, you name it. “Ballroom dancing was definitely my mother’s idea,” he said with a laugh.

If that’s not enough, he also cooks. At his high school, he founded the Iron Chef Club. His friends say his chicken saltimbocca is *magnifica*.

SCARLETT ROYSTON:

Move Over, Mr. President

Ask Scarlett Royston, who is half African American and half white, if she feels a stronger connection to either race, and she will tell you she feels a bond with both.

In fact, she has an affinity for all races.

“Actually, I feel more Latina at times,” she said with a laugh. “I have a real connection to Latinos when I’m with them.”

After spending two months in the Dominican Republic last summer, Royston speaks nearly fluent Spanish. Upon her return, she knew she would major in international relations.

Raised in Houston, she was drawn to USC College for its unparalleled School of International Relations and “Trojan Family feel,” she said.

Although neither of her parents earned a bachelor’s degree, Royston has been preparing for college since middle school. By high school, she had changed her major in her mind several times. Now, her mind is made up.

In the Dominican Republic, she volunteered for Amigos de las Américas in a barrio near Elias Piña at the border with Haiti. She lived in a home with a cement floor and tin roof. Her host mother tended cows and sold milk for a living.

Her job was to teach children about public health. Their group answered a request to build a public restroom in the center of town, raised funds, gathered materials and organized construction.

Royston saw that villagers who wanted non-farming jobs had to take a bus to the capital, Santo Domingo. This was a watershed realization for Royston, whose goal is to create businesses in developing countries.

In the long run, her mother has another dream for her eldest daughter, a cello player who was president pro tem of her high school orchestra, homecoming queen, and acted in musicals.

“My mom is pushing me to become president of the United States,” she said. “My goal is simply to make a difference in other people’s lives.”

Scarlett Royston joins children in the Dominican Republic at a portable hand-washing station.

Playing the violin since age 8, Erik Peterson was a longtime member of the Metropolitan Youth Symphony in Portland, Ore.
Back in Widener Library at Harvard University during the late '60s, an American historiographer was born. University Professor and Professor of History in USC College Kevin Starr researched and wrote five chapters for his dissertation that would constitute a good part of his first of eight books about the state of California.

“I write all the time and language courses through me like the Niagara Falls; it’s a form of thinking, of being,” Starr said.

In fact, he gets anxious if he does not write. Unlike many writers, he does not suffer from writer’s block. He has composed toward a million words of print journalism in addition to his 14 books.

According to Starr, he came of age in libraries. An inveterate reader since grade school, he loves walking into libraries, which he describes as arenas for self-navigation.

While many may assume that students today use the Internet as their sole source for research, Starr explains that the Internet is only the beginning of a paper.

“At the modern university, students begin their research on the Internet, which provides an interaction to all available resources — students can dialogue with the libraries,” he said.

Starr describes writing the first draft as somewhat painful as the writer is in the process of formulating his or her thoughts. However, it is countered by the “exquisite pleasure of revision.”

As a prolific and masterful writer, Starr extols the virtues of having a great editor. He has worked with two from Oxford University Press on whom he showers great praise: Susan Ferber and Sheldon Meyer.

Known for his command of language and stylistic flourish, Starr said, “Hundreds of thousands of years have gone into the way our brains are wired; language demands clarity, precision and vividness.” And ultimately, language demands that you get to the point as clearly as possible. It does not tolerate fuzziness.

Starr tells the story of California with the very clarity, concision and color he favors. He believes that narrative is natural to human beings and that it is “essential to individual life, culture, civic existence and anthropologically necessary for a flourishing human culture.”

“Without the memory of the past, the present loses its vitality and the future becomes frightening or obscure,” he continued.

Teaching in a liberal arts environment is important to Starr. “Today the filmmakers, broadcasters, directors and business leaders will all be extraordinarily well educated. The successful ones will have that little extra spark, the civility — the intellect and imagination that only comes from a humanities education.”

Starr currently teaches in the College’s Master of Liberal Studies program, where students are likely to be in their 40s, 50s or 60s. “Henry James wrote his finest novels after 50,” Starr said. “As people mature, there is less emphasis on their response to the drama of youth.”


A fourth-generation Californian, Starr is the State Librarian of California Emeritus and a 2006 National Humanities Medal winner.

Next up for Starr: A book on the Golden Gate Bridge and a fine press book, Clio on the Coast, which will focus on the writing of California history from 1848 to 1948.

Los Angeles County Supervisor Mark Ridley-Thomas (right) presents USC Professor of History and California State Librarian Emeritus Kevin Starr with a County Scroll for his many contributions and efforts to promote literacy and education.

In a series of eight books about the state of California, Kevin Starr takes readers on an unforgettable journey that reconstructs the past and sheds light on the present.

HISTORIAN AND AUTHOR extraordinaire

BY SUSAN ANDREWS

VIEW THE ONLINE VIDEO at college.usc.edu/starr
Filmmakers are storytellers, but they are also architects and anthropologists. They must create whole worlds in which their stories can unfold. And the worlds they create must be coherent and believable, be they a representation of our own society or an entirely new universe. Few filmmakers, however, have had the time or resources to do so with such attention to detail as James Cameron, director of such blockbusters as *Titanic*, *Aliens* and the *Terminator* films.

During the summer of 2008, I briefly experienced this aspect of Cameron when his associate, producer Jon Landau (a graduate of USC’s School of Cinematic Arts), contacted me. Cameron wanted to consult with an anthropologist who had worked with so-called “primitive” tribal groups about his new film project, *Avatar*.

Intrigued, I arranged to go to their studios — a sprawling network of offices, rooms crammed with computer monitors and electronic equipment, and a cavernous sound stage housed in a former airplane hangar, part of a complex near Playa del Rey where Howard Hughes constructed his Spruce Goose airplane.

There I met Landau, a short, affable man dressed casually in a Hawaiian shirt and jeans. He proceeded to tell me about *Avatar* — Cameron’s new sci-fi thriller set on the imaginary planet of Pandora some time in the distant future. One aspect of the project especially caught my attention. Early on, Cameron had hired a linguist from USC, Paul Frommer, to create an entirely new language to be spoken by the Na’vi people, the inhabitants of Pandora.

Frommer, who earned his doctorate in linguistics from USC College and is now professor of clinical management communication in USC Marshall School of Business, told me that Cameron had come to him with a few Polynesian-sounding words he may have picked up in New Zealand. He asked Frommer to incorporate these into a new language — complete with its own phonetic system, morphology and vocabulary — for the Na’vi to speak. Since Cameron envisioned the Na’vi to be a sci-fi version (9 feet tall, incredibly skinny and blue-skinned) of the so-called “primitive” tribes anthropologists once studied in places like Africa and Papua New Guinea (where I had done fieldwork), Frommer said he created a language for them that was “spiced” with what to most westerners’ ears would sound like “exotic elements,” such as ejectives and velar nasals.

On my second visit to the studios I met Cameron, a tall, sandy-haired man not given to small talk. He had also hired L.A.-based choreographer Lula Washington, renowned for her work that incorporates elements of African dance and music. She was choreographing several of the ritual ceremonies performed by the Na’vi. As Cameron, Washington and I discussed aspects of the *Avatar* script, such as the coming-of-age ceremony that the film’s protagonist, Jake Sully, undergoes, it became apparent to me that Cameron was thoroughly familiar with much basic anthropology and had read widely about non-Western religious beliefs and practices.

When I finally viewed the completed film, it made sense to me why Cameron was interested in talking with an anthropologist who specialized in non-Western tribal societies. He is not only obsessed with details but also, not surprisingly, fascinated with expertise — both his own and that of others — especially when it bears directly on his own projects. Cameron is like a collector of fine art who sees himself as a connoisseur and my function was less that of a dealer who brings rare objects to the collector, but rather that of a curator whose expertise provides the imprimatur of authenticity.

The lush primal world of Pandora and the exotic culture of the Na’vi revealed in *Avatar* include all the basic elements of what used to be called “primitive” societies — animism, a coming-of-age ceremony, a vision quest, and a religion based on a supreme (maternal) tree spirit. It is truly a 21st-century elegy to a lost world — as well as Cameron’s warning to our own.

NANCY LUTKEHAUS is professor of anthropology, gender studies and political science, and chair-elect for the Department of Anthropology in USC College.
On the 125th anniversary of The College Review, we invite you to take a stroll with us down memory lane as we explore USC’s earliest publications in Doheny Library’s Special Collections section. Aided by Claude Zachary, university archivist and manuscript librarian, we perused three seminal magazines produced by USC students: The College Review, The Cardinal and The University Advocate.

An examination of the archived materials provides insight into student life in and out of the classroom, as well as a close-up view of the university with an eye to institutional growth, Los Angeles culture, and the beginning of the spirited Trojan Family.

From the words and photos contained in these publications, we begin to learn about the many gifts that the first generation of Trojans passed on.
The College Review was replaced by The Cardinal and acquired a more ornate format.

The Cardinal's "Local and Personal" page contained class notes from students from the College of Liberal Arts.

Above: An ad for USC at the time that its colleges included liberal arts, medicine, music, dentistry, fine arts, oratory and law. Right: The University Advocate became the newest university publication. A monthly, it sold for 10 cents a copy or 50 cents a year.
Every day for almost a year, Robin D. G. Kelley dug through junk to find a man.

In a storage facility stacked to the ceiling with overflowing bags and boxes, Kelley donned a dust mask and spent hours sorting through the discarded belongings of Thelonious Monk, the jazz pianist and composer who died in 1982.

“I was like an archaeologist, digging through this stuff,” Kelley said. “There was dust everywhere, there were mice. It was terrible.”

For Kelley, professor of American studies and ethnicity, and history in USC College, nonlibrary research methods aren’t unusual, but this experience was certainly something else.

Rummaging through the storage facility was just one aspect of Kelley’s research process for his book about Monk, known for both his unique musical style and eccentric personality.

In his new book, *Thelonious Monk: The Life and Times of an American Original* (Free Press, 2009), Kelley aims to “correct the record” and tell the true story of the life of a musical genius, without the myths and rumors surrounding Monk’s public persona.

The book was published in October after 14 years percolating inside its creator’s head. For Kelley, this book is not just a project, but a lifelong fascination.

Kelley, himself a pianist, was introduced to Monk’s music as a teenager, and that first impression has stuck with him. “I’d never heard anything like it,” he said. “Monk has a sound that is so jarring and humorous. He was just this spectacular figure.”

When Kelley first decided to write about Monk, he thought he would focus on Monk’s status as an icon and the myths that surround him. “If you read anything about Monk, writers tend to describe his behavior before they say anything about his music,” Kelley explained.

But as he began to delve deeper, he realized that the man himself was more captivating than the public’s perception of him.

“And then it suddenly got infinitely more interesting, because it became no longer a story about an eccentric artist or his craft, but it became a life story,” Kelley said.

The story developed into a narrative about the life of the pianist: his family, his community, his friends. As Kelley says, “it takes a village to raise a Monk.”

At first, the Monk family was hesitant about Kelley’s exploration into the life of their patriarch. And yet after finally meeting Kelley, who at this point had been writing the book on his own for several years, they changed their minds. “They were convinced that I not only knew my stuff, but that I cared enough about the subject to tell the truth,” Kelley said.

It was then that the family gave Kelley something unprecedented — complete access to the family papers and materials. Buried in the storage facility in Manhattan, where Monk spent most of his life, Kelley found everything from common items to musical artifacts: photographs, receipts from London hotels, medical bills, Monk’s silk smoking jacket, reel-to-reel rehearsal recordings, and music written in Monk’s own hand.

Kelley documented so much history — from the storage facility, his 200 interviews with Monk’s family and friends, and his years of research — that not everything fit in the book. Kelley created a Web site, www.monkbook.com, where he is posting sessionographies, videos, photographs, and other information that he collected during the last 14 years.

The book was released on Oct. 6, 2009, four days before what would have been Monk’s 92nd birthday. After a book tour, Kelley will travel to Oxford University to serve a yearlong appointment as the Harmsworth Professor of American History, the first African American to ever hold the position.

Kelley is also working on several other books, including *Speaking in Tongues: Jazz and Modern Africa* (Harvard University Press, forthcoming 2010). Altogether, he has published eight books.

There are many reasons that his book on Monk, however, stands out from others he has, and will, publish. “When I first started playing his music, I was 17,” Kelley said. “So basically I’ve been living with this man in my head for 30 years. I’ve spent half of that time trying to tell his story.”

“It’s unlike any project I have ever done,” Kelley said. “When I finished the last chapter and sent it off, I wept.”

Robin D. G. Kelley’s biography of jazz pianist Thelonious Monk tells the true story of the man behind the music.

photobyalisagayhilton
A course offered by the Freshman Seminar Program, housed in USC College, teaches a different kind of writing.

Comic books are not solely about superheroes anymore. Nor are they reserved for children. Rather, they have become a younger generation’s vehicle for expressing social consciousness. A course offered by the Freshman Seminar Program, housed in USC College, delves into the world of comic books, comic strips and graphic novels, allowing students to tell stories through pictures and graphics as well as text.

Students create comic books, exploring subjects that go far beyond tales of caped crusaders fighting super villains. In the two-unit course taught by William Feuer, associate professor of writing in the College, undergraduates Christina Yen and Drew Moxon, for example, produced a comic book about child abuse. In it, a foster child named Aislin must come to terms with disturbing memories of life with his biological parents.

“He’s learning to get over the trauma of his past,” said Yen, now a senior. “I was sort of interested in more psychological comics because a lot of action comics aren’t very psychological. We wanted to see how we could put the two together.”

The course teaches students how to process and critique images, he said.

“We’re barraged by images all the time: film, television, advertising. We have to be good readers of images because they have a rhetorical force.”

In his class, Feuer discusses with his students the well-known graphic novel *Maus: A Survivor’s Tale*, which recounts in comic form a Polish Jew’s struggle to survive the Holocaust. Students also examine the 2007 Academy Award-nominated animated film *Persepolis*, which follows the story of a young girl as she comes of age during the Iranian Revolution.

Feuer, who is also a painter, believes that images are powerful tools for communication.

“Images can be used to communicate things that are difficult to express in words,” he said.

USC College undergraduates Christina Yen and Drew Moxon created a comic book about a foster child, Aislin, struggling to overcome his past. In the top sketch, Aislin is thinking, “Oh no, not again. These painful memories play like old films projected onto my eyelids.”
Every Saturday afternoon a 9-year-old boy plunks down next to his father and together they listen. The radio dial properly adjusted, a broadcast of the Metropolitan Opera’s production of Puccini’s La Bohème begins. A gentle melody rises — first from the clarinets and then the violins — and a bit later Mimi makes a timid entrance. Soon after, her aria, “Sì. Mi chiamano Mimi,” envelopes the father and son. The boy closes his eyes as he envisions Paris’ Latin Quarter on Christmas Eve.

So began Jim Kincaid’s lifelong fascination with opera.

He recalls with fondness the hours he spent alongside his father and an old, scratchy radio. Their discussions of opera fueled a love for the complex art form that Kincaid, Aerol Arnold Professor of English in USC College, now hopes to share with his students and anyone else who will listen.

When the Los Angeles Opera announced its plans to partner with more than 100 Southern California arts and educational institutions to stage an arts festival around its production of perhaps the most monumental opera work of all time — Richard Wagner’s Der Ring des Nibelungen — Kincaid immediately knew he and USC College had to join the effort.

The only problem was, although he had enjoyed an intimate connection with opera since his childhood, Kincaid confessed he knew little about Wagner or his four-opera cycle, which runs approximately 15 hours. But for a seasoned scholar who has vowed to never teach the same material twice, this presented the perfect challenge. Kincaid dove into many of the thousands of volumes written on Wagner and multiple video recordings of the composer’s vaunted work, and eventually emerged with a plan to engage students of all ages.

Wagner composed the Ring cycle — “Das Rheingold,” “Die Walküre” (The Valkyrie), “Siegfried” and “Götterdämmerung” (Twilight of the Gods) — between 1848 and 1874. He based the work, loosely, on Norse mythology. At its heart a tale of the epic struggles on Earth and in the heavens through several generations, the opera was originally staged in the German city of Bayreuth over four days. Wagner conceived the Ring as a massive, yet unified, festival event that completely engaged the city in all aspects of the arts.

Ring Festival LA intends to do the same.
Through a variety of special exhibitions, performances, symposia and special events at venues throughout Southern California this spring, the festival will encourage local residents and cultural tourists from around the world to experience the first-ever presentation of the Ring cycle in Los Angeles.

“LA Opera’s presentation of the Ring cycle, a mammoth undertaking, will in a sense be the Company’s coming-of-age celebration,” said Plácido Domingo, LA Opera’s Eli and Edythe Broad General Director. “But we also wanted it to become a defining moment in the cultural history of Los Angeles.”

Sharing this enthusiasm for the city-wide festival, Kincaid crafted a new spring semester course, “Opera, Culture, History and Thought,” around the Ring for the Master of Liberal Studies (MLS) program, housed in the College, as well as a continuing education, four-session series open to the public. The continuing education series will begin in June and will cover highlights from the MLS course. With these and other MLS program activities, the College became an inaugural “Official Ring Festival LA Partner.”

“I teach a course on Charles Dickens and Jane Austen, and they’re wonderful, but many students have already read them and know how to read novels,” said Kincaid, who chairs the MLS program board. “So, it’s hard to get students off balance. With Wagner and opera, they’re off balance to begin with, or almost all of them will be. I’ll try to approach the Ring from enough different angles that I can find something to interest any student and try to get under their skin with the music — try to let it seep in.”

Through both the class and series, Kincaid hopes to explore how the 20th century and the one in which we live have been shaped. While some may claim nothing could be more irrelevant to our contemporary lives than Wagnerian opera, Kincaid points out that the Ring provides a provocative springboard by which to investigate ideas of the hero, fascism, the unconscious, gender, and the allure of death, to name just a few.

“Wagner is so central to how the 19th century turned into the 20th and certainly how the 20th turned into the 21st. He’s a great vehicle for raising enormous central questions whether you like music or not.”

With the Nazis, they nevertheless appropriated the Ring into a showcase for Nazi propaganda. By separating out the question of Wagner’s anti-Semitism, both as a historical phenomenon and Wagner’s own writings on it, Kincaid will encourage students to examine whether anti-Semitism has any connection to the experience of Wagner’s operas.

In addition to a wide range of texts, from Wagner’s own to Scandinavian myth and German philosophy as well as diverse music selections, Kincaid’s MLS course will draw on an eclectic group of College faculty to further illuminate the Ring’s transcendence across disciplines. Members of the College’s English, comparative literature, gender studies, Spanish and Portuguese, history, philosophy, American studies and ethnicity, political science, and art history departments will join experts from LA Opera, the Los Angeles Philharmonic and the Museum of Tolerance as guest lecturers throughout the semester.

For one speaker, John Nuckols, this will be an especially welcomed return to the classroom. Nuckols, who earned his M.A. in English in 1995 and did his doctoral work in the
College, was a subscriber to LA Opera throughout his graduate career. A passion that grew from his Balcony B seat eventually led Nuckols to fundraising and to his current position as LA Opera’s vice president of advancement.

When Kincaid, his dissertation adviser and mentor, approached Nuckols about his participation in the course he was delighted not only to share his knowledge on the subject, but to grant MLS students access to LA Opera’s production process, including early rehearsals.

“Part of my mission is finding new ways to get people more engaged in this art form,” Nuckols said. “Opera has a stereotype of being elitist but when individuals are properly introduced to it, especially younger people, they begin to see how powerful and beautiful it is. And that opera is really something that is very visceral and accessible.”

Nuckols views opera itself as a liberal arts education and the Ring as particularly indicative of this. “Opera is in many ways the most complete art form and the most collaborative,” he said “It’s music, it’s narrative, it’s theatre, it’s dance, it’s visual art.”

Continuing education students enrolled in the four-session series, “Wagner’s Ring Cycle: Meaning, Sources and Influences,” will also have the opportunity for a backstage tour. With area residents and visitors from around the world flocking to L.A. to watch the Ring, the MLS program hopes to enhance attendees’ appreciation of the production with such behind-the-scenes access and expert-led sessions.

As part of the pre-festival “Road to the Ring” activities, USC College and the MLS program will present “Wagner’s Ring Cycle: Why Should We Care,” on USC’s campus on Jan. 21 with the USC Alumni Association and the USC Thornton School of Music. Kincaid will join Kenneth Cazan, resident stage director for USC Thornton Opera and associate professor of vocal arts and opera in USC Thornton School of Music, for a point-counterpoint discussion of the Ring’s significance in 20th-century history, philosophy and culture, and the controversies that surround it.

Then on April 15, the MLS program officially kicks off its participation in Ring Festival LA with a panel discussion, “From Nietzsche to Star Wars: The Wagnerian Power of the Ring,” at L.A.’s Museum of Contemporary Art, featuring Kincaid, Nuckols, University Professor and Leo S. Bing Chair in English Leo S. Braudy, Associate Professor of Spanish and Portuguese, and Comparative Literature Roberto Ignacio Díaz, and USC Associates Chair in Humanities and Professor of English, and American Studies and Ethnicity John Carlos Rowe. The panel will delve into how the Ring’s themes and symbols have permeated literature, philosophy, psychology, and even films and cartoons.

This interdisciplinary inquiry into issues of relevance to today’s world is at the heart of the MLS program, which intends to offer similar events and courses in conjunction with future LA Opera productions. “We are working to connect the expertise of USC College faculty teaching in the MLS program with the communities of other regional cultural institutions,” said Susan Kamei, associate dean for advanced and professional programs, and director of the MLS program.

Through its Ring Festival LA-inspired programming, Kincaid and the MLS program invite individuals of all backgrounds to consider how we hear our world and relate to it — through its myths and political and intellectual foundations. There will be plenty of listening; but don’t worry, singing won’t be required.

For more information on LA Opera and Ring Festival LA visit www.laopera.com and www.ringfestivalla.com. To learn more about the Master of Liberal Studies program visit www.college.usc.edu/mls.

Register for USC College’s continuing education course “Wagner’s Ring Cycle: Meanings, Sources and Influences” at www.college.usc.edu/registration-II.
Inside the writers studio

USC COLLEGE WRITERS SHARE THEIR JOURNEYS & CRAFT

It was over in a minute, the way most fights are. I grabbed both his hands and flung them away from me even as my shirt—green Tencel, in a banana leaf pattern, eighty seven bucks on sale—ripped down the front and I gave him a parting shove that sent him into the empty steel framework of the bicycle rack, where his legs got tangled up and he went...
THE THRILL OF

Writing

IN THE Trenches

BY PAMELA J. JOHNSON

Author Brad Thor ’92 goes the extra 7,000 miles researching his multi-leveled, action-packed novels.
Walk into any bookstore, make a beeline to the *New York Times* best-seller section and you will find a political thriller by Brad Thor.

The 40-year-old author produces one book a year. To date, he has written eight novels — all *New York Times* best-sellers, some No. 1.

So if you are among the millions addicted to Thor’s books, you’re familiar with Scot Harvath, a younger, cooler James Bond and protagonist in the series. Think a tougher, more pro-American Jason Bourne without the amnesia. What Bourne was to the Cold War, Harvath is to the War on Terror.

And as Dirk Pitt was for Clive Cussler and Philip Marlowe was for Raymond Chandler, Harvath is Thor’s alter ego. It’s sometimes hard to tell where Thor ends and Harvath begins, or vice versa. For starters, both are USC alumni.

“I’m extremely proud to be a Trojan and these are *my* books,” asserts the USC College alumnus, who earned his bachelor’s in creative writing in 1992.

“Why in the heck should I promote any university other than USC? It’s my homage to my alma mater.” >>

“When I get invited to do things like I did in Afghanistan, I don’t want to be dead weight. That trip was a dream come true.”

Thor is discussing his work over lunch at his favorite restaurant, Ralph Lauren — or RL — in Chicago, his hometown. His navy blazer matches the cloth walls that are covered with old English oil paintings and black-and-white photos of larger-than-life characters like Mick Jagger and Gary Cooper. The mahogany ceilings and floors, bookcases, fireplace and white rosebuds on each table exude a private club ambience.

He slips into a comfy, corner buckskin leather booth and flashes a bright smile. Like his books, Thor is adrenaline-filled, but it’s not nervous, bouncing-off-the-walls energy. It is the kind of verve seen in one who as Joseph Campbell would say, is following his bliss. Clean-shaven and clad in blue jeans, he looks like an action hero, maybe a more boyish, blonder Pierce Brosnan.

One half expects Thor to order a dry martini in a deep champagne goblet, shaken, not stirred, with a thin slice of lemon peel. Ever the pragmatist, the author orders an iced tea.

He has chosen a booth also preferred by locals Oprah Winfrey and Christie Hefner, but probably for different reasons.

“I’m one of those guys who will not sit with his back to the door,” Thor says, watching the entrance, where fashionable diners begin streaming in. He has good reason to be on the qui vive.

**Fighting the Good Fight**

Similar to Harvath, an ex-Navy SEAL and counterterrorism agent, Thor’s life has been in peril. After *The Last Patriot* (Atria) was published in 2008, Thor received so many death threats that he, his wife, Trish, and their two small children were forced to move.

In the novel, Harvath, working for the U.S. Department of Homeland Security, hunts for Muhammad’s final revelation. As Thor’s story...
goes, the founder of Islam had a final revelation, but before it could be revealed to the world, he was assassinated by his disciples to keep it from the Qur’an. If the missing revelation can be found, the face of Islam will be forever changed.

Considered the Da Vinci Code of Islam, The Last Patriot was banned in Saudi Arabia. The threats were so serious law enforcement advised Thor to wear a bulletproof vest to book signings. Then he relinquished the house he and his family cherished.

“I take very strong positions, but I believe as an American I have the First Amendment right to free speech,” says Thor, who sports a small American flag pin on his lapel. “I have the right to write whatever I want and that right is equal to another right just as powerful. And that’s the right not to read it.”

Never flinching in the face of controversy, Thor is friends with Glenn Beck and has appeared on the radio and television host’s Fox News show several times. During one appearance, Beck begs Thor not to publish The Last Patriot, predicting that if he did the author would be dead within a year.

“Last night I read the first three chapters with my mouth open and thought to myself, my friend Brad may lose his life for a fiction book,” Beck says in the program with his characteristic showmanship. “Have you and your wife had that talk?”

“We have, we have,” replies Thor, referred to by some as the new Salman Rushdie. “And I’ve had the talk with some very well connected friends who are in law enforcement, who specialize in security for the president, Congress and so on.”

Thankfully, Beck’s prediction was wrong. In addition to becoming a No. 1 New York Times best-seller, the book was nominated Best Thriller of the Year by the International Thriller Writers association.

Notes on the Front Line

Back at RL, Thor digs into his chicken hash with black truffles and poached eggs, which he had slathered in ketchup.

He points out that his books include many positive Muslim characters. For his latest thriller, The Apostle (Atria, 2009), Thor spent time in Afghanistan, shadowing members of a covert black-ops team. In Afghanistan, he got to know the locals.

“Most Muslims are peaceful and moderate people who just want to feed their families and get along with their neighbors,” Thor says. “They don’t care if you’re a Christian or a Jew. The good Muslims are in my books as well.”

Readers take his thrillers so seriously because they ring true. As a member of Homeland Security’s Analytic Red Cell program, Thor has intimate knowledge of possible terrorist plots on U.S. soil. After Sept. 11, the government created a program bringing together members of the CIA and FBI, futurists, philosophers, thriller writers and others in an attempt to predict al Qaeda’s future methods of attack against the United States. Thor was asked to participate.

“What the government decided to do was to break away from this Beltway-think, to sit down with our military, law enforcement and intelligence officers and to brainstorm,” Thor says. “They wanted to bring in a fresh set of eyes.”

Although no particular terrorist scenario he developed for the government appears in his works, he uses the same creative process to build his book plots.

Thor’s plots are so realistic that not surprisingly, law enforcement, intelligence, and counterterrorism operatives are big fans of his work. In fact, it was members of a black-ops team in Afghanistan who invited their favorite author to watch them in action.

“So you really want to see what Scot Harvath does?” they asked Thor. “You need to embed with us.”

Thor’s time in Afghanistan was a highly covert mission. Black ops involve extensive arrangements meant to hide the fact that missions ever occurred. The operations are extremely risky.

“We were trying to fly under the radar, so were not rolling in a big armored column of Humvees,” Thor recounts. “It was just us, riding in thin-skinned, unarmored vehicles like the locals drive.”

During the mission, Thor grew a bushy beard and dressed in traditional Afghan clothing.

“The point is to not draw a lot of attention to yourself,” he says. “But I still looked like a westerner, even with the beard.”

His sunglasses were confiscated by the black-ops team.

“Nothing identifies you as an American quicker than a pair of sunglasses,” Thor says.

He was also taught to walk a certain way.

“Hands behind the back,” he says. “Shuffle as if you are ice skating; only without the skates.”

A White-Knuckle Ride

The Apostle benefited from Thor’s rigorous research and many of these details ended up in the book. The setting takes place largely in Afghanistan, where Harvath must secretly infiltrate Kabul’s notorious Policharki prison and capture a man whom terrorists demand in exchange for the release of an American doctor.

The thriller is punctuated with vivid images of the Afghan people, customs and landscape. Several characters in the book are based on people he met in Afghanistan. “Suffice it to say,” offers Thor, “Many of the characters in the book are real. They know who they are, but they don’t want anyone else to know. They’re the epitome of the quiet professional.”

Accompanied by the black-ops team, Thor met with members of the Taliban in small villages — research also evident in the book. When Thor’s team was invited into the villages, they were protected under the ancient Pashtun code of honor known as Pashtunwali and their safety was guaranteed by their hosts. But there were other places they had to travel through where they were not invited, and were most definitely not welcome. Those village visits were dubbed “7-11 stops.”

“You couldn’t stop longer than seven to 11 minutes,” Thor says. “Because the minute we got there [villagers] were calling their Taliban brethren. You had to be self sufficient.”

Thor understood the risks. “We were out in Indian country as they call it — in Taliban areas,” he says. “There was going to be no cavalry coming to get us if something went wrong.”

He diverts from Harvath for a moment to add: “That’s how we’re going to win in Afghanistan. If we can make strong relationships in the small villages, that’s where we’re going to get the good intel and help the Afghans repel the Taliban.”

After the dishes are cleared, Thor turns down a waiter’s offer of dessert. Physically fit, Thor works out every day. He also practices shooting at a range.
“Before I could grab the words out of the air and shove them back into my mouth, I revealed my deepest and darkest secret to her, which was writing a book and getting it published.”

“When I get invited to do things like I did in Afghanistan, I don’t want to be dead weight,” he says. “That trip was a dream come true. You have men who dream of pitching for the Yankees or quarterbacking for the Dallas Cowboys, mine has always been to shadow a black-ops team.”

When the waiter sets down coffee, Thor slips him some extra cash. “You could have turned this table twice,” Thor tells the waiter, who hesitates accepting the generous tip. “I’m a businessman, you’re a businessman, take it.”

Thor explains that he was once in the restaurant business. He worked as a bartender and waited tables. “I’ve done a million different things.”

Finding His Voice

Born Aug. 21, 1969, in Chicago, Thor is the elder of two sons. Thor named his protagonist after his brother Scot, also a USC alumnus. In Thor’s fiction, Harvath’s mother spelled Scot with one t because his middle name is Thomas. She didn’t want him to have to write three t’s in a row. In real life, Thor’s mother spelled Scot with one t for the same reason.

Thor’s paternal family came from Sweden. His father is a second-generation American who joined the Marines as a way to escape Chicago’s south side. His mother is a former TWA flight attendant. After his military career, Thor’s father became a real estate developer who often managed projects in Southern California, where many of his business associates were USC graduates.

“My dad became very pro USC because everybody he met from USC was intelligent, successful in business and articulate,” Thor says. “He said: ‘If you’re from USC, people take care of you; there’s a tight feeling of family.’ He said, ‘USC is the best university in the United States and that’s where I want you to go.’”

His father also wanted him to major in business, which he dutifully did. By his sophomore year, however, he knew business was not for him. He recalled being in class one day and shutting his textbook.

“A friend asked me, ‘Where are you going?’” Thor recalls. “I told him, ‘I can’t do this anymore. I would rather take a bullet in my head than be in middle management for the rest of my life.’”

He took a career aptitude test that showed he had a great interest in writing and publishing. He wanted to switch his major to creative writing but knew that would not go well at home.

He began taking creative writing classes with excellent faculty members such as Distinguished Professor of English T.C. Boyle, who challenged him to “really push and go after it.”

Wary of his father’s reaction, Thor didn’t officially change his major until he was preparing to graduate.

“I love my dad to death and know how he thinks,” Thor says. “It’s easier to ask for forgiveness than permission. Now, he’s extremely proud of me. I followed my passion.”

Thor went on to create and host a successful public television series, Traveling Lite. Then in the mid-’90s, he met Trish, a sports medicine physician for the Chicago Bulls and White Sox, at a wine tasting and things changed.

A Life With No Regrets

“I always thought this was Hollywood malarky, but the moment I walked in and saw her, I said, ‘That’s the woman I’m going to marry.’ ”

The newlyweds were on a three-month, around-the-world honeymoon when, one night in Italy, Trish asked her groom, “If you were on your deathbed, what would you regret having not done?”

“Before I could grab the words out of the air and shove them back into my mouth, I revealed my deepest and darkest secret to her, which was writing a book and getting it published.”

Trish made him promise that when they returned home, he would make his dream a reality.

“I couldn’t look her in the eye and say, ‘I’m not going after it because I’m afraid of it’ — because that’s what it had been up to that point. I really believe that what we are most destined to do in life, we’re most afraid of.”

He hadn’t articulated it yet, but he already knew the title of his first book, The Lions of Lucerne (Atria, 2002). About a year earlier, while shooting an episode for his TV show in Switzerland, he was moved by the Lion Monument of Lucerne. Carved in rock above a lily pad-covered pond is a mortally wounded lion, head bowed, his shoulder pierced by a spear.

“The title was in my mind,” Thor says. “I just had to find a story that involved Switzerland.”

On the last leg of their trip, aboard a train from Munich to Amsterdam, the newlyweds shared a compartment with a brother and sister from Atlanta. Thor and the sister sparked a conversation about literature. He told her he was going to write a thriller and they talked until the train rolled into Amsterdam. When they exchanged business cards, he learned she was Cindy Jackson, a sales representative for Simon & Schuster.

“When you finish your manuscript,” she told him, “send it to me.”

In Amsterdam, Thor and Trish’s hotel room was not ready. “There’s a little café around the corner,” the concierge told the couple. “Why don’t you grab a cup of coffee and a sandwich, then come back?”

At the café, Trish began reading a book. Thor looked around for something to read, found The International Herald Tribune and picked it up. Inside was a story about a Swiss intelligence officer who had embezzled money from the Swiss Army and was training a shadow militia high in the Alps with his own private arsenal. The story became the plot for The Lions of Lucerne.

“Fate was knocking,” he says, “and I was ready.”

For Thor, discovering his talents, choosing a major, and pursuing and catching his dream has been a lot like solving a mystery.

Visit Brad Thor’s multimedia Web site at www.BradThor.com
Tell me a story.

That edict drives journalism, a craft I chose to pursue when I entered USC in the fall of 1982.

Good writing is the backbone of the storytelling done in journalism, along with the good reporting that separates journalists from other writers. Every writer has a purpose and strives for meaning in the words that they choose. But the writing that makes journalism stand out is supported by the gathering of facts and the verification of those details.

The New York Times — the Gray Lady of newspapers — lives by the motto “All the news that’s fit to print.” At one time, such a motto suggested text is about the printed word on a page. Today, text is about characters flashing on a screen — whether it’s on a computer, cell phone or a “smart phone” that is a cross between the two.

Web experts say writing in the age of the Internet has changed. But the way stories are told — the point of all the text — really hasn’t changed all that much since I learned the inverted pyramid style in my first news writing class. Breaking news on the Internet is much like the days of the telegraph: A bulletin containing the most important news comes out first. Then more information is learned and related in updated dispatches.

The journalist who writes for the Web has to figure out the most important facts at hand, write them in a way that grabs the reader and, hopefully, compels that person to keep scrolling and checking back for more. The inverted pyramid is just as relevant today as it was back then.

People think that writing for the Internet is boundless because digital space has no limits. But who has the time to scroll to the bottom of a story that goes on and on? It’s no different than reading a newspaper story that — gasp — jumps inside for a solid page or two of text. Writing on the Web still has to feature clear subjects and active verbs, free of cluttering phrases and digressions.

Those are the concepts that I try to instill in my team at USA TODAY, where we produce The Oval, a blog about President Obama and his administration. The Oval is the tip of our news spear: a place where our lead blogger breaks news from the White House beat and where we follow up with more context elsewhere on usatoday.com or in the daily newspaper.

Twitter, with its ceiling of 140 characters, shows us that we can write news in shorter, digestible bites. But imagine this tweet, circa March 19, 2003: U.S. bombs Iraq to find WMD. Hunt 4 Saddam begins. OMG.

It may tell you that the United States has bombed Iraq, hoping to find weapons of mass destruction that dictator Saddam Hussein has used to terrorize his people. A war has begun. But the tweet doesn’t do justice in conveying the origins of war or the justification for it by President Bush. That’s where writing for newspapers comes in — by providing context and a verification of facts.

Much has been written about the newspaper industry’s free fall and the search for a viable business model to compete for readers and advertisers. What will distinguish newspapers — including what we produce for the Web — is good storytelling that starts with good writing, especially writing that has voice and nuance backed up by the depth and texture provided by reporting. Technology may have changed since I graduated from USC, but the reason for writing and storytelling has not.

Catalina Camia ’86 is a Washington assignment editor for USA TODAY, overseeing a team covering the White House and national politics. She has reported for The Dallas Morning News, Congressional Quarterly and the Dallas Times Herald. Camia earned a B.A. in international relations and print journalism from USC.
I grew up within poetry — the sound of my mother’s voice reciting Great Poems.

The poetry she recited was canonical: Shakespeare, Milton, Tennyson, Dickinson, Longfellow — but the way she told these poems was performative — even as she stood at the stove or the washing machine, her eyes alight, an eyebrow raised, one finger pointing upward to emphasize a word. She made both the unforgettable language and her emotional personal sense of the words a single thing.

I never thought I would witness that combination again — the memorization of powerful poems by heart — and their dramatic presentation with the addition of commentary. My mother’s own words would answer the timeless lines, responding to the poem within the poem itself. She would begin, “Let me not to the marriage of true minds — Put that down right now! — admit impediment!” This was all part of her conversation with Great Poetry, this was her way of living within the lines.
When I first saw and heard the Get Lit Players (under the remarkable direction of Diane Luby Lane and Azure Antoinette), I understood that the spirit of my mother’s love of great poetry had returned. Here were extraordinary young poets, most from inner city backgrounds reciting Shakespeare, Milton, Tennyson, Dickinson, Langston Hughes, T.S. Eliot — and providing their own Spoken Word responses as a kind of counterpoint to the melody of the traditional poems. I found it riveting. Not since my mother had stood in her apron, the fiery syllables spinning in her voice, had I witnessed anything like it.

The great John Keats famously said that poetry “should come as naturally as leaves to a tree.” Years ago, when I taught for the Poets in the Schools program in New York, I saw how naturally poems came to kids. The imagination is wild and untamed and alive up until about fourth grade, when a sense of self-consciousness and the huge pressure of peers and the commodification of what is original within us gains ascendancy (that is to say, when kids start looking outside the self to be told what is inventive by product promotion or conventional pedagogical thinking).

Even far back in that dim past, as a young poet, I recognized that “Rose, Where Did You Get That Red?” and “I Dreamed I Was an Ice Cream Cone” might be quite enough to elicit a charming spontaneous poem — but ultimately was not enough to withstand the leveling of the imagination that takes place as the conventions of education and social pressure set in. The poems are dazzling, they are testimony to the well-spring of creativity in all of us — but they are, even if published in books for the kids — eventually forgotten.

Rarely in the Poets in the Schools program (or in other institutional teaching of the creative arts) — at any level of education — were traditional poems (even though children love to rhyme, and rhyme naturally!) routinely memorized as fun that could actually teach the beauty and power of poetry — and act as an energetic stay against forgetting — and the death of the imagination. The resistance to learning a poem by heart — a poem that could then beat with the heart and run in the blood — a poem that belonged to the child learning it in order to recite it — remains in place.

Which is why, when I witnessed what the Get Lit Players were making happen in language, I had a Eureka moment. I saw that it was important for my new project, The Magic Poetry Bus, and Get Lit to merge. (Which we have now officially done as of November 2009.)

I had envisioned The Magic Poetry Bus as a real vehicle — bringing poets and filmmakers to schools and juvenile halls and other communities all around the state — to talk to children and teenagers about poetry. I had also begun working toward a Virtual Bus — an online, interactive website which would provide all kinds of bus stops and pop-ups and reading lists of Great Poems — and motion graphics and clips of kids memorizing poems — with creative teaching techniques for teachers and students.

The website is still being developed, but with the help of Get Lit and its phenomenal young Players, I’ve also come up with an approach to learning verse called ProActive Poetry or Poem Conversations. The Players now have learned the technique and can demonstrate it on-stage: how kids can respond to an individual poem as a conversation in which they take an active, compositional part.

What I’ve done (in order to showcase how the process works) is to write to a few friends, a few well-known American poets, to ask permission to take a particular poem by the poet and open it up into this poetic call and response.

So we now have the rights to poems by former United States Poet Laureate Robert Pinsky, Joy Harjo, Jorie Graham, Bob Holman (with many others on the way) and this dynamic process has been documented by the Get Lit Players.

Take Pinsky’s famous poem “The Shirt,” which has been widely lauded and anthologized and which, in startling meditation, leaps from the literal linaments of a new shirt to the history of the factory, the sweatshop, the Triangle Factory Fire and unions and docks and back again to the collar and sleeve and the name of the person who inspected the shirt. The Get Lit Players have memorized the poem in total — including the places where we have indicated that the poem can open to a response.

At these designated junctures within “The Shirt,” the young poets step in with their own Spoken Word original responses, their own words — replying to the lines by Pinsky — in other words: The act of memorization and original composition become one! It is ProActive Poetry, it is a Poem Conversation — it is the Poem Speaking to Us and Hearing an Answer.

It is a powerfully dramatic experience — to see and hear the new poem emerging in response to the memorized lines. The Get Lit Players recited and performed “The Shirt” at the Bowery Poetry Club in October 2009 and the clip of their living poem is on The Magic Poetry Bus website. We hope the technique of ProActive Poetry will begin to change curriculum choices — how poetry is taught to kids. Not just as an endless free form exercise or a purely rote experience, but a combination that works and is unforgettable. All kinds of poems — from contemporary poets like Pinsky and Rita Dove — to poets of the past — some in the public domain and some not — poets like Robert Hayden, Dylan Thomas, Dickinson, Tu Fu or Keats, Shakespeare and Neruda can come to life in a new but timeless way.

We are optimistic, I am optimistic, that the merger of The Magic Poetry Bus, carrying its cargo of new approaches — book lists and proactive methods for learning and loving poetry — and the Get Lit Players demonstrating onstage what is the embodiment of the ideas can actually change how poetry is taught in California and beyond.

Carol Muske-Dukes, professor of English and creative writing and founding director of the Ph.D. in Literature and Creative Writing program in USC College, was appointed California Poet Laureate in November 2008. In the official announcement of the appointment, Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger noted that, along with giving poetry readings, Muske-Dukes would be expected to create a statewide poetry project to bring poetry to communities throughout the state. The project she came up with is The Magic Poetry Bus (now The Magic Poetry Bus/Get Lit). Visit www.carolmuskedukes.com and www.magicpoetrybus.org for more information and to become a fan of The Magic Poetry Bus on Facebook.
Passing the torch — T.C. Boyle wants to be for his students what his mentors were to him.

Auteur rock star STRIKES A Chord

BY SUSAN ANDREWS

Listening to a brooding cello concerto, the writer strikes the keyboard as he begins his short story or book. He begins, yet does not know where it will end until he arrives there.

T.C. Boyle writes early (“but not that early,” he interjects), seven days a week except for the days he travels to USC. Yet, he continues to think about it then, too.

“You know, it’s hard for me to do this — to sit still for a few minutes,” he said. “I think of all the things I have to do around the house.” The house that the USC Distinguished Professor of English refers to is the first that Frank Lloyd Wright built in California, and the home that Boyle shares with his wife, Karen, and their three children in beautiful Montecito near Santa Barbara. Wright is also the subject of his 2009 best-selling novel The Women (Viking).
How does he get into the mindset to write if sitting still is a challenge? “When I write, I try to get into a mind trance. And sometimes I do, and sometimes I don’t,” he said. “When I am really into it, I don’t notice the time and sometimes hours can go by.” Boyle always looks forward to his next story and announces that he is about to begin another very soon. “I will be interested to see what it is. So that is a spur for me to write. It’s so satisfying to see something come to a conclusion.”

In the Beginning
Boyle’s literary odyssey began at SUNY Potsdam, where at first he majored in music as an aspiring saxophone player. “That did not work out because I did not have near the talent of my colleagues,” he said. “I became a singer in a rock band.”

From music, he drifted toward history. Ultimately, he settled upon both English and history. Boyle channeled his creativity into fiction writing, where he has become a literary legend — no less a rock star of literature.

Boyle has a striking appearance, dresses like a rock star, and has piercing green eyes that make you feel as if he knows something about you that you don’t.

His 21 successful books to date and his precision-delivered reading performances are a testament that good literature is musical.

Literature, for those of us who revel in it, is not trifling matter. It’s a path to unfamiliar and exotic countries, colorful cultures, organic plots and multi-dimensional characters of both good and evil and in-between. So, Boyle’s failure to flourish in one art, music, is a gift to us in another, fiction writing.

The first of his family to attend college, Boyle earned his M.F.A. and Ph.D. in the Iowa Writers’ Workshop at the University of Iowa. Soon after, he left the heartland for the West Coast.

About his Craft
Boyle’s average time to research a book is three months. For example, to prepare for The Women, he read as many books as humanly possible from the roughly 1,000 volumes written about Frank Lloyd Wright. He traveled to Chicago and Oak Park, III., to experience Wright’s architectural wonders and visited his home in Wisconsin, Taliesin, which is the primary setting of the book.

Boyle loves to craft a work steeped entirely in fiction with no real people, as was the case with his newest book, about the restoration of the Channel Islands. When the Killing’s Done is to be released in March of 2011. He enjoys in fiction no restrictions given to a character’s life.

However, Boyle said that the fascination in writing about Wright and actual people is that life is often stranger than fiction. He gave an example from his book Riven Rock (Viking, 1998): It is really true that Stanley McCormick’s (son of Cyrus McCormick and heir to International Harvester) mother and mother-in-law tagged along on his monthlong honeymoon. “Can you imagine? Can you make that up?” he asked incredulously.

Boyle defies the oft given advice to write about what you know best. Instead he writes about that which interests him the most. This includes the great egomaniacs of the 20th century. In his books about John McCormack, Alfred Kinsey, John Kellogg and Wright, he writes about the men’s obsessions. They each have their project, which is an obsession that consumes their worlds. “Many novelists are like this, and I wonder, how do I fit into this?”

Writing is an obsession to Boyle, as is the case with most great writers. A few of his friends who are writers have not found the balance that he enjoys in his life. “I love physical activity — hiking, cutting firewood, snowshoeing, boogie boarding…”

Likened to that of America’s favorite author and humorist, Mark Twain, Boyle’s writing is deliciously infectious. His masterful use of wit and dark satire pepper the pages with a focus on social exploration in contemporary times.

In fact, Boyle was recently inducted into the prestigious American Academy of Arts and Letters, a 250-member club that boasts the likes of Twain, Henry Adams, Mark Rothko, Edward Albee and Toni Morrison.

You won’t find him writing multiple stories simultaneously, though. “I only work on one thing at a time. I think that gives writers a reason to bail out when they are juggling a few projects at one time,” he said.

It excites him to turn people on to what is good in literature and possibly affect their taste in reading material. “I love to catch people unaware. They bring their boyfriend and girlfriend to one of my public readings. And they think that maybe this literature stuff is not that bad,” he said.

“I love to be on stage and give a show,” he said. “It’s a happy wedding with two sides of me.”

But Why USC?
“USC struck first and I really liked what they had to say. I was lucky they gave me a job and I hope that they don’t regret it.”

“I have a simple way of dealing with the world. If you love me, I love you. And so SC loved me and I came here in 1978. And by default, we started the undergraduate writing program when I came here,” he continued. “I was the first creative writer they ever had.”

When the Department of English wanted a poet, Boyle contacted his friend and former Iowa Workshop classmate, David St. John. He asked him if he knew of anyone interested in joining the Department. It turned out that St. John was interested and came on board. The Department brought on Carol Muske-Dukes. And then Aimee Bender joined and so on, he explained.

More than anything, Boyle wants to be for his students what his mentors were to him. “I want to be that person for this generation,” he said. Although he had a series of father-like mentors in academia who recognized and encouraged his great talent, he more often than not let them down.

One mentor he did not let down was Vance Bourjaily. At Iowa, during his first semester, Boyle had a chance to work with one of five formidable writers: Bourjaily, Frederick Exley, Gail Godwin, John Irving or Jack Leggett. He chose Bourjaily and he calls it the right choice.

Boyle credits three of the writers he was fortunate to work with—Bourjaily, John Cheever and Irving — as being exceptionally generous and supportive.

It appears that he has succeeded in passing the torch to his students. If you walk by Boyle’s office on a Monday afternoon, you will find a long stream of students waiting to be the next in his company.

Boyle loves the idea of what has been done at USC College with the Ph.D. in Literature and Creative Writing program: “The students I
teach, advanced undergraduate and graduate students, are great, great talents and go off and set the world on fire and succeed in film, journalism, medicine and other fields. It’s been marvelous.”

The students in the program produce their art. Then, Boyle and the students write, talk about and try to interpret it. “Creative writing is always new. Each discussion is utterly new,” he said. “Why does a character do this or that, and not this? If an ending is unclear and the class suggests this or that to the artist, well maybe he or she will rewrite it, or maybe the artist will think the reader is ignorant and they won’t get it.”

Boyle views his role as that of a coach who copyedits and offers comments. He gives students confidence in their work and tells them not to be afraid.

“A writing workshop can easily degenerate into bitterness if the person organizing it is not in control and people begin to view things dispassionately,” he continued. “It can turn into this: If you don’t like what I wrote, I don’t like what you wrote. I want my students to feel good about being writers and about being in the workshop.”

In addition to his mentors, Boyle was influenced by those he describes as having “a marvelously black view of things”—Harold Pinter, Robert Coover, Flannery O’Connor, and Gabriel García Márquez.

Life in the world today is more complicated and it is more difficult to approach a subject as a writer than it was in the past, according to Boyle. “Not only do we have to deal with a lack of meaning in our own lives, but the overall lack of meaning in the universe. Especially as we are coming upon 7 billion people, we are destroying the very environment that has allowed our species to thrive. ... Bad times are coming for our species,” he said.

On Great Art

Can great writing be taught? According to Boyle, it cannot. What teaching can bring is a deeper appreciation for literature if you have tried to make it yourself. What great teaching will do is accelerate the talents of those with a gift.

“And by the way,” Boyle inserts into the conversation, “I love the idea of a liberal arts education. It worked for me.”

Yet, Boyle’s first love is biology. “But of
There is no one. That is unless the reader finds one. “I am not preaching to anyone. You may or may not know where I stand in The Tortilla Curtain (Viking, 1995), which is probably my best known book. But my stand is not what is important,” Boyle continued. “The more important question is what is this work and how does it affect you? Any good work of art will have its own moral compass.”

Boyle said that many readers of The Tortilla Curtain have equally called him a right wing racist or a left wing immigrant lover. He refuses to be drawn into that. Said Boyle, “Artists engage readers so that they remake the book in their own way and decide for themselves where to stand on an issue.”

Boyle concluded the interview with a reading of a passage from his new collection of short stories, Wild Child. The story, “The Unlucky Mother of Aquiles Maldonado,” is about a Venezuelan baseball player whose mother is kidnapped and held for ransom. Not to give away the story, but it has a happy ending. Boyle foretells that it is the only story in the book with a happy ending. And, why is that?

“Life does not have a happy ending,” he said.

So, What’s Next?
Boyle can’t imagine not writing. “I think everybody’s powers decline at some point. But, so far so good,” he reported. He finds joy in making art and has an audience with expectations. “You want to show them what comes next.”

When asked what he has a burning desire to write about, he wryly answered, “If there are topics I have a burning desire to write about, I am certainly not going to tell you right now.”

And so, the author and his faithful readers anxiously await the next surprise ending.

VIEW THE ONLINE VIDEO at college.usc.edu/boyle
I had just received my first, graded essay as a college freshman in a class called “The Mind.” Clearly mine was doing something wrong: The professor hadn’t even bothered to give me a grade.

Ironically, the problem started with a method some might call scientific. My high school taught a regimented form of writing called “power writing,” in which every paragraph had a purpose (overview, detail, sub-detail), as did every sentence (overview, detail, sub-detail). Power writing assembled these pieces of language according to a rigid formula, much like following the steps in a chemistry lab. I suppose school administrators adopted power writing to help organize wayward teen minds. Unfortunately, the method also stifled creativity, personal voice, complex argument, and took the joy out of writing. For my “Mind” class, I had turned in a perfect power writing essay.

So, when I saw those bold, red words across the top of the page I ran for cover. I never went to see the writing counselor. I avoided writing as much as possible, abandoning words and sentences for symbols and signs. My class schedule was a whirlwind of math and science classes in which I puzzled out theoretical problems. I romanticized the idea that I was privy to a secret language, one that opened a portal to a world of perfect answers. I basked in learning to manipulate concepts and ideas until they formed elegant, cohesive solutions.

The consequences of my avoidance strategy hit me like the force of gravity on a ton of bricks when I was writing the dissertation for my doctoral degree at USC. To be sure, my dissertation was chock full of Greek letters. But in between, I had to fill the space with verbs and nouns, not just equal signs and omegas. I had abandoned power writing years before, and in its place was only a vacuum. The writing was agonizing.

A friend kindly agreed to review my first draft. As I flipped open the cover, I had the same sinking feeling I had had freshman year. The page was coated in red ink that blurred and seemed to spell “writing counselor.”

But, this time I didn’t flee. I took a deep breath and studied the red ink. And it was brilliant. The comments showed where to cut, where to add, where to reorganize. As the ideas and concepts slipped into their proper places, my points crystallized. The edits were a revelation: Writing was a powerful problem-solving tool. Writing forced you to think clearly. It had no patience for missing pieces of ideas or concepts with rough edges. Writing was the ultimate problem that, when solved, conveyed thoughts with perfect elegance.

After leaving USC, I stumbled into a job writing math and science textbooks. I learned to write in the small captions and paragraphs squeezed between graphics, puzzling out the clearest ways to compress complex ideas into succinct sentences. This was the start of my journey toward becoming a science writer.

Sometimes there are multiple solutions to the problem of writing a good piece. Some stories are unsolvable puzzles, or at least unsolvable given the limitations of knowledge and skill. But in those profound moments when words, sentences, and concepts come together to perfectly express a thought, I know I’ve found the real power (of) writing.

Juli Berwald ’98 is a freelance science writer who earned her Ph.D. in ocean science from USC College. Her work has appeared in Oceanus Magazine, Wired.com, Redbook, and National Geographic. She also writes middle and high school science textbooks and technical publications for the Gulf Coast Carbon Center at the University of Texas. Berwald lives in Austin, Texas, with her husband and two children.
Percival Everett doesn’t spend a lot of time considering his body of work. Instead, says the 52-year-old author, whose new novel *I Am Not Sidney Poitier* (Graywolf, 2009) came out in June, “I think about writing one book at a time. It’s not that my books are non sequiturs — after all, you can’t hide from yourself. It’s just that I know something when I start and less when I finish.”

This Zen-like approach might explain why, even after 21 books, Everett is not exactly a household name, even in Southern California, where he has lived and worked for many years. (He is Distinguished Professor of English in USC College) Beginning with his first novel, *Suder* (Viking, 1983), he has written about baseball, Vietnam, Greek myths, cowboys, Native Americans, revenge, genius and hate crimes, among other subjects, all the while inserting himself, Zelig-like, into his own work.

He’s not in it for the money, or even the fame. And that makes him pretty relaxed about it all. “There’s nothing at stake,” he says, sitting back among the cushions of a sofa in his high-ceilinged Los Angeles apartment. “I can’t affect what readers think.”

This sense of cool distance is the tone of *I Am Not Sidney Poitier*, a book about identity without the *Sturm und Drang* that usually accompanies books about identity. That makes it a thoroughly modern novel, in which the protagonist triumphs not by asserting his will over the world, but by achieving a quiet comfort with his true nature, independent of race or class or religion or politics. It’s a book about how much we don’t know.
The narrator’s name is Not Sidney, as in Not Sidney Poitier. His mother has named him that because their last name is Poitier and she wanted to avoid confusion. This is just the first of many ways in which the novel plays with the fixations of contemporary culture; a second comes when Not Sidney’s mother invests all her money — around $30,000 — “in a little-known company called the Turner Communications Group that would later become Turner Broadcasting System.” At one point, Ted Turner pays her a visit because she owns so much stock in his company and because she represents “the kind of grass-roots, if not proletarian, person he wanted to imagine his media world touching.” When Not Sidney is 7, in 1975, his mother dies in her sleep, leaving him to become “filthy, obscenely, uncomfortably rich.” Turner invites Not Sidney to live in one of his houses.

Lest this seem like the stuff of a traditional bildungsroman, Everett has something completely other than that in mind. “To Turner’s credit,” he writes early in the novel, “even he was not comfortable with the scenario of the rich do-gooding white man taking in the poor little black child. Television was polluted with that model, and it didn’t take a genius to understand that something was wrong with it. My situation was somewhat different as I was in fact extremely wealthy as a result of my mother’s business acumen.”

Turner is a wise, avuncular presence, appearing now and then to offer oblique advice. One spring, he visits Not Sidney at college and offers the following: “Enjoy your break. And remember, be yourself. Unless you can think of someone better.”

Not Sidney’s other erstwhile mentor is one Percival Everett, professor and king of the loan. Everett’s answers to Not Sidney’s earnest questions are even more oblique than Turner’s. “You want to know why people are so [messed] up?” he asks Not Sidney, who is upset after a weekend with his girlfriend’s snooty parents. “It’s because they’re people. People, my friend, are worse than anybody.”

Is this Everett the writer, or Everett the character? Or is the line between them irrevocably blurred? It’s easy to imagine Everett having some pointed fun with his readers, wanting to keep everyone on their toes. Among his students, he has a reputation for not suffering fools, while his editors know that if they talk about marketing, his attention will fade fast. “I am paid,” he is fond of saying when asked about teaching, “to write books and hang around smart young people.”

The eerie thing is that even after spending a few hours with him, his physical presence remains elusive; it’s hard to remember what he looks like. Your mind tries to recapture the details but it’s like trying to catch the character in The Soupy Sales Show — the one who ran along the bottom of the screen. You think you saw him, but it’s impossible to freeze the frame. Everett teaches fiction workshops, as well as classes in literary theory (Barthes, Derrida and others) and a film course. I Am Not Sidney Poitier is punctuated by dream sequences modeled after the story lines of Poitier’s films. “Poitier was the safe choice of white Americans interested in film,” Everett explains. “An iconic, beautiful, sensual dark man; politically progressive, someone who always kept a safe sexual distance from the camera and the story.”

The dream sequences allow Everett to explore aspects of Poitier’s experience that are not so safe — the sources of his distance and dignity.

“There’s a freedom of absurdity in dreams, enjoyed by drunks and babies,” Everett says as he hugs his son Henry, 2 1/2, who has just returned from a walk with his mother, the novelist Danzy Senna. The couple also has a 1-year-old named Miles.

Henry is given to wild dreams. Everett has learned to let him wail before trying to soothe him. He’s interested, as both a father and a writer, in how we edit our dreams and our everyday experience to make sense of the world, in “how we make meaning.” This is not plot, exactly, but something Everett calls “the inner thread of the story.” Like Robert Coover, his friend and professor at Brown, where Everett got his MFA in the early ’80s, he is interested in hyper-reality. “My books tend not to be chronological — sections don’t follow each other logically. But I hope the overall impression is a continuous story.” He laughs. “Unplotted.

“I begin with a sense of weight. Then I find somebody, and I become that character. I inhabit that character.”

Fiction is an illusion, after all, a pretty cool trick. A lot of my work deals with people out in the world. My job is not to report real things but to make the fiction sound real. The beauty is that even when we know these tricks and recognize them, they work anyway.”

Surely, writing about identity involves a certain sleight of hand. For Everett, though, it’s more a matter of feeling his way into his novels. “I have a feeling about it,” he says, “but I can’t articulate what it looks like. I begin with a sense of weight. Then I find somebody, and I become that character. I inhabit that character.”

When I bring up Not Sidney’s innocence and truthfulness — which verges on naiveté — Everett almost betrays himself. “It’s sad that we think because he’s painfully honest, he’s naïve,” he says, ever-so-slightly protective of his character. “We take his modesty and conflate it with innocence.”

As for how I Am Not Sidney Poitier does, “I hope the book sells, but I am constitutionally unable to participate,” Everett says. Like many authors, he does not usually read reviews, although when he does, he prefers the bad ones because he learns more. For the most part, he finds reviews generally uninteresting and likens them to movie trailers. “I make my money in France and Italy,” Everett says. We talk about the earnest streak in American literature, a preference for clear morals and clear plot lines. Everett’s books are anything but linear or predictable despite the fact that he studied mathematical logic and philosophy in college.

In much of his work, we get the not unpleasant sense of being mocked, of having our core beliefs taken apart by a mischievous author. But Everett is not in the business of judging.

“All thinking is good,” he shrugs. “It sure beats an absence of thought.”

Susan Salter Reynolds is a Los Angeles Times staff writer.
Holly Payne ‘97 spoke these words as she lay on the edge of a road beside a cemetery. Seconds earlier, she stopped to assist two stranded cyclists. A passing pickup truck struck all three.

Payne was propelled several dozen feet onto her back. She was badly hurt and believe the two cyclists were most likely dead. Yet, they survived. But regardless of injuries that would leave her unable to walk for nearly a year, as she gazed up at the evening sky, she made a promise she has since kept.

“If I am alive, I am going to write.”

As with many novelists, the life they experience parallels the fiction they create. In Payne’s latest novel, *Kingdom of Simplicity* (Skywriter Books, 2009), her own experience with pain and healing coalesces with a real-life tragedy in Lancaster County, Pa., and the Amish community’s remarkable ability to forgive.
The Master of Professional Writing Program graduate crafts a tale in which a car collides with a horse-drawn buggy, killing five Amish sisters. Their surviving brother and Payne’s main character, Eli Yoder, must then embark on the difficult quest of forgiving the person who ultimately caused their deaths.

Forgiveness — this is what both Eli and Payne struggle with. Even as being a true Amish hangs in the balance, Eli is unable to offer absolution. It is only after progressing through feelings of anger and denial that he is able to arrive at forgiveness. And rather than let rage swallow her whole, Payne has likewise chosen a different path. She has dedicated the novel to the drunk driver who struck her.

12 Years, 10 Screws and a Titanium Plate

As a result of the accident on that dark mountain road in her then home of Crested Butte, Colo., Payne endured countless injuries. She had a broken pelvis as well as a shattered femur held together by a titanium plate and 10 screws. Intensive physical therapy followed. She eventually healed, but only after nine months in a wheelchair, behind a walker, on crutches and then a cane.

Thanks to her conditioning as a tri-athlete, she was once again competing in races. Nevertheless, for Payne it was the emotional scars that needed more time to mend.

Harboring a silent fury as they question the circumstances that aligned against them, where Payne and Eli’s fictional character part ways is in his desperate search for reminders of his sisters. Payne avoided any connection with her accident. One refusal in particular — and probably the most significant — was her response to the letter that arrived one day from the driver who hit her.

“I was in Hungary at the time, teaching English. It was six months after the accident; I was 23 and on crutches,” Payne explained.

Even with this remoteness from the United States, not to mention Crested Butte, her past and its disquietude still caught up with her.

Payne recognized the name and return address from insurance documents. She opened the envelope. After reading the letter up to the point that the driver asked for her forgiveness, Payne came to a succinct conclusion: “I thought, ‘How dare he contact me,’ and I put [the letter] in a pile and forgot about it,” she recalled. “I was so angry that I pretended he didn’t exist. I was going to play out his punishment my way, which was to not respond.”

Twelve years passed. Payne went to graduate school. She also wrote two novels, The Virgin’s Knot (Dutton/Plume, 2002) and The Sound of Blue (Dutton/Plume, 2005). She was at work on a third book, which was to become Kingdom of Simplicity.

Everything came to a halt on Oct. 2, 2006, when Charles Carl Roberts IV burst into the West Nickel Mines Amish School in Payne’s childhood home of Lancaster County. Roberts shot 10 Amish girls execution-style, killing five before taking his own life.

Suddenly news helicopters were buzzing over the same fields Payne
knew growing up and described in her book. The shooter, in fact, made his way to the schoolhouse along the same road her characters walk in her novel. The fictional terror Eli experiences in *Kingdom of Simplicity* had become real and it deeply affected her. She pushed aside her work, breaking the vow she made to herself outside of the cemetery.

“At first, I thought I should stop writing the book because no one would want to read a fictional account of something that had just happened,” Payne said. “For at least a month, I sat at my desk and cried for those girls and their families. ... It took a full hour each day to face the pages and continue to the end.”

Despite this being the single worst act of violence against the Amish since they arrived in North America, Payne salvaged inspiration from equally phenomenal events that occurred days later. The community set up funds not only for the families of the five slain girls, but also for the Roberts family. This outreach to both the victims and perpetrator of the Nickel Mines massacre continued when the Lancaster Amish attended, in equal number, the memorial services for the girls as well as for Roberts. As the Amish daughters were buried, the shooter was absolved.

Payne was fascinated by these actions. Though not Amish herself, she had grown up in their shadow and came to understand the solemnity and lament that were sacrosanct to their religious beliefs. It wasn’t until the shootings that she learned of their unbelievable strength to absolve in the face of tragedy.

“Many people couldn’t understand how they could forgive so quickly,” Payne recalled. “But what they do not understand is that forgiveness is one of the first lessons an Amish child learns, ‘Forgive the sinner, but not the sin.’ Let go of any attachment to the act itself, move on; however, this is where so much of the confusion remains for us.”

Witnessing this prompted Payne to revisit the driver’s letter she had hidden away for well over a decade. Upon opening it and again seeing his request, Payne immediately knew she had to finish the novel with the driver in mind. She also knew she had to dedicate the book to him. For all along, her novel had been about forgiveness, and with that she planned not only to forgive him, but to use her book as a vehicle for sharing the importance of this difficult and necessary act.

“I was so angry, I dismissed his entire existence,” Payne said. “But through the writing, I completed something in my own life and was able to see how much I needed to reach out to the driver and hope that he knew I had forgiven him and would find a way to forgive himself.”

**It's Been Done**

Despite its compelling story and despite Payne’s prior success as a writer, publishers turned down *Kingdom of Simplicity*, which at that time was titled *Big Ugly*.

“Dutton told me that it’s been done, and that they weren’t interested,” she said. “I was devastated.”

Payne, who now resides in Marin County, Calif., came up with another tactic. Instead of scurrying to find another publisher, she founded Sky-writer Books, a publishing house whose first endeavor would be to publish *Kingdom of Simplicity*.

“I remember thinking I had nothing to lose,” she said. “That I have no timeline, and I’m going to write it and see what happens.”

“What Payne did insist on, however, was the stark honesty found in her novel. “I want to show the Amish are real human beings who are no different than us. Eli is a real human who wants to be Amish, but can’t forgive, which is core to the Amish community,” she said.

“Culturally, forgiveness is a subject we don’t discuss. But the Amish are very progressive with it.”

And what of Payne’s own offering of forgiveness through her novel? “After 15 years, I wrote back and told the driver I forgave him, and that I do hope he can release himself from any shame and pain that he still carries. He never sent a letter in return.”

So, to that, one has no choice but to move on, which Payne has done. “I am a survivor,” she said. “In many ways, getting struck was a gift and it set me on the course of a writing life. I wanted to be free from the power the past had over me, and writing the book gave me the key; though nothing would have prepared me to see so much of the plot become real in life, and affect real people.”

With harm and pain so inherent to the human condition, forgiveness is a powerful countermeasure. Payne knows this, and her dedication is proof.

To read an excerpt from *Kingdom of Simplicity*, visit [www.kingdomofsimplicity.com](http://www.kingdomofsimplicity.com)

David Dorion is a 1994 graduate of the Master of Professional Writing Program.
Although ESPN The Magazine Senior Writer Jorge Aranguré Jr. ’97 remains concerned with these key components of sports reporting, deeper issues are at play in his features.

Aranguré-penned stories tend to reveal as much about the players as the game itself. These qualities in his work trace back to his undergraduate career as a history major in USC College, when richly detailed readings about historical events sparked his own interest in writing. In fact, writing moved Aranguré with such force he passed up law school to pursue a master’s in journalism from Syracuse University.

Though born in Tijuana, Mexico, where soccer or fútbol is king, Aranguré grew up in the baseball-loving San Diego area. Aranguré not only played, but avidly read about baseball in the newspaper.

His favorite sports writer growing up was the late Jim Murray, a Pulitzer Prize-winning columnist at the Los Angeles Times.

“Murray,” Aranguré explained, “was someone to always consider because he met the challenge of sports writing. The themes can be formulaic. Murray tried to build the theme into a feature.”

After stints with several papers, including the Washington Post, Aranguré arrived at ESPN The Magazine, where he soon learned one pressing fact about baseball and his place in baseball writing: Of all the players mentioned in the media, few were Latino.

This, of course, worked to Aranguré’s favor, as he was the magazine’s go-to guy when fluent Spanish was needed.

“There are many Latinos in the sport and I speak Spanish,” said Aranguré. “It’s only natural that I could get stories more freely than anyone else.”

Though he maintains there are some famous Latino baseball players, Aranguré also wants to give exposure to the lesser-known players from the region.

He recently profiled Aroldis Chapman, a Cuban pitcher who defected from his country’s national team in Rotterdam, the Netherlands, then fled to Spain, where Aranguré met up with him.

As Aranguré explained, his interest in Chapman went beyond the young Cuban’s baseball talents, to the plot that surrounded Chapman as a political lightning bolt.

“I’ve always been intrigued with Cuban defectors. I don’t think people realize what they have to do and what they leave behind to come make a living in the United States.”

Aranguré added that defection, as a political action, particularly in Cuba, is not widely understood by American baseball fans.

Of course to write such in-depth features, one needs a diet of continual reading, which in Aranguré’s case, includes everything from newspapers to fiction. From this, he gains not just knowledge and story ideas, but exposes himself to new ways to execute the written word.

But in the end, Aranguré maintains it all comes down to one’s own writing.

“People will always want good writing and journalism. In this business, one has to be persistent and always look to improve. If most everyone is good, you have to be even better.”
First, the highly popular *Asymptotia* is not a science blog.

It’s a blog that happens to be written by a scientist.

Clifford Johnson, professor of physics and astronomy in USC College, blogs about his life and vast interests. He may blog about his daily routine of taking the subway and bus to work. Or about the compost in his vegetable garden, his folding bicycle or trumpet playing. He may post a funny video spoofing *The Matrix* as a silent film.

He may even blog about Halloween, complete with a chilling photo of himself wearing vampire fangs.

“What I hope people get from my blog is a realization that scientists are just ordinary people,” Johnson said. “We’re not special people. We’re just people doing a special thing. It’s an issue of making science accessible by first making the practitioners accessible.”

This is not to say that some of his posts don’t discuss science. Remember, this is a man at the forefront of the international effort to understand and describe the universe’s origin, past, present and future.

When Johnson goes to work, he may teach students why the sky is blue and why the blueness has a particular pattern. So he may return home, blog about it and include a computation demonstrating in concrete numbers why the sky is blue.

“I went outside to enjoy the beautiful autumn day and the beauty there is in seeing an equation writ large in the sky,” Johnson wrote in one posting that included photos he took of the sky.

“At times like this,” he blogged, “one remembers why it is that it is hard not to just love physics!”

Johnson believes science should play a bigger role in American culture.

“When people talk about culture, they don’t normally list science with music, dancing and art,” he said. “But it is part of our culture. So I’m just trying to put science back where it belongs.”

He blames part of the problem on mainstream media’s “ghettoization of both science and scientists.”

“They’re put in this corner of being special, somewhat weird people doing a thing I never understood at school,” Johnson said. “There’s a lot of fear and suspicion associated with that.”

He laments that society has reached a point where it’s OK for people to admit they never understood science.

“People giggle when they say this as though it’s funny,” he said. “If someone claims, ‘Oh, I never got the whole reading thing at school,’ they wouldn’t be proud of that. Basically it’s the same thing. Literacy about how the world works is as fundamental as reading.”

*Asymptotia* — Johnson thoroughly explains the word on his blog — is a way to put a human face on science while breaking stereotypes.

“A typical scientist is still regarded in terms of the numbers as being a white male,” said the London-born Johnson, who was raised for 10 years on the Caribbean island of Montserrat.

“Children of color are seldom told they can be scientists. So another aspect of all of this is to let them see that all kinds of people can be scientists.”

The blog has additional value. He often hears from prospective students and faculty who say the blog teaches them about USC and life in L.A. But Johnson, a blogger for five years, has noticed a disturbing trend. In the wake of Facebook and Twitter, readers are not as eager as they once were to engage in substantial dialogue.

“Conversations have been reduced to sound bites,” he said. “I’m happy that I have no intention to change the blog to keep up with all that stuff. There should be at least a few places where you can go to slow down, just be quiet, sit and reflect.”

*View an Online Video about Clifford Johnson at college.usc.edu/johnson*
David St. John exudes the grace and aplomb of a holy man, perhaps a monk or sage. He actually does resemble a bit of bespectacled, bearded spiritual teacher Eckhart Tolle — especially in his quiet gaze and half smile.

But this poet and professor of English in USC College is no saint — even if his surname does pay homage to the preacher who is said to have baptized Jesus. That St. John’s head was later delivered on a platter to King Herod’s stepdaughter-niece, Salome. At least St. John’s poetry would not be considered saintly. Erotic, sensual and brutally honest, his poems mine the complex relationship between woman and man. >>
“For me, that’s the topos, that’s the locale of the most interesting and complicated psychological reckonings with all aspects of one’s life,” St. John says. “That’s the lens through which all kinds of experiences can be seen and understood. Tracing the psychological dramas of that relationship is to me the most compelling way to talk about faith, desire, loss and hope.”

She said that loathing is
Too strong a word since what
I feel now is so much closer
To contempt & pity both
That it’s become wearying even
To watch you pour the wine
& so depressing to feel
The draft of the night

—From St. John’s “Patience”

The Other Venice

Dishes clank in his kitchen as St. John brews tea. Twice-divorced, father of two, and raising his precocious 16-year-old daughter Vivienne, St. John gives off the vibe of a sophisticated Mr. Mom at one with the small rituals of domesticity.

He is explaining why streets have no right angles in his beloved Venice, Calif., where he has lived for 22 years. Walking across his wooden floors carrying two steaming cups, he effortlessly finds the perfect words to describe the connecting canals that during the turn of the 20th century flowed from the city’s Grand Lagoon.

“They radiated like the spokes of a star,” St. John says, setting the cups on a large, antique wooden dining room table. A bright ray from the skylight illuminates him as if preparing to beam him up — perhaps to Venus, St. John’s favorite planet.

His friend and fellow poet Mark Irwin, assistant professor of English in the College, laughs at the notion of St. John being described as an alien from Venus.

“Yes, say that!” Irwin says. “David will love it.”

St. John’s transporting poetry is simply not of this world. Comparing brushstroke to line in his works, Irwin says, “We’re talking about the decadence and attention of Rembrandt and Caravaggio.”

“Who else but David’s persona could say, ‘The opaque stroke lost across the mirror,’ or, ‘The opal hammock of rain falls out of its cloud,’ or, ‘Hymn away this reliquary fever,’” Irwin says, quoting from St. John’s poem, “Elegy.” “What other poet could equate ‘seeds’ with ‘nerves’? What other friend would offer you ‘smudges of bud’ or ‘a blame of lime’?”

Inside his 1912 low-pitched, side-gabled roofed Craftsman home, St. John is sipping yerba mate, a strong South American tea he prefers over less caffeinated teas. His house, he says, is situated where canals once snaked along the city styled after Venice, Italy — or “that murky soup of dreams” as he calls the capital of the Veneto region in The Face (HarperCollins), his 2004 novella in verse.

“If you know (expletive) about me, or ever cared to, Italy is where my heart is,” St. John wrote in The Face while traveling on a rapido between Rome and Florence, moving through a “cinemagraphic journal of the soul.”

But mostly, he writes in longhand sitting in a black leather chair in his living room between a piano — an instrument he has played since boyhood — and his fireplace, its mantle made from wood salvaged from Fraser’s Million Dollar Pier after Venice, Calif.’s disastrous 1912 blaze.

When his children were small, he worked into the night when the house was quiet. Now, he usually writes in the mornings after dropping off Vivienne at school.

“I still write late at night,” he says. “I like being awake when the world’s asleep.”

He writes amid the comfort of his many shelves packed with volumes of poetry and books on Michelangelo, Leonardo da Vinci and Raphael — the last being the subject of his current project. There are biographies, history and photography books, and ones featuring rock legends such as Jim Morrison, who lived in Venice Beach in the ’60s, when the area was the center for the Beat generation.

Those unfamiliar with St. John’s background might wonder why a poet owns so many books about tennis. But St. John comes from a family of tennis aficionados. His father, a track and basketball coach, and uncle were superb players. So was his grandfather, an English professor and dean of humanities at California State University, Fresno. St. John, an only child, has played the game since he could hold a racket. In his teens, he played against experts his age who went pro.

“I loved playing and was winning up to a point,” St. John says. “But I wasn’t world class. In my mind, this was not crushing news. I was incredibly realistic about it. There came a point where I wanted to do other things.”

He taught himself to play guitar, starting with folk music, then rock, playing in bands for a time until poetry exploded his rock-star wannabe bubble.

The Tipping Point

Born and reared in Fresno, St. John attended Fresno State and took a class with Philip Levine, a then-emerging poet who would go on to win a Pulitzer Prize in poetry. Levine became St. John’s mentor and has remained a dear friend.

“When a freshman comes into your class familiar with Wordsworth and Milton, you take notice,” Levine told Ploughshares in 2005. “Sometimes that year, two new Philip Larkin poems I’d never seen before came into my possession. I shared them with poet friends; I even read them to my classes. I no longer recall how I discovered they were not by Larkin but by St. John, who was having a ball gulling his teacher.”

“Here was this 18-year-old tennis whiz with an ear so perfect for rhythm, tone, nuance, he could completely fool someone who had read and reread everything by Larkin.”

Encouraged also by his mother, a drama teacher, St. John leapt into the world of poetry, earning a master of fine arts degree at the Iowa Writers’ Workshop at the University of Iowa, where he served as poetry screener for The Iowa Review. He became good friends with his office mate at the literary journal, T.C. Boyle, who was fiction screener.

St. John went on to teach at Oberlin College then Johns Hopkins University, where his closest friend was Leo Braudy, also a professor there.

After Boyle joined the English faculty in USC College in 1978 and Braudy followed five years later, they began attempting to recruit St. John.
Boyle is now a Distinguished Professor of English and Braudy has additional titles of University Professor and Leo. S. Bing Chair in English and American Literature.

“I knew if I took the job, I was going to live by the beach,” St. John says, as seagulls caw in the background. “The only place I could afford was Venice.”

Ph.D. Writing Program Prospers

St. John arrived in the College in 1987 when its creative writing programs were beginning to flourish. In 2001, Carol Muske-Dukes, now California’s poet laureate, founded and directed USC’s first Ph.D. in Literature and Creative Writing program. Two years later, St. John became director. St. John and Muske-Dukes teach in the program, along with Boyle, Irwin, Aimee Bender, Percival Everett and Marianne Wiggins, among others.

Under St. John’s leadership, the program is producing some of the most interesting and successful writers in the country: Chris Abani, Bridget Hoida and Jennifer Kwon Dobbs to name a few.

In a class taught by St. John and Frank Ticheli, a professor in USC Thornton School of Music, the program’s writers work with graduate composers to produce acts of operas and poems set to music. St. John’s students also collaborate with photographers and other visual artists.

“All of the arts are in conversation with one another,” he says.

Accepting four to six students per academic year, the program selects those showing great promise as well as proven accomplishments in their writing and scholarly work. The program produces prolific authors and often professors.

“All aspects of our culture are courting people who can use language,” St. John says. “Good writers are always in demand.”

Becoming Achromatic

St. John became a published poet at 26 with his book *Hush*. Now the author of nine collections of poetry, he has earned some of the biggest prizes for poets, including fellowships from the Guggenheim Foundation and National Endowment for the Arts, the Rome Prize (Prix de Rome) and an Academy Award in literature from the American Academy of Arts and Letters. He also won Discovery/The Nation, James D. Phelan and O.B. Hardison, Jr. poetry prizes, the last being a career prize for poetic achievement and teaching awarded by the Folger Shakespeare Library.

The decorated poet shuns the tired topic of why poets seem to be marginalized in American society.

“There has never been as broad or deep an audience for poetry as right now,” he says.

When he is not at USC, he can be found shepherding in new generations of poets at Beyond Baroque, the Los Angeles area’s leading literary and arts center, located in Venice.

Recently, Beyond Baroque honored St. John in an event where friends read his poetry, played the guitar, piano and cello, and told stories. Some sang a tongue-firmly-in cheek song, to the tune of Johnny Cash’s “Man in Black,” about why St. John always wears black.

If you’re wondering, St. John will first explain he wears black because it is a post-punk holdover of the ’80s. After a few awkward moments, he’ll give you the real reason: “When my second marriage ended 10 years ago, I thought, ‘OK, black is my uniform.’ ”

But remember the heart of St. John’s works — man and woman — and consider the last lines in his poem, “Vespa Vestals”:

*To begin yet again as if, each time one loved,
One loved as a virgin, helplessly, if faithlessly —
Until the life that was once long ago imagined
Begins laughing again, silently, in the ruins.*

The poet in black seems to weave into this expression of hope hints of Technicolor.
MC: What drives you to write?
AB: I think it comes from a love of language — I really enjoy words and the beauty of words. It comes from an interest in telling stories, and something invisible I can’t define.

MC: I’m curious about the writing process. I’ve always wondered about yours, especially after having been your student. Could you tell me a little about it? Is there a certain schedule you stick to, a word count or time limit you aim for?
AB: I have a very rigid schedule where I write for two hours in the morning, five or six days a week, which I’ve been doing since 1995 and it really changed my writing once I set that in place. I know people who do a word count but I do a time limit because I like the idea that I could just sit there for two hours and that could be considered work. And when I write, there’s no using the Internet or e-mail, nothing to distract me.

MC: We know that you write organically, and never really know how the story will end when you start; why do you think this works better than writing a complete plot outline?
AB: I think what happens for me, is if the plot is outlined, I get bored. And as soon as the writer gets bored, the writing gets boring. I also feel like I can’t think up an interesting plot, I’m just not that kind of thinker, so my more original ideas happen when I’m not thinking and I’m just writing.

MC: What do you do when you reach an impasse or a roadblock of some sort in your writing?
AB: I’ll usually shift and work on something else — I won’t try to barrel through it. I’ll work on something else for a while and go back to it. Sometimes I just need a fresh eye and in order to get that freshness I need to look away. I’ll have stories sit for years or months or a long time before I know what to do with them.

MC: What do you enjoy most about writing?
AB: Probably the sense of discovery, because when I write something I didn’t expect to write, then I’m kind of opening up myself to myself, and also it tends to be surprising to the reader. Those days are the most exciting.

MC: In addition to being a beloved and successful writer, you’re a beloved and successful teacher. Can you describe the relationship between your teaching and writing?
AB: My current way of looking at it is that the writing is very solitary and the teaching is very social, and even though they’re about the same topic, they’re super different. I like the teaching because I like people and I like talking about writing. I love writing, but I would have fun teaching anything, to tell you the truth. It happens to work out nicely that I get to teach something I’m passionate about.

MC: We share the same stance on the benefit that writing can have on students, both young and old, but there seems to be a resistance against including creative writing, and the arts in general, in primary classrooms. Why do you think this is, and what does this say about our society?
AB: I think the problem is that people will view the arts as extra, and so when the schools are in a dire situation — LAUSD is struggling right now — the arts can often get cut. But ideally, and many schools do this, the arts should be considered an integral part of a curriculum, because certain students learn differently and will be able to access everything much better if taught through the arts. On French bills, there’s a piano player or a painter, and we would never ever put someone from the arts on our money — they’re always politicians.

MC: What authors’ works do you admire, both now and when you were growing up?
Professor, mentor, magician with words — Aimee Bender is all of these. She’s also a friend; not just to me, her undergraduate student for more than a year, but to all of her students, to whom she is staggeringlly devoted. The first time I took one of her courses — “The Writer in the Community” — I’m embarrassed to say I wasn’t all that familiar with her work. I’d changed my major from political science to creative writing a semester earlier and at the time wasn’t all too savvy about contemporary fiction. But Aimee (she welcomes students calling her by her first name) changed all of that. She exposed my class to authors who struck a chord, whose writing was weirder and more fun than anything I’d read in a very long time. It unlocked a part of my imagination that I hadn’t tapped into since I was a kid. I began seeing what was once to me a monochrome world through the kaleidoscopic lens of literature. Aimee’s fiction — *Willful Creatures* (Doubleday, 2005) and *An Invisible Sign of My Own* (Anchor, 2001) to name a few — has the same effect; her work enhances readers’ lives through the beauty, magic and mystery of language.

**BY MICHAEL CAMPOS ’09**

Aimee Bender teaches undergraduates in the course, “Classic and Contemporary Fairy Tales.” A writer of beautifully-odd fairy tales, Bender has mastered the opening line: “Steven returned from the war without lips.” Or, “There were two mutant girls in the town: one had a hand made of fire and the other had a hand made of ice.”
Many budding writers would give anything to get inside the heads of best-selling authors to learn their secrets to success.

Crime novelist Jonathan Kellerman ’74 can spare them the trouble.

As a trained psychologist, Kellerman is certainly qualified to analyze the workings of his brain. More than that, he’s also willing to share the time-tested methods that allow him to write best-selling novels year after year.

Kellerman, a USC College Ph.D. graduate, first started writing as a therapeutic hobby while working as a psychologist. After two decades of working by day and writing by night, and after publishing five books, he finally made the shift to writing full time.

Since 1985, Kellerman has written 31 best-selling novels, and in the past two years, he’s written four novels and an art book on vintage guitars. What could account for this prolific publishing schedule? His diagnosis is simple. “I think I have a touch of hypomania,” he said. “I talk fast; I move fast; I think fast.”

He has earned a prominent place in the writing world, but part of him has never left his original field of psychology. This training may be most evident in his creation of Alex Delaware, the star of 24 of Kellerman’s novels. The character is a retired child psychologist turned amateur detective who applies his expertise to help police solve horrific crimes. Kellerman decided to make Delaware a former psychologist because, as he puts it, “Write what you know, and I’m a psychologist.”

Kellerman’s background has influenced his writing process as well. Before he landed on the New York Times best-seller list, Kellerman already had been published in the field of psychology. Writing for a scientific audience taught him, among other things, “literary thrift,” which he admits is a challenge.

“One of my weaknesses is I tend to be very wordy, but I realize that about myself and rein it in,” he said. “I think scientific writing helped teach me a bit of discipline, in terms of outlining, organization, and paring it down to what’s really necessary to get your thoughts across,” he said.

Although he is aware of his weakness and attempts to use words wisely, Kellerman says that after finishing a book, he will still go back and cut it by 20 percent. “I tell writers, ‘The Bible is holy, your stuff isn’t. Learn to maintain confidence and cut. There should be a purpose to everything in your book.’”

Ninety percent of writing is in the preparation, Kellerman says, and he practices what he preaches. “I will plan a book for months, if not years, and I will only sit down to write once it is outlined in detail,” he said.

“I always progress through chapters by chapter outlines, and I realize it’s less for the sense of devising plots and more for my own confidence,” he continued. “People ask me, ‘Do you ever have writer’s block?’ I don’t have it, I think, because I have the outline.”

Another factor that drives Kellerman is setting attainable milestones: “If I think about writing a whole book, it’s too scary. So what I do is have a goal — to sit down every day and write five pages. And if I do that, I feel I’ve succeeded.”

Despite his background in psychology, Kellerman does not overanalyze himself. “ introspection is one of creativity’s greatest enemies,” he said. Although writing can be therapeutic, and even though his own career started as a form of therapy, he believes that all successful writers who have longevity treat writing as a job, not just as a creative outlet.

“I don’t doubt the therapeutic value of writing; I just think that too much thinking will hinder you,” Kellerman said. “You just have to do the work.”

And he certainly has done the work. Kellerman recently turned 60. He has had two successful careers in his lifetime, which leads some readers to ask him if he’ll ever retire. So can we continue to expect another book each year from Jonathan Kellerman?

“They’ll probably be lowering me in to my grave typing,” he said, laughing.

We’ll take that as a yes.
No longer do we live in a world divided into two cultures. The literary artist, like the scientist, must embrace science and technology. Telling science stories is an excellent way to do this, though many writers balk at the prospect. They believe — wrongly — that one has to have specialized training to tell such tales, a misconception I myself harbored for decades.

One morning 10 years ago, however, I woke up with a book deadline that required me to explain how a rocket engine works and how engineers direct a spacecraft to another planet. Not your garden-variety predicament, I’ll admit — and one for which I was exceptionally ill-prepared. But I survived, thanks to two key attributes: meticulous attention to the craft of writing, and a willingness to appear dim by asking elementary questions.

Here’s what happened. When I was in junior high, and my mother was dying of cancer, my father disappeared into the Jet Propulsion Laboratory in Pasadena to work on twin space probes for the Mariner Mars 69 mission. His absence was brutal, but I weathered it and moved on, fleeing Southern California for Yale, where I studied history and studio art, then New York, where I toiled for over a decade as Newsday’s political cartoonist.

While employed as an artist, however, I continued to write, and in 1994 published Forever Barbie: The Unauthorized Biography of a Real Doll, which sold well. Suddenly publishers wanted to pay me to investigate whatever interested me. Casting around for a new project, I realized: The one thing I burned to know — even after more than 20 years — was where my father had gone. What went on in the Jet Propulsion Lab? Why had he chosen it over his wife and daughter?

A book is a marathon, requiring stamina to write and report. Not all subjects welcome the scrutiny of nonfiction writers, or of outsiders, period. It was far from a cake-walk to gain high-level access at JPL when my principle credential was a social history of the Barbie doll.

But when doors slam in your face, you have to keep on knocking. I spent six years researching JPL and hanging around with engineers. The result — Astro Turf: The Private Life of Rocket Science — was an unexpected odyssey of forgiveness. I understood what had so riveted my father because it riveted me.

Reviewers liked the book, and science magazines asked me to contribute. NASA even invited me to deliver the closing keynote address for a conference at the Smithsonian Institution on “The Societal Implications of Spaceflight.” I talked about my dad, which, had he been alive, would likely have embarrassed him.

In my science-writing class at USC, I emphasize the thrill of the chase, as well as ethics and technique. Most of all, however, I try to teach students to read like writers, so they can examine a work in any genre or medium — memoir, science-writing, research nonfiction, dramatic writing — and figure out what makes it work. Once they understand its mechanism, they can emulate it.

We live in a time of great change. The Web has crippled print; no longer can writers rely on traditional markets. Yet transitional times can also be rich in opportunities — for writers flexible enough to embrace them.

This is not just wacky wishful thinking. Last summer, for example, with my writing partner on dramatic projects, I was offered an extraordinary opportunity — a commission from LA Opera for a libretto about the 110 Freeway on its 70th anniversary.

Back in college, in a German literature class, I fell in love with the wit and feeling in Hugo von Hofmannsthal’s libretto for Richard Strauss’ Der Rosenkavalier. I’ve been reading librettos critically ever since, without, of course, any expectation of ever writing one.

Yet because construction on the 110 Freeway began near the spot where JPL’s first rocketeers tested their engine prototypes, an idea for one of the opera’s main characters immediately suggested itself. My writing partner and I accepted the assignment. To compress a long story, at LA Opera’s workshops of the 110 project last month, the tenor, who plays a JPL engineer, sang words I wrote that I had first heard from my father — a happy convergence of science and opera, two disciplines I never expected to embrace.

Transforming Global Information and Communication Markets
The Political Economy of Innovation
BY JONATHAN ARONSON AND PETER COWHEY
THE MIT PRESS / Jonathan Aronson, professor in the USC Annenberg School for Communication and the USC School of International Relations, and his coauthor argue that continued rapid innovation and economic growth require new approaches in global governance that will reconcile diverse interests and enable competition to flourish.

I Am Not Sidney Poitier
BY PERCIVAL EVERETT
GRAYWOLF PRESS / An irresistible comic novel from Percival Everett, Distinguished Professor of English, and an irreverent take on race, class, and identity in America.

ALSO BY PERCIVAL EVERETT
Abstraction und Einfühlung
AKASHIC BOOKS / In words that mimic process, Everett’s poems attempt to reverse the artistic canvas, taking perspective and skewing it to reflect the world around it, spiraling into the work as a way to get out of it.

A NEW YORK TIMES NOTABLE BOOKS OF 2009
Dearest Creature
BY AMY GERSTLER
PENGUIN / In her newest collection of poetry, Amy Gerstler of the Master of Professional Writing Program marries fact and fiction in a menagerie of dramatic monologues, twisted love poems and epistolary pleadings.

This Lovely Life
A Memoir of Premature Motherhood
BY VICKI FORMAN
MARINER BOOKS / Vicki Forman of English shares what became of her family after she gave birth to twins Evan and Ellie, weighing just a pound at birth, at 23 weeks gestation, and explains the harrowing medical interventions and ethical considerations involving the sanctity of life and death.

Eighteenth-Century Authorship and the Play of Fiction
Novels and the Theater: Haywood to Austen
BY EMILY HODGSON ANDERSON
ROUTLEDGE / Emily Hodgson Anderson, assistant professor of English, looks at developments in 18th-century drama that influenced the rise of the novel.

Thelonious Monk
The Life and Times of an American Original
BY ROBIN D. G. KELLEY
FREE PRESS / In the first book on Thelonious Monk based on exclusive access to the Monk family papers and private recordings, Robin D. G. Kelley, professor of American studies and ethnicity, and history, brings to light a startlingly different Monk beyond his public persona.

Civic Engagement in the Wake of Katrina
EDITED BY GEORGE SANCHEZ AND AMY KORITZ
UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN PRESS / This collection of essays edited by George Sanchez, vice dean for College diversity, and professor of American studies and ethnicity, and history, and his coeditor document the ways in which educational institutions and the arts community responded to the devastation wrought by Hurricane Katrina.

Golden Dreams
California in an Age of Abundance, 1950–1963
BY KEVIN STARR
OXFORD UNIVERSITY PRESS / This volume by Kevin Starr, University Professor and professor of history, concludes his acclaimed multi-volume Americans and the California Dream. Here Starr covers the crucial postwar period — 1950 to 1963 — when the California we know today first burst into prominence.

Connecting Social Problems and Popular Culture
Why Media is Not the Answer
BY KAREN STERNHEIMER
WESTVIEW PRESS / Karen Sternheimer of sociology goes beyond the news-grabbing headlines claiming that popular culture is public enemy No. 1 to consider what really causes the social problems we are most concerned about.

1989
The Struggle to Create Post-Cold War Europe
BY MARY ELISE SAROTTE
PRINCETON UNIVERSITY PRESS / Mary Elise Sarotte, professor of international relations, uses previously unavailable sources to explore the momentous events following the fall of the Berlin Wall 20 years ago and the effects they have had on our world ever since.

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WESTVIEW PRESS / Karen Sternheimer of sociology goes beyond the news-grabbing headlines claiming that popular culture is public enemy No. 1 to consider what really causes the social problems we are most concerned about.
Frank Alber, assistant professor of biological sciences, will get closer to determining the architecture of a macromolecular machine after being named a 2009 Pew Scholar in the Biomedical Sciences. He will receive a $240,000 award over four years to help support his research. Alber is among 17 early-career scholars The Pew Charitable Trusts considers to be America’s most promising scientists.


KO Honda, professor of mathematics, has been awarded the Mathematical Society of Japan’s 2009 Geometry Prize.

Thomas Jordan, University Professor and holder of the W.M. Keck Foundation Chair in Geological Sciences, was awarded a $1.6 million federal stimulus grant to continue developing the PetaShake Project — an advanced computational research platform designed to support high-resolution earthquake simulations on a regional scale.

Peggy Kamuf, Marion Frances Chevalier Professor of French, and professor of comparative literature and English, was awarded a $180,000 grant from the National Endowment for the Humanities for the translation of the seminars of Jacques Derrida.

Zhong-Lin Lu, professor of psychology and biomedical engineering, and director of the USC Brain and Creativity Institute, received the first Richard Wollheim Memorial Award from the British Psychoanalytic Council and an honorary doctorate in economics from the Copenhagen Business School.

Eric Friedlander, Dean’s Professor of Mathematics, has been elected by the membership to become the next president of the American Mathematical Society.

Jill McNitt-Gray, associate professor of kinesiology, biological sciences and biomedical engineering, was elected president of the American Society of Biomechanics.

George Sanchez, vice dean for College diversity and professor of American studies and ethnicity, has been selected as the outstanding Latino/a faculty in higher education research institutions by the American Association of Hispanics in Higher Education, Inc.

The award, which will be presented to Sanchez in March, recognizes an individual who has demonstrated excellence in both research and teaching and has provided significant contributions to his or her academic discipline.
RICHARD ROBERTS, professor of chemistry and chemical engineering, has been awarded a five-year, $1.25 million research grant from the new National Institutes of Health ‘Transformative Research program. He is among only 42 nationwide honored with the elite award.

STEVE ROSS, professor and chair of history, hosted KCRW’s The Politics of Culture show on Nov. 3, 2009. He discussed ‘The Los Angeles Berlin Wall Project with guests Justin Jampol, founder and director of the Wende Museum, mural artist Kent Twitchell, and Wayne Rakovich, chairman of the Wende Board.

ROBERT SACKER, professor of mathematics, has had a special issue of the Journal of Difference Equations and Applications dedicated to him.

MARY ELISE SAROTTE, professor of international relations, has won the American Institute for Contemporary German Studies’ 2009 German Academic Exchange Service (DAAD) Prize for Distinguished Secondary German Studies. ‘2009 German American Institute for Contemporary German Studies, Dean’s Professor of History, professor of Russian, and chairman of the department, has been appointed to the National Science Foundation review panel for the Cognitive Neuroscience program.

LORRAINE TURCOTTE, associate professor of kinesiology and biological sciences, was elected to the Board of Trustees of the American College of Sports Medicine (2009–12, Basic & Applied Sciences). She also received the Recognition Award from the Southwest Chapter of the American College of Sports Medicine.

MICHAEL S. WATERMAN, USC University Professor, holder of the USC Associates Chair in Natural Sciences, and professor of biological sciences, computer science and mathematics, was named a 2009 fellow of the Society for Industrial and Applied Mathematics (SIAM). Waterman was also named an International Society for Computational Biology (ISCB) fellow in the inaugural Fellows Class of 2009.

KEVIN STARR, University Professor and professor of history, was presented with a County Scroll by the Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors for his many contributions to promote literacy and education.

LOWELL STOTT, professor of earth sciences, and GARY ROSEN, professor and chair of mathematics, along with Gisele Ragusa of the USC Rossier School of Education, have been awarded a $1 million State Department of Education California Post-secondary Education: Improving ‘Teacher Quality Grant. Science Technology Engineering and Math (STEM) pipeline grant.

BOSCO TIAN, associate professor of psychology, has been appointed to the National Science Foundation review panel for the Cognitive Neuroscience program.

MELLON FOUNDATION GRANT SUPPORTS GRADUATE RESEARCH
The Andrew W. Mellon Foundation has approved a three-year, $883,000 grant for the USC-Huntington Early Modern Studies Institute’s (EMSI) programs for 2009 to 2012. The institute’s director, Peter Mancall, notes that the foundation’s support will also allow the institute to frequently bring leading humanists to USC’s campus or to the Huntington.

The Bard Goes Digital

BRUCE R. SMITH, Dean’s Professor of English, has received a start-up grant from the National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH) to create the Cambridge World Shakespeare Encyclopedia. In addition to being published as a 2 million-word, two-volume reference book in 2012, the encyclopedia will become a second-generation digital workspace and reference resource designed for collaborative exchange among scholars, teachers, students and performers who study Shakespeare worldwide.

The project addresses key opportunities for Renaissance studies and the digital humanities. It integrates a wealth of otherwise distributed resources in an encyclopedic way. It offers multiple user models, balancing copyright constraints with individual and institutional access. And it combines user-generated content with peer review, modeling new modes of publication applicable beyond this field.

Sponsored by Cambridge University Press, an international team that is developing core content will build and maintain the site. USC’s Center for Transformative Scholarship will support design and prototyping.

Mancall in the Media

PETER MANCALL, professor of history and anthropology, and director of the USC-Huntington Early Modern Studies Institute, appeared on The Daily Show with Jon Stewart in July to discuss his book Fatal Journey: The Final Expedition of Henry Hudson (Basic Books, 2009). His book was also the History Book Club’s Featured Selection for July. A lecture Mancall delivered on the book at the Museum of the City of New York in September was aired by C-Span in October as part of its Book TV program.

The West Bank and East Jerusalem Archaeology Database Receives Honor

The West Bank and East Jerusalem Archaeology Database that is publicly available through USC’s Digital Library has been awarded the American Schools of Oriental Research (ASOR) Open Archaeology Prize, sponsored by the Alexandria Archive Institute, the William and Flora Hewlett Foundation and the David Brown Book Company. LYNN SWARTZ DODD, lecturer in religion and curator of the USC Archaeology Research Center, developed the database in collaboration with the USC Digital Library staff (Matt Gainer, Zahid Rafique, Wayne Shaof and Joyce Ouchida) and based on research done by Rafi Greenberg (Tel Aviv) and Adi Keinan (University College London), which was supported by a project originated by Dodd and Ran Boytner (UCLA Director of International Research at the Cotsen Institute of Archaeology).
Jody Agius Vallejo specializes in international migration, immigrant integration, race/ethnicity and the Mexican-origin population.

Julianna Aravind Asok specializes in algebraic geometry and representation theory.

Juliette Emile-Geay’s research focuses on extracting dynamical information from records of past climates, with a particular emphasis on the El Niño phenomenon.

Jacques E.C. Hymans studies international security and foreign policy.

Jane Junn researches political behavior and attitudes in the United States, race and ethnicity, and the politics of immigration.

David Kang is a professor of international relations and business, director of the Korean Studies Institute.

Matthew Pratt is an assistant professor of chemistry.

Veronica Terriguez’s research focuses on educational inequality, immigrant integration, and organized labor.

Wendy Wood is a social psychologist who studies attitude and behavior change, especially the influence of habits on behavior.

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1950s
CARL TERZIAN (B.A., history, ’57) and Carl Terzian Associates, his full-service boutique public relations firm in West Los Angeles, celebrated 40 years in business in 2009.

1960s
TAYLOR HACKFORD (B.A., international relations, ’68) was selected by the Directors Guild of America (DGA) as its new president. He was elected to a two-year term unanimously at the DGA’s national convention in July.

KENNETH KRUEGER (B.A., comparative literature, ’68) welcomed his 14th grandchild at the end of 2009. He resides in Malibu, Calif., with his wife, Patricia Honey. The couple was married in December 2008 after 12 years together. A former national champion and All-American swimmer under coach Peter Daland, Krueger is a retired teacher who taught at the secondary and college levels.

1970s
DR. DOUGLAS CHINN (B.S., biology, ’72; M.D., ’76) has been retained by EDAP TMS SA, the global leader in therapeutic ultrasound, to assist and support U.S. investigational sites in enrolling, treating and following patients in the U.S. ENLIGHT clinical trial.

HENRY J. HALL (B.A., international relations, ’73) has been appointed by California Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger to a judgeship with the Los Angeles County Superior Court.

DONALD J. HERREMA (M.A., economics, ’76) was appointed executive vice chairman of Kennedy Wilson, an international real estate investment, services and fund management firm, and chief executive officer of its newly formed division Kennedy Wilson Capital Markets.

BRIDGET HEALY (B.A., English, ’74), was elected to the board of directors for the House of Ruth Inc., which offers counseling, services and shelter to women and children trying to escape the tragic circumstances of domestic violence.

KRYSTN HANGGI (MPW, ’00) was nominated for a 2009 Tony Award for best direction of a musical for the Broadway show Rock of Ages. At 31, she became the youngest musical director nominated for a Tony. Whether directing or writing, her goal is always the same.

“What I love is great storytelling,” Hanggi said. “MPW taught me how to tell a story, which is an art form, understanding the protagonist, the importance of watching them go through challenges, the importance of the ‘ah-ha’ moment. What I find is, the way we tell stories and watch stories mirrors the lessons we learn in life.”

Currently, Hanggi is writing a screenplay based on the young adult book series Dear Dumb Diary by Jim Benton. She will also direct the movie musical about an only child — an awkward middle school girl with a giant crush on a boy.

NORMAN “DON” HARMON (B.A., international relations, ’68; M.A., international relations, ’69) retired for the third and last time and moved to New Bern, N.C. Harmon had a distinguished career in the Air Force including service for 13 months in Vietnam, four years in NATO forces in Germany; and four years at NORAD headquarters. He also taught for four years at the Air Force Academy and finally served in NASA at Kennedy Space Center, from which he retired. Harmon then worked for 15 years at Harris Corp. in Florida and 10 more at Booz Allen Hamilton, Inc.

JERRY MARLATT (B.S., physics, ’66) joined Morrison & Foerster LLP’s Capital Markets group.

JAMES MORRISON (B.A., political science, ’69) was named director of congressional affairs for the Overseas Private Investment Corporation.

RICHARD E. POSEY (B.A., English, ’69) was appointed to the Board of Directors of Trex Company, Inc., the nation’s largest manufacturer of composite decking, railing and fencing.

CRAIG STERN (B.A., astronomy, ’69; PharmD, ’76; MBA, business administration) ’84 gave several presentations to the Academy of Managed Care Pharmacy, the Western Claim Conference and the 2009 Western Managed Care Student Program. He also co-authored three articles in the Spring 2009 issue of California Pharmacists Journal.

TODD J. THOMAN (B.A., humanities (drama), ’90) shares this photo of his 12-year-old twins during an August 2009 trip to Paradisus Riviera Resort in Cancun, Mexico. Thoman notes both are avid Trojan fans and he truly believes they will follow in his footsteps at USC.
1990s

ROBERT ANDRADE (B.A./M.A., economics, ’97) was appointed as a vice president and member of the Board for Adherex Technologies Inc.

MARK BABIN (B.A., political science, ’93) was appointed national account manager for Relational Technology Solutions (RTS) and is based out of RTS’ Western Region office in Irvine, Calif.

REESE E. BARRICK (M.S., geology, ’90; Ph.D., geology, ’93) was selected director of Fort Hays State University’s Sternberg Museum of Natural History.

DAVID BLAKESLEY (Ph.D., English, ’90), professor in the Department of English at Purdue University and founder and publisher of Parlor Press, received the Computers and Composition Charles Moran Award for Distinguished Contributions to the field at the Computers and Writing 2009 Conference at the University of California, Davis in June 2009.

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CLASS NOTABLE

CLAY MATTHEWS III (B.A., international relations, ’08) was a 2009 first-round draft pick of the Green Bay Packers, which traded its second-round pick and both third-rounders to nab him.

It took the linebacker three training camp practices to work his way into the Packers’ starting lineup. And he was named the Pepsi NFL Rookie of the Week in October 2009. He was the fifth member of his family to play football at USC.

CLASS NOTABLE

HEIDRUN MUMPER-DRUMM (M.S., environmental engineering, ’78; B.S., biological sciences, ’77), designer and associate professor at Art Center College of Design in Pasadena, Calif., was recently appointed director of sustainability initiatives at Art Center.

MARK WAGNER (B.S., business administration, ’78), was named president and CEO of Celleration Inc., Minneapolis, Minn., which markets low frequency ultrasonic medical devices used to treat chronic wounds.

M. FAYE WILSON (B.A., international relations, ’76), was appointed to Biocept, Inc.’s board of directors.

1980s

JOHN G. ANDERSEN (B.A., history, ’82) joined the Sacramento law firm Ellis, Coleman, Poirier, LaVoie & Steinheimer, LLP as an associate attorney.

ROBERT CAVALLO (B.A., English, ’85) was named to the newly created position of chief creative officer at Warner Music Group Corp.

WILLIAM A. COVINO (Ph.D., English, ’81) was appointed the new provost and vice president for academic affairs at California State University, Fresno in July 2009.

J.D. CROUCH II (B.A., linguistics, ’80; M.A., international relations, ’81; Ph.D., international relations, ’87) was appointed executive vice president for strategic development for QinetiQ North America.

ALESSANDRO "SANDRO" DURANTI (Ph.D., linguistics, ’81) was appointed dean of the UCLA Division of Social Sciences in July 2009.

SAMUEL K. FENG (B.A., history, ’81) has been appointed by California Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger to a judgeship with the San Francisco County Superior Court.

VICKI GOLICH (Ph.D., international relations, ’84) was appointed provost and vice president for academic affairs at Metropolitan State College of Denver.

DOUG HOLTE (B.A., international relations, ’83) was named president of the Irvine Company, a private real estate company.

MERCEDES MÁRQUEZ (B.A., political science, ’82) was unanimously confirmed as an assistant secretary at the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development.

LAWRENCE RISLEY (B.A., political science, ’83) has earned a Professional Clear Credential of Social Studies, issued by the California Commission on Teaching Credentialing.

NOTE: Listings for the “Class Notes” and “In Memoriam” sections were compiled based on submissions from alumni and College departments as well as published notices from various media outlets.
JULIE CHEN (B.A., humanities/English & broadcast journalism, ’91) and husband Les Moonves welcomed their first child, Charlie Moonves, on Sept. 24. Chen is coanchor of CBS’s The Early Show and host of Big Brother.

MELISSA FRUGÉ (B.A., political science, ’94) was promoted to the position of vice president, general counsel and secretary for Borland Software Corp. in February 2009.

NICOLE GORDON STILL (B.A., political science & theatre, ’93) was appointed to serve as Jefferson County Circuit Court Judge by Alabama Gov. Bob Riley in June 2009.

MAUREEN R. MCGOWAN (B.A., environmental science, ’98) was named interim director of the District Department of the Environment by Washington, D.C. Mayor Adrian Fenty.

JOSEPH MISHRIKI (B.S., exercise science, ’97) was named community banking regional president for South San Diego at Wells Fargo.

KATHLEEN RHODES (B.A., international relations, ’97) was named corporate spokesperson for Pelco.

CHARLES ANTHONY SILVESTRI (M.A., history, ’91; Ph.D., history, ’95) joined the faculty of W ashburn University as a lecturer in history.

YUHKO SIMONEK (B.A., East Asian languages and cultures, ’92) joined TWI Human Resource Consulting as an international senior consultant.

JEANNA YOO (M.A., art history (museum studies), ’98) was appointed chief advancement officer for the Museum of Contemporary Art San Diego.

2000s

MONICA BENNETT (B.A., psychology, ’08) was awarded a 2009–10 Fulbright Scholarship to Spain, where she will teach English as a second language in Arroyomolina, southwest of Madrid.

SEAN BERENS (B.A., religion, ’09) embarked on a year of full-time volunteer service with Jesuit Volunteer Corps (JVC) Northwest.

TIMOTHY DERDENER (M.A., economics, ’06; Ph.D., economics, ’09) joined the Tepper School of Business at Carnegie Mellon University as assistant professor of economics.

VICTOR M. REX (B.A., political science, ’06), vice president of Golden Estate Management, has been named by the Institute of Real Estate Management as one of the 30 best and brightest individuals under age 30 who have chosen real estate management as a career.

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MICHELLE STEIN (B.A., English, ’09) was selected as head water polo coach at Shadow Hills High School in Indio, Calif.

PHILLIP TALLEUR (B.A., political science, ’04) was named 2009 chairman of the all-volunteer Board of Directors of LeRoy Haynes Center in La Verne, Calif.

MARISA SAORI TAMARU (B.A., psychology & East Asian languages and cultures, ’06) was named First Princess in the 2009 Nisei Week Japanese Festival’s Court.

Engagements

CHRISTOPHER HERR (B.A., history, ’01) is engaged to Kristen Wiggin. He is a social studies teacher at Concord High School in New Hampshire.
Laffit
Anatomy of a Winner
BY MADELYN CAIN-INGLESE
AFFIRMED PRESS / Madelyn Cain-Inglese (MPW,’00), also a lecturer in the Master of Professional Writing Program, tells the life story of Hall of Fame jockey Laffit Pincay Jr.

Hidden Voices
The Orphan Musicians of Venice
BY PATRICIA LOWERY COLLINS
CANDLEWICK PRESS / Set in the early 1700s in the heart of Venice, this novel by Patricia Lowery Collins (B.A., English, ’53) weaves the history of Antonio Vivaldi’s early musical career into the lives of three young women.

American Fractal
BY TIMOTHY GREEN
RED HEN PRESS / Timothy Green’s (MPW,’09) poetry navigates the personal, the political and the metaphysical, in a lyric dream-scape in which an eerie chaos lurks just behind the façade of order.

Curio A Shetland Sheepdog Meets the Cat
BY JEANETTE A. GRIVER
COMPSCY SYSTEMS, INC. / In Jeanette A. Griver’s (M.A., psychology, ’64) fourth children’s book, a story of communication begins with Curio, a Shetland Sheepdog, meeting the cat, Gwen.

The Social Philosophy of Jane Addams
BY MAURICE HAMINGTON
UNIVERSITY OF ILLINOIS PRESS / Maurice Hamington (MBA, business administration, ’83; Ph.D., religion, ’94), associate professor of women’s studies at Metropolitan State College of Denver, analyzes how Jane Addams gave American pragmatism a radical, revolutionary edge.

White Coat Fever
Author House / In his latest novel, Roland S. Jefferson (B.A., biological sciences, ’61), focuses on student life at a black college campus during the ’60s civil rights era.

Peaks and Valleys
Making Good and Bad Times Work for You — At Work and in Life
BY SPENCER JOHNSON
ATRIA BOOKS / Spencer Johnson (B.A., psychology, ’63) tells the story of a young man who lives unhappily in a valley until he meets an old man who lives on a peak, and it changes his work and life forever.

Creativity 101
BY JAMES C. KAUFMAN
SPRINGER / James C. Kaufman (B.A., psychology/creative writing, ’95), associate professor of psychology at California State University, San Bernardino, investigates the many definitions of creativity, as well as how it is manifested and measured.

Global Warming Is Good for Business
How Savvy Entrepreneurs, Large Corporations, and Others Are Making Money While SAVING the Planet
BY KIMBERLY KEILBACH
QUILL DRIVER BOOKS / Kimberly Keilbach (MPW,’08) explores the people and forces at work today that deal with and profit from global warming.

Secret Son
BY LAILA LALAMI
ALGONQUIN BOOKS / Laila Lalami’s (M.A., linguistics, ’94; Ph.D., linguistics, ’97) first novel explores the struggle for identity, the need for family, and the desperation that overtakes ordinary lives in a country divided by class, politics and religion.

The Brightest Moon of the Century
BY CHRISTOPHER MEEKS
WHITE WHISKERS BOOKS / In his first novel, Christopher Meeks (MPW,’82), also a lecturer in the Master of Professional Writing Program, chronicles the life of Edward, a Minnesotan, from ages 14 to 45.

Sexual Coercion in Primates and Humans
An Evolutionary Perspective on Male Aggression against Females
EDITED BY MARTIN N. MULLER AND RICHARD W. WRANGHAM
HARVARD UNIVERSITY PRESS / In this volume, Martin N. Muller (B.A., anthropology, ’94; Ph.D., anthropology, ’92), assistant professor of anthropology at the University of New Mexico, and his coeditor provide the first systematic attempt to assess and understand primate male aggression as an expression of sexual conflict.

Second Twin, First Twin
BY JESSICA NGO
SARELLAPRESS / In this memoir, Jessica Ngo (MPW,’08) uses twin mythology from Nigeria and other countries around the globe to investigate the uniqueness of twin bonds and the significance of being a Nigerian twin growing up in the United States.

Teaching Teens & Reaping Results in a Wi-Fi, Hip-Hop, Where-Has-All-The-Sanity-Gone World
Stories, Strategies, Tools, & Tips From a Three-Time Teacher of the Year Award Winner
BY ALAN SITOMER
SABELLAPRESS / In this memoir, Alan Sitomer (B.A., English, ’89), a three-time Teacher of the Year award winner and young adult novelist, shares stories, teaching tools and insights from his high school classroom.

Sacred Listening
Discovering the Spiritual Exercises of Ignatius Loyola
BY JAMES L. WAKEFIELD
BAKER BOOKS / James L. Wakefield (B.A., religion, ’76) adapts the classic spiritual exercises of Ignatius Loyola specifically for Protestant Christians.

Flying Lessons
BY PENNY DUMM WILKES
FINISHING LINE PRESS / Penny Dumm Wilkes (B.A., anthropology, ’68), adjunct professor of creative and nature writing at National University, offers this book of poetry that according to one reviewer, “paints the landscape of the human heart from 3,000 feet.”

Architectural Influences on Jane Austen’s Narratives
Structure as an Active Agent of Fictive Knowledge in the Long 18th Century
BY MARGARET ENRIGHT WYE
EDWIN MELLEN PRESS / Margaret Enright Wye (M.A, English, ’88; Ph.D, English, ’92), associate professor of English at Rockhurst University, offers the first sustained analysis of Jane Austen’s Mansfield Park in conjunction with her two Bath novels, Northanger Abbey and Persuasion.

Distant War
Recollections of Vietnam, Laos, and Cambodia
BY MARC P. YABLONKA
MERRIAM PRESS / This is a compilation of 20 years of Marc P. Yablonska’s (MPW,’90) reportage on the Vietnam War during the conflict and in its aftermath.
IN MEMORIAM

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USC College Magazine

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Henry B. Clark II, professor emeritus of religion, has died. He was 78.

Henry B. Clark II, professor emeritus of religion, has died. He was 78.

Clay had spent two weeks in July at a lakeside cabin in Vermont with his family. He was returning from a subsequent visit to friends in Nova Scotia when he suffered a heart attack while on a ferry, and died July 23.

PETER ALEX JR. (B.A., '80)
Henderson, NV (10/19/09) at age 52; worked in television production and syndication in Los Angeles; had a career in restaurant management in Santa Fe, NM; Portland, OR, and Las Vegas; prior to USC, he earned his A.A. degree from the Rochester Institute of Technology in New York.

JANE DEL AMO
Gstaad, Switzerland (05/04/09) at age 93; her late husband Jaime del Amo's family donated significantly to USC College's study abroad programs; actress in the '40s best known for her role in the film noir Cat People; reprised the character in the 1944 sequel The Curse of the Cat People; between 1941 and 1948, she made 20 films; studied at director Max Reinhardts' acting school; for the animated Disney movie Bambi, she was one of two human models used for the ice-skating sequence with Bambi and Thumper.

RAYMOND W. BOROTA (M.S., microbiology, '60), Largo, FL (10/22/09) at age 72; upon graduating from medical school, completed his internship and residency at the University Hospitals of Cleveland in the field of otolaryngology; in 1968, he accepted a commission as an officer in the U.S. Air Force, where he became a flight surgeon and was promoted to captain; in 1969, he served in support of Department of Defense Medical Operations during the First Scientific Exploration of the Lunar Surface for the Apollo 12 mission; started his private practice in 1974 in ear, nose and throat medicine.

WILLIAM P. CAMM (B.A., '46), Indianapolis, IN (07/11/09) at age 85; a senior partner of Arthur Andersen LLP and prior to his retirement in 1978, was managing partner of Arthur Andersen's L.A. office and the firm's U.S. southwestern region; served in the U.S. Navy during WWII; a member of Second Presbyterian Church of Indianapolis.

PIERRE COSSETTE (B.A., sociology, '49), Orléans, Quebec, Canada (09/11/09) at age 85; talent agent, manager, music mogul and Tony Award-winning Broadway producer; considered the father of the Grammy Awards telecast; produced the Grammys for the first time in 1971; involved with the production until his death; creative force behind the Latin Grammy Awards and the BET (Black Entertainment Television) Awards shows; his talent roster included Frank Sinatra, Nat King Cole, Bing Crosby and Judy Garland; co-founded Dunhill Records; won Tony Awards for Broadway productions The Will Rogers Follies and Tony nominations for The Scarlet Pimpernel and The Civil War.

DOUGLAS DAILY (B.A., sociology, '76), Camarillo, CA (05/03/09) at age 56; a Ventura County Superior Court judge; Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger appointed him in August 2007; served as a commissioner in Ventura County Superior Court since 2003; a senior deputy public defender in Ventura County from 1980 to 2003; and a supervising attorney for Grey Law, Inc., from 1978 to 1980.

ROBERT D. GILBERT (B.A., economics, '49), Los Angeles, CA (08/02/09) at age 83; served in the U.S. Navy during WWII; played the clarinet and formed his own group, the Gil-Tones; developed a business, RDG, Inc., importing clarinet, oboe and bassoon reeds from France; his clients included major symphony orchestras throughout the world, Benny Goodman and Peggy Lee; retired in 2004, selling his business to his general manager, a former music student at USC.

RAPHAEL A. GIMENEZ (Ph.D., French, '83), New Orleans, LA (10/28/09) at age 60; native of Montauban, France; taught French and Spanish in Orleans, Jefferson, and St. John the Baptist parish public schools, the University of New Orleans, and USC; author of Inside the Ivory Tower: Tribulations of a French Professor (AuthorHouse, 2001).

RABI ALFRED GOTTSTECHALK (Ph.D., religion, '65), Cincinnati, OH (09/12/09) at age 79; central leader of Reform Judaism instrumental in strengthening the movement's ties with Israel; ordained the first American and Israeli female rabbis; an authority on Ahad Ha'Am, an influential theorist of cultural Zionism; escaped the Holocaust in Germany as a child; oversaw the expansion of Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion, the Reform seminary and graduate school and later served as chancellor; before rising to president, he was for 12 years dean of the Los Angeles campus; was founding member of the United States Holocaust Memorial Council and guided the development of the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum; oversaw the expansion of the Museum of Jewish Heritage in New York City as its president from 2000 to 2003.

CARVIN WAGNER HAIST (B.A., '49), Las Vegas, NV (09/04/09) at age 87; served in the U.S. Army during WWII; had a long and distinguished career teaching junior high English, history and related subjects at LAUSD; was leader in the teachers' union; opened a typography company in Woodland Hills; involved in fundraising efforts in the Summerton Chapter of City of Hope, serving as president, treasurer and newsletter editor; active member of St. Andrew Lutheran Church; loved traveling, bowling, gardening and singing in a choir.

LEE HOBERMAN LIPPE (B.A., psychology, '49), Sarasota, FL (07/16/09) at age 81; after graduation lived in Paris for several years before settling in New York City; wife, mother and homemaker and highly competitive bridge life master; avid tennis player and skier; lifelong cineaste with an encyclopedic knowledge of film.

ARNOLD HEIDESIECK

THE PHILOSOPHY PROFESSOR WAS LEAD AUTHORITY ON WRITER FRANZ KAFKA.

Arnold Heidesieck, professor of philosophy, preeminent scholar in German and European intellectual history and literature, particularly 20th-century writer Franz Kafka, has died. He was 72.

Heidesieck died on Sept. 23 in the Venice, Calif., home of his companion, Kay Hammer, following a battle with cancer.

He was extremely knowledgeable in secondary literature, dissecting the works of acclaimed authors.

In his seminal book, The Intellectual Contexts of Kafka’s Fictions: Philosophy, Law and Religion (Camden House, 1994), he illustrates how the modernist innovations in Kafka’s fiction were formed by non-literary influences in the areas of cognitive psychology, philosophy, jurisprudence and theology.

Heidesieck also wrote many papers studying Holocaust literature and memory.

In 1967, he came from Germany to the United States to teach languages and literature at New York University. He joined USC College in 1975 and later served as chair of the Department of German. He had been looking forward to teaching a course on Immanuel Kant and Karl Marx in the School of Philosophy when he fell ill.
Herbert A. de Vries
THE USC ALUMNUS AND EMERITUS PROFESSOR OF KINESIOLOGY WAS A PIONEER IN STUDYING THE EFFECTS OF EXERCISE ON AGING.

Herbert A. de Vries, emeritus professor of kinesiology, known as the father of exercise and aging, has died. He was 91.

De Vries died Oct. 1, eight days before his 92nd birthday, in his Laguna Beach, Calif., home. He died in his sleep following congestive heart failure, his wife, Ana de Vries, said.

“I had just finished playing on the piano, ‘Somewhere in Time,’ when the caretaker came over and hugged me, saying, ‘I think Herb is no longer with us,’” de Vries said. “Herb went to heaven in style with musical accompaniment.”

De Vries was a USC graduate who became one of the foremost exercise and muscle physiologists of his time. He served as a College professor for 18 years, retiring in 1983 before working as a USC consultant until 1988. He earned his master’s at the University of Texas at Austin, where he was inducted into the 2008 Hall of Honor. He earned his Ph.D. at USC in 1960, becoming a professor in 1965.

He authored or coauthored many books on the physiology of exercise, most notably, *Physiology of Exercise for Physical Education and Athletics* (McGraw-Hill Higher Education) published in five editions from 1966 to 1994, and *Applied Exercises and Sport Physiology* (Holcomb Hathaway Publishers, 2003). At 66, he was featured in the *Los Angeles Times* with his photo depicting him jogging along the beach after he wrote *Fitness after 50* (Scribner Book Company, 1982).

**Herbert G. Klein**
THE VETERAN JOURNALIST AND USC ALUMNUS MAINTAINED STRONG TIES TO HIS ALMA MATER.

Herbert G. Klein, a veteran journalist and the White House’s first director of communications, died on July 2. He was 91.

Klein served as vice president and editor-in-chief of Copley Newspapers from 1980 to 2003 and was associated with the Copley chain for more than five decades.

A 1940 journalism graduate of USC, Klein had served on the USC Board of Trustees since 1982 and was a life member. He also was a past president of the USC Alumni Association.

**Morton Silverman**
(B.A., philosophy, ’32, Los Angeles, CA (04/27/09) at age 98; was a pioneer L.A. Jewish funeral director; moved to L.A. from Illinois in the early ’20s; began funeral career at the Home of Peace Cemetery; then joined Malinow and Simons Mortuary, later renamed Malinow and Silverman Mortuary; funeral director until retiring at age 89; city of Los Angeles commissioner for 17 years; served on the board of the Department of Animal Regulations and the board of Public Utilities and Transportation.

**Kenneth E. Stager**
(M.A., zoology, ’53; Ph.D. ’62, Los Angeles, CA (05/13/09) at age 94; emeritus senior curator of ornithology and mammalogy at the Natural History Museum of Los Angeles County; WWII Army veteran; appointed curator in 1946; promoted to senior curator of ornithology in 1961; elected a fellow of the American Ornithologists’ Union and an honorary life member of the Cooper Ornithological Society; served as president of the Southern California Academy of Sciences.

**Carlos M. Teran**
(B.A., political science, ’53, Pomona, CA (06/15/09) at age 93; a Los Angeles County Superior Court judge; retired from the bench in 1979; served in the U.S. Army; went on to become a member of the U.S. Air Force Reserve and held rank of colonel upon his retirement from active service; in 1957, made history when he became the first Mexican-American appointed to the Los Angeles Municipal Court; two years later, he was appointed to serve in Superior Court; was active in many civic and cultural organizations; helped to start the Boys & Girls Club of Pomona.

**John B. Thomassini**
(B.A., ’40; M.A., education, ’57, Los Angeles, CA (04/16/09) at age 91; played football at USC and was a key player in the 1939 and 1940 Rose Bowl victories; enlisted in the U.S. Army Air Corps in 1941; became a flight instructor; released from active duty in 1945 then earned master’s degree; became a teacher, vice principal and principal in Los Angeles schools in the San Fernando Valley; retired in 1982.

**Elizabeth Signe Trever**
(B.A., fine arts, ’38, Lake Forest, CA (04/13/09) at age 92; accomplished pianist, organist and harpist; widow of John C. Trever, alumnus, famed Dead Sea Scrolls photographer and scholar, and former professor of religion at the then-Morris Harvey College in Charleston, S.C.
“What was it like for you...?”

This is a question my editor at the Los Angeles Times never asked me back in 1989, after my luncheon interview with a young and unknown Australian movie actress. So, I will tell you now.

Near 30 and newly pregnant, I was feeling pretty pleased with myself as I swirled in the revolving doors and entered the Four Seasons Hotel in Beverly Hills. I was well prepared; I had seen her movie, my tape was in place and my legal pad was blank. I felt smart in my designer suit and hid my baby bump. I had another secret, too. I was also an actress—yet, for the time, I had returned to journalism, the family trade. Inwardly, though, I felt I was as glamorous as any movie actress.

Then I met Nicole Kidman. Her complexion was perfection. Her hair was like Alice in Wonderland’s, only red. She was very tall, practically gangly. She was wearing a chiffon shift, and a girlish smirk that in no way masked the enormity of her ambition. I observed her objectively as she moved through the hotel lobby—in her flats across the Persian carpet, under the gigantic chandeliers hanging like glittering octopi from the decorous ceiling, navigating oversized urns exploding with opulent flower arrangements. In awe I thought: *If anyone has everything it takes to be a movie star it is this Miss Kidman.*

Suddenly I felt over the hill. My Issey Miyake suit was itchy.

My father was a journalist. To say I learned the five points of a strong lead — who, what, where, how and when — shortly after I learned to count on my fingers is not an outrageous exaggeration. Early on, he instilled in me a devotion to facts, diligence in research and an appreciation for lively verbs. Above all, he said, a reporter strives for invisibility and objectivity.

He admired Hemingway and Fitzgerald. I wanted to be Zelda Fitzgerald. In the early ’80s, when I arrived in New York — after majoring in semiotics at college — I did not sit by the fountain at The Plaza Hotel and sip champagne and then take a dip in it as Zelda had; still, the fountain was a sort of shrine to me. I toiled as a model by day and went out at night. I had dinners with Tom Wolfe at Elaine’s and did headstands at Mortimer’s. Where I met Gay Talese. These two literary (and sartorial) giants revolutionized journalism. They wrote first-person nonfiction. They made the reporter central, integral to the story.

Years later, in 2004, when my child went off to boarding school, I went back to school. I reveled in the multi-genre opportunities in the Master of Professional Writing (MPW) program. I wrote a play, a movie and short stories. Then my mentor suggested I take on a new genre: memoir.

The focus of my book was my mother. It began as an essay for Vogue. When I turned in an early draft, my editor roiled me with a question.

“But, Devon, what was it like for you?”

Reporting was just not enough. Yet habits do not just go away; they must be studied and understood and dismantled.

Is invisibility actually possible? Is objectivity achievable? I defer to scientists and to philosophers for the answers to these questions. Yet remembering my lunch with Kidman, I questioned myself. Tinged with jealousy, had I not worked just a little too hard to include in the article that her first acting role had been a sheep?

“I wasn’t able to play Mary in the school play,” she explains, “because I was so tall. I cried my eyes out.”

I had an I, of course, and always had. Through work with my editor at Vogue, and continuous work on the book, I retrained myself and positioned my I in the proper place: at the very center of my story.

One night at USC, some of us wandered over to Radisson’s. The basement restaurant had only one customer, Gay Talese. We descended on his table. I wanted to tell him I was the girl who had stood on her head at Mortimer’s. I wanted to tell him that I, too, had morphed from journalist to memoirist.

Mr. Talese was gracious, but weary. He had flown the red eye from JFK to LAX and spent the day with his students in MPW. So, when the waiter brought his dinner, we left him alone.

Well — not alone. We left him in the company of his impeccably dressed, revolutionary and iconic I.

DEVON O’BRIEN ’06, recently completed a memoir, My Mother’s Body.
A Gift that Gives
AND GIVES
BACK TO YOU

For guaranteed fixed income, you may want to consider a USC Charitable Gift Annuity.

Trojans have supported USC College students for generations through planned gifts and annual gifts. L to R: Morton Kay '49, Andrew Platt '09, Larry Platt '74 and '77

Learn How... To create income for yourself while giving to USC College

Tommy Trojan, age 75, plans to donate a maturing $100,000 certificate of deposit to USC College. Because he would like to continue receiving income, he decides to fund a one-life USC Charitable Gift Annuity. The annuity will pay him a rate of 6.3%, or $6,300 per year. And there are further advantages!

For his $100,000 donation to establish the annuity, Tommy receives a charitable income tax deduction of $45,433. Because Tommy itemizes his tax deductions on his income tax return, he can use this deduction to reduce his current year’s income tax obligation. With Tommy’s 35% federal income tax rate, his tax savings is $15,902. In addition, for 13.4 years, the first $4,404 of his annual payments of $6,300 will be tax-free.

The gift annuity will therefore yield an effective rate of return of 10.3%. Plus, his gift may be designated to support any USC College department or program of his choosing.

Good for You, Good for USC College

Please contact Susan Redfield, USC College Director of Planned Giving, by phone or e-mail redfield@usc.edu to discuss gift options and to obtain a copy of the university’s Suggested Bequest/Distribution Language. Deferred gift annuities for individuals under age 60 are also available for your consideration. Please visit www.college.usc.edu/giving for further information.
reveling in the ring

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USC College joins Ring Festival LA in sharing Richard Wagner’s four-opera cycle with listeners of all ages.