

# ALPHA CHI RECORDER

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### **On the cover**

Seen from the International Space Station, which was Alpha Chi alumnus Clay Anderson's home for 152 days, the Space Shuttle Endeavor is etched against Earth's clouds and ocean. Endeavor delivered a mission team, equipment, and supplies during Anderson's ISS sojourn. See more photos and excerpts from his mission journal on pages 3-13.



International Space Station above the southern coast of Italy. NASA Photo.

**I**t was the year 2001, and I had been invited to Savannah, Georgia, to be presented with Alpha Chi’s Distinguished Alumnus Award. The thought running through my head at the time was, “...but I haven’t done anything.” I was a relatively new astronaut, undergoing basic training in hopes of someday being named to a space mission. Now, some seven years later, after having spent 151 days, 18 hours, 23 minutes and 14 seconds living in outer space onboard the International Space Station (it’s okay to round that up to 152...we’re not all math majors!) as a member of the Expedition 15 crew, my mind is at ease. I *have* done something worthy of that prestigious award! From June 8 through November 7, 2007, I was fortunate to play the part of a “poor man’s Superman,” flying faster than a speeding bullet (17,500 mph) and being able to “leap tall buildings in a single bound!” If only we’d had some buildings!

What follows are excerpts from journals of my journey. With simple words and photos that attempt to capture the experiences of my lifetime dream, I invite you to “fly along” with me and be a part of an experience that was truly remarkable.

I hope to have the chance to fly again someday. And yet, if that opportunity never comes to pass, that's okay too. You see, I applied to be an astronaut fifteen times and I became a member of Expedition 15. I landed on Runway 15 at the Kennedy Space Center on my fifteenth wedding anniversary. We launched on June 8, which would have been my Father's 77<sup>th</sup> birthday. For a small-town boy from Nebraska who dreamed of touching the stars, it could not have been more perfect! Live long...and prosper!

### **Chapter 1: "...And Then There Were Three!"**

Wow! I can't believe it...here I am, safely on orbit, living onboard the International Space Station (ISS). The last eleven days have seemed like a Category 5 hurricane to me.

Launch was right on time, June 8, 2007, on my father's birthday. As I sat in the mid-deck and felt the anticipation of the final countdown and start of the Shuttle's main engines, I could feel my heart rate increasing. The ride was spectacular, the rumble of the engines and solid rocket motors intense and rough. Once the solids dropped off, it smoothed out tremendously and the ride was easier. Easier, that is, until we hit 3 g's, at which time my parachute harness felt like the weight of the world on my chest. Yet once the Shuttle main engines cut off, we were in zero g and I was weightless. I was in space!

Docking with ISS occurred on Shuttle Flight Day 3. The view of the ISS as the Shuttle approached was, in short, awe-inspiring. Photos and video cannot do it justice. As the sun reflected its rays from the metallic structures and gold and blue solar arrays, it glistened as if on fire. With hatches opened we arrived in my new home and I felt a tinge of "I have been here before," undoubtedly from my training in Houston and Star City, Russia. We embraced, shook hands excitedly and then settled down for ten days of serious joint work; Shuttle and Station crews united as one.

The Atlantis crew, with our help, performed four critical spacewalks and installed and deployed a Station truss segment housing a new solar array. And then, in what seemed like the blink of an eye, it was time to say good-bye. Their departure was too quick and the Station seemed so empty.

Here we are...just three crew onboard...and I am honored to be one of those three!

### **Chapter 2: "So What is it Like...Really???"**

Our average days are a bit longer in terms of work. On Monday through Friday we awaken at 6 a.m Greenwich Mean Time. Sleep is scheduled for 9:30 p.m. So, if we are good boys and go to bed on time, we should get about 8.5 hours of sleep. Like that's gonna happen! I am so far behind at this point, I usually work about an hour into the sleep period catching up on e-mail and reading what I am supposed to do the next morning. Once I get into a rhythm, though, things should smooth out and I will hopefully be able to stick to the schedule.

We, "The Three Musketeers," eat breakfast, lunch and dinner...typically together. Fyodor and Oleg seem to like American food, while right now, I am a bit partial to some of their Russian dishes. Some of it is "heat and eat," while other dishes require you to add warm or hot water (there is no cold water on board) to the package, wait a few minutes, and enjoy! We do get special bonus—containers and goodies sent from our loved ones, like chocolates, special beverages, and snacks.



My days are typically spent performing experiments (this morning I collected my own blood; yep, all by myself!), performing maintenance on various systems or components (e.g., today I discharged batteries for our spacewalking suits to maximize their ability to hold a charge for our July spacewalk!), exercising, and taking photos of the Earth. We exercise for about two hours every day, using a treadmill, a stationary bike, or a resistive exercise device. I look forward to exercising because I sweat and that makes me feel like I am doing something as if I were on Earth. Post-exercise showers are a bit of a challenge. We have rinse-less soap, rinse-less shampoo, toothpaste, and shaving cream...all the necessities. You carefully add water to your body (surface tension keeps it right there), then rub it around gently with the soap, rinse it off with a towel, and voila! You're clean (sort of) again. You don't want to be too vigorous, as the water and soap fly away. But even that's allowed, as we will recycle it and use it later to re-hydrate our food!

When bedtime finally rolls around, I "fly" into my sleeping bag that is hanging on a wall in my "room." My room is about the size of a telephone booth with a small light and mirror and lots and lots of Velcro. When I am sleeping, my hands float out in front of me and I just sort of hang there. It's really amazing how my brain now makes me think I am lying down in a bed when I am really not.

### **Chapter 3: "I'll Take World Geography for \$2000, Alex...!"**

Living on the International Space Station gives me a perspective that I often imagined on the ground, but now I am blessed to have first-hand knowledge of that perspective, and to put it simply, it boggles my imagination! I have seen the glory of God's own hands from 220 nautical miles above the Earth. It is a place that is absolutely free of borders; a place where its beauty is, for lack of a better word, overwhelming. I have been amazed at the differences I can see from orbit, simply by the change in the sun's angle, the time of day, or the direction from which I look.

We circle the globe once every ninety minutes. During our 24-hour days, we have the opportunity to witness sixteen sunrises and sunsets. When the weather cooperates, I have revered the rugged snow-capped peaks of the Rocky Mountains in the U. S. and Canada. I have admired the cool, green-fanned delta of the River Nile and the silent and sleepy volcanoes of the Galapagos Islands. I have been in awe of the endlessly expanding tentacles of the vine-like Grand Canyon and the quiet, sweeping majesty of our moon, smoothly and quickly sinking below the multi-shaded just waiting for its next appearance over our home... the planet Earth.

As space travelers, one of our jobs is to capture photos of places of interest around the globe. Scientists use those photos to analyze things like deforestation, global warming, coral reef degradation, and increases in urbanization. We are given targets each day, which represent good orbital passes over an area we wish to learn more about.

One of my personal goals during my time onboard is to capture my home town of Ashland, Nebraska, in a digital photo. I figured it would be easy to spot. Well, I am here to tell you that it's not as easy as it sounds. The speed of 5 miles a second can mean that if you need to change a camera battery or put in a new memory card; oops...better luck next time. Maybe on the next orbit!

#### **Chapter 4: "Please Put Your Boots on Before You Go Outside...!"**

As a youngster, I recall those winter days back in Nebraska when we wanted to go outside and play in the snow. Typically, we would always hear our Mother say, "Please put your boots on before you go outside!" Dad would chime in too, "Put on your stocking hat or you'll catch cold!"

On Monday, July 23, Fyodor and I will also venture outside. Our environment will be just as nasty as those I faced as a kid in Nebraska...okay, maybe a bit worse, but likely without snow! We are headed outside of the International Space Station to perform the third spacewalk of Expedition 15, the first in U. S. spacesuits for this expedition and the first of my career.

The preparations are what reminded me of my parent's sage words. One of our first steps to prepare was to disassemble the suits that were left onboard after the STS-117 crew departed. Those were configured to fit the sizes of their crew members. So now, we have done a bit of re-sizing so that they will fit Fyodor and me. It takes at least two crew members working together to be able to suit up. It's a bit more complicated than this when you consider that some pieces of the suit can come in different sizes and that you can shorten or lengthen some of the arm and leg pieces for a more individual fit. It all boils down to the fact that we must be careful in our assembly...six hours in a suit that doesn't fit right can be very, very painful!

Our suit is our personal spacecraft. It runs on battery power and contains all the oxygen we need to breathe, the water to keep our bodies cool, and the systems to remove heat and carbon dioxide as we perspire and exhale. It also has lights and a TV camera, so the folks helping us on the ground in the Control Center can see what we're doing. We must also prepare our tools. For this spacewalk, we only need a small number: power drills, a ratchet wrench, a couple of cameras, and a scraper tool very similar to those I used in Nebraska to remove windshield ice and snow on cold winter mornings.



Our space walk is being dubbed a “trash run.” A major portion of it has us throwing overboard two outdated pieces of equipment. One is about the size of a coffee table and the other is as big as a refrigerator, weighing in around 1,450 lbs. I have the opportunity to jettison these pieces of hardware. I will be attached to the end of the robotic arm, upside down and out in front of the Station flying backwards. All of this will help me throw them in the proper direction at the proper speed to create trajectories that cause them to eventually re-enter the Earth’s atmosphere and burn up. It may take over 330 days for our “refrigerator” to re-enter!

### **Chapter 5: “Visitors...From Another Planet!!!”**

Fifty-six days and counting for me, 220 nautical miles up! I think that this must be the longest period of time that I have ever been away from my family! Yet, we are all doing well and life is good onboard the International Space Station. Time continues to pass quickly, with much to do each and every single day. That is especially true now, as we prepare to welcome some interplanetary guests...the 7-person crew of STS-118 and the good ship Endeavour.

Prepping for the arrival of the shuttle crew is not a trivial task. I find that it is reminiscent of the same type of work you might do when you have guests scheduled to arrive in your home! I have spent a large amount of my time doing what we term as “pre-pack.” That means I am gathering loads of equipment and supplies that we no longer need onboard the ISS and must be returned to Earth. You know...like cleaning house! This is not just trash disposal. Much of this equipment gets refurbished for use later, and some things are analyzed by the experts to figure out how they worked/behaved in the harsh environment of outer space.

## Chapter 6: “Must You Go...Can’t You Stay Just a Little Bit Longer?”

I miss them already...the crew of STS-118 and the beautiful ship Endeavour. It seems like only yesterday they were here, flying through the Station, moving cargo to and fro, knocking our stuff off of the walls! It was grand! I haven’t laughed so much since I left the planet some 77 days, 14 hours, 40 minutes and 54 seconds ago...but who’s counting!?! Our crews accomplished so much: we added a truss segment, flew the robotic arm, performed four spacewalks, transferred an outlandishly huge amount of cargo and supplies; and we did it together, all while having a wonderfully good time. We talked, we laughed, we worked, we played, and we thoroughly enjoyed each other’s company. That is what camaraderie and “crew” is all about.

You see, if you haven’t figured it out yet, I am a “people person.” I thrive on having contact with others and I am not bashful about showing emotion. I recall an interviewer asking me how a person like me would do on a long duration mission, cramped up inside a small volume with only two crewmates to interact with. Well, let me tell you that I am doing perfectly fine...but I do miss my family and friends. The Shuttle Endeavour and her crew came at a perfect time for me. I was ready for them to be here and welcomed them with open arms. I truly hated to see them go

I am often asked just what it is I miss the most up here. I must admit that since the Shuttle crew has been here and gone, I have begun to think more about the things that are not up here. First and foremost, of course, is my wonderful family. They are all doing quite well on Earth, thanks to so many of you who have provided unlimited prayers and unwavering, loving support. I joke with my kids that this is probably a record length of time for them to have not been scolded by their father! I also miss some significant physical things...things that I did not anticipate I would miss...ever! For example, sometimes as I daydream I envision a soft breeze from Galveston Bay and the warm rays of the summer sun, or the smell of freshly cut grass amid the sound of all the neighborhood lawn mowers as they resonate in unison early on a Saturday morning. And what kind of Nebraskan would I be if I didn’t dream of the sights, sounds and tastes of a nice thick, Nebraska corn-fed, medium rare T-bone steak sizzling outside on the grill while my stomach growls in anticipation of a loaded baked potato on the side! Man, I gotta stop thinking like this!

## Chapter 8: “So Now What Do We Do?!”

No more spacewalks; no more robotic arm operations. So what do we do now? Well, that’s an easy question to answer. Lots of stuff is happening onboard the International Space Station and there is even more to come.

We’re in the home stretch, but it’s no time to become complacent. Very soon we’ll begin preparations for a re-docking of our Soyuz spacecraft. This will allow the upcoming expedition crew to be able to dock their Soyuz where ours was.

We have also recently installed and upgraded our local area network onboard. We used to have a system using coaxial cables, but now the Station is set up more like your office computer environment with multiple Ethernet jacks allowing you to more freely move computers around or add new ones to the mix.

Our onboard scientific research has also ratcheted up a bit. We continue to perform experiments growing plants and small animals (worms!) to help us learn how microgravity



affects the growth and evolutionary processes. We are also monitoring our bodies by analyzing the food we eat and how it affects our blood and body chemistry to determine the effects on our bones and muscles. For that long trip to Mars (six to nine months one way...wow!), we will need to know how our bodies will change and how we might be able to effectively provide and enhance our own sustenance through agriculture while also potentially reducing the amount of supplies that we need to carry with us. In addition, we recently kicked off two new experiments.

Oh, and let's not forget that we will have more visitors! First the Expedition 16 crew will arrive to begin their six-month stay on orbit. That will

be followed a short time later with STS-120 and Discovery. We all know what her most important function is...to carry me back home to my family!

### **Chapter 9: "Let's Take Her Out for a Spin, Shall We?!"**

I have ridden in everything the United States Space Program currently has to offer. Yet, yesterday was likely the most interesting trip of all...a flight on the Russian Soyuz. Not exactly straight off the showroom floor, but I consider it a test drive of sorts.

The Soyuz is a critical part of the ISS, our steady and reliable lifeboat, ready to carry us to Earth in the event of a serious problem. Of course it is used primarily to ferry crews to and from the ISS, sort of like a taxicab, but for me, since I arrived and will leave via the Space Shuttle, its capacity as a rescue craft is paramount.

Some have asked why I didn't stay onboard ISS to keep her going while my crewmates Fyodor and Oleg moved the Soyuz. I would be stuck inside and all alone if for some strange reason they were not able to re-dock. In that case, they would have to return to Earth. So, everyone must go together, such that no one is left onboard alone. You could survive by yourself, but it would be a struggle and pretty darned lonely!

It was a cool ride, but for a guy of my size (6 feet tall on Earth, about 6 feet 2 inches in space) it's tough. I like to relate it to kids by having them imagine three fully grown adults sitting in a compact car with a moon roof. The moon roof is open, leading to a telephone

booth-sized compartment. You live in the telephone booth...that's where you eat, sleep, change clothes, and go potty...all three of you. That's where all of your daily life equipment is stored as well. When it's time to "go somewhere," everyone puts on his spacesuit, climbs down into the car, and gets comfortable—as comfortable as possible with three adults and everyone in the front seat—in bulky spacesuits! The back seat is stuffed with more equipment to make the car run smoothly and to perform various functions like keeping the air clean and providing air conditioning to keep you cool. You also stow your survival gear there, in case you accidentally land in the desert, swamp, mountains, ocean/sea/lake, or snow-packed fields and forests. The kicker is that you have to sit with your knees up in your chest, curled up like a ball for up to three hours! It's kind of like when you pack up your car with all of your stuff to head off for your freshman year of college!

### **Chapter 11: "There's a New Sheriff in Town...!"**

I am going to miss them. Fyodor and Oleg departed today for Earth. After a successful undocking and reentry of their Soyuz craft, they are now safely on the ground, reunited with their families and basking in the glow of a job truly well done! They were wonderful crewmates and we worked together extremely well, accomplishing all of the goals set forth for our increment.

As for me, I remain on board as the "sole survivor" of Expedition 15! Maybe I'll win a million dollars and be on TV or something?! The latest Soyuz docking brought me my new crewmates: Commander Peggy Whitson, from Iowa, and Flight Engineer 1 Yuri Malenchenko of Russia. Together, we now form the first of many versions of the 16th expedition to the ISS.

I will be relieved of duty soon, when Discovery arrives with the STS-120 crew Dan Tani will assume my role. At that moment, I become a Shuttle crew member, ready to return with STS-120.

These are sure to be exciting times for Peggy and her crews on the ISS. Peggy and I have had a lot of fun so far talking with the media from our childhood homes in the Midwest. I try to get a lot of mileage out of the fact that we are both from the Heartland, and I love telling everyone that we Nebraskans consider Iowa to be "far Eastern Nebraska"! Since Russian dignitaries gave her the launch gift of a couple of Kazakh riding whips to "keep the men in line" on her crews, I was a bit worried that she may have a new and unique management style! Fortunately for Yuri and me, she left them both at home! So far she has been a wonderful commander, sharing her wealth of knowledge and experience. She has a great sense of humor and we are enjoying our time together.

My time onboard is ticking down. It has been a wonderful adventure for me...something I will never forget. Thanks for flying with me. "Live long and prosper!"

### **Chapter 12: "The Hard Thump of Reality...!"**

When I was about 8 years old, my parents woke my brother and sister and me up in the middle of the night, on Christmas Eve of 1968. Mom and Dad were always very good about having us "witness history" when they knew that a special moment was imminent. On this cold, dark, and crystal clear Nebraska night, three American astronauts were, for the first time

in history, to fly around the back side of the moon on the mission of Apollo 8. As the (my) story plays out, this was the moment that my life's dream truly began to take shape and I set my heart on becoming an astronaut—a dream that would ultimately take me on the journey



of a lifetime, culminating with five memorable months onboard the International Space Station!

As my duties onboard ISS are quickly coming to an end, I have been trying to find some time to reflect on this absolutely awesome experience. It has flown by in an instant, so much so that I feel like I just arrived. Yet, five highly productive months have passed and it's now time to come home, home to what may be the hard thump of reality.

For five straight months, I have been off of the planet, free from the tugging bond of gravity. My muscles, bones and brain have become adapted to this environment, and I think they really like it! I have flown like Superman (even hummed the theme

song), flipped and twisted like a gymnast, and even whacked my head on a handrail once or twice. But now, in a few short days, when the Shuttle re-enters our beautiful blue blanket of atmosphere, the reality of gravity may jump on my body like ticks jump on a dog. How my mind and body react to this reacquaintance with this powerful force of nature will go a long way in determining how fast I will recover. It is my hope that I will be able to exit from the Shuttle (with help, of course) and after some time of relaxation and fluid/food ingestion, be able to perform the walk-around that most of the Shuttle crew members will do. Since their flight was only two weeks long, their bodies may adapt more quickly. I, on the other hand, may stagger, stumble, even fall down. We will just have to wait and see. My head may spin like a top and I may be so dizzy that I will have to stay seated. I have been exercising for about 2.5 hours every single day of my stay up here and have really been ramping up my fitness training in the last few weeks to make that big push for the goal line. I am hoping all that work will pay off. But, no matter what happens when I step off Discovery, I will have on my face the biggest smile that I can muster!

You know...dreams really can come true...but I wish they didn't have to end.

**Chapter 13: “A Note to My Family...!”**

This journal chapter will be my final one from orbit. It is a very special chapter for me as my time in this wonderful place is coming to an end. Today, in these words, I hope to complete a task that I consider extremely important; and that is why this chapter is for my family. To all of you out there who have been following this adventure, you are welcome to read along ... but it is truly meant for Susan, Cole, and Sutton.

To my beautiful and intelligent wife, my strong, tall son, and my energetic and playful daughter, I must say that it has taken me far too long to pen these words. But I think that now is the right time.

First and foremost, I must simply tell you, thanks. Thank you for letting me pursue my dream. Thank you for putting up with the travel and my time away from home and my crankiness when I was tired after long days at work and for missing all of those practices, games, and first days of school. Believe it or not, there are people in this world who would not let a loved one do something like this. Their thoughts would have been more focused on themselves, about how it might change their lives in some way, how it could adversely impact what they were trying to accomplish. But not the three of you. You have given to me a gift that I may never be able to fully repay. You have given me the gift of love, the gift of trust and support, the gift of family. You have all sacrificed for me in a truly remarkable way by staying strong and focused and working together to assume the responsibilities that previously fell to me.



My dearest Susan, you have been mother and father, chauffeur, accountant, landscaper, and wife, all while continuing to perform at the highest level in your job. Cole and Sutton, you have grown up more quickly perhaps than I wanted you to, but you have learned a great deal. You have continued to mature in positive ways, and I pray that you now understand better what it means to give to and sacrifice for others. I am sorry for all of your events that I have missed over the years...I truly wanted to be there for you. I will be there now.

I have missed you all deeply. There has not been a day when I did not think of you, pray for you, and smile because of you. I so looked forward to our weekend video visits over the air waves and our chats on the telephone. It meant so much to me to be able to see your faces as well as hear your voices. It brought me “home” for just a while and helped carry me through the days. You mean everything to me, and I am so proud of you. We have done this together as a family, and we are stronger because of it.

If all goes well, I will be home soon. We will be a family once again, and I can't wait!  
I love you all.

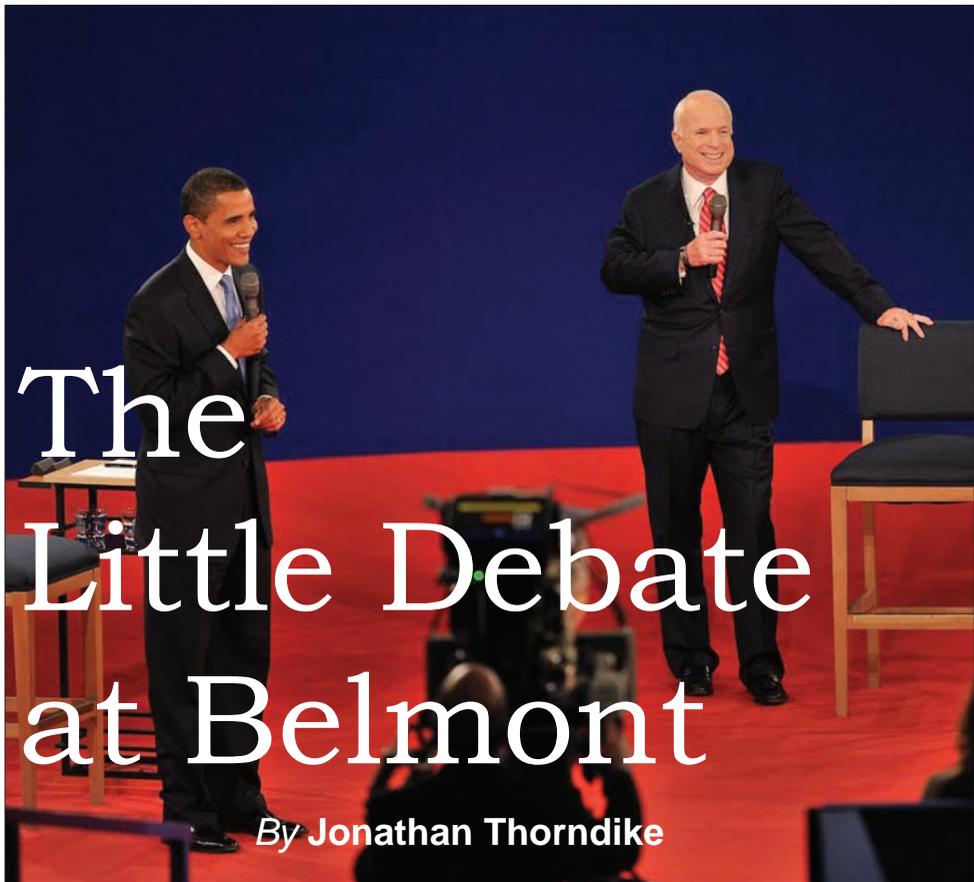
**Epilogue: “I Miss You, Mom....”**

On November 7, 2007, the Space Shuttle Discovery glided to a picture-perfect landing at the Kennedy Space Center near Cape Canaveral, Florida. I was strapped in to the center seat on the Space Shuttle’s middeck, resting comfortably on my back as she had executed her first role reversal, an energy-reducing maneuver, directly over Nebraska on her way to Florida. My 152-day journey in space that began with a thunderous launch onboard the Space Shuttle Atlantis on what would have been my father’s 77th birthday, had come to an end as we gently touched down on Runway 15 and rolled to a stop directly on the runway centerline. That monumental day marked not only the completion of 151 days, 18 hours, 23 minutes, and 14 seconds for me in space, but the 15th wedding anniversary for Susan and me.

Just a mere twelve hours later, I was gingerly navigating the confined space of my private room in the astronaut crew quarters to enjoy my first hot shower in over five months. After 45 minutes with the warm water pelting my head, shoulders, and arms, I slowly dressed myself in my astronaut flight suit feeling like I weighed every single bit of my 195 pounds, fully realizing I was back in the gripping confines of the Earth’s gravity. Having grunted and groaned, stretched and tugged to get my flight boots on and properly tied, I carefully rose from my chair and eventually emerged from my room to begin a slow, methodical, and wall-aided walk down the hallway.

Moving with a determination bolstered by five months in outer space and keeping my head steady so as to not start the world spinning again, I closed the distance between me and one of the main ACQ lounge areas. As I entered the room, I was reunited with my wonderful family. Not just my beautiful wife Susan and our children Cole and Sutton, but my brother Kirby, my sister Lorie and their families, Susan’s mother and father, and my uncle. And there in the back, sitting quietly in a chair, her face and eyes covered with those huge oversized sunglasses that made her look like she was playing some sort of virtual reality game, sat my mom, Alice. The smile on her face stretched across the room, and I am certain was matched only by the identical one on my face. My heart swelled with pride and love. I had dreamed of this moment since before I launched and had prayed that she would be strong enough to be there when I returned to Earth. You see, my Mom had been bravely battling lung cancer since just before I was announced to fly to the International Space Station last April. We held each other tightly, and she said she was better now. She told me that what she really wanted was to touch me and hold my hand, and that in doing so, she would know that I was real to her again and back safely upon the Earth.

Mom lost her fight on December 13, 2007, just a little more than a month after we saw each other for what turned out to be the last time. Now, I listen often to a phone message she left me a few days after our meeting in Florida. She had just called to tell me “welcome back.” Thanks, Mom...for everything. I miss you.



Photos by J. Michael Krouskop

**B**elmont University in Nashville is the proud home of the Tennessee Eta chapter of the Alpha Chi National Honor Scholarship Society. For more than twenty-five years at Belmont, Alpha Chi has been instrumental in the growth of academic achievement of students by providing opportunities for leadership, scholarships, community service, and presenting research at regional and national conventions. However, even the long-standing presence of Alpha Chi at Belmont took a back seat to a recent *little* debate in the 2008 election cycle.

Perhaps no event so quickly transformed Belmont University as the announcement made by the Commission on Presidential Debates (CPD) that the Nashville school had been chosen as a site for a Town Hall-style debate between the candidates for President of the United States. The mission of the CPD is to organize debates for the leading presidential and vice presidential candidates and to support educational activities relating to presidential elections.

*This is the third in a series of articles about distinctive programs or projects at Alpha Chi colleges and universities.*

The nonprofit, nonpartisan organization CPD, established in 1987, has sponsored all general election debates held since 1988.

Sixteen sites were chosen as finalists for consideration as possible locations for the three Presidential Debates, and Belmont learned of its acceptance in October 2007. The Belmont debate took place on October 7, 2008, but required months of preparation. As one of the older “frontier” states, Tennessee was home to three nineteenth-century United State Presidents (Andrew Jackson, Andrew Johnson, and James K. Polk), but the Belmont Debate was the first time the CPD has selected the state to host a debate. The Belmont Debate planning committee welcomed approximately 3,000 members of the media to Nashville, along with the candidates’ campaign staffs and supporters. With interest running high in the 2008 election, the historic event was seen by as many as 40 million people across the country.



Student rally at Belmont Mansion

According to CPD rules, universities agreeing to host a debate had to be willing to contribute at least \$1.35 million towards infrastructure production expenses such as technology upgrades, temporary buildings, offices and facilities for visiting media, and security services. Belmont was required to install additional telephone and computer lines, add some new sidewalks, erect a temporary building for media members known as “Spin Alley,” and do some landscaping and campus beautification—bringing the total cost to around \$3 million. All of Belmont’s faculty, staff, and students were affected by the debate in some way. Some faculty members were required to move their offices temporarily to make space for visitors. The fall semester break was moved one week earlier in October so that the campus would be empty of classes, freeing up space for meeting rooms and planning sessions. The athletics department was required to vacate their offices, making space for about 700 journalists. Belmont constructed the temporary “Spin Alley” building for the media over the school’s soccer field, requiring the men’s and women’s teams to play most of their games away from home.

Wanting to capitalize on the educational opportunity, Belmont scheduled several outstanding guest speakers in connection with the debate, including award-winning documentary filmmaker Ken Burns, *New York Times* best-selling author and two-time Pulitzer Prize winner historian David McCullough, and University of Vermont sociologist James Loewen. In September, Burns gave a presentation titled “Telling the American Story” about his work on the World War II documentary series *The War*, which debuted on PBS

last fall. Loewen's book *Lies My Teacher Told Me* was selected as the First Year Seminar common book required for all first-semester students, and he came to Belmont on October 23 to address the campus about the weaknesses of American high school history textbooks. McCullough is scheduled to lecture on "Beginning a Presidency" and discuss his latest book on March 19, 2009. "The opportunity to host the Town Hall Presidential Debate provides an invaluable educational experience to our students, allowing them to observe firsthand our nation's political process and to be participants in American history," said Belmont Provost Dan McAlexander. "Bringing such distinguished guests as Ken Burns and David McCullough



Obama and President Fisher

on campus is just one component of the debate experience we plan to offer our students."

As the time for the debate drew near in Nashville, signs that security was being tightened on campus were everywhere. Some students complained about being asked to leave their dormitories during the fall semester break, but most were willing to put up with inconveniences given the magnitude of the event. The Beaman

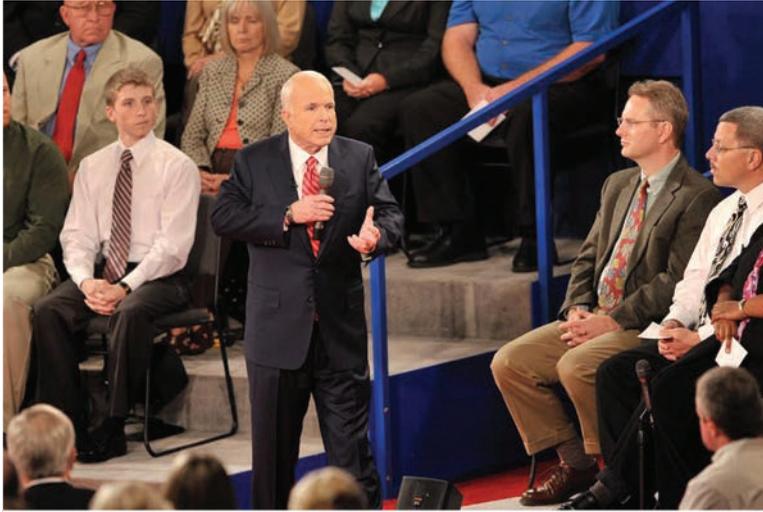
Student Center with its popular exercise equipment and Curb Event Center (site of the debate) were shut down a week before the debate. A temporary chain-link fence was erected around campus, restricting entry to a few spots. The city of Nashville stepped in to help renovate the neighborhood, adding some pedestrian crossing markers and a new flashing sign over Belmont Boulevard that read "Congested Area Ahead."

In the Town Hall format used at Belmont, audience members were allowed to question the candidates directly instead of listening to formal, prepared opening and closing speeches. Former President Bill Clinton famously excelled at this more casual format when debating against George H. W. Bush, Ross Perot, and Bob Dole in 1992 and 1996. The audience played a direct role in determining the topics addressed by the candidates. The selected audience who could post questions was made of about eighty undecided voters identified by the Gallup Organization and randomly chosen from the 1.5 million residents of Metropolitan Davidson County, which includes Nashville. Some tickets went to national sponsors, local government officials, and members of the state's Congressional delegation. Approximately fifty tickets were set aside for Belmont students, who applied for admission through an online lottery. The remaining audience was composed of about 500 people who sat on multi-tiered seating on the floor of the Curb Event Center at Belmont but were not allowed to ask questions or respond to the speakers with applause. When hosting a basketball game, the normal seating capacity for the Curb Event Center is 5,000, but much space was required for the Town Hall format seating and the media. ABC, CBS, NBC, CNN, Fox, C-SPAN, and PBS sent video journalists and reporters to cover the event along with writers from the national print media such as *The Wall Street Journal*, *The New York Times*, and *The Washington Post*.

The moderator of the Belmont Debate was Tom Brokaw, former news anchor for *NBC Nightly News* and special correspondent for NBC. Brokaw also serves as moderator for *Meet the Press* and is the author of *The Greatest Generation*, a best-selling book about the World War II era.

As agreed in the format, John McCain and Barack Obama made no opening or closing statements. For the first time in the history of the CPD-sponsored debates, the general public could submit questions to Brokaw via the Internet using MyDebates.org, a partnership between MySpace.com and the CPD. A coin toss determined that Senator Obama was the first candidate to respond to a question.

Brokaw called on members of the Town Hall audience to ask questions directly to either candidate. The candidates had the option of standing or sitting on stools with chair backs during the debate. They were not allowed to carry



anything on stage with them but could use a pen or pencil to take notes during discussion. McCain and Obama had two minutes to respond to the question followed by a one-minute follow-up. Brokaw did his best to enforce the time limits, but both candidates frequently rambled and exceeded the limits.

Senators McCain and Obama responded to approximately fifteen questions coming from the audience, from Brokaw, and from the Internet as selected by Brokaw. Individual citizens in the audience stood up to state their questions directly. The debate became a 90-minute back and forth sparring between the candidates on issues of health care, the economy, foreign policy, the recently announced federal bailout package of the financial system on Wall Street, reform of Social Security, Medicare and other entitlement programs, environmental issues like climate change and “green” jobs, and the use of the military in humanitarian crises. The “elephant in the room” was clearly the economic downturn, which dominated two-thirds of the debate time.

The senators repeated themes mentioned many times before. Obama and McCain charted a course through well-travelled terrain, having participated in countless debates and media interviews over the course of a very long primary season. However, the feeling of a crisis moment stemming from the federal bailout of investment banks gave the debate unique importance. Most of the questions reflected some anxiety about the future of America relative to international affairs and the current financial breakdown.

“We are in the worst financial crisis since the Great Depression,” Obama said in response to the first question asked about how older workers close to retirement would be helped by the bailout. He added, “This is a final verdict on the economic policies of the last eight years.” McCain said, “Americans are angry, upset, and a little fearful...I would order the

Secretary of the Treasury to immediately buy up the bad home loan mortgages in America and renegotiate the new value of those homes, at the diminished value of those homes, and let people be able to make those payments and stay in their homes.” McCain’s statement was one of the few new ideas to come from either candidate during the debate.

The most anxious question appeared to come from Nashville resident Teresa Finch, who asked the candidates, “How can we trust either of you when both parties got us into this global economic crisis?” McCain’s primary strategy seemed to be to go after Obama aggressively as the tax-and-spend Democrat intent on raising taxes, which would hurt the American middle class. Obama insisted over and over that he would not raise taxes on the middle class and that McCain wanted to cut taxes on corporations and the super-rich. Obama argued for spending \$15 billion over the next ten years to develop alternative energy systems including nuclear power, biofuels, clean coal, solar, and wind power that would reduce America’s dependence on foreign oil and create new jobs. Obama claimed his new energy and jobs proposals would be financed through reductions in federal spending and increased taxes on wealthy individuals and corporations. McCain insisted that his role as a reformer with deep political experience in Washington and someone who has taken on the leadership of his own party gives him the advantage over Obama.

Brokaw asked Obama and McCain, if they were elected, whom they would nominate to run the Treasury. McCain hesitated before mentioning businessman and investment billionaire

Warren Buffet and eBay Chief Executive Officer Meg Whitman. Obama also mentioned Warren Buffet but refused to get more specific, trying to turn more attention to “fundamental differences” between himself and McCain concerning the tax burden on the middle class.



Neither candidate emerged as the undisputed debate “winner” in the fast-moving exchange of ideas, claims, and counter-claims. Both tried to capitalize on strengths and make a statement to the American people about why they deserve to win votes. Whereas McCain had earlier promised to “take his gloves off” and get more aggressive with Obama, the general style of both candidates was consistent with the University of Mississippi debate and numerous other campaign appearances.

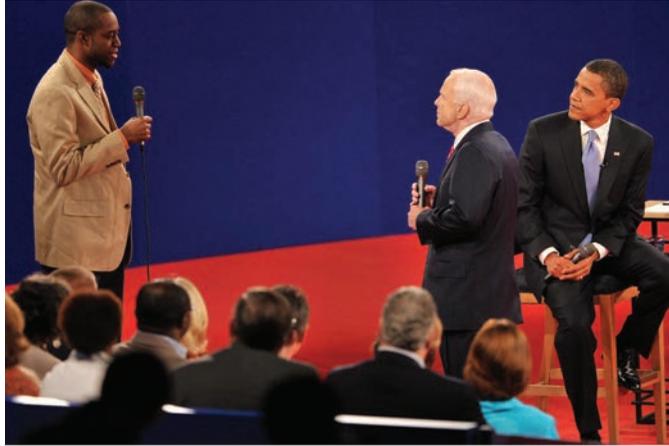
McCain did manage to evoke some laughter with his one-liner that understanding Obama’s evolving tax proposals was like “nailing Jell-O to the wall.” Obama countered with the comment that when McCain charged that his tax increases would hurt small businesses, “the Straight Talk Express lost a wheel on that one.” Obama charged that McCain’s attempt to rescue a Savings and Loan bank in the 1980s financial crisis was a failure.

Towards the end of the 90 minutes, the final question asked by Brokaw came from the Internet. The moderator warned that the question had a certain “Zen-like” quality before he read it: “What don’t you know and how will you learn it?”

Obama responded by saying that his wife could give a much better list than he could, but

that he knew the President will always be challenged by the unknown. Obama said, “I know that I wouldn’t be standing here if it weren’t for the fact that this country gave me opportunity. I came from very modest means. I had a single mom and my grandparents raised me and it was because of the help of scholarships and my grandmother scrimping on things that she might have wanted to purchase and my mom, at one point, getting food stamps in order for us to put food on the table. Despite all that, I was able to go to the best schools on earth and I was able to succeed in a way that I could not have succeeded anywhere else in this country....the question

in this election is: are we going to pass on that same American dream to the next generation? Over the last eight years, we’ve seen that dream diminish. Wages and incomes have gone down. People have lost their health care or are going bankrupt because they get sick. We’ve got young people who have got the grades and the will and the drive to go to college, but they just



don’t have the money. And we can’t expect that if we do the same things that we’ve been doing over the last eight years, that somehow we are going to have a different outcome. We need fundamental change. That’s what’s at stake in this election.”

McCain responded to the question by saying that he did not know what the unexpected will be, but “I have spent my whole life serving this country. I grew up in a family where my father was gone most of the time because he was at sea and doing our country’s business. My mother basically raised our family. I know what it’s like in dark times. I know what it’s like to have to fight to keep one’s hope going through difficult times. I know what it’s like to rely on others for support and courage and love in tough times. I know what it’s like to have your comrades reach out to you and your neighbors and your fellow citizens and pick you up and put you back in the fight. That’s what America’s all about. I believe in this country. I believe in its future. I believe in its greatness. It’s been my great honor to serve it for many, many years. And I’m asking the American people to give me another opportunity and I’ll rest on my record, but I’ll also tell you, when times are tough, we need a steady hand at the tiller and the great honor of my life was to always put my country first.”

The event was a chance for Belmont University and the Alpha Chi members who participated to showcase the campus and the Nashville area. Nearly 600 student volunteers were required to transport members of the media, hold doors open, carry supplies, drive golf carts, work security, and provide directions. They eagerly gave up their fall break and woke up at 4 a.m. on October 7 in order to be a part of the important event. Student volunteers had to endure the first heavy rain in Nashville in a month while working for the CPD, Belmont, and the media. University President Bob Fisher did his part in greeting visitors and giving

interviews with the local and national newspapers and television stations. Fisher said, “I have never been more proud and amazed at the competence, dedication, and creativity of the Belmont community...the feedback that we have received from the Presidential Debate Commission points back to you and your efforts as making this among the best, if not the very best, operation in their experience.”

Belmont students and Nashville residents of many political affiliations took part in the debate festivities. A crowd of more than 1,000 turned up at a university-sponsored viewing party at the Ryman Auditorium, the historic home of the Grand Ole Opry. In typical Nashville fashion, country music performers and various bands joined street vendors who set up booths to sell food, hats, and T-shirts across from the Beaman Student Center. Approximately 600 people marched down Magnolia Avenue towards the university in support of Senator Obama before the debate began while Belmont’s College Republicans student president George Scoville appeared on C-SPAN’s *Washington Journal* program. It was quite a mix.

At times, the debate looked more like a street fair than a political event with the musicians and social organizations jockeying for space. People who could not get inside the Curb Event Center waited in line for hours to get their photos taken with Bill Clinton, George W. Bush, and Sarah Palin impersonators. Chris Matthews, moderator of MSNBC’s *Hardball*, drew hundreds of fans to the Belmont Mansion for the taping of his program. About 50 people from the Nashville Peace Coalition gathered at a nearby intersection holding signs reading “End the War Now” and “Foreclose on Wall Street.” Nearby, the supporters of Ralph Nader argued that the media had ignored their candidate, who is running as an independent.

Some participants had nothing to do with politics, such as Andrea Lindsley, a representative from Johnston & Murphy. The Nashville shoe manufacturer has made shoes for every American president since the mid nineteenth century. Lindsley brought replicas of shoes worn by Abraham Lincoln, Teddy Roosevelt, John F. Kennedy, Lyndon B. Johnson, and Ronald Reagan. Lincoln’s size 14 was the largest specially made by the company.

For Alpha Chi students, Belmont faculty and staff, and the Nashville community, the debate was the biggest one-day event to hit the state since the Tennessee Titans went to the Super Bowl in the year 2000. The candidates might not have changed voters’ opinions or scored an easy “win,” but the debate highlighted the deep troubles faced by our country. The new President will need to deal immediately with most of the issues raised in the Belmont debate. Perhaps the question of trust raised by one audience member was the intangible most hotly contested by Senators McCain and Obama. If the democratic political system works, it must rely on restoring citizens’ trust in all elected officials.



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**M**edievalists who love *Beowulf*, the Anglo-Saxon epic, reject the 2007 Robert Zemeckis movie out of hand, even without seeing it, when they hear how different it is from the revered folk epic. Casting the beautiful Angelina Jolie as the hag and witch, Grendel's mother, seems an inconceivable abuse of the sacred classic. Obviously the story and the message have been greatly altered, but there are improvements in the movie. The structure of the movie is definitely better, and the theme is also much more positive. The epic, for all its dignity and grandeur, is chaotic in its digressions and fatalistic in its theme, offering no hope. Conversely, the movie unites the episodes, leaves out the digressions, and provides a possibility for choice, and thus for hope.

*Beowulf*, the poem, has great significance as a picture of a society that had already vanished by the time the epic was written. The Danish and Geat societies of the sixth century that the hero defends were remembered by the Anglo-Saxons who overran England and from whom the writer of the epic sprang a century or two or three after the events in his tale. (Like much about the poem, the date of its composition is much debated.) The numerous digressions tell of a society constantly feuding as one tribe raids a neighboring tribe, someone is killed, and then his thanes must retaliate rather than mourn. To make peace, daughters are exchanged in marriage, but the peace does not last as the violence persists and new incidents

that require revenge arise. Certainly medieval Danish society focused on revenge. As some literary critics have demonstrated, Shakespeare's masterpiece *Hamlet*, also with a Danish setting, exploits an age-old appetite for revenge, violence, and bloodshed while at the same time decrying revenge in the play. Roy Battenhouse in "The Ghost in *Hamlet*: A Catholic 'Linchpin'?" (*Studies in Philology* 48 [1951]: 161-92) goes so far as to say that the ghost that tempts Hamlet to revenge is a demon. The violence and revenge the society of Beowulf espouses unfortunately compares far too well, producing such demonic characters as Grendel, Grendel's mother, and the dragon, in itself often a symbol of evil.

Because of the necessity of revenge in his society, Beowulf, as the hero, has the strength of thirty men and is thus able to tear from its socket the arm of the Cain-descended villain Grendel and stop his marauding attacks on the mead hall of Hrothgar, the Danish king whom Beowulf comes to deliver from the monster. Heroes of such miraculous strength are needed in a land ravaged by violence. Compounding the hopelessness of this vengeful, violent society is the concomitant fatalism that springs from centering a society on revenge, or death and destruction. All realize that if one avenges himself because of the deaths of one's kin, the kin of the victim of the revenge must then retaliate in a never-ending cycle. Violent revenge breeds fatalism, the belief that all is death and destruction, and there is nothing that we can do to alter our fate. The Anglo-Saxons called this *Wyrd*, from which we derive the word *weird*. Joseph Campbell in *The Masks of God: Creative Mythology* sees the word as having "a sense of haunting doom" about it such as is seen in the three witches, or weird sisters, of *Macbeth* (NY: Viking, 1968, 121).

The hero of *Beowulf* and his society are trapped in a hopeless condition. Intelligence, generosity, loyalty, the other traits of the hero of the epic, are overshadowed by the fatalism rampant in the poem. As Beowulf tells Hrothgar before fighting Grendel (in Seamus Heaney's translation), "Fate goes ever as fate must" (l. 455). Even the monster's death is considered fated:

But death is not easily  
escaped from by anyone:  
all of us with souls; earth-dwellers  
and children of men, must make our way  
to a destination already ordained  
where the body, after the banqueting,  
sleeps on its deathbed. (ll. 1001-07)

After returning to his home in Geatland and his king, Hygelac, Beowulf says he survived because "my time had not yet come" (2141). As the fight with the dragon nears, the narrator warns of Beowulf, "After many trials, he was destined to face the end of his days, in this mortal world" (2342-44). Even Beowulf senses his end: "His fate hovered near, unknowable but certain" (2421); "what occurs on the wall / between the two of us will turn out as fate, / overseer of men, decides" (2525-27); "his allotted time was drawing to a close, death was very near" (2727-28).

That fatalism throughout the poem does help to unify the poem, though much of the space does not advance the story of the hero confronting three separate monsters over a span of perhaps sixty years. After returning home to Geatland and after the death of Hygelac, his king, Beowulf helps Hygelac's son reign until the boy reaches manhood. After this young king's death, Beowulf is himself chosen king and rules for fifty years before fighting the

dragon. Devotees of the poem have argued for various unifying structures for the poem, but their cases are not convincing. More than half of the poem is off the subject of the hero's three contests with monsters, a considerable portion devoted to Beowulf's retelling the story of his victories to Hygelac. In contrast, the writers of the movie have greatly condensed the epic, focusing on the three episodes concerning Beowulf and ignoring the digressions. They have gone further to unite the episodes with not only the hero's bravery and might but also with a story of temptation and fall reminiscent of the Genesis story.

In the epic Grendel's mother appears only in the second episode. Beowulf kills her with a magic sword, her blood is so tainted that it melts the sword blade, and Beowulf returns to the mead hall with the hilt and Grendel's head. Zemeckis has united the three episodes of the original poem with the presence and agency of the witch, Grendel's mother, creating a fall story that seems modeled after the Fall of Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden when they eat the fruit of the

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The writers . . . have gone further to unite the episodes with not only the hero's bravery and might but also with a story of temptation and fall reminiscent of the Genesis story.

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Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil. In the movie the first glimpse of the witch is when the hag's snake-like scaly tail and bony, claw-like fingers caress her wounded son. Close to the beginning, the moviegoer is given evidence that Hrothgar, the Danish king, years before had fathered Grendel on the witch. Though Grendel's attacks on the mead hall are a consequence of Hrothgar's earlier fall into temptation, Grendel refuses to fight his father, but responds, "Nay," when Hrothgar urges him, "Fight me." (This is one of the few times in the movie that Grendel speaks, and in this scene the moviegoer senses the monster's humanity.) Hrothgar has created his own monster. When Beowulf offers to rid the land of the monster, Hrothgar says, "So you will kill my Grendel, will you." Wealhtheow also tells Beowulf that "the demon is my husband's shame." All of these references prepare the reader for the revelation that Grendel is not only the son of the beautiful witch but also of Hrothgar.

When Beowulf seeks the hag in her den after Grendel's death, he finds a naked beauty tempting him and falls as Hrothgar had done before him, assuming the burden of the king. In preparation for this scene, Beowulf had earlier dreamed of Wealhtheow's asking him to father a son with her, a dream in which the queen turned into a monster, at which point he woke up. In the temptation scene itself, the beautiful witch, who still has a long scaly tail, tells the hero, "Your story could live on when everything now alive is dead," tempting him with fame and glory as the serpent had tempted Eve in Genesis by telling her she would have her eyes opened and see like the gods. The witch also connects the two seductions in saying

to Beowulf, “You took a son from me. Give me a son.” On Beowulf’s return to the mead hall, Hrothgar confronts him and, finding that Beowulf has also lost his innocence, gives over his cares to Beowulf, saying, “The mother, the hag, she’s not my curse, not anymore.” Then he jumps to his death from the castle wall, leaving Beowulf his throne, his queen, and the consequences of another fall into temptation. The movie unites the episodes by keeping Beowulf in Denmark rather than returning him to Geatland to become a king. Years later, Beowulf removes his weapons to approach a Frisian who challenges him, telling the challenger that he can’t kill him “‘cause I died many, many years ago when I was young,” reminding the audience of the Garden of Eden story, in which Adam and Eve died spiritually when they ate the forbidden fruit even though their bodies lived on for a millennium.

Through the years Beowulf has nightmares, but obviously he has created his own doom. When the dragon/man appears for the final episode, he claims, “I have a message for my father.” A man in the village whose family has been slain by the dragon remembers only one phrase from the slaughter, “the sins of the fathers.” The final episode where Beowulf fights the dragon is united with the previous episodes as an older, cynical, spiritually dead Beowulf fights the son he fathered on the witch, a son who has taken the form of a dragon. Beowulf asks his faithful retainer Wiglaf, who wants to deter him from the fight, to remember him “not as a king but as a man, fallen and flawed.” Father and son die together, the dragon turning into a golden man as he lies beside his father dying on the sands of the seashore. The father reaches out in a final gesture to touch his son, one of the fine touches in the movie.

The story the movie tells is not over, as the naked beauty in the closing scene appears before Wiglaf, Beowulf’s last faithful retainer from the epic, the thane that Beowulf has given the kingship just before his death. The beautiful witch rises from the water (she is said to be a water demon) to beckon Wiglaf to her. Her second son is now dead, and presumably the immortal being is able to assume whatever shape she chooses and seduce a new drone into fathering a son for her. She is connected to Satan and the Garden of Eden in that her braided hair by the time it reaches the end of its long twisting has shown itself to be the tail of a scaly snake. Wiglaf advances two or three steps toward the beauty, and then stands still. The audience will never know whether he follows Hrothgar and Beowulf in succumbing to her fatal charms. However, as the last picture fades, Wiglaf, wearing the crown, stands.

The movie makes clear that to choose her is to choose death, and Wiglaf has a choice. His fall is not predetermined. It is not the result of fate. Wiglaf is not compelled to make that choice as Hrothgar and Beowulf before him were not compelled. Beowulf, the hero, dispensed with the physical monsters that attacked his society, but he could not withstand the spiritual monster and chose death. The movie ends ambiguously. Wiglaf might choose the witch and death, but he need not do so. The message of the epic *Beowulf* is that our destinies are determined by Wyrð, even if one argues that the human will is indefatigable. Life is hopeless and there is nothing we can do to end the violence of our society. The movie has a different message: Choice is before us. John Milton ends *Paradise Lost* as Adam and Eve are evicted from the garden by angels holding flaming swords:

Some natural tears they dropped, but wiped them soon;  
The world was all before them, where to choose  
Their place of rest, and Providence their guide.  
They, hand in hand, with wandering steps and slow,  
Through Eden took their solitary way. (12.645-49)

They are evicted on the east side of Eden, the side of the rising sun, a side that represents hope. They have a choice where they will go as they leave the garden hand in hand. Wiglaf also has a choice, as do we. As long as there is choice, we have the potential to choose right over wrong, good over evil, life over death.

True, the epic has dignity and beauty in its poetry, but a beauty only a few Old English scholars can fully appreciate in the original language. And although the modern translation by Seamus Heaney is itself beautiful, Heaney is a Nobel Prize winning poet in his own right, who makes the lines his own. The movie can never attain the beauty of the original epic for the initiated, but that number is small. It can, however, rise above the epic in its unity and in its message that we have choices; we are not at the mercy of Wyrð or fate. We can fall to temptation and reap long-term consequences, or we can resist and probably avoid much of the pain and suffering that are ultimately chosen by people who must have immediate gratification despite the obvious negative consequences sure to follow. Beowulf in the epic has chosen to come to Denmark to make a name for himself. Certainly he succeeds as he later becomes king of Geatland and rules for fifty years. However, the final section of the poem reeks with references to Beowulf's fate. Nothing that happens is seen as a result of his weakness (he must now be eighty years old), but all results from fate. Surely we have some choices. If all is fate, we might as well stay in bed every morning. If we choose and have a better life because of the choices we make, there is hope for our future. Neither Adam and Eve, nor Beowulf, nor Hamlet, nor we ourselves are victims of a fate we can do nothing about. We have choices, and those choices do go far to determine our destinies. It is true that accidents happen and that we cannot control many things in our lives. Others around us whose lives connect with ours are also making choices. But how much better our lives are and our world is that we can choose and with good choices make a better future for ourselves and for those whose lives join ours. William Faulkner closed his Nobel Prize speech (December 1950), "The poet's voice need not merely be the record of man, it can be one of the props, the pillars to help him endure and prevail." Surely the movie retelling Beowulf's story, even with all its violence and open sexuality, provides more of a prop to help us live better than does the ancient epic.



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# Robert Moses and Long Island

*Success, Failure, and  
Social Policy*

By **Susanne Bleiberg Seperson**

To describe the role of Robert Moses (1888-1981) as merely an urban planner and unelected New York State government official would be an injustice of significant magnitude. At the height of his power, Moses held twelve city and state jobs simultaneously dealing with infrastructure, parks, and urban development. On Long Island alone he built nineteen parks and ten major highways. His marks on New York City and New York State are even more momentous. His reputation as a power broker and flawed man seemed to be sealed with the 1974 publication of critic Robert Caro's Pulitzer Prize-winning *The Power Broker: Robert Moses and the Fall of New York*. Yet in 2007 three museum exhibits were opened under the title "Robert Moses and the Modern City: The Transformation of New York," in what seemed to be a serious attempt to rehabilitate his reputation as a master builder and view his contributions in a more positive light.

The interesting question to consider in light of Moses' power and the means used to build enormous public works is: What are the ethical, political, and policy questions we should ask

based on our historical experience with Robert Moses and their implications for today? This article will offer a brief review of Moses' life, an overview of the parks and roads he built on Long Island in historical context, and implications for social policy. The two examples I will review are Jones Beach (a barrier beach), which epitomizes the "good" or "early" Moses, and the Rye-Oyster Bay Bridge (the bridge not built), which epitomizes the "bad" or "late" Moses. I conclude with suggestions for six criteria to be used when reviewing public works projects today.

### Reassessment

The curator of the three museum exhibits reassessing Moses was Hilary Ballon, professor of art history and archeology at Columbia University, who edited the museum catalog with Kenneth T. Jackson, professor of history and the social sciences, also at Columbia. The first show was "Remaking the Metropolis" at the Museum of the City of New York, the second was "The Road to Recreation" at the Queens Museum, and the third was "Slum Clearance and the Superblock Solution" at the Wallach Gallery of Columbia. In addition, there was a separate small exhibit on "The Triborough Bridge: Robert Moses and the Automobile Age" at the New York Transit Museum in Brooklyn. Caro's treatment of Moses' accomplishments has become controversial even in scholarly and museum circles, and so at the opening symposium at the Museum of the City of New York on February 1, 2007, "Lessons from Robert Moses," Caro was not invited. The snub caused a major brouhaha in the academic world because it appeared that even to consider the rehabilitation of Robert Moses' reputation as a master builder would be too controversial for Caro to be engaged directly.

### Biography

Robert Moses was born on December 18, 1888, in New Haven, Connecticut, to wealthy German-Jewish parents, Emanuel Moses and Bella Silverman Cohen Moses. Robert and his two siblings were raised in a secular, unaffiliated, religiously indifferent home. His mother did not believe in religion and was a follower of Felix Adler, who founded the Society of Ethical Culture and advocated ethics over religious piety. Eric Herschthal notes that Moses was labeled by some an "apicoros," or heretic, and spent a lifetime avoiding his Jewish identity. Some have suggested that Moses' notorious action on locating the site of the Cross-Bronx Expressway was specifically designed to destroy the working-class Jewish neighborhood.

Moses earned a B.A. from Yale in 1909, a second B.A. from Oxford in 1911, an M.A. from Oxford in 1913, and a Ph.D. from Columbia in 1914. A student of political science, he wrote his dissertation on British colonial administration.

At age 25 he married Mary Louise Sims of Wisconsin, who was four and a half years older than he, in a nonsectarian Labor Temple in New York City. The service was performed by a Presbyterian minister. They had two daughters. Moses loved to swim and go boating, but was also a workaholic. Only one month after Mary died in 1965, Moses married Mary Grady, a staff member at the Triborough Bridge and Tunnel Authority. They lived at 1 Gracie Terrace in Manhattan and in a small house in Gilgo Beach, Long Island. At the time of his death on July 30, 1981, Moses was estranged from his daughters. The *New York Times* of August 14, 1981, reported that Moses' will listed assets of only \$50,000, with an unspecified amount of principal from a trust account left to his widow and \$33,000 left to a grand-daughter and

three friends. His daughters, Barbara M. Olds of Greenwich, Connecticut, and Jane Collins of Babylon, Long Island, were not mentioned.

### **Parks and Roads Overview**

To begin to understand the magnitude of Robert Moses' accomplishments, we need only to look at the number of parks and roads he built. In an obituary and retrospective essay, Paul Goldberger credits Moses with the following during his forty-four years of state service: \$27 billion (in 2007 dollars) in public works including parks (a state system with 2,567,256 acres),

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its environs from a top-  
down perspective, a regional  
perspective of how all the  
parts flowed together.**

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highways (416 miles of parkways), playgrounds (658 in New York City alone), housing, tunnels, beaches, zoos, civic centers, exhibition halls, and the 1964-65 New York World's Fair.

Moses viewed the city and its environs from a top-down perspective, a regional perspective of how all the parts flowed together. Some say that he defined parks differently than many

would. Hence the term "parkway." The slivers of green surrounding the roads were parks by his definition; roads were simply a means to get to the parks and parks were a means to build roads. Thus, Moses built nineteen parks and ten parkways or expressways on Long Island.

### **Historical Context**

The question that many find intriguing is, How did he do it? We need to look at this in historical context. Moses, rightly called a Master Builder, survived and thrived from 1924 to 1968 under five mayors of New York City—from Fiorello La Guardia to John Lindsay—and six governors—from Alfred E. Smith and Franklin D. Roosevelt to Nelson A. Rockefeller. During this time Moses held twelve jobs simultaneously: NYC commissioner of City Planning, NYC commissioner of the Department of Parks, NYC commissioner of Housing, NYC commissioner of Slum Clearance, NYC Construction coordinator, NYC Parkway Authority (sole member), NYC Planning Commission chairman, chairman of the Triborough Bridge and Tunnel Authority, NYS Parks commissioner, chairman of the Power Authority of the State, president of the state Parks Council, and president of Long Island State Park Commission.

Moses was not even a professional planner. He did all this by being a brilliant drafter of legislation and developer of a different kind of institution: the public authority, an autonomous organization that creates public works with money raised by the authority and is accountable to almost no one. Its works go unchallenged by the public or politicians. During Smith's first term as governor in 1918, Moses became chief of staff for a new commission that was to reorganize the state government. Moses learned to draft legislation that would hide clauses

to further his own interests. His most successful projects, such as the Triborough Bridge and Tunnel Authority, collected huge amounts of money in tolls, paying for themselves and then continuing to raise money even after the initial project such as the Whitestone and Throgs Neck bridges were paid for. This money was kept by the Authority and was free from public or governmental interference and pressure (Goldberger 3). In essence, Moses created independent fiefdoms with the ability to plan, create, and sustain his projects indefinitely unless a politician could control him. It wasn't until Governor Rockefeller that Moses met his match.

### **Jones Beach: The Early Moses**

Jones Beach is one of the most beautiful white sand beaches in the world and the crown jewel of Moses' accomplishments on Long Island, the creation exemplifying the work of the "young Moses" or the "good Moses." Moses himself said he was most proud of this creation. In 1974 Moses told the Freeport Historical Society: "Let us have no illusions about Jones Beach as we found it. It was an isolated, swampy sandbar accessible only by small boats and infrequent ferries, inhabited by fishermen and loners, surf casters, and assorted oddballs, and beachcombers trying to get away from it all. . . . The tales told of a lovely, primitive, paradise wilderness with indestructible dunes were fiction" (DeWan). In the summer of 1921, when Moses began to spend weekends in the town of Babylon, his love affair with the Great South Bay began. He spent time at Babylon Town Hall and learned that in 1874 Brooklyn, before it was part of New York City, had bought up water-carrying properties that ran the length of Nassau County and part of Suffolk County. The property was a hedge against a water supply problem that never occurred, and so the land lay undeveloped. Moses envisioned the land as a highway. As Robert Caro described it, Moses took his old motor boat to the almost "virgin spit of land to sit lonely on the beach with wind rustling his hair, drinking in the wild, desolate scene" (qtd. in DeWan). Moses thought that all it would take to get the millions of people sweltering in the New York City street to this wonderful place would be a road.

In 1923 Gov. Smith made Moses the president of the Long Island State Park Commission, which didn't even exist. Moses wrote the legislation, giving the president broad powers, especially the power to condemn and appropriate land, that is, to apply the concept of eminent domain. However, state law required that property owed by a township could be transferred only by a vote of the residents, and Jones Beach was owned by the townships of Hempstead, Oyster Bay, and Babylon. In order to build Jones Beach, the LISPC had to acquire the barrier beach and bay from the town of Hempstead. The towns were all against him. A vote taken in the town of Hempstead defeated Moses' plan by 12,106 to 4,200 (DeWan). The dream was all but dead in late 1925, when Moses held a series of private meetings with Nassau County's powerful Republican boss, G. Wilbur Doughty, who controlled public works decisions and had a reputation for corruption. There is, of course, no record of what transpired at these meetings, and no proof that any deal was entered into. But, as Caro notes, "certain developments ensued" (209), including agreements for land sales and future planning conducted in conjunction with a delegation from Hempstead that included the bosses and preferred contractors. A new election reversed the earlier vote.

In order to create the beach, tens of thousands of cubic yards of sand were pumped from the bottom of the bay to raise the island above sea level, and acres of beach grass were planted to stabilize the new dunes. The quality and style of the bathhouses are still remarkable. Moses incorporated expensive Barbizon brick and Ohio sandstone. The water tower landmark is

styled to look like a Venetian bell tower, and the garbage cans are covered to have a nautical theme. The directional signs are made of wrought iron with figures.

Today Jones Beach is a 2,413-acre state park with beaches at the ocean and bay, heated pools, sport fields, fishing docks, rowboat rentals, and the 8,200 seat Jones Beach Theater, added in 1952. The park attracts 7 million to 8 million people annually. It was named after Major Thomas Jones, who came to Long Island in 1692 and built the first brick house. The causeway to Robert Moses State Park ends at Jones Beach with a traffic circle around a huge central water tower.

One of the major controversies about the intent of Robert Moses is his vision as to whom these beaches and roads were for. Caro and others argue that it was only for the urban middle class who could afford their nice cars for a day in the country. The overpasses on the Southern State Parkway, for example, are too low for public transportation such as buses. In 1927 few cars traveled the Southern State Parkway. However, from 1949 to 1952 traffic on the Southern State doubled and in 1950 John Darcy, an engineer for the state Department of Public Works, noted that the parkways were becoming commuter roads (Adcock, “Link”).

### **Bayville Bridge/Rye-Oyster Bay Bridge: The Late Moses**

The last effort of Robert Moses, exemplifying the “late” or “bad” Moses, was to build another Long Island Sound crossing—the proposed Bayville Bridge, also called the Rye-Oyster Bay Bridge (I-287). It is one of only two projects that Moses wanted but was unable to build on Long Island. (The other was the Ocean Parkway running down Fire Island.)

Various factors combined to thwart the building of the bridge, one of which was a power struggle between Moses and Gov. Nelson Rockefeller. Although Rockefeller supported the

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project, he also wanted to derail Moses’ plan to be in charge of and receive credit for building it. The governor wanted to rein in the power of public authorities, Moses’ specialty, and was able in 1962 to pressure Moses, who was almost 74, to resign from all his government positions except presidency of the World’s Fair and chairmanship of the Triborough Bridge and

Tunnel Authority (TBTA). A few years later, Rockefeller pushed through a merger of the TBTA and the Metropolitan Transportation Authority, effectively clearing the way financially for the project and, at the same time, supplanting Moses in favor of the MTA board headed by a Rockefeller political ally. Moses was left with only an advisory position.

The bridge project ran into other problems, however, especially community opposition and financing. Finally, in 1973, the governor shelved plans for the Bayville Bridge, citing

the public's "new values in relation to our environment and . . . willingness to forgo certain economic advantages to achieve these values" ("Oyster Bay-Rye Bridge"). In the interest of full disclosure, I will say that for many years I have opposed efforts to revive the bridge plan. As a resident of a neighborhood to be affected by the project, I joined the voices of resistance, the kind of voices that through his career an arrogant Robert Moses seemed to disregard.

Perhaps it was the influence of the rich who live in Mill Neck, Center Island, and Oyster Bay Cove that affected the outcome of the original plan to build the bridge. Or perhaps it was the state of the New York State economy that did not permit the construction of the bridge. Perhaps it was both. But the questions raised about the environmental, political, economic, and social impact of such an undertaking persist. As of 2008 the Oyster Bay-Rye Bridge remains unbuilt. However, since 2000, most recently in 2007, proposals have been made to build an underground tunnel along the same route as the bridge.

### **Assessing/Criticizing Moses' Contributions**

Until recently the defining view on Robert Moses was that presented by critic Robert Caro: Moses lived for power and was corrupted by it. The recent museum exhibits created by Ballon and Jackson suggest that Moses' contributions should be viewed more positively in the historical context of New York City's decline, a time of economic crisis for many cities. This view argues that Moses did not create the automobile age; he responded to it. He went where the money was, and it certainly was available through President Eisenhower's federal Interstate Highway System. It can be argued that Moses reflected his times. As racism was and is part of our cultural landscape, Moses built not only parks and swimming pools throughout Manhattan, but also segregated housing. In light of his road-building career, ironically he never learned to drive a car, instead being chauffeured wherever he wanted to go.

What Moses did, however, is "look at New York City not as an isolated urban zone but as the central element in a sprawling region. In the early nineteen-thirties, he would charter small planes and fly back and forth across the metropolitan area to get a better sense of regional patterns. His vision of New York was of an integrated system with an urban center, a suburban ring, and a series of huge public recreational areas, all connected by parkways" (Goldberger 2007).

Moses, aware of the controversies created by his projects, offered some pithy responses. The few listed below reflect, in my opinion, the good-young-parks and bad-old-roads sides of Moses.

- "Once you sink that first stake, they'll never make you pull it up." (1920s)
- "As long as you are on the side of the parks, you're on the side of the angels; you can't lose." (1929)
- "Those who can, build. Those who can't, criticize." (1959)
- "I raise my stein to the builder who can remove ghettos without removing people as I hail the chef who can make omelets without breaking eggs." (1974)
- "We live in a motorized civilization." (1974)

### **Conclusion: Legacy Criteria**

So what should Moses' legacy be? Will he be viewed as having done more good than bad? Are there any lessons we can take away from his and our experience? I suggest six criteria below to be used when considering future public works projects:

1. Concentration of Power: We know that power will never again be so concentrated in one person. We must ensure that there will always be checks and balances.

2. Community Opinion: We also know that community opinion is powerful. It can perhaps be shaped, but not bulldozed. We have seen this even most recently when Charles Wang, former CEO of Computer Associates and owner of the New York Islanders hockey team, had to bow to the community's wishes in Plainview, Long Island, about a development he wanted to build. The community's voice, those most affected by government decisions, should be taken into account.

3. Role of Money: Money talks and individuals can influence what happens. However, it must be seen in historical context. What is the condition of the economy of the county, state, and country? Whatever the economic circumstances of the time, we must ensure that government decisions are transparent.

4. Role of Government and Eminent Domain: What is the proper role of government in planning, developing, and financing public works? Whose interests should be protected? Private property is a cornerstone of our democracy. Yet, with the precedent of the *Kelo v. City of New London* case decided by the Supreme Court in 2005 (545 U.S. 469), the power of eminent domain has become stronger.

5. Implications for Democracy: The equal protection clause, part of the Fourteenth Amendment of the United States Constitution, requires that "as nearly as is practicable one man's vote" must "be worth as much as another's" (*Reynolds v. Sims*, 377 U.S. 533 (1964)). We have always focused on the individual's rights. As a result of the *Kelo* case, we have to ask if group rights, the rights of the politically connected and powerful (which were stated as benefiting the City of New London) supersede the individual's rights. Thus, not only do we need to be concerned about the influence of money on politics and decision-making, we also need to determine at what level of government decisions should be made at—the community, town, state, or federal level—and if individual rights or group rights take precedence.

6. Ethical Responsibility: Finally we need to view development decisions in terms of our ethical responsibility to future generations. The environment has become a concern of many different groups—old, young, conservative, liberal, urban, suburban, and rural. Future growth is inevitable. Sustainable growth and the Smart Growth movements are harbingers of the politics of the future. I close with a Hebrew phrase, *Tikkun Olam*, which means to repair the world. As ethical individuals we have an obligation to make things right. This can take many forms, but decisions about our future are certainly one of them. Decision-makers at every level of government and certainly those individuals responsible for making decisions should assume ethical responsibility for the impact of their decisions on their constituents and future generations.

I end with an update on events at Jones Beach. Builder Donald Trump is slated to construct a \$40 million seaside dining and banquet hall at Jones Beach. He was quoted in the *New York Times* on September 27, 2006: "I think Robert Moses would have loved it. It's going to be the most spectacular catering facility anywhere in the world." Robert Caro responded by saying it depends on which Moses was considering it—the young idealist or the old empire builder. In an interview Caro said, "Robert Moses did a lot of wonderful things, and he did a lot of terrible things, but to my mind the most wonderful thing he did was Jones Beach.... His idea was to bring the ocean and the seaside in as untouched form as possible to the middle class. To create a luxury restaurant on a grand scale out there is as antithetical to this point of view

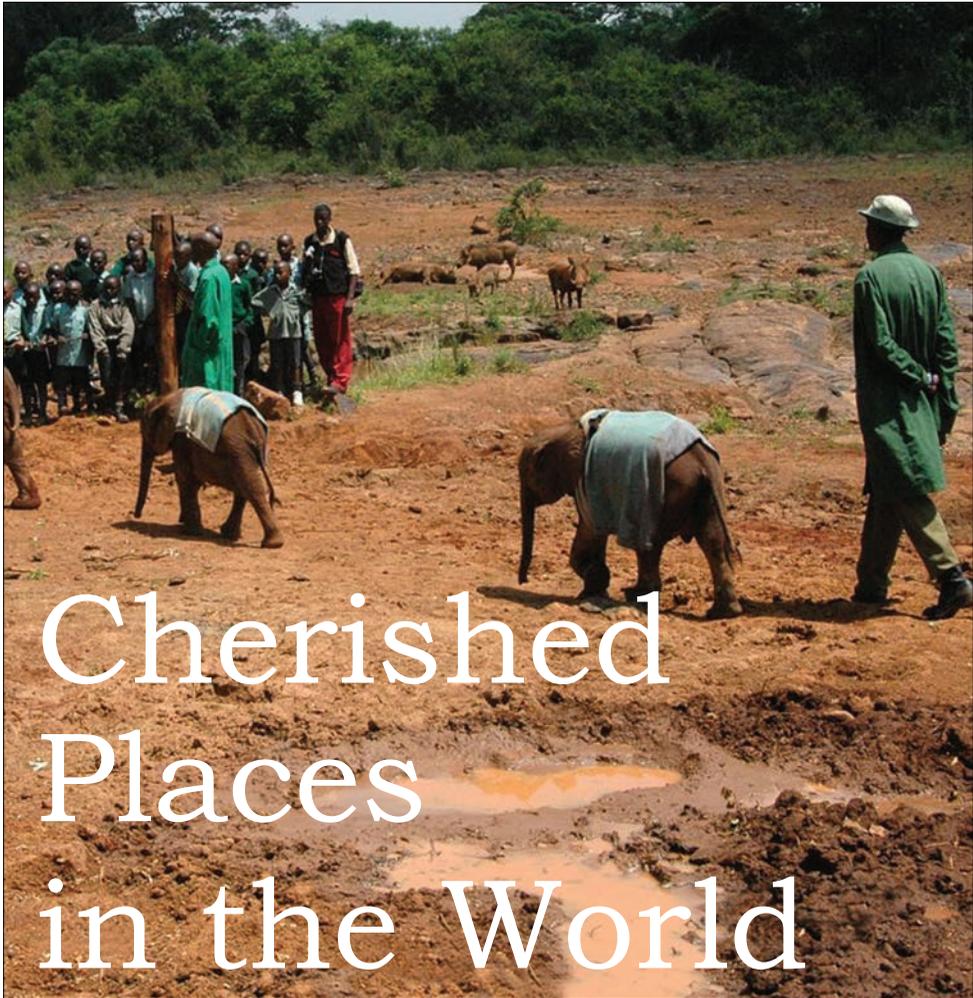
as could be imagined” (Applebome 2006). Recently an offshore wind farm was proposed within sight of Jones Beach but was abandoned as being too costly. So who benefits from such development? Whose interests should be served? These are the ethical, political, and policy questions we should be discussing, and such questions, perhaps, are the best legacy of Robert Moses—master builder, power broker, and unelected government official.

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Twyla Miranda Photo.

# Cherished Places in the World

**L**ast year Alpha Chi sponsors responded enthusiastically to the invitation to tell us about what they had been reading, so this year we posed another question to elicit short essays from our faculty and alumni readers: “What is your favorite place in the world?” The pieces that follow range from vacation travelogues about exotic locales around the globe to reflections on nearby places, from both past and present experience, that evoke nostalgia and peace. Whether it’s as remote as an elephant orphanage in Kenya or as close as a backyard, as awe-inspiring as an ancient English cathedral or as sobering as a cancer ward, someone’s favorite spot in the world evokes memories of our own special places—places where, as poet William Wordsworth said, we have discovered “life and food for future years.”

# A “thin place” called Little Round Top

The tour buses parked alongside the narrow Pennsylvania roadway were pumping out clouds of gray exhaust, their engines, air conditioners, and air brakes contributing to a general din of activity...children crying, loud men reading their guidebooks, park rangers narrating and gesticulating to open-mouthed senior citizens, the sound of feet on gravel and backpacks being dropped. The ceremony taking place at the end of a short, narrow path, perhaps twenty yards removed from this boisterous scene, should have required strong lungs and sharp ears. Re-enactors representing the 20<sup>th</sup> Maine Regiment, which had fought on this hill 140 years before, when “little round top” was more a description of an otherwise ordinary tree-covered mound, had gathered to commemorate the members of that outfit, since made famous through a book and movie on the Battle of Gettysburg. My friend and I gathered at the edge of the small throng of onlookers, more out of curiosity than any sense of the sacred.

And then the bugle sounded. As the haunting notes of “Taps” echoed through the trees and around the curve of the hill down to Devil’s Den, that warren of glacial boulders among which desperate men struggled hand to hand one terrible afternoon, the air changed. Something opened, and that which had seemed so real just seconds before receded into some shadowy semi-existence. The buses, the crowds, the noise, even the birds became strangely silent and still, till all that was left in the world was the sweet mourning of the bugle and a row of uniformed men standing at attention in the thick woods. The music ended with one last long-drawn note and was followed by a shout...roll call.

One after another, they called the names of those who had defended the end of the Union line, who had resisted charge after frantic charge by an overwhelming opposing force, who had put their own lives between the enemy and their comrades higher on the hill. And one after another, the men in uniform crisply informed the commanding officer that they were once again, after fourteen decades, present and ready for duty. For twenty minutes there was nothing but call and response, while a swirl of activity and noise doubtless continued unabated just a few feet away, but for those of us who gathered on that hillside the buses and tourists were in another world...a lesser one.

The Celts have a tradition of “thin places,” ordinary spaces that provide glimpses of Someplace Else. They are portals of transcendence, sacred spots in which time and eternity meet for dinner, in which this reality and another sidle up against each other. And because we desire transcendence...perhaps above all other things...because there is within me and you a longing for that which is beyond us, we are drawn to, we long for, such places. It is there we encounter Joy.

Joy showed up that afternoon on Little Round Top...and has on other events since. It is my favorite thin place.

*Tony Blair*

*Dean*

*Pennsylvania Iota, Eastern University*

# Land of leprechauns

It is difficult to write about enchanting Ireland without employing superlatives. Everything about our recent trip there was festive and wonderfully fulfilling.

The ride from the airport to Dublin's city center is short and reveals the bustling nature of this cosmopolitan and world-class city. The skyline is dotted with construction cranes signaling growth and successful economic activity. While Dubliners enjoy their modernity, they are keenly aware of their history. Trinity College, Ireland's largest and best known college, serves as a constant reminder of the country's turbulent past while serving as the repository of the country's cultural, religious and literary heritage. Tourists flock to view the Book of Kells, the illustrated version of the gospels, and stroll through the libraries housing the largest collection of books published in the country. Sculptures celebrate the school's famous literary alumni, including Oliver Goldsmith, Oscar Wilde, and Samuel Beckett. James Joyce has River Liffey bridge named for him to commemorate his life and works.

While touring Dublin could easily have consumed our two-week Irish stay, our itinerary included visits to the cities of Galway, Killarney, and Kilkenny, each with its own charm and visual delights.

Galway is Ireland's fastest-growing city. Its university and festive outlook serve as magnets for youth, who also enjoy its nearby surfing spots on the western coast. Known for traditional music and cuisine, the city also serves as a port for transit to the Aran Islands, barren, rocky islands where Gaelic continues to be spoken.

The drive to Killarney in the far southwest revealed resplendent mountain views, taking us from the majestic Cliffs of Moher to the seemingly endless rocky landscape of the Burren, which surprised us with a delightful pointillistic palette of tiny, colorful flowers.

Killarney is the starting place for a tour of the Ring of Kerry, one of Europe's most scenic drives. While the narrow winding roads were a bit unsettling, the little villages that appeared magically around each curve offered reminders of the independent spirit of the Irish, symbolized by flower gardens demonstrating the character and tastes of the occupants.

The small city of Kilkenny, on the east, is the center for the arts and crafts of Ireland. Kilkenny Castle is the showpiece of the town with stately rooms and a gallery housing modern art. This last stop provided time to reflect on our experience.

Ireland is a land of contrasts. It is green yet colorful. Its cities are vibrant, yet its villages are rustic and quiet. Its people are garrulous and fun-loving yet serious. It remembers its turbulent history, yet it stands poised at the razor's edge of modernity. It is a lilting melody, a vigorous dance, a Land of Leprechauns.

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# The creek

When I was a child, a creek ran through my backyard. I grew up in Woodland West, a planned community of 1960s tract homes, with a neighborhood park, pool, and recreation center. Lawns were short, shrubs were trimmed into balls, and a pop-up camper sat in nearly every driveway. In the evenings, children on bicycles owned the streets. It was a managed childhood, idyllic in its way, but short on adventure. But I had the creek and it was my wilderness.

I watched the seasons change in that creek, the ebb and flow of nature. In spring, fresh water brought the creek to life. I scooped up tadpoles in a glass jar, longing to find one with the green legs of a frog jutting out from its black body, like the picture in the World Book Encyclopedia. But they were always fully tadpole.

In summer, the tadpoles morphed into tiny green frogs that grew into large green frogs that got squished in the road. The air buzzed with dragonflies by day and fireflies by night and mosquitoes by day and night. With the heat of late summer, the water turned brown and green and stagnant and finally dried up. In autumn, the rains returned and the creek was clogged by oak leaves raked from neighborhood yards. Where the water could not penetrate the brush, the creek shifted its course, carving away the red clay and dark rock, our own little Grand Canyon.

Winter was my favorite time on the creek. Cold days were quiet, rife with adventure. I spent long winter afternoons creating stories, casting myself as the hero in epic quests. At night in my room, I read adventure tales about children who, with a dog and a pocket knife, could overcome any obstacle. Then I invented my own stories in the creek. I was a fugitive from the great villains of a child's life—a cruel orphanage director or a scowling librarian. Alone in the wilderness, with only my wits, I could conduct myself to a better life, where Mom waited with cookies and milk and put my muddy shoes and socks in the washer without reprimand.

An urban planner who traced the tributaries of the Trinity River, all the small creek outlets that collected urban runoff and carried it away, showed me my creek on her map. I followed it to its final union with the river. The line on the map undervalued the power of the creek; it looked small and insignificant, important only for its role in water management. Nothing designated it as a child's wilderness.

I have often thought I should name this creek, but what could I name it? I could name it for myself, but the creek has taught its lessons to many children and it is theirs as much as mine. I could name it for its neighborhood, the Woodland West Creek, but it transcends the neighborhood. It was special precisely because it was an exception to the orderly suburban world. Perhaps it will remain the creek, the one creek that for me needs no other designation.

*Jeanna White*

*Assistant Professor of English*

*Texas Alpha Zeta, East Texas Baptist University*

# Española, the Galápagos

I am not a morning person, but somehow it just seems natural to wake up with the sun at 6 a.m. on the equator. My ability to rise and shine might also have something to do with my anticipation for the day's adventure in the Galápagos.

The previous evening, our small group of faculty and staff, from colleges and universities all over the United States and abroad, was briefed on the upcoming journey. For the duration of our 10-day tour, we travel the rough seas between the islands at night and wake up to a brand new world each day. While we are provided with a general description of the landscape and a checklist of the flora and fauna we hope to encounter, nothing quite prepares us for the first moment we lay eyes on that morning's horizon.

Today's adventure is the island of Española. From the small boat conveying our group from the cruising vessel to the shore, I notice the waves crashing against the huge lava rocks that define the coast. It is only once we've disembarked that I notice that the seemingly solid rocks are actually moving. This illusion is created by the dozens of marine iguanas who've stretched their black bodies across the rocks in an attempt to stay warm. Occasionally they spit out salt from glands in their necks, thus revealing their true identity.

Just a few steps past the marine iguanas, we spot small lines of sea lions looking like overstuffed cigars basking in the sand on the beach. They bellow and howl and belch as they jockey for the best position. With some regularity, mothers roll over to expose their dark nipples to eager young. Despite the precious intimacy of the scene, the smell of dried milk mixed with the salt of the sea air causes my stomach to turn.

We follow a stone path beyond the rocks and the landscape changes completely. We are now traversing a very rocky trail through salt bush and low-lying brush. Every several feet, the trail is interrupted by blue-footed booby pairings in various stages of courtship. They seem perfectly annoyed by our presence and completely unwilling to alter their path for our convenience. The first groups we encounter are playing the dating game. The male lifts and lowers his feet in a calculated manner, then stretches his wings out and head up while producing a low, melancholic whistling sound in his throat. If the female looks interested, he picks up a small "gift," usually a stick, and offers it to her. Some eagerly accept it, some bow their heads in shyness, some walk away...such is life. Further down the path, mothers incubate their eggs on small nests surrounded by guano, and, further down still, the hatchlings take their first breaths. Some don't make it, and carcasses can be spotted along the path in various stages of decay.

I came to the Galápagos because I wanted to see what Darwin saw. What I witnessed this morning on Española Island was surprising, disturbing, and awe-inspiring. The entire circle of life unfolded on this half mile path.

*Corinne Andersen*  
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# Beach Point, Cape Cod

My favorite place to be, out of all the many places I've visited or lived, is Beach Point, North Truro, Massachusetts. My parents met and fell in love there, so it was natural for them to take me there after I was born. My grandparents had homes on the beach, and all my life I have spent long hours there each summer.

Beach Point is just a narrow road, with cottages on both sides, right on Cape Cod Bay. Every day, as the tides go in and out, you have the option of walking for hours on the sandbars, wading through the sea grass in search of crabs or clams, lying in the sun, jumping in the waves, or walking on the beach looking for shells and beach glass.

At night the curve of Provincetown can be seen all lit up, with the monument rising up out of the quaint houses and inns. The starry night is quiet and serene as you walk the beach or sit and look to the sky for a shooting star. Staying in a cottage with few luxuries means you can choose to read a book, play a board game, or play cards. My family even spends hours putting together a jigsaw puzzle, something we would never do at home.

As a child I loved to make sandcastles, weave beach grass sandals, and fly kites. I learned to swim, water ski, and row a boat on this beach. I also learned how to catch a fish, clean it, and grill it for dinner. Now I have had the pleasure of passing on these skills to my husband and my two sons, as well as my love of this place.

It is my favorite place mostly because of the happy times I've spent there. I have fond memories of my grandparents teaching me important things, like how beach glass is made and how to make beach plum jelly from the pretty plants lining the walkway. I have passed on many pieces of beach trivia to my husband and sons, and I believe this place has become so important to my sons that they will continue to visit it when they have families of their own.

Each year we reserve our cottage during the dead of winter. Then, whenever we are feeling stressed or unhappy for some reason, we can think about our next trip to the Cape and the wonderful time we are sure to have. Just yesterday my husband said, "Only one month until the Cape." My son said, "I can't wait!" Neither can I.

*Dawn Levasseur  
Assistant Professor of Education  
Connecticut Epsilon, Mitchell College*

# Kenya safari: elephant orphans

The most heart-warming travel memory I have is time spent on safari following elephants in Kenya's parks and ranches. From the high backseat of a Landrover rumbling over terrain that could have been West Texas, I photographed lions, giraffes, rhinos, buffalos, wildebeests, and zebras—but mostly elephants, all roaming, foraging, and bathing in their natural habitats. After days of keeping company with these giant creatures, my safari trail led me to a nursery of tiny elephant orphans in Kenya's Nairobi National Park.

Observing these rescued orphans helped me understand the concept of wildlife conservation. Since 1977, Dr. Daphne Sheldrick and a dedicated team have rescued baby elephants from all regions of Kenya. As with human babies, without a mother for protection and food, a baby elephant will die. Whenever a baby elephant is found separated from its mother, possibly due to her death from poachers or starvation, the orphanage is called and Dr. Sheldrick quickly assembles the rescue team. The baby elephant is transported to the nursery and given antibiotics, special milk formula, and tender loving care. The other orphans help the keepers with the new arrival, showering it with attention and a sense of family, which is highly important for an elephant's survival.

At noon each day, visitors are permitted to watch the elephants play in their mud baths, kick balls, nurse from their bottles, and in general perform for onlookers. Groups of school children squeal with delight as the little elephants come close to the rope barrier and raise their trunks. Keepers explain the daily routines and details about the elephants, where they were rescued, and what they are named. The keepers feed, walk with, and even sleep beside the babies, and various elephant behaviors are logged daily in a journal.

Even though the keepers and staff grow attached to the orphans, the goal is to rehabilitate them for return to the bush as free elephants, living in their highly social herds. After one to two years in the nursery and during another five to eight years in an elephant center in Kenya's Tsavo National Park, the elephants are introduced to herds in the area. Eventually, each orphan leaves the care of keepers and is adopted by a herd. As intended, the young elephant returns to the elephant way of living in the wild, when he or she is ready.

Dr. Sheldrick, knighted in 2006 for her efforts, and the keepers have recorded that some of the older elephants frequently revisit the elephant center, as if to say thank you and to check on their human friends. At present, more than eighty elephants have been raised and returned to the bush in this amazing example of wildlife conservation. A piece of my heart remains on Kenya safari, with both the elephant orphans and the wild herds they join.

*Twyla Miranda*  
*Professor of Education, Director of Graduate Studies*  
*Texas Mu, Texas Wesleyan University*

## 503 Kirchwood Drive

Over the years I've done a fair amount of traveling. I've been to the fish market in Seattle and the zoo in San Diego. I've walked around Times Square in Manhattan and down the Magnificent Mile in Chicago. I've toured the museums of the Smithsonian in Washington. I've enjoyed the laughter of my children at Disney World and Universal Studios in Orlando. I've found Venice Beach in Los Angeles interesting, the Ford factory tour near Detroit memorable, Alcatraz in San Francisco cool, and the Grand Canyon incredible. In Alaska, Exit Glacier and Denali National Park were breathtaking. In Hawaii, I really enjoyed snorkeling at Hanauma Bay on Oahu. I've run marathons all over Texas.

But I suppose my favorite spot on earth would have to be my beautiful home in the small farming community of Plainview, Texas. My family has put a lot of blood, sweat, and tears into a total renovation, and being at home is a sanctuary for me. It is exactly the way my wife and I want it. Our jobs demand a lot of time, so when we are at home it is time for family togetherness and relaxation. This is where we have had and hopefully will continue to have many great memories. We're fortunate in being located across the street from a large floodplain that is restricted from any future homebuilding. So while living in town, we get the feel of living out in the country. My kids and I ride go-carts, motorcycles, and four-wheelers throughout this undeveloped area. At night we can sit out in the front yard and experience a quiet solitude while gazing at the bright stars in the Texas sky. Our neighborhood jointly owns a nice swimming pool where my kids have learned to swim.

I've lived in several locations and presented research in many popular tourist destinations. In the future, I expect to visit new cities and hope to travel abroad. Although I enjoy traveling and exploring new locales, home and family are very important to me. I'll leave the big city life for others. They can have the concrete and airports and taxis and small living quarters and skyscrapers and schools with metal detectors. I have fun in the big city, but while I'm there I think a lot about my favorite spot on earth—503 Kirchwood Drive in Plainview, Texas. You should check it out on Google Earth when you get a chance.

*Perry Collins*  
*Associate Professor of Psychology and Counseling*  
*Texas Alpha Eta, Wayland Baptist University*

## Tortuguero, Costa Rica

Tortuguero, Costa Rica, is barely a dot on the map to the average person. For me, it was paradise encased in the rough shell of poverty. It would become an attentive professor, silently correcting my mistakes and building my confidence.

I was there for the sea turtles, volunteering to walk the beach at night to search for nesting Leatherbacks. This beach became my friend and my enemy. Some nights, my walking buddy and I would crack jokes, or on others, we would pace in silence. We weren't allowed to use flashlights because they could disturb the turtles. On moonless nights, the only evidence of another person next to me was the soft sound of footsteps in the sand. A washed-up branch could cause devastation to the legs, but even this became a game in the end. The person who tripped the least won. Sometimes that was all the entertainment we got.

When we found a turtle, excitement would fill up my lungs and I would stand in awe of one of the nature's oldest creatures. Most Leatherbacks that we worked with were longer than I was tall. One of the first things we would do was measure the length of their massive carapace, which was hard yet leathery. Once she started to nest, we would reach under her and catch the eggs, counting them before letting them drop as nature intended. We would mark the nest so that we could watch over it and hopefully witness the hatchlings racing into

the waves. As sea turtles nest, they release tears full of salt from the ocean. It was always an emotional scene to watch their big black eyes oozing sadly. They were gentle giants, a living piece of history that probably knows more about our world than we do. They made me stop and take notice of the miracles around me.

One night, I lay in the sand to witness an endless sea of stars expanding above. It was a humbling moment. We are not meant to count the stars, but to stand in awe of their massive presence and to thank God for His city above. I could have stayed there all night and never drifted to sleep.

It was then that I realized how lucky I was. The things I had seen and experienced would be like a foreign language to my loved ones at home. To them, this place might be more significant than a dot on the map, but they know it only from stories and square photographs. They will never be able to feel it under that panoramic view. It is a sad truth that the best lessons in life cannot be taught, but instead must be experienced. In the end, I learned that I was capable and strong; I just had to believe in myself. Costa Rica opened my mind to who I really was, and I am a different person because of it.

*Lindsay Bryant*  
*Alumna*  
*Kansas Epsilon, Friends University*

## Chemo-chair, Philadelphia

My favorite spot on earth (presently) is a chemotherapy chair in a large university setting in Philadelphia. If you had asked me six months ago, my answer would have been quite different. Perhaps my favorite spot would have been in my own examination room working as a urology nurse practitioner, especially after a patient smiled at me and said, “You’re the best,” or perhaps at the podium as a nursing faculty member after teaching a tough medical surgical nursing class, when instead of anxious expressions I saw a few faces with that “Aha! I got it!” look.

But after February 11 of this year, when the colorectal surgeon told my husband and me that I had a large tumor in my colon that was probably malignant, our world changed drastically. My husband likens it to a nuclear bomb having exploded in our laps. After fighting back tears and then getting in the car, we wept in each other’s arms like babies. “But wait,” I asked the Lord. “We have a wedding in one month and two college graduations in two months.” It was quiet. (The Lord worked that all out, by the way.)

After a meeting with my oncologist, who felt my cancer was still in the curable stage, my first chemotherapy session was soon scheduled. Although I am a nurse and my husband is a physician, none of our expertise helped as I sat in the chair and got hooked up to toxic chemicals coursing into my chest via a port placed earlier by an interventional radiologist. I felt vulnerable and scared.

The chemotherapy rooms at this well-known hospital are usually private. After a few treatments, though, things tend to get busy, so we often have to “buddy up.” It is tight and inconvenient, but I like being in a room with another patient. The nurses are wonderful, competent, and busy. The patients I have met are quiet, scared, sometimes angry, and often resigned.

After being diagnosed with colon cancer, it took me some time, after crying, praying, and studying the Bible, to truly believe that the Lord Jesus is an all-loving God who really is working out the good for his children. My cancer is not some “Whoops, missed that one!” situation. The God of the Bible is the all-wise, sovereign, and loving God who ordains all things, including cancer and chemotherapy chairs. It is not about us; it is about Him.

So the chemo-chair for me, ironically, is my favorite place for the moment. It is where the Lord Jesus Christ’s life, death, resurrection, reality, mercy, blessings, strength, and healing meet technology, pain, and weakness. Jesus wants me to be in this chair for a time, in this place, and when his work is done, I will leave the chair, prayerfully free of colon cancer but changed forever.

*Joyce Wallace  
Medical Surgical Nursing Coordinator, Lecturer  
Pennsylvania Iota, Eastern University*

## Durham, England

My wife Diane and I made Durham, England, our final destination when we plotted a two-week tour of some of England’s cathedral cities. We’d already visited the Gothic churches of four terrific cities—Cambridge’s King’s College Chapel, Ely’s and Lincoln’s cathedrals, and York’s Yorkminster. We’d even climbed into the “Lantern” and steeples of the latter three.

Then we arrived in Durham, a small city in the north. Wonderful things—historical, architectural, and spiritual—come in its small package.

There’s the proximity to Roman ruins at Housesteads and Corbridge. Corbridge was a Roman fort and village. The excavated remains are in good condition, all easily recognizable for what they were in Roman times—a water trough (part of the extensive system that brought water to the fort), a thoroughfare, and granaries complete with a ventilation system to keep the grain dry. Housesteads is one of the very best sites along Hadrian’s Wall, with another excavated Roman fort, this one with a barracks block and communal bathhouse and latrine with running water to carry off waste, a hospital, another granary, and the commanding officer’s house. The wall itself at this point is intact and substantial. Corbridge and Housesteads are both an easy drive out from Durham.

In Durham itself, there’s the City Hall, a Gothic building full of Medieval weaponry, stained glass windows, vaulted ceilings with carved wooden angels, and friendly city workers eager to give visitors a tour. There’s the medieval castle atop a hill dominating the city, just up from City Hall. Founded in 1072, the Castle was the Palace of the Prince Bishops of

Durham. The Norman Chapel dates from 1080, the Great Hall from 1284, and the extensive kitchens from 1499.

And then there's main event—the Norman cathedral, the burial site of both St. Cuthbert and the Venerable Bede. Bede lies in the Galilee Chapel at the west end of the cathedral, Cuthbert behind the altar at the east end. Between them run the stunning quire and nave. Begun in the 11<sup>th</sup> Century shortly after the Norman Conquest, the cathedral features round Norman arches, the first rib vaulting in Europe, the first flying buttresses (within its outer walls), and massive pillars and walls playfully decorated with carved rope swirls, zigzags, and other motifs. Attached are the cloisters and the dormitory of the Benedictine monks who built the cathedral. It's been called “the finest building on the planet earth.” I call it the Chartres of Great Britain.

For all its historical and architectural significance, Durham Cathedral is primarily a holy place, one “set aside” in the true sense of what “holy” means. We sensed that in the cathedral, and we found our sense confirmed when we heard of the miracle that literally set it aside from destruction during World War II. Hitler included it among his targets of historic sites in England. The day the bombers headed for Durham, however, the heaviest fog natives had ever experienced settled over the city. Residents couldn't see across the street. Needless to say, the fog kept the bombers from finding their target. A stained glass window in the cathedral commemorates that miraculous fog.

Too many see Durham as “flyover” country between York and Edinburgh. They shouldn't. It's a jewel box.

*Terrell Tebbetts*  
*Professor of English*  
*Arkansas Iota, Lyon College*

## JFAB, Peru State College

Before an education was available on a cell phone screen, it occurred at a place: a campus. Generally, a student inevitably spent a good deal of time in one part of a campus, sometimes beginning and ending in the same place, a place that became the heart of one's activities. That central place for me was the Jindra Fine Arts Building at Peru State College, a small state school in rural Nebraska. The first and last of my classes met there, and I came to regard JFAB as a place within a place, like a heart within a soul.

From the outside, JFAB looked like a red brick box, a standard academic beehive. I learned, however, that the outside and the inside were not the same. They were like mirror images: seemingly equal but actually opposite, reality and reflection. Upon entering the building for my first-ever college class in 1987, I was instantly enchanted. The front doors opened into the Diddel Exhibition Court, a large space reminiscent of the sanctuary of a cathedral. It was like the opening of a mind.

The court was ringed by a gallery that served as a hallway for the upper floor. This court constituted half the building. The other half was the Benford Recital Hall (where I

took Introduction to Psychology and once heard the Nebraska Poet Laureate read his work). Mirror image: open/closed. The recital hall was ringed by a hallway leading to classrooms and offices for the ground floor. Mirror image: high/low.

The building was like my life at that time. I worked second shift in a factory and went to college. Mirror image: night /day, blue collar/white collar, physical/intellectual. I remember learning the sociological term “role conflict” in that building (upper floor, recital hall side). It was a name to go with the feeling. Mirror image: abstraction/experience.

At some point during my time in and out of JFAB, I learned about Alpha Chi. The sponsor’s office opened onto the gallery and overlooked the court. Mirror image: private/public. I recall frequently asking about the progress of the selection process. Ultimately, I was invited to join Alpha Chi on October 4, 1991. On October 22, I received a letter detailing the induction process. The first paragraph read:

“The Alpha Chi Induction Ceremony is scheduled for Sunday, November 3, 1991, in the Benford Recital Hall of the Jindra Fine Arts Building. There will be a reception in the Diddel Exhibition Court immediately following the ceremony. Encourage your family and friends to attend. Guests are welcome.”

Mirror image: the personal achievement of Alpha Chi membership was conferred in the intimacy of the Benford Recital Hall and then celebrated in the openness of the Diddel Exhibition Court. Even now, seventeen years later, I recall the Jindra Fine Arts Building with a great, abiding affection. It’s changed from the heart of a place to a place in the heart.

*Martin M. Jacobsen*  
*Associate Professor of English*  
*Texas Zeta, West Texas A&M University*

## Venice, between myth and reality

I had the good fortune to spend five weeks exploring Venice in the summer of 2006. The city has always had a peculiar fascination, in part because its unique location, uninterrupted thousand-year history, and unparalleled architectural/artistic/cultural heritage have been enveloped in a self-generated myth embroidered and perpetuated by visitors. The irony is that Venice really is rather mythical and enchanting.

Venice’s mythos is bound up in its location. It rose out of a cluster of small islands in an Adriatic lagoon, which not only protected it but also allowed Venice to become a powerhouse of the Middle Ages and bridge between the East and the West. Today, Venice is composed of some 117 small islands and 150 canals, with nearly 400 bridges. Because there are no cars, it is remarkably clean city. And, although I wouldn’t recommend swimming in the Grand Canal which sweeps majestically through the center of Venice, the canals no longer have their proverbial odor.

The art and architecture of Venice are exceptional, probably because so much of it has remained where it was created rather than being destroyed by warfare or carted off to museums elsewhere. One might think of Venice a living museum (though by the end of the 20th century it was also becoming a kind of theme park). It harbors a wide variety of art from Byzantine to Baroque. One of my favorites is the Scuola San Rocco, whose amazing interior was painted by Tintoretto over a period of twenty-four years.

The architectural panorama that opens before you as you travel down the Grand Canal to the Piazza San Marco is unforgettable. Palace after distinctive palace and not a few churches line the Grand Canal, which is abuzz with gondolas, motor boats, and the ever-present vaporettos that provide public transportation. Halfway down the Grand Canal, in the heart of old Venice's business district, is the Rialto. The Rialto is a bit too crowded with tourists and small shops full of the kinds of things that they allegedly are interested in: Murano glass, Carnevale masques, silk scarves, and other genuine Venetian goods often labeled "Made in China."

Then your vaporetto rounds the final bend of the Grand Canal and you are near the civic center of old Venice, San Marco, with the Basilica, Campanile, Doge's Palace, and great square itself. The Basilica of Saint Mark is a harmonious vision within and without despite its odd lack of proportion and multiplicity of styles, while the Doge's Palace is a masterpiece of secular architecture that embodies Roman, Gothic, and Muslim architecture. The beauty of the components of San Marco shifts throughout the day as the sun moves from the east to the west. Which turn of the kaleidoscope is the "real" Venice? In the end, in this jewel of imagination and memory, myth and reality turn out to be inseparable.

*Paul Michelson  
Professor of History  
Indiana Beta, Huntington University*

## My back porch

My favorite place on earth is my screened-in back porch. We live in South Texas four miles from the Rio Grande in a climate where we can be outside all year round. Even in July and August we can use the porch early in the morning. When we bought the house thirty-five years ago, all of the woodwork was a dark gray, which didn't show dirt, but I've painted the ceiling and the wood supports for the screen white and had the floor tiled in white. After we bought a white table and chairs, I painted the porch swing and the rocking chair white too. The white reflects the light, making the porch the best place at our house for old eyes to read. I've perused many books on that swing and graded reams of essays and exams on the table. The white contrasts with the green of the philodendron and ladyfinger palms in the planters. As three sides of the porch are screened from floor to ceiling, the view is also green looking out on the backyard. I watch papayas, peaches, oranges, figs, and grapefruit ripening on the trees. The avocado tree looks good, but it seems as if it will never bear fruit. People tell me

it will bear after twenty years. The bird we see most frequently is the kiskadee, but we also see chachalacas, whistling ducks, grackles, wild red-headed green parrots, woodpeckers, mockingbirds, mourning doves, sparrows, and hummingbirds. The birds are especially fond of the chili pequins that grow wild under the arbor. They are *muy caliente* but can be used sparingly to make salsa. My son barbecues on the pit just outside the porch to the east, and Timothy and Mary, the grandchildren that live with us, climb and swing on the play station. I sit on the back porch guarding while they splash in their little blue pool. When Timothy, who was six yesterday, was a baby and cried, I wrapped him up, even in the winter and at night, and rocked him in the porch swing. Something about being outside comforted him. It's a comfort to me too. I'm away from home too much, so I'd rather be on my back porch than anywhere else in the world.

*Mimosa Stephenson*  
*Professor of English*  
*Texas Alpha Omicron, University of Texas at Brownsville*

## Costa Rica excursion

In July 2003 I visited Costa Rica with a group of scholars on a Phi Delta Kappa International travel excursion organized by the Smithsonian in Washington. To experience Costa Rican life, I rode a rainforest aerial tram, took a volcanic mud bath, visited several butterfly farms, and waited patiently but unsuccessfully to see the resplendent quetzal. Although everyone else saw the exquisite bird, I never did. But I did experience the country's beauty.

A bus ride took us to the mammoth Poas Volcano and the El Tucano Thermal Spa Resort. On the way we stopped to ride the rainforest aerial tram. As we glided through the forest's canopy, our guide spotted tropical birds hidden in the dense foliage and pointed out armies of ants devouring huge trees. At San Carlos I decided to visit the spa for a bath in hot, coal-black volcanic mud and a dip in the thermal pool. What a unique experience!

I thought I was ready for any adventure in this idyllic setting, but then came the wild six-hour ride to the Monteverde Cloud Forest Reserve high in the Tilaran Mountains. As we started the treacherous, winding, steep climb, hawkers were selling "I survived the road to Monteverde" T-shirts that didn't alleviate our fears. We backed up more than once because a passing motorist could not get past our bus without falling into the abyss.

At the end of this seemingly never-ending jaunt, we soaked our weary bodies in the hotel's hot tub and enjoyed the breathtaking view of Nicoya Bay. We were reminded to be cautious of where we stepped because snakes and insects are abundant. Nature's creatures are not to be maimed, swatted, stepped on, or killed, but we were not thrilled when flying roaches kept buzzing around our heads. Yet the array of delicate butterflies was an awesome sight. When we visited butterfly farms, these creatures often alit briefly on our clothing before fluttering away.

After several peaceful days in the picturesque setting, we drove back down the mountain to a beach resort in a 1,100-acre rain forest. While strolling on the beach and swimming in the hotel's pool, we watched iguanas perching on limbs and posing like statues. Only too quickly, our Smithsonian vacation ended as we drove back to San Jose and boarded planes, but I have many fond memories of Costa Rica and its people and a deeper appreciation for nature's boundless beauty.

*Patricia A. Williams*  
*Professor of Curriculum and Instruction, Retired*  
*Texas Omicron, Sam Houston State University*

## Rocking chair, South Carolina

When I am old and in my dotage, and when my caretakers say, "She's gone somewhere else today," as they tap their temples, I know where I will be. I will be sitting in a rocking chair on an old-fashioned, wraparound porch in South Carolina.

It will be spring and the ornithological courtship rituals will be in full swing. I'll watch the mourning doves behave like cartoon characters, first inching toward and then away from each other on the power line. I'll glimpse a flash of fluorescent blue as the bluebirds tend and protect their babies, the babies in the wood box home I provided, just there—on the three-slat country white fence. I'll watch in the evening dusk for father bluebird's characteristic profile as he stands evening vigil. I'll hear the unmistakable screechy voice of Jay-Jay, the blue jay who adopted me and who comes to my call. I'll look up into an overcast Sunday morning sky and see the hawk migration—hundreds and hundreds of hawks. My reverie will be interrupted by the baby bird cacophony from my hanging ferns as the mother purple house finch returns with fresh worms for her babies. I must remember to carefully water the ferns underneath the nests so as to prevent giving mother and babies an unwelcome cold shower. I'll hear the twittering of the dozens of birds who have made their home in the huge cedar tree, an arboreal apartment house.

I'll taste the brewed coffee and the Krispy Kreme cruller doughnuts, my favorite morning indulgence. I'll breathe in the fragrance of the white petunias in the flower boxes hung all around the porch railing and the earthy deep scent of the geraniums on each step. I'll close my eyes, and it will be dusk. I'll face the sunset through the black silhouettes of the trees and I'll hear the Canada geese before I see the V formation, as they wend their way, like me, wandering, but not lost.

I'll hear the rhythmic creak of my rocker on the wooden floor of the porch and the voices of people I love—and I will be happy.

*Portia Weston*  
*Director of the Honors Program*  
*Pennsylvania Eta, Point Park University*