

# ALPHA CHI RECORDER

Vol. 52, No. 3

Alumni Issue

Fall 2009

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### **On the cover**

The cover photo honors one of the society's President's Cup chapters, Oklahoma Gamma at East Central University, recognized as the society's top chapter for 2005. The institution's University Center, which opened in 1997, has several large lounge areas for relaxation or study, game centers, a media center, a food court, an aerobics room, a wellness center, two racquetball courts, a movie theater, and a formal Governors Room.

# Promoting Literacy: It's Everybody's Job

**By David Harrison**

*Editor's Note: On April 2, 2009, award-winning children's author David Harrison addressed Alpha Chi's national convention in Indianapolis. Later he kindly agreed to adapt his talk for publication. "My challenge," he said, "was to take an address delivered from an outline to a more general article without losing too much of the original spontaneity. Maybe it will help if you pretend you are sitting in the audience in Indianapolis. Here goes . . . ."*

**A**s an author of children's literature I've visited tens of thousands of students over the last forty years. From early on I became an activist for literacy, though even now I struggle for an exact definition of the term. A literate person can read and write, of course, but surely there is more to it than simply mastering fundamental skills. Doesn't a literate person develop awareness of surroundings, a sense of community? Doesn't he or she keep up with the news? Articulate informed opinions? Make a difference? I think being literate involves all of these characteristics, but it begins with that great leveler—reading.

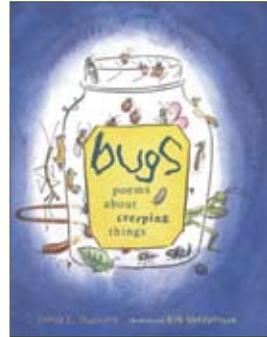
## 4 PROMOTING LITERACY

Here's an example of how reading can make all the difference. Not long ago I was sweeping our back deck. A mat by the door spells in large letters, W-E-L-C-O-M-E, and under the mat I discovered a cluster of bugs. I wondered how such tiny creatures figured they were welcome under my mat. They inspired a poem in one of my books (*bugs, poems about creeping things*).

### bugs

Bugs moved under  
my welcome mat.  
If bugs can't read,  
explain that.

I've always said  
that bugs are pests,  
but bugs who read  
are welcome guests.



Reading not only helps us know where we are welcome. It also teaches us how to properly use our language. Sometimes the learning process is pretty tough and can be, to some, humorous.

### Have It Your Own Way

(Isabelle)

Me and Sally are pals!

I didn't know you knew her!

Then why did you say,  
"Me and Sally are pals?"

You said it again!  
You said,  
"Me and Sally are pals!"

Have it your own way.  
You and her are pals.

(Teacher)

Sally and I are pals.

I don't.

Sally and I are pals.

Sally and I are pals!

But I don't believe it,  
 And Sally won't neither!  
*(The Mouse Was Out at Recess)*

Writing is the other half of basic literacy and here, too, we encounter occasional problems in the learning process.

### **I'd Rather Not**

To you it's only homework,  
 But I'm half wild with fright!  
 You said to write two pages  
 And get them done tonight!

Give me a thousand problems,  
 I'll work until they're right,  
 But Teacher, Teacher PLEASE don't make me  
 Write two pages tonight!

I'm really good at reading,  
 At spelling you've said I'm bright,  
 But the thought of two whole pages  
 Is turning my hair all white.

Test me till I'm dizzy,  
 I'll try with all my might,  
 Give me a break,  
 I'm nearly in tears,  
 I'll praise your name,  
 I'll shout three cheers,  
 I'll study hard  
 For a hundred years,  
 Scold me,  
 Whip me,  
 Pull my ears!  
 Only DON'T make me write  
 TONIGHT!  
*(Somebody Catch My Homework)*

Literate people tend to be smart. Everyone in Alpha Chi is smart, which can be rather intimidating to others. My suggestion is to remember, as you journey through your lives, to be as empathetic as you can for those who don't have as many answers as you do. Otherwise, you run the risk of being Bradley.

### **A Better Answer**

Bradley always answers!  
We hate it when he answers!  
His hand is always shooting up  
To make us all look bad.

Teacher says to study.  
Study! Study! Study!  
Studying isn't the answer –  
It's getting rid of Brad!  
*(Somebody Catch My Homework)*

Whatever else is involved in learning to read, there is, I think, some magic in it. If you should be in Phoenix at the Burton Barr Central Library and locate the children's department on the first floor and walk out into the Children's Garden and look down, you'll find yourself standing on this poem sandblasted into the sidewalk. I wrote the poem to describe that magic moment in my life when I read my very first book all the way through all by myself.

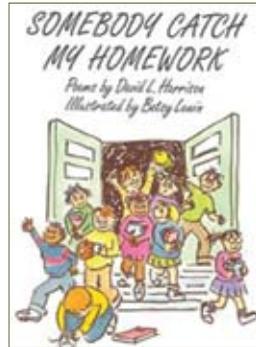
### **My Book!**

I did it!  
I did it!  
Come and look  
At what I've done!  
I read a book!

When someone wrote it  
Long ago  
For me to read,  
How did he know  
That this was the book  
I'd take from the shelf  
And lie on the floor  
And read by myself?

I really read it!  
 Just like that!  
 Word by word,  
 From first to last!

I'm sleeping with  
 This book in bed,  
 This first FIRST book  
 I've ever read!  
 (*Somebody Catch My Homework*)



Such is the power of reading. I know of a 6-year-old girl who received a new book. She sat on her mother's lap and listened to the story over and over. She read it silently to herself. She read it aloud. She asked an adult friend to sit down and listen to her read her new story. She asked the adult to take turns reading with her. The little girl loved the words so much that she began acting out some of the parts, leaping and waving her arms and dancing in exuberant interpretations of what she heard and felt and saw in her imagination. The following morning she took the book to school. There she organized her classmates into teams. As the book was read aloud, the children performed the girl's choreographed movements.

This is one of those small miracles that happen when a child loves a book. The girl imbued the characters in her new book with her own personality. Henceforth they would march to her rhythm. The words in the storybook were still the author's, but the joy of discovery and interpretation belonged to the child. She became the director of the story.

Jim Trelease, a long-time proponent of introducing children to literature, says about the importance of reading, "Literature's words, as opposed to those of the electronic media, offer a wealth of language for children to use. Because good literature is precise, intelligent, colorful, sensitive and rich in meaning, it offers the child his best hope of expressing what he feels."

That's all well and good. Who would disagree with Trelease's wisdom? However, we first have to win the attention of today's young people who are busily engaged in a myriad of competing activities. They Twitter, Flickr, visit personal sites, and focus on favorite video games. On the move, they haul out cell phones, iPods, iPhones, or Blackberries to call, text message, listen to music, check dates, and e-mail. At home it's back to the computer or television for more entertainment.

A Kaiser Family Foundation study (2002) found that kids 8 to 18 may average nearly 40.0 hours per week in front of some kind of screen. The only thing they do more is sleep. Kids who are good with language are more likely to succeed in school, yet up to one-third of American children enter kindergarten lacking at least some of the skills needed for a successful learning experience. When children are poor readers by the end of first grade, they are likely to remain so in fourth grade.

Why are so many children unprepared to start school? National studies reported by Reading Across the Nation (2007) show that less than 48 percent of the nation's children under 5 are read to at home on a regular basis. That number drops to 36 percent in families below the Federal Poverty Level and 31 percent in families where no one completed high

school. Across the nation too many children reach school age with more expertise at electronic games than with books and with little background in reading or being read to. There is much to overcome to help such students develop language skills and learn to reason.

Because of the constant innovations in appealing technology, a shrinking number of today's youth (and their families) have or make time in their hectic schedules to sit down with a book. The trend is strong but the situation is not hopeless. Rather than looking at this as one enormous, unsolvable problem, we can view it as individual cases that can be helped by individual people determined to make a difference. There is much that each of us can do to return reading and literature to a more prominent place in young people's lives.

### **Become a role model.**

Engage someone you know in interesting word games.

**Tall Tales:** A number of years ago I met an 11-year-old boy on a cold winter visit to Pennsylvania. His mother had moved them to that community because it offered the kind of special education her son needed. The boy and I enjoyed our visit that evening over dinner, and I decided to send him a note when I returned home. I'll call him Rick. Here's how it started.

"Dear Rick, it's so cold in Springfield that a robin in our yard got its tongue frozen to a worm. We had to bring them in and boil them to separate them. The grateful robin went back outside but the worm refused to leave the boiling water. Says this is the first time it's been warm all winter!"

I didn't know if Rick would answer, but his mother said she was amazed at how quickly her son grasped the sense of the game.

"Dear David," he responded, "it's so cold in Pennsylvania that people's words are freezing. We have to bring them in by the fire to hear what everyone is saying!"

Our game went on for years. Today Rick is about to graduate from high school. He is going into music and has begun writing songs. He says he loves words.

**Punning:** When our son and daughter were growing up, punning was a favorite pastime. Almost anything would set us off. "He just chickened out," my son might say about an event at school that day. Immediately the rest of the gang was on task.

"What a dumb cluck."

"Sure nothing to crow about."

"Maybe he was afraid to wing it."

If someone hadn't contributed yet, the invitation might be, "Just jump hen when you're ready." The response? You guessed it: "You know I dislike barnyard humor."

At that point someone would roll his or her eyes and "Thigh."

**Co-write poems and stories:** One day our daughter Robin and her son Tyler were raking up sweet gum balls in the front yard. Tyler started griping about the chore. Robin matched his complaint with one of her own. They wound up with this poem for two voices, which made them both laugh.

*Tyler*

I wish the tree was still a sprout.

*Robin*

I want it out!

Sticky balls here, there, and everywhere!

I wish they'd go so we could feel the breeze

Darn you sticky ball tree!

They're more than we  
can bear!

And jump in the  
leaves!

Tyler has now made up other poems with his mom. Meanwhile big brother Kris began writing detailed narrative stories. One day he'll be a blockbuster novelist because he writes stories by the pound.

**Read to kids:** Whatever else you do with the young people in your life, make sure you read to them. Of all the activities that can make a difference, reading to children ranks right at the top. Here's a letter from a reader of one of my books, *Piggy Wiglet and the Great Adventure*.

"I grew up on a dairy farm, the youngest of five daughters. One of my most precious memories is of my grandmother reading to me. *Piggy Wiglet and the Great Adventure* was our favorite. She kept it in the living room, on a small bookshelf that my grandfather had made. My sisters and I would all gather around her rocking chair, two of us on her lap. We used to fight over who got to turn the pages. . . . I am now twenty-seven years old and I still remember the opening lines. . . . My grandmother passed away this last September at 90 years old. She'd had multiple strokes and often couldn't concentrate on a conversation or understand what we

were talking to her about. But whenever we reminisced about my childhood, and I reminded her of the first few lines of your book, she smiled. I think it was her favorite too."

Like any other activity, it helps to be organized. When our grandsons were small, we kept a collection of books for them on the floor in our office. The boys soon developed the habit

of pawing through the stack and pulling out several they wanted to hear. This always led to sofa time with a boy on either side snuggling in to hear favorite stories or new ones while sharing time and space and love with someone who loved them enough to read to them.

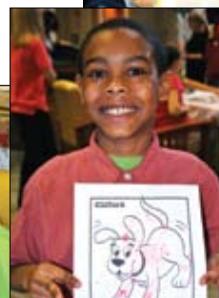
### **Volunteer. Instigate. Facilitate.**

**Encourage writing:** Help start exciting projects. Get up a team of like-minded individuals and plan something that will make a difference. A few years ago I collaborated with our public school district to create a book written by students. The challenge was to finish in a few words a statement that began with, "What I've learned so far is . . . ."

Whatever else you do with  
the young people in your life,  
make sure you read to them.

## Promoting Reading with “Literacy 500” 2009’s National Service Project

Alpha Chi promoted its literacy theme at the national convention by collecting more than 500 books (2,000+ actually) from its chapters and donating them to agencies in and around the host city of Indianapolis. Highlighting the project, a group of delegates visited Riley Hospital for Children to conduct a book carnival for some of the young patients, who got to select books of their own and enjoyed interacting with a favorite children’s literature character, Clifford the Big Red Dog.



The Clifford costume was filled by a student from Carson-Newman College, where the Tennessee Delta chapter has a tradition of sponsoring children's book fairs featuring appearances by the Big Red Dog. In the following poem, a past performer, Christina Suzanne Lee, reflected on the impact of her role in the Clifford suit.

## Clifford, or Why I Joined an Honor Society

I was born to be in a big red suit.  
 Though I may spend an afternoon hour  
 sweating inside this cumbersome costume,  
 I feel no tricklings of self-pity.  
 Like any good actress, I embrace the role  
 with tail-wagging enthusiasm.  
 Girl I am no more; dog I must be.  
 I cavort; I frisk; I do a puppy dance  
 in the middle of the SAC Grand Hall.  
 Sweet are the uses of anonymity.  
 I pantomime a conversation with soccer players  
 with whom I would never speak on other days,  
 being too intimidated by their imported attractiveness.  
 A small, golden pixie runs to meet me  
 with arms outstretched in infantile glee  
 and embraces me about the kneecaps.  
 Were I not doggy, she would not feel so friendly.  
 I would be "stranger"--one of millions  
 Who is neither "Mommy," nor "Sissy,"  
 nor "Grandma," nor "Aunt," nor "Cousin,"  
 and therefore an object of utmost suspicion.  
 I feel only a slight pressure on the fabric,  
 but it makes me smile inside my cavernous canine head.  
 For this hour, at least, I am everyone's friend.  
 Would that it could be this easy  
 when there is nothing but my own skin  
 and my plain, old, everyday costume  
 standing between me and the eyes of the world.



In our district of 24,500, a total of 11,000 students K-12 submitted entries and 1,100 of them became published authors in a 160-page book that was edited by volunteers and printed by a local press. We held autographing parties and young authors proudly signed on their pages. Here are examples by age.

What I've learned so far is:

(Age 4) Not to wipe slobber on my daddy's shirt.

(Age 5) You can eat a chicken if you kill it.

(Age 6) Cats only have six lives.

(Age 7) Think before you glue.

(Age 8) Boys are worse than I thought.

(Age 9) You can't keep a boy and girl hamster together.

(Age 10) I can go with eight girls at a time without any of them knowing it.

(Age 11) I like money and I don't have it.

(Age 12) It's not hard to kick three boys at once.

(Age 13) If you're making a C in art, life goes on.

(Age 14) No matter how hard you pray, God won't clean your room for you.

Variations of *What I've Learned So Far* have been adapted in Alaska, Florida, California, Kansas, and Pennsylvania.

**Encourage Reading:** On another occasion we challenged students in our district to read enough books to make a pile two miles high. With help from librarians I learned that the average thickness of a book (K-12) is one-third of an inch. It would take roughly 190,000 books to pile one mile high. I called the public library and was told that kids check out many more books than that every year so I upped the ante to a stack two miles high – 380,000 books.

With help from the media and “Sky High On Reading” posters plastered all over the place, we promised that if the kids read two miles of books during that school year, we would have a huge party and a plane would fly over at two miles high to show them what they had done. Students took the dare and read over 1.5 million books, enough for a stack eight miles high.

We had a party all right. The plane flew over at two miles high and four guys jumped out in parachutes and landed on the grass nearby. It was a party to remember! By the way, reading scores in the district went up.

**Involve your community:** Does your local school system need more books for its libraries? Then pitch in, round up a committee, and go public with your goal. We call our grassroots group Reading Roundup. We meet regularly to review progress and report back to the public that supports our efforts. Since 2001 we have helped the district add thousands of new titles and replace thousands of worn and obsolete books. Most of the committee members are not teachers or paid by the school district. We saw a need and decided to be people who make a difference.

**Advocate. Speak out. Take a position.**

**Write a letter to your newspaper:** Explain the importance of promoting literacy and why you support such efforts. I often wonder at all the hate letters in the paper. Why are so many people so angry? Only occasionally do I read a pleasant, grownup sort of letter on a topic of general interest to the community. I even saw one the other day about the need to promote literacy! I thought it was a great letter. I wrote it.

**Lobby for literacy:** If you find yourself a member of a civic group, PTA, or other organization where literacy is a logical topic to discuss, speak out! Become that person that others turn to for information.

**Become a public speaker for literacy:** Bone up on the issues. Speak to educators who specialize in that area. Write yourself a good speech and practice it. Volunteer to deliver your talk for local groups.

**Write about literacy:** Send articles to newsletters, journals, magazines, newspapers, and blogs. Someone must do these things. Why not you?

**Tutor a child:** If you don't care for public speaking and don't have time for writing, become a reading tutor. Now you are truly down to making a difference, one-on-one.

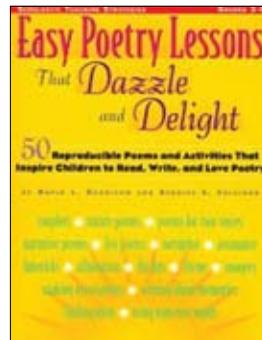
**Local politics:** Run for your school board. I tried that and won. The following six years were among the most informative in my life. During that period, our board successfully passed a bond issue large enough to build or improve libraries in every elementary school in town.

At this point, dear reader, celebrate that you can't hear me sing this poem. Those in the audience in Indianapolis did. Later a young man told me he enjoyed my talk but suggested that my singing could use a little work. I chose this poem because it reminds me that we're all in this together. We may have our differences, but I like to think it's what we have in common that binds us together. Besides, I began with bugs under a mat so it seems fitting to close with bugs under a rug.

**Love**

Said the green-eyed beetle  
To his honey doodle bug,  
"You're sweeter than a rose  
And I want a little hug,"  
So they hugged and they giggled  
And a little later on  
They had a thousand kids  
Called Green-eyed Beetle  
And Honey Doodle Bug  
And they all lived together  
In a snug little rug.

*(Easy Poetry Lessons That Dazzle and Delight)*



**Make yourself a promise.**

This may not be a good time to consider such matters. You must graduate, find a job, perhaps get married and start a family. It might be a while before your life takes on anything like a routine. But what you can do is make yourself a note now and keep it in a place where you will run across it in the future. Put the note in the form of a commitment to yourself, a promise that one day you will fulfill. This is what the note should say: "I will be that person who makes a difference."

It has been my pleasure to address you and share some time together. Thank you for the opportunity. Goodbye, and good luck.



*David L. Harrison, whose first book for children was released in 1969, has published 76 original titles that have sold more than 15 million copies and earned numerous honors. A dedicated literacy advocate, his "Sky High on Reading" program was the International Reading Association's nationwide winner in 2001. He is poet laureate of Drury University in Springfield, Missouri, and a frequent speaker at conferences and other events around the country.*

## Works Cited

*(I am aware that most of the work cited is my own. Remember, this began as a speech. I used material close at hand. My apologies to all those poets whose work would have done splendidly.)*

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**By Robert W. Sledge**

*Editor's Note: This is an expanded version of a speech given April 3 at the 2009 national convention in Indianapolis on the occasion of Dr. Sledge receiving Alpha Chi's Distinguished Alumni Award. Inducted into the Texas Alpha chapter in 1951, Sledge later served many years on the National Council, including terms as president, and in 1997 wrote the society's history, Scholarship and Character: Seventy-five Years of Alpha Chi. He is pictured above at the 1983 convention in San Antonio with his student David Hutchinson of McMurry College (now University), National Council student representative from Region I.*

**E**ver been to an Alpha Chi national convention? If you have, you are among a fortunate minority of inductees; if you haven't, you have missed a great opportunity to expand your horizons.

While the Alpha Chi national convention is not an event experienced by most Alpha Chi members, it does make a remarkable impact on those who are able to attend. Over the years, the changing style of the conventions has reflected developing attitudes about the nature of the society. Here are four representative or landmark conventions as a sample of changing times.

# 1934

## The Great Depression

The college association then known as the Scholarship Societies of the South assembled at Texas State College for Women (now Texas Woman's University) at Denton in February, 1934, for a landmark session. This meeting inaugurated the thirteenth year of the group's existence. The organization was founded on February 22, 1922, by several Texas colleges at the initiative of Dean Harry Benedict of the University of Texas. He envisioned a society that would celebrate the academic achievements of students on the college campuses of the state, in similar fashion to what Phi Beta Kappa did at the state's flagship institution.

A few years later, the Scholarship Societies of Texas expanded its program to include schools in Louisiana and Arkansas. That triggered a revision of the name in 1927 to reflect the expanding scope of the organization. By 1934, even that new name seemed restrictive. Thus, a major item for discussion at Denton was the selection of a name that could encompass the whole nation. And more, the agenda included a new constitution that envisioned a substantially different face for the organization. Great changes were in the wind.

The delegates, about equally divided between faculty and students, represented chapters on 31 campuses, 26 in Texas, two in Louisiana, and three in Arkansas. In the years following the expansion to non-Texas schools, growth had been stagnant. Thus, a wider view seemed necessary.



*The Old Main building at Texas Woman's University at Denton*

A number of items that would become staples of later conventions were not yet inaugurated. Student participation was relegated mainly to observing. There was indeed one student voting delegate per chapter, but there was also a faculty voting delegate and the chapter could only cast one vote. The faculty vote took precedence over the student opinion

if there was a difference between them. There were no student papers or performances; every presentation came from faculty or administrators. There were no scholarships or fellowships awarded by the society. The first Benedict Fellowship came in 1938, honoring the recently deceased founder. The first Nolle Scholarship did not appear until 1957.

The first major business item was the new constitution. Drawn up by Dr. O.T. Gooden at Hendrix College, the new plan proposed that the existing general governance body, the Council, be replaced by a two-tiered system featuring a Regional Council and a National Council. The Regional Council, which could be expanded to include additional regions at some point in the future, would be the actual working body. The convention elected a Regional Council president and vice president for one-year terms, along with other council members serving longer terms. This group would plan the annual meetings and establish basic policies. The constantly rotating leadership posed a problem of continuity for the society, a problem

the National Council did little to address, though tradition and common sense did keep the society functioning.

At a higher level, there would be a National Council, a figurehead group that would give status and credibility to the society, but would not actually do much. These persons would be chosen by the convention, but the National Council could also fill its own vacancies. Membership was restricted almost exclusively to people who bore the title “president” or “dean.” UT President Harry Benedict was the first president of the National Council, with Dean Alfred Nolle serving as secretary-treasurer of both the Regional Council and the National Council. This group was so perfunctory in nature that, when Benedict died in 1937, he had yet to call the first meeting of the National Council.

The other issue before the 1934 convention was a name change. The two options before the convention were “Sword and Shield” and “Alpha Chi.” One chapter objected to the latter on the ground that the school constitution prohibited Greek fraternities and sororities, but someone pointed out that this was a “society,” not a fraternity, and the objection melted away. After debate, the 26 chapters present at the meeting voted by a margin of 15-11 for “Alpha Chi,” the name Gooden originally proposed. Either name would have eliminated the regional nomenclature previously used, but the choice was a wise one, since the name “Alpha Chi” defines the focus of the organization in a number of ways.

The convention approved the name and the constitution, elected the necessary officers, and adjourned.

## 1945 The Second World War

A standard catchphrase in 1945 was “Don’t you know there’s a war on?” to justify sacrifices on the “home front.” The 1945 national convention would have been held, like most before it, on February 22, but there was indeed a war on and one of those sacrifices was the suspension of most conventions “for the duration.”

On February 22, 1945, American troops in Europe were mopping up the remnants of the Battle of the Bulge and preparing to move into Germany. In the Pacific, young men who might have been attending an Alpha Chi convention in a peacetime world were dying on an obscure island called Iwo Jima. A visibly ill President Franklin Roosevelt was just back from the Yalta Conference in the USSR.

So there was no Alpha Chi convention in 1945, just as there had been none in 1943 and 1944. If there had been one, however, it would have featured student papers and presentations, an innovation dating to the 1941 convention.

And . . . . . Alpha Chi leadership was in tatters. From the death of Benedict in 1937 to 1940, the society had no national president. The vice-president, Dean John Lord of Texas Christian University, was the de facto head of the society but refused to become president, presumably because he was “only” a dean. In 1940, Alpha Chi persuaded Homer P. Rainey, Benedict’s successor as president of the University of Texas, to accept the role of president of the National Council of Alpha Chi. There is little evidence that he exercised much leadership, and the post again became vacant when the UT regents fired him in 1944 over issues of academic freedom. The Regional Council president, J.H. Wisely of Stephen F. Austin State

Teachers College, was gravely ill and died in May 1945. The society had added exactly two chapters since 1934. It was not in a promising position.

Did Alpha Chi survive the crisis of 1945? Obviously it did. In 1946, with the war over, the society chose new officers and expanded its reach, albeit slowly. Dean Lord continued as National Council vice president without a president until 1949, when the society elected Dr. Paul Schwab of Trinity University in San Antonio to the presidency. He would serve a record seventeen years as president until death claimed him in 1966. Schwab's election meant that Alpha Chi was now looking for active leadership and not mere figureheads; Schwab was neither dean nor school president. Under his leadership, Alpha Chi experienced a healthy expansion, almost doubling in size to 63 chapters and creating Region II. The society took on more of a national aspect with the addition of chapters outside the original four states, in Massachusetts, Nebraska, Georgia, Indiana, Mississippi, Iowa, and others. When Schwab passed away, his society claimed chapters on campuses in most of the states east of the Great Plains. Still, it was small group, meeting on college campuses and boasting only a very modest treasury.

## 1971 The Sixties (1963-1974)

After the death of Dr. Schwab, the society elected a group of new leaders—bright, young, energetic. Dean Edwin Gaston of Stephen F. Austin and Dr. Jess Carnes of Trinity became president and vice president respectively in 1967, joining Alfred Nolle briefly as the ruling triumvirate. When Nolle retired in 1969, Dean Joseph Pryor of Harding College replaced him as secretary-treasurer. The new leadership team of Gaston, Carnes, and Pryor triggered a renaissance in Alpha Chi. The society mushroomed, adding a total of 39 chapters in the four years 1967-70.

The new dynamic demanded a new focus. The first step was constitutional revision, accomplished in 1970 and resulting in the innovative 1971 national convention.

It was as revolutionary an event as any in the history of the organization, though it did not appear so at the time. Held at the Holiday Inn in Memphis with nearly two hundred in attendance, it was the first true national convention. For the first time, the society met outside the bounds of the original four states (just barely—Arkansas was right across the river). The convention passed a wide array of substantive changes, in addition to ratifying the new constitution. Most importantly, the Memphis convention was the first to be held at a commercial site, off campus. It was, in short, the first modern Alpha Chi convention. It met for a total of 23 hours, Friday afternoon and Saturday morning, March 19-20, 1971.

The society at the time consisted of a little over a hundred chapters, half of them less than ten years old. Three of the five regions represented (III, IV, V) were less than a year old. The 29 student papers and performances were not in concurrent sessions, so that delegates could hear each of the presentations. Session presidors were all sponsors. The society doubled the scholarship awards, awarding two Benedict Fellowships and two Nolle Scholarships. Representation was small enough that Dr. Pryor could call the roll of chapters one by one at the opening session, with the delegates from each proudly standing as their school was called.

With a new constitution in effect, there was a sea change in the National Council.

Thirteen members of the new Council had to be chosen, and five of them, for the first time ever, were students. The new National Council would be composed of the five regional secretary-treasurers, in addition to the eight sponsors elected at large by the convention, and five student members. After the election for the faculty seats on the Council was completed, the eight drew straws to see which four would serve two-year terms and which four would serve four-year terms, so that all the terms would not expire at once. President Gaston drew a two-year term, at which point Dr. Susan Logan of Appalachian State volunteered to exchange her four-year term for his. The Council then met privately to elect the three national officers, quickly choosing the three incumbents to continue their positions.

The convention divided into two discussion sessions, one for sponsors and one for students. The student session nominated ten candidates for the National Council, from which list five were subsequently elected. This number happened to coincide with the number of regions, but these students were not chosen to represent their regions. Dr. Woodrow Pate of Centenary College in Louisiana, the principal author of the new constitution, wanted to be sure that the National Convention always chose the majority of the National Council membership. The 1975 convention changed the rule, henceforth electing student members at the regional conventions to represent their respective regions. The student caucus at Memphis passed a series of resolutions calling for longer conventions, a student mixer to begin the conventions, concurrent presentation sessions, student session presidors, and a nationally known keynote speaker. By the next national convention in 1973, almost all of those ideas were in place.



*Alpha Chi members from the 1970s*

At the time of the 1971 meeting, Dean Pryor conducted all the work of the national office from his own resources—registration of new members, printing, correspondence, expansion, jewelry matters, and on and on—without compensation. Dr. Carnes planned the conventions, edited the *Recorder* and other publications, and ran the scholarship program—without compensation except for a modest editor's stipend. Alpha Chi had no established national office and no paid staff. Other member groups of the Association of College Honor Societies always marveled that Alpha Chi could be run on a shoestring like that. But it was necessary; the society's treasury held only about \$70,000.

## 2009 The New Millenium

When the delegates assembled at Indianapolis in April 2009, Alpha Chi had a different look. There were now over three hundred chapters on campuses all over the nation, organized into seven regions. All seven regions were mature, with their own traditions and cultures and comfortable treasuries. There was a professional national office, based at Harding University, with a professional staff to do the planning and supervise operations. Dr. Dennis

Organ occupied the position of Executive Director, a post first held by Dr. Pryor. Organ also edited the society's publications. Though it seemed at one point that no one could replace Pryor, Gaston, and Carnes, somehow Alpha Chi found a seemingly inexhaustible supply of competent leaders. The "experiment" with student National Council members was a total success. The society's reach was extended to include graduate students.

The society's treasury was vastly expanded, enabling a more extensive scholarship program. In 2009, Alpha Chi awarded two Pryor Fellowships for Alpha Chi alumni or graduate students; two Sledge Fellowships and eleven Benedict Fellowships for senior students who wished to do post-baccalaureate study; and two Gaston Scholarships and ten Nolle Scholarships to junior students enrolling in their last undergraduate year.



The national convention also had a different face. There were too many delegates for a formal roll call—more than four hundred. Student presentations took up much of the three-day event. They were so numerous that they had to be carefully coordinated and run in concurrent sessions, within fifteen different presentations going simultaneously. Nearly two hundred students showed their scholarship in papers, performances, posters, and art displays. Numbers of them utilized technology unknown in 1971. A measure of suspense was added by the awarding of prizes in 28 categories of presentation.

Other convention innovations since 1971 included the honoring of the outstanding chapter of the society with the President's Cup, the naming of a distinguished alum, the recognition of leading chapters via the "Star Chapter" designation, the presentation of two Executive Director's awards for sponsors, and the introduction of a service project that would begin to give feet to the society's dream of "making scholarship effective for good." At Indianapolis the service project involved the collection and donation of some 2,000 books for a local children's hospital, in keeping with the convention's theme of literacy. A nationally known children's author also spoke on the literacy theme.

Yet much was the same—faculty and students mingling in scholarly pursuits and sharing in fellowship; the excitement of the convention city; the quality and variety of the student presentations; the climactic business session.

*Read on for an additional perspective on conventions by another long-time Alpha Chi chapter sponsor and national leader, Patricia Williams, who succeeded Rob Sledge as president of the National Council.*

# Conventions Make Memories

By **Patricia A. Williams**

**T**wenty-six years as an Alpha Chi sponsor—what does it mean? As I read *The Last Lecture* by Randy Pausch, I pondered that question. Do we, as Alpha Chi sponsors, really leave a legacy? Will students remember us as fondly as we hoped they would? As Pausch discovered, oftentimes it's out-of-classroom experiences that are forever embedded.

Pausch's trips to Disney World with his fifteen-member research team are similar to what we do as Alpha Chi sponsors—we too make lifetime memories, especially on convention trips. As he stated so eloquently concerning the Disney trip, "We had a blast, and I made sure that we all got some education with our entertainment, too. . . . It was perfect because it was an experience I could share with people I cared about" (157).

How did I begin tying this book and my Alpha Chi experiences together? In July, I received an e-mail from a former Alpha Chi chapter officer who contacted me via Facebook. She commented,

I just want you to know that you made quite an impact on me as a student. You can't possibly remember everyone who passes through your office, and I wasn't an education major. I was your student nonetheless, class of '94, now a math teacher of all things. Maybe I should have changed my major. Alpha Chi forever.  
Brandi

She also noted that she now has six children. Wow! As I read her e-mail several times, I thought about her and the countless Alpha Chi students whom I have had the privilege of working with over these many years. As Pausch mentioned, "It has been delightful to read notes from former students and colleagues" (184). I do remember riding with Brandi in a limousine in the Chicago snow with Dan Rather, Alpha Chi distinguished alumnus and

newscaster, and Dennis Organ, our executive director, as we tried frantically to get from the airport to downtown through traffic snarls in time for the 1993 convention banquet. I also have pictures of her and the other Sam Houston State University chapter officers making a tiny snowman out of the few flakes that fell. We enjoyed ourselves, and those occasions are forever etched in my memory.

Another convention story that comes to mind was the time I caught our 1990 chapter president, Jerri Ann, who was attending the Region II convention in Oklahoma City, riding the off-limits horse statue at the Oklahoma Cowboy Hall of Fame. We still laugh about the look of horror on my face and the fact that no one else caught her. She later worked in my office as a graduate assistant, and I attended her wedding and, most recently, her baby shower.

I also remember how Kim, another of my chapter presidents, and the officers were so excited about attending the 1989 New Orleans convention. One officer wanted to check out the voodoo shop, and I think that the group finally found it. Years later I attended Kim's wedding, and I can vividly recall her reception with so many former students. Now, Kim is a Methodist minister, and I absolutely love hearing her sermons. She is extremely gifted. For many years after she graduated, she attended every Alpha Chi national convention to help student presenters with their technology. We will remain lifetime friends.

At our convention in Indianapolis this spring, three chapter officers went to the line dancing activity. As I walked in, these three young men, Irving, Dominic, and James, all yelled out, "Dr. Williams, come join us," so I did. Yes, I will hear from them years from now. That's the real reward for being a sponsor—you do touch lives forever, and often you don't even know it. They also touch your life. I think Randy Pausch would agree.



*Patricia A. Williams continues to teach education courses and to work with Alpha Chi at Sam Houston State University, Huntsville, Texas, though she formally retired in 2007. An alumna of Alpha Chi and sponsor of the Texas Omicron chapter since 1981, she is past president (1999-2003) and vice president (1993-99) of the National Council. Re-elected to the National Council in 2005, she is now in a second four-year term.*



*Tim Lindblom*

*L*yon College, with about 500 students, is one of the smallest four-year institutions in Arkansas but has a well-earned reputation for excellence. Perhaps its most remarkable achievement is the record of success in the Carnegie Foundation's Professor of the Year award process. In the past twenty years, Lyon teachers have claimed the award for Arkansas fourteen times, the most recent being Dr. Tim Lindblom, official sponsor of the Arkansas Iota chapter since 2005.

*What's more, four other Lyon professors who have won the award have also been Alpha Chi sponsors.*

*Dr. Roberta Bustin, now emerita professor of chemistry at Lyon, was the first Arkansas Professor of the Year, being named in 1989 when the program began. She had been inducted into Alpha Chi as a student at Lyon in 1961. She served as assistant sponsor for many years from the 1970s to the 1990s.*

*Dr. Jim Rulla, professor of mathematics at Lyon and the 1998 Arkansas Professor of the Year, also served as assistant sponsor in that decade.*

*Two current assistant sponsors have been named Professor of the Year.*

*Dr. Catherine Bordeau, professor of French, is a regular at the chapter's weekly lunch meetings. She was the 2006 Professor of the Year.*

*Dr. Terrell Tebbetts, inducted into Alpha Chi as a student in 1964, has been a sponsor for 36 years. He was official sponsor from 1995-2005 and has been an assistant sponsor the remaining years. A member of Alpha Chi's National Council from 1999-2009, Dr. Tebbetts was the 1992 Arkansas Professor of the Year.*

*The following article on Lindblom is reprinted by permission of the Arkansas Democrat Gazette. By Jack Schnedler, it ran in the February 1, 2009, issue.*

### ***By Jack Schnedler, Arkansas Democrat Gazette***

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# A Case for Honors Experiences

By Carolyn Blakely

The general reaction to the basic concept of honors education is that it is a great idea, but one that can take a back seat to “more practical” endeavors. While educators agree that those “practical” endeavors (remediation, support services, athletics, capital improvements, etc.) are important, many also stress the equal importance of honors education as a *necessity*, not as an *elitist luxury*, to providing support and guidance for that segment of the student population that we generally assume will excel without any special attention. The reality, however, is that many of them excel *in spite of* the lack of support. Imagine, then, what they might do if we target them as top priority, challenge them, and channel them into uncharted territory. A further reality is that these bright students deserve and have earned more than what we are sometimes willing to provide for them

Many other arguments can be added to the most commonly held one that “they’ll make it anyway,” among which are the usual charges of elitism and even objections from some students themselves who are reluctant to avail themselves of honors opportunities for fear of jeopardizing their grade point averages or their scholarships. However, it seems to me that a rational, logical, and sound response to all of these arguments is the very clear fact that we cannot afford to refuse to embrace honors education.

Frequently, we are fond of referring to our youth as “the nation’s future,” “tomorrow’s leaders,” “our natural resources,” and any number of other such appellations and designations. If, however, these references are to be more than meaningless monikers, then we must take them seriously and be willing to invest our time, money, and resources in all of our youth in order to assure the continued promotion of a way of life that we have identified and adopted as a means of improving the quality of life for all of us.

The challenge to all of us as educators, administrators, scholars, and citizens is to discover the avenues through which we can attract the attention of these students (especially those who are disinclined to accept the challenge); the means through which to stress to them the significance, importance, and rewards of accepting the responsibility that accompanies excellence; and certainly the methodology, curricular offerings, and experiences designed to challenge and motivate them.

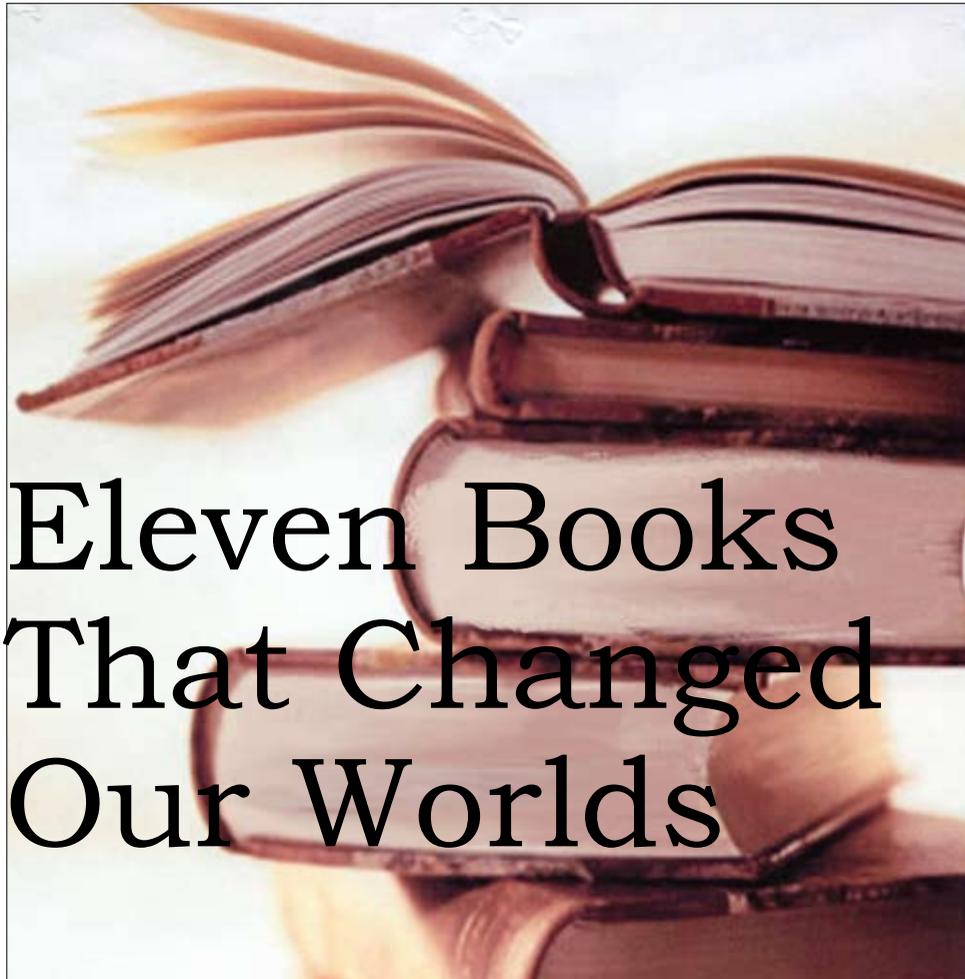
Honors colleges, honors programs, and honor societies are some of the structures used effectively by institutions of higher education to attract and support students with excellent academic preparation and high levels of intellectual commitment. Unfortunately, in recent years, our society has produced a generation composed of some students who have been endowed with the mindsets that they need to reap momentary rewards, or experience immediate gratification, rather than work toward long-term, far-reaching, and lasting benefits. The need to invest in long-range planning for their futures seems to have escaped many of them. This contemporary, fast-paced society puts a premium on the here and now and has built in degrees of competition that impact the mindsets of these students. Therein lies another challenge to us, as educators. We must penetrate those mindsets.

The lure of the immediate, material world could prove to be the nemesis of honors education if we fail to impress on these students who have the talent, the intellect, the commitment, and the inclination the fact that honors education is, indeed, a necessity. Through honors, students can be provided with an extra edge and with additional skills that will enhance their chances of success in their chosen fields of study and broaden their possibilities of assuming positions in which they will be contributing citizens to the enhancement and advancement of society. In this high-tech age, it is incumbent upon all of us in academia to approach honors education through the avenues that appeal to our students and that have relevance to them.

In the total scheme of things, honors experiences are important. They develop thinkers. They develop learners. They develop leaders. They promote excellence. They instill self-confidence and self-esteem. They provide exciting intellectual challenges, and the list continues. If for no other reasons than those cited, these experiences are worth our efforts and are indeed a necessity rather than a luxury.



*Carolyn Blakely is dean of the Honors College at the University of Arkansas at Pine Bluff, sponsor of the Arkansas Mu chapter, and a long-time professor of English.*



# Eleven Books That Changed Our Worlds

**F**or a third year, we asked sponsors, alumni, and faculty at Alpha Chi schools to contribute brief essays on a topic of our choosing. In 2007 we had invited articles on “What have you been reading?” and in 2008 on “What is your favorite spot in the world?” This year it was back to books, the staff of life for academics. Here was the call for submissions:

Jay Parini’s new book, *Thirteen Books That Changed America*, focuses on America as macrocosm. Our essays will take their lead from this idea. Submit a short piece on a book that changed one of America’s microcosms—that changed, for example, how we write novels or poetry, how we view the labor movement, how we view children, how we view a particular church or religion, how we view the small town or the city, how we view westward expansion and our Indian Wars, how we view slavery or Jim Crow. The possibilities are

many, as numerous as the issues and concepts in our various disciplines.

Our correspondents responded, as we hoped, with an interesting range of books. Only three of the selections—*The Federalist*, *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, and *The Feminine Mystique*—also made Parini's final cut, but among the others, as with every such list-making poll, there are choices both expected and surprising. They range from works that history shows dramatically altered the world, to those whose influences, if not yet well recognized in the wider culture, are felt keenly in specific fields of study.

## *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, by Harriet Beecher Stowe

No list of books that changed America would be complete without Harriet Beecher Stowe's *Uncle Tom's Cabin* (1852). Tradition maintains that Abraham Lincoln said upon meeting the author, "So you're the little woman who wrote the book that started this great war!" Objecting to the Compromise of 1850 with its Fugitive Slave Law, Stowe planned a few installments of protest for *The National Era* in 1851, but her serialized story grew into the long double-plotted novel we read today. Selling 300,000 copies in the United States and 1,500,000 in England its first year, the novel became the nineteenth century's best seller.

Still I had not read it until two or three years ago when I began planning a nineteenth-century American women writers course. I learned as a graduate student that the novel was inferior sentimental melodrama, not to be taken seriously by academics. When I read the novel nearly half a century later, I was engrossed by the stories of Eliza as she flees to Canada and Tom as he dies at the hands of Simon Legree while protecting Eliza's mother. Not until I read Jane Tompkins on *Uncle Tom's Cabin* did I truly understand how I had been brainwashed:

The very grounds on which sentimental fiction has been dismissed by its detractors, grounds which have come to seem universal standards of aesthetic judgment, were established in a struggle to supplant the tradition of evangelical piety and moral commitment these novelists represent. In reaction against their world view, and perhaps even more against their success, twentieth-century critics have taught generations of students to equate popularity with debasement, emotionality with ineffectiveness, religiosity with fakery, domesticity with triviality, and all of these, implicitly, with womanly inferiority. (*Sensational Designs*, 1985, 123)

As a woman, I love reading about "the chicken and ham [that made] a cheerful and joyous fizzle in the pan, as if they rather enjoyed being cooked than otherwise" (*UTC* 119) and "a nutmeg-grater [stashed with] a Methodist hymn-book . . . some small white onions, several damask table-napkins, . . . some twine and darning needles" (177). Joan D. Hedrick notes that as literature became the province of academia, where all the professors were men, "literature became professionalized, the voice of the novelist became depersonalized and the standards of art became matters for aesthetic consideration rather than political passion.

Influencing public opinion became less important than creating a beautiful product” (*Harriet Beecher Stowe: A Life*, 1994, ix). Stowe develops characters the reader cares about, and her message is clear: The separation of families due to slavery must end.

If Lincoln spoke the antithetical greeting attributed to him, he exaggerated. The Compromise the novel sprang from was a desperate attempt to keep the fractured Union from falling apart, its authors believing that holding the states together was worth bending their principles. Stowe didn’t cause the war, but her novel still enthalls, at least the half of us who are women.

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

## ***The Feminine Mystique*, by Betty Friedan**

Betty Friedan identified the “problem that had no name” in *The Feminine Mystique* (1963) and, in doing so, changed the role and status of women in American society. Friedan recognized that the idealized image of post-World War II American women—the feminine mystique—left women feeling depressed when their own lives did not meet those expectations. By articulating this problem, her best-selling book not only gave women hope but also provided a basis for political participation that launched a new wave of the women’s movement in the mid 1960s and early 1970s.

Journalist and freelance writer Friedan surveyed her Smith College classmates fifteen years after graduation. The dissatisfaction expressed by the two hundred women who completed her questionnaire led Friedan to more systematically investigate the cause of their discontent. She interviewed editors of women’s magazines as well as experts in advertising, psychology, anthropology, and sociology. Friedan’s analysis did not congeal until her intensive interviews of eighty women each at crucial points in their lives.

The interviews revealed that middle-class housewives were inexplicably miserable, and that they blamed themselves for not finding fulfillment as wives and mothers. Friedan’s study, however, suggested multiple, interrelated factors contributing to the societal consensus about the “appropriate” role for women. Women’s magazines, which in the 1920s and 1930s had featured stories of adventurous heroines, changed markedly after World War II, when male editors, seeking some sense of normalcy after the war, emphasized a more traditional role for women. Advertisers communicated to women that the latest new appliance would make them better housewives. Friedan also determined that prevailing social science theories reinforced the inferiority of women. In sum, women were confined to a childlike state and their own personal growth had been forfeited to conform to an idealized image. Ultimately,

Friedan encouraged women to seek self-fulfillment through work and/or education, but she recognized that widespread attitudinal changes were necessary to free women from the housewife trap.

This book significantly altered attitudes about women and was part of a broader wave of cultural changes initiated by the civil rights movement in the 1950s. By focusing attention on injustices in American society, the civil rights movement provided a powerful backdrop for Friedan's arguments. *The Feminine Mystique* raised the consciousness of American women and inspired them to change their lives, but they faced numerous obstacles in educational and employment opportunities. The National Organization for Women (NOW) was founded in 1966 with Betty Friedan as its first president. This organization lobbied generally for legal equality for women and specifically for the Equal Rights Amendment. Although the ERA was not ratified, numerous other legislative enactments and judicial rulings eliminated many legal barriers that kept women from full participation in American society. *The Feminine Mystique* had a profound effect on social attitudes so that today women can decide for themselves what it means to live a fulfilling life.

*Kara E. Stooksbury*  
*Associate Professor of Political Science*  
*Tennessee Delta, Carson-Newman College*

## *The Federalist*

Among the works examined in Jay Parini's book is *The Federalist*, otherwise known as *The Federalist Papers*. In an introduction to a 1961 publication of the text, Clinton Rossiter writes that "*The Federalist* is the most important work in political science that has ever been written, or is likely ever to be written, in the United States. It is, indeed, the one product of the American mind that is rightly counted among the classics of political theory." I want to examine the purpose behind and impact of this book, an explanation and defense of the American Constitution.

Following the Constitutional Convention of 1787, where thirty-nine of forty-two delegates voted to approve overhaul of the incumbent Articles of Confederation with a federal system composed of three national branches of government, the proposal for the new government was sent to the states for ratification. In New York and Virginia, two of the largest and most influential, approval of the Constitution was anything but certain. So representatives of those states who had vigorously supported the changes to the Articles began a letter-writing campaign to ensure passage. In New York, lawyer and diplomat John Jay, together with lawyer and revolutionary hero Alexander Hamilton, contributed essays to newspapers beginning in October 1787 and running through March 1788, while Constitutional Convention MVP James Madison did the same in Virginia. The essays, and those by opponents, were published anonymously under pseudonyms. Though the writings had little impact outside of New York and Virginia at the time, they were critical to the success of ratification in the latter states.

Indeed, Virginia approved the Constitution by an 89-79 count, while New York accepted the proposed new government by a close 30-27 count, becoming the tenth and eleventh states to ratify, respectively.

*The Federalist* was compiled in two waves, with the first thirty-six essays brought together in a single volume in early April 1788 and the complete eighty-five essays released in late May 1788. Of these essays, it is surmised that Hamilton contributed fifty-one of the total, followed by Madison's twenty-six and Jay's five, with three a joint product of Madison and Hamilton. It is the complete series of letters which has had the most significant, lasting impact.

Throughout the essays there is a consistent thread in the writings of all three contributors as to what must be avoided: disunity, weakness, civil war, anarchy, tyranny, despotism. So in promoting the Constitution, the authors were explicitly criticizing the status quo, including the Articles of Confederation. This tactic proved enormously successful, though at least one of Hamilton's fears—a Bill of Rights for citizens—would be quickly added after ratification of the Constitution by the states.

Another key component of *The Federalist* is discussion of the establishment of separate branches of government. This separation at different levels, Madison argued, will prevent the accumulation of power. Because the legislature was already in place during the Articles of Confederation, much of the debate was over the presidency and the judiciary, which Hamilton examined in the last quarter of the text. His explication of the ingredients of "energy in the executive" and of the doctrine of judicial review form the backbone to understanding how the newly added branches would flourish.

Though not the first sustained treatise on the benefits of constitutionalism, *The Federalist* as yet has no equal.

*Samuel B. Hoff*

*George Washington Distinguished Professor*

*Department of History, Political Science, and Philosophy*

*Delaware Alpha, Delaware State University*

## ***Pygmalion in the Classroom*, by Robert Rosenthal and Lenore Jacobson**

Determining that a book changed America in a fundamental way means to me that there had to be political and behavioral consequences in terms of changes in the law and practice and how people thought about a problem. The number one media piece that comes to mind isn't a book; it was a 1972 TV show on ABC: Geraldo Rivera's report on Willowbrook changed how we think the mentally handicapped should be treated. Deinstitutionalization and the

creation of small group homes to simulate family life within a community are the outcomes of Geraldo's reporting. Two books that had a profound impact on our way of thinking are Betty Friedan's 1963 *The Feminine Mystique*, which gave the problem with no name a face and a name, feminism, and Rachel Carson's 1962 *Silent Spring*, which advocated for respect for the environment. However, as a teacher, specifically a professor of sociology, I would have to choose Robert Rosenthal and Lenore Jacobson's *Pygmalion in the Classroom* (1968), on the effect of labeling on school children, the creation of a self-fulfilling prophecy, and the relationship of social class and achievement.

In their experiment, Rosenthal and Jacobson had teachers believe that some children were designated as "spurters" who, through "testing," appeared to be ready for great growth in the coming school year. Miraculously those so designated, did! In reality, the "test" was a routine IQ test, and the students labeled "spurters" were chosen randomly.

This clearly showed that teachers' expectations and views of children impacted their educational development. So who the teacher is and what her view of your child is, matters! This resulted in a major change of how classes are organized within a school. Each grade is no longer divided into the "smart," "average," and "slow" classes. Instead there is a mixture of children and abilities in each class. In recognition that students have multiple talents, elimination of tracking allows students to demonstrate abilities in a variety of ways.

The stigma of being a "slow" learner still exists, but is based on students' observations about who gets extra help for what kind of disabilities and who gets into the "gifted" program for some portion of the school day. Mainstreaming as a concept did not even exist when the study was undertaken. Schools have a mandate to teach all children in educationally appropriate environments, but attention to the psychological and sociological impact of labeling and segregation has changed school practices as a result of Rosenthal's important study. Schools now pay much more attention to the impact of class placement and teacher expectations on students in terms of abilities, social class, race, gender, disabilities, etc. Discrimination, whether intended or not, is illegal and immoral. In this regard, schools are doing better, and the Rosenthal and Jacobson experiment has changed American educational practices.

*Susanne Bleiberg Seperson*  
*Professor of Sociology, Sponsor*  
*New York Rho, Dowling College*

## ***Sexual Behavior in the Human Male*, by Alfred Kinsey**

*Sexual Behavior in the Human Male* (1948) by Alfred Kinsey (which was later followed by *Sexual Behavior in the Human Female*) was groundbreaking in that the scientific method was used to shed light on a topic previously considered too taboo to explore. Kinsey, who

taught biology and zoology at Indiana University, was intrigued by how naïve his undergraduate students were in their understanding of topics such as puberty, pregnancy, and sexual behavior. Because students found him very approachable and easy to talk with about sensitive topics, he became the informal resident expert on questions regarding sexual behavior. Not pleased with the college-level coursework that addressed human sexuality, he was given the opportunity to teach the subject, but his candor in the classroom led to much criticism and the request of I.U. administrators to tone down his lectures.

Kinsey eventually broke ground on the largest study on human sexual behavior at the time. Kinsey was pressured not to publish his results and was criticized by many once *Sexual Behavior in the Human Male* came out. However, a surprisingly large number of copies were sold. In his book, many topics were scientifically investigated, including sexual preferences, sexual fantasy, extramarital sex, homosexual behavior, and sexual behavior among senior adults. Among his controversial findings were that more men had engaged in homosexual behavior than had ever been speculated, that more senior adults had sexual desire and engaged in sexual behavior than previously thought, that about half of all married men had engaged in at least one extramarital sexual encounter, and that a great majority of men masturbated periodically. The list of findings in his study is quite lengthy.

When Kinsey began collecting data for his research on female sexual behavior, he began to feel the backlash of dissent from the American public as evidenced by his diminished success in acquiring grant funding for his research. He became very bitter for a time. Eventually he was able to publish his book on female sexual behavior, which found, among other things, that women experienced orgasms as intensely as men and that women also had sexual fantasies and masturbated as well. He also found that because of Puritan and Victorian influences, wives' sexual needs were considered less important than those of husbands and that sexual intercourse was often performed only to accomplish the goal of procreation or relieving male stress.

Kinsey's books were published in a fairly conservative era in our country's history. In many ways, the books normalized sexual behavior. As an academic who has taught many years at the university level, I continue to marvel at how long it took in American history for such an exhaustive study to be conducted on sexual behavior. To me, sexuality is a very important part of one's identity, so it could be argued that Kinsey conquered one of the last frontiers in human behavior. I applaud his tenacity in bringing to the public a very influential contribution to American thought.

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

## *As I Lay Dying*, by William Faulkner

William Faulkner's *As I Lay Dying* (1930) has repeatedly risen, phoenix-like, it would seem, in the fiction of the last three decades. It rises in new uses of the funeral journey as a major plot device and, even more often, in uses of multiple narrators to tell a story. From Southern fiction to international fiction, Faulkner's dark comedy has certainly changed the way novelists write.

Among Southern novelists, Clyde Edgerton, Lee Smith, and Bret Lott stand out. Edgerton's two novels on the extended Copeland-McCord-Bales family, *The Floatplane Notebooks* (1988) and *In Memory of Junior* (1992), both tell stories of a "dysfunctional" family using Faulkner's multiple narrators, the names of the narrators at the head of the chapters they narrate. In the first family harmony is threatened by the homecoming of son Meredith Copeland, who has been severely disabled in the Vietnam War, as he "lies dying," as it were.

Smith's two novels using *As I Lay Dying* as a starting point are *Family Linen* (1985) and *The Last Girls* (2002). In the former, a mother of five adult children lies dying and then dies, her gathered children telling her and their own tales in chapters headed by their names. The deceased mother even gets her own narrative when a daughter finds her girlhood journal. In Smith's latter novel, old college friends are on a funeral journey to dispose of the ashes of a deceased member of their old circle. The travelers narrate chapters headed by their names, and the deceased "narrates" as well through poems and sketches she wrote before her death.

Lott's recent *Ancient Highway* (2008) tells the story of the dysfunctional Holmes family, with father Earl, a man who lies to himself and others, like Anse Bundren, and mother Saralee dying of cancer like Addie. Chapters headed by the family members' names tell the family's story, ending in this case before Mother dies.

Non-Southerners, even non-Americans, use *As I Lay Dying* as well. Maryse Conde, Graham Swift, and Suzan-Lori Parks have written novels in dialogue, as it were, with their predecessor.

In *Crossing the Mangrove* (1989), Conde, a French Caribbean novelist from Guadeloupe, tells the story of Frances Sancher, a stranger to the island who now lies mysteriously dead. Multiple islanders narrate his and their own stories, only one character narrating more than a single chapter, that being Mira, Sancher's one-time lover and the mother of his son Quentin. The deceased Sancher gets his narration in an interview he had once given to the island historian.

In his Booker Prize winner *Last Orders* (1996), Swift takes four men on a funeral journey to dispose of the ashes of one Jack Dodds, the pub mate of three of the travelers and the step-father of the fourth. The travelers and members of their families narrate Jack's story as well as their own as the car moves from London through Kent to Margate, the names of the narrators heading their chapters. Swift even includes a chapter with a list like Cash's list of reasons for making Addie's coffin on the bevel, as well as an extremely short chapter matching Vardaman's "My mother is a fish."

In her single novel to date, *Getting Mother's Body* (2003), African-American playwright Parks sends the family and friends of Willa Mae Beede on a journey to disinter rather than bury their long-dead mother-sister-friend. The travelers tell their own and Willa Mae's story in chapters headed by their names, and Willa Mae speaks in songs she wrote dispersed through the novel, and one of the travelers narrates a chapter as short as Vardaman's. The situation of the central character, Willa Mae's daughter Billy, matches Dewey Dell's: she is unmarried, pregnant, and seeking an abortion.

All of these novels engage *As I Lay Dying* in dialogue. In contrast to the ironic order restored to the Bundrens at the end of Faulkner's novel, these novels all reflect on how families work out of dysfunction and restore an authentic order to their members' lives.

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

## *Science and Human Behavior*, by **B.F. Skinner**

When considering the books that have changed the landscape of thinking, one would be remiss not to include the works of B.F. Skinner. The works of Skinner span many decades, but of chief importance in schools of education and psychology would be his *Science and Human Behavior* (1953). This text is perhaps most influential in later movements in the behavioral sciences, culminating in our understanding of human behavior, language, speech, and learning. Its influences can still be seen in education, economics, and behavioral analysis. Skinner's pioneering research led to a paradigm shift in our understanding of how an organism relates to its environment. In any book on child rearing one might pick up, it would be rare to discover a concept not illuminated by Skinner. Skinner discovered what is now called operant conditioning and articulated the now widely accepted concept of reinforcement as a scientific principle of behavior. Carrying on the work of great scientists such as John Watson, Ivan Pavlov, and Jacques Loeb, Skinner transformed the way we understand human behavior.

When Skinner branched off from the behaviorists of his time, he developed a new "radical behaviorism." This shift led to the acceptance of phenomena such as thinking, perception, and emotion and the roles they play in influencing behavior. What has made *Science and Human Behavior* such an influential book is the profound steps Skinner took in his research to include the concepts not easily measured by the constructs of his time. Skinner incorporated concepts such as imagining, thinking, and attending into the purview of behaviors. This allowed for behavior to be measured around private events in a person's life, accepting personal experiences as an influence on human behavior. This opened many doors for the scientific world in terms of the boundaries of behavior. The influences of Skinner on oper-

ant conditioning are found in concepts of language and learning and how we communicate with one another. After the publication of *Science and Human Behavior*, Skinner turned his attention to the development of human language. He assumed that children were born as blank slates or “tabula rasa” and that they learn language by shaping the sounds they hear from their caregivers into words and eventually sentences through selective reinforcement. These are concepts that have been expanded and studied in current child psychology.

In his later years, Skinner applied his efforts to the social implications of his theory, work that is currently being pursued by social psychologists and researchers across the globe. If we were to ask counseling or psychology students fifty years from now whom they were reading, I would predict B.F. Skinner would still be at the top of their list.

*Jeremy Berry*

*Alumnus*

*Texas Alpha Eta, Wayland Baptist University*

## ***Revolutionary Road*, by Richard Yates**

At a crucial point in Richard Yates’s novel of suburban angst, *Revolutionary Road* (1961), a character judges life in those ubiquitous housing developments from my youth that seemed to bear the weight of the American Dream: “it takes a certain amount of guts to see the emptiness, but it takes a whole hell of a lot more to see the hopelessness.”

As Yates himself protested, a close reading of the book makes clear that the fault for any emptiness or lack of hope lies not in the ’burbs but in the weakness of main characters Frank and April Wheeler. Nevertheless, readers have tended to see *Revolutionary Road* as the first truly anti-suburban novel.

The suburbs had been part of the fictional landscape before World War II, but it wasn’t until the postwar boom, with its swelling GNP, new-fangled credit card, and media omnipresence, that they took on the paradoxical aura of a place of hope and despair, the fulfillment and corruption of the American Dream. That better house in a better neighborhood became a metaphorical territory of spiritual malaise, and the emerging suburban novels recounted lives of quiet desperation lived by people like—my parents, for instance, part of Tom Brokaw’s “greatest generation” whose pursuit of success was supposedly leaving them empty inside.

*Revolutionary Road* was by no means the first “suburban” novel. Along with Cheever and Updike, Sloan Wilson got there first in 1955 with *The Man in the Gray Flannel Suit*. Like Yates, Wilson depicts the shabbiness of the suburbs and the New York corporate world from which they sprang. The novel’s protagonist, Tom Rath, almost sells out to Madison

Avenue for a “more expensive house and a better brand of gin.” Relying on his own unhappy experience, Wilson’s best seller took readers to the brink of despair but then rescued them, along with Tom and his wife Betsy, by reaffirming marriage and allowing a way out of the rat race.

Yates is not so merciful to his protagonist, Frank Wheeler. Wheeler’s house in *Revolutionary Estates*, his dull job, his deteriorating marriage, and his moral timidity were all part of a familiar stereotype by 1961. What Yates did was reanimate it with flesh and blood and suffering spirit. Frank and his wife April rail against what the suburbs represent: settling for less than the exceptional “something” that languishes within. Like us they decry the mediocrity of their peers even as they fail to overcome their own inertia. Yates structures the novel—sometimes even at the sentence-level—as repeated cycles of delusional hope and bitter returns to reality. For those who can bear the unflinching portrayal, he creates a profound sympathy for his doomed suburbanites.

In the four decades since *Revolutionary Road* and with many variations, the suburban novel has remained part of our literary landscape. Newer realists like Rick Moody (*The Ice Storm*) and Tom Perrotta (*Little Children*) have refreshed “the state of mind” shaped by Yates and his contemporaries.

Few, if any, of these more recent novels, however, go as far as *Revolutionary Road* in associating suburbia with the death of hope. Despite rave critical reviews, the novel was understandably not a best seller. As for Yates, he produced eight other works of fiction before his death in 1992, but that first novel remains his grim masterpiece. As the 2008 film version of *Revolutionary Road* demonstrates with its critical acclaim but tepid box office, the novel’s vision is both powerful and oppressive. Whether we want to deny or evade its implications, too many of us live in the suburbs to welcome it with open arms.

*John E. Williams*  
*Professor of English*  
*Arkansas Eta, Harding University*

## ***Discipline and Punish, by Michel Foucault***

The project is to traverse with quite novel questions, and as though with new eyes, the enormous, distant, and so well hidden land of morality—of morality that has actually existed, actually been lived; and does this not mean virtually to discover this land for the first time? —Nietzsche, *On the Genealogy of Morals* (Preface, #7)

Which hidden land of morality did Michel Foucault discover when he published *Disci-*

*pline and Punish: the Birth of the Prison* (1974)? What novel questions did this remarkable book raise that equipped—even demanded—its readers to see with new eyes their own world? How did his take on Nietzsche’s genealogy help so many of us to think differently?

*Surveiller et Punir* was first published in France. At the time, Foucault was largely unknown in American colleges and universities. He was never mentioned in my undergraduate or graduate courses. Three years later the book was translated by Alan Sheridan as *Discipline and Punish* (with the author’s approval). All his books were soon translated into English. Before he died in 1984, Foucault made numerous appearances as an invited speaker or guest professor to American schools. Scholars from a variety of disciplines began addressing and debating his lively and controversial ideas.

By 2000, *Discipline and Punish* was considered a landmark book. Amid the many 100 best-of-century lists, only Foucault’s *Discipline and Punish* had the distinct honor of being recognized by experts as one of the most important works in two different fields: philosophy and criminology.

It begins with a dramatic and journalistic account of a public torture in 1757, which is followed by an account of a 1840s prison regimen, described in equally grueling language, less physical but nevertheless unbearable. The displacement of the spectacles of public punishment with the privacy of the penitentiary was considered proof that modernity was guided by the gentle hand of humanism. Much of *Discipline and Punish* undercuts this moral contention. Although the word penitentiary derives from penitence—implying that prisoners in solitude would reflect upon and reform their criminal ways—in fact the modern prison was more a laboratory for examining human beings and providing a social model for observing, measuring, and regulating human behavior.

Foucault discovered the rise of a disciplinary society. The modern prison has never had demonstrable effect on crime. The United States now has more than 2 million citizens in jail, yet crime remains a perennial controversy among elected officials. More important is how the modern prison—its spatial arrangements, use of time, methods for having cellmates discipline themselves—offered new ways to understand and regulate individuals. Hence the apocalyptic question that ends the Panopticon chapter: “Is it surprising that prisons resemble factories, schools, barracks, hospitals, which all resemble prisons?”

Foucault’s striking analyses of the interrelation between the human sciences and functions of political authority (the power/knowledge nexus) spawned considerable studies in numerous disciplines. Ian Hacking, William Connolly, Paul Rabinow, and Judith Butler are among many prominent thinkers who altered their own research projects in light of this book, particularly in light of Foucault’s reworking of Nietzsche’s genealogy. Political theorist Kathy Ferguson applied Foucault’s ideas to the growth of modern bureaucracies. Historian Linda Gordon and philosopher Nancy Fraser traced changing meanings and images of dependency in twentieth century America, from the young child or old person to the unwed teenage mother. A fascinating three-volume multidisciplinary collection, titled *Fragments for a History of the Human Body*, is homage to Foucault’s enduring insights. And today’s research on a wide range of topics—from sports psychology and anorexic bodies to gender issues and pedagogical tactics—remain grounded on themes introduced in *Discipline and Punish*.

Foucault acknowledged the limitations and shortcomings of this book. He did not expect it to be complete and systematic. That’s why he concludes with the hope that *Discipline and Punish* will “serve as a historical background to various studies of the power of normaliza-

tion and the formation of knowledge in modern society.”

This historical background continues to give readers, scholars, and students new eyes—not to review the distant past, but, as Foucault put it, to reconsider the history of the present. Thirty-five years later, *Discipline and Punish* still helps us to think differently.

*Alexander E. Hooke*  
*Professor of Philosophy*  
*Maryland Epsilon, Stevenson University*

## *The Protestant Ethic and The Spirit of Capitalism, Max Weber*

The book that came to be known as *The Protestant Ethic and The Spirit of Capitalism* is the compilation of two pieces written in 1904 and 1905. Unfortunately, Max Weber was unable to complete this work before his death; had he been able to pursue his ideas more thoroughly, the final product probably would have been even more provocative to scholars.

For Weber, capitalism was spurred by religion, specifically by a basic Protestant belief that work is the means by which serving God is best fulfilled. Calvinism held that although salvation was predetermined, devotion to God and work benefitting God would serve as prime demonstrations of salvation. Thus, accumulation of wealth became a means by which to promote God’s Kingdom and the Church. This thinking culminated with economic success in business ventures being regarded as a reflection of God’s plan and purpose. Work became a “calling” to God.

Weber points out that while the New Testament places great emphasis on the dangers of wealth and materialism, the true risk of downfall is not in possession of wealth but in what is done with wealth. In other words, the calling or labor is an essential element of the equation leading to ethic and spirit. The word of caution is not to allow wealth to lead to relaxation and waste of time, which in itself are sins and reflect poor stewardship toward God. This motive to labor continuously, both physically and mentally, is an element of the Western church.

As Weber understands Protestant thought, division of labor or the specific labor one does is not important as long as it is for the glory of God. Failure to labor in a calling reflects lack of systematic, methodical character. Personal profit is consistent as long as it is not at odds with God’s purpose. Again, wealth is bad only if it tempts to idleness or leads to a sinful enjoyment of life such as living life vicariously. On the other hand, where wealth leads to performance of duty in calling, it may be enjoyed.

The discussion of work as a calling relates to two contrasting concepts, “salvation by works” and “works relative to salvation.” It isn’t necessary here to provide in-depth theological distinction between these two concepts, but rather what is imperative is understanding the role that this philosophic mindset of “calling to work” plays in legitimatizing modern capitalism,

productivity, profit, and the later compounding of the capital and profit as an investment. It is important to understand that the spirit or calling of the Protestant Reformation per se did not create capitalism. Rather the development of the spirit as embodied by certain Protestant sects led to a definition of modern capitalism as Weber observed it.

Recently I had the opportunity to read *The Protestant Ethic and The Spirit of Capitalism* again. One thing became quickly apparent to me: the controversy over how capitalism is fed and develops has not been resolved. A question that seems most appropriate is whether Weber's theory of capitalism continues to be of value in understanding capitalism in late modernity as described by thinker such as Anthony Giddens, Daniel Cohen, Ulrich Beck, Jürgen Habermas, and Zygmunt Bauman, or a post-modernity described by Jean Baudrillard. For example, does Weber's theory apply to capitalism as practiced in such far-flung cultures as Brazil and India? If you have not read this book, or it has been a while since you have, I encourage you to ponder its pages.

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*Visiting Professor of Sociology*  
*Arkansas Beta, Ouachita Baptist University*

## *Three Cups of Tea*, by Greg Mortenson and David Oliver Relin

I thought I'd stretch the margins of this exercise by suggesting a book that currently *is* having an influence and may well continue to have an influence in the future rather than one that *has* influenced us in our receding national past. *Three Cups of Tea* (2006), by Greg Mortenson and David Oliver Relin, an account of Mortenson's efforts to establish schools in rural Pakistan and Afghanistan, has been on the *New York Times* Best Seller list for over a hundred weeks now and, I'd like to argue, is having a significant and positive impact on how the United States views the Muslim world and is in turn viewed by that world.

The book is a factual account of Greg Mortenson, a mountaineer and ER nurse who became disoriented after a failed 1993 attempt to summit Pakistan's K2, the second-highest peak in the world. Stumbling into Korphe, a primitive village high in the Karakoram Range, he was taken under the wing of the elderly village leader and nursed back to health over the course of the next two months. Upon leaving, Mortenson promised to build the village a school—and made good on that promise after learning much about Islamic culture and the frustrations of fund-raising over the following three years. Today, Mortenson is the director of the Central Asia Institute, which has erected in Afghanistan and Pakistan 179 schools and counting, where 34,000 students—24,000 of them female—have been educated. (Mortenson

puts special emphasis on girls because educated boys tend to move away from rural villages, while educated women remain and continue to influence their communities.)

So what has been the influence of Mortenson's story? As is true of many a prophet, he has not always been honored in his native land, receiving death threats from some Americans after the 9/11 attacks and undergoing an investigation by the Central Intelligence Agency during the Bush administration. However, General David Petraeus, head of the U.S. military's Central Command, whose policies have borne much fruit recently in the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, read Mortenson's story, which is now one of five books required to be studied by the 5,000 officers a year recruited for the Pentagon's counter-intelligence training program. Furthermore, Mortenson has spoken at all three of the U.S. military academies, and just this past July, Admiral Mike Mullen, current chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, spent half a day helicoptering out to Mortenson's newest school in remote Pushghar, Afghanistan, to cut the ribbon at its opening.

But what makes Mortenson's influence most impressive is his effect on the Muslim world, an area that since 9/11 continues to have a profound impact on America. Mortenson has endured some dangers in his efforts, having had two *fatwas* declared against him by Muslim clerics (nullified afterwards by higher Islamic authorities) and suffering an eight-day kidnapping in Waziristan that ended with Waziri tribesmen giving him a feast and stuffing his pockets with rupees for his schools as they released him. For his work, Mortenson is one of only a handful of foreigners to have ever won the Star of Pakistan award, and he has been nominated for the Nobel Peace Prize.

On September 11, 2001, Mortenson was in the tribal areas of Central Asia, working on a new school. A couple of days later, when news of the Twin Towers filtered into the village, a poor widow gave Mortenson five eggs to give to the women of New York. I'd call that influence on a profound level.

*Mark Stevens*

*Associate Professor of English, Sponsor*

*Georgia Nu, Southern Polytechnic State University*



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- Oh, and the famous Peabody Hotel ducks in the lobby fountain

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- Check out the Conventions page at [www.AlphaChiHonor.org](http://www.AlphaChiHonor.org).
- Tell your chapter sponsor that you want to attend the convention. If you're a current Active Alumni Member, the national office will mail convention information to you by November.
- Prepare your academic research, artwork, or performance for presentation.
- Partner with Reading Is Fundamental and/or Heifer International for a chapter project.

# **Call for Nominations**

## **Distinguished Alumni Award**

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Alpha Chi is now accepting nominations for the 2011 Distinguished Alumni Award, which will be presented at the 2011 national convention in San Diego. We invite individuals and especially chapters to recommend potential recipients for this honor. The recipient's nominating chapter will receive a \$500 grant in the name of the Distinguished Alumnus or Alumna. The recipient will be asked to speak at a general session during the convention.

Nominees should have been inducted as undergraduate members and should have made notable achievements in their chosen careers that represent the ideals of Alpha Chi. Nominations should include a letter from the nominating individual or chapter, a resume or C.V., and any additional supporting documentation to aid the selection committee. Past recipients include individuals from medicine, education, journalism, aerospace, and government service.

For assistance with determining eligibility, contact the national office at [alpachi@harding.edu](mailto:alpachi@harding.edu) or 1-800-477-4225.

Please send all nomination materials to the national office by March 15, 2010. The recipient will be chosen during the National Council meeting later in March.

