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The cover photo honors the Missouri Rho chapter at Evangel University, Springfield, Missouri, winner of the President's Cup in 2009 as Alpha Chi's outstanding chapter. The 75-foot clock tower was erected to commemorate the institution's 50th anniversary in 2005.

A Creator of Worlds

By **Sharyn McCrumb**

Now that I have written more than twenty novels, I have reached some conclusions about the fiction process. Long practice has made me familiar with the components of creating books, so that now I can focus on the difficult bits of a novel's construction, knowing that the easy parts will take care of themselves.

First of all, one needn't worry about plot. There are only two plots, anyway. (Okay, stop right here and think of a novel you have read. Make sure you know the story. Any novel—*Huckleberry Finn*, *The Cat in the Hat*, *Twilight*, *The Grapes of Wrath*...—Got it?) Here are the two plots: (1) Someone went on a journey; (2) A stranger came to town. (And, yes, the novel you thought of could be classified as one of those two ideas.) Every story is a permutation of one of these ideas. Everything else is just embellishment. The journey does not have to involve travel in a literal sense; it can be a journey to maturity or to self-discovery, or the road to recovery. Metaphorical journeys (e.g., *Catcher in the Rye*, *To Kill a Mockingbird*, and *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest*) also count.

Editor's Note: Best-selling novelist McCrumb was keynote speaker at the 2012 super-regional convention in Baltimore, discussing the research—historical, geographic, cultural—done for her many books. She graciously agreed to write this additional essay for the Recorder.

The reason that every novel has to be predicated on one of these two patterns is that the principal character of the story functions as the guide for the reader. The reader must find out things in order for the reader to discover them, too. When someone goes on a journey, he meets new people and sees unfamiliar places, and thus through his experiences the reader is made acquainted with the new elements as well.

In the plot construction of “a stranger came to town,” the newcomer must get his bearings in a new place, and as he finds out what the place is like, so does the reader. The stranger coming to town is Bella in *Twilight*, most of Stephen King’s novels (e.g., *The Shining*), Michael Valentine Smith in Robert Heinlein’s *Stranger in a Strange Land*, and *The Mysterious Stranger* by Mark Twain. (It seems to me that there are more novels overall that fit into the category of “someone went on a journey,” but that fantasy and science fiction have more examples of “a stranger came to town.” Perhaps this is because in the latter, the writer has to create a perfectly ordinary community, familiar to the reader, and then introduce the alien element—the vampires, the creature from outer space, the demon, etc.—to disrupt the peaceful community.)

Setting and character are, for most writers, not entirely a matter of invention, but of conscripting real places and actual acquaintances into fictional disguise to serve within the context of the narrative. When I begin a story, it will be set in a place I am familiar with, or, if the work is a historical novel, set, at, say, Gettysburg, then by the time I begin the book, I will have visited the locale, so that my descriptions will be accurate. A writer cannot assume that

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a place will resemble some locale that he already knows. (For example: I grew up in eastern North Carolina, where the beaches are made of fine white sand. When I set a book in Scotland, with a beach scene in the narrative, I might have assumed that I knew what a beach looked like: fine white sand. Not in Scotland. The beaches there are comprised of boulders, slick with seaweed and

treacherous when the tide is changing. Had I guessed, I would have got it wrong.)

It is imperative that the setting, if it is a real place (as opposed to a distant planet), be accurately depicted, because the reality of the setting contributes to the credibility of the narrative. I once read a novel that contained the classic cinematic car chase: the car sped along a narrow mountain road, missed the sharp turn, and tumbled down the bare, rocky cliff into the ocean. Here’s the problem: *the author set that scene in Florida*. (Everyone who is at all familiar with the state of Florida is now snickering, because there are no such rocky cliffs in Florida. The author of that novel lived in northern California, where the rocky coastline does look like that. He should have either set his book in California, a place he knew, or he should have taken the trouble to find out about the terrain of Florida.)

When writers make such easily detectable mistakes in a story, they lose the trust of the



The author in her convention presentation. Photo by Heidi Tabor

reader. Essentially, a story is a contract between the reader and the writer. The author is saying, “Come here. I’m going to tell you a story, and *you can trust me.*”) But if the reader catches the author in a lie (putting cliffs in Florida, or M-16’s in World War I), then the author has broken the contract, and the reader has lost confidence in his authority. Even in fantasy and science fiction writing, that credibility of narrative must be present, but in that genre credibility takes the form of *internal consistency*. Internal consistency means that once you have set the conditions for the imaginary setting, the rules must remain consistent throughout, unless you give good reasons for their changing: If dogs can talk in the first chapter of the book, then they must be able

to talk throughout the story, unless you have given a reason for that to change.

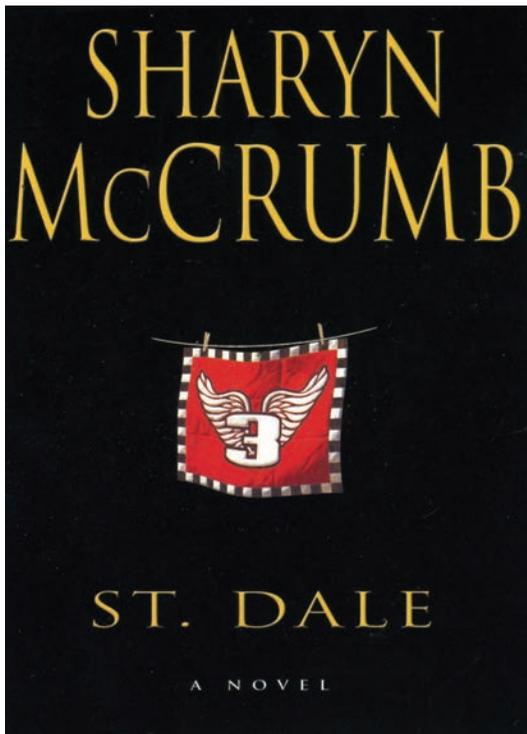
Characterization is seldom a matter of pure invention, either. A writer is always observing the world, ready to salvage it for parts. Garrison Keillor said, “Writers are vacuum cleaners who suck up other people’s lives and weave them into stories like a sparrow builds a nest from scraps.” Almost all major characters are to some extent embellishments upon the personality of a real person known to the author—though not necessarily well known. One might build a character on a face seen in a magazine, or on a scrap of overheard conversation. Years ago I was walking across my college campus one spring Sunday morning, and I saw a good-looking young man, obviously a student, dressed in the most fashionable “Mr. Fraternity Cool” clothes. He was standing on the gravel path talking to a dowdy older couple—the weatherbeaten man in his polyester shirt and clip-on tie and the gray-haired woman in a shapeless flowered dress and sensible shoes. As I walked past them, I overheard the young man say, “Just because you pay the bills doesn’t mean you can come up here and embarrass me.” Those people were on my radar screen for less than a minute, and yet I think I could do an entire novel about that family if I wanted to.

My personal experience with the process of characterization has given me the knack for spotting this literary transformation, and I can often tell when actual individuals have been taken almost intact from real life and thrown through the screen of the word processor

to appear recognizably as themselves on the printed page. Gilderoy Lockhart in the *Harry Potter* stories of J.K. Rowling is one such literary hostage, as are Granny Aching in *The Wee Free Men* by Terry Pratchett, and the RAF personnel in *Johnny Underground* by Patricia Moyes. Very few literary characters are literal renderings of real people who were close to the author, but it is easy to spot the ones who are.

Mostly what writers do is to audition the whole world when they are in the process of creating a character. We are looking for mannerisms, speech patterns, a way of looking at the world. So one might take a plumber in real life and transform him into a doctor or a soldier within a story. It isn't his knowledge or his expertise that we're borrowing—it might be the way he walks, or his turns of phrase. This may be why people seldom recognize themselves in fictional works: I put a NASCAR driver friend into one of my novels as a 1930s mail pilot, and because he isn't a flier and wasn't around in the 1930s, he never saw the similarity of the character to himself.

A character may bear no more than a passing physical resemblance to the person in the story, just as an actor may be nothing like the character he plays in a film, but even that slight grounding in reality is enough to anchor a fictional character, so that there is a consistency



St. Dale, McCrumb's award-winning novel about adoration of the late NASCAR driver Dale Earnhardt and a group of admirers on a bus pilgrimage visiting tracks where he raced, draws imaginatively on Chaucer's *The Canterbury Tales*.

to his actions and speech patterns. I based a character in *St. Dale* on the actor Simon Baker (*The Mentalist*). Now, I have no idea what Mr. Baker is like in real life, but I know how he looks and talks, and it was that superficial likeness that I needed for the character. It's all in your head, anyway; the reader never sees the model after whom your character is patterned, so use anyone you want. But don't make them too recognizable.

In the case of novels not set in the here-and-now (e.g. historical novels or science fiction), you'll find that the process of creating characters still applies, and the setting, even if antiquated or fantastical, is probably based on somewhere you've been or something you've seen. Research is important in getting the details right, especially in novels set in an era other than the present. I have a quiz that I give in writing workshops, with questions like: "Could Mark Twain have ridden an escalator? Could Thomas Jefferson have eaten a nectarine for breakfast? Could Jack the Ripper have made his escapes from Whitechapel via subway?" Before

you put a detail in your work, it's important to know when things were invented or when they first came into general use. I find that the mistakes one makes in writing about the past are about the things you think you already know. I once said that the presidential inauguration of Andrew Jackson took place in January of 1829, but before the 20th century, presidents were inaugurated in March.

These details really do matter. In the days before the internet made it easy to look up basic information, I knew of someone who lost a national literary award because of one sentence in a 200-page book. The sentence said, "Prophesy County, Oklahoma, was established in 1810 and bordered the Indian reservation." Since the book was a contemporary police procedural, the sentence was not even necessary to the story. One

of the awards committee judges that year happened to be from Oklahoma, who said, "We're not giving this award to a durn fool." Oklahoma, the judge explained, did not become a state until 1901, and it was not divided into counties nearly as early as 1810. Also, since Oklahoma was designated the "Indian territory," there were

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no reservations. Oklahoma *was* the reservation. Five minutes' research in a library would have yielded all that information, but because the author decided to wing it, she made simple mistakes and lost a national award.

Louis Pasteur was right: "Chance favors the prepared mind." Research is important.

All of the preceding components of a story are matters that can be perfected with skill and practice, and attention to detail. Eventually, if one writes long enough, those things take care of themselves.

But the important part of the story-telling process is having something worth saying.

It takes two ideas to make a novel.

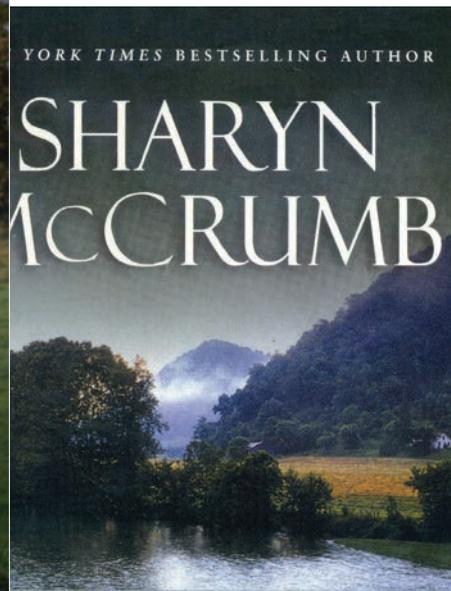
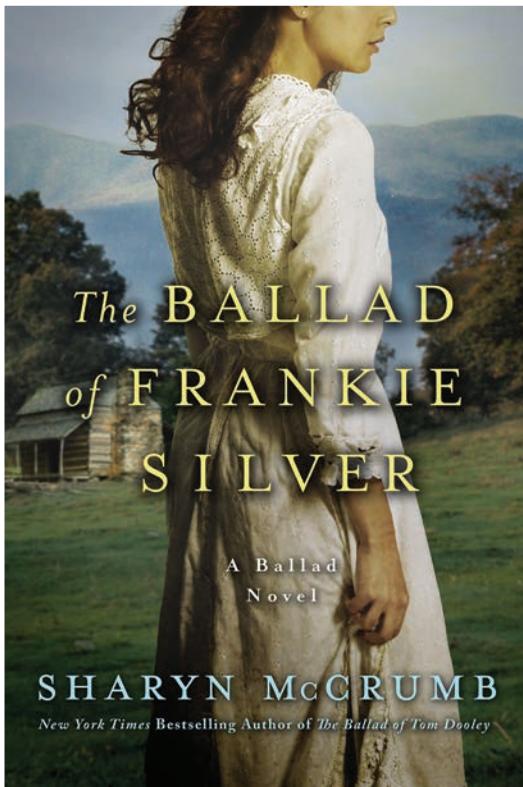
One, the "Inside Idea," is determined by the interests and experiences of the author, and usually that factor remains constant throughout all of the writer's works. Charles Dickens, for example, incorporated his grim and impoverished childhood into nearly everything he wrote. His childhood is echoed in the stories of David Copperfield being forced to work in the factory, Oliver Twist swept up into a gang of thieving street urchins, etc. Another example of an inside idea is seen in the woman who wrote vampire novels because her young child died. The idea can be a form of wishful thinking: in Charlotte Bronte's novels the plain, shy spinster is loved by the handsome powerful man. (Charlotte Bronte pioneered the gothic romance genre, but what is now a formula was, for her, a *cri de coeur*.)

The Inside Idea is a way of looking at the world, so that every idea or impression one has is filtered through that internal idea: if Charles Dickens had written *The Hunt for Red October*, there would have been a little boy on that submarine asking for more food. You will have to read more than one book by an author in order to spot the Inside Idea, because

it is the pattern from book to book that makes it apparent. (Do not confuse the Inside Idea with general similarities of setting or plot. Genre writers must have similar plots in all their books—e.g., boy meets girl, or who killed Colonel Mustard in the library—and many writers—e.g., Stephen King and Dick Francis—keep more or less the same setting for most of their works, but those qualities are different from the Inside Idea, which is really a way of reacting to the world.) I think Stephen King’s Inside Idea might be: “You’re up against the world, and you’re all alone, and the world can be pretty weird sometimes, but if you’re brave and steadfast, you’ll be all right in the end.”

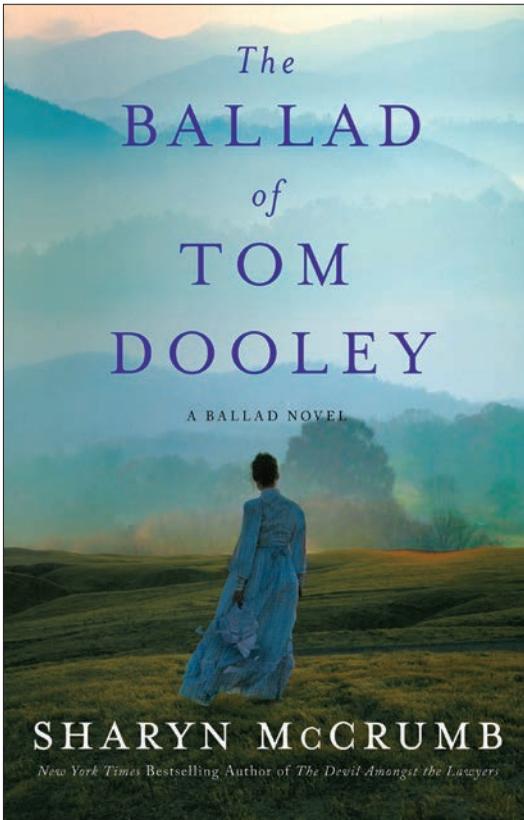
One cannot choose or change the Inside Idea: in some form or another it is always present, and it reflects the experience of the author.

My own Inside Idea is the perspective of the outsider encountering a closed society. In many of my novels the stranger comes to town. In *The Ballad of Frankie Silver*, the



McCrumb is best known for her “Ballad” series of (so far) nine carefully researched historical novels set in her native Appalachia, including The Ballad of Frankie Silver (1998), The Songcatcher (2001), and The Ballad of Tom Dooley (2011).





stranger is newly minted lawyer Burgess Gaither, faced with an 18-year-old girl about to be hanged for murder. In *The Songcatcher*, 10-year-old Malcolm McCourry is kidnapped from his home in the highlands of Scotland, is impressed into the crew of a sailing ship, and finally homesteads on the Carolina frontier in 1790. In *The Ballad of Tom Dooley*, an angry and malevolent servant girl arrives on her cousin's farm and brings disease, tragedy, and death in her wake. The perspective of the outsider is useful because, through that character's observations, the author can call into question all the customs and assumptions of the closed society, as well as introducing the reader to the milieu of the story.

The second idea that forms a novel is the Outside Idea, or external inspiration. When people say to an author, "Where do you get your ideas?" it is this Outside Idea that they are referring to. The Outside Idea can come from anywhere: a personal encounter, an article one reads in a newspaper, a

casual conversation at a party, a house or other landscape feature that evokes curiosity in the writer.

Sometimes the Outside Idea is sparked by a memorable experience. In Jack Ritchie's 1961 short story "For All the Rude People," a man is humiliated in front of his child by a cruel store clerk. When the man later learns he has a terminal disease, he spends his final days going around shooting discourteous people. A painful incident once witnessed by the author turns into a wishful thinking "What if?" and a memorable short story is born.

Those ideas are easy to come by. The difficult part is maintaining your interest in the outside source long enough to craft a novel out of its elements. Usually this works only if the Outside Idea resonates with your Inside Idea in a complementary way, so that it enables you to better express whatever you wanted to say anyhow.

Besides this fusion of two ideas, there is sometimes an echo of an archetypal story. In his novel *Witches Abroad*, the English fantasy novelist Terry Pratchett expressed the concept this way: "...a story, once started, takes a shape. It picks up all the vibrations of all the other workings of that story that have ever been."

The vibrations of a story...They work the same way that reverb works in music: they provide an intensifying echo which resonates after the initial sound is heard. In literature these "vibrations" are the familiar archetypes present throughout literature.

There are some stories that are told in every culture and some themes that appear over and over again in literature. These archetypes are universally understood symbols or characters that resonate with the audience because they are familiar and basic to the human condition. They are the star-crossed lovers (*Romeo and Juliet*, *Tristan and Isolde*, *Bonnie and Clyde*). The archetype of the Christ figure can be found in many forms: in Herman Melville's *Billy Budd*, the Norse legend of Baldur, Simon in *Lord of the Flies*, Randle Patrick McMurphy in *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest*, and Frodo in *Lord of the Rings*.

Some authors deliberately use the archetypal characters or narratives to underscore their work. Charles Frazier's *Cold Mountain* is an homage to *The Odyssey*. My own novel *St. Dale* sets *The Canterbury Tales* in NASCAR, substituting champion driver Dale Earnhardt for St. Thomas Becket. *The Princess Diaries* by Meg Cabot and the Julia Roberts film *Pretty Woman* both contain echoes of the classic fairy tale Cinderella.

These underpinnings of myths and traditional stories are your literary reverb. It helps to be aware of them, so that you can use them as underpinnings to your narrative, or so that you will be aware that these archetypes shape readers' expectations.

The one thing that remains elusive in all this is talent. It is a gift to create characters who take on lives of their own, independent of the author (*Sherlock Holmes*), and a gift to create stories so memorable that readers try to move into them, making James Joyce pilgrimages on Bloomsday or celebrating a Dickensian Christmas. To write well is to create worlds.

Adventures in Biography

By Michael Claxton

In his book *Blue Like Jazz*, Donald Miller claims that he never cared for jazz music until he saw the effect it had on other people. “Sometimes you have to watch somebody love something,” he writes, “before you can love it yourself.” I was recently reminded of a similar line by William Wordsworth, “What we love, others will love, and we will show them how.” Donald Miller is discussing what people of faith do, but he could have just as easily been talking about scholars. It can be a challenge to get other people excited by what excites me, and sometimes my friends start looking for excuses to slip away when I bring up my current research project. So I’m grateful for the opportunity here to share a little of my scholarly romance with a talented entertainer from the past.

This is an expansion of a lecture given at an all-university assembly by Claxton, chosen as 2012 Alpha Chi Faculty Scholar by the Arkansas Eta chapter at Harding University, where he is an associate professor of English. Claxton is also an alumnus of the Georgia Gamma chapter at Oglethorpe University.

For seven years I've been toiling away on a book about an entertainer little known by the general public. By sharing some of my adventures in biography in this essay, I hope to celebrate the scholarly life—the serendipitous thrill of discovery, the delight in bringing order to scattered sources, and the pleasure of sharing new knowledge with the world. My subject's name is Dell O'Dell (1897-1962), and she was best known as a magician during the Swing era and later as a TV personality in the early 1950s. A pioneering female performer in a profession usually associated with men, Dell O'Dell has a courageous story that deserves to be more widely known. Along with her husband, a Swiss juggler named Charlie Carrer (1898-1971), Dell brought wonder to audiences in countless show business venues, from vaudeville and night clubs to charity hospitals and state fairs.

While Dell and Charlie are still fondly remembered by a rapidly graying generation of magicians, and while they've been the subject of several articles and websites, no full-length study of their careers has been written. The couple had no children, nor did they leave behind a published memoir or even a private diary. Very little performance footage from their careers is available, either. Alas, I never met them. Charlie outlived his wife nine years, and he died three months before I was born.

My journey to becoming a biographer really started in elementary school in Conyers, Georgia. A magician named David Ginn came every year to entertain us, and I was amazed at the tricks he could do. He sparked in me a life-long interest in sleight-of-hand. A local magic shop became my frequent hangout, and I wore out a catalog of magic tricks with constant study. As a pre-teenager I put together an act, but it was pretty lousy. I soon realized that fame would hardly come my way in this profession.

Even though I didn't quite have what it took to be the next David Blaine, I discovered in middle school that I could get academic mileage out of my hobby. I wrote a paper about the famous escape artist Harry Houdini in the seventh grade, and that research opened up a whole new world for me. I realized that there were fascinating stories of famous magicians in the past. My parents were antique collectors, and they got me interested in seeking out old books and posters and magic props. This collecting passion quickly got out of hand. Just imagine if Harry Potter were a hoarder. My house is now full of this old wizarding junk.

When I went to graduate school in English at UNC-Chapel Hill, I continued to study stage magic through an academic lens. I eventually wrote my dissertation on the image of the magician in 19th century literature and culture, looking at a variety of texts, including poems, magicians' autobiographies, and political cartoons. One special area of interest as both a scholar and collector has been gender and magic. Since the image of the male magician sawing a woman in half is so iconic, I find it fascinating to study two centuries of women who have taken on that performance role.

And that brings me to Dell O'Dell. I had long been aware that she was the most popular mid-century lady magician in America, but it wasn't until 2005 that I began to study her career in depth. That year I had the chance to see Dell's personal scrapbooks, seven bulging volumes where she had carefully pasted in four decades worth of photos, newspaper clippings, and publicity. A friend of mine in Chicago had them, so I took a road trip and spent a week in his basement reading these enormous books. When I finished, I knew this story needed to be told. While most of her relatives and contemporaries were long gone, I started on the trail of magicians who knew her who might still be alive. That number was slowly dwindling, so I started making phone calls right away.



Married entertainers Dell O'Dell and Charlie Carrer

Over the next seven years, I managed to piece together a narrative that covers most of Dell's career. In hundreds of publicity interviews over the years, she had told various versions of her life story, carefully omitting certain details—as people in the entertainment world business sometimes do. So I had to do some untangling, as well as quite a bit of detective work. And occasionally, I had to rely on a little imagination.

Her real name was Odella Newton, and she was born into show business in 1897 in the small town of Lemonweir, Wisconsin. Her father ran a traveling circus for over forty years, and even though she spent much of her

childhood in a boarding school in Nebraska, by the time Dell was a teenager, she was able to juggle, walk on a trapeze, and balance furniture on her chin. You may think this is a pointless skill, but if you are ever moving out of an apartment with both hands full, and the last thing left in the room is your swivel chair, you might wish you could do this.

She started her own circus in 1925, calling it the Della O'Dell Show. She alternated the sawdust life with vaudeville, performing song and dance and juggling. Eventually she dropped the circus and lectured on health and exercise, capitalizing on the physical culture fad in the United States. When a magician friend of hers named Frank Van Hoven died in 1929, she purchased his madcap act, which consisted of slapstick comedy, burlesque magic tricks that didn't work, and a gag with two or three boys from the audience who had to hold a huge block of ice onstage while the magician pretended to ignore them. Dell worked this act on and off for five years, and I was amazed in 2008 to find someone who had seen it and remembered the details very well.

In 1931 Dell married a juggler named Charlie Carrer, who had emigrated from his native Switzerland after performing for ten years in the theaters of Europe and South America.



Charlie demonstrates his popular tray-flipping stunt as Dell watches.

As a child he took up juggling to strengthen his weak eyesight, and now this man was, as today's teens might put it, ridiculously talented. He could take a 12-foot pole with a knife attached to the end of it and balance it on his chin. Then he would throw an apple up into the air. It would land on the knife, cut itself in half, and Charlie would catch the two halves in his hands. One of his favorite stunts was to take a tray with ten glasses on it. In front of each glass, there was an orange slice, a lemon slice, and a cherry. He would give the tray one flip, and the oranges would leap into the glasses. Then he'd do it again, and the lemons would go in. A final flip would catapult the cherries.

Charlie's performance persona was modest and self-effacing, while Dell was a larger-than-life presence on the stage. She linked rings. She made a borrowed ring disappear and reappear on a necklace worn by a monkey hidden inside a box that was inside another box—five boxes in all. Rose bushes bloomed magically at her command. Doves appeared inside a net. Even if her tricks were not stunningly original, the show was full of energy and comedy. Dell recited poetry while she performed, she threw her props around, she interacted with members of the audience. If there was a bald man in the crowd, she nicknamed him “Curly” and heckled him for the rest of the show. In between spots at supper clubs, she would visit each table in the room, hand out souvenirs, and hang out with the crowd. She was bubbly and vivacious, and audiences loved her.

As you can imagine, Dell and Charlie were an interesting couple. They lived on Long Island with a house full of animals and a calendar full of performance dates. During the thirties and forties, they often did shows together, and they played every venue possible, touring all across the country in a specially designed trailer. At the height of her popularity in the 40s, Dell had a fan club with more than 10,000 members. During the war she and Charlie

gave benefit shows for soldiers, and they also did free shows at children's hospitals. They sometimes performed five shows in one day. Every weekend Dell would invite the neighborhood children to her house for cookies and magic. She loved to entertain and was a fantastic cook. She also loved to hang out with her fellow magicians and often stayed up talking shop into the wee hours of the night. Charlie was her official photographer and snapped pictures of her with colleagues both famous and not.

When Dell and Charlie moved to Santa Monica, California, in the early 50s, she had her own television show on KTLA in Los Angeles. It ran for two years. In 1952 she was nominated for an Emmy. She lost to an actress who is still working today at the age of 90—Betty White. Dell also owned a magic shop in Hollywood during those years, and she and Charlie constantly toured the West Coast performing. Even when she developed cancer and was in severe pain, she kept the show going. Dell O'Dell died on February 5, 1962, and Charlie died nine years later on Christmas day 1971.

My search for their story has been quite an adventure. Over the past seven years, I've chased Dell and Charlie all over the place. I've traveled to the exotic town of Quenemo, Kansas (population 388), where Dell grew up. There's not that much left of it now. In fact, on

my way there I stopped and asked a man how to get to Quenemo, and he said, "Why?" Later I traveled to Los Angeles and saw Dell's house—which still has her original swimming pool in the shape of a rabbit. In L.A. I visited her 88-year-old former agent, as well as a 95-year-old magician who knew her in the '30s. One collector in L.A. had Dell's home movies, and he graciously let me watch all six hours of them while I was in town. I recently made the trek to the small town of Lemonweir, where I examined Dell's birth records, discovering that her al-



Dell shows a trick to children in the studio audience of her TV show.

leged birthday was a fiction—she had actually subtracted five years from the real date.

The travel is just the most "glamorous" part of the research. I've spent countless hours reading through magazines and newspapers (sometimes on microfilm) to track down dates and information. I've been on the phone interviewing well over a hundred magicians who

knew Dell and Charlie. I've searched genealogical records online and written letters asking for information. In 2011 I made a stunning find, as I got in touch with the family of Charlie's second wife, who had just died at the age of 77. She had lived alone since his death and had saved his memorabilia for forty years. After making a deal with the family, I purchased piles of scrapbooks, photographs, postcards, letters, sheet music, newspaper clippings, and other items.

I discovered that Charlie had written postcards home to his mother from his travels, but all nine hundred postcards were written in German. I don't read German, but some colleagues

at Harding have helped me out. In fact, I've really come to appreciate the benefits of working in a university community. Fellow teachers and even students have helped me read materials in Spanish, Hungarian, and Serbian, each one telling a tiny part of Charlie's story. Other colleagues have helped me brush up on European history or understand the physics behind Charlie's stunts.

While I would give anything
to read Dell's daily
Twitter feed, no one else
would ever want to see it all.

Contacts in Zurich helped me track down information on his family, just as Dell's relatives helped me to piece together the story of her father, mother, and five brothers.

I continue to meet the most interesting people. One day a friend called me and said, "You've got to talk to this guy. He's a 92-year-old plate spinner from India, and he knew Dell O'Dell." So I dropped everything and called him. You don't wait around with people who are 92. He was a riot. It turns out that he was in the movie *The Terminal* with Tom Hanks. I've had correspondence with Betty White and with Rose Marie, who used to be on the Dick Van Dyke Show. Two years ago I talked with the widow of one of Dell's nephews. She was 89, and after she got off the phone, she went to her closet, got on a stepladder, and climbed up to get down a heavy box of family photographs. When she sent me some of the pictures she found, I was so grateful, but I shuddered to think that she could have fallen in doing so. But it shows that people are risking their lives so that this story can be told.

I've gained a new respect for local history buffs—those tireless volunteers who work at libraries and historical societies answering countless questions about people who lived in Osage County, Kansas, or Springfield, Missouri. They have helped me uncover marriage and divorce records, obituaries, and even some family scandals. More broadly, I now better appreciate the work of biographers. I've learned that history is not just the reporting of facts; it involves making sense of the facts, deciding what to do with conflicting stories, and explaining what it all means. For example, Charlie kept a photograph of his parents on their wedding day, but the picture was torn in half. Since Charlie never talked about his father, I had to do some guesswork to figure out what happened. Also, since Dell talked very little about her childhood, it has taken some creativity and a little bit of luck to piece together a narrative. She even erased the year from the back of her baby photograph.

Writing a biography also involves a huge amount of reading—I've had to get an education in so many topics: the circus, vaudeville, physical culture, European history, the jazz age, juggling, and the history of magicians. Sometimes an entire day of reading results in one sentence in my book. Because of that fact, there is a huge temptation for the writer to want to tell all that he or she has learned. But that, of course, is a mistake. The famous French writer Voltaire once wrote that the historian has two duties: the first is not to slander, and the second is not to bore. Since Dell was such a lively personality, the worst thing I could do would be to turn her biography into a dull list of places she performed and tricks she did. It all has to be woven together into an engaging narrative. That's why I can't tell everything I know. Some details just have to be left out. While I would give anything to read Dell's daily Twitter feed, no one else would ever want to see it all.

So far I've written about fourteen chapters, and it was not until I started writing that I discovered both how much I knew, and how much I still needed to find out. Sometimes I can't even finish a sentence without digging back through a mountain of notes, photocopies, letters, interview transcriptions, clippings, and post-it notes. In fact, this project has taught me so much about writing—even though as a writing teacher I thought I knew quite a bit about that subject. Mostly it has taught me about being a storyteller—building suspense, dramatizing motives, putting things in context, fleshing out personalities.

So someday when I tie up all the loose ends, I'll publish a book about Dell and Charlie. Now, in the great scheme of scholarly activities, this may not amount to much. Some researchers cure diseases. Some find solutions to poverty. Some create new technologies. And then there are those of us who tell stories. Dell's is an empowering story of a woman who succeeded in a man's profession and who brought joy to thousands of people in her lifetime. Her career spanned important eras of history—the roaring 20s, the Great Depression, World War II, and the early days of television. I like the detective work involved in piecing together clues and getting people to share their memories. But the main reason I tell her story is that she's not here to tell it herself. It is, as they say, a labor of love. I don't expect the book will be a bestseller. Nevertheless, I've found a quirky little corner of knowledge that I love to dig into, and that's really what scholarship is. Now, if I could just figure out how to balance that sofa on my chin.



Alpha Chi at 90

By Trisha Yarbrough and Dennis Organ

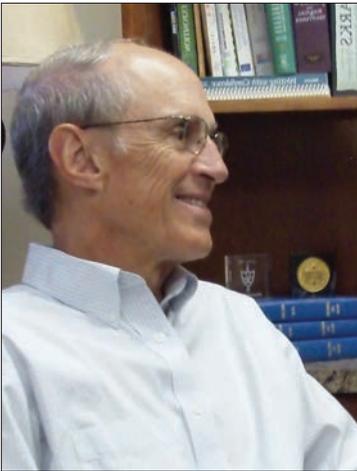
On February 22, 2012, Alpha Chi observed the 90th anniversary of its founding. The 90th year was also a milestone in other ways. For one thing, the 400,000th member in Alpha Chi's history was inducted, Katherine Dumeer of the Rhode Island Alpha chapter at Roger Williams University. Katherine was recognized at the 2012 super-regional convention in Baltimore this spring and had the honor at the banquet of blowing out the candles on Alpha Chi's birthday cake. A second marker announced in the 90th year and accomplished early in the 91st was the retirement of Dennis Organ after eighteen years as executive director. Recently he and his successor, Trisha Yarbrough, engaged in an e-mail conversation about Alpha Chi at this transition point, looking back and looking ahead.

YARBROUGH:

You edited Alpha Chi publications for thirty-seven years. Are there favorite Recorder articles that stay in your memory?

ORGAN:

The articles that I remember the most fondly are two pieces in the 2010 Alumni Issue that developed out of the program of our first super-regional convention that spring in Little Rock. We had two terrific programs at that meeting—a keynote speech by Carlotta Wells LaNier, one of the Little Rock Nine who integrated Little Rock Central High School in 1957, and a panel discussion at the Clinton Presidential Library by three former members of the President’s staff. These were such well-received events that I knew we needed to share them somehow with the full membership through the *Recorder*.



Mrs. LaNier didn’t speak from a script, so I couldn’t ask her for a text to print, but she read several moving excerpts from her recent autobiography—copies of which, by the way, she graciously provided for all the delegates. She agreed to let me quote more extensively from the book, and so I had the joy of reading carefully and deciding which passages would work best to tell a condensed version of her dramatic life story. To me it was an editor’s dream job. The resulting article was almost all Carlotta LaNier’s own words, with just a few transitional summaries from me. It’s a story that will never be out of date, and I hope future Alpha Chi members will continue to read it.

The article about the Clinton panel was just as much fun for me. I knew the discussion would be unscripted, so I got prior permission from the speakers to record the event on video so I could produce a record of their comments. Since I’m not a stenographer or court recorder, transcription was a tedious and long process. But it was a great exercise in writing for me, in that it wouldn’t make sense to print a literal transcript, with all the glitches that everyone makes in extemporaneous speech—tangled grammar sometimes, starts and stops, and so forth. So I had to edit as well as transcribe, preserving the speaker’s tone and vocabulary but smoothing things out here and there. And in the process I just enjoyed hearing the discussion again. It’s a piece that people who are interested in political history will find interesting and instructive. The three panelists—Carol Rasco, Skip Rutherford, and Janis Kearney—create a sense of what it was like to work in the Clinton administration, a conversation that is heavy on humor, candor, and human warmth. Naturally, they’re admirers of the former President, but you’d be hard pressed to find much partisanship in their remarks.

YARBROUGH:

If you could have been present in 1922 when Alpha Chi was first being formed, what questions or conversations would you have liked to pose to any of the founders? Or, from your perspective of the history since then, what suggestions would you have liked to give them that would save some trouble down the road?

ORGAN:

Thanks largely to former National Council President Rob Sledge's excellent history of Alpha Chi published for the society's 75th anniversary in 1997, we have a good understanding of the founders' motives in 1922.

I also know that the concept of college honor societies really took off in the 1920s, a decade in which many discipline-specific societies were born as well as general societies like Alpha Chi. So I wouldn't have many questions for the founders and certainly no advice on how they might have done better. I have nothing but admiration for those early leaders, who not only began Alpha Chi but also kept it alive through hard economic times, strictly through their volunteer service—a tradition of Alpha Chi leadership that we relied on solely for more than sixty years. The story of how our organization grew to a national presence of more than 200 chapters is a remarkable one when you remember that we had no paid employees all those years, only the after-hours service of faculty members and administrators with their own full-time jobs to keep up with.

To me, the greatest of these was Dr. Joe Pryor, my dean at Harding University, who inducted me into Alpha Chi when I was a student and then, when I was a young faculty member, invited me in 1975 to edit the society's publications. By then he was national secretary-treasurer, handling all the membership registrations, production of certificates, and finances, a job he did with minimal clerical help until he retired from Harding and became the first executive director in 1983. Maybe a few others would have been willing and able to do the same all those years as a labor of love, but it's hard to imagine Alpha Chi being where it is today without him.

ORGAN:

You served many years as a chapter sponsor, something I've never been too involved with. What did you find most rewarding about that role? And how do you think your experience on the local level will influence your new job in the national office?

YARBROUGH:

I was appointed a chapter sponsor one night just before the academic year started, at a regional state university, with no preparation or grooming, and my first semesters felt like



trial by fire as I learned everything the hard way. That experience has certainly made me sympathetic in my national role to the new Alpha Chi sponsor, the one who doesn't have much on-campus advice, who doesn't even realize to call the national office, who is so busy she doesn't open all the mail. I'm trying to contact all of the new sponsors by phone or email, to put sister schools in mentoring relationships with new chapters, to connect somehow with any chapter that might need someone who remembers how at sea I felt at first.

I'm certainly glad I selected a co-sponsor that first year, who, although he didn't know any more about Alpha Chi than I did at first, generously shared the load from the beginning; we later added many other valued colleagues to our ranks. We toted boxes of Alpha Chi "stuff" to inductions and graduations, poured coffee at yet another reception, packed up endless van loads of students for conventions, and counted noses at airports and breakfast sessions to make sure all the contingent was still in tow—some of whom abandoned one very bewildered sponsor in a parking garage in Sundance Square to her everlasting shame one late convention night one April (eternal thanks to whichever student finally asked if someone knew where Dr. Y was!).

Early on, I wanted our chapter to find its own ways to develop an identity on campus, to be known for something significant.

Many of our students were first-generation college students who came from rural schools, and those who joined Alpha Chi tended to fall into one of two groups: the many who valued the recognition for their high academic achievements (and this included a large proportion who were adults returning to school, whose families were so proud of their accomplishments, and who

were grateful for their often hard-won education) and the fewer who were interested in the full range of honor society experiences—leadership roles, convention opportunities, and on-campus programs. With this latter group of students I spent the most time and have the most vibrant memories. This is also the closest connection I have to my colleagues who sponsor Alpha Chi at private and independent universities. I first became aware of the rich diversity of Alpha Chi life when I moved into leadership of Region II and began to attend chapter development workshops at conventions. Even though I was fairly certain we'd never be the sort of chapter who would sing the Alpha Chi song at weekly meetings, I was impressed by colleagues who invested that kind of energy in their students and in maintaining those traditions, and I decided early on I wanted our chapter to find its own ways to develop an identity on campus, to be known for something significant and important to students, faculty, and administrators. Because of my role on the National Council, I traveled to several campuses through the years as they installed their chapters of Alpha Chi and inducted their very first classes of students. My main message became "Alpha Chi looks different on each campus. It

upholds the same values and rewards similar achievements, but the methods and the details will differ depending on your leadership and your students. Figure out what works for you.”

ORGAN:

Who is the most memorable student member you worked with?

YARBROUGH:

Well, I have twenty years of memories to sift through—students reading their papers to me “one more time” in my hotel room the night before the conference, pranking me that they had forgotten all their papers and posters in the office back in Oklahoma, van dancing on a wild ride home—“Let us drive, Dr. Y, we think of this van as a tactical vehicle”—debriefing in frustration after a conference awards session. If I zero in on a success story, Lynn might be an illustrative choice. A history major who transferred to our university, she was one of those “hungry” students who seized every opportunity available to her. Almost a full foot taller than me, Lynn loped everywhere with an athlete’s grace and energy, and every room brightened when she leaned in a doorway or draped over a podium to rest as she waited to speak. She joined our Honors Program first, then Alpha Chi (once she’d finished the 24 hours at ECU), looking for chances to research, to attend conferences, to be involved on campus. Lynn submitted sections from her honors thesis on women homesteaders to the regional Alpha Chi conference, where she read her first academic paper outside the classroom (it later received awards at a state history conference) and was elected as Region II’s representative to the National Council. The daughter of educators, Lynn dove head first into her student rep role and listed it prominently on her graduate school applications, citing the leadership and communication experience she’d gained. She was accepted into the graduate school of her choice, to further her undergraduate research projects.

Although Lynn was the only student of mine to pursue national leadership opportunities through Alpha Chi, she stands in for many when I recall what a delight she was to work with both personally and professionally. She organized our chapter activities (and me, too, when she could) with humor, energy, and enthusiasm, pursued her academic projects with rigor, and worked almost full-time for the National Park Service, all while commuting to campus several hundred miles each week. Students like Lynn are the reason being a campus sponsor was one of the genuine highlights of my career. I think of them when I call university provosts on campuses where Alpha Chi needs a sponsor to ask the administrators to encourage a young faculty member to take on this additional responsibility. The students made it all worth it for me.

YARBROUGH:

What core qualities do you believe Alpha Chi possesses that will allow it to endure in an evolving higher education landscape?



ORGAN:

In terms of enduring in a competitive honor society environment that is much more diverse and crowded today than ever before—in other words, staying attractive to institutions and students—Alpha Chi has an important advantage rooted in our history of student-centered conventions. Long before colleges and universities embraced the now-popular emphasis on undergraduate research, Alpha Chi was providing a national forum for showcasing their students’ academic work. With institutions now driven by accreditation to show evidence of their support of undergraduate research, we offer them a true academic partnership in this effort. We have an annual national meeting built around student presentations in numerous disciplines, and we make the experience affordable for institutions by pouring a lot of our own resources into getting students there and treating them well—on average, \$400 or more per delegate.

I think it’s important to note that Alpha Chi has been doing this for decades, not to gain a competitive edge over other honor societies but to fulfill its core mission of advancing scholarship. We’ve always sought to challenge and support our members and to make Alpha Chi about them and their academic development. I’m also proud of our more recent emphasis on service projects and a wider range of tangible member benefits; these have made us a better organization. But we’ve never forgotten our most important purpose, which is scholarship.

ORGAN:

How would you answer this same question?

YARBROUGH:

Even though higher education is changing at a pace almost impossible to record, I still hear regularly from students and their families and from faculty an appreciation for the almost-

intangible concept of excellence. Despite all the limitations and qualifications that accompany trying to acknowledge high achievement, Alpha Chi will have a role on campuses as long as universities continue to give grades in courses that lead to degrees conferred in a graduation ceremony. Students want to hear from faculty who want to acknowledge those whose work was consistently exceptional. Because Alpha Chi's mission is to acknowledge and reward academic excellence, primarily in the life of the mind as revealed in research and creativity, but also in the life of service as developed in making scholarship effective for good, our place in the university should be secure. One especially fine feature of Alpha Chi is its suppleness—one chapter may operate well on a small campus where it is the only honor society and another chapter may work equally well on a different campus, partnering with the multitude of voices acknowledging the work of high-ability students. This nimble ability to adapt to the local campus environment while maintaining core values should ensure Alpha Chi's longevity.

YARBROUGH:

What do you see as the most significant change in Alpha Chi nationally in the last twenty years?

ORGAN:

I'm not sure that my perspective on this would necessarily be the same as that of the sponsors and students on the front lines of Alpha Chi life on their campuses. Like a college administrator who can get wrapped up in administration, you know, and become too removed from what's happening in classes, the executive director and the staff may think too narrowly in terms of their own work. Nevertheless, I'm going to say that from my perspective the most significant change in the last two decades has been the growth in Alpha Chi's professionalism. I've left you a first-rate staff led by the inimitable Lara Noah, who studied music and speech therapy in college (and earned Alpha Chi membership) and on the job with us taught herself how to be an accountant, computer whiz, event planner, and office supervisor. We have learned what it takes to put on a convention that I would gladly put up against anything in the college honor society world. We have a state-of-the-art online registration system that others envy. We try to take care of our volunteer chapter sponsors and make their job as easy as possible. We've judiciously added member benefits, some with income-producing corporate partnerships, allowing us to enrich our scholarships and convention subsidies.

ORGAN:

What do you hope to see for Alpha Chi in the next five or ten years? How might the society be different? What seem to be the biggest challenges facing us, or honor societies in general?

YARBROUGH:

I hope that we will continue to expand in an increasingly complex educational world. Currently, we have two major avenues to do so which can be explored simultaneously: campuses

without a general honor society and campuses which currently have at least one general honor society but which could add Alpha Chi. Some of these latter campuses (which include the universities where many Alpha Chi sponsors received their doctorates) might be open to adding the undergraduate research and scholarship resources which Alpha Chi makes possible for students.

One of the biggest challenges facing us at any university is finding and maintaining a faculty sponsor who is a good fit. As trends evolve in higher education, administrations may shift the ways they reward faculty service at the same time faculty feel even greater administrative responsibilities overall, so that without an enlightened provost or VPAA, sponsoring a student organization such as Alpha Chi may seem a thankless or careless faculty choice. One of the ways Alpha Chi is changing in response to such realities is to shift as much of the paperwork load as is practicable to the national office where it can be automated and handled centrally. So much of the registration process can be handled via our Induction Management System now, for example, that many of the headaches I grappled with as a sponsor are poofed away.

Another big challenge comes from students who wonder whether any external reward such as Alpha Chi is “worth it”—to them, concepts such as honor and character belong to a discussion held in a quaint, ivy-covered columned university from long ago. Our challenge will be to maintain the values we believe have meaning while reframing the dialogue to include them—on their technological frameworks.

ORGAN:

You’ve witnessed the evolution of our conventions in the last two decades. What might lie ahead in this regard?

YARBROUGH:



The most significant change is the move away from alternating years of national and regional conventions to an annual national convention, a change that we hope delegates to the 2013 national meeting will approve as a constitutional matter. The National Council endorsed this concept before I took office, but it’s one with which I heartily agree. Students like the prestige of presenting their papers at a national meeting and visiting somewhere culturally interesting. My students always listened to me politely when I spoke nostalgically of the small, regional conventions the students and I attended when I was a young sponsor, always held on Alpha Chi campuses. I enjoyed strolling around sister schools and finding the delights and curiosities on the “sightseeing”

afternoons in smaller venues (the lovely stained glass windows on Van Cliburn’s church in Shreveport, anyone?). The students listened politely, but most of them really wanted to be

in a big city, and I understand.

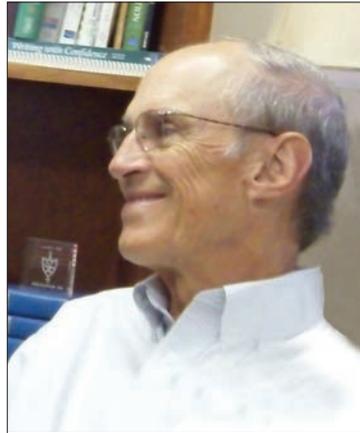
In the future, I expect the national conventions may evolve, perhaps to allow a second track of student presentations on a dedicated topic, for example, or in partnership with another organization even, but as long as I can recall the hundreds of students I personally sponsored at convention presentations through the years, and remember the value presenting their projects was to them, I imagine undergraduate research will stay the core of programming for us.

YARBROUGH:

Did anything about being executive director ever surprise you?

ORGAN:

The biggest surprise had to be what will be called the Dumpster Incident. Imagine me and Lara sitting in an evening session of the National Council in Atlanta in 1995. Someone raises a financial question, and I realize we've not brought down our big file box containing the complete 1994 records. Lara excuses herself to go up to the room where the Council's audit committee has sifted through the records the day before. The meeting moves ahead. Lara's gone a long time. A very long time. An inordinately long time. Finally she returns and whispers to me that the hotel cleaning crew apparently thought the box was trash and discarded it. While I sweat it out in the meeting, the hotel staff flies into action and engages in dumpster diving. Think hundreds of pages of bank statements, cancelled checks, invoices, and receipts damp, or worse, with the juices of garbage from the hotel kitchens.



The smelly pile was eventually shipped to Searcy, where it sat unopened in my garage until Lara decided she was up to exploring the contents. Let's just say that since we already had a professional auditor's review of the year's finances as well as that of the Council's committee, we decided that saving every one of those original records wasn't all that important.

Conventions always hold the potential for the unexpected. Students show up prepared to make presentations although somehow we never received their program proposals. Someone wants to use a pet bird in her presentation, but the hotel doesn't allow any pets in guest rooms other than guide dogs. An early April snow hits Chicago on the opening day of our national meeting, delaying some delegates and even the banquet speaker, who arrives from the airport just in time. It pays to have a sense of humor in this job.

YARBROUGH:

An inductee into Alpha Chi makes the membership pledge of “striving to make its ideals my ideals in scholarship and in service.” Do you have favorite examples of this pledge being lived out?

ORGAN:

My immediate reaction to this question is to think of the individuals Alpha Chi has honored with the Distinguished Alumni Award. All of them have spoken at our national convention, so my admiration is based not only on their impressive resumes but also on the personal qualities they showed on those occasions. I don't have space to mention them all, but I remember televi-

Alpha Chi's ranks are filled
with individuals committed to
truth-seeking and service.

sion newsman Dan Rather, at the height of his busy career, generously volunteering to go the extra mile and sit for an interview for our Alpha Chi video. I smile thinking of the modesty and almost boyish enthusiasm of Clayton Anderson after he had joined the prestigious company of astronauts. And then there was the courageous, ethically centered Coleen Rowley, the

FBI agent who brought to light some of the agency's lapses prior to the attacks of 9-11 and then became one of *Time* magazine's "Persons of the Year" for 2002. I remember one of our most distinguished academic recipients, Joe Hightower, a chemical engineer at Rice University, who built a large charitable outreach to families of out-of-town patients being treated at M.D. Anderson Hospital in Houston. And most recently, Heather Biehl regaled the 2011 convention with stories from her career as a young analyst for the CIA, work that led to her becoming one of the country's top counterterrorism experts.

Although folks like these are the most prominent, Alpha Chi's ranks are filled with individuals committed to truth-seeking and service. If we knew all their stories, we'd be amazed by the power and reach of Alpha Chi's ideals.

ORGAN:

If you could recommend one book to colleagues and students, outside their own sacred texts, to help them think more deeply about honor, what would it be?

YARBROUGH:

While I can't say I have a favorite or most important book about honor, I will say that the most interesting one I've looked at recently is Kwame Appiah's book called *The Honor Code*:

How Moral Revolutions Happen (2010). In it Appiah, a philosophy professor at Princeton, connects honor to ethics by exploring the history of several moral revolutions—the end to foot binding in China, slavery in the west, and dueling, among others—and in his thesis argues that long-standing arguments to end these horrible practices finally received traction when the concept of honor was introduced. Linking honor to respect as a chief means to achieve Aristotle’s ideal of *eudaimonia*, living well, he finally takes on contemporary issues where honor is an issue—such as honor killings. While not everyone will agree with his conclusions, I’m finding it refreshing to read a book where honor, a concept Alpha Chi values, is treated seriously and centrally. Although Kwame is an academic who writes both historically and philosophically, most readers will appreciate his sense of style, since he also incorporates a novelist’s sense of character, dialogue, and setting to breathe life into his examples. The book is enjoyable to read as well as thought-provoking.

YARBROUGH:

What do you want most for Alpha Chi as you “pass the baton”?

ORGAN:

When you’ve given a significant portion of your working life to a job like this, you naturally want to see it continue to thrive. That means I want to see Alpha Chi adding more chapters, but even more importantly, reinvigorating struggling chapters. I would love to see an infusion of younger faculty sponsors who are willing to sign on for the long haul, just as so many of our most effective sponsors have always done. I want to see Alpha Chi have the financial resources to support meaningful programming that enhances scholarship among its members and on their campuses in general—things like our conventions and our scholarship and fellowship programs.

I’m very optimistic about Alpha Chi’s future. As the cliché goes, I believe our best days are still to come. We’re less than ten years away from the society’s centennial, and I hope to attend the 2022 national convention to join in the celebration of all Alpha Chi has achieved.

About the Executive Directors

Dennis Organ’s retirement concluded an unbroken career of service with Alpha Chi that began in 1975 when he was appointed editor of publications and worked closely with the late Dr. Joseph E. Pryor, long-time secretary-treasurer of the National Council, a position that administered the day-to-day work of Alpha Chi before the society established a professional office. Pryor and Organ were both professors at Harding University, Pryor serving as academic vice president and Organ as professor of English.

After Pryor retired from Harding and became Alpha Chi’s first executive director, Organ eventually became assistant executive director and in 1994 executive director. Organ’s position with Alpha Chi was a half-time appointment that he combined with his work as chair of the English Department and later dean of the College of Arts and Humanities. He retired from Harding in 2011.

With a B.A. in mathematics from Harding, an M.A. in journalism from the University of Missouri, and a Ph.D. in English from Texas Tech University, Organ liked telling students he was the poster child for undecided majors. His doctoral dissertation on Tennyson's dramas was published by the Texas Tech Press, and he also published journal articles on Tennyson, Hemingway, Dickens, and Faulkner and presented several papers at academic conferences. He twice received Harding's Distinguished Teacher Award.

During his Alpha Chi tenure Organ was active in the Association of College Honor Societies, serving on several committees and one term on the ACHS governing board.

* * *

Trisha Yarbrough retired in May 2012 as professor of English and director of the University Honors Program at East Central University in Ada, Okla. Her long experience with Alpha Chi includes service from 1990 to 2011 as sponsor or co-sponsor of the Oklahoma Gamma chapter at ECU, which in 2005 won the President's Cup as the society's outstanding chapter. From 1996 to 2008 she served as secretary-treasurer of Region II, which also gave her a seat on the National Council.

Yarbrough brings management and supervisory experience from a two-year term as chair of the English department and six years as director of the Honors Program. In both positions she managed budgets, evaluated faculty, set goals, and conducted assessments annually. She also wrote several successful grants that brought visiting speakers to campus and helped institute a regional studies program.

Her educational background reflects the diversity of Alpha Chi's member institutions. Her B.A. is from a small faith-based university, Oklahoma Baptist, and her M.A. and Ph.D. are from a large, urban, public research university, Arizona State. While working on her doctorate, she taught full time for a proprietary institution, DeVry Institute, on the Phoenix campus, and she taught 25 years at a regional state university in a small town. Yarbrough's professional accomplishments include 11 journal articles or published essays, 32 conference presentations, editorial and review work on four projects, and membership in numerous organizations. At East Central she won six teaching awards.

DWD: No LOL Matter

Study shows drivers are more aware of texting and talking dangers. But touch-screen devices make it easier to text and dial behind the wheel.

Editor's note: Alpha Chi asked its new corporate partner, Nationwide Insurance, to share the latest data on a troubling consequence of the popularity and proliferation of mobile communication devices—calling and texting while driving. Thanks to the Nationwide team for providing this article.

U.S. drivers say they are talking and texting less while driving than they did, and they say it's because they are more aware of the dangers of driving while distracted (DWD).

A Nationwide Insurance DWD survey shows 20 percent of drivers with cell phones say they text while driving, and that number jumps to 47 percent for drivers under the age of 35. Of those who admit to texting behind the wheel, 40 percent say they do it less often than they did a year earlier.

While the problem of DWD remains one of the deadliest risks facing drivers, this survey shows that drivers are changing their behavior due to awareness and legislation.

"This is the first survey we've seen showing drivers making positive changes in their behavior, but there are still too many drivers who either don't realize just how dangerous distractions behind the wheel are, or are willing to take that risk," said Bill Windsor, Nationwide's associate vice president of consumer safety.

"The stigma now associated with distracted driving may also have fewer people willing to admit they do it, but studies continue to indicate that DWD causes one out of every four U.S. crashes."

Today's communication devices make it easy for drivers to be distracted while they are driving, Windsor said. In 2006, 158 billion texts were sent. In 2011, 2.3 trillion texts were sent.

In 2010, 3,092 people were killed in crashes involving a distracted driver and an estimated additional 416,000 were injured in motor vehicle crashes involving a distracted driver, according to the National Highway Safety Transportation Board.

A distraction is anything that could divert a driver's attention from the primary task of driving. All distractions endanger driver, passenger, and bystander safety. Such distractions include the following:

- Texting
- Using a cell phone or Smartphone
- Eating and drinking
- Talking to passengers
- Grooming
- Reading, including maps
- Using a navigation system
- Watching a video
- Adjusting a radio, CD player, or MP3 player

According to the telephone survey of 1,005 U.S. adults conducted by Harris Interactive on behalf of Nationwide Insurance, 67 percent of drivers admit to talking on their cell phone while driving. Of those who do, 30 percent say they do it less often than they did last year.

While drivers report they are talking and texting less frequently, the percentage of people who say they do it hasn't changed. Nationwide's first DWD survey (conducted in 2007 by MarketVision using different methodology) showed 73 percent of drivers said they talked on a cell phone while driving and 19 percent admitted to texting while driving.

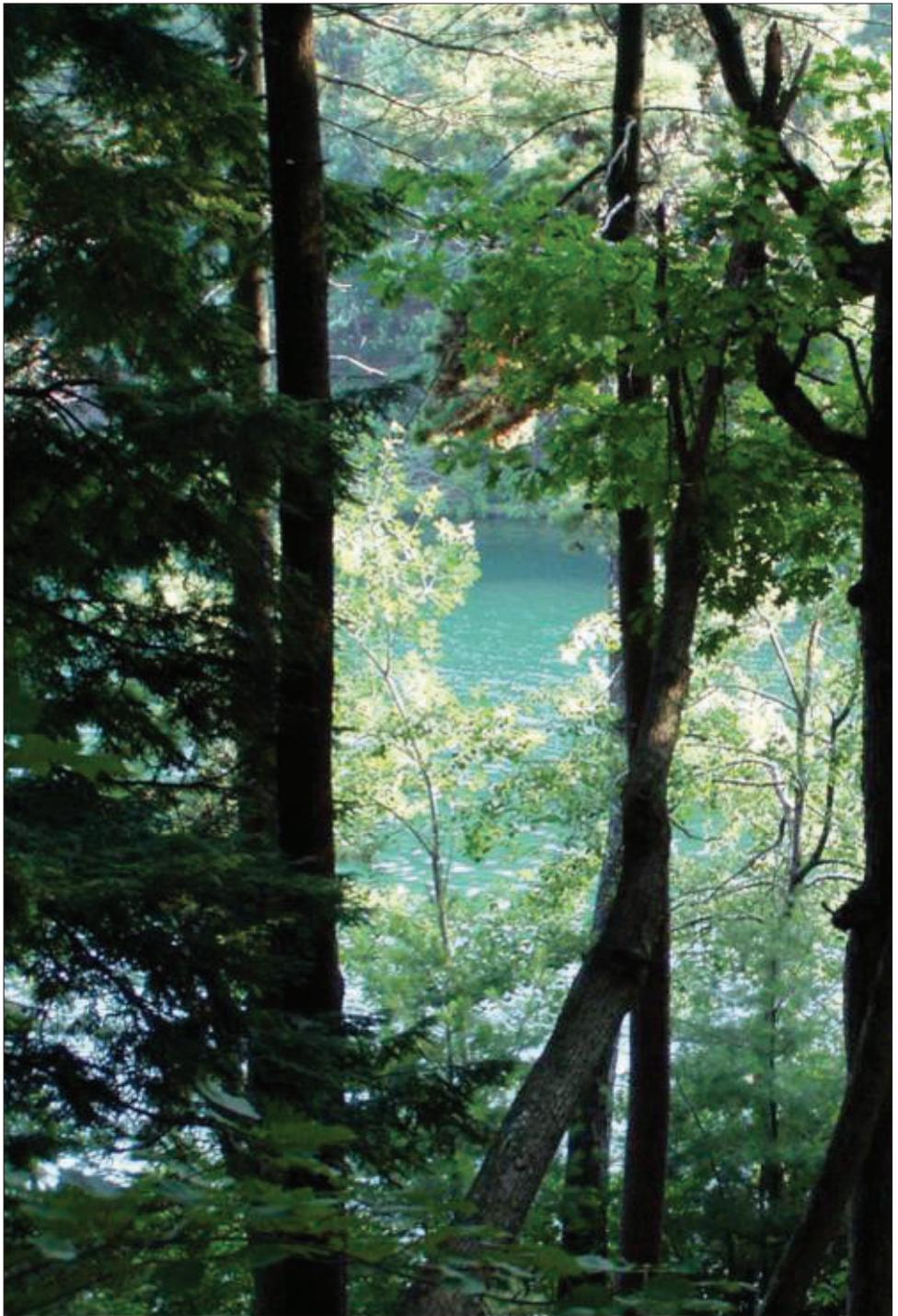
About one in four (24 percent) U.S. cell phone users have a touch screen cell phone; 40 percent of them say it makes texting and dialing easier, and 23 percent say it makes it more difficult. But those who own touch screen cell phones are also more likely to talk and text

while driving.

People who text while driving are taking extreme risks, Windsor said. “There is no phone call or e-mail message important enough to risk hurting yourself or someone else.”

Nationwide Insurance offers these safe driving tips that, if followed, can lead to safer roadways for everyone and the prevention of more car accidents:

1. Stay focused on defensive driving
 - Keep 100% of your attention on driving at all times.
 - Use defensive driving techniques – be aware of what others around you are doing and expect the unexpected.
 - Don’t use a cell phone or any other electronic device while driving.
2. Practice safe driving tips
 - Build time into your trip schedule to stop for food, rest breaks, making necessary phone calls or other business.
 - Adjust your seat, mirrors and climate controls before putting the car in gear.
3. Prioritize car safety
 - Secure cargo that may move around while the vehicle is in motion, and don’t attempt to retrieve items that fall to the floor.
 - Have items needed within easy reach: toll fees, toll cards, garage passes, etc.
4. Make the time for driving safety
 - Pull over to eat or drink. It takes only a few minutes.
 - Practice defensive driving and give yourself time to react. Keep a two second cushion between you and the car in front of you – four seconds if the weather is bad.
5. Slow down
 - Don’t speed – it gives you less time to react and increases the severity of an accident.
6. Be safe
 - Always wear your seat belt and drive sober and drug-free.



Academic Pilgrimages

In May we invited chapter sponsors, friends, and other faculty at Alpha Chi colleges and universities to submit short personal essays for this regular feature of the Alumni Issue. This year's topic asked for reflections on places of importance to one's insight about an academic field:

Academics enjoy visiting sites important in their fields, from the places where great historical events took place, to the homes and workshops of great writers, artists, ecclesiastics, and scientists. Sometimes visitors find only what they expected, but at other times the sites bring them new understandings of the events, works, or persons central to the sites. The *Recorder* invites faculty and others to write a short essay on a site important in their field that brought them such new understanding.

The photo opposite depicts one of American literature's most popular destinations, Thoreau's Walden Pond, a site that attracted two of the essays that follow. Whether you're a teacher or not, we think your traveling appetite will be whetted by what our writers share about their memorable places.

Refugee center, Kenya

In kind, somber, empathic tones, Bishop Simon related the horror that brought a thousand Kenyans to his town of Limuru following the post-presidential election massacres. It was a cool gray day punctuated with rain in this high plateau country west of Nairobi. My colleague and I entered the tented community to meet survivors of the Rift Valley murders. The local pastor conveyed the violent tale in a large wooden meeting hall while oblivious children played loudly on a red cement floor. Several meters away, motley-clothed, somber-faced adults awaited us on scarred wooden benches.

The expectation for comfort was palpable. Some forty pairs of eyes leaned forward as if to embrace hope yet unseen. The ebb and flow of English-Swahili soon found a comfortable cadence. “My daughter is still missing,” said the tearful man in an ill-fitting pinstriped suit. “My children have nightmares . . . they are still afraid,” came the plaintive voice of a hurting mother. Into the churning chaos of pain and trauma we waded with care not to tread too harshly on the hallowed ground of their damaged souls. One took notes. Another showed us photos of his hospitalized wife. Yet another pointed to the skin graft work on both legs of a barefoot friend. Their fear-stabbed spirits were too raw to reveal enlivened eyes but their gracious *asanti* (thanks) and cultured handshakes returned more than we could hope to give.

* * *

More than 1,200 Kenyans lost their lives to machete-wielding neighbors. Others were beaten. Many were raped. Several survived the burning at Eldoret, where villagers attempted to escape death by fleeing to an Assemblies of God church. Soon the faces of their neighbors appeared at the door. They blocked the entrance, placed mattresses against the sacred place, ignored the screams of children and mothers, and lit a hellish fire. Women, children, and men were immolated. They were surprised by hate.

* * *

Did they need psychological care? Yes, but not psychotherapy. Not yet anyway. It was as if they illustrated Maslow’s commonsense hierarchy of needs. Relief agencies knew. The Red Cross and Convoy of Hope delivered shelter, mattresses, clothes, and food. The first step in healing has now begun. The needy see faces of love and receive gifts from warm hearts. They are esteemed worthy. Although they live in safety, a camp is not a home. The journey to recovery is long and fraught with emotional and political landmines. Where do they belong?

Geoffrey W. Sutton
Professor of Psychology
Missouri Rho, Evangel University

E.A. Robinson's 'western gate'

Twelve summers ago a friend and I enjoyed a week's vacation in the state of Maine. We went there especially to tour Acadia National Park and some of the coastal towns nearby. At that time, however, I had been teaching poems by Edwin Arlington Robinson in one of my courses, so we decided to make an excursion inland to Gardiner, the town where the poet grew up and where his ashes now lie buried.

Gardiner is not just Robinson's hometown. It is also the "Tilbury Town" mentioned frequently in his poetry. Not all of his poems are set there, nor are all of his famous characters expressly identified as citizens of the town. Nevertheless, glancing down at the weirs (milledams) along Cobbossee Stream and reflecting that they were all that remained of the long defunct industry that had built Gardiner, I felt that my understanding of "The Mill" had been appreciably enriched. In this poem, largely by implication and indirection, Robinson recounts the tragic double suicide of a miller and his wife: his by hanging in the mill itself, hers by drowning in "[b]lack water, smooth above the weir." His parting words to her—at once a cry for help, a comment on the obsolescence of his trade, and a kind of suicide note—had been "There are no millers any more." There certainly weren't.

Our tour of the town included the obligatory visits to the Robinson monument on Gardiner Common, the Robinson house on Lincoln Avenue, and the Robinson gravesite in Oak Grove Cemetery. At the house we were unexpectedly invited inside to see the upstairs room in which Robinson is said to have written his first book of poems. But the most illuminating moment for me came after we left the house and, turning the corner onto Danforth Street, strolled to the entrance to the cemetery, located perhaps a hundred yards from Robinson's front door.

From the gravesite itself I learned nothing except that many of Robinson's relations are buried in the same plot. The name "Edwin A. Robinson" is one of seventeen inscribed on the stone. However, stepping over the long chain that hung between the two gateposts flanking the entrance, I realized that the road leading up to the cemetery gate and continuing in a straight line beyond it followed a southwesterly course. In the autumn the sun would set in a more or less direct line with the end of this road.

These facts seemed to me to shed new light on some of Robinson's most famous lines:

Go to the western gate, Luke Havergal,
There where the vines cling crimson on the wall,
And in the twilight wait for what will come.

Like the season of autumn, sunset has traditionally been associated with death, and the nameless, sepulchral speaker of "Luke Havergal" clearly urges the title character to take his own life. What I discovered, serendipitously, in Gardiner that day was that "the western gate" may have had a more immediate and literal inspiration.

Mark Brown
Professor of English, Sponsor
North Dakota Alpha, Jamestown College

Mesa Verde and the CCC

Mesa Verde National Park excites both ancient and modern historical curiosity. Ancient Puebloan peoples settled and lived in what modern Americans call the Four Corners region of the American Southwest. Visitors to its heritage sites invariably reflect upon the archaeological remains of these peoples who spent more than a thousand years in this arid environment. These ancestral Puebloans abandoned their dwellings and relocated before the Europeans arrived in the 16th century. For me, the Mesa Verde region combines curiosity about early Puebloan civilization and my interest in the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC), a New Deal program that intentionally focused upon youth employment for projects in state and national forests and parks and in land conservation.

The CCC lasted a mere nine years (1933-1942), but Mesa Verde Superintendent Jesse Nusbaum credited them with accomplishing more than thirty years of work. Mesa Verde National Park (MVNP) was a remote and isolated heritage site before the 1930s. Because early visitors wanted creature comforts such as warm fires and primitive lodging, tourists and their guides cut trees. By the 1930s the area surrounding the park headquarters and Spruce Tree House was largely barren landscape. While living in barracks-style camps less than two miles from the site, the CCC enrollees landscaped the headquarters area, moving large boulders to form a parking loop that protected their re-vegetation initiatives. This relocation of rocks and landscaping delimited parking and camping sites. Walking in this area today, visitors encounter former campsites and take trails into what now is a day-use picnic area. If they wander far enough, they will discover the beautiful campfire circle and amphitheater where several generations of tourists learned more about Mesa Verde from interpretative park rangers. Today Park Service personnel and knowledgeable locals use this space for special celebrations

Visitors to the headquarters area can discern the remnants of indirect lighting that permitted visitors and staff to walk safely about the site. The CCC enrollees under the supervision of park personnel built the ingenious and memorable dioramas that attract visitors and provide an artistic recreation of early life at Mesa Verde. Almost every aspect of the park and its trails benefitted from the work of the enrollees, and their supervisors: “locally employed men” and Park Service personnel who oversaw their work. Although enrollees could venture out into the park and onto the beautiful mesas, they rarely worked on archaeological sites. This specialized work was conducted by Park Service personnel and local Native Americans employed by the Park Service. When visiting Mesa Verde, I enjoy the centuries-old dwellings created by the Ancient Puebloans, but I also cherish the special accomplishments of a generation of young men who spent from months to several years improving access to the park and its many splendid views of the Four Corners from Cortez, Colorado, to the distant image of New Mexico’s Shiprock. Both ancient and early twentieth-century ruins and artifacts can broaden and deepen our understanding of the American experience and past.

Ronald C. Brown
Assistant Vice President, Academic Services, Sponsor
Texas Iota, Texas State University-San Marcos

Walden Pond (seen)

Henry David Thoreau's beautiful *Walden* (1854) is one of my favorite literary works, a work I taught in American Literature to 1865 for a quarter of a century. A few years ago my husband and I visited a friend in Boston and, of course, drove to nearby Concord, about five miles outside the outer interstate circling the major metropolis. I told my students in the second half of American Lit that Robert Frost made his lonely farm women seem a hundred miles from the nearest house though New England was well populated and that this exaggeration of the rural was typical of the pastoral mode. Still I was surprised to visit Walden Pond and find it not at all what I expected.

Thoreau tells about buying an old shack and using the lumber and nails to build his house at Walden Pond, spending \$28.12½ on its construction, but I thought of the cabin as looking like a backwoods log cabin constructed of trees freshly chopped down with Thoreau's sharp axe and roughly hewn. We followed a path far around the pond from the current parking lot to the original site of Thoreau's cabin. Granite pillars mark the site, and little seems natural; even the trees aren't very thick. We did see a replica of Thoreau's cabin on the other side of the paved road from the lake, a replica built by Thoreau's twentieth-century admirers. It's in the wrong place and it's not roughly hewn or old.

I knew that Thoreau heard the train's whistle from his cabin, that he walked into Concord most days to converse with people, and that friends and a runaway slave visited him in his cabin in the woods, but still one of his chapters is named "Solitude," and I expected some. However, Walden Pond has been developed as a recreational area with bathhouses for changing clothes and a beach for swimming and play. The day that we visited, the beach was crowded with parents and children enjoying the water and sun. The impression the site leaves now is of modern-day access and improvements for large numbers of people to enjoy a popular local lake. Nothing in our visit made me think of solitude and pristine nature. Thoreau's *Walden* is a cult classic and a foundational text of the ecology movement. We saw trees, a lake, and even some blackberry vines, but not "back to nature."

To me a pond is a small body of water for the cows to drink from on the farm. Walden Pond is a 62-acre lake, far larger than I had envisioned it. I'm glad we went to Thoreau's homesite, but I haven't been able to see *Walden* the same way since. The book-length essay is a true pastoral in its artificially creating an imaginary isolated, rural world where the cultivated and educated can discuss the deeper issues of philosophy. And Walden has always been close to Boston.

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

Walden Pond (unseen)

Actually, I've never been to Walden Pond, Massachusetts, the site of Henry David Thoreau's 1845-47 "experiment of living," the account of which was published seven years after he had returned to Concord. But thanks to a considerate friend, I have a piece of Walden with me. When I was studying in graduate school at distant Florida State, one of my grad student colleagues heard me talking about the impact that *Walden* had made on my life, and when he visited there the next summer, he returned with two thoughtful gifts: a stone from the pond's shallows and a photograph.

The stone (1.5" x 1"—Thoreau was accurate in his own observations) is a somewhat mottled off-white oval, rather flat on the bottom and round on the top. I regret to say that it's in two almost equal halves; it broke one day when I dropped it on the granite steps of a building at my current university as I was returning to my office after showing it to a class. I've considered Crazy Gluing it together, but somehow Crazy Glue just doesn't seem to be in the spirit of Thoreau. The photograph shows a summer view of the sandy, rippled shallows leading into the deeper blue water beyond to the woods on the other side, with an inlet off to the left and high, feathery cirrus clouds scoring the sky in lines above.

The stone and the photo reside on my office desk at the base of my computer monitor (what would Thoreau think of *that*?) as a reminder of two crucial concepts the author taught me at age 20: to be independent of mind and ironically skeptical of attitude. Walden has remained in my "deep heart's core" (to quote William Butler Yeats' riff on the book) since then, a reminder of who I intended (and still intend) to be.

And yet, most people don't "get" *Walden*, which leads me to reflect on how we each are inscrutable individuals. Walden is an important part of who I am; however, I recognize that many others are animated by other things (e.g., Ginsberg, *Breaking Bad*, even Farmville) that don't have a significant impact on me but that are crucial to their identities. I think Thoreau would agree: We *should* each be unique. His mentor, Ralph Waldo Emerson, urged us to "Make your own Bible."

A few weeks ago, my wife and I were having a cup of coffee at a table in a bookstore that was decorated with framed blow-ups of book covers from influential books, one of which was *Walden*. At the next table sat two high school girls, one of whom told her friend that she was going to have to read the book in the upcoming academic year. I almost turned to her to comment that Thoreau's book had changed my life. But then I decided not to. I resolved to let her discover for herself whether or not it would resound in her own deep heart's core.

Mark Stevens

*Associate Professor of English, Technical Writing, and Media Arts, Sponsor
Georgia Nu, Southern Polytechnic State University*

Koyasan, Japan

I have been teaching Asian Studies for about ten years with a focus on Japan. On my last trip to Japan, I became interested in the tradition of Buddhist pilgrimage. I saw groups of young college students and senior citizens walking the byways and roadsides of rural Japan and wanted to visit Koyasan, one of the major pilgrimage sites. Koyasan is a flat-top mountain south of Osaka with many temples and the tomb of Kūkai (also known as Kōbō Daishi). Visiting this place and walking a miniature pilgrimage in Kyoto gave me a new appreciation for Japanese culture and Buddhist teaching.

Kūkai (774-835 CE) was crucial to the establishment of Buddhism on Japanese soil. Saichō, founder of Tendai Buddhism, and Kūkai, founder of Shingon Buddhism, traveled to China together on a mission to learn from Buddhist masters and bring the sacred teachings, sutras, and rituals back to Japan. The offshoot of the Saichō/ Kūkai mission to China took radically different directions in Japan. Whereas Saichō founded the temple and monastery compound on Mt. Hiei adjacent to the imperial capital city of Kyoto, Kūkai preferred the remote location of Koyasan on top of a sparsely populated mountain. It was Kūkai who fostered syncretism in the blending of Chinese teachings, Buddhist sutras, Japanese customs, mountain asceticism, and Shinto deities to make Buddhism thoroughly Japanese and widely accepted by the common people in rural areas. Kūkai is also credited with the founding of the 1400-kilometer-long Shikoku Pilgrimage (also called the *henro*), which traces the perimeter of the smallest of Japan's four main islands. The pilgrimage is not an officially sanctioned route. Religious scholars, historians, and ethnographers do not agree on why there are eighty-eight temples and not some other number. What is certain is that the pilgrimage has been transformed from an obscure ascetic practice of a local Shingon sect into an internationally famous treasure of traditional Japanese culture.

Students and visitors to Japan can experience the Shikoku *henro* in a smaller, more manageable form through the miniature pilgrimage at Ninna-ji, a beautiful and stately temple in Northwest Kyoto. I have walked this miniature pilgrimage each time I visited Kyoto and decided to take my student group on the 5-kilometer hike that curls up the side of a mountain in back of the temple. On this route, there are indeed eighty-eight miniature temples modeled after the Shikoku *henro*, so the Ninna-ji version is also called *hachijuhakasho* (eighty-eight temple pilgrimage). Some of the students happily clicked away with their cameras and cell phones to capture images of every temple after I explained the ritual of bowing in prayer, clapping, ringing the bell, and leaving a few yen coins. The miniature route took most of the afternoon because the group stopped to reflect at each temple and enjoyed the views from the high point on the mountain overlooking Kyoto. Though a diminished imitation of the real thing, the Ninna-ji pilgrimage did create a new kind of temporary community, the mindset of walking meditation, and a focus apart from the self so important to Kūkai's way of being.

Jonathan Thorndike

*Professor, Honors College (Humanities), Former Sponsor
Tennessee Eta, Belmont University*

The Supreme Court

The U.S. Supreme Court is central to my work as an attorney and professor of constitutional law. Beyond that, I have been fascinated by the majesty of the Court ever since I first saw a photo of the imposing Greek Revival façade of the building. We have our U.S. Constitution, which can be found in booklet form in every good student's backpack, yet what the words "establishment of religion" or "cruel and unusual punishment" mean can be interpreted only by nine black-robed Justices.

In preparing for a trip to take my students to intern in Washington, D.C., I pondered whether we should visit the Court. I consulted the Supreme Court's schedule and found that the Court would be in session while our group was in the capital. In reading further, I discovered that the only way to get guaranteed seating during an oral argument is to be a personal guest of a Justice. On a whim I wrote a letter to Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg asking if we could be her guests. She wrote back to let me know that she had reserved ten seats for us. Such a privilege is very, very rare.

On the day of March 21, 2012, nine of my students (including Conner Alford, an Alpha Chi member) and I were escorted through the crowd and into the dim hallways of the Court building. All of our personal items were stowed in lockers and we were led to a long pew at the front of the gallery. We were in awe. The room itself is ringed with white columns, and maroon drapes block any direct sunlight. An ornately carved wooden bar divides the gallery from the front of the room, where the bench, lectern, and attorney's tables sit. It's easy to imagine Chief Justice Earl Warren sitting in the middle chair, or Thurgood Marshall standing at the lectern.

The Supreme Court was the subject of my dissertation. However, those four hours in the courtroom gave me countless new ideas for research. My first big revelation is that these Judges sitting on this high bench were just people, not some kind of legal machine. What I mean is that they were human—they got confused, forgot things, made jokes, and liked to laugh. Their humanness deflated some of the reverence I had held for the Court nearly all of my life. Second, and more important, it was astounding to me how little of the discussion during oral argument actually concerned the law. The Judges asked questions about the facts of the case and about the policy implications of deciding it this way or that way, but there was almost no discussion of specific cases. What, then, is the law if it not the application of cases to facts? I saw quite clearly that day that past cases may constrain very slightly the actions of the Justices, but Supreme Court decisions are mainly products of the conversations of nine carefully chosen American citizens.

Christine Pappas

*Associate Professor of Political Science, Sponsor
Oklahoma Gamma, East Central University*

Faulkner's Oxford

Readers of William Faulkner's fiction owe themselves a visit to Oxford, Mississippi, Faulkner's home from his early childhood to his death and the basis for his fictional town of Jefferson, the county seat of his famous Yoknapatawpha County. Oxford brings Faulkner's life and fiction alive.

From Faulkner's life, visitors can see Faulkner's boyhood home on 11th Street. It's a private residence and not open, but visitors can get a good look at it on a slow drive down 11th toward Old Taylor Road. Enter "William Faulkner boyhood home" in Google images and you'll get a good picture of it.

Visitors can pass that home on the way to Faulkner's adult home on Old Taylor, the 1840s Rowan Oak. Ole Miss now runs it as a house museum open to the public, fully restored to the condition it was in when Faulkner died fifty years ago. His furniture is in every room, his books on the library shelves, his typewriter on the desk where he wrote, and his handwriting on the wall—literally, where he outlined his novel *A Fable*.

Rowan Oak brings home how simply Faulkner lived, even in his last decade when he was a Nobel laureate with novels finally selling well. He obviously didn't spend his new wealth on expensive new furnishings. (Visitors can see his Nobel Prize medallion in the Faulkner room in the Ole Miss library.)

Finally, there's St. Peter's Church where Faulkner belonged and St. Peter's Cemetery, where he and Estelle are buried, along with many family members and his beloved Mammy Callie, Caroline Barr, the model for his character Dilsey.

From Faulkner's fiction, Oxford offers visitors a wealth of sites. There's the Oxford square where Jason Compson worked in a hardware store in *The Sound and the Fury*. At its center is the Victorian courthouse with its statue of a Confederate soldier, the site of Lee Goodwin's trial in *Sanctuary*.

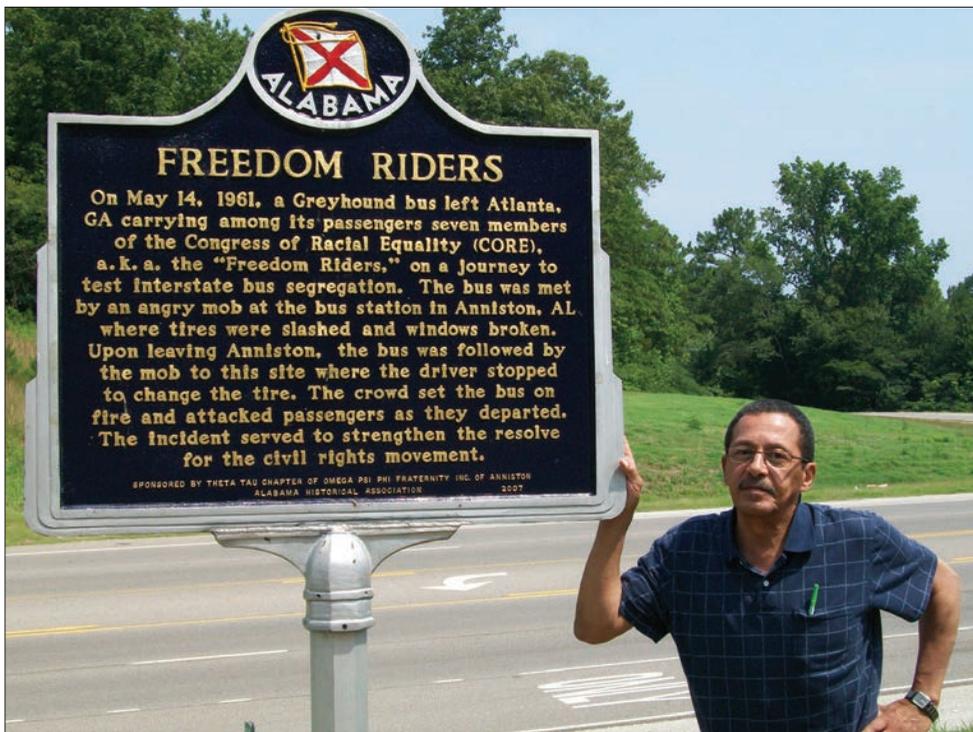
Running northwest from just off the square is a deep ravine locals used to call "the ditch," the site of Joe Christmas's flight in *Light in August*.

The Thompson-Chandler House on 13th Street is the model for the Compson home in *The Sound and the Fury*. The Isom House on Jefferson Street is a model for the home of Miss Emily Grierson in "A Rose for Emily." The restored depot, where Doc Hines and his wife came and went in *Light in August*, sits a few blocks west on Jefferson.

Eight miles to the south lies the hamlet of Taylor, where temple Drake got off the train to join her drunken boyfriend in *Sanctuary*. Eight miles to the north is the 1840s College Hill Presbyterian Church, where Thomas Sutpen brought his family in *Absalom, Absalom!* Across from it is a preserved general store like the one at Frenchman's Bend where Flem Snopes began his rise to wealth in the Snopes trilogy.

Faulkner had a great sense of place. Readers who know his place engage his fiction most fully.

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



Route of the Freedom Riders

Last summer, as part of my development of a new experiential J-term course, *Freedom Riders: The History of the Integration of Interstate Travel, 1944-1964*, I retraced the route of the Nashville replacements freedom riders. After the Mother's Day attack on May 14, 1961, of two buses in Anniston and Birmingham, Alabama, most thought the ride for freedom was over. But students in Nashville, hardened by the sit-in movement for equality in Nashville, organized replacements willing to risk their lives in the Deep South for their values.

On Mother's Day morning a Greyhound bus and a Trailways bus left Atlanta for Alabama carrying a coalition of black and white students led by Congress of Racial Equality organizers. These Americans, collectively called Freedom Riders, were on board to test the federal rulings against segregation in interstate travel and declaring segregation in bus terminals unconstitutional.

The Greyhound bus was attacked in Anniston, suffering damage to the tires. When it was finally able to leave, heading toward Birmingham, slashed tires forced the driver to stop outside the city. There, segregationists following the bus, lit it on fire and beat the passengers as they exited. When a replacement bus was arranged and the already battered passengers arrived in Birmingham later that day, they were met by another mob, including Klansmen, who severely assaulted them. This was all coordinated with the assistance of the local police. Many riders were hospitalized and had to pull out from the next leg of the journey.

It was into this volatile danger that the Nashville students of the Student Non-violent Coordinating Committee decided to move, knowing full well that they would surely be abused, likely beaten, and possibly killed. Students met at Fisk University and Meharry Medical College to head into the firestorm. They signed Last Wills, phoned their disapproving parents to say goodbye, and boarded buses to Birmingham.

Upon arrival they were arrested and later deported across the line to Tennessee. The next day they re-boarded buses south and the students were soon back in Birmingham. Finally, from Birmingham, they rode into history via stops in Montgomery, Jackson, and finally Mississippi's infamous Parchman Prison.

To actually visit these sites made the struggle for human dignity of the 1960s more real. To be able to retrace the steps of these heroes was both moving and enlightening. History is made by real people in tangible places at specific moments in time. To be in those places where history was made and to be blessed to speak to people who were there at the time allows for the truest, most complete, and most immediate form of experiential learning. And to board a bus with current college students and lead them through this saga of our history while at the sites of its making gave me a teaching experience that will probably be unsurpassed in my career in higher education.

Henry J. Grubb
Professor of Psychology, Sponsor
Iowa Zeta, University of Dubuque

Hemingway's Arkansas studio

I didn't expect to find much when I first visited Piggott, Arkansas. (It was probably the name. Rural Arkansas has a way with very unflattering names.) Piggott, a town of roughly 4,000, is nestled in the corner of the state created by the Missouri Bootheel. Growing up in nearby Jonesboro, I had heard frequently of Ernest Hemingway's connection to this part of Arkansas. Like most, I initially assumed Piggott would be just another small town with a "Hemingway Slept Here" sign. Piggott wouldn't have been the first town to try to latch on to celebrity by overselling a one-night stay by some famous person. However, Piggott defied my expectations. I discovered that Hemingway spent much time in Piggott, writing parts of his greatest works in a studio in his in-laws' barn. Further, I discovered that the Pfeiffers contributed more than just a studio to Hemingway's career. They provided him both intellectual and financial support, which helped sustain him as one of America's great writers.

Hemingway first visited Piggott in 1928, having married his second wife, Pauline Pfeiffer, in Paris in 1927. During Pauline and Ernest's marriage, the two visited Piggott frequently, often staying for months at a time. Ernest was very productive in Piggott, writing portions of *A Farewell to Arms* and many of his short stories in the loft of the family's barn. Realizing that Hemingway was more productive when he had an isolated place to write, the Pfeiffers

converted the loft into a furnished studio in 1931. The gift of the barn-studio is just a small example of the Pfeiffers' financial support of Ernest. Pauline's uncle Gus Pfeiffer (a prominent New York businessman and philanthropist) provided homes, cars, vacations, and other assistance to Ernest, including completely funding the family home in Key West and the safari that became the inspiration for *Green Hills of Africa* and "The Snows of Kilimanjaro."

Arkansas State University has restored the Pfeiffers' home and Hemingway's barn-studio and opened them to the public. The museum is the only one in the country to focus on the Pfeiffers' significant influence on Hemingway during his most productive period. The museum also opens up new source material that hasn't been widely available in the past. One exhibit explores Pauline's unpublished African journal. Pauline was an accomplished journalist and editor herself. In his letters Ernest refers to Pauline as his greatest editor. The museum's African exhibit allows visitors to see Pauline writing about the same experiences as Hemingway. In this and many other ways, the museum emphasizes not only the financial but also the intellectual support the Pfeiffers provided Hemingway.

Since my first visit to Piggott, I've continued to follow, and eventually work and study at, the Hemingway-Pfeiffer museum. Counter to my initial expectations, I found that Piggott was not just a dot on the map but the center of a fruitful partnership between a prominent Arkansas family and one of America's greatest writers, a partnership that helped to create the modern literary world.

Adam Long
Alumnus
Arkansas Iota, Lyon College

God's Little Acre

As a psychologist, attorney, and professor, I have a profound appreciation for the importance of context in understanding history and recognizing its influence on the present. Although I try to avoid judging the past through the sanctimonious arrogance of the present mores, I often fail. At times I also gravitate to simplistic explanations that best fit my own ethos.

A trip to God's Little Acre, a part of the Common Burial Ground in Newport, Rhode Island, provided an opportunity to reflect on history and recognize its impact on my current experiences and challenges at my university just a few miles down the road. In this cemetery the tombstones of black slaves are clearly marked. In some instances the headstones of slaves and free African Americans are in the same area as European Americans. During the colonial period there were more slaves in Rhode Island than in any other colonies in the Northeast. Rhode Island figured prominently in the slave trade in the early days of the original colonies. This cemetery has become known as God's Little Acre because of the number of graves of slaves. Some tombstones, those with cherubs, reflect the workmanship of an early African American artisan Zingo Stevens. Some headstones lack the last name of

the person buried. Only the first names of the slaves and their masters are recorded. There are many graves of children. Although some monuments cannot be clearly read, many can, and the story they tell is one of intimately intertwined lives. It is irrefutable. The reality in stone cannot be denied. Masters had slave children. People owned people. Children were owned and they died in bondage. The owners believed themselves to be children of God, a sentiment reflected in many an epitaph.

It is important as we learn the historical facts that we also respect and appreciate the complexity of history. Not only did Rhode Island figure prominently in the early slave trade, but it was also the home of Quakers and many other religious minorities who spearheaded the movement for the abolition of slavery. Although this common burial ground is evidence of the horror that was slavery, there is also evidence of the human spirit that cannot be enslaved. There are African names that can be traced to specific West African tribes. Through the artistic creativity of Mr. Stevens on headstones and footstones, there are angels depicted with curly hair and distinctively African features. Some of the African Americans who were buried here were those who bought their freedom and owned businesses that contributed to the success of this colonial community.

I deal with the legacy of this history on a daily basis. Being reminded of the reality, the complexity, and the resiliency of the human spirit renews my commitment to continue to meet this challenge with patience, compassion, and the recognition that we are in the place that we are because of those who have gone before.

Bonita Cade
Professor of Psychology, Sponsor
Rhode Island Alpha, Roger Williams University

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