INSIDE THIS ISSUE:
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The College of Humanities and Social Sciences is a cornerstone of learning and research at George Mason University. Programs of study at the graduate level provide opportunities for career development and advancement, professional education, personal fulfillment, and participation in research. Through course work that emphasizes writing, research, technology, reflection on the past, global awareness, and leadership, undergraduates gain a broad foundation of disciplinary and interdisciplinary knowledge. All programs promote direct or indirect exploration of contemporary issues, as well as opportunities to apply learning in the community.

Visit chss.gmu.edu to learn more.
Dear Alumni and Friends,

In our increasingly globalized society, academia finds itself at a major turning point. Technology is rapidly closing gaps created by physical distance that previously precluded the connection and collision of ideas within international discourse. To offset that shift in the paradigm, we must instill in our students the importance of looking outward in all directions. Just as reflection on the past is a principal tenet of the humanities and social sciences, the future of academia rests on our vigorous exploration of the ideas new and old that exist in the planet’s many cultures and societies—their histories, economies, philosophies, religions, and their people. In doing so, we will enhance our ability to learn and evolve alongside other cultures while gaining a greater command of how our own society is perceived from the outside.

This issue of Cornerstone underscores the importance of adopting a global perspective. I’m pleased to announce four special features written by college faculty members. Influential blogger Tyler Cowen (Economics) offers his thoughts on the increasing wealth of China and Russia. Frequent United Press International contributor Mark Katz (Public and International Affairs) opines on the global challenges that will immediately face the new president following this year’s historic national election. On a lighter note, creative writing professor and book critic Alan Cheuse notes two compelling translations from the international literature circuit. And don’t miss creative writing professor Helon Habila’s original fiction, “Oil on Water.” This tale of two reporters might make you read the morning paper with a different perspective.

In Notes from the Field, 10 faculty members reflect on their Fulbright experiences. Many note how seeing another culture up close enhanced their expertise and their cultural sensitivity in the classroom. In the quest to expand one’s global knowledge of the human experience, the art of listening may be our greatest tool. Graduate student Nicole McCoy’s (MAIS) recent ethnographical study of domestic servants in Brazil serves as a refreshing reminder that the social sciences are foremost about people.

Mason’s diversity continues to be a highlight; we currently have students from 125 countries living and learning on the Fairfax Campus. In addition, students can take advantage of our study-abroad programs. One such student, Alex Sims (Anthropology), was kind enough to send me a postcard from South Africa this summer, and I’m pleased to share it. Finally, globetrotting alumnus and local celebrity weatherman, Brian van de Graaff (Communication), forecasts positive outcomes for the university when alumni stay connected to the Mason community.

Speaking of our alumni, we are proud to present the second annual collection of Class Notes. I hope you enjoy reading about each other’s success as much as I do. This college would not be thriving without your continued support.

Go Patriots!

Jack R. Censer, Dean
Reading Your Way Abroad

By Alan Cheuse

Trade publishing in America—the publication of hard cover books—began as a business to import work, mainly fiction, from England to the colonies. Ever since then the business has gone through great fluctuations. I’ll leave it to the statisticians to remind us just what small percentage of the overall publishing trade translations currently comprise, but it has in the past 50 years been mostly on the low side, though there have been decades with great flurries of translations, mostly of novels and short stories. In the 1950s, Kafka, as the late critic and novelist Anatole Broyard once put it, was the rage. And then came the novels of Thomas Mann, Jean-Paul Sartre, and Albert Camus. Another great wave of translations swept over us in the United States with the advent of the so-called “boom” in Latin American fiction. The work of Gabriel García Márquez, Carlos Fuentes, Mario Vargas Llosa, and to a smaller extent Alejo Carpentier took the place of the great European fiction writers who had preceded them a few decades before.

Right now we are witnessing another sort of boom, that of fiction in translation from China. (The Mandarin equivalent for the “boom,” or so my expert friends tell me, would be 百花齐放 or “zheng zheng ri shang.”) As a fiction writer who reviews regularly for a number of places, primarily National Public Radio, I find that when I choose a work in translation to write about, it almost always has been something out of China. In fact, the most recent reviews I did of books by non-U.S. writers—see below—came out of China. One of these, the novel Beijing Coma by expatriate novelist Ma Jian, deals with recent Chinese history, mainly the events on either side of the Tiananmen Square massacre, and the other, Wolf Totem by Jiang Rong, takes us to Inner Mongolia, where the Chinese were forcing their modern ways on a traditional way of life.

Why are publishers bringing out these translations about China? They hope we want to know about the subject. Anyone who begins reading either of these two fascinating new novels will know from the start that they do want to know.

San Francisco Chronicle
Sunday, March 16, 2008

Wolf Totem
By Jiang Rong; translated by Howard Goldblatt
The Penguin Press;
527 pages; $26.95

When Jiang Rong’s first novel, Wolf Totem, was published in China in 2004, it became an immediate best-seller, with more than 2 million copies in print. You don’t have to read very far into the book to discover why.

San Francisco Chronicle
Sunday, June 29, 2008

Beijing Coma
By Ma Jian, translated by Flora Drew
Farrar, Straus and Giroux;
586 pages; $27.50

Great books require great themes, Melville once wrote. So it seems fitting that Ma Jian, one of China’s finest writers (and now nearly 20 years in Europe as an expatriate), has taken up the subject of one of his country’s “great leaps” forward, from the abysmal days of the Cultural Revolution to its present-day ascent as a major economic power.

To read the complete book reviews by Alan Cheuse, visit cornerstone.gmu.edu.
As recent college graduates and other would-be graduate students search for their next big life adventure, some wrestle with the dilemma of serving in the Peace Corps or diving into a master’s program. Now, through a unique partnership between Mason and the Peace Corps, both the Master of Arts (MA) in Political Science and Master of Public Administration (MPA) programs within the College of Humanities and Social Sciences offer students the chance to do both—at the same time.

MASTER’S INTERNATIONAL PROGRAM
The Master’s International Program is a special agreement that the Peace Corps has made with 54 colleges and universities around the country, which allows students to earn a master’s degree while serving in the Peace Corps. Currently, Mason is tied for third place in the number of students currently serving in the program. The popularity of the Master’s International Program points to an increased interest in global competency in education on the part of universities and students.

Both master’s programs in the college are designed to allow students to incorporate two years of Peace Corps service into their degree trajectory. Students in the program complete approximately one year of intensive on-campus study and then serve for roughly two years in the Peace Corps. During their Peace Corps service, students participate in a long-term assignment related to their academic program and receive credit for an internship. Long-term assignments run the gamut from research papers to blogs.

READ CURRENT MASTER’S INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS’ BLOGS
Jenni Punchard (MA Political Science), El Salvador
globalgringa.blogspot.com
Heather Forrester (MA Political Science), Niger
peacecorpsniger.blogspot.com
Maggie Boehly (MA Political Science), Namibia
www.xanga.com/maggierosepc
Sarah Bergin (MPA), Suriname
mastersinsuriname.wordpress.com

WHY IT’S COOL
Upon completion of the program, graduates possess both academic credentials and international field experience. Students who choose to incorporate Peace Corps service into their master’s program will be eligible to receive special hiring consideration for federal government positions for up to one year after returning from Peace Corps service. The special hiring consideration, combined with a graduate degree, can enhance an individual’s career potential. In addition, the tuition for the internship credits is waived.

Students who choose this program will make an extraordinary contribution by teaching skills to people in a developing community, and while they will undoubtedly have an impact on others during their service as a volunteer, their experiences in their host communities will probably have an even greater impact on them.

The first two students to complete their Peace Corps service returned to Mason this fall.

LEARN MORE
For more information about the growing Master’s International Program at Mason, visit pia.gmu.edu. Started by the Peace Corps in 1987, the Master’s International Program now has more than 500 students and is helping the Peace Corps meet the requests of countries seeking community development assistance. More information can be found at www.peacecorps.gov/masters.

WHEN IT’S COOL
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Will Globalization Lead to More Democracy?

By Tyler Cowen

If there is one worry I hear about today’s world, it is the rising prosperity of authoritarian regimes. To be sure, nondemocratic rule is nothing new, but today China and Russia are becoming much wealthier than in times past. In economic terms, they are starting to advance on the West rather than lag behind it.

One common hypothesis is that countries become democratic as they become wealthier, which happened in South Korea and Taiwan. So perhaps Russia and China will follow suit, but I don’t think they will—at least not any time soon—for a few reasons.

First, the East Asian Tigers were part of an American economic and security orbit, and were determined to stay there. They were smaller countries looking to fit in, not larger powers looking to regain former glories. Furthermore, they feared China and saw democratization as one way to ensure America’s support on the broader global stage.

Second, the East Asian miracle economies were based on a relatively equitable distribution of wealth and decentralized entrepreneurship. Economic power was quite widely distributed, and it was only a matter of time before political power followed that same path. China and Russia have enormous inequities of wealth, driven in part by the corruption in their economies. While no simple connection links economic inequality and political inequality, neither China nor Russia are fundamentally egalitarian societies and their politics reflect this fact.

Third, in the case of Russia, much of the new wealth is based in natural resources. Resource-based booms are less likely to lead to democracy—just look at Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, or Dubai. State elites are keen to control the resource; they don’t want to democratize and give everyone input on how the revenue is spent. Furthermore, the resource of wealth gives them the capacity to buy off the opposition and suppress groups that won’t play along.

A good rule of thumb is that is you should worry when a state does not fund itself through broadly based income and consumption taxation. We all complain about taxes, but in fact when large numbers of people pay taxes, they also demand accountability from their government.

Finally, both China and Russia have unresolved issues of foreign policy and territoriality. China still claims Taiwan and also Tibet. Many parts of China would like to break away, and it is not clear how much the central government controls the provinces. It’s hard to democratize when you don’t know what lies at the other end of the process. China ought to be willing to give up many of these territorial claims, but of course it isn’t.

Russia lost the world’s largest empire less than 15 years ago. The Kremlin still tries to control events in the Ukraine and Georgia, among other parts of the former Soviet Union. As I write, the conflict with Georgia continues with the end unknown.

Sadly, Russia and China often combine the worst qualities of government management and capitalism. The other day, I read the following passage from an interview with Georgian energy minister Alexander Khetaguri:

“Georgia is a transit country. Through our territory went the Great Silk Road. And we have confirmed our transit potential more than once. Through our territory go the BTC, the Baku-Tbilisi- Erzurum, and the Baku-Supsa pipelines. Not only liquid goods transit through Georgia, but also dry goods by railroad. However, apart from the existing oil and gas pipelines, there is a potential for new ones. But they will only be considered if the oil producing companies themselves become interested in them. With today’s price for crude oil, the attractiveness and profitability of the BTC and the Baku-Supsa are obvious. Therefore, with the growing production of hydrocarbons in Central Asia, and in the Caspian region, new oil pipelines will undoubtedly be profitable. Therefore I would like to emphasize that all of the proposed projects are viable and have prospects.” (Source: www.neurope.eu/articles/88907.php)

Yes, it is true. Russia is interested in Georgia for several reasons. It not only sees Georgia as falling within its traditional sphere of influence, but also as revenge for American support for independence in Kosovo. Furthermore, Russia wants to stop Georgia from setting up competing pipelines, thus drawing revenue away from the Russian elite. The Russian intervention is motivated in part by profit. When a state does not rely enough on the taxation of income from
its citizens, we see another example of a bad incentive program. A government funded by a pipeline is a government with a big incentive to be nasty to its competitors abroad.

Russia’s foreign policy adventures are not increasing its prospects for democratization. Of course, America’s military adventures also have eroded the rule of law in our country, but at least we are fortunate to be building on stronger and better-aged foundations.

So what does it mean if China and Russia remain as autocracies?

First, autocracy is likely to find an increasing number of apologists in Western circles. This case is exactly what happened during the 1930s following the rise of fascist governments and even during the later years of Stalin’s reign. If there is a wealthy government somewhere in the world, there will be a set of foreigners who will adore the autocracy, whether for reasons of self-interest or misguided idealism. It’s not just that some intellectuals are corrupt; in the battle for ideas, humans really do look at the relative status of who promotes those ideas.

Second, the autocracies will in fact do well in a few select areas of policy. The Chinese government, which has little respect for the rule of law, has built an effective infrastructure. It’s much harder to scream, “Not in my backyard,” in a one-party system. The Chinese also have become the world’s leading patron of first-class contemporary architecture, as evidenced most of all by Beijing. No,

I don’t think the democracies should copy China’s ways of operating, but we can expect those highly visible successes to influence current debates in the United States. Just about every country judges itself relative to its peers, for better or worse.

When it comes to foreign policy, the United States and the Western democracies will find it increasingly difficult to get their way. Russia and China already have been obstacles in solving the problems of Darfur and Iranian nuclear weapons. China financially supports African dictatorships without much concern for human rights. All those episodes are why John McCain wants to start a new “league of democracies,” essentially as a way to cut out Russia’s and China’s veto power at the United Nations. That proposal is understandable, but in my view, such a move would only worsen Russian and Chinese paranoia, which is extreme in the first place, without yielding much in return. Without real Russian and Chinese cooperation, international problems are truly difficult to solve, no matter how we set up multilateral institutions.

We’re stuck in a difficult situation. The good news is that many more people are wealthier than ever before. The bad news is that the transmission of ideas about freedom and democracy has yet to keep pace with economic advancement. The university is just one of many institutions that has its work cut out for it in the 21st century.
No matter who wins the 2008 American presidential elections, the next president will face a host of foreign policy challenges. Many of these will be related to the Global War on Terror declared by President George W. Bush in the aftermath of the September 11, 2001, attacks on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon, which led to the ongoing military interventions in Afghanistan and Iraq. In addition, many other important challenges will demand the attention of the new president. With Congress, the American public, and U.S. allies less willing to support military intervention, the incoming president will have to rely more on diplomacy to achieve his objectives.

The Global War on Terror—the primary focus of the Bush administration’s foreign policy—is not just one conflict, but many separate ones with varying degrees of linkage to one another. The best known of these are the fight against Al Qaeda and its affiliates worldwide, the struggle in Afghanistan to suppress the Taliban, the various conflicts in Iraq (including Arab versus Kurd, Sunni versus Shi’a, and Shi’a versus Shi’a), the political vacuum in Pakistan that has allowed Al Qaeda and the Taliban to operate with relative impunity along Pakistan’s frontier with Afghanistan, tensions concerning Iran, and the Arab-Israeli (especially the Palestinian-Israeli) conflict.

In addition, other less publicized problems simmering in the Muslim world could easily break out or grow worse during the next four years. These include the ongoing conflicts in Somalia and Sudan; growing instability in Yemen, the southern Philippines, or elsewhere; and the unpopularity throughout the Muslim world of pro-American authoritarian regimes and anti-American ones (such as Syria) where the principal opposition is radical Islamist.

Another significant challenge the new president will face involves the rise of new great powers. An increasingly nationalist Russia recently used force in support of pro-Russian secessionist causes in pro-Western Georgia and insists that Georgia and Ukraine not join NATO. Russia also opposes the Bush administration’s plan to set up ballistic missile defenses in Poland and the Czech Republic aimed at Iran and aggressively seeks to maximize Russian influence over Europe’s natural gas imports not just from the east (the former Soviet Union and Iran), but also from the south (Algeria, Libya, and even Nigeria).

China is also becoming more powerful, more nationalist, and more active on the world stage, including through increased economic activity in Africa and Latin America. As does Russia, China appears to view authoritarian regimes with which America and the West are unwilling to work (such as Sudan and Myanmar) as an opportunity to extend its own influence.

Though both democratic and relatively friendly toward the United States, India will play an important role in international relations, as well as in American foreign policy. The possibility of a growing rivalry between increasingly powerful India and China has the potential for becoming a worldwide geopolitical competition, similar to the Soviet-American rivalry during the Cold War. It would not be easy for the United States—or indeed anyone—to manage this.

Nor can the next president afford to neglect what is going on in Africa and Latin America. Africa is experiencing economic development in some countries and ethnic conflict and even state collapse in others. While economic development has made greater progress in Latin America, its benefits have been uneven, thus contributing to the rise of populist regimes espousing an anti-Western model of economic development but which do not seem capable of fulfilling this, even where they possess great petroleum wealth.

Another challenge facing the next president will be repairing U.S. relations with many of its traditional allies in Europe and the Far East that deteriorated in the wake of the American-led intervention in Iraq. Relations with all our allies, though, will not always be harmonious because we have so many allies and they sometimes clash with each other, as well as with our common opponents. It is important for the next president to realize that because America plays such a large role in world affairs, one of the most important foreign policy tasks for many nations is to compete with one another for our attention and support.

The new president cannot afford to focus on just one foreign policy issue, such as the Global War on Terror. It is not uncommon for presidents to become engrossed by...
the one or two foreign policy issues that receive the most media coverage. Therefore, it is imperative that he appoint competent foreign policy advisers who are aware of the broad array of foreign policy issues, not just those in the news. Progress toward restoring America’s relations with its allies can also be made through a more cooperative approach to international environmental issues, closing down the Guantanamo Bay prison, and focusing on global issues such as the high cost of food and energy, the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, and human rights issues.

With regard to the Global War on Terror, it should be obvious by now that military means alone cannot win it. The new president would do well to keep in mind that the Cold War did not end through a military victory over communism, but through communism becoming thoroughly discredited among those who had previously lived under it. In considering American foreign policy options concerning the Global War on Terror, the new president would do well to ask himself whether they will serve to discredit radical Islamism or strengthen its appeal.

With regard to the rise of Russia, China, and India, in his 1987 book *The Rise and Fall of the Great Powers* (Random House), Paul Kennedy explains how one great power becoming overextended militarily allows for the rise of other great powers that are not. To the extent that American overextension allows other great powers to rise, that’s bad news for the United States. The good news, however, is that as some nations are increasingly perceived as aspiring great powers, nearby states are likely to fear them and hence be more willing to turn to America for support. The new president, in other words, must keep in mind that the rise of other great powers presents America with opportunities, as well as dangers.

In an international environment where there are so many challenges, America’s next president cannot afford to overestimate what the United States can accomplish unilaterally. However, with patience, persistence, and a willingness to work with others, much can be accomplished.
Notes from the Field: INTERNATIONAL EXPERIENCE

We asked faculty members, “In what ways does your experience as a Fulbright scholar affect your work at Mason?”

**Marion Deshmukh, History and Art History Germany, 2000**

I was fortunate to participate in a Fulbright Commission German Studies summer seminar. The topic, “History and Memory: Jewish Past and Present in Germany,” directly related to my teaching and research on German cultural and art history. Participants included political scientists and professors of literature, history, and art history. We spent several weeks touring historic sights, museums, memorials, and meeting with key architects, curators, government, and religious leaders in several cities including Berlin, Munich, Leipzig, Weimar, and Frankfurt. I have been able to incorporate the wealth of material into my class lectures, as well as use the information for my own research on several artists condemned by the Nazis in the 1930s and 1940s. We learned that each city uniquely commemorates or chooses to evade uncomfortable epochs of history. For example, Berlin erected multiple memorial sites and museums, while Munich barely acknowledges its role as the founding city of National Socialism. The Fulbright experience certainly enlarged my understanding of issues of the politics of memory in contemporary society.

**Roger Lancaster, Cultural Studies Mexico, 2006–07**

My international research experience informs not only my writing, but also my teaching. For instance, I spent a good slice of class time in CULT 320 Globalization and Culture talking about how neoliberal globalization has affected Mexico, the country where I was a Fulbright for the entire academic year. A quick summary: Select elites have benefited enormously; the urban middle and working classes have had a mixed experience, depending on location, access to resources, resourcefulness, dumb luck, and other factors.... But overall, economic growth has been anemic, social inequalities have increased, and the rural poor are being uprooted from the countryside at an alarming rate. Working class people with ambitions emigrate—but this social safety valve is increasingly obstructed by onerous U.S. immigration policies. I found it useful to give direct examples—quotes from native informants, as we say in anthropology—to give some life to the data.

**Hung Nguyen, Public and International Affairs Vietnam, 2006**

I went to Vietnam under a Fulbright scholarship to conduct research on United States–Vietnam relations. Because I am a Vietnamese American, my language capability and my understanding of Vietnamese and American cultures and societies gave me a clear advantage in conducting research and interacting with Vietnamese colleagues and students. The trust I gained and the personal connections I made gave me access to sources and views that could not be obtained under normal circumstances. While most of my important interviews were off the record, they provided me with precious information and a background that helped me have a better understanding of the current situation and made me a better teacher when I returned to Mason. The Fulbright award gave me an opportunity to learn new things, make new friends, share knowledge, feel useful, and be part of the program’s mission, which is to promote mutual understanding and friendship between countries and...
peoples. Working and traveling between two countries have also helped me have a deeper understanding of what this country has provided me—freedom and opportunities.

**Brian Platt, History and Art History**

**Japan, 1995–96**

I spent a year at the University of Tokyo, then another six months doing archival work in Nagano prefecture. The fellowship was crucial in several respects. First, from a logistical perspective: research in Japanese history requires an extended period of residence in Japan, using Japanese libraries and archives, and I could not have done this without the support of the fellowship. Second, this kind of extended period of residence helped me develop a more basic cultural literacy in Japan, one that can’t really be obtained without actually living there. Finally, the Fulbright fellowship provided a number of opportunities for me to network with other fellows in Japan, and those relations have continued to be meaningful both personally and professionally. In addition to better equipping me to field questions about Japan on a variety of topics, acquiring a cultural literacy of another country helps me appreciate the different cultural literacies that my students at Mason bring to the classroom. The experience of having been culturally illiterate in a foreign country and then acquiring a moderate level of cultural literacy reminds me of the fact that the cultural reference points and common knowledge that I draw from when teaching are sometimes not shared by my students.

**Benedict Carton, History and Art History**

**South Africa, 1992–93 and 2002–03**

Twice in my career as a historian, I have been a Fulbright fellow in KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa, where I conducted historical research in rural areas (i.e., collecting oral traditions from chiefs), archival depots, libraries, universities, and government offices. My most recent Fulbright enabled me to bring my entire family to South Africa, particularly my young sons, Isaac and Jacob, who became good speakers of the Zulu.
Survival through Domestic Service

Nicole McCoy Explores Poverty, Racism, and Sexism at Work in Brazil

By Brooke Braun and Anna Maurer

As a child, Nicole McCoy (MAIS ’08) spent half of each year in Brazil, her mother’s homeland. Her family, as did most middle-class Brazilian families, employed domestic servants—usually Afro-Brazilian women from the favelas (slums) of Rio de Janeiro. McCoy, as a typical child might be, was curious about these people who lived and worked in her home, spending a good portion of her childhood watching the action in the kitchen or exploring the backrooms of her family’s home where the domestic servants lived.

“I could never reconcile the fact that they lived in these tiny, windowless rooms, adjacent to and often open to the kitchen or laundry area while the rest of us slept on the other side of the apartment in spacious rooms,” McCoy remembers. “I don’t know if being American gave me a kind of comparative ability that I would not otherwise have had, but I always knew that there was supposed to be a difference between ‘them’ and ‘us,’ and I was never comfortable with that.”

She continued visiting Brazil frequently throughout her youth and still returns to the country each year. More than just a visitor, McCoy has been able to truly experience Brazilian culture. As an American living in the United States for most of the year, she has the ability to contrast the two countries’ cultures, analyze their differences, and see the racial and class separation in Brazil.

“As I traveled back and forth between the United States and Brazil, it was impossible not to notice the children and homeless adults in Rio. It is a social reality—not something swept under the rug or hidden away in shelters the way it is in the United States,” she says. “From the age of maybe 5 or 6, I remember being aware of fundamental injustices in the world and being concerned with war, poverty, and inequalities. So when I was asked about a potential topic for my thesis, thoughts of these women in Brazil just kept coming back to me. It was as if I finally had a chance to understand what has bothered me for so long.”

During summer 2007, McCoy, in pursuit of a master of arts in interdisciplinary studies (MAIS), with a concentration in women’s studies, again journeyed to Brazil, but this time in a different context—as a scholar.

McCoy’s thesis focused on how the expectation for many Afro-Brazilian women to become domestic servants affects the rest of their lives and the choices they make about education, marriage, and parenting. Searching for answers to a lifetime of questions and observations, McCoy spent six weeks interviewing women who live and work as domestic servants in the homes of middle- and upperclass families in Rio de Janeiro.

In strict adherence to feminist ethnographic methods, McCoy did not enter the project with a specific theory in mind.

“This is extremely important to a feminist analysis because it attempts to correct for the silencing of particular populations of people,” McCoy says. She mainly worked with a grounded theory in which the data speak for themselves, and patterns and conditions emerge throughout the interview process.

McCoy’s studies at Mason were a combination of women’s studies and sociology; the women’s studies concentration of the MAIS allows students to ground their studies in another area that complements women’s studies and do half of their course work for that area. McCoy designed a graduate course load that was heavy on theory. In the two years that preceded work on her thesis, she used her course work to explore different aspects of domestic service in Brazil, experimenting with the application of ideas from such theorists as Susan Moller Okin and Patricia Hill Collins.

“I wasn’t going in with a theory and trying to fit what I learned into that theory,” McCoy explains of her research. “The voices of the women were prioritized in my work.” McCoy began her research by interviewing women who used to work for her family and are now retired. They led her to other women who led similar lives. Overall, McCoy conducted in-depth interviews of 17 poor, black women who live in marginalized areas and work as domestic servants. According to McCoy, Rio de Janeiro’s numerous slums house all kinds of people: the poorest of the poor, teachers, drug dealers, domestics, taxi drivers, and all kinds of minimum wage or low-salaried workers.

A universal experience in the favelas is violence that stems from drug and gang activity and subsequent police
brutality. All the women to whom McCoy talked described a fear of stray bullets.

Most of the women McCoy interviewed are live-in domestic servants, and most have husbands and children of their own. They live with their employing family five days a week and leave Friday after dinner to spend the weekend with their own family, where they often still are responsible for such traditional female roles as laundry and cooking. All the women are from families that worked in the service sector, generally their mothers had been domestic servants. McCoy noted that racism and sexism in the Brazilian job market make it extremely unlikely that young Afro-Brazilian women will find employment in an office or shopping mall. At best, they may secure secretarial work, but it pays little and many young women find themselves supplementing these kinds of jobs with domestic work anyway.

Ultimately, a sociological and feminist framework for McCoy’s questions and observations began to emerge, particularly rooted in theory by Michele Lamont. Lamont’s theory of cultural repertoires helped McCoy understand that domestic work as an occupation stems from historical and social context, and in this case, poor black women draw on their embodiment of this occupation. In the face of extreme poverty, racism, and sexism, domestic service is the best and easiest option for survival. But, this occupation does not come without consequence.

“It is clear that the inevitability of domestic service influences and perhaps even structures other life options,” McCoy explains. “Education and the illusory possibilities for social mobility and the opportunity it offers is often evaluated by economic constraints; it is simply not worth the cost to educate a girl in a marginal school system with the prospect that racism will severely limit any advantages accruing to educational achievements.”

The absence of options influences how life is understood by these women. Much like the inevitability of becoming a domestic servant, inherent in their understanding of their womanhood is the fact that they will become mothers, even though motherhood is a burden in this context. It further compounds the necessity of domestic service to earn a living.

“Motherhood is experienced as not useful and is a frustration in the context of social and economic uncertainty and the pervasive violence and poverty of favela life. Its lack of utility highlights the tension between hope and reality where one’s hope in raising a successful child is mediated by an inability to fully protect and care for children.”

One of the women McCoy spoke with told her how, on her way home for the weekend from the house she works in, she picks out food from the trash to feed her family. “I have no shame,” the woman told her. “I do what I need to do to eat.”

Like motherhood, relationships and marriage are also generally understood as economic burdens and emotional drains, especially in light of high unemployment rates for men, frequent occurrence of domestic abuse, and uneven division of labor across the sexes. Because these women have a degree of economic independence as domestic servants, they tend to see relationships as options and not necessities.

McCoy thinks of the project as a feminist, interview-based sociological study in which she aimed to make heard voices that have been previously overlooked or ignored. Even though she conducted the interviews in Portuguese, she found that the women were intrigued by her white middle-class American heritage and the mere fact that someone like her would be interested in their lives. She noted that the women were open, honest, and reflective about their lives and their experiences as servants, including their feelings about the people for whom they work.

“I don’t think anyone ever asks them anything about themselves personally. I wanted people to see them as human beings,” says McCoy. She was particularly surprised to learn that, in a way, these 17 women accept that their lives are going to be difficult without a lot of bitterness.

This past spring, McCoy presented her work at the National Women’s Studies Association conference in Cincinnati. The reception to her paper was extremely positive, particularly from some Brazilian audience members. McCoy attributes much of her success to the theoretical insights of Nancy Hanrahan and her thesis committee. McCoy says she enjoys having opportunities to represent Mason at conferences, “bringing attention to the program I am coming from.”

McCoy is now pursuing a PhD in sociology at Mason. Her doctoral work will continue to focus on Brazil and Afro-Brazilian women living in poverty.

In 10 years, McCoy wants to be teaching full time, particularly in a sociology department that allows her to teach and conduct research in Brazil during the summer. She recently finished reading a series of historical fiction novels by Diana Gabaldon, and at the time of this interview, she was reading Hannah Arendt and Margaret Canovan’s The Human Condition. When she’s not studying, McCoy can be found playing with her five-year-old son, learning about wine, and cooking.

More information about the Women and Gender Studies Program can be found at wmst.gmu.edu.
Brian van de Graaff, BA Speech Communication ’97, delivers the weather forecast each day as part of the Storm Watch 7 team on the Washington, D.C., area’s ABC television affiliate.

Born in Arlington and raised in the rural communities of Culpeper and Madison, Virginia, van de Graaff was always interested in weather, broadcasting, and media. When it was time to go to college, Mason’s proximity to Washington, D.C., drew him to the campus, where he truly fell in love with the university. “Although a large school with a vast campus, the community felt tight-knit,” van de Graaff reflects. “I have many fond memories and great friends from GMU.”

The highlight of van de Graaff’s studies at Mason were his production classes, which gave him hands-on experience. “My professors would describe me as a solid student who was always eager to learn,” he says. “Communication professors Susie Tomasovic, Katherine Mangus, and Roger Smith had a unique impact on my time at Mason.”

Soon after graduating from Mason, van de Graaff began his first job as a marketing assistant at television station WUSA 9, which eventually led to his successful career as a meteorologist.

“I have always been interested in the weather. When I realized that I could make a career out of a hobby and a passion, it clicked.” Although van de Graaff has earned the prestigious American Meteorological Society Seal of Approval for television weather-casting, he feels his biggest achievement to date has been securing a full-time position in a top 10 market station before the age of 30.

What does it take to be a meteorologist besides a solid education in meteorology and a background in communications? Long hours and a packed schedule, van de Graaff says. “I wake up very early, around 2:30 a.m. and arrive at work by 3:30 a.m. to begin the intensive on-air schedule, which includes 28 television and radio updates in four hours.” He then makes school and publicity visits. Van de Graaff speaks at several schools a week, many times at multiple locations in one day. He travels to these locations in Storm Chaser 7, a vehicle equipped with weather instruments that serve as excellent tools to teach children about weather and weather safety. He then returns to the station for the mid-day news. “My work day ends at 12:30 p.m. unless there is an after-work community event.”

Van de Graaff lives in Fairfax, Virginia, with his wife, Kristen. When he gets a rare moment of free time, he enjoys working in his yard. “Now that I’m a homeowner, I spend a lot of time in the yard. I also love to travel and am often jetting off to some new location. While at home I enjoy a game of tennis with my wife or playing my Wii.” His recent trips have taken him to the Canary Islands, France, Italy, and Australia.

Supporting Mason is important to van de Graaff. An active alumnus on campus, van de Graaff helps out with a Mason summer camp for TV and is a frequent speaker in communication classes.

“I truly attribute my success in my career to GMU. The university provided me an excellent internship that turned into a job and eventually a career. Due to my proximity to the university, I see no reason why I wouldn’t be involved.”

“When I felt I was financially stable, I made the decision to give back. I hope to give another generation the chance to experience the same success I’ve achieved,” says van de Graaff. “It’s a way to show respect to the institution that molded me.”

Van de Graaff advises future Mason alumni to help the university stay strong and competitive. “A top-notch university will reflect well on you. Even a small donation can make a difference.”

To current students, van de Graaff offers one last bit of advice regarding their time at Mason, “The school has so much to offer. Be sure to take the time to take advantage of it all!”
Annual Donor List
JULY 1, 2007–JUNE 30, 2008

1968
Theodore B. McCord Jr.
Elizabeth B. Monroe

1969
Susan H. Godson
Joseph C. Howard
Keith A. Kenny
Helen R. Gleason White

1970
Patricia M. Cole
Kathryn H. Draper
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Enver Bill Hoff Jr.
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Mary W. Pappalardo
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Diana E. Rich
Jerome R. Schultz
Robert C. Sorgen
Nancy M. West
Raymond L. Willingham

1971
Capt. Joseph Connelly, USN
Robert L. Cushing Jr.
Karen A. Ellis
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Paul C. Gibert Jr.
Celeste M. Goldsborough
Thomas M. Holland
Christine F. Hughes
Barbara Kerner
Anne B. Kerr
Joan D. Lawson
Phyllis A. Maloy
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John C. West

1972
Barbara A. Leahy
John J. McCann
Timothy J. McCleerey
Duane E. Nystrom
Donald L. Peters
Robert S. Sargent Jr.

1973
Margaret M. Anderson
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Carolyn Gomez-Foronda, PhD
Patricia R. Grimes
Marlene Hernandez
Maureen L. Hunter
Rosario Jullano
Mary E. Richards
Conrad L. Ring Jr.
C. B. Sadlowski Switzer

1974
John E. Baker
Anita L. Champ
Beverly S. Ellis
Larry A. Gwensberg
Carl A. S. Coan III
Scofield Carpenter

1975
Kathleen Ann M. Baum
Michael R. Bull
Stephen R. Currie
Geoffrey W. Davenport
Powell L. Duggan
Edwin W. Gunberg Jr.
Bac Hoa Hoang
Joseph V. Laraia Jr.
William Olivari
Glynn A. Smith
Kristin B. Spencer
Walter L. Vernon

1976
William M. Berrigan

1977
Patricia M. Anderson
Donna C. Bestebreurtje
Michele A. Blank
Nancy M. Croft
Frances B. Currie
Carol T. Fitzpatrick
Marcia M. Harris, PhD
Mary H. Lannan
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Evelyn J. Penn
Jacquelyn J. Rivas
Robert G. Roomian
Patricia A. Sampson
Gay Cameron Snell
Christine C. Thompson
Eleanor H. Weinhardt
Kathleen D. Wisiackas

1978
Donna R. Bafundo
Susan K. Brennan
Scott K. Carpenter
Carl A. S. Coan III
Diane E. Dixson
William E. Freeman
Richard L. Fulton
Doris H. Gearing
Arlette M. Gillis
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Kevin R. Limbach
Patricia L. Mann
Maj. Ronald L. Martin

Bold—Members of the President’s Circle.
For a complete list of giving clubs at Mason, please visit www.gmu.edu/development/recognition.html.

Each summer many students and faculty members travel and study abroad. Here is a sample of programs that took place this summer.

1. **Beijing, China**: Intensive Chinese Language and Internship Program (Karl Zhang, Modern and Classical Languages)
2. **Buenos Aires, Argentina**: Intensive Spanish Language (Julia Ruiz-Ross, Modern and Classical Languages)
3. **Florence, Italy**: Intensive Italian Language (Laura Vinti, Modern and Classical Languages)
4. **Grenada, Spain**: Intensive Spanish Language (Ricardo Vivanco, Modern and Classical Languages)
5. **Paris, France**: Intensive French Language (Laura Fyfe, Modern and Classical Languages)
6. **Egypt and Tunisia**: Culture, Politics, and History (Sumaiya Hamdani, History and Art History)
7. **Sligo, Ireland**: Field Study in Communication and Journalism (Steve Klein, Communication)
8. **Milan, Italy**: Italian Cinema, Culture, and Society (Catherine Wright, Communication)
9. **Oxford University, England**: International Summer School (Robert Matz, English)
10. **Philippines**: Grassroots, Peacebuilding, History, and Culture (Al Fuertes, New Century College)
11. **London, England**: Internship Program (Suzanne Scott, New Century College)

The photos featured throughout this portion of the magazine are a representation of these programs.
Bold—Members of the President’s Circle.
For a complete list of giving clubs at Mason, please visit www.gmu.edu/development/recognit.html.

Please donate online at give.gmu.edu.

1980
Belen Baas
Tierney R. Bates
Richard A. Baum
Lorraine A. Bivins
Linda N. Blair
Christopher E. Brazda
Guy A. Cerato
Joseph D. Comtois, CPA
Daniel C. Duvall
Robert S. Gregorits
Charles G. Gundeberg
Patricia H. Henry
Susan J. Janson
Denise M. Kfoury
Gail Madden Shedlick
Elizabeth W. Jones
Maryann L. LaLonde
Westover
Suzanne Watkins Martinez
Adam L. Wieder
Laura E. Wills-Mitchell

1981
David R. Apker
Lucy C. Church
Nancy J. Cooke
William T. Coren
David Darmstadt
Mary F. Deornellas
Marlene E. Henriques
Frances L. Terry
Michael J. Hoover
Robert B. Kaiman
Lillian D. Kozloski
William M. Layden
David K. Lear
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Linda Privette
Sally L. Rademacher
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Anne A. Sears
Carolyn P. Siegel
Douglas E. Stanton
Helen T. Stevens
Barbara M. Sutter
Carol E. Tsou
Elaine C. Wade
Joe Anderson Wood Jr.
Karen C. Pirihalla
Henry J. Sanko
Christine F. Wolf
Rev. Stuart C. Wood

1982
Linda M. Abbott
Elizabeth J. Bertolini
Ann L. Brueen
Debora K. Coan
Cindy A. Crump
David O. Crump
Margherita M. DiCenzo
Barbara S. Falcone
Dennis J. Godfrey
Dianne D. Guensberg
Eric E. Herbst
Maryanne B. Kendall
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Mary L. McGilhen
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Elisabeth H. Oldaker
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Christine L. Plankett
Steven A. Riley
Farideh Schonberger
Corinne J. Sidener
Donna C. Singh
Richard M. Smith
Barbara M. Smith
John T. Tillery
Ruth E. Urich
Jacqueline R. Yeatman

1983
Philip J. Benedicto
Janice M. Bohall
Michael G. Cheek
Charlene S. Comtois
Betty J. Davis
Michele Eldredge
Audrey A. Fleming
Ingrid U. Geissler
Albert D. Hemphill II
Jane-Sue Huff
E. Marion Jacknow
Joyce H. Jones
Ronald D. Kaye
Walter R. Lawson Sr.
Christopher M. McGaffin
Nancy L. Mercure
Rosemary O. Pattullo
Sheila Prom Pelaez
Ann C. Powell
Derek C. Saldanha
Susan H. Sciria
Robert R. Stewart
Deborah W. Weinberg
Wendy L. Wolters

1984
Toby L. Altman
Ruth Sinberg Baker
Sheila M. Barrows
Angela C. Beachy
Herald G. Beale
Karen L. Booth
Andrea D. Bowing
John Edward Carlson
Arlene H. Conover
Cynthia E. Ehinger
Lisa A. Faust
Capt. Carter L. Greene
Anthony C. Homan, PhD
Brenda Y. Jones
Alusine M. Kama
Stephen P. Kirby
Alvin E. Kitchen
Patricia Klimkiewicz
Cecilia M. Lahiff
Myron F. Laible
Tjinta E. May
Barbara R. Miller
Robin J. Moscati
Liane P. Munnikhuysen
Tamara L. Sakuda
Laura L. Stefanelli

1985
Mark P. Addison
Panayiotis I. Alephoritis
Daniel L. Broyles
Hannelore B. Brunner
Margaret A. Carpenter
Valerie L. Cooley-Elliott
Lisa J. Danahy
Alicia H. Farrell, PhD
Frances A. Feiner
Sandra First
Leann J. Fisher
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Gail Madden Shedlick
Patricia L. Smith-Solan, PhD
Robert W. Thomas
Renee A. von Worde, PhD
James C. West

1986
Lynn B. Abbett
Margaret Downes Andino
Patricia S. Barth
Sara L. Barton
Hyonhui Byun
Tina A. Campbell
Carolyn H. Carlson
John D. Cheeseman
Jennifer D. Clemmensen
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An Excerpt from Oil on Water

By Helon Habila

A
fter a while the sky and the sea and the dense vegetation on the river banks all looked the same: now blue, now green, now blue-green misty. The whole landscape was a mere trick of light, vaporous and shape-shifting, appearing and disappearing behind the mist. We had been in the boat for more than three hours, going down river. Half-moon Island—named for its distinctive, half-crescent coast line—had long since disappeared in the distance measured by the smoky mist that rose from the sea banks, and from where we sat in the boat the mist looked like cotton candy, all tangled up in the mangrove branches, arching over the brackish swamp water like a bridge. Sometimes, entering an especially narrow channel in the river, our dugout canoe would be enveloped in the airy grey stuff so that we couldn’t see each other as we glided silently over the opaque water. I was wet and cold and hungry, and not for the first time I asked myself if coming with Zaq in search of the kidnapped British woman was wise after all. This was half-way through the adventure that was to last a whole week. The other journalists with whom we had set out from Port Harcourt four days ago had long since returned home, and I was sure the whole adventure (misadventure is a more accurate term) was now to them nothing but memory, anecdotal currency to trade for a drink on a lazy day in the press clubroom. Zaq dismissed them with a wave of his hand.

—That is the difference between great reporters and average ones.

Zaq was a great reporter, one of the best this country ever produced, and because of that I respected his opinion, but right now I’d take warm food, dry clothes, and shelter over greatness.

—What do we seek for? he asked. It wasn’t a question, but I answered anyway.

—The woman, and the Professor.

—Apparently, yes. But isn’t there something deeper that drives us forward, some sort of gravity, just like this water is driven by its own gravity, its own hidden purpose? Or better still, imagine this river is not this river, but the river of life itself, with the same pollutions, the same constrictions, and here we are, travelling on it. What we seek is neither the kidnapped woman, nor the Professor, her kidnapper, but meaning itself. We can’t help ourselves, it is something we have to do. You know that, you are perplexed by that knowledge, perhaps a bit scared by it. Don’t be scared. Everything will be fine at the end. His voice was deep, his stare far away, his posture as close to reclining as was possible in the boat’s narrow space, and he appeared for all intents like an ancient philosopher under a tree, addressing his acolytes. I was impressed that even now, wet and far from any mooring as we were, his mind still had the muscle to coin such extravagant metaphors. But like he said, I was perplexed, and more than a bit scared—and ultimately things didn’t turn out right like he promised, especially for him, but then maybe he wasn’t talking about himself but about me. Maybe he already knew by then that he had (to borrow Zaq’s metaphor) reached a point in his river that was beyond return. But I am running ahead of myself, so I’d go back and start, like I had been taught in journalism school, from the beginning.

I feel as if since we left Port Harcourt a week ago, I had done nothing but ride in boats on this water except for when I was on some pebbly beach waiting for the boat to arrive. The river had not changed much—except for a few places where it had grown darker and murkier with spilled blood—since that day when we left Port Harcourt. We left early. There were seven of us, six reporters including Zaq and myself, and the man behind the boat’s wheel, who appeared to be some sort of security operative—he wore a gun on his waist, and his green shirt and blue trousers and calf-length boots had the semblance of a paramilitary uniform. He looked intimidating, over six feet tall with a clean-shaven pate. I hoped he was good with that gun. I was a bit nervous, and I was sure the other reporters were as well. Two of them were from Lagos. They mostly kept to themselves, exchanging notes, whispering, whenever they looked at us, they did so with their noses up, as if expecting a bad smell to emit off us. They were overdressed for the occasion, in suits and ties and soft city shoes, as if they were going for a press briefing in a hotel boardroom in Ikoyi. I sat next to Zaq and introduced myself, shouting over the loud noise of the boat engine.

—Rufus, I said, from The Reporter.

continued on page 22
He nodded. — A good paper.

After that he went quiet, his arms tucked under his orange lifejacket, his red, teary eyes focused on the vast blue water leaping towards us. The oil company had provided the boat and its pilot, they had also cut down the number of Port Harcourt reporters from five to three, replacing the other two with the reporters from Lagos. I was surprised I wasn’t one of the two dropped. Perhaps they wanted someone young, with a fresh perspective.

I sat next to Zaq because I wanted to compare views with him, to see whether he thought we were in any danger from the kidnappers. But he kept his eyes on the water, appearing, at times, to be sleeping, his face lowered into his bulky, diaphanous life jacket. He looked queasy, already seasick. Looking at him, the thick grey tufts in his hair, the thick midsection resting in his lap—a testament to his legendary love affair with the bottle—I found it hard to imagine that this was once the most famous reporter in Lagos and probably all of Nigeria. A long time had passed since his days of fame though. Five years ago his brilliant career was ruined by a scandal involving drugs and a prostitute, after which he disappeared for a long time, and then a year ago he reappeared at the Port Harcourt Star.

I turned my attention to the Lagos reporters who were seated right next to the pilot. One was trying to make notes in the open, windy boat, pressing down his notebook with one hand, the other was shouting into his mobile phone, battling against the engine’s roar and the increasingly poor service. They hadn’t introduced themselves, so I had no idea what paper they worked for. Next, I turned and watched the white furrow following in the boat’s wake, curving when we curved, and I felt strangely soothed by the sight. Soon we were out of the open water and into the narrow channels that were like valleys bordered on both sides by dense mangrove plants or sometimes by unexpected cliff faces. Here the going became slow, and already we were more than an hour into our trip and the city lay far away behind us. There were no people to be seen here, only birds jumping out of the tall thin trees and flying away in a flutter of wings and leaves as we approached. Even the Lagos journalists had stopped their loud self-important whispers and were listening intently to the increasingly incoherent exchange between the boat pilot and the kidnappers on his two-way radio. When we asked him what was going on, he admitted he had no idea where we were going, he had been instructed to head for a general direction and at a certain point to call a particular frequency on his radio to be guided in. Now we were going about in circles, and we could hear the rising frustration in his voice.

—I am here now, I need a contact. Over! he screamed into the radio, maneuvering the wheel with one hand.

—What’s going on? Nkem the reporter from the Globe asked.

—No one is answering. He waved the radio angrily, as if aiming to throw it into the water. The channel had become narrower, and by now I wasn’t sure whether he knew exactly where he was. I was born not far from here, and I knew how confusing and indistinguishable the rivers and creeks could be. They are like the waters that run in them: turbid, deep, unknowable, and every tree and turning look like the last. We had been circling for hours now, and still we had not made contact. We made a turn and suddenly we were in the open water again. I could see the relief on the journalists’ faces—better to be here where we could see for miles ahead, away from the hot and claustrophobic creeks and the threatening swamps that had seemed to be closing inwards, bearing down on the boat. We went fast and straight for about 30 minutes, and suddenly we could see a chain of islands in the distance ahead of us—the tall oil palm trees were like flags waving us in. We passed the first couple of islands, and then suddenly we saw fire a burning on one of the beaches, right by the water. At first we took it for some kind of beacon signal, but as we got nearer and could see past the trees, more fires appeared. It looked as if the whole island were a flame. Now the pilot was talking with renewed animation into his radio. The journalists were standing, holding the sides of the boat for balance, trying to look beyond the trees on the beach. A wooden boat was making the fire on the beach—it was broken to bits, probably from a direct hit by a rocket. Inland, the smoke billowed high into the sky over the savaged, seared trees. Our pilot circled round the burning boat, the sweat running off his head and into his shirt, clearly uncertain of what to do next.

—This doesn’t look good, he said, turning to us as if for guidance. He shouted into his ineffectual radio, but only silence-laden static greeted his effort.

—Can we get down? We must take some pictures, Nkem said, already clicking away. The others had started jumping into the knee-high water. I was impressed when I saw the Lagos reporters also jump into the water, suits, ties, soft shoes, and all. Zaq was the last to get down. He took no pictures, instead he made notes in a tattered notebook as he walked around, raising his legs high over the wet undergrowth, sweating, breathing hard through his mouth. I stayed close to him, observing him as I took pictures.

—So what do you think happened? I asked him.

—This thing is so uncomfortable, he said, shrugging off the cumbersome lifejacket. When I repeated my question he turned his puffy, bloodshot eyes to me and shrugged,

—An ambush, obviously. Someone must have informed the soldiers about this meeting.

—You mean, someone in the kidnappers’ camp?

continued on page 29
1968
George Hargrove is enjoying the success of his children’s book, Shhhhhhhhhhh! He is planning his next book while teaching in California.

Theodore (Ted) Remington is retired and lives in western North Carolina with his wife, Peggy, and their two children, Theo, 12, and Sasha, 10. He is currently restoring a vintage home and car.

1970
Rod Tomkins retired in 2005 after teaching for 30 years in the Cherry Creek Schools of Colorado.

1974
Thomas Karwaki is the director, economic development, Port Gamble S’Klallam Tribe in Kingston, Washington.

1975
Margaret Dodd (van der Vate) Ritter is happily retired from college teaching and mental health counseling. She lives in Aiken and Hilton Head Island, South Carolina.

1977
Donna Gobie-Callender teaches special education at a private school. She has lived in Minneapolis, Minnesota, with her husband and two sons for the past 12 years.

Don Tuthill spent many years in service to his country, living in various exotic locales, before settling down to teach English in Florida. He has now retired to Redmond, Washington, to write and publish his poetry and struggle against Parkinson’s disease.

1978
Raimon W. Lehman moved to Louisville, Kentucky, in late July.

Ramon Planas taught with Fairfax County Public Schools, returned to Mason as an adjunct, and now continues to enhance the university as a term Spanish instructor.

1979
Mary Harrison retired from the Woodbridge Campus of Northern Virginia Community College last fall after 25 years of service.

1981
Mark Beck lives outside Lynchburg, Virginia, where he has served as a Baptist pastor since 1984. He is now a mental health professional at Lynchburg General Hospital’s emergency room and a licensed professional counselor in private practice.

William Buser was appointed director of sales and business development for Pertech Resources in Riverton, Wyoming. His youngest daughter began her education at Mason this fall.

1982
Norma E. Hols was proud to add her granddaughter, Monika L. Hols, to the family legacy of Mason graduates this past December. Her son, Eric, and daughter, Laura, are also Mason alumni.

David Robarge was appointed chief historian in 2005 for the Central Intelligence Agency.

1983

James C. Rousseau III and his wife, Ester, had their first baby, James C. Rousseau IV, on October 4, 2007, in Augusta, Georgia.

1984
Lauri Fisher Brown is the business development manager for a computer security company. With her two children attending the University of Virginia, she has begun to travel in addition to pursuing her other hobbies.

Cecilia M. Lahiff founded a public relations and strategic communications company in 2005. Her family has an established tradition of education at Mason.

Eugene “Gene” Lundgren is president and CEO of Aquarian LLC Entertainment and Productions Services.

1985
Clifford Kellett is a housing officer with the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development.

1986
Luellen Hoffman wrote Special Dream: After the Death of a Loved One, which was published in March 2008 by E-Book Time.

Kyle Renell graduated from William Mitchell College of Law in 1996. He works as a staff attorney for the Minnesota Department of Health.

1987
Tom Mullin was promoted to associate professor at Unity College in Maine, where he also serves as the program leader for the Parks, Recreation, and Ecotourism Program.

Michael P. Vendermark lives in Denver, Colorado, and enjoys knowing Mason alumni are all over the United States.

May Ann Wollerton works as a public health advisor in the Center for Devices and Radiological Health at the Food and Drug Administration.

1989
Kevin Baker is a manager with Deloitte Consulting after serving six years in the U.S. Army.

Jennifer M. Buchko teaches third grade in the Fairfax County Public Schools. She lives in Dumfries, Virginia, with her husband, Mark, and two children, Emma and Timothy.

John McKinley is serving as a Commander in the U.S. Coast Guard.

Peter Snow has been married for 21 years and has four sons. He works at an

Tell us what you’ve been up to.*

Alums, we want to know... where are you now?

» Have you moved?

» Gotten married?

» Had a baby?

» Landed a hot new job?

» Seen old classmates recently?

*Submit your class notes to chssalumni@gmu.edu.
In your note, be sure to include your graduation year, department, and degree.
Join the dean and fellow alumni at the third annual Dean’s Tailgate Party!

Complimentary tickets to Mason home basketball game
Food and drinks, music, cheerleaders
Giveaways, raffle prizes, and more!

Watch your mailbox for the details.

**Class Notes**

**Investment Brokerage Firm** and lives in Herndon, Virginia.

**Dave D. White** and his wife, Rebecca, welcomed their daughter Fern on October 14, 2007. Dave was awarded tenure and promotion to associate professor of community resources and development at Arizona State University in Phoenix.

**1990**

**Gail Barrett** is a high school Spanish teacher turned romance novelist. Her first novel was released this May, and the second will be available in November.

**Dave Bexfield** is a co-owner and managing editor of Nissan Sport, a quarterly magazine for Nissan, Infiniti, and Datsun enthusiasts.

**Todd Curlup** serves as the pastor of the Church at Convergence, a community in Alexandria that explores the connection between creativity and spirituality and celebrates artists and their work.

**Tracy (Howard) Short** is working as a marketing expert for IBM in Clearwater, Florida. She recently received Mason’s Admissions Volunteer Network Volunteer of the Year Award.

**1991**

**Paul S. Adams** recently finished doctoral work at the University of Massachusetts in Amherst. He is now an assistant professor of political science at the University of Pittsburgh at Greensburg.

**Kathy Albarado** is president and CEO of Helios HR in Reston, Virginia. Her article “The Need for Strategic HR” was published this past January in *Virginia Business*.

**Tracy Evans** was named a contributing writer for mommysrtrackd.com.

**Nevin Homberg** has been the accountant for the city of Ephraim, Utah, since July 2007.

**Charles A. Mitchell-Diago** is an architectural designer at Gensler in Washington, D.C.

**Elisabeth Muraski** received a fellowship to Hawthornden.

**Mary Summers** is the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) lead representative to the Civil Air Navigation Services Organization, Global Benchmarking Workgroup. She works in the Office of the Senior Vice President, Finance, in the FAA’s performance-based Air Traffic Organization.

**Mayella Valero** moved to Redondo Beach, California, in 2004 to live closer to family. She is the director of accounts management for SC Hunton & Associates, an insurance brokerage agency located in beautiful Palos Verdes Estates.

**1992**

**David Scott Barber** teaches English, creative writing, and humanities at Chancellor High School in Spotsylvania County, Virginia. He lives in Stafford.

**Brian P. Burns** was appointed deputy chief information officer for the U.S. Department of Education.

**Gary Clemens** is serving his second term in office after being re-elected last November to the Clerk of the Circuit Court in Loudoun County, Virginia. He also is president of the Virginia Court Clerks’ Association.

**Fred Foldvary** taught in the summer school of the Economic and Social Policy Institute in Serbia during July 2008.

**Harold Geller** was awarded the 2008 Faculty Member of the Year Award by the Mason Alumni Association. He also spoke at the Osher Lifelong Learning Institute in March 2008 and again in April 2008.

**Robert L. Rancourt Jr.** has enjoyed a successful law career and currently works on high-profile cases. He lives with his domestic partner of five years, David Villegas, in Riverside, California.

**Jennifer D. Washeleski** has been a member of the Foreign Service of the U.S. Department of State since 2002. She will marry Swen Janke on April 18, 2009.

**Matt Waters** was hired as the vice president of client development by American Target Advertising Inc. in Manassas, Virginia.

**Christy Wing** owns World Express Tours Inc., which specializes in tours of Alaska. She resides in Cary, North Carolina, with her husband and two children, Resse and Hannah.

**1993**

**Saadia Ali Aschemann**’s first volume of poetry was published by Firefly Publishing. She expects her second volume will be released soon.

**Zina Michael Beasley** and her three children recently welcomed home their father, George, after his 17-month deployment to Iraq. She home schools her children and is a contributing editor for a local news publication.

**Musa L. Eubanks**, Esquire, is with the law firm of Ashe Rafuse & Hill in Atlanta, Georgia.

**Michael A. Jefferson** works as a senior systems engineer with a federal government contractor in the Washington, D.C., area. He and his wife, Josephine, reside in Northern Virginia with their three children, Carter, Piper, and Mason.

**Melissa Krost** is a human resources consultant for the U.S. Office of Personnel Management Center for Talent Services. She lives in Atlanta, Georgia, with her husband, Jack.

**M. Gail Ledford** completed her PhD in public administration and policy from Virginia Tech in December 2007.

**Merideth (Cawley) Perkins** received her master’s in library and information science from Catholic University.

**John D. Wyatt** accepted a position with American Technology Services Inc. in Fairfax, Virginia, as vice president of the Network Services Group.

**1994**

**Nina Braun** works as a marketing specialist for a medical software company called eScription based in Boston, Massachusetts.

**Deborah R. Fair** was appointed to senior pastor of Main Street United Methodist Church in Emporia. She and her husband, John, are piloting a new project of the Virginia annual conference of the United Methodist Church in leadership of two churches that joined to form a cooperative parish for shared ministry in Emporia.

**Marcy R. L. Glover** was elected senior international vice president and regional vice president, southeast, for Phi Beta Delta, the honor society for international scholars. She is also the chapter coordinator for the Mason chapter, Epsilon Delta.
Adam Hulnick, based in New York City, has accepted a position with TNS Global Research as a web usability specialist.

Donna Kidd, associate vice president for budget and planning at Mason, was elected secretary–treasurer for the Society for College and University Planning.

Ann Garner Mills continues her service to the Mason community with her work in the University Career Services office on the Fairfax Campus.

Dana Pase is a certified instructor of the Bradley Method of Natural Childbirth and teaches in the Washington, D.C., metropolitan area. Her husband, Mike Carr, and son Christian welcomed Nathaniel to their family.

Cesar G. Soriano is a London-based freelance writer for such publications as USA Today, Lonely Planet, and Politics magazine. He recently cowrote three Lonely Planet books, including the first travel guide to Iraq in nearly 20 years, which will be published in early 2009.

Michael A. Tucker is a writer and media consultant.

1995
Shawn Brann works as a technical writer and editor for Northrop Grumman on an intelligence community contract.

Theresa “Gaffrey” Cogar is the mother of two young boys in Charlotte, North Carolina. She is also the executive assistant to two construction company owners.

Michael Langan’s first novel, Dark Horse, was published this past April, and his second novel is being released later this year. He continues his successful law career.

Kevin McLaughlin, his wife, Dana, and daughter Caroline Anne welcomed Meghan Kathleen to their family on March 4.

Greg Tidwell is an attorney with Progressive Insurance, primarily working in Washington state. He lives in northern California with his wife and two children.

Emmy Velarde and Agustin Zamora recently celebrated their third wedding anniversary. The couple has three sons, two of whom are twins. Velarde is a portfolio administration associate at the Inter-American Investment Corporation in Washington, D.C.

1996
Jenna and Tony Caudillo welcomed their son, David, who was born in 2007.

Tina McPherson was appointed the branch supervisor of the Jenkins Architecture and Art Library at the University of Houston.

Ryan and Kathryn Sneed welcomed their daughter, Carolyn Rose, on May 24, 2008.

Rufus (Russ) C. Taylor III is about to finish his PhD at the University of Oxford. He plans to leave England sometime in 2008–09 and settle in his new home in Decatur, Georgia, just outside Atlanta.

1997
Ken Bohall was appointed regional controller for the Americans with the Arup Group. He is a CPA and lives in Robbinsville, New Jersey, with his wife, Robyn, and daughters, Sydney and Katie.

Alexandra Huebner works for Grant Thornton LLP as a finance manager. She and her husband, John, welcomed their son, Peter Preston, in 2007.

Tim Martin lives in South Bend, Indiana, with his wife, Kathleen, and his daughter, Eimhean. He works for Notre Dame Federal Credit Union as the AVP of branch administration.

Tenille Parker works for the City of Falls Church and served as vice president for alumni involvement for the Mason’s Alumni Association. She lives in Northern Virginia with her husband and fellow alumnus, Jerod M. Parker (BS ‘97).

Anna Louise Pearman is a humanities professor at Vincennes University. She is traveling to China studying Mandarin Chinese and PhD-related topics.

Jamie Beth Schindler recently accepted a position with Planned Parenthood as director of volunteer programs in Los Angeles.

Doug Trout is married with three children and works for the Jefferson Scholars Foundation at the University of Virginia. He credits Maxine McMannamon as essential to his completion of graduate school.

Tracy Viselli started an online media company called Reno Fabulous Media.

Michelle Zeilman is the lead school therapist at CEG School at the Evangelical Children’s Home in St. Louis, Missouri. She is completing her PhD in education with an emphasis on counseling at the University of Missouri-St. Louis.

1998
John Gaudiosi cowrote a book for Random House, Electronic Arts: Celebrating 25 Years of Interactive Entertainment. He has also secured a deal to bring his documentary, Hollywood Goes Gaming, to the web. The documentary appeared last fall on Starz Entertainment.

Steve Hudock is working with Northrop Grumman Information Technology as the director of Enterprise Architecture Solutions in McLean, Virginia.

Steven G. King was promoted to deputy director within the U.S. Department of Homeland Security Office of Infrastructure Protection. He anticipates completing an MS in biodefense this year.

Dawn Lawson accepted a position as the deputy program manager in the Office of the Under Secretary of the Army (Business Transformation) in Crystal City, Virginia.

Bonnie B. Matheson is working on the final draft of her book “Ahead of the Curve.”
Calling all CHSS Graduates!

**Mason Students Need Your Career Advice.**

You are invited to join George Mason University’s Career Network!

University Career Services and the Office of Alumni Affairs jointly sponsor Career Network, a password-protected online database of alumni and university friends who share career advice with students and alumni. The information you include in the database is secure and only accessed by Mason students and alumni.

**Volunteers are needed from ALL career disciplines!**

The network is a great supplement to career counseling that students receive through University Career Services and allows them to speak directly to someone working in the field. Follow the link below to learn more about the different ways you can provide career advice to Mason students and alumni through Career Network!

To learn more and join today, visit Career Network online at careers.gmu.edu.

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**1999**

**Lee R. Briggs** works with the United Nations Development Program (UNDP) as a confidence building and development advisor in Dhaka, Bangladesh. Briggs is working hard to influence governmental policy change in Bangladesh.

**Kevin Greene** and his wife, **Becky** (BA ‘98), welcomed their son, **Brady Robert**, in 2007.

**Rod McFadden**’s article, “Reaching Out: Career Afloat Opportunities,” was accepted for publication in the U.S. Coast Guard’s *Proceedings of the Marine Safety Council*.

**Jennifer Monaster** graduated with an MBA from DePaul University. She is married to **Dieter Bardy**.

**Michael Porterfield** returned to the Washington, D.C., area after accepting the marketing manager position with Prospects of Wealth and Resources in Bethesda, Maryland. He has started an Official Adobe User Group on campus at Mason. He has been an Adobe user group manager for five years, beginning as a manager for a Macromedia Educational User Group in 2003.

**Sylvia (Wong) Wendel,** her husband, **George,** and daughter, **Claire,** welcomed **Emily Jee Yun** to their family on March 15, 2008.

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**2000**

**Amanda Marie (Bohrer) Thomas** and her husband, **Sam,** welcomed their son, **William Austin,** in 2007.

**Julie and Shawn Brann**, together with their daughter **Sophia**, welcomed **Tyler William** on May 2, 2008. The family resides in Prince William County, Virginia. **Shawn** is a technical writer and editor for Northrop Grumman in the Dulles corridor, and **Julie** is a busy stay-at-home mom.

**Julie Carpenter** began her position as executive director of the Betts House Research Center in Cincinnati, Ohio, in April 2008.

**Christian Cunnane** is helping to shape brand strategy, creative design and messaging at the Pappas Group, a growing brand and strategy agency in Tysons Corner, Virginia.

**Christin Dougherty** and **Kevin Dougherty** (BA ’04) were married on August 10, 2008.

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**2001**

**Francis D. Holder** is heading up and working on a project that consists of acquiring business as a copywriter/creative consultant for Dean & Partners.

**Tamara (Rollins) Kapper** is an investigator with the U.S. Department of Labor, Office of Labor-Management Standards in Atlanta, Georgia. She lives with her husband, **George,** and two daughters, one of whom is preparing to attend Auburn University with a full four-year ROTC scholarship.

**Amy Mbagwu** was named regional account director for Lifescript, a women’s lifestyle publisher.

**Trish Navarro** and **Daniel McKenna** were married on May 24, 2008.

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**2002**

**Emily Miller** recently celebrated 10 years with the Booz Allen Hamilton Information Technology Team. **Emily** lives in Vienna with her husband, **Brian,** and daughters, **Grace and Alexandra**.

**Michelle Smith** works for the D.C. Caregivers’ Institute, which won the 2007 Aging Innovations and Achievements Award from the National Association of Area Agencies on Aging.

**Michael Tolosa** produces online content for AOL, including articles, blogs, and video. He also creates podcasts for the D.C. Derby-D.C. Rollergirls and performs improvisation comedy at the Washington Improv Theater.

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**2003**

**Lee R. Briggs** continues to work with the United Nations Development Program (UNDP). His work on influence governmental policy change in Bangladesh was recently highlighted in the *Proceedings of the Marine Safety Council*.

**Jennifer Monaster** and her husband, **Dieter Bardy,** are expecting their first child, **William Austin**.

**Michael Porterfield** has started an Official Adobe User Group on campus at Mason. He has been an Adobe user group manager for five years, beginning as a manager for a Macromedia Educational User Group in 2003.

**Sylvia (Wong) Wendel** and her family welcomed **Emily Jee Yun** to their family on March 15, 2008.

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**2004**

**Amanda Marie (Bohrer) Thomas** welcomes her second child, **William Austin**, on May 2, 2007.

**Julie and Shawn Brann** welcome their second child, **Tyler William**, on May 2, 2008. The family resides in Prince William County, Virginia. **Shawn** is a technical writer and editor for Northrop Grumman in the Dulles corridor, and **Julie** is a busy stay-at-home mom.

**Julie Carpenter** continues as executive director of the Betts House Research Center in Cincinnati, Ohio. She recently announced her plans to expand the center’s operations to additional locations across the country.

**Christian Cunnane** continues to shape brand strategy, creative design and messaging at the Pappas Group, a growing brand and strategy agency in Tysons Corner, Virginia.

**Christin Dougherty** and **Kevin Dougherty** (BA ’04) welcome their second child, **Emily Jee Yun**, on March 15, 2008.

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**2005**

**Lee R. Briggs** continues to work with the United Nations Development Program (UNDP). His work on influence governmental policy change in Bangladesh was recently highlighted in the *Proceedings of the Marine Safety Council*.

**Jennifer Monaster** and her husband, **Dieter Bardy**, are expecting their second child, **William Austin**.

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**Sylvia (Wong) Wendel** and her family welcome **Emily Jee Yun** to their family on March 15, 2008.

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**2006**

**Amanda Marie (Bohrer) Thomas** welcomes her third child, **William Austin**, on May 2, 2007.

**Julie and Shawn Brann** welcome their third child, **Tyler William**, on May 2, 2008. The family resides in Prince William County, Virginia. **Shawn** is a technical writer and editor for Northrop Grumman in the Dulles corridor, and **Julie** is a busy stay-at-home mom.

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**Christin Dougherty** and **Kevin Dougherty** (BA ’04) welcome their third child, **Emily Jee Yun**, on March 15, 2008.

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**2007**

**Lee R. Briggs** continues to work with the United Nations Development Program (UNDP). His work on influence governmental policy change in Bangladesh was recently highlighted in the *Proceedings of the Marine Safety Council*.

**Jennifer Monaster** and her husband, **Dieter Bardy**, are expecting their fourth child, **William Austin**.

**Michael Porterfield** continues to manage an official Adobe User Group on campus at Mason. He has been an Adobe user group manager for five years, beginning as a manager for a Macromedia Educational User Group in 2003.

**Sylvia (Wong) Wendel** and her family welcome **Emily Jee Yun** to their family on March 15, 2008.

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**2008**

**Amanda Marie (Bohrer) Thomas** welcomes her fourth child, **William Austin**, on May 2, 2007.

**Julie and Shawn Brann** welcome their fourth child, **Tyler William**, on May 2, 2008. The family resides in Prince William County, Virginia. **Shawn** is a technical writer and editor for Northrop Grumman in the Dulles corridor, and **Julie** is a busy stay-at-home mom.

**Julie Carpenter** continues as executive director of the Betts House Research Center in Cincinnati, Ohio. She recently announced her plans to expand the center’s operations to additional locations across the country.

**Christian Cunnane** continues to shape brand strategy, creative design and messaging at the Pappas Group, a growing brand and strategy agency in Tysons Corner, Virginia.

**Christin Dougherty** and **Kevin Dougherty** (BA ’04) welcome their fourth child, **Emily Jee Yun**, on March 15, 2008.
Howard "Jack" Nevitt is married with two children. He owns and operates Virginia Digital Photo Safaris.

Elizabeth and Dennis Pereira welcomed their daughter, Veronica Homan, in 2007.

Mark C. Wallace was named Southside Virginia’s Favorite College Professor of 2007.

2002

Craig Ashbrook was recognized as the 2007 Phi Beta Kappa Faculty Scholar at the fall induction ceremony.

Julia Boulay is an independent sales consultant with Mary Kay Inc.

Rebecca Clemens teaches high school at La Lumiere in Laporte, Indiana.

Jesse and Amy Combs welcomed their first child, daughter Natalie Lane, in 2007.

Rachel Friend took a position last January as the Testing and Writing Center supervisor at the Manassas Campus of Northern Virginia Community College. She is engaged to be married in December to Washington Times sportswriter, Mark Zuckerman.


Robert Traynham, former communications director for the Senate Republican Conference, is now the Washington bureau chief for Comcast CN8.

2003

Michelle Cowin-Gantz has been the Baldwin Elementary School counselor in Manassas, Virginia, since 2003.

Jonathan Marlow was promoted to vice president of sales for Nationwide.com, formerly Nationwide Limousine, in Alexandria, Virginia.

Anthony P. Paduano is a patient advocate at Inova Fairfax Hospital. He has been appointed as a nonscientist member to the Inova Fairfax Hospital Institutional Review Board and also serves as a member of its Ethics Committee.

Susan S. Turnbaugh will receive an LLM in taxation from the Georgetown University Law Center in 2008. She is currently living in Centreville, Virginia.

2004

Robert Brzenchek began his own vulnerability threat assessment consulting company. He is pursuing a master’s in strategic intelligence with a minor in terrorism studies at the American Military University.

Charles H. Byrd II is working on a master’s in theology with the Theology Faculty at Oxford University in preparation for his DPhil.

Kiley Cogis was a semifinalist for the Kathryn A. Morton Prize in Poetry through Sarabande Books and the Cleveland State University’s First Book Competition in Poetry.

Courtney L. Jenkins and Russell W. Jenkins were married on October 6, 2007.

Richard Alan Massie has worked with the FBI for more than 24 years. He married Zanka Trencheva. They have three children together.

Danielle Morrison married B. J. Koubaroulis (BA ’04) last summer in Virginia Beach, Virginia. Danielle is a senior consultant with Booz Allen Hamilton, and B. J. is a sports reporter for the Washington Post.

Andrea Pokorny married Ryan Hancock in 2005. She received a master’s in education, curriculum, and instruction in 2008 and currently works as an instructional systems designer, creating classroom and web-based courses.

Brian Reddan graduated from Washington and Lee University School of Law this year. He has accepted an associate position with the firm of Clement & Wheatley in Danville, Virginia.

Kathleen Toomey was a finalist in the Tarrt First Fiction Award for her short story collection Combat Town. Her story “Quality of Life” will be published in the collection Tarrts Four.

Alexi Valencia married Elizabeth Rommel this past June.

2005

Katherine M. Bennett received a master of education in special education from Vanderbilt University. She has accepted a teaching position at Vanderbilt Psychiatric Hospital, working with 4- to 12-year-old patients. She plans to take the exam to become a board-certified behavior analyst.

Brian Brodeur’s first collection of poetry, Other Latitudes, has been chosen by Stephen Dunn as the winner of the University of Akron Press’ 2007 Akron Poetry Prize. It will be published in the Akron Series in Poetry in October 2008.

Katherine D. Fisher is working to have her thesis on Thomas Nelson turned into a feature film or documentary. She is senior technical writer for Advanced Technology Systems in McLean, Virginia.

Jennifer Furlong is director of academic support for Embry-Riddle Aeronautical University in Savannah, Georgia. She is also a part-time adjunct at Savannah College of Art and Design, Columbia College, and Savannah Technical College.


2006

Adrienne C. Blaylock started her master’s in teaching at Virginia Commonwealth University this fall.

Katie Camden is engaged to marry Jesse P. Tillack (BA ’08) in Chesterfield, Virginia. She works on casualty claims with Norfolk Southern Corporation in the Law Department.

Stacy Bromley Cheetham is married to Rick Cheetham and lives in West Chester, Pennsylvania. She works as an account executive with the Industrial Supply Association and plans to sit for the certified association executive exam.

Charlotte Crowley was promoted to senior consultant at Booz Allen Hamilton and finished a graduate program in intelligence analysis at the University of Maryland, College Park.

Aria Gee is relocating to New York City from Northern Virginia to work as director of student affairs in Harlem Village Academy High School, a highly respected and innovative preparatory charter academy for inner-city youth.

Christina Gurick has worked at the British Embassy in Washington, D.C., for the past two years. She has been accepted into the London School of Economics and Political Science to earn a master’s in public policy.
Megan Ibbotson works at the U.S. Department of Education in Washington, D.C., in the Office of Special Education and Rehabilitative Services. She also is pursuing a master’s in school counseling at Mason, while serving as the secretary/treasurer for Chi Sigma Iota.

Lindsay Jefferies is a second-year law student at the University of Richmond School of Law. This past summer, she clerked for the Transportation Security Administration’s Office of the Chief Counsel.

Lucy Marquez will marry German Vasquez at Mt. Calvary Community Church of Alexandria, Virginia.

Beth Rosenberg is now the continuum of care coordinator with the Loudoun County, Virginia, Department of Family Services.

Lauren Vessey works for the United Way of the National Capital Area as an accounts receivable assistant.

Julie Weber married Kevin Gallagher on June 21 in Georgetown and honeymooned in Tahiti before opening a new start-up focused on creative development.

2007

Krista Noelle Boyd accepted a position with the Federal Bureau of Investigation in Washington, D.C.

Bethany McCracken Burroughs works for Guidance Software in Dulles, Virginia. She has been married for over a year and is still best friends with Em Gaziano.

Patrick Delaney works with a boutique public relations firm, located in Bethesda, Maryland, that specializes in broadcast PR.

Allison Fine is living in Chicago, working in subscription sales for the Goldman Theatre. She continues to write and has submitted several works for publication. Allison also performs at the Gallery Cabaret.

Kathy Hamby joined Performance Food Group as a customer service and compliance analyst in Richmond, Virginia.

Cory McConnell was appointed regional counselor for Phi Sigma Kappa. He has taken a position with ICF International as a business technology analyst.

Michael Meadows is a first-year learning specialist at Gar-Field Senior High School in Woodbridge, Virginia. He is also the school’s head junior varsity baseball coach.

Laura Messer is employed by the Office of Economic Development for James City County in Williamsburg, Virginia.

2008

Laura G. Montoya is a project manager in Cochabamba, Bolivia, with Que Roco, the U.K.-based children’s nonprofit organization.


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The MASONLine Alumni Directory allows you to search for classmates and update your contact information with the click of a mouse. Receive all the latest news, events, and happenings at your alma mater, including the Mason Spirit magazine and the monthly e-newsletter, MasonWire.

www.gmu.edu/alumni
www.gmu.edu/alumni/alumnidir.html
— Someone who knew where and when.

The island seemed uninhabited, as if the people, with their chickens and goats and pots and pans, had escaped rattleless in their dugout canoes after the first shot was fired. We moved inwards gradually, pushing aside wet leaves and tendrils, looking at the signs of carnage. Trees lay on the ground, cut in half, dripping vital sap, like fallen soldiers on a battlefield. The smell of burning hung in the air. In the centre of a compound, a hut had been hit square on its conical roof, the thatch had caved inwards, and now the grass and its support all lay in a big pile of ash in the middle of the hut. Household utensils were scattered around the compound, pots, pans, plastic buckets. Zaq was kneeling somewhere in the bush talking to the boat pilot, pointing at something in his hand, when I joined them I saw that he held a spent cartridge.

— What kind of gun would you say? he asked the pilot.
— AK47. It is their gun of choice.
— So there was a gun fight? I asked, scribbling in my notebook.
— Not much of a fight. They didn’t know what hit them. They were taken by surprise either by a gun helicopter or more likely a gunboat. The boat on the beach was the first to go and then the huts.

One of the men gave a shout from behind a tree and when we went there we found the journalists in an excited huddle, cameras flashing. A dead body in a torn blue shirt. It was half-covered by bamboo leaves, and so the torn stomach was only partially visible, but that was enough. Undigested food mixed with blood covered the grass around the corpse; flies hovered and descended, creating a moving cloud over the body. His face was squeezed in a grimace of pain, a voiceless howl, as if he saw the projectile screaming towards him just before it hit him. He looked young, not more than twenty. Not far from him, two more bodies lay in the bushes, bloody, broken, and awkward. I moved away from the group and faced the water, visible in the distance, and took a deep breath and that was when I saw Zaq. He was bent over in a bush not far from me, retching his guts out. He finished and stood up, his face wet with sweat, wiping the vomit from his mouth with a white hanky. He saw me looking at him and managed a weary smile. He lifted his hand weakly and pointed towards the boat, then he set off.

***

— I know your editor, George. We were reporters together in Lagos, a long time ago, Zaq said. We were sitting in the boat, facing each other. From behind the trees, we could hear the excited voices of the reporters as they took pictures. Zaq was sitting on the same seat he came in, but this time he was leaning weakly against the edge of the boat, still recovering from his retching fit. I was facing him, draining the water from my shoes.
— I see, I said.
— You are very young, he went on. The motion of the waves gently raised and lowered the boat, a peaceful and soothing experience after the visual violence we had just witnessed.
— Yes, I said.

I told him how chance had played a hand in my being here. A week ago, the invitation—written in black ink on a 10-inch-square handbill—to reporters to come and interview the kidnapped British woman hung unanswered on the notice board next to my editor’s office. The Reporter was the third largest paper in Port Harcourt with lots of experienced reporters, and ordinarily such an important assignment wouldn’t have come my way. But fate began its intervention a month ago when two reporters were killed after answering a similar invitation. They had gone deep into the delta marshes to interview five foreign hostages taken from their offices at gunpoint by masked gunmen. Usually, after a kidnapping, the kidnappers would invite a select team of reporters to their swamp hideouts to view the hostages and confirm that they were alive and unharmed, after which the militants would make long speeches about the environment and their reasons for taking up arms against the oil companies and the government, and finally send a ransom demand through one of the reporters. After a week or so, depending on how quickly negotiations go, the oil companies pay up, the hostages are set free, unharmed, each with his bag chockfull of anecdotes. But this time, things didn’t quite work out as expected. One of the hostages, a desperate Filipino contractor, perhaps doubtful of ever regaining his freedom, had suddenly bolted and attempted to make off in one of the boats waiting to take the reporters back to Port Harcourt. He didn’t get far. The militants, in black overalls, their faces covered in masks, fired wildly, afterwards three bodies lay dead on the pebbly beach, one was the Filipino and the other two were the unfortunate reporters.

And so, understandably, this time the invitation hung unanswered in front of my editor’s office.
— I don’t blame you for holding back, but I hate to see the other papers out-scoop us, the editor said, taking down the notice.
— The event is tomorrow, and already three reporters have signed up, from the Globe, the Voice, and the Star. He laughed. — Guess who from the Star? Zaq. I didn’t even know he was still alive.

Zaq smiled when I said that. — George and I used to work for rival papers. I always beat him to the scoop.

I was standing with the other reporters in the little passage between the editor’s office and the newsroom,
Oil on Water, continued from page 29

listening, avoiding the editor’s eyes, but when I heard the name Zaq, I stepped forward.
—I’ll go.

***

Later, Zaq would tell me how he came to volunteer. Two days before I volunteered, his editor, who was also the Star’s proprietor, had walked into his office, his face nervous with excitement, and said, —Two men are here to see you. They are in my office.

Two white men. Zaq recognized one of them. His face alongside his kidnapped wife’s had been in all the national dailies and on TV. Only yesterday Zaq had written an angry editorial titled, “Freedom Fighters or Gangsters?” condemning the rising indiscriminate in the ranks of the militants. He had written it after a seventy-year-old woman and a three-year-old girl had been kidnapped for ransom. Zaq said it was hard to tell anyone who the true freedom fighters were, and if they continued like this, no one would care to know anymore.

—I read your column, and I must say I like what you are doing, the husband said, coming forward, offering Zaq his hand. Zaq took the hand, blinking in the strong light coming in through the open windows. He was badly hungover. The editor hovered in the doorway in his rumpled suit and tie, the well-polished black shoes, and thought, diplomatic service, most likely security section.

—What can I do for you? Zaq asked, still standing, scratching his stubbles. His eyes were red and teary from gazing all day into the computer screen.

—I am..., the husband began, but Zaq said, —I know who you are. What can I do for you?

The husband sighed. His eyes went to the seated man as if seeking assistance. The man nodded and stood up.

—Dan here is a great admirer of your writing, and it is his idea that we come to you and ask you to go with the journalists to confirm that his wife is still alive.

Zaq turned to Dan, as if waiting for him to assent to what had just been said. Dan’s eyes were baggy, red, his shirt rumpled, he looked like a desperate man, ready to try anything in the hope of getting his wife back.

—What good will that do? I am just a desk journalist. Zaq spoke with abruptness, a habit he had for masking his stunted social skills.

—I went to Leeds, same as you, the husband said.

Now black suit took the husband’s arm, as if to say it was all a bad idea anyway and it was time to go. But Dan continued, looking at Zaq. —I graduated five years after you, so we never met. But I know you went there, I saw it when I was going through your background. I need someone I can trust. I wish I could go myself, but my people think there’s a chance I could get kidnapped as well.

—Well, Zaq, what do you say, the editor said, coming over, clapping a fat hand on Zaq’s shoulder. Zaq was looking at the dirty carpet, as if ashamed he couldn’t be of help. Black suit led the husband towards the door.

—Gentlemen, thanks for your time. Please, this must remain between us...

—I’ll go, Zaq said. The men stopped at the door, the husband eagerly turning back and taking Zaq’s hand. He brought out a picture from his pocket. Zaq took it. She was a pretty woman, brunette, and in the picture she looked young, carefree, smiling confidently into the camera. Zaq guessed it was taken when she was younger, perhaps at university.

—It’s been a week now, and so far there have been three ransom requests by three different groups. This is a chance to make contact with the real kidnappers. We’ll negotiate, as long as she is alive, we will pay...

—Just confirm she is alive, take pictures, etc., and we’ll take it from there. It should be easy. You leave in two days, early, and by sundown you are back. Of course, we are willing to make a decent payment for your troubles.

—This is a great opportunity, Zaq, the editor said after the men had left, shaking Zaq’s hand excitedly.

—Don’t forget to take our subscription form when next you meet them.

—For God’s sake, Beke, the man’s wife’s been kidnapped.

—I know, but how often does the oil company come knocking on your door, asking for a favour? We are talking petrodollars here! We mustn’t miss our chance. I can imagine the headlines already. This will be the making of us. Oh, and make sure you write your columns before you leave.

He led Zaq back to his tiny windowless office and stood at the door watching as Zaq cleared his table and picked up his jacket.

—You are not going home, are you? The day is not over yet. Who will write the editorial, the Metro column, the book review?

Zaq brushed past him. —Why don’t you write it yourself, just for a change?

***

Now sitting in the boat, his voice rising and falling as if in sympathy with the wave motion, Zaq lit a cigarette and offered me one. I didn’t smoke, but I took one anyway. He blew smoke into the air and said, —All the time I was sitting in that airless, windowless office, I was waiting for
someone, something, to come and compel me out of that place. Some god from a machine, as in the ancient plays. I didn’t have the contrivance or the energy to do it, it had to be from outside. We all have such fortuitous moments, such calls, but often the call gets lost in the inertia of daily life, the quotidian of existence, and we miss it. I left that office that day knowing I’d never go back again. That phase of my life is over.

—So, where do you think she might be?

He asked. He was staring at the scum on the surface of the water as it washed against the boat, leaving a bubbly film of oil on the wood.

—She wasn’t here in the first place, that’s for sure. My guess is that the bodies out there were our escorts to where the world of oil on the wood.

—She wasn’t here in the first place, that’s for sure. My guess is that the bodies out there were our escorts to wherever she is being held. I felt pleased he wanted my opinion.

—It cannot be far from here.

—What of the soldiers?

—Also not far from here. Still patrolling, trying to find the hideout. And my opinion is that we should be heading away from here as soon as we can. We don’t want to be caught in crossfire between the soldiers and the kidnappers.

—You think so? he asked, opening one eye to look at me.

—Yes.

—So, why don’t you tell them?

Now Zaq appeared nervous. He sat upright, looking around. I nodded. He kept looking at his watch and then towards the voices hidden behind the dense foliage.

—Tell me about yourself, you seem to know a lot about the kidnappers.

I shrugged. —I am from these parts, a lot of them went to school with me. I could have ended up one of them, but...

—But what?

—I don’t know. Chance, fate.

—You believe in fate?

—Don’t you?

—To some extent. Do you feel fated to be here, for this?

Again I shrugged, unsure of where he was going. He just told me he felt that chance meant for him to be here, to leave his office never to return.

—I wonder what she’d say about that. Was she fated to end up here, like this? he said.

She had been taken while out shopping, according to the papers. The police had declared her driver a person of interest and were still hunting for him. Her husband, Daniel Thompson, was an engineer with Shell, the biggest oil explorer in these regions. She had been in the country only five months. What could fate possibly want with her in these oil-polluted waters? Fate might want to show her the carcasses of fish and crab and water birds that floated on the deserted beaches of these tiny islands every morning, killed by the oil her husband was helping to produce. Who knows with fate?

—Tell me more about..., Zaq began, then stopped, staring past me at the path leading to the island and the men whose voices, I realised, had suddenly gone quiet. Then, just before I turned to see what he found so arresting, I heard the command, —Oya, move faster.

The men were returning, their hands raised above their heads. They were moving in a single file towards us, flanking them were figures in black, wearing masks over their faces, their guns pointing at the reporters. There were about five of them, one moved forward and pointed the gun at us.

—You two, get down. Now.

We raised our hands and joined the others by the water. In the total silence, we watched the incoming tide bring the debris covered in oily film to deposit at our feet. Still holding their guns on us, the men climbed into our boat one by one.
language. I speak, read, and write in Zulu, so it was a wonderful experience for me to communicate with my own children in the language of my research. Above all, my sons’ fluency enhanced my relationships with a range of wise elders in rural KwaZulu-Natal. I gained deeper insights into Zulu family dynamics, past and present, by watching my sons communicate in Zulu with these esteemed older people. I think the greater cultural fluency I gained enables me to explain more clearly to my students how crucial family and spiritual relationships function in Zululand and sub-Saharan Africa more broadly. In one of my courses on the history of South Africa, I often discuss Zulu idioms that describe the importance of filial piety, elder mothers, marriage arrangements, rain-making, and so on. By doing so, I hope that my class considers carefully what is unique about Zulu power dynamics and what is profoundly universal (and accessible) about them.

“...acquiring a cultural literacy of another country helps me appreciate the different cultural literacies that my students at Mason bring to the classroom.”

—BRIAN PLATT, HISTORY AND ART HISTORY

Michael G. Chang, History and Art History
People’s Republic of China, 1996–98
Living and working in the People’s Republic of China (PRC) in 1992–93 (Harbin) and again in 1998 (Beijing) introduced me firsthand to the daily dilemmas and confusions experienced by many ordinary Chinese living through a historic and ongoing transition from state socialism to a more fully market-oriented economy. As an advanced language student and then as a Fulbright scholar in Taiwan, I pondered the significance of the then-unfolding Asian financial crisis, calls for Taiwanese independence, Hong Kong’s imminent return to the PRC, and official slogans such as “one country, two systems,” not as tidy abstractions but rather as immediate and pressing concerns in the lives of individual people I knew. The intensity and rapidity of change that I experienced in my years of studying and living abroad, on both sides of the Taiwanese Strait, have instilled in me a deep appreciation for the enormity, complexity, and diversity of this entity called “China,” a sensibility that I constantly try to convey to others who seek to understand China, both inside and outside the classroom.

Rex Wade, History and Art History
Finland, 1972
I was a Fulbright research scholar in Finland for seven months. The Helsinki University library was an official depository library during the years Finland was part of the Russian empire and thus holds a magnificent collection on 19th- and early 20th-century Russia. It was a wonderful library to work in and moved me along on researching and writing my second book and some articles. I have returned for later research there. I also formed friendships with Finnish scholars and some other American and British academics who were working there at the time, some of which are still intact more than three decades later. Even though my Fulbright preceded my coming to Mason, it was extremely valuable for my long-range professional career and still informs my teaching and scholarship to the present here.

Karen Rosenblum, Sociology and Anthropology
Japan, 2006
I have become a much less U.S.-centered sociologist, which I suspect would never have happened without the Fulbright experience. Beyond that, the opportunity to teach and live in Japan made me appreciate the depth and complexity behind the idea of cultural difference. Now I can at least begin to understand what an uphill climb is being accomplished by Mason students who grew up abroad. I had always thought the task was primarily learning English, now I know it is about finding a way to understand and bridge truly different core values and assumptions. No small task!

Mark Goldin
Modern and Classical Languages
Spain, 1968–69
I wouldn’t be teaching Spanish today and probably wouldn’t be at Mason if not for my Fulbright fellowship teaching English in Spain a long time ago. I had taken a lot of Spanish classes as an undergraduate and graduate student, and my dissertation applied a then-new theory to Spanish syntax. Having finished my graduate degree just prior to the grant, I had to look for something to do on my return to the states. In the pre-Internet days, it wasn’t easy to know where opportunities were available, but a letter-writing campaign netted me a few interviews for which I traveled home during the winter holidays. By spring, I had received an offer to teach in the Spanish department of a large midwestern university. The department had never hired anyone who had majored in another field, but they were impressed by my dissertation and my Fulbright teaching in Spain. Over time, my research shifted more toward Spanish, and I was able to establish my scholarly reputation. A few years later, I was pleased to come to Mason to help develop the Spanish graduate program. Over the years, I’ve also coordinated the undergraduate major program and the basic Spanish language program.
Dear Dean Censer:

Sawubona (Hello)! I’m in South Africa this summer and really enjoying myself! I’m working with the Building Bridges Program, an initiative from Mason’s Multicultural Research and Resource Center. Building Bridges seeks to establish a link between Mason and the University of KwaZulu-Natal (UKZN) in Durban, allowing students to make academic and cultural connections. Three students, as well as Mason faculty and staff, are working on the pilot of Building Bridges here by focusing on culture and HIV/AIDS.

The academic portion of the program focuses on culture, identity, and race, and how each plays into health behavior and the delivery of health care. At Mason, I study anthropology and am on a premedicine track, so the connection between my course work in the United States and what I’ve learned here in Durban has been phenomenal. This summer’s class has helped me imagine what I can do in the future with medicine. I know I will incorporate these experiences into my future work.

UKZN is in a suburban setting, so we have become pretty familiar with this part of town. In addition to academics, we’ve been immersed and engaged in Zulu culture.

Through home-stays, we’ve had a chance to see the many different parts of Durban. Earlier in our trip, we had a home-stay in Zululand and the chance to learn about rural culture and family structure. This past weekend, we had home-stays in Umlazi Township, the second largest township in South Africa, where we spent time with South African youth and their families. I was surprised that my hosts had just as many questions for me about U.S. culture as I had for them. Many of our conversations compare race relations, HIV, and politics in the United States and South Africa.

We’ve also had volunteer opportunities; my placement was with the Dream Centre, a local hospital that serves patients with HIV and AIDS. Simply put, my experience there was unforgettable. My clinical exposure in the United States could not have prepared me for the emotional rollercoaster that would begin upon walking through the hospital’s doors. Most of my time was spent in the physical therapy department, where I assisted patients with exercises. Because many of the patients primarily spoke Zulu, the language barrier made the work difficult, but I was inspired by the resilient spirit that was evident in many of the clients, as well as the success stories the staff shared.

Thinking about leaving at the end of this week is becoming difficult, because I feel so connected to this place and the people I’ve met so far…. As a student, I’m grateful for the opportunity to see my course work magnified into real-life dimensions. Durban, South Africa, has helped me refocus my dedication to medicine, public service, and social justice.

There is a South African concept called ubuntu, which, in short, is the idea that “I am, because you are” and that we are all connected. Through this concept, the individual is defined in terms of his or her relationships to other people. In the spirit of ubuntu, my experience here has helped me make more sense of who I am and my purpose, primarily through the relationships I’ve built with other people, ranging from students to leading medical professionals in the country. As a program, Building Bridges will be able to connect students on both sides of the Atlantic and provide cultural exchange and understanding through difference. I am grateful to have participated in this initiative and look forward to staying involved in the future.

Sala Kathle (Stay Well),
Alex

Building Bridges keeps a blog at buildingbridgesprogram.blogspot.com.