He wouldn’t call his passion to teach about Chaucer and things medieval a mission. “It’s more like sharing enjoyment,” he says.
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Cover illustration by Anna Kaplan
Micro- v. Macroevolution

After digesting “Creative License,” I found it appropriate to point out the two very different views of evolution. Microevolution describes a process of change within a species, but a horse is still a horse. Scientists have observed microevolution. Macroevolution is another story. Macroevolution requires the transfer of genetic information to a higher, more complex classification. More than 100 years of geology have yet to unearth the first fish-with-legs fossil. Macroevolution remains an unproven theory to this very day.

John Shirk, C’83
Ocean City, N.J.

Irreducible Complexity

I propose a few words for intelligent design in reply to “Creative License.” Intelligent design does not deny that the appearance of present life forms took place over a long time. Sniegowksi and Weisberg describe it as creeping creationism. So? If natural phenomena show complexity that is, at this point, “irreducible,” acknowledging there might be a creator seems to be the intelligent approach. The issue in question is the statistical likelihood of the appearance of life forms that at this point appear to be irreducibly complex – life forms where natural selection will not preserve functional intermediates.

Albert McGlynn, C’67

Proper Tribute

Your article on “Creative License” was great. Interestingly, it alluded to the importance of “license” – properly used of course. It was correct (as correct as one can be) in its reference to the grandiose issues circling the environs of science and religion, and was commendable for the copious tributes to the past professor at Penn, Loren Eiseley – a wonderful teacher who knew how to illuminate his subject with fairness and sagacity. His thoughtfulness included a keen perceptiveness regarding life and its vagaries. Your reference to him as a “literary stylist” was appropriate. The article caught the essential importance of both science and religion – both being relevant to today’s thinking.

Rosario Quatrochi, CCC’55
Hinsdale, Ill.

Questionable Hypothesis

Indebtedness to my linguistics teachers at Penn makes me want to disagree with Michael Weisberg’s approach to the Dover school board’s policy on teaching about life’s origins. Professor Henry Hoenigswald was careful to draw distinctions between the structure of languages and their origins. The structure is open to scientific investigation in an unproblematic way to the extent that the language is alive. But the history of a language’s development is hypothetical because of insufficient data for reconstructing earlier stages.

In the argument about evolution, some scientists are saying that studies of the development and origin of life should be clearly marked in publications as hypothetical. It is a mistake to award the same level of confidence to reconstructed forms as it is to the observed structure of current life forms. Yet Weisberg believes that the soundness of evolutionary theory is beyond controversy and that “for the last 75 years there has been full scientific consensus.” Moreover, he has excluded as heretics scientists who question claims evolutionary theorists have recently made, which guarantees his alleged “consensus.”

Many interpretations may be sponsored by the same data, especially if that corpus is severely restricted, as is the case with ancestral life forms and ancestral forms of a language. In the marketplace of ideas, marshalling arguments for one interpretation over another is honorable and fair. “Creative License” did not even attempt that. It was inquisitional in spirit and substance.

Kent Gordon, G’77
Jefferson, N.H.
A diverse faculty is key to building a vigorous and well-rounded academic community that can engage in the many-sided discussions that feed the search for truth.

Last September, the School of Arts and Sciences welcomed 20 new members of the standing faculty, ranging from a specialist in African-American art to a researcher in nanoscale materials. They have already made their mark on teaching and research in the School. Hardly pausing to take a breath, this year we have launched searches for 45 new faculty members, an ambitious undertaking that marks the first stage of our effort to increase the size of the faculty by 10 percent in five years. This growth will significantly enhance the quality of our teaching, making for smaller classes and more individual contact between students and faculty. It will also allow us to make investments in the multidisciplinary initiatives our plan outlines while sustaining our strengths in the traditional academic disciplines.

If the School’s mission is to advance the frontiers of knowledge and educate the next generation, then the faculty – working with staff and students – is the heart and soul of what we do. Our faculty is committed to groundbreaking research and to inspirational teaching, deeply versed in the disciplines and adroit at moving across new fields of knowledge and ways of thinking. In the searches now underway, we are looking for multidimensional faculty members who reflect the spirit of the School in its commitment to integrated knowledge.

We want to bring to the University scholars and educators with a multiplicity of perspectives, experiences and disciplinary approaches – a diversity of ideas, a diversity of methodologies and also a diversity of people, since a scholar’s ideas and perspectives are informed by life experience as well as academic training. Debate – the free-flowing exchange of ideas and points of view – makes knowledge and learning strong. A diverse faculty is key to building a vigorous and well-rounded academic community that can engage in the many-sided discussions that feed the search for truth. It is at the very heart of what it means to be a great university – a microcosm of a democratic society.

We know it will be a challenge to increase faculty size, because we must compete with our peers by offering comparable salaries, funding, research time and state-of-the-art research and teaching facilities. High-quality laboratories, libraries and classrooms are not luxuries; they are spaces that nourish and support intellectual community and effective teaching. We must provide all faculty members with the support they need to live up to the School’s high expectations.

Another crucial tool for building a great faculty is endowed chairs. Named chairs, along with the research stipends that accompany them, are one of the most important ways to entice top scholars to come to our campus and to retain our own accomplished, high-profile scholars who become targets of recruitment by other universities in a highly competitive market.

All of these interlocking facets for building a great faculty are integral parts of the School’s strategic plan. Every great research university depends upon the rich, broad and thriving intellectual perspectives of the arts and sciences. A faculty of unquestioned distinction and of sufficient size is the cornerstone for achieving everything we want to accomplish in the School of Arts and Sciences. It is the foundation upon which eminence is built.
Osvaldo Golijov, Gr’91, is all over the place. For one thing, his innovative music brings three continents’ worth of folk and pop elements to a buttoned-down classical tradition. For another, thanks to a heavy travel schedule overseeing premieres and recordings of his new works, he’s darn hard to pin down for an interview. We play phone and e-mail tag for weeks before I finally connect by phone to his Boston studio.

It seems that Golijov’s name (pronounced Golly-hov) and his music are everywhere. At the tender age of 45, his career has already taken off in the colossal way that most composers of classical music only dream about. His symphonic works are performed by major orchestras worldwide; his most recent opera was directed by the superstar Peter Sellars; he has recordings on eight different labels; he writes film scores for Francis Ford Coppola; he’s a MacArthur Fellow with a list of commissions longer than his arm. In perhaps the ultimate test of cross-over into the popular imagination, you can download his works from the iTunes Music Store. (As I type, I’ve got Golijov on the iPod.)

This winter, the Great Performers series at New York City’s Lincoln Center launches an all-Golijov festival, The Passion of Osvaldo Golijov, whose title is a nod to the composer’s groundbreaking setting of St. Mark’s passion. La Pasión Según San Marcos is written primarily in Spanish but uses multiple dialects. The work mingles contemporary classical idioms with flamenco riffs, hints of bossa nova and Nuevo Tango, and even capoeira dancing. The massive, 90-minute work, which is scored for orchestra, 60-voice choir, vocal soloists, berimbau, Afro-Latin dancers and percussionists, will be performed at the conclusion of the two-month festival.

Golijov was born in Argentina to Eastern European parents and counts among his early influences Jewish liturgical music (he sang in his synagogue chorus as a boy), J.S. Bach, Louis Armstrong, the Beatles, Astor Piazzolla, Miles Davis, Duke Ellington and Leonard Bernstein.

“At Penn, I was very lucky to study with George Crumb, one of the great American composers,” he says. “My music does not resemble his much, but he completely transformed me in his teaching. He is part of the essence of who I am as a composer.”

When Golijov arrived at Penn, fresh from studies in his native Argentina and Jerusalem, neither man could understand a word the other said. “He had a heavy West Virginian accent, and I spoke with my own accent. … Still, I learned, if not always in a conscious way. I listened as he played Chopin in his office in between students. I absorbed everything I watched him do. This was the greatest thing that happened to me. It’s like an old Hasidic legend, where the student decides to learn by watching the rabbi tie his shoes.”

After Penn, it was off to a fellowship at Tanglewood, where Golijov sprang onto the international scene with his Grammy-nominated string quartet, Yiddishbuk, a holocaust meditation that incorporates klezmer and other Yiddish styles. His more recent works, including the opera Ainadamar (Fountain of Tears) are increasingly filled with eclectic new-world influences. Ayre, a cycle of 11 songs, uses Sephardic, Arabic and Christian folk tunes in sometimes jarring juxtapositions of melody and text. All three compositions come together in the same place at the Lincoln Center festival. —KAREN RILE
Story Time

“Professor Rieber was a professor in the history department whose lectures were legendary; he just made the stuff come alive,” explains Budd Mishkin, C’81. “People would come to his lectures who weren’t even in the class. If you heard that the ‘Hitler lecture’ or the ‘Stalin lecture’ was being given that day, people would show up.”

Experiences like this are what make up the fabric of Penn history. Thanks to Penn Back Then, an audio scrapbook maintained by the School of Arts and Sciences, there is a place to record and enjoy stories from all generations of Penn students. Modeled after StoryCorps, the national oral history project, Penn Back Then captures slices of campus life and presents them in an online archive. At campus celebrations each year, alumni from all decades can contribute anecdotes and remembrances to teams of mobile Penn Back Then recorders.

Though the college experience varies from one generation to the next, every Penn graduate is linked by the history and traditions of a common campus. Penn Back Then is a chance to learn about University life across several decades, as told by the people who know it best. To access the archive, go to www.sas.upenn.edu and click on the Penn Back Then link.

Farewell to a Friend

The Penn community mourned the loss of one of its most esteemed scholars when psychology professor John Sabini died on July 15 at the age of 58. A member of the psychology faculty for nearly three decades, Sabini chaired the department from 1991 to 1996. He also chaired the psychology graduate group and directed graduate studies in psychology from 1984 to 1991 and from 2003 until his death. Noted for his study of the moral dimensions of social interactions, he won the 2003 Dean’s Award for Mentorship of Undergraduate Research.

“I had a close-up view as John mentored dozens of graduate students, many dozens of undergraduate students and at least a dozen assistant professors – myself included,” says Robert DeRubeis, the associate dean for the social sciences and a psychology professor. “John was everybody’s uncle, or perhaps big brother.”

Sabini’s published works include the textbook Social Psychology and Moralities of Everyday Life and Emotion, Character, and Responsibility, which he co-authored with Maury Silver. The psychology department gathered on Dec. 2 to commemorate his many contributions to science, education and the community.

“Although John’s formal commitment was to graduate education, I believe that in fact he made a greater contribution to undergraduate education than anyone else in our department,” Professor Robert Rescorla said at the event. “Where this showed up most clearly was in his contributions to teaching the logic and love of research to our undergraduates.”

The John Sabini Memorial Prize Fund has been established for senior psychology majors with an interest in social psychology. To make a donation, contact Elizabeth Caimi at ecaimi@sas.upenn.edu or 215-898-5262.

Humanities Hero

For more than 35 years, Alan Kors has defended free speech on the Penn campus and at colleges and universities across the nation. In November, the eminent professor of European intellectual history was awarded the National Humanities Medal to recognize his dedication to scholarship and activism.

Kors, the George H. Walker Endowed Term Professor of History, was among 11 individuals to receive the prize. The medal is given annually to those whose work has deepened the nation’s understanding of the humanities, broadened citizens’ engagement with the humanities or helped preserve and expand America’s access to important humanities resources. The medal is awarded in a White House ceremony.

In addition to the national prize, Kors has been honored at Penn for his commitment to teaching excellence. He has been recognized with the Christian R. and Mary F. Lindback and the Ira Abrams Memorial teaching awards, as well as a faculty award from the Friars Senior Society. His colleagues at Penn have elected him four times to University and School committees on academic freedom and responsibility.

Kors established the Foundation for Individual Rights in Education in 1998, which aims to protect the intellectual freedom of professors and students. That same year, he co-authored The Shadow University: The Betrayal of Liberty on America’s Campuses.
Oxford Calling

Two College and Wharton seniors have punched their tickets to the graduate program at Oxford University after winning a pair of Britain’s most prestigious scholarships. Brett Shaheen, an international relations and economics major from St. Louis, Mo., is the 18th Rhodes Scholar from Penn and its third since 2000. Aziza Zakhidova, a student in the Huntsman Program in International Studies & Business, also will study at the esteemed British institution after netting a Marshall Scholarship. She is the eighth Marshall winner from Penn and the University’s fifth in the last six years.

Shaheen is editor-in-chief of Penn’s Undergraduate Journal of Economics and worked as a consultant for the Association for Rural Community Development in India last summer. He has plans to go for a master’s in international relations. Zakhidova, an international studies and finance major from McKinney, Texas, will pursue a master’s in development studies. This is the second time that Penn has had a Rhodes and Marshall winner in the same year.

The Rhodes Scholarship, the oldest international fellowship, was initiated after the death of British philanthropist Cecil Rhodes in 1902. The value of the award varies depending on the academic field, degree level and Oxford college chosen. It covers all costs and averages about $40,000 per year. The Marshall Scholarship was created by Parliament in 1953. Its aim was to extend the idea of the Rhodes Scholarship to all British universities.

India’s New Entrepreneurial Classes

Francine Frankel (left), director of the Center for the Advanced Study of India, speaks with Sunil Bharti Mittal, one of India’s leading entrepreneurs, who delivered CASI’s annual lecture in November on sustaining India’s high-growth economy. Daughter Eiesha Mittal (center).

Cecil Rhodes in 1902. The value of the award varies depending on the academic field, degree level and Oxford college chosen. It covers all costs and averages about $40,000 per year. The Marshall Scholarship was created by Parliament in 1953. Its aim was to extend the idea of the Rhodes Scholarship to all British universities.

Classes in Session

Fisher-Bennett Hall has emerged from its tarpaulin shroud in time to host classes for the spring semester. After months of silence, the cornerstone of liberal arts education on campus is filled with the sounds of students discussing literature, practicing concertos and dissecting screenplays. The $23 million project has brought state-of-the-art computer technology, soundproof classrooms, modern performance spaces and advanced instructional tools to the new humanities corridor on 34th Street.

Faculty members already have begun taking advantage of the options that Fisher-Bennett Hall present. For example, Associate Professor of Music Emma Dillon utilizes an advanced multimedia classroom to bring the history of opera to life for her students. “My class requires that I use all types of media, including DVDs, CDs, laserdiscs and computers,” she explains. “The technology lets me use different media simultaneously and switch from one to another quickly and simply. Now I can move through the course material at a much faster pace. Plus, the room’s stadium seating and film screen allow students to focus on minute details in the operas we are studying. It’s truly spectacular.”
Unlocking the Groove

The producer creates the records. The DJ spins the records. The dancer dances to the records. Layer upon layer, song upon song, beat upon beat. From techno music to house music to trance, electronic dance music (EDM) represents a broad range of soundscapes that have emerged during the last two decades. With his book, *Unlocking the Groove: Rhythm, Meter, and Musical Design in Electronic Dance Music*, assistant professor of music Mark Butler “creates a space in which EDM can be discussed as music.” He uses new and traditional approaches to explore the genre’s musical, historical and social significance. It’s all about the experience of making and enjoying a music that’s not “locked into a single, restricted type,” he argues, but unfolds from the DJ’s deft handling of sound and beat on turntables and mixing boards. Butler says “the sound is the force that drives people to dance…. The sound is what producers spend their time crafting…. The sound motivates DJs to play this particular record at this particular moment.” And the driving force in electronic dance music’s sound? Rhythm – which is not only heard but can be seen in the uniform movements of the dancing crowd.

Freedom to Fight

“No mature democracies have ever fought a war against each other,” writes Edward Mansfield, the Hum Rosen Professor of Political Science. “Consequently, conventional wisdom holds that promoting the spread of democracy will promote world peace and security.” It’s a belief dearly held by the American foreign-policy establishment and a maxim supporting President Bush’s strategy in Iraq. Unfortunately, argue Mansfield and co-author Jack Snyder in *Electing to Fight: Why Emerging Democracies Go to War*, the world is not so simple. In fact, they observe, the transition to democracy can give rise to violent conflict with neighbors, especially in states that do not have the strong political institutions needed to turn the wheels of democracy. States that attempt the changeover from authoritarian regimes to democracy without a strong judicial system, professional news media, organized political parties and other institutions of accountability are unlikely to complete the transition. “When these institutions are deformed or weak,” states Mansfield, “politicians are better able to resort to nationalist appeals, tarring their opponents as enemies of the nation, in order to prevail in electoral competition. The use of such appeals generally heightens the prospect that democratization will stimulate the use of force.” It’s a pattern that dates back at least to the French Revolution, the political scientists say, and they marshal quantitative data and case studies to support their claim. The adage about mature democratic states not warring against each other might be true, but the way to “democratic peace,” Mansfield and Snyder show, is a perilous path.

How Things Melt

When ice cubes melt, the solid crystals turn to water. It’s pretty simple, right? Not really, says physics professor Arjun Yodh, the James M. Skinner Professor of Science. “Melting is one of the most fundamental phenomena in physics, and yet there are lots of things we don’t understand about it,” he says. “When ice heats up, molecules within the ice acquire more energy and jiggle around more, driving the transition from a solid to a liquid. This is true in part, but reality is richer and more complex.” To look deeper into that complexity, Yodh and his team made “atoms” that were big enough for researchers to see but also sufficiently transparent so they could look at what goes on inside the solid structure. “We created translucent three-dimensional crystals from thermally responsive colloidal spheres,” says doctoral student Ahmed Alsayed, which “behave like enormous versions of atoms for the purpose of the experiment.” The scientists observed with video microscopy that “premelting” occurred along the boundaries of imperfections in the orderly structure of crystals, especially where the patterns of the atoms shift. “Premelting was first revealed as an increased movement near defects in the crystal,” Alsayed explains. “These motions then spread into the more ordered parts of the crystal.” Yodh notes that understanding this effect could lead to the design of new materials able to withstand stresses at higher temperatures.
Tawkin’ American

In the musical *My Fair Lady*, phonetician Henry Higgins hid behind a pillar taking notes on the speech patterns of the Cockney flower girl Eliza Doolittle. From the way she spoke, the snooty professor could identify her place of birth. Penn linguist William Labov, the John H. and Margaret B. Fassitt Professor, doesn’t conduct field research from behind columns, nor does he hold to Higgins’ musical observation regarding the English language: “In America, they haven’t used it for years.” In his new book, *The Atlas of North American English: Phonetics, Phonology and Sound Change*, Labov, with coauthors Sharon Ash, G’74, Gr’82, and Charles Boberg, Gr’97, lays out the first coast-to-coast overview of the major dialects spoken and sound changes underway in the U.S. and Canada. There is no uniform accent of North American English, linguists say, only a variety of dialects that continuously undergo sound changes. “Most of the important changes in American speech are not happening at the level of grammar or language but at the level of sound itself,” he told a New York City gathering. *Atlas* includes color-coded maps and a CD that lets readers search and hear the variations on how people speak. “The biggest new sound change we found – in the Great Lakes area – spreads out over 80,000 square miles and 34 million people,” Labov says, “but no one is aware of it.”

Formula for Happiness

There may not be a magic formula for happiness, but Hans-Peter Kohler and Jere Behrman know a few equations that lay out parameters for mothers and fathers, wives and husbands. Kohler, an associate professor of sociology, and Behrman, the William R. Kenan Jr. Professor of Economics, along with a research scientist with the Danish Institute of Public Health, reported their findings in “Partner + Children = Happiness?” Simply correlating parenthood or partnership with happiness doesn’t take into account the possibility that happiness might be a genetic or personality trait or that people with happy dispositions may be more likely to get married and have kids in the first place or to be pleased with their choices. To control for those and other variables, the researchers tapped the Danish Twin Registry and surveyed almost 35,000 twins on their sense of well-being. Their analysis showed that marriage and children do have “appreciable persistent effects on happiness.” Individuals with partners reported greater happiness than those who are alone, with men deriving greater happiness from partnerships than women. Children directly contribute to the happiness of women. Having a first child is an important source of happiness for both partners, but subsequent children make women less happy and don’t much affect the well being of men. The greatest happiness for the greatest number, Kohler and Behrman’s study seems to suggest, is to marry and to have one child.
Ask David Wallace who a modern-day Chaucer is, and he’ll fold his hands in his lap, exhale lightly and explain. It’s not someone in the United States, whose words and ideas follow familiar English patterns established long ago. And it’s not someone in the European-influenced city of Philadelphia or in the sharp and at times street-savvy student body of the University of the Pennsylvania. A new Geoffrey Chaucer would be lurking in an emerging country that is still fighting for its modern identity, its voice. “If there is one, she’s probably in Africa,” Wallace said recently.

Wallace, the Judith Rodin Professor of English, says there is much to learn from the 14th-century poet, whose revolutionary choice to write in the English language paved the way for many to come. “Generosity of spirit, a sense of humor, acceptance of human follies and limitations, a voice to all social classes” is the list of virtues he attributes to Chaucer. *The Canterbury Tales*’ “The Wife of Bath Prologue,” an 800-line monologue by a medieval woman talking about her five husbands, is one of Wallace’s favorites. “It’s like a wall of sound that threatens to overwhelm you. There’s nothing quite like it really.”

This summer, Wallace will work with dozens of high-school teachers at the meeting of the 300-member New Chaucer Society to help them...
understand, teach and fluently perform Chaucer. It’s not just for the future of medieval studies. Wallace’s drive stems from a deeper passion. “I want to encourage people to encounter cultures that they think are alien and strange and have nothing to do with them – and in that discover a common humanity.”

Clad in a purple sweater and black-rimmed glasses on a recent morning in his office, Wallace says studying the Middle Ages is just one way to explore differences. Unlike the Renaissance, which usually conjures up something positive, medieval times are often vilified for primitive superstition and darkness, he explains. But neither typifies the period. “The assumption is that witch burning is a medieval activity. It’s not. It’s a Renaissance activity. The assumption is that judicial torture, that burning people for their political beliefs is a medieval activity. Nobody in Chaucer’s lifetime was burned for their religious beliefs or any beliefs in England.”

With a hint of a mischievous smile, Wallace admits he enjoys the challenge of dispelling those myths and inspiring students, in whatever way he can, to get out of their comfort zones. “You bring them up against ways of thinking and behaving and worshiping that are alien to them, supposedly. Engaging in the culture, they come to like it. They come to understand it.”

That said, he is not snobby about how people get interested in the Middle Ages, even if it’s through the Gothic representations of Dungeons and Dragons or roadside Renaissance fairs. “Everything helps to stimulate interest really, even the sort of cheesy, medieval evenings when you get a bit of jousting and wenches in uniform,” he says.

Wallace felt a sense of the bigger world early on. Despite the “monochromatic” atmosphere of his brick-making town north of London, he was surrounded by centuries-old churches and books. Wallace, who first read Chaucer at 15, fell in love with books. “I disappointed my father, who wanted me to be interested in motorcycles. He kept his motorcycle license up until I was 16 and realized it was hopeless.”

His parents went to work at 14. His father served as a fighter pilot during World War II and later became an engineer while his mother served in the Women’s Land Army and later worked in factories. Without a preconceived academic path to follow, Wallace says he was free to discover his love of education by himself. “I think I was the first member of my family to start ninth grade,” he says.

He received a full grant for his undergraduate work in English and Italian at the University of York and graduate studies at St. Edmund’s College, Cambridge. He was also attracted to medieval studies’ internationalism, which has provided a sure foundation for historical development. “Communities evolved over centuries, leading to European, North African and Arab cultures, which are finely calibrated with many intersecting traditions and relations. It’s so important to understand the delicacy of those relationships.”

He didn’t stay put for long but set off on what would be the first of many travel adventures to teach English to teenage typists in Italy. He’d later go behind the Iron Curtain in East Germany and to the great medieval city of Prague. Like Chaucer, Wallace toured Eastern Europe in his early 20s, earning an accelerated education.

On that recent morning in his office, he reads one of his favorite passages from The Canterbury Tales. With his tongue twisting furiously and voice lowering, Wallace holds a thick book in his hands and rattles off lines from “The Pardoner’s Tale,” a story of “a morally questionable character” and his edict on “a lecherous thing is drink.”

A new Geoffrey Chaucer would be lurking in an emerging country that is still fighting for its modern identity, its voice. “If there is one, she’s probably in Africa,” Wallace says.
The beauty of Chaucer and the medieval period is that they are not just a view into the insular lives of kings. “There is tremendous social variety in Chaucer,” Wallace says, describing the series of pilgrims’ tales that range from tragic war stories to rude comedy, often told by peasants, a forbidden move for Shakespeare. “I think the Middle Ages respects human persons for what they are and what they are – and not in an idealized way.”

For Wallace, who won the Modern Language Association’s James Russell Lowell Prize in 1998 for Chaucerian Polity: Absolutist Lineages and Associated Forms in England and Italy, the challenge is to keep interest in Chaucer going. Medieval studies is healthy, he says, but it must fight for its market share of the curriculum.

“People ask, ‘Why should I study something 600 years old? It’s not about me.’ We have to convince them it is about them.” He illustrates: A parallel can be drawn between today’s anxieties about the threat of Asian bird flu and disease “coming from the East,” and the plague of 1347-1349, which killed one-third of the European population. Also, he observes, “If you study the history of medieval women, a lot of the issues that come up are struggles that women are still going through today.”

Medieval author Margery Kempe, whose book is the first autobiography in the English language, went on a pilgrimage to Jerusalem in her 20s and then at 60 left Poland to travel Europe and visit her daughter. The pilgrimage structure allowed her to travel safely, something that hasn’t been fully recovered for women today, Wallace says.

He spent a year, on and off, following in her footsteps for a recent radio documentary for BBC. “We just tried to recreate what it would have been like for a medieval woman of her age to do that traveling, talking to lots of local experts,” he says. “We hiked some but also cheated and took planes.”

Wallace, whose most recent book explores premodern places, says travel is just another way to teach students to experience diversity, never mind feed his own curiosity. “It’s one of my weaknesses,” he says. “I’m interested in everything.”

As for Chaucer, the key will be teaching others, including high-school teachers, how to read him fluently and confidently, focusing on the performance of the works, which were written to be read aloud. Wallace did just that in 2000, taking part in a four-hour marathon on the 600th anniversary of Chaucer’s death for BBC Radio 3. “We drank a lot of BBC wine toward the end,” he confesses.

In Premodern Places: Calais to Surinam, Chaucer to Aphra Behn, Wallace writes, “From ancient times, it has been the dearest and simplest wish of poets that, through their writings, their voices might endure; that in some sense, they will be re-embodied, re-remembered by being heard again.”

If there were a new Chaucer, he’d be in a developing country, writing to keep up with the changes. It could come in poetry or perhaps even in avant-garde rock music, Wallace speculates. “What does it mean to be alive now? What does it mean to be contemporary? Who can give that artistic form and expression?” These “new” questions are the same ones Chaucer asked himself 600 years ago.

Through 10 books, some 30 articles and 13 TV/radio productions – not to mention his sense of humor – Wallace’s work has certainly contributed to keeping Chaucer alive. He wouldn’t call it a mission. “It’s more like sharing enjoyment,” he comments, “or reminding people that this is their culture as well as it is mine.”

Laura Beitman is a freelance writer living in Philadelphia.
Archaeologist Andrew Koh is expert at uncovering the indulgences of ancient people. The proof is in their pottery – not the designs painted thereon but in traces left behind in cups and cooking pots, dirt that Koh knows how to extract and decode. “It’s archaeology meets CSI,” he says.

For years, archaeologists have been using chemists’ tools to help reconstruct the habits and tastes of the people they study. Organic compounds lifted from excavated pottery and analyzed using gas chromatography and mass spectrometry, for example, often reveal traces of the finer things in life – wine, perfume and even traces of a meaty meal. These high-tech tools produce a “fingerprint” of each substance by separating and identifying its unique chemical components.

Researchers typically extract these organic residues months or in most cases, years after the artifacts were excavated, explains Koh. “They usually pick the pieces that are most intact or the prettiest.” Koh, a student in Penn’s Graduate Group in Art and Archaeology of the Mediterranean World, thinks researchers would get a better story if the ancient leavings were taken from as many objects as possible immediately after pulling them from the ground, before the “evidence” is removed by the washing procedures used in conservation.

As ambitious as his plan sounds, Koh pulled it off in summer 2004 at Mochlos, a village on East Crete and the site of his dissertation research. With the help of a very understanding research team led by Jeffery Soles, Gr’73, of the University of North Carolina, the support of Koh’s wife and fellow archaeologist, Laura Labriola Koh, and lab equipment garnered from multiple Greek and U.S. sources, including eBay, Koh was able to extract residues at a facility just miles from the excavation site. “I forced myself into the middle of the process between the archaeologists and the conservationists.”

Koh and his wife spent nearly 400 hours in the lab sampling over 300 pieces of pottery. “It was worth it,” says Koh. Later, when he used the chemistry department’s equipment to analyze the samples, he found that over 90 percent contained organic compounds.

Now he is using this information to piece together the perfume-making process of the Minoans, a tribe known for their stunning art and sophisticated architecture who lived at Mochlos during the Bronze Age. So far, he has been able to map the perfume-making room, identifying ingredients kept in smaller containers and the final products made in the large vat anchored next to the main wall.

Koh, who came to Penn in 1999, says that both his chemistry skills and his interest in classical archaeology came from his days as a biophysics major at the University of Illinois. “I finished all my science requirements by my junior year and was looking for something new senior year.” He immersed himself in the liberal arts, filling his schedule with courses in classics, mythology and Greek. “I absolutely loved it.” After graduating in 1996, he worked as a chemist at a pharmaceutical company while he considered applying to medical school. “In Korean-American culture,” he says, “you’re expected to get an M.D. or a J.D. A Ph.D. is a distant second.” He laughs. Still, he dared to ask himself, If I could do anything in the world, what would it be? “I already knew the answer.”

— DANA BAUER
BANGKOK’S MOST NOTORIOUS SLUM IS PROBABLY THE LAST PLACE YOU WOULD EXPECT TO FIND A RENOWNED SCHOLAR OF IRISH MUSIC. BUT ON THIS BRIGHT OCTOBER MORNING, MICK MOLONEY, GR’92, IS NAVIGATING THE NARROW STREETS AND RAMSHACKLE HUTS OF KLONG TOEY GHETTO IN SEARCH OF A REBEL PRIEST.

“FATHER JOE MAIER IS THE MOTHER TERESA OF SOUTHEAST ASIA,” MOLONEY SAYS IN A SOFT BROGUE THAT HINTS AT HIS LIMERICK ROOTS. FOR MORE THAN 30 YEARS, MAIER HAS Fought TO SAVE SOULS IN THE FACE OF RAMPANT DRUG DEALING, GANG VIOLENCE AND PROSTITUTION. MOLONEY CALLS HIM A “MIGHTY MAN” – THE TITLE HE AFFIXES TO ANYONE WHO ASSISTS NA BOCHTAÍN – THE IRISH GAELIC PHRASE FOR THOSE WHO ARE MOST DESTITUTE. AT THE END OF THEIR VISIT, MOLONEY OFFERS TO STAGE A CONCERT IN KLONG TOEY TO BENEFIT MAIER’S MERCY CENTER.


“It’s a very complex history, and the music is very much bound up with that. To have music that comes out of that context being used in the service of disadvantaged communities just seems right to me.”

A slender man with unlimited reserves of energy, Moloney can fire off jigs and reels as easily as you can tie your shoes. He is often found playing the tenor banjo with celebrated folk musicians and teaching ethnomusicology at New York University. He also is a folklorist, record producer, arts advocate and occasional tour guide for groups of Americans wanting to experience the cultural side of his homeland.

He credits the global makeup of the Irish music community for allowing him to organize a concert in Thailand’s superslum. “Irish musicians are everywhere: they’re in Tokyo, they’re in Malaysia, they’re in Vietnam and they’re in Australia as well,” he says before rattling off the names of pipers and fiddlers who will play the Thailand gig. “Everyone knows everyone else — I suppose more so now because of the Internet — but everyone knew each other before the Internet because it’s one big extended family.”

He does not mention that his unparalleled reputation among folk musicians is why they flock to play his shows at a moment’s notice, regardless of the location. “It seems that everybody on this side of the Atlantic owes their early gigs to Mick,” says Stephen Winick, G’92, Gr’98, Moloney’s friend and a folklorist at the American Folklife Center in the Library of Congress.

Moloney’s musical journey began in Ireland, where he had a successful career in the 1960s with fellow musician Donal Lunny and the Johnstons, a popular folk group. He probably would have continued along that path except for the intervention of Professor Kenneth Goldstein, whom he credits with changing his life forever.

Goldstein was the head of folklore studies at Penn and a great lover of folk music. He and his wife, Rochelle, would open their home to traveling musicians who needed a place to stay after playing in Philadelphia. “It just meant putting a couple of extra dishes on the table because we were already a large family,” says Rochelle Goldstein, whose husband has since passed away. “That’s just the way we ran our lives in those days.” Moloney was a houseguest on many occasions.

The basement, office and several other rooms in the Goldstein home held the professor’s folklore library. Regarded as the largest and most complete assortment of Irish folk music was never the music of the upper classes; it was always the music of the wretched of the society.
It seems that everybody on this side of the Atlantic owes their early gigs to Mick.

there’s more to a Mick Moloney concert than breakneck jigs, reels and tuneful airs. Drawing from a deep well of knowledge about Irish musical history, he delivers a cultural education that connects his audience to the songs. “Being a good performer means you have to create a relationship between yourself and the people for whom you’re performing,” he says. “The more context and history you can bring to a song or tune, the more people will leave the show feeling both entertained and informed.”

In addition to his studies, Moloney was at the forefront of Irish folk music in America throughout the 1970s and 1980s. He created two of today’s most well-known acts – Cherish the Ladies and the Green Fields of America – encouraged many others and organized scores of festivals that resulted in seminal recording sessions. “He’s had a hand in making the music more popular and bringing it to the attention of more people,” Winick says, “which helps to make it more viable both artistically and commercially.”

Playing and promoting Irish music has led him to appreciate other types of world music. Over the past six years, Moloney has toured Southeast Asia and become interested in the music of such places as Vietnam, Cambodia and Indonesia. It is a great journey, he says, to be involved with the people of other nations, to learn about their social histories and general folklore materials in private hands, the collection contained tens of thousands of records, cassettes, reel-to-reel tapes and photographs as well as myriad books and journals.

“It was his library that changed my life, no question,” Moloney says. “I remember being in the basement and being fascinated with it. I would go down there after dinner and then Kenny would come down the stairs and say, ‘You’re up? You’ve been up all night.’ And I’d say, ‘What are you talking about – up all night?’ It would be 7:30 in the morning, and I wouldn’t have realized.”

Goldstein knew a budding scholar when he saw one. With his encouragement, Moloney immigrated in 1973 and began studying in the graduate folklore and folklife program at Penn. “I had never been at school with Americans before, and they were very talkative,” he recalls. “In Ireland, we never asked questions at all, or very rarely. You just listened to the teacher, and if he asked a question, you’d put your head down and hope he wouldn’t pick you. So I thought it was hilarious – all these Yanks wanting to talk all the time and express themselves.”

In 1999 he received the National Heritage Award. Presented by the National Endowment for the Arts, it is the highest honor a traditional artist can receive in the United States.

Plumber of Hornpipes

here’s more to a Mick Moloney concert than breakneck jigs, reels and tuneful airs. Drawing from a deep well of knowledge about Irish musical history, he delivers a cultural education that connects his audience to the songs. “Being a good performer means you have to create a relationship between yourself and the people for whom you’re performing,” he says. “The more context and history you can bring to a song or tune, the more people will leave the show feeling both entertained and informed.” To illustrate his point, Moloney tells the story of Ed Reavy, Philadelphia’s “Plumber of Hornpipes.”

Reavy was an Irish immigrant who lived for many years just north of Penn’s campus in what is now Powelton Village. A master plumber by trade and an excellent fiddle player, he started inventing new Irish melodies in the 1930s. Although he never learned to read or write music, Reavy became the most prolific Irish traditional music composer of the 20th century. He saw his music spread across the globe through regular contact with other musicians, who learned it and brought it back to their own villages, towns and cities.

“I was in Irish-music sessions in Australia about three weeks ago, and there wasn’t one where Ed Reavy’s tunes weren’t being played,” Moloney says. “We’d sit in the pub and we’d talk about Ed and I’d tell them my stories. Before I knew it, we were playing Ed’s tunes for half and hour.”

It wasn’t until 1969 that Reavy’s son Joe began notating his father’s compositions, many of which had been captured on 78-rpm home recordings. He helped his father name many of the tunes and publish them in a volume called Where the Shannon Rises. More than 15 years after his death, about 130 of Reavy’s compositions are part of the canon of Irish folk music. His sons estimate that he had written more than 500.

—JOSEPH MCLAUGHLIN
cultural contexts. In Burma last October for the national music competitions, he saw people from many tribes and subcultures representing their regional traditions at the highest level. “On the one hand, that’s an affirmation of both the diversity and the unity of the country,” he says. “On the other, behind its organization is a very repressive regime at work that likes to use art for its own purposes – as all totalitarian regimes will do.”

Using people that he’d met there as contacts, Moloney traveled to villages in Central Burma after leaving the music competitions. It was a great coming together under the noses of the authorities, who might have been suspicious of foreign travelers under different circumstances.

Risking imprisonment to further musical and cultural knowledge may hardly seem worth it, but only to those who don’t know what motivates this globe-trotting, musical scholar. “He originally went just for his own pleasure, and he fell in love,” Rochelle Goldstein says. “That’s the way he is: he falls in love. He gets very passionate, and then he has to research everything. That’s why he’s so fascinating to talk to.”

Moloney’s current projects include a compact disc featuring the songs of Ed Harrigan, a late 19th-century songwriter who chronicled the Irish immigrant experience in New York. Credited with inventing musical comedy, Harrigan’s compositions were performed mostly by pit orchestras during his lifetime.

“The people not only recognize his musical talent, but his knowledge and the fact that he can back up what he says with years and years of research,” Stephen Winick says. “They come to him for answers to all sorts of questions about Irish music.”

It’s 4 p.m. on a Sunday in November and the setting sun is resting its rays on the crowds streaming into St. Malachy’s Church in Philadelphia. Moloney is on hand to perform another benefit concert in the service of another mighty man – Father John McNamee – and to raise money for his independent parish school. This is the 15th year Moloney has played the church and, as always, musicians have come from as far away as Tuscany to donate time and talent.

Built by the influx of Irish immigrants who came to America in the 1840s and 1850s, St. Malachy’s church and school now serve North Philly’s mostly poor African-American population. Tonight the church is packed with more than 800 patrons who believe is minic duine bocht fiúntach – a poor person is often worthy. The performance is their chance to help a neighborhood they wouldn’t normally visit.

Feeding off the palpable excitement that permeates the pews, Moloney and company send tidal waves of sound crashing off the altar, throwing the melody from one player to the next and back again as effortlessly as you might toss a beach ball. The crowd responds with cheers and applause that reverberate through the marble floors. It’s just another night in the life of Mick Moloney, musical ambassador.

“Mick is very special,” Goldstein says. “He is an intelligent man who knows how to hold on to information and teach it to others. It’s a natural gift he has. He’s also a musician for musicians. He has a way of gathering other musicians around him wherever he goes, and he’s loved that way in Ireland and in the United States and all over the world.”

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Irish translations courtesy of Roslyn Blyn-LaDrew, Gr’95, teacher of Irish Gaelic at the Penn Language Center.

He has a way of gathering other musicians around him wherever he goes.
With a population of 8,195, the town of Oberlin, Ohio, is hardly a booming metropolis. But according to Sara Jaffee, an assistant professor of psychology who grew up there, its smallness is deceptive. Walk into a public school, and it feels like you’re in a city. “It’s surprisingly diverse,” she says. “The families vary enormously – racially and by socioeconomic status.”

A midsize town that’s a micro-cosm of a teeming city is not such a bad place for a social scientist to come of age. And because Jaffee’s parents were teachers, she had easy access to closely observed “data.” Her mother taught first and second grades, and her father continues to teach high-school math. “Dinner conversations were often about my parents’ students, how they were doing and why they were doing well or poorly,” Jaffee recalls. “I was always aware of how much baggage these kids brought into the classroom.”

During senior year of high school, Jaffee volunteered in her mother’s classroom, and she was charged with watching Dante, an easily distracted first-grader. He was fine when Jaffee worked with him one-on-one, but unmonitored, he was a whirling dervish. Jaffee remembers him as a bright kid with a sweet temperament who shouldered a chaotic home life. “I was very aware of how much he and some of the other kids were dealing with,” she says.

Spending time with Dante and the other students in her mother’s classroom piqued her curiosity about the connections between environment and genetics, behavior and outcome. At Oberlin College, she majored in psychology. As a graduate student at the University...
of Wisconsin-Madison, she was a research assistant for a professor who specialized in experimental social psychology.

In her third year, Jaffee took a class in developmental psychology with Professor Avshalom Caspi. She became excited by his interest in the possibility that people shape their own environments. Ironically, she was about to turn her own environment on its head. After starting to question her desire for a career in academia, she took a leave of absence and found herself living in Brooklyn, commuting each day to Yonkers, where she worked in the survey-research department of Consumer Reports magazine. “It was a funny place to work,” she says. “They were always auctioning off things like toaster ovens.” Instead of probing the intricacies of human nature, she was comparison-testing the durability of panty hose. After a year, she realized she was unsuited for anything besides academia.

Jaffee returned to school in 1998 just as The Nurture Assumption, by Judith Rich Harris, reignited the debate between nature and nurture. In her book, Harris takes an extreme stance, writing that parents have no impact on their kids’ development beyond providing DNA. The pendulum had swung all the way to the other side from the 1970s, when predominant theories traced outcomes directly back to parenting styles. “I was interested in taking a middle-of-the-road perspective,” says Jaffee, “in using behavioral genetics to help measure how much genetic factors can explain certain behaviors, but at the same time looking at how the environment factors in, especially when a kid’s genetically vulnerable.” In other words, how do nature and nurture interplay to affect the lives of disadvantaged children?

Working with Caspi at the Institute of Psychiatry at King’s College in London for the next three years, Jaffee published studies that challenged conventional wisdom. A 2002 study of teen mothers in New Zealand found that the young women probably would’ve ended up with the same negative outcomes even if they’d waited to have kids. Being a teen mom was impairing, but the factors that led to them dropping out of school and living below the poverty line – low IQs and aggressiveness – predated their pregnancies. But were they a result of nature or nurture?

Jaffee further explored that question with a study on antisocial fathers. She was the lead author of a 2003 paper concluding that the longer children live with fathers who display high levels of antisocial behavior – lying, stealing, bullying, inability to hold down jobs – the greater the likelihood that those children will develop conduct problems themselves.

Not only do the antisocial fathers pass on “risky” genes to their children; they also provide rearing experiences that tend to nurture antisocial behavior. At the time, she urged policy-makers to note the implication that encouraging biological parents to marry isn’t always in a child’s best interest.

Since her appointment at Penn in 2003, Jaffee’s research has focused on the factors that lead to child abuse. Is it something about the child or something about the parent? “We’ve found no evidence that there’s some genetic influence to account for children eliciting maltreatment from an adult,” she says, “which was a relief to me, frankly.” The kids in the study who were genetically inclined to misbehave were more likely to be smacked or spanked as punishment, but their provocative temperaments didn’t up their chances of being abused.

The studies Jaffee has produced as a postdoctoral fellow at King’s College and as a member of Penn’s faculty garnered the 2006 Early Career Research Contributions Award from the American Psychological Association’s Society for Child and Adolescent Clinical Psychology.

She never doubts her decision to return to academia after the yearlong blip in New York testing products for Consumer Reports. “I really value the flexibility that academia affords,” she says. “Your ideas are your own. Your time is your own. Your career can be self-directed.”

Going forward, the young psychologist is studying a data set of 5,000 kids in foster care. “When a child is removed from the biological parents, you can start disentangling nature from nurture kinds of questions,” says Jaffee. She’s especially interested in the kids who do better than you’d expect and in the factors that indicate their resilience.

Dante, the first-grader who started school with no advantages, is a quintessential example of a child who recovers. “He ended up, you know,” she says of Dante. “He was so charming, he was so lovable.” She laughs. “We lost track of him. As she monitors the thousands of children in her studies, she wonders where and how he ended up. “He was so charming,” she recalls, “and he was born with the decks stacked against him.”

Caroline Tiger, C’96, is a Philadelphia-based freelance journalist and author.
As the old saying goes, “Give a man a fish, and you’ll feed him for a day. Teach a man to fish, and you’ll feed him for a lifetime.”

In the case of senior Amelia Duffy-Tumasz, it might be appropriate to say, “Find yourself covered in fish guts, and you’ll learn about the lives of women in West Africa.” The urban studies major spent last summer in Senegal, working and conducting research at an outdoor fish factory that was run by local women who had learned the principles of microfinance.

Microfinance is an economic model by which small loans and other monetary services are provided to impoverished people in mostly Third-World countries. Having no collateral or credit history, they normally would be outside the realm of traditional banking. The loans – some for only a few hundred dollars or less – allow the world’s poor to generate income and make strides toward self-sufficiency. Duffy-Tumasz was introduced to microfinance in Religion, Social Justice and Urban Development, a class taught by urban studies lecturer Andrew Lamas, L’81, that covered alternative models for community advancement. She decided to craft her senior thesis around the lending program after learning that more than 95 percent of microfinance loans go to women.

“Women were found to be much more likely than men to repay loans,” she says. “Men tend to spend their money on women instead of investing it, especially in polygamous societies like Senegal. Also, the literature shows that women are generally more concerned with devoting their earnings to the needs of their families. So now, women and microfinance are almost inseparable.”

She describes her temporary home as a wonderful mix of poverty and hospitality; its people possessing a resiliency and cultural richness that is not often found in the United States. A friend introduced her to Khelkom, an outdoor processing plant that became her worksite for the next two-and-a-half months. More than 300 workers, most of whom were women, performed the labor-intensive process of cleaning and salting fish by hand and then drying them in the sun on huge outdoor tables. Some would be transported to places that lacked fresh fish, while others would be covered with hay and burned to make kethiakh, a smoked specialty.

Before Duffy-Tumasz could engage in the participant observation...
and questioning that would provide data for her thesis, she had to overcome the stigma that went with being a *tubaab* – the Senegalese word for stranger. She broke down that barrier by working shoulder to shoulder with the women, getting to know them and learning as much Wolof – the local tongue – as she could.

"I've never been so close to the raw product of fish in my life," she says. "It was everywhere. From pregnant women to old men, everyone was working on transforming this fish. They had their hands in the grime, taking out the parts that weren't used for consumption and then cleaning the rest. The women saw me and said, 'A *tubaab* getting her hands dirty? We've never seen this before. Tubaabs just come here to look at us and then they leave.' I spent a month or so cleaning and salting the fish and laying them out, and through doing that I was able to gain some of the women's trust."

During that time, she learned a lot about the women who built Khelkom. Like many microfinance programs, the seeds were planted by PROPAC, an international concern funded by the French Development Agency, the European Union and the Senegalese government. PROPAC came to Joal in the 1990s to teach the women about money management, give them a basic banking vocabulary and supply them with small loans. They were told to organize themselves into groups so that each group was accountable to all the others. After the training, however, PROPAC never issued any microfinance loans. Undeterred, the women of Joal chose the one among them who had the best credit rating. That woman used her meager home as collateral to obtain a loan, part of which was used to open the fish-processing plant.

"There I was, this First-World feminist, going into the situation thinking that these women were 'oppressed,'" Duffy-Tumazs admits. "But from everything I saw, they are in charge of their businesses; they're heads of their households; they're feeding their families. These women are empowered by any stretch of the imagination."

She points to one of the women – who goes by the name Madame Sye – to illustrate her point. A native of Joal, Madame Sye began distributing fish locally as soon as her children were old enough to look after themselves. Long before microfinance became popular, she was buying fish a bucket at a time. When the opportunity arose to increase her operation through microfinance training, she embraced it. Today she is the main income earner in her family.

“I always thought that Madame Sye could be walking down a New York City street in a power suit and high heels and look the part,” says Duffy-Tumazs. “She’s a mother and a wife, but also a businesswoman. She has a look that says, ‘This is who I am, and I mean business.’ There’s no messing around with that.”

Duffy-Tumazs returned to Joal over the winter break to show her thesis to the women at Khelkom and share some photos. A *tubaab* no longer, she has been given a Senegalese name – Rama – by one of the workers. She hopes to open a women’s cooperative in Senegal one day as part of her continuing efforts to study microfinance. “This project spoke to a lot of my interests: community development, economic development, social development and women’s issues,” she says. “What I’m finding is that microfinance is not a panacea to poverty alleviation. Still, I’m really interested in what makes it effective.”

“*BUT FROM EVERYTHING I SAW, THEY ARE IN CHARGE OF THEIR BUSINESSES; THEY’RE HEADS OF THEIR HOUSEHOLDS; THEY’RE FEEDING THEIR FAMILIES. THESE WOMEN ARE EMPOWERED BY ANY STRETCH OF THE IMAGINATION.*”
Marc Morial, C’80, is a mainstream politician with spit-shine polish. Moderate and temperate, he’s mastered the soothing patois of healing. He moves with ease between the black and white communities like the head of a blended family.

He doesn’t do impolitic or provocative. Yet here was the president of the National Urban League on Meet the Press, on the Sunday after Hurricane Katrina inundated his beloved New Orleans, pointing fingers. Morial, in full Ralph Ellison mode, implied that the federal government would have acted with more urgency had a disaster struck power centers such as Los Angeles, Washington or New York instead of the Bayou. His plaint stemmed from frustration and the recognition that poverty has gone underground – out of sight, out of mind.

The upper and middle classes do not see the poor, says Morial, the former mayor of New Orleans, because they don’t live in their neighborhoods, and the poor don’t get a fair hearing in the media. Nor, he adds, speaking from experience, do civic leaders wish to shine a spotlight on their city’s problems, much preferring to herald the progress of a glistening downtown development.

But this myopia does not obscure the bitter truth long banished from the national conversation: poverty is crawling out of the shadows once more. Hurricane Katrina gave us a helicopter’s-eye view of it on the rooftops of New Orleans. “On the one hand, yes, we’ve seen progress since the 1960s,” says Morial. “On the other hand, there’s still deep economic disparities. The last three years have shown a slippage. More people are in poverty in 2005 than were in poverty in 2001.”

In its 2005 report on the State of Black America, the National Urban League cited big economic gaps between whites and blacks. The rate of unemployment among blacks was double that of whites, median income of blacks was $20,000 less (as of 2003) and less than half of blacks owned homes compared to three-quarters of whites.

Still, statistics also show that poverty has been cut in half since the 1960s, the legacy of historic government programs such as Medicaid, Head Start, food stamps and the earned-income tax credit. Which is cold comfort to Morial, who finds it unacceptable that a quarter of African-American families still live below the $20,000-a-year poverty line. (The rate is even higher in New Orleans – 30 percent.) Morial, an economics major who returned to campus last fall to participate in the Fox Speakers Forum, where he spoke about the fallout from Katrina, refuses to accept piecemeal gains in the War on Poverty. He wants...
nothing short of conquest and uses the language of shared sacrifice and national commitment to lay down his challenge to Americans. “A country is governed by its aspirations,” he says. “What kind of country do we want to have? What kind of communities do we want to build? We should never be satisfied if any element of the country is suffering. I think that a country that has many of its people working at full productivity is going to be a better country.”

Buried within the incremental rise in poverty is a most disturbing statistic, one that plants the seeds for future dissolution: more children, 17.8 percent, are living in poverty now than in the 1970s, when the figure never exceeded 17.1 percent, according to the U.S. Census. This is where Morial really gets up on his soapbox. To reverse this trend and eliminate what he calls the “preordained destiny” of failure, Morial proposes going to the root of the problem. He and the National Urban League advocate early education. They want children to start school at age 3.

“I don’t view it as a cost,” explains Morial during an interview in his New York office, which is decorated with street scenes of New Orleans and posters of Louis Armstrong, Jackie Robinson and Muhammad Ali. “I view it as an investment. … What’s the return? Better test scores, better school attendance rates, lower rates of social misbehavior and crime, and higher graduation rates.”

“It’s not sexy,” he continues, “but it works. It’s more important to me than doing another mission to the moon. I love space. I want to see men on Mars. But I don’t know why NASA’s going back to the moon.”

Morial understands that the dynamics have changed. It is no longer fashionable – or feasible from the standpoint of public policy – to sink massive federal dollars into “curing” poverty. Morial hails from the teach-a-man-to-fish school of government. He champions economic empowerment and favors the new grail of public-private partnerships. And he doesn’t have to look far for a model. Last year, the National Urban League launched the Urban Entrepreneur Partnership. The initiative brings together business, government and philanthropic and community organizations in five cities – Atlanta, Cincinnati, Cleveland, Jacksonville and Kansas City, Mo. – to help more minorities start their own businesses. (Interestingly, there are no plans to add New Orleans to the mix. Morial says his hometown lacks the leadership and business community buy-in to participate in such a program.)

Although Morial finds salvation in private investment, he remains a true believer in government. He knows its cadences and has seen its power to move people. Son of the legendary Ernest “Dutch” Morial, the first African-American mayor of New Orleans, for whom the city’s convention center is named, Marc Morial inherited the mantle of leadership. He ran New Orleans for eight years (1994-2002), and the city prospered, with $400 million in infrastructure improvements, 7,000 new hotel rooms and community reinvestment initiatives that created 15,000 new homeowners. At the tail end of his term, he also served two years as president of the U.S. Conference of Mayors, traversing the country and learning about the hard realities that all cities face. His education has continued at the National Urban League, which has

The upper and middle classes do not see the poor, says Morial, because they don’t live in their neighborhoods, and the poor don’t get a fair hearing in the media.

“I don’t view it as a cost; I view it as an investment.”
more than 100 chapters, the majority of which he has visited. “The situation in New Orleans is not unique,” says Morial, who blames post-9/11 economic dol-drum, an inadequate minimum wage, a drop in the dollar’s value and above all, outsourcing as contributors to the rise in poverty. “The economy is not producing the numbers of entry-level jobs that it once did,” he says.

Does Morial, who is credited with turning around New Orleans, have the mojo to affect the national dialogue and raise the profile of poor black people?

Hugh Price, Morial’s predecessor at the National Urban League, believes he does. “[Marc] has a keen, pragmatic understanding of what makes cities tick and how minorities and the poor are faring in them,” Price says. “Even prior to Hurricane Katrina and certainly in the wake of it, he positioned himself as a formidable advocate for addressing poverty in this country.”

But many worry that the renewed emphasis on poverty is receding more rapidly than the floodwaters in New Orleans. “Post-Katrina, the hope that the country would focus on poverty and the nexus between race and poverty is dimming,” laments Mary Frances Berry, the Geraldine R. Segal Professor of American Social Thought and former chair of the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights. “Proposed budget cuts in Congress, foot-dragging in the administration at all levels and the short attention span of the public and the media have made a focus on remedying poverty problematic. Those who believe in the cause, however, must continue to push.”

Michael Eric Dyson, the Avalon Foundation Professor in the Humanities, whose latest book is Come Hell or High Water: Hurricane Katrina and the Color of Disaster, also sees Katrina-fatigue setting in and amnesia taking hold. “The refusal to see can still render even the most visible figures quite invisible,” declares Dyson. “There is not a lot of empathy in American culture for the poor. … They get dismissed, they get marginalized, they get demonized. They get seen as the carriers of a particular virus of pathology.”

Even Morial conjectures that the soul-searching brought on by Katrina could prove “fleeting,” more like a “120-day fascination” with a big storm than a seismic policy shift or change in heart. In which case, as Ralph Ellison wrote, poor blacks will return to being “a phantom in other people’s minds.”

Larry Teitelbaum is editor of the Penn Law Journal.

This myopia does not obscure the bitter truth long banished from the national conversation: poverty is crawling out of the shadows once more.
I first met Elizabeth Castro, C’86, at Van Pelt College House, which had a reputation for being where the geeks and artists hung out. We had a wonderful year discussing everything under the sun and concocting banana pancakes for the house brunch. Liz posed for my first attempts at portrait painting, and I proofread some of her papers.

Over the last 20 years, we have remained in touch. But because Liz is modest about her accomplishments, I never knew much about her impressive resume until a Penn friend asked about her at a dinner party. Catching on to my ignorance, he gently clued me in: “She’s famous now, didn’t you know?” I knew she did something with computers, but she and I mostly talk about raising our children and cats, and home renovation.

Turns out that Liz is the editor of the Macintosh Bible, 5th edition, the version many still claim is the best for clarity and ease of use. She has written seven books for Peachpit Press, a leading publisher of Web and computer books, including Publishing a Blog with Blogger. The step-by-step guidebooks translate technobabble into useful prose. Her HTML for the World Wide Web is the best-selling book about HTML in the world. In the universe of computer manuals, she’s the closest thing there is to a celebrity writer.

At Penn, Liz created her own major in Spanish studies. After graduation, she traveled to Barcelona to figure out what she wanted to do with her burning interest in all things Catalan. Wandering the city and worrying about money, she spotted a job notice: Wanted: Native English speaker who knows the Macintosh. All a delighted Liz could think was, “Yes! Now I can stay in Barcelona!”

For her first assignment, instead of simply translating a computer manual into English, she rewrote it. A delighted Apple Spain invited her to take on another project that used material from the Macintosh Bible. “Being the goody-two-shoes that I was, I wrote the folks who published the Macintosh Bible and asked if they’d mind if we used some of their material. Peachpit Press wrote back with a very friendly note saying they would be very happy to let us – thank you for asking – and also would we like to translate the Macintosh Bible into Spanish?” “Yes, please,” she told them.

She translated 14 more books, and Peachpit asked her to move back to the States to edit the 5th English edition of the Macintosh Bible. She returned with her Catalan husband, Andreu Cabré, in 1993. Today they live on a small New England farm with their three children.

Life on “the farmstead” is a heady brew of chores, computers and homeschooling. Liz once sent me a letter that described writing a new book while leaping up every 20 minutes to check the sap level in the maple-sugaring pan. They had tapped their trees, and she was tending the sap while writing to deadline. Another letter recounted how she had to stop at every page to check a box of baby chicks and make sure none had tumbled into the water dish.

When I last chatted with Liz, I asked what she was working on. She described with enthusiasm how she and her daughter had mixed a beautiful shade of blue paint for the dining-room walls. “How about computer projects?” I now knew to ask. “Oh, yes, and I am writing another book too!”

—NANCY BEA MILLER, C’85
Things go wrong in so many ways that you can’t imagine,” sociologist Charles Bosk told his class. He speaks softly, with a touch of wry humor that’s often missed by students, and sometimes he sips from the silver can of Diet Coke that is his constant companion.

On Tuesday afternoons last fall, 18 freshmen sat at tables arranged into a U-shape to consider the intricacies of Bosk’s claim. The freshmen seminar on Mistakes, Errors, Accidents and Disasters reviewed mishaps big and small – from the loss of a single life due to medical error to big, public-spectacle tragedies like the Challenger explosion and large-scale catastrophes like the leakage of toxic fumes from a pesticide plant that killed thousands in Bhopal, India.

“Accidents are normal,” Bosk says of the fast-moving, interlocking parts of technology and people that make up social systems, “but we don’t know their frequency nor do we know their consequences.”

This afternoon, the class is looking into how a couple of F-15 fighters managed to shoot down two Black Hawk helicopters that had permission to enter the No Fly Zone overseen by an AWACS surveillance plane in Iraq. All 26 peacekeepers onboard the helicopters were killed in the 1994 incident. The students pass around plastic tubs of Trader Joe’s Crispy Crunch Oatmeal Raisin Cookies and Triple Ginger Snaps that the instructor had supplied.

“Was the system broken before the shoot-down?” Bosk asks. Most in the class say it was, so he presses the point. “Is it possible that a broken system could function and even be hailed as a model of interservice teamwork?”

Together, the group probed the training, the values and views of pilots and technicians, the myriad operational protocols, the shortfalls of even the best-written plans, the pressures for maximum efficiency and all the unseen warnings of breakdown that piled up and the decisions that were made at the breakneck speed of high-performance jets.

“Shouldn’t they have seen the obvious flaws from the beginning?” states Jenny Ball.

“How would they know the system was broken unless something happened?” Ben Cirlin shoots back.

“Why fix something that’s working?” Al Moran adds, noting that the no-fly system had operated without incident for three years.

“If I were forced to pick a day when the system failed,” Bosk observes, “I’d say it was the day the transponder code for identifying friend or foe was changed.”

“Are there a lot of places we can pinpoint like that?” Kevin Rosenberg protests.

“Probably,” says Bosk, “but that’s my favorite.”

In the military’s fast-paced, high-risk, high-tech world, a string of harmless mishaps can sometimes line up and unfold suddenly into fiery debacle. In his recounting, Colonel Scott Snook, author of Friendly Fire, today’s reading, concludes that everyone’s actions were by-the-book and that the shoot-down was a “normal accident” that occurred in an otherwise highly reliable organization.

“Carelessness? System error? Just plain bad luck? ‘I think it’s one of those puzzles that I’ll never quite figure out,’” Bosk says of the shards of disaster that, when pieced together, make a picture of how things go awry. “This is complicated, interesting and important material that’s worth thinking about in a million different ways. I will have failed if these students leave and say this is how you prevent errors and disasters, and these are the answers.”

“I’m surprised by how many open-ended questions there are,” Mike Eckert remarks near the end of class.

—PETER NICHOLS
Class of 1966

When it came time to decide on a 40th-reunion gift from the Class of 1966, Bill Constantine, C'66, WG'68, and Steve Roth, W'66, knew just what to do. The School of Arts and Sciences had undertaken a floor-to-rafters renovation of Bennett Hall, and not long ago, their classmate Judith Rodin, CW'66, had stepped down after 10 years as president of Penn. As an undergraduate, Rodin had been the last president of the Women's Student Government, which was based in Bennett Hall, and as president of the University, she had championed the building’s restoration. “All the stars just lined up,” says Constantine, who contributed the lead gift for the Judith S. Rodin Undergraduate Study Center on the restored building’s second floor. “Since Bennett Hall was the location of the College for Women until 1974, it seemed like the ideal location in which to provide lasting recognition of Judy’s amazing tenure as president of Penn,” adds Roth.

Class giving director Evelyn Schwartz notes with astonishment that the ambitious fundraising campaign for the Judith S. Rodin Undergraduate Study Center on the restored building’s second floor, “Since Bennett Hall was the location of the College for Women until 1974, it seemed like the ideal location in which to provide lasting recognition of Judy’s amazing tenure as president of Penn,” adds Roth.

PARTNERS Real Doers

In the five years since former Nabisco Group Holdings chairman Steven F. Goldstone, Esq., C'67, made a $2 million gift to strengthen Penn’s Philosophy, Politics and Economics (PPE) major, enrollment has increased by more than 30 percent, making it one of the largest majors in the College. Goldstone thinks the future looks even brighter, thanks to the leadership of PPE director Cristina Bicchieri, the Carol and Michael Lowenstein Endowed Term Professor.

The program lies at the intersection of the social sciences and humanities and, according to Bicchieri, encourages students to “use tools from different disciplines to solve complex real-world problems.” A philosopher of science whose interests range from behavioral ethics to game theory, Bicchieri practices the same kind of interdisciplinary thinking that she preaches. Goldstone describes her as “an extraordinary person and real doer whose vision for PPE will help it to become one of the best interdisciplinary programs in the country.”

Goldstone also attributes the success of the program to former director Samuel Freeman, the Steven F. Goldstone Endowed Term Professor of Philosophy, and to the students, with whom he keeps in regular contact. Adds Bicchieri, “Steve, too, has been a tremendous force in the program and is committed to making the experience exceptional for students.”

—BROOKE ERIN DUFFY

In Memoriam

The School of Arts and Sciences is saddened to announce the passing of the following members of the faculty in 2005:

John Cebra, Annenberg Professor of Natural Sciences (biology), October 7
David DeLaura, Avalon Foundation Professor Emeritus in the Humanities (English), April 9
Roland Frye, Felix Schelling Professor Emeritus of English Literature, January 13
Peter Gaeffke, professor emeritus of South Asia regional studies, March 30
Paul Korshin, professor of English, March 2

George Rochberg, Annenberg Professor Emeritus of the Humanities (music), May 29
John Sabin, professor of psychology, July 15
Paul Watson, associate professor emeritus of history of art, May 15
Chung-Tao Yang, professor emeritus of mathematics, September 15

To make a tribute donation in memory of deceased faculty, stipulate the name and send a check, payable to the Trustees of the University of Pennsylvania, to Laura Weber, 3440 Market Street, Suite 300, Philadelphia, PA 19104.
Backseat Drivers

As students, Jon Schmerin, C’00, and Jeremy Shure, C’00, would often sit in the back row of their classes. So it was only natural that they would make gifts to purchase chairs in the back row of the fourth-floor lecture hall in the refurbished Fisher-Bennett Hall.

Schmerin and Shure liked the idea of leaving “something tangible” behind and chose to name chairs in honor of their parents. “My parents made it possible for me to go to Penn, and this is one way for me to say thank you,” Shure says. They are looking to members of the Class of 2000 to help them “fill the row,” and SAS is working to fill the hall with named chairs. “Having classmates join us in our efforts to fill the back row would make this classroom special and leave a lasting impression for those who sit in the row,” Schmerin says.

For a gift of $2,500 (payable over five years), donors’ names will be engraved on a silver plaque on the back of their chairs. To make a chair-naming gift in Fisher-Bennett Hall, contact Beth Wright at 215-898-5262 or ewright@sas.upenn.edu.

Film & Media Pioneers

“When we were putting together the cinema studies program,” explains Peter Decherney, an assistant professor of cinema studies and English, “we realized Penn had a long tradition of film innovation and study, and there were all these alumni in the industry – directors, actors, producers, studio executives, screenwriters – not to mention film scholars.” That’s when Warren Lieberfarb, W’65, stepped in to fund Penn Film & Media Pioneers. “I thought the notion of bridging the past, present and future by bringing together alumni, faculty and students would be an excellent way to bring greater attention and participation to the cinema studies program,” he says. Lieberfarb, a Penn trustee, is chairman of Lieberfarb & Associates, a Los Angeles-based consulting and investment firm specializing in media, entertainment and technology.

The symposium, which took place last fall, explored some of Penn’s pioneers such as early filmmaker Eadweard Muybridge, considered contemporary scholarship, looked at some student cinema projects and imagined the future of media education. Besides Lieberfarb, other alumni panelists included Douglas Belgrad, C’87, president of production for Columbia Pictures, and Duncan Kenworthy, ASC’73, one of Britain’s leading film producers (Notting Hill and Love Actually). Panelist Douglas Gomery, a professor of media studies from the University of Maryland, thought the presentations by Penn students were the best part of the program. “The student panel gave me hope for the future,” he says.

Make your gift to the School of Arts and Sciences

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Send your check, payable to the Trustees of the University of Pennsylvania, to Laura Weber, 3440 Market Street, Suite 300, Philadelphia, PA 19104.

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Make a gift online at http://www.sas.upenn.edu/home/views/alumni.html.

APPRCIATED SECURITIES
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OTHER ASSETS, LIFE-INCOME GIFTS AND ESTATE INTENTIONS
Gifts can be made using assets like real estate, art or collectibles. Some can even pay you income for life or be designated to benefit SAS when you pass on. For information, contact Penn’s Office of Gift Planning at 800-223-8236 or planned_giving@ben.dev.upenn.edu.

MATCHING GIFTS
Many organizations match gifts to the School from their employees. Ask your employer for more information.
Someday I suspect you’ll ask me what I do. You’ll ask, “What is pediatric palliative care?” I wonder what I’ll say, whether I’ll try to explain the important yet difficult truths of this job or simply recollect the encounters of that day.

This morning, for instance, having gently knocked, I step into a patient room and close the door, leaving behind the hospital hubbub. The mother sits on a blue sofa by the window at the far end of the room, her baby in her arms, wrapped in a white blanket. Standing next to her is her own mother, hands on her daughter’s shoulders. I approach, passing the empty crib, the tray of medical supplies, the silent monitors, and I sit at the edge of the sofa. Midmorning sunlight cascades through the window, enveloping us. The mother looks at me, tears on her cheeks. We say nothing.

Then, after a while, she says, “It happened so peaceful. I never knew someone could die so peacefully.”

Several hours later, in another hospital room, bending over to examine a teenage boy, I see a maroon line of dried blood where his teeth meet his gums. Pale lips open, sallow eyelids closed, the sound of his unconscious breathing fills the otherwise quiet room, his chest rising and falling conspicuously yet adagio. His bedside is ringed with family. One holds his limp hand; another strokes his black hair. I check the doses on the medication pumps infusing drugs through the IV line. The father steadies his gaze on me, and I ask him the question that we agreed earlier was, at this juncture, the most important question: “Do you think your son is comfortable?” He nods.

The final patient I visit today is, at that moment, alone. The mother and nurse had just bathed the child. Even at some distance, she smelled like lavender, her brown hair combed and tied back with a purple ribbon. Propped up in bed, pillows supporting her twisted limbs and back, she is looking in the direction of the TV, which plays her favorite video. I greet her but expect no response. With the odor of illness absent from the room, I know immediately that she has improved. Glancing at the record of her temperature, I see further confirmation of this impression. Then the mother re-enters the room, and from the look on her face, I am sure that this crisis has ebbed, even as we both know that, like the ocean tides, the physical havoc wrought by the illness will someday flow again. “Hi, doc,” she says. “Well, this is a much better day. … This is what I was hoping for … just to get her back to that place where she’s stable enough to go home, at least for a while, and do the few things that she really loves to do.”

In the car driving home, I weave through the traffic. So many thoughts, feelings, images, decisions from work clutter my mind. Navigating is always a challenge. I pull into the driveway, stopping short of the yellow kickball and red tricycle. Walking toward the door, I ready myself, trying to be as present and mindful as possible. From the foyer, I hear both of you shout out, “Daddy!” and come tearing around the corner, running up to me with your arms outstretched. Savoring my favorite part of the day, I pick each of you up and jostle you around in the physical play of love.

Just how I will answer your questions about my job is not for now, but for another day – a day I look toward with uncertainty, yet with conviction that, despite the inscrutable and often cruel workings of fate, we must work to create our hope.

Chris Feudtner, G’89, Gr’95, M’95, is a pediatrician specializing in complex chronic conditions and palliative care at the Children’s Hospital of Philadelphia and in the Division of General Pediatrics at the University of Pennsylvania. He lives with his wife, Lynda Bascelli, a family-medicine physician, and their sons, Jack (3 years old) and Hank (2).
Jubilee Chocolates in Philadelphia sells high-end, handcrafted confections that come with a story line. Co-founder Kira Baker, C’97, GE’d’99, uses locally grown ingredients or those from businesses with a conscience. She buys raspberries from Glenn Brendle’s organic farm in Gap, Pa., and coffee from Mut Vitz, a Mexican cooperative working to improve living standards. Her mint chocolates take an earthy flavor from mint leaves grown in West Philly gardens tended by students of Drew Elementary School, part of Penn’s Urban Nutrition Initiative. The pleasure may not be guilt-free, but it’s for a good cause.
A CELEBRATION OF INTELLECTUAL EXCELLENCE

2006 Dean’s Forum

Henry Louis Gates Jr.

The Humanities and
the New Black Renaissance


Gates’ scholarly achievements have led him to argue logically and eloquently in support of African-American contributions to American culture. He rails against the depiction of blacks in the popular media and the lack of recognition given to black works. He also is disturbed by blacks’ attitude toward education and athletics, saying “Far too many black kids treat basketball courts and football fields as if they were classrooms and alternative school systems.”

Thursday, March 23, 2006, 4:30 p.m.

see http://www.sas.upenn.edu/home/news/deans_06.html for more information