



# THE KEY REPORTER

## Ferry, Smith, and Diamond Win 1997 Phi Beta Kappa Book Prizes

The three winners of the 1997 Phi Beta Kappa prizes to authors for outstanding contributions to humanistic learning are Anne Ferry, Stephen B. Smith, and Jared Diamond. Each author was awarded a check for \$2,500 at the annual ΦBK Senate banquet, held in the ballroom of the ITT Sheraton Hotel in Washington, D.C., on December 5, 1997.

Ferry, who formerly taught at numerous institutions and now lives in Cambridge, Mass., received the Christian Gauss Award for *The Title to the Poem* (Stanford University Press, 1996).

Smith, professor of political science at Yale University, received the Ralph Waldo Emerson Award for *Spinoza, Liberalism, and the Question of Jewish Identity* (Yale University Press, 1997).

Diamond, professor of physiology at the UCLA School of Medicine, who was unable to attend the banquet, won the Science Award for *Guns, Germs, and Steel: The Fates of Human Societies* (W. W. Norton, 1997). (A review of his book appears on page 14.)

The awards committees were chaired by Jonathan Culler of Cornell University, Alexander Pond of Rutgers University, and Andrew Cayton, of Miami University.

The 1998 ΦBK book awards are open to qualified



Book Award winners Stephen Smith and Anne Ferry at the banquet in December.

books published in the United States and submitted by the publishers between May 1, 1997, and April 30, 1998. Inquiries and entries should be addressed to the appropriate award committee at 1811 Q Street NW, Washington, DC 20009.

## Phi Beta Kappa Presents Program for National Honor Society in Houston

In November 1997 Phi Beta Kappa presented the major program on the theme "Is Science the Salvation of Society?" at the fifth annual meeting of the National Honor Society (NHS) attended by 1,000 high school students and their advisers in Houston.

On November 8, NHS faculty advisers met at Rice University to discuss the theme under the leadership of James Rutherford of the American Association for the Advancement of Science and Anthony Gorry of the university's computer laboratory. The Houston Phi Beta Kappa association provided lunch.

On November 9, four Rice faculty members addressed the students and led informal discussions: Ken Kennedy, professor of computer science; Stephen Klineberg, professor of sociology; Carol Quillen, professor of history; and Patricia Reiff, professor of space physics and astronomy.

This is the second year that Phi Beta Kappa has presented a program for the NHS gathering as part of the Society's outreach to high school students.

Texts of some of the Rice University faculty presentations may be found on Phi Beta Kappa's Web site (<http://www.pbk.org>).

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# Anne Fadiman Assumes *American Scholar* Editorship

Last winter Phi Beta Kappa chose Anne Fadiman to succeed Joseph Epstein as editor of its quarterly journal, the *American Scholar*. Fadiman is a 1975 graduate of Harvard University who won a National Magazine Award for Reporting in 1987 and was a John S. Knight Fellow at Stanford University in 1991-92. She was made an alumna member of Phi Beta Kappa by her alma mater last spring, at which time she gave the Phi Beta Kappa oration, titled "Procrustes and the Culture Wars."

Using the procrustean bed as a metaphor for today's culture wars, Fadiman recounted Diodorus of Sicily's story of how Procrustes seized passing travelers and threw them onto a particular bed. He then lopped off whatever parts of the bodies overhung, or stretched bodies that were too short. Fadiman said that, in contrast to Procrustes, the culture wars only lop off.

She appealed to her Harvard audience to avoid taking sides in the culture wars but instead to make decisions case by case, noting that some of her own stances on controversies surrounding the literary canon would be considered liberal and some conservative. Her examples ranged from Epictetus's *Enchiridion* to *Huckleberry Finn*.

Last autumn Fadiman hired two book designers from Alfred A. Knopf to do a "modest" redesign for the magazine; she also established several new departments for the magazine and began recruiting writers for forthcoming issues.

The first issue of the *American Scholar* under Fadiman's editorship will appear in March. She talked with the *Key Reporter* about her new job in December.

## **Q. What changes do you plan for the design of the *Scholar*?**

A. The new design is beautiful, simple, and somewhat old-fashioned. The most important things about the *Scholar* will stay the same: size, shape, paper, listing of major articles on the cover, and the typeface—New Baskerville—for the text. We looked



*The Scholar's new editor, Anne Fadiman, center, shows her designers' proposals to members of the Phi Beta Kappa Senate's Publications Committee in December. From the left: ΦBK Senators Niall Slater and Donald Lamm; the Scholar's new associate publisher, Peggy Ferrin; and Senators Rita Dove and Eugen Weber.*

at a lot of other typefaces, but I had a strong feeling that this typeface, which is legible and beautiful, was the *Scholar*.

The new departments in the *Scholar* will be more visually distinct from the articles. There will be an editor's letter to open each issue, and I will write a pseudonymous column in the familiar-essay tradition of the Aristides column—it will be hard to match it!—but somewhat shorter.

Other departments will include a commonplace book of excerpts on a theme, selections from writers' journals, "rereadings" of books originally read before age 25, and a column by physician Sherwin Nuland. There will also be some fine poetry by, among others, Rita Dove and Paul Muldoon.

## **Q. What are your goals for the new *Scholar*?**

A. I see the *Scholar* as a magazine for people who aren't ashamed to be intelligent and want to be made to think. I don't like to hear it called the "new *Scholar*" because I feel that the focus of its articles should continue to be more timeless than timely.

I also hope that the *Scholar* will be a kind of public conversation in

which biologists can rub shoulders with historians, historians with literary journalists, and both with poets. In the academy today there's too much fissioning into bailiwicks. The *Scholar* should be a place for people in different fields to come together and see what they have to say to one another.

## **Q. What new groups of readers do you plan to try to reach and what do you plan to do to satisfy the existing readers?**

A. We know that the typical subscriber to the *Scholar* is 55 years old. It would be wonderful if younger people also could look at the *Scholar* and say, "It's for me." However, I do not want to attract those readers at the expense of our loyal subscribers. There is nothing more important or satisfying to an editor than readers who know and love a magazine—readers for whom the magazine has been an important part of their lives for a decade or more. If I were to lose those readers in the course of reaching the 28-year-olds, I would be heartbroken.

By the way—this happened purely by accident, but it's deliciously emblematic—in my second issue I'm



planning to run articles by two Harvard graduates seven decades apart: J. C. Furnas, 92, on modern interpretations of Shakespeare, and Adam Kirsch, 21, on Matthew Arnold and T. S. Eliot. If memory serves, I've also accepted pieces by authors representing every decade between these two.

**Q. How do you define the "literary journalism" that the *Chronicle of Higher Education* [see page 5] says you have been hired to provide?**

A. At its best, literary journalism is the kind of piece we might have seen in the *New Yorker* 15 years ago—thoughtful, intelligent, well crafted, and usually of the world, not the academy. When John McPhee writes about the construction of a birchbark canoe, the result is no less literary than a Saul Bellow novel.

I am certainly fond of literary journalism, but I'm also looking forward to publishing essays on academic subjects written in a nonacademic style—as the *Scholar* has always done—plus essays that are unclassifiable, just great essays.

**Q. How will your strong interest in other cultures, as exemplified in your new book about the Hmong [*The Spirit Catches You and You Fall Down*, Farrar, Straus & Giroux], affect the *Scholar*?**

A. My book about a Hmong refugee family's encounters with the American medical system was a fascinating experiment for me. The Hmong are about as different from me as any people I could possibly think of. My own background is in literature and history; I'm a compulsively rational thinker, happily stuck in the Western tradition. I think it's safe to say the *Scholar* will never publish an article about the Hmong!

The Hmong aside, I am interested in other cultures, and if I'm able to find really superb writers who are from Asia or Africa or Latin America, or who can write about those cul-

tures, I'd be proud to see them in the *Scholar*. However, it is the *American Scholar*, and its primary purview should continue to be America and America's traditional influences, by which I mean Britain and Western Europe.

I do feel that the various cultures that have come together in America might find more of a home within the *Scholar*. In particular, I'd like a stronger African-American voice.

**Q. What kind of writing do you seek for the *Scholar*?**

A. One of the things I've always respected most about Joseph Epstein is his uncompromising attitude toward the English language; I've never read a graceless word in his column. I share his view that our language is

ers write nonfiction, academics write about nonacademic subjects, and journalists write about academic subjects. All these things add spice. I can't tell you how excited I am to open my mailbox every day!

**Q. What are some of your favorites among the articles you've found in your mailbox?**

A. A memoir by Alfred Kazin on New York as a great art city. A lovely essay by the British paleontologist Richard Fortey on hunting for fossil trilobites in the wilds of Nevada. Ved Mehta on how he became a careful writer. A young writer named Robert Worth on a 1910 lynching at his great-grandfather's steel mill. Robert Wokler on how the editors of Voltaire and Rousseau came to resemble their subjects. You'd better stop me, or we'll be here forever.

**Q. How do you view Phi Beta Kappa's relationship to the *Scholar*?**

A. I think they are inextricably linked and should always be. About half of the *Scholar's* 25,000 subscribers—the most loyal ones—are members of Phi Beta Kappa. They represent all fields, all political stripes, and all ages, but they do not represent all levels of intelligence—only the highest. What Phi Beta Kappa members have in common is what I hope will

make them love the *American Scholar*.

Most of the readers of the *Scholar* are nonacademics—intelligent people with sophisticated imaginations who enjoy reading outside their fields: physicians with a strong interest in literature, journalists who relish reading about science.

Phi Beta Kappa has shown extraordinary support for my editorship and for the magazine. Moreover, no one at Phi Beta Kappa has ever asked me what I plan to put in the *Scholar*, no one has asked to read an article in advance, no one has warned me away from a certain writer, no one has ever said that Phi Beta Kappa had to okay

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Anne Fadiman, center, with some *Scholar* staff members: from the left, managing editor Jean Stipicevic, literary editor Richard Nicholls, poetry editor Robert Farnsworth, and associate publisher Peggy Ferrin.

becoming increasingly debased. I believe that the *Scholar* should be a last bastion against the crumbling of English.

The strong voice—the use of the first person—has long been a tradition at the *Scholar*, and I will continue to seek idiosyncratic personal essays. One example in my first issue is Clara Claiborne Park's piece on her adult autistic daughter, who happens to be a fine artist and a mathematical savant. I'm always fascinated when a subject that is usually treated in a mushy way is dealt with by someone with a truly fine mind.

I'm also fond of casting against type—I like seeing good fiction writ-



my redesign. It's an atmosphere of such extraordinary trust that I feel a heavy weight of responsibility and much gratitude.

**Q. Do you wish to comment on politics in the *Scholar* under your editorship?**

A. I don't feel that the *Scholar* has ever been or should be essentially a political magazine. It certainly shouldn't cover national politics. It hasn't before, and it won't with me—there are plenty of other magazines that do that well.

Now for the *cultural* politics. The *Scholar* is perceived as having been a magnet for controversy, but I believe that perception has more to do with the genuinely controversial manner in which Joseph Epstein was dismissed than with the actual content of the *Scholar* under his editorship or mine.

I think that viewing literature or art through the lens of cultural politics generally diminishes it. I therefore refuse to be cast in the realm of cultural politics as a member of either the right or the left. To insist on such a classification—or to insist on the equally reductive view that if you like me you can't like Joseph Epstein, or vice versa—is a kind of idiotic Manicheism that stomps on nuance. I reject it.

**Q: What has been your relationship with Joseph Epstein during the transition period?**

A. One of generosity on his part and keen appreciation on mine. No one else has done as much as Joseph Epstein to fan life into the American essay—not only because he's probably our greatest living essayist, but because he made the *Scholar* the essay's most important haven in our country.

Over the past few months Mr. Epstein has been extraordinarily warm and helpful to me in both large and small ways. He has guided me through the labyrinthine workings of the *Scholar*, and we've exchanged many letters. His are, of course, always beautifully written.

One day he flew from Chicago to Washington in order to go over all the

pieces that had been accepted by the *Scholar* but that he was not going to have an opportunity to run. I said I would be pleased to run them all. We sat down together for three hours to talk about those and many other things. I'd heard about his legendary wit, but I didn't expect him to be so just plain *nice*.

In the current tempest over the end of his tenure, everyone seems to forget that the articles under his editorship that had a political bent actually constituted about 10 percent of the magazine. I plan to continue that approximate percentage. The only difference will be that the political mix within my 10 percent will be more heterogeneous.

Joseph Epstein is a humane, gallant man whom I've never heard say a mean-spirited word. His is an exceptionally tough act to follow. I very much hope that he will contribute regularly to the *Scholar* under my editorship, but so far he hasn't committed himself.

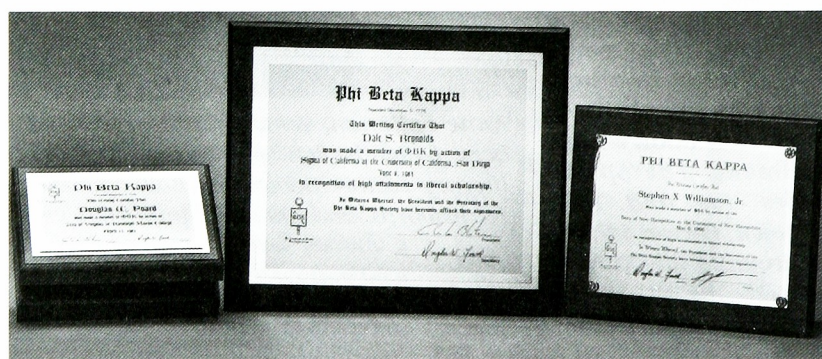
**Q. Do you plan to continue writing for *Civilization* as well as editing the *Scholar*? How does a**

**mother of two small children find time to do either job?**

A. I've loved doing my Common Reader column for *Civilization* for the past three years, but I'm writing my last one next week. It makes me very sad to leave *Civilization*—in fact, when I put it that way, it sounds downright barbaric—but I want to make the *Scholar* the center of my working life and to give the *Scholar* my best work.

As for combining family life with my writing and editing, I do it with difficulty but also with enthusiasm. I have an excellent support system and a wonderful husband who is a writer himself and so understands the complexity of my divided loyalties. It is true that I sometimes find myself mentally editing Alfred Kazin while taking off my two-year-old's sweater, but that's not entirely a disadvantage.

I firmly believe that literature is rooted in life—that if I didn't have a family, if my own life were more emotionally circumscribed, I would not be able to appreciate some of the writing that I find every day in my thrillingly bulging mailbox. ■



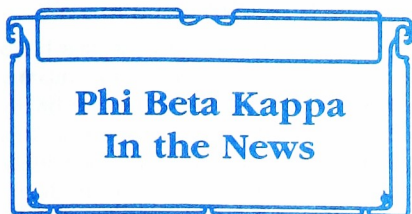
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# Chapter and Association Representatives Describe Activities

## ***Chronicle* Hails Fadiman As a 'Literary Journalist' Chosen to Enlarge Audience for Scholar**

In a long feature article published November 28, 1997, in the *Chronicle of Higher Education*, Jennifer K. Ruark recapitulated the controversy over the dismissal of Joseph Epstein as editor of Phi Beta Kappa's quarterly journal, the *American Scholar*, and profiled his successor, Anne Fadiman, who for the past three years has been editor at large and columnist for *Civilization*, the magazine of the Library of Congress.

After detailing an assortment of dire predictions by the former editor's supporters, Ruark wrote, "In fact, the 44-year-old Ms. Fadiman may be more traditional than either Joseph Epstein's supporters or his opponents realize." Ruark quoted Fadiman as rejecting claims that the journal under Epstein was narrowly conservative or expectations that she will make it more liberal, adding, "If there's anything I could do, it would be to shuck off this image of myself and the journal I love as being essentially political in any direction."

Ruark quoted two members of the committee that selected Fadiman, Joseph Gordon and David Levering Lewis, as claiming, respectively: (1) "We were interested in maintaining the very high standards that Epstein demanded but also in reaching out to a wider range of readers; Anne Fadiman loves the magazine and saw ways of extending it and bringing more light and air into it"; and (2) "Phi Beta Kappa is not endorsing anything but ideas in general, not some ideas over others."

Ruark's article also reported Fadiman's plans to redesign the journal while retaining its current size and shape; to write personal essays in the Epstein tradition; and to publish articles by some of Epstein's favorite contributors as well as by younger writers.

On January 9, 1998, the *Chronicle's* "Hot Type" column noted Epstein's "parting shots at Phi Beta Kappa" in his last issue as editor of the *Scholar* [Winter 1998].

For several years the winter issue of the *Key Reporter* has detailed the activities of the chapters and associations across the nation. This year, because these activities were the subject of discussion by a panel during the triennial Council held last October in Chicago, we are presenting the text of two presentations there instead, plus only a few highlights from the chapter and association annual reports to ΦBK headquarters.

*Presentation by Thomas Bell, Representative of the University of Tennessee Chapter*

As a chapter representative and secretary, I speak from a very limited perspective. If other chapter secretaries find themselves nodding in agreement with what I am about to say, then perhaps it is time to rethink some of the ways we do things to make Phi Beta Kappa more relevant to the intellectual development of our new members in course.

One of the seemingly shocking precipitating events leading to this dialogue was a finding reported rather innocently by a chapter secretary at the University of Arizona. The acceptance rate there among students who qualified academically and morally (i.e., those who were elected at the chapter election meeting) was hovering around 60 percent, and he simply wondered whether that experience was being borne out elsewhere or whether there was something unique about the university he represented that made the rate of acceptance so low.

His question seemed to strike many chapters like a thunderbolt but ruffled nary a feather at others. Secretaries at smaller liberal arts colleges could not relate; their acceptance rates were well over 90 percent and nonacceptance was, for them, a nonissue.

The story of the experience at Arizona really got me thinking about the issue for the first time, so I ran some of the statistics at Tennessee and found to my amazement that our rate of acceptance was even lower than that for Arizona. What was the problem?

Some chapters were willing to dismiss low acceptance as a temporary aberration that would right itself eventually. Others were quick to attribute the problem to a single cause—most commonly the fact that public institutions are likely to have a much higher proportion of their student body who are first-generation college students than is the case at private institutions. The parents of these students might not know about Phi Beta Kappa and would not, therefore, instill in their chil-

dren an appreciation of the value of membership in such a prestigious society.

As with all facile explanations, there certainly is an element of truth to it, but the problem of low acceptance is much deeper and more multifaceted than could be accounted for by simple differences in the composition of student bodies among the various institutions with Phi Beta Kappa chapters.

I'd like to posit some reasons why I think students at Tennessee are not joining the Society in the proportions that we'd like to see. I think you'll agree that many of these problems are structural and eminently solvable.

## **Some Problems**

- Timing is a huge problem. Many students at Tennessee postpone taking their required foreign language until very late in their programs of study. Two years of a foreign language are now required for graduation in practically every college in the university. This has, of course, led to a heavy demand for foreign language courses. The response of the relevant language departments has been to give priority to upperclassmen in these terribly oversubscribed courses. Many otherwise wonderfully qualified students wait until the summer of their senior year to complete their foreign language requirement by taking it intensively.

We induct new members in course only twice a year and, believe me, even a Phi Beta Kappa election letter is antilimactic after you've already graduated.

- Another aspect of the timing problem is the increasing number of students coming from the community college system into the University of Tennessee as upperclassmen. Articulation agreements with the surrounding community colleges ensure that the courses they take in their curricula are comparable, but our strict residency requirements at the four-year institution for admission to Phi Beta

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## PANEL PRESENTATIONS

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Kappa once again preclude many deserving students from election until the last semester of their senior year or, worse, after they have already received the baccalaureate degree.

- Much of the timing problem could be handled through better advising of incoming freshmen and transfer students. Phi Beta Kappa has not, unfortunately, been given the opportunity to present the case for careful curricular planning, or even allowed to present a brief overview of what the fraternity stands for at freshmen summer orientation. We are not being singled out in that regard; none of the other honorary fraternities are able to get any time at orientation either. Now social fraternities and sororities—well, that's another matter entirely.

- It is important to involve members in course in the activities of the chapter. We have only a handful of junior elections each term, and these people should be involved because they will be around for at least one more year. But these are also often the people who are active in a variety of other campus and intellectual activities. Perhaps, like many chapters, we tend to be a chapter "of the faculty, for the faculty." We have little problem getting these people to pay our modest annual chapter dues to keep their membership active, but like many other organizations, we find that the real work of the chapter is accomplished by a very few dedicated individuals.

- Good students are bombarded with offers to join honor societies. Imagine the plight of the academically gifted first-generation college student. He, or much more likely she, in the case of our chapter of Phi Beta Kappa, as we have detected a strong gender bias among both our electees and our initiates, may be asked to join Golden Key, Phi Kappa Phi, and any number of honor societies within his or her major in addition to Phi Beta Kappa. While I think our dues are quite modest, the total cost if all offers are accepted would be substantial.

- Some of our brightest students are in a program called College Scholars in which they basically develop their own curricula. Some of these students fail to complete the required courses to satisfy admission to the Society. Others spend a semester or an entire year abroad, and often the foreign university's grading system is incompatible with that in the United States, so that no grades are re-

corded on the student's official transcript. Only if the student is proactive and makes sure that course grade equivalents are placed on the transcript will these courses be used in the calculation of the GPA to determine Phi Beta Kappa eligibility. Such seemingly pedantic bureaucratic matters keep some of the best students from qualifying for Phi Beta Kappa.

- By the same token, we have some bright students who get off to a disastrous start at Tennessee, usually by majoring in party and minoring in fraternity. Fortunately for them there is a program called Academic Second Opportunity that allows them to wipe the slate clean and begin over after they have been out at least three years and appear before a readmissions board that oversees this process.

Our members-in-course committee has no alternative but to do the same and count only their academic work after readmission. I would judge that perhaps as many as 5 percent of our initiates have been elected to Phi Beta Kappa only because this program is in place.

Our members-in-course committee is equally concerned about the students who have turned their academic lives around without the benefit of the Academic Second Opportunity program, and whose poor grades therefore remain to haunt them throughout their undergraduate career and perhaps beyond. Should time really heal all wounds? I'd be interested to see how other universities with similar readmissions programs handle these situations when it comes to calculating eligibility.



*Mary Mladinov, the Society's associate secretary, is leaving Phi Beta Kappa this winter after 14 years' service. The Wellesley College chapter conferred alumna membership on her in December. She is a member of the class of 1973.*

## Some Solutions

- We have developed a one-page blurb for inclusion with our congratulatory election letter; in the blurb we briefly explain what Phi Beta Kappa is and its prestige and important educational mission for the preservation of academic freedom and the promotion of the ideals of liberal learning. This enclosure is placed there on the chance that the student might be unfamiliar with the Society. So far, we see no detectable difference in acceptance rates with and without the inclusion of the enclosure.

- As a chapter, we try to host a Phi Beta Kappa Visiting Scholar annually, and we review popular or controversial books in a panel discussion format titled the Phi Beta Kappa Book of the Semester. These informal brown-bag luncheons are open to the entire university community and have proved to be quite popular.

- We host a reception for new members in the fall after the initiation and hold a banquet with a keynote speaker in the spring. At that banquet we also recognize outstanding research and creative achievement among scholars who have not yet attained the rank of professor in the three broad branches of the liberal arts—the humanities, social sciences, and natural sciences.

- We make sure that hometown newspapers receive information about the students who have been elected to the chapter, and we always run a large congratulatory advertisement in the student newspaper the day after our initiations.

- We could do even more to celebrate the uniqueness of Phi Beta Kappa. Many initiates who are elected to the chapter ask whether there is anything they can wear on their academic gowns when they graduate to designate their election to Phi Beta Kappa. In other words, they are proud of their accomplishment and want the world to know. Perhaps a ribbon with the Phi Beta Kappa key symbol would be good advertising for the Society. Many chapters may already be doing this as a way to recognize members in course. If it hasn't been tried, perhaps it should be; it would certainly raise the Society's visibility on our campus.

On a big campus with many other competing activities and events, this is about all we can manage to do. What have we overlooked? How can we make our chapter even stronger and of greater service and relevance to our newer members? ■



*Presentation by Christel G. McDonald, Representative of the  
Washington, D.C., Area Association*

I was asked to talk about collaborative efforts between our association and the seven universities in the Washington, D.C., area that shelter Phi Beta Kappa chapters, and possible ways to expand this collaboration.

First, a few years ago our association started to invite Phi Beta Kappa faculty from the universities in the area to join us at our December holiday event. The idea was to build a bridge between the association and the chapters and among the chapters themselves. Our holiday event allows Phi Beta Kappa faculty from different disciplines to meet and to socialize with each other and with Phi Beta Kappa faculty from other chapters.

In addition, we are always pleased to have representatives from the national office at this December event, thus bringing together the association with the chapters and the Society.

Second, each year when we present our Phi Beta Kappa awards to outstanding high school students, we ask a Phi Beta Kappa faculty member to be the keynote speaker. The graduating high school students are always excited to learn about Phi Beta Kappa, and they go on to college with a greater awareness of it.

Third, two D.C. universities—George Washington and American—have made a generous scholarship offer of \$25,500 annually to our association—\$8,500 each for any of our three Phi Beta Kappa Award winners who want to study full time at these universities.

Fourth, all chapters in the D.C. area have splendidly supported the summer institutes for high school teachers in the D.C. public schools. Through Phi Beta Kappa, these high school teachers have over the past five years had the opportunity to discuss, for one whole week, subjects such as chaos theory, Copernicus, or Darwin, or something closer to home like the Potomac and Anacostia rivers. The Phi Beta Kappa summer institutes enable the high school teachers to get recertified or to obtain graduate credit. Our association financially supports one or two of these teachers to pay for the graduate credit.

There is no way to enumerate the benefits of the summer institutes for the teachers, their students, and the participating chapters, and the institutes boost the reputation of Phi Beta Kappa to a degree we can never fully know.

But our association does face a challenge: We have an aging membership. Our oldest member is 104; she obtained her key in 1916, only three years after our

association was founded. We simply do not attract enough new and young members, and I welcome the Policy Committee's recommendation to consider a more systematic method for future expansion of the associations.

Many long-time Phi Betes and new initiates simply have no knowledge about the existence of associations. My guess is that less than 5 percent of the 440,000 Phi Betes who receive the *Key Reporter* are members of an association. I don't know what agent for change is required to highlight more effectively all aspects of Phi Beta Kappa, but I believe that it would be greatly beneficial for Phi Beta Kappa's future to find a way to spread the information about the associations to further their growth.

### A Wish List

Here is my wish list for a more ideal Phi Beta Kappa world:

1. Collaboration between chapters and associations would intensify.

For example, our association plans to send the names of our officers to the chapter secretaries of the universities in the D.C. area. We hope that the chapters will send us, in turn, the names of their chapter officers.

In addition, we hope that the chapters will agree to share the list of initiates with our association and invite us to send a representative to the initiation ceremony. Then we could tell the new initiates that there is a Phi Beta Kappa life after graduation.

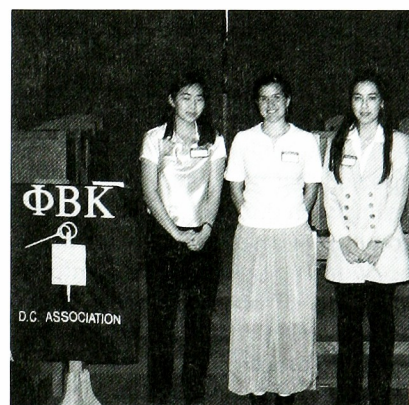
Furthermore, association members could assist the chapters with addressing and mailing the invitations to the students elected to Phi Beta Kappa. Our association members also could help write the invitations for the receptions to honor the new initiates. More important, one or two of our members could contact the students who have not responded to the invitations or who have questions about joining Phi Beta Kappa. A closer collaboration between chapters and association members does not violate the Phi Beta Kappa constitution, which allows chapters to be as inclusive in their regular business as possible.

2. More Phi Beta Kappa faculty would become members of an association. By being members of an association, they enable the association to more effectively inspire high school students to do the best they can when they reach the university. Also, faculty presence will add a special encouragement to association meetings.

3. Our own association would find new ways to reach out to Phi Betes inside and outside academia, including working through the college alumni associations, which could be a good source of members and speakers for us.

4. Our symbol, the gold key, would be more visible. I am sure that there is a reason why the *American Scholar* hides the key inside the cover, and why some people prefer not to wear their keys or openly display their Phi Beta Kappa certificates on the wall in their offices, especially on campus. I wish we could change all that somewhat.

In addition, I am looking for something besides a certificate that could be used as a token of thanks to faculty or association officers for the hard work they do, often year in, year out. I am not talking about T-shirts or mugs with Phi Beta Kappa



*Winners of the Washington, D.C., area association's high school awards in 1997 are, from the left, Heannie Yoo (Maryland), Alice Reiner (Washington), and Delia Wendel (Virginia).*

written on them. I envisage a pin that symbolizes the work done for Phi Beta Kappa as president, secretary, treasurer, etc., to which the key could be attached. This would be a lovely gift and an emblem of distinguished service in Phi Beta Kappa.

5. Thoughtful consideration would be given to how Phi Beta Kappa can harness the power of all Phi Betes, including the great potential of Phi Betes who are not Americans and who live outside the United States. With the restructuring of the universities and the changing curriculum in higher education all around the world, I believe it is vital that Phi Beta Kappa begin to think globally about the men and women who make Phi Beta Kappa possible, regardless of where they live.



## Chapter News

In response to a request by the ΦBK chapter at the **College of William and Mary** and by college administrators, the William and Mary Endowment Association has agreed to finance the purchase of keys for all 1997-98 ΦBK initiates there at a cost of \$5,000. Each year thereafter the endowment has agreed to provide up to \$2,500 in matching funds for that purpose.

The president of **Rice University**, Malcolm Gillis, has decided to pay the membership fees of every student elected there this year.

The secretary of the **University of Vermont** chapter, which celebrates its 150th anniversary in 1997-98, reported that it takes special pride in having been the first chapter to admit women (two, in 1875). Portraits of the two women were to be painted in time for a ceremonial unveiling during the year.

A large bronze replica of a Phi Beta Kappa key was unveiled in a prominent position on the campus of **Mary Washington College** last year to give "a visual representation of the Mary Washington College chapter's work encouraging humane learning and scholarship."

The chapters continue to report the numbers of students who are invited to join Phi Beta Kappa and of those who actually join. Among the chapters reporting 100 percent acceptance by invitees are **Amherst College**, **Birmingham-Southern College**, **Brown University**, **Davidson College**, **Elmira College**, **Gustavus Adolphus College**, **Mary Baldwin College**, **Randolph-Macon College**, **Rhodes College**, **Santa Clara University**, **University of South Dakota**, **Tufts University**, **University of Virginia**, **Washington and Lee University**, **Williams College** ("In the past 10 years only one student has declined membership"), **University of Wyoming**, and **Yale University**.

The following two excerpts from the reports of large university chapters indicate the range of experiences and some challenges and solutions. From the secretary of the **Wayne State University** chapter:

Even though we increased our efforts to make personal contact with the students we elected to membership this year, we still had a very low acceptance rate of 48 percent. We discuss this issue at every faculty meeting. It is quite clear that our problem is that students do not recognize the Phi Beta Kappa name.

We have also lost faculty members from our student selection committee, through both retirement and overwork, which makes the active members feel even more imposed upon, and perhaps less willing to work on new publicity efforts. Nonetheless, many individual students who do follow through and accept our invitation of membership express their gratitude to us warmly, which keeps us going.

From the secretary of the chapter at **Ohio University**, who reported a 99 percent acceptance rate:

When phoning new initiates who haven't responded to our election letter, I have heard the following theme: Why should I join an honors society? What's in it for me? I am already a member of other honors societies, and I don't need it for my résumé or to get into grad school.

Other students respond that they don't want to join an honors society unless it means something. Since our chapter has few activities, I try to respond that the Society is a national group that fosters and supports love of learning throughout one's life. I tell them that we are a community of learners, rather than intellectuals. This seems to strike a chord with some new initiates.

We have never had a problem with institutional support. The dean of arts and sciences has always responded favorably to requests for money to finance

the Visiting Scholar. Our new president and provost are both members of Phi Beta Kappa and both have been willing to speak at initiation ceremonies. . . .

## Association News

The **Cleveland** association celebrated its 50th anniversary on October 24, 1997, by holding its first full-scale benefit and raising more than \$100,000 to endow its scholarship fund and its annual scholastic awards banquet. The first \$50,000 will endow the scholarship fund, which administers four scholarships to students studying the liberal arts; the second \$50,000 will endow the banquet, at which 120 high school seniors are honored for their academic excellence.

Sam Miller (ΦBK, Western Reserve University, 1943), a trustee of the association, had issued a challenge grant of \$10,000 to increase the participation of Phi Beta Kappa members in the area. Miller and two others—Jeannette Grasselli Brown (ΦBK, Ohio University, 1950) and Agnar Pytte (ΦBK, Princeton University, 1953)—were honorary chairmen of the benefit, which was attended by more than 250 people. The Cleveland association has 355 members.

The **Houston** group (632 members) continued its remarkable scholarship program at the same level as in the previous year, giving away a total of \$120,000 (\$2,000 each to 60 high school seniors); most of the funds come from corporate donors.

The **Southern and Northern California** associations (1,800 and 1,720 members, respectively) also continued their generous award programs. The Southern California group gave a total of \$55,000 in scholarships for high school, college, and graduate study. The Northern California group gave a dozen \$3,000

CONTINUED ON PAGE 10



# ΦBK Association Secretaries, 1997-98

## Alabama

- \* Northeast Alabama—Dr. George E. Whitesel, 907 Second St. NE, Jacksonville, AL 36265.
- \* Southeast Alabama—Dr. James Sherry, Department of Foreign Languages, Troy State University, Troy, AL 36082.

## Arizona

- \* Phoenix Area—Mrs. Doris Krigbaum, 1230 E. Loyola Dr., Tempe, AZ 85282.

## California

- \* Northern California—Dr. Madeleine Babin, 50 Kevin Ct., Walnut Creek, CA 94596-5427.
- \* San Diego—Mr. Hal K. St. Clair, 17137 Bernardo Oaks Dr., San Diego, CA 92128.
- \* Southern California—Mrs. Virginia L. Hornak, 5034 Palomar Dr., Tarzana, CA 91356.

## Colorado

- \* Denver—Ms. Adrienne Bendel, 582 S. Carr St., Lakewood, CO 80226

## Connecticut

- \* Greater Hartford—Ms. Marilyn Pet, 235 E. River Dr., #1601, East Hartford, CT 06108.

## District of Columbia

- \* District of Columbia Area (Washington, southern Maryland, and northern Virginia)—Mrs. Suzanne Smith Sundburg, 5300 N. 8th Rd., Arlington, VA 22205-1206.

## Florida

- \* Northeast Florida—Prof. John Garrigus, Department of History, Jacksonville University, Jacksonville, FL 32211-3394.
- \* Sarasota-Manatee—Mrs. Lois Urban, 1402 Gleneagles Dr., Venice, FL 34292-4304.
- \* South Florida—Mrs. Agneta C. Heldt, 3024 Kirk St., Miami, FL 33133.
- \* Tampa Bay—Prof. James B. Halsted, 4024 Bell Grande Dr., Valrico, FL 33594.

## Georgia-Carolina

- Atlanta—Dr. Karina L. Miller, 1956 River Forest Rd., Atlanta, GA 30327.
- \* Coastal Georgia-Carolina—Dr. George B. Pruden, 13 Old Mill Ct., Savannah, GA 31419-2824.
- Middle Georgia—Dr. Douglas Steeples, 240 River North Blvd., Macon, GA 31210.

## Illinois

- \* Chicago—Ms. Lisa Godde Kerr, 7117 N. Keystone Ave., Lincolnwood, IL 60646.
- \* East Central Illinois—Dr. Karen Taylor, Foreign Languages/EIU, 600 Lincoln Ave., Charleston, IL 61920.
- \* Southern Illinois—Dr. Elizabeth Ann Gammon, School of Social Work, Southern Illinois University at Carbondale, Carbondale, IL 62901-4329.

## Indiana

- East Central Indiana—Dr. Lawrence Shaffer, 1821 E. 240 N., Anderson, IN 46012.
- \* Indianapolis—Dr. C. Sue Stewart, 3001 E. 56th St., Indianapolis, IN 46220.

## Iowa

- \* Sioux City—Mrs. Marjorie C. Meyer, 2412 Allan St., Sioux City, IA 51103.

## Kentucky

- \* Kentuckiana—Dr. Scott D. Johnson, 4129 Brentler Rd., Louisville, KY 40241.

## Louisiana

- \* Southwestern Louisiana—Dr. Mary R. Meredith, USL Box 43570, Lafayette, LA 70504.

## Maryland

- Greater Baltimore—Mr. Mark T. Jensen, 3925 Keswick Rd., Baltimore, MD 21211.

## Michigan

- \* Detroit—Ms. Carol Poosch Klein, 31720 Franklin Rd., Franklin, MI 48025.
- \* Southwestern Michigan—Dr. Gina Soter, Department of Classics, Kalamazoo College, Kalamazoo, MI 49006.

## Minnesota

- \* Minneapolis—Mr. George A. Warp, 4824 Thomas Ave. S., Minneapolis, MN 55410.

## Missouri-Kansas

- \* Greater Kansas City—Ms. Rhonda Smiley, Ferrellgas, 1 Liberty Plaza, Liberty, MO 64068.
- \* Northeast Missouri—Ms. Carol Race, Rte. 3, Orrick Rd., Kirksville, MO 63501.

## Nebraska

- \* Omaha—Mrs. Margaret A. Wiltse, 14017 Pierce St., Omaha, NE 68144.

## New Mexico

- \* Los Alamos—Mrs. Rosalie Heller, 301 El Viento, Los Alamos, NM 87544.

## New York

- \* Long Island—Prof. Sharon D. Abramson, Nassau Community College, Garden City, NY 11530.
- \* New York—Dr. Stanley Novak, Apt. 23J, 205 West End Ave., New York, NY 10023.
- \* Scarsdale/Westchester — Dr. Lloyd Raines, 29 Argyle Rd., Rye Brook, NY 10573.
- \* Upper Hudson—Dr. Frances L. Allee, 24 Providence St., Albany, NY 12203.
- Western New York—Ms. Kathy Hallborg, 48 Windermere Ave., Amherst, NY 14226.

## North Carolina

- \* Pitt County—Dr. Tinsley E. Yarbrough, Department of Political Science, East Carolina University, Brewster A135, Greenville, NC 27858-4353.
- \* Wake County—Ms. Sarah D. Williamson, 1801 Craig St., Raleigh, NC 27608.

## Ohio

- \* Cleveland—Mrs. Margaret Robinson, 2602 E. Overlook Rd., Cleveland Heights, OH 44106.
- \* Toledo—Mr. Lyman F. Spitzer, Shumaker, Loop & Kendrick, 1000 Jackson, Toledo, OH 43624.

## Oklahoma

- \* Oklahoma City—Ms. Elaine B. Thompson, 6204 Waterford Blvd. #11, Oklahoma City, OK 73116.

## Pennsylvania

- \* Delaware Valley—Mrs. Evelyn S. Udell, 124 Annasmead Rd., Ambler, PA 19002.

## South Carolina

- Low Country—Mrs. Catherine D. Postek, 12 Surf Lane, Isle of Palms, SC 29451.
- \* Piedmont Area—Dr. B. G. Stephens, 429 N. Church St., Spartanburg, SC 29303-3663.

## Tennessee

- \* Chattanooga—Prof. John D. Tinkler, 1012 Hanover St., Chattanooga, TN 37405.
- Nashville—Ms. Jana Liste, 3615 Nebraska, Nashville, TN 37709

## Texas

- \* Greater Houston—Ms. Barbara S. McKittrick, 3131 Eastside, Ste. #440, Houston, TX 77055.
- \* North Texas—Mrs. Patricia Irvin, 5423 Hilton Head Dr., Dallas, TX 75287-7326.
- \* San Antonio—Dr. Matthew D. Stroud, 13703 Pebble Walk, San Antonio, TX 78217.
- \* West Texas-Eastern New Mexico—Dr. Pamela A. Cooper, Texas Tech University, University Library, Lubbock, TX 79409-0002.

## Virginia

- \* Northern Virginia (see D.C. Area)
- \* Richmond—Mrs. Ellen H. Massie, 12283 Mount Hermon Rd., Ashland, VA 23005.
- \* Shenandoah Valley—Prof. Linda Cabe Halpern, Dean of General Education, James Madison University, Harrisonburg, VA 22807.

## Washington

- \* Inland Empire—Dr. John Morey Maurice, Gonzaga University School of Law, Spokane, WA 99220-3258.
- \* Puget Sound—Mrs. Myra Lupton, P.O. Box 84103, Seattle, WA 98124.

## West Virginia

- \* Charleston—The Rev. W. F. Mansell Jr., 2606 Virginia Ave. SE, Charleston, WV 25304-1036.

## Wisconsin

- \* Greater Milwaukee—Ms. Kimberly Barskaitiki, 1725 N. Prospect Ave. #702, Milwaukee, WI 53202.

\*Chartered associations. Charters are granted by the ΦBK Senate.



scholarships to students at four ΦBK institutions in the Bay area.

The **San Diego** association (275 members) attracted 28 applicants for its new \$3,000 fellowship targeted at ΦBK members elected anywhere in the country and enrolled in a graduate or professional program in San Diego County.

The **Detroit** association (376 members) gave 120 scholarships of \$200 each to high school seniors; the association administers the program for the Matilda Wilson Fund.

The **Southeast Alabama** association has established the Emma C. Norris Memorial Fund, in memory of the three-term secretary of the Conference of Association Delegates who died last year.

The **Nashville** association, which was formed in December 1996, already reports a membership of 150. It has held several meetings, formed a book club, and decided to make annual presentations of a book to high school valedictorians.

Several new associations are in the planning stages; the locations include **Pittsburgh, Penna.; Boston, Mass.; Beaumont, Tex.;** and **Northern** and **Southern New Jersey.** ■

## Letters to the Editor

### Phi Beta Kappa in Popular Culture

Like most people of my age—the first TV generation—the development of my sense of what was important in popular culture was heavily influenced by what I saw and heard on the Tube. This includes the formation of the concept that Phi Beta Kappa is a recognized mark of high achievement in college, a kind of Gold Standard in that respect.

The earliest and weirdest reference to Phi Beta Kappa on TV that I remember was the theme song to an improbable and short-lived sitcom called “Hank.” Its storyline revolved around the efforts of its eponymous hero to get his college education without having either to register or to pay tuition, by working at odd jobs on campus at a small midwestern college. The song went, “He’ll get his degree . . . / his Phi Beta Kappa key . . . / And get it all for free! / That’s Hank.”

The most impressive reference, however, came from the 1970s cop show “Kojak,” which I watched during my college years. In one episode, the clue to solving a murder turned out to be a Phi Beta Kappa key, which revealed the identity of the killer. Kojak holds up the key in front of his mystified sidekick and solemnly intones, “Hey, they don’t give these things out as a prize in a box of

Cracker Jack.” Campy? Sure, but when I got my invitation to join Phi Beta Kappa as a college kid [University of Pittsburgh, 1975], I knew what it meant.

I don’t watch as many TV shows now, but it seems to me that contemporary scriptwriters, who are uncertain of the propriety of any tone except skepticism verging on the cynical, are not likely to make such references to Phi Beta Kappa now. (I know at least that the only way my two sons have ever seen or heard anything about it is from what I have told them.) Popular culture and the general reputation of the Society are both the poorer.

*Ketal A. Mericli, Pittsburgh, Penna.*

Having immensely enjoyed all the letters about the key, I decided to send you my story.

I first heard about Phi Beta Kappa (as a kid in the early 1960s) in an old movie starring Fred Astaire, I think, as the Devil. The Devil wanted to debauch a morally upright young husband. The henchwoman chosen for this task presented herself in a sexy dress for the Devil’s approval. No, no, no, the Devil objected. He’s refined, educated, he won’t fall for a femme fatale. So she came back in a business suit, wearing as earrings matching Phi Beta Kappa keys—hers and Daddy’s. That’s the ticket, the Devil exclaimed.

I don’t remember anything else about the movie, but I have never forgotten that scene or its message: Phi Beta Kappa is high class.

After two years as a French major at UCLA, I dropped out of school to get my MRS and my MOM. Eighteen years later, tired of being treated like a dumb housewife and college dropout, I went back to UCLA and finished up my B.A. in French. I didn’t dream of making Phi Beta Kappa. I just worked very hard. When I was notified that I would graduate magna cum laude and was invited to join Phi Beta Kappa, in 1986, I was ecstatic. So were my husband and two high school children—for a short while.

Then, every time I wore the key (which wasn’t often), my kids made a fuss (she’s wearing THAT again!) and my husband got a certain patient look on his face (when is she going to get past this midlife crisis?).

I am now (after a divorce) the only Phi Beta Kappa concierge in Paris (*gardienne d'immeuble* is the politically correct term). Zilch prestige, but the job has



*Three of the newly elected Phi Beta Kappa senators who attended the December banquet are, from the left, Margaret Geller, professor of astronomy, Harvard University; Alonzo Hamby, Distinguished Professor of History, Ohio University; and Pauline Yu, professor of East Asian languages and culture, UCLA.*



economic advantages and gives me a perfect vantage point from which to study the French—and free time to read, write, and enjoy Paris. The French, of course, know nothing about my key and I wear it (on a short gold chain around my neck) whenever I want.

Several months ago I joined the American Library. So far, my key has drawn no comment, though I feel a couple of people have made a point of not noticing it. When I was a salesperson at the only American bookstore in Paris, an author, espousing it among my various baubles, commented that since I was Phi Beta Kappa, she was sure I could direct her to the ordering department.

Maybe, after all, the key is just a Dumbo's feather. But it gave me the courage to unlock a whole new life. Fingering it occasionally as I saunter around Paris, I am filled with an indescribable joy. I can fly!

*Susan C. (Holmquist) Billaudel, Paris, France*

## More Key Stories

I just read with interest the letters in the Autumn 1997 issue about membership in Phi Beta Kappa. They led me to think about my admission to the chapter at the City College of New York 50 years ago.

I grew up as an only child in a poor family in New York City. I had never been more than a few hundred miles from the Bronx. I graduated from evening high school while working in a clothing factory all day. My academic average was in the high 80s. I applied only to City College, was admitted, and approached my classes as I had in high school.

However, I had joined the Enlisted Reserve Corps and, after completing only one semester, I was called up by the army. When I returned to City College three years later I did not realize at first how much I had changed and how these changes would affect my attitude toward and participation in college.

I had learned to be comfortable in the streets of London, Edinburgh, Paris, Lyon, Dannenberg, Cologne, Marche, Marmain, Heidelberg, Heerlen, and Comblain-la-Tour.

I had lived in foxholes I had dug across Germany. I had seen Buchenwald shortly after its liberation, had walked through Pforzheim after it was destroyed in a single bombing, and had met Russian soldiers at the Elbe River. I knew soldiers and civilians from a dozen countries. I had supervised the conversion of a warehouse into an enlisted men's night club and then managed it. The USO had provided my first theater tickets, and seeing Paul Robeson, Jose Ferrer, and Uta Hagen in *Othello* had hooked me for life.

I had heard of Phi Beta Kappa as recognition for top students, but I had never felt I qualified. I was astonished and very honored when I was informed of my admission. I also appreciated the fact that no cost was involved in receiving this honor. I was living on the G.I. Bill at the time and had to turn down two honor societies that required both admission and initiation payments for membership.

I've now been a proud member for 50 years and look back with pleasure at a time when my national and city governments really provided free educational opportunity that allowed me to obtain a doctorate and enjoy a career in education that culminated with my service as a superintendent of schools.

*Samuel Cohen, N. Massepequa, N.Y.*

In breezing through the *Key Reporter* this evening, I was moved by the experiences of my fellow members to throw in my own two cents.

My invitation to join Phi Beta Kappa [Washington State University, 1992] was the third invitation I received to join an academic honor society, and, quite honestly, I didn't know one from the other. I called my friend and former English 101 professor, Sue DeBord, who had since moved on to teach at Ohio Wesleyan. A member herself, she explained the significance of Phi Beta Kappa to me. My parents were overwhelmed with pride when I told them of the invitation.

Today I am a television advertising executive. I still wear my ΦBK key as a necklace when I am working on a sale worth \$100,000 or more. It symbolizes my past successes both academic and professional and gives my confidence a little boost.

My great-grandmother, born in 1903, was one of 13 children. She dropped out of school in the third grade because she had to go to work in the sugarcane fields. It has always been a source of tremendous pride to her that she has maintained her ability to read and write—the only one of her siblings to remain literate.

She does not understand what Phi Beta Kappa is. But its significance lies not in her understanding of my accomplishments but in my understanding of her accomplishments and sacrifices, and how they led me to the place that I am today.

*Beth Jakubanis, Simi Valley, Calif.*

I was amused by the letter [summer 1997] relating the sexist story of the obstetrician who assumed that the woman's Phi Beta Kappa key was someone else's. I had a similar experience. In 1970, soon after my marriage, I took my husband to a Phi Beta Kappa dinner. Everyone at our table as-

sumed my husband was the Phi Beta Kappa member and addressed their conversation to him. Ironically, my husband was accepted into medical school after only three years of college and always regretted not knowing whether he would have been elected to Phi Beta Kappa had he remained for the fourth year.

After our two children graduated Phi Beta Kappa (our daughter, Tami, Yale, 1994, and our son, Darrin, UCLA, 1997), my husband joked that he should submit his college records to see if he could qualify. He seems truly upset that he is the only one in the family without a key. So I guess the key still holds an aura about it!

*Cindy Loman Hurwitz, Calabasas, Calif. [UCLA, 1967]*

Inducted into Phi Beta Kappa at West Virginia University in 1953, I anticipated an ambitious intellectual career and envisioned wearing my key to seminars, publishing parties, and other prestigious affairs. However, I soon found myself in a New York City pawnshop hocking my key along with my wedding and engagement rings in order to survive a few more days. The shop clerk gave me a receipt for the rings and the "charm."

With deteriorating self-esteem I had begun to believe my husband's assessment of me as "stupid and lazy." Then I earned a paycheck, retrieved my pawned key, and took a good look at it. I smiled. In my heart I knew that I had not earned the key or the honor by being lazy and stupid. I wore the key first on a chain as a necklace, later as a lapel pin, to remind me of past and potential achievements through many years of ups and downs. *I wore it for myself.*

Last year I retired after 40-plus exciting, productive professional years, having done almost everything I wanted to do and been nearly everywhere I wanted to go, fulfilled and satisfied.

The unappreciative ex-husband is long gone, but I still wear the Phi Beta Kappa key.

*Roberta A. Barba, Westover, W.Va.*

## A Diane Ravitch Fan

Like others of my generation who have written, I did not know anything about Phi Beta Kappa when I was invited to join in 1974 [University of California, Riverside], and only my parents' enthusiasm about it persuaded me to join. My father even offered to buy me a key and now, after reading all these letters about the key, I almost wish I had taken him up on it. This morning I even looked at the order form, but once again I rejected the idea, realizing that I would rather buy one of the books reviewed in your Recommended Reading section.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 12



This realization leads me to the further insight that the main impact of Phi Beta Kappa on my life has been through the *Key Reporter*. I have enjoyed reading the essays and have clipped numerous book reviews from it over the years. One essay stands out as influential on my life: "Tot Sociology: What Happened to History in the Grade Schools?" by Diane Ravitch (Autumn 1987). I still have my original copy.

At the time it appeared, my oldest son was six years old. Since then, he and his two younger brothers have benefited from Ravitch's advice to teach history as a fascinating story. My husband and I chose to educate our sons at home (for personal and educational, not religious, reasons), and I have followed Ravitch's recommendations in setting their curriculum.

Reading aloud "fairy tales, myths, legends, folklore, heroic adventures, legends, biographies, and stories from history" to them, as Ravitch recommends, has been one of the most satisfying and fulfilling things I have done. I probably would have done this even if I had not read her essay, but it inspired me and increased my conviction.

So on the 10th anniversary of its publication, here's to Diane Ravitch and to the *Key Reporter* for giving her a forum. I am looking forward to a sequel.

Jane McEwan Pearia, Pabrum, Nev.

## An Appeal for Nonacademic ΦBK Senators

The lead article in the Autumn 1997 issue of the *Key Reporter* reports the election of 13 of 14 Phi Beta Kappa "Senators" from the ranks of academia. Does one need more proof of the irrelevance of Phi Beta Kappa to a superior student who has no aspirations to spend his or her career in academia?

I spent the vast majority of my career as an appointed local government CEO. I also, simultaneously, spent 17 years teaching at three major graduate schools. I found the academic atmosphere stultifying, in-bred, hostile to innovation in any form, inappropriately self-satisfied, and desirous of being exclusive. These are not the ideas of the world outside academia and should not be those of Phi Beta Kappa.

In the same issue I read that "approximately 90 percent of Phi Beta Kappa members are not professional academ-

# RECOMMENDED READING

## BOOK COMMITTEE

**Humanities:** Svetlana Alpers, Michael Griffith, Simon McVeigh, Robert P. Sonkowsky, Eugen Weber  
**Social Sciences:** Louis R. Harlan, Thomas McNaugher, Catherine E. Rudder, Anna J. Schwartz  
**Natural Sciences:** Ronald Geballe, Russell B. Stevens

## Eugen Weber

**Ancients against Moderns: Culture Wars and the Making of a Fin de Siècle.** Joan Dejean. Univ. of Chicago, 1997. \$35; paper, \$16.95.

Dejean draws an unexpected connection between the culture wars of Ancients and Moderns in late-17th-century France and the culture wars affecting curricular canons and national cohesion in the late-20th-century United States. Both feature battles of the books; both broaden intellectual confrontations into more wide-ranging conflict; both involve issues of class, gender, and race; and both, taking place at the end of a century, are colored by a mood of decline and fall. That is why, Dejean argues, although the locution *fin de siècle* was born only a hundred years ago, the sense of crisis, the ability to touch a public nerve beyond narrow literary circles, and the lexicographical developments and ideological ferment of the late 1680s and 1690s reflected the first true *fin de siècle* before the *fin de siècle*.

Dejean does not convince me, but her brief, readable book, thick with novel perceptions, insights, and connections, suggests possibilities that compel attention and, sometimes, assent. The ax she

ics." We nonacademics are ignored. We also have scholarly thoughts and abilities, innovative and worthy intellectual ideas that may well be useful to the 90 percent of Phi Beta Kappa members who are represented on the Senate by one member. And precious few of our thoughts are ever expressed in either the *Key Reporter* or the *American Scholar*.

A total reappraisal and reemphasis needs to be made of and by Phi Beta Kappa, but not exclusively by academics.

Douglas W. Ayres, Sedona, Ariz.  
 [ΦBK, University of North Carolina—Chapel Hill, 1953].

**Editor's note:** There are 24 ΦBK Senators in all, with staggered, six-year terms; the total number of nonacademics in the group is two. ■

grinds is as partisan as others, but amid the cacophony of campus quarrels, her book speaks with clarity, substance, and wit.

**The Damascus Affair: Ritual Murder, Politics, and the Jews in 1840.** Jonathan Frankel. Cambridge Univ., 1997. \$54.95; paper, \$15.95.

In February 1840 an Italian monk and his Arab servant disappeared in Damascus, Syria, never to be found. Their vanishing was blamed on Damascus Jews, accused of ritual murder. Many were imprisoned, many were tortured, and some died, under charges that were hardly exceptional (at least 59 serious instances occurred between 1800 and 1933) but that turned into an international *cause célèbre* involving Ottoman authorities, Egypt (whose viceroy Mehmet Ali ruled in Syria), the European powers, and Jewish communities throughout the Western world.

The ugly and tangled Damascus affair was played out in Alexandria and Constantinople, Rhodes, London, Paris, Vienna, and Berlin. France and Britain clashed over the Middle East, the British fleet shelled Beirut and Acre, Mehmet Ali was forced out of Syria, the French prime minister resigned, the innocence of the Damascus Jews was vindicated, but the powerful myth of ritual murder marched on. So did the efforts of Christian friends of Jews, eager to speed Jewish return to Palestine crucial to Christ's Second Coming; and so did international organization of Jewish communities. Born in 1860, the *Alliance Israélite Universelle* was part of the fallout of the Damascus crisis.

Frankel unfolds all this in a methodical, judicious, and stimulating account—the first in a long time to weave together the strands of interest, prejudice, vanity, and power conflict that help illuminate the international affairs of mid-19th century.

**The Politics of Proverbs: From Traditional Wisdom to Proverbial Stereotypes.** Wolfgang Mieder. Univ. of Wisconsin, 1997. \$52.95; paper, \$19.95.

Much matter decocted in a few words, musty as Hamlet had it, or witty and wise



as Lord John Russell thought, proverbs are saddles for all horses: an anthology of conformity and nonconformity, stereotype, metaphor, assertion, and its contrary. Mieder, who edited *The Dictionary of American Proverbs*, sets out to supplement existing studies of proverbs in literature and media with a glance at the political realm, where proverbs and proverbial expressions have played significant roles but attracted little scholarly attention. Focused on the 20th century, his book includes three chapters on virtuosos of adage and apothegm—Hitler, Churchill, and Truman; one on proverb use in the cold war; and two on the misuse of proverbial wisdom employed as a verbal weapon against American Indians and immigrant Asians in North America.

It is a pity that a book that is as full of information as of political correctness lacks the sense of humor that would have leavened it. One can, after all, cross one's metaphors before they're hatched. At any rate, dedicated paremiolophiles (proverbialists?) will be rewarded with two terms to enrich their vocabulary: paremiography and paremiology.

**The University in Ruins.** *Bill Readings.* Harvard, 1996. \$29.95.

**Crisis in the Academy: Rethinking Higher Education in America.** *Christopher J. Lucas.* St. Martin's, 1996. \$29.95.  
**What's Happened to the Humanities?** *Ed. by Alvin Kernan.* Princeton, 1997. \$29.95.

Johann Gottlieb Fichte's ideal university existed less to teach information than to inculcate the exercise of critical judgment. On darkling campuses where scholarly armies clash by night, there's not enough of the one and there's too much of the other. Where, then, would jeremiads be more poignant than in the ruins of the university? Liberal education bankrupt or betrayed, the professoriate proletarianized, the pursuit of excellence commodified and packaged for the market, knowledge replaced by culture and culture by multiculturalism, Readings's university is the model of the absence of models.

Readings's ironic survey is complemented by Lucas, who judiciously conveys both facts and atmosphere. The unspeakable in pursuit of the indefinable features familiar protagonists: structuralism, poststructuralism, deconstruction, postmodernism, feminism and postfeminism, gender and ethnic and cultural studies, Old Uncle Tom Cobley and all. The university-turned-multiversity wants to be all things to all people. The results are educational delinquency at higher fees, public disillusionment, soaring costs, rickety budgets, squabbling faculties, ad-

ministrative hypertrophy, intellectual and material overextension, as once-insulated institutions surrender to trendiness, market forces, and social activism.

The United States, Lucas argues inter alia, has recently overbuilt and overinvested in higher education. Popular but increasingly dysfunctional, higher education would do better to focus on the purposes it can and should serve. But how would that be done, when the best voice few convictions and the worst are full of passionate intensity?

Neither book raises a peep about the illiteracy that is firmly locked in by the end of secondary education, and makes "higher" education as aleatory as its rethinking. As for the disarray that makes reform in academe as unlikely as reform in France, readers might turn to some of the essays in *What's Happened to the Humanities?* David Bromwich is especially good on "Scholarship as Social Action" (speech codes vs. coded speech). So is Louis Menand on "The Demise of Disciplinary Authority" (professional identity vs. diffuse disidentification). *Pace* Allan Bloom, the American mind is not closing but curdling. Happily, though, it can still provide entertainment to the semidetached.

**The Oxford Companion to British History.** *Ed. by John Cannon.* Oxford, 1997. \$60.

Oxford has done it again, or at least Cannon has: 1,016 pages of text, 119 contributors, 15 maps, 6 genealogical tables take us from *abbeys* (and priories) to *Zuthpen, battle of*. Entries are brief but often fruity. Witness *bretwalda*: "It would be a venial sin, but sinful all the same, to regard the term 'bretwalda' as having caused more trouble than it is worth." We encounter Sophia Jex-Brown M.D., the stormy pioneer of women in medicine; Marie Stopes, the indifferent poet and playwright who opened Britain's first birth control clinic in 1921; Anthony Trollope, the Post Office official famous for introducing pillar [mail] boxes, and incidentally a novelist; Diana, princess of Wales (b. 1961), "the subject and sometimes the victim of massive press coverage, but her attitude towards it has often appeared ambivalent."

Selection is idiosyncratic: quintessentially English cathedral closes are absent, and so are the mews developed from royal hawk houses. But literature, arts, industry, science, war, and trade are well represented, along with personalities and politics. Simon Marks appears, son of a Russian refugee, who expanded penny bazaars into Marks & Spencer, while Henry Tate, the sugar magnate, gets a

walk-on part for lending a hand with the Millbank gallery that bears his name.

Sport is treated with some snootiness. Lacrosse, hurling, tossing the caber are out; billiards, croquet, lawn-tennis are in, and, not least, cricket, which offered opportunities for pioneering games: married women vs. maidens (1793), teetotalers vs. whisky-drinkers (1840). We are not told who won.

## Michael Griffith

**Nabokov: Novels and Memoirs 1941–1951; Novels 1955–1962; Novels 1969–1974.** *Vladimir Nabokov.* Library of America, 1996. \$105.

This three-volume set makes available, in the Library of America's handsome, elegant, and durable format, all of Nabokov's major works written in English. It contains not only the novels from his years in the United States and in Switzerland—including the incomparable *Lolita* and *Pale Fire*, both among the century's greatest, most eccentric works of fiction—but also his screenplay for *Lolita* (little of which, by the way, made it into Stanley Kubrick's 1962 film). The first volume contains Nabokov's revised and corrected version of what may, finally, be his most devilishly intricate narrative, the 1951 autobiography *Speak, Memory*. Brian Boyd has provided a lucid chronology of the writer's life and helpful textual notes.

One hopes (one would like to do one's hoping, here, IN CAPITAL LETTERS) that the Library of America will soon bring out a similar edition of Nabokov's earlier novels, all of which have been acrobatically translated from the Russian by the author or his son, Dmitri, or both.

**An Explanation for Chaos.** *Julie Schumacher.* Sobo Press, 1997. \$21.

In story after story of this memorable debut collection, parents are dead, ill, absent, distracted, or emotionally distant, and children grope through the burdens and perplexities of fractured family lives. In "Dummies," two teenaged sisters and their mentally handicapped brother are sent to live with a babysitter/bric-a-brac dealer while their gravely ill mother, attended by their father, is in the hospital; in "Rehoboth Beach," two adolescent girls fall in love with the only adult man they have access to, their elder sister's crippled husband Donald, and spirit him to the shore in the doomed hope that he can "offer secrets about the partial lives within us, that could be made whole."

The title story, a Barthelme-like dialogue between (it seems) a young woman and her analyst, tackles with fierce lyri-

CONTINUED ON PAGE 14



## RECOMMENDED READING

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 13

cism the ambivalence at the heart of a daughter's relationship with her father. At the story's core is the half-joyful, half-anguished realization that she shares habits of thought with the father she both resents and adores: the daughter sees that families, like everything else, are prone to time and to entropy, which she defines as "the tendency of small, otherwise reasonable forces to disagree and move away, traveling in centrifugal directions." We grow apart; we have to. These are subtle, well-made fictions, told in a variety of voices.

**Same Place, Same Things.** *Tim Gautreaux.* St. Martin's, 1996. \$20.95.

Most of the characters in this marvelous first collection of stories, set by and large in small-town or rural Louisiana, are workaday folks in dire straits. The first principle of Gautreaux's fiction seems to be that we are, all of us, in over our heads in this world. An itinerant pump repairman who "follows the droughts" discovers a farmer's corpse and then becomes entangled in the widow's fantasies of escape ("Same Place, Same Things"); after a train derailment that sparks an environmental catastrophe, the engineer, who's had a few friendly drinks to celebrate his birthday, flees—and wakes to find himself reviled as public enemy number one ("Waiting for the Evening News"); a well-meaning exterminator insinuates himself into the lives of his clients ("The Bug Man"). Gautreaux tells these tales with compassion, wit, and considerable charm; he is a writer who bears watching.

### Russell Stevens

**In the Company of Mushrooms: A Biologist's Tale.** *Elio Schaechter.* Harvard, 1997. \$24.95.

Although this is a wide-ranging commentary on the biology of fungi in general and of mushrooms in particular, it is *not*, and was in no sense intended to be, a handbook for identification of mushroom species and most certainly not an explicit guide to determining which specimens are edible and which are not. It is an attractively written, rather conversational, discussion of the author's lifelong interest in "going mushrooming" with other enthusiasts, buttressed with detailed but not troublesomely technical information about the biology of the fungi. Without half trying, one learns a lot about the subject and the kinds of people involved.

**Guns, Germs, and Steel: The Fates of Human Societies.** *Jared Diamond.* W. W. Norton, 1997. \$27.50.

The author, a professor of physiology at the UCLA School of Medicine and widely respected evolutionary biologist, attempts here to respond to a question posed by his New Guinean friend Yali, couched as follows: "Why is it that you white people developed so much cargo and brought it to New Guinea, but we black people had little cargo of our own?" In large measure, Diamond's answer is summarized as "the ubiquitous role of geography in the transmission of human culture and technology." Judging by the detailed analysis in the book, he might well have said, "It's just the luck of the draw!"

The body of this highly readable text, enlivened by catchy chapter titles, displays an impressive familiarity with the course of human populations in the roughly 10,000 years since the so-called invention of agriculture. Four key factors are identified and defended with a wealth of detailed information: (1) continental differences in the wild plant and animal species available as starting materials for successful domestication, (2) factors influencing rates of diffusion and migration, (3) relative isolation of continents, and (4) differences in area and population size. The book concludes with a spirited advocacy of what Diamond refers to as "human history as a science."

**Note:** The word *cargo* as used here is a South Pacific term more or less synonymous with "worldly goods."

**African Exodus: The Origins of Modern Humanity.** *Christopher Stringer and Robin McKie.* Henry Holt, 1996. \$25.

The central theme here is the argument that modern humans are derived from earlier species that dwelt in East Africa and from that point emerged to "conquer," as the authors put it, virtually all of the remainder of the Earth's surface in an astonishingly brief period—perhaps 100,000 years. The authors take issue with the notion of a multiregional evolutionary process, which is based on the view that the move out of Africa occurred much earlier and that *H. sapiens* then evolved in several geographically scattered sites.

In making their case, Stringer and McKie rely on several sources of data: (1) recent, more critical study of fossils, including recently discovered material; (2) increasingly precise and sophisticated dating technologies; (3) the explosive development of procedures to examine genetic components of human and other

primate nucleic acids; and (4) the availability of such devices as CT scanners and scanning electron microscopes. For many readers this volume, like that by Jared Diamond, just mentioned, will be of special interest for its vehement assertion that the classical concept of race in humans is no longer tolerable, and that, to the contrary, the entire species is remarkably alike.

**Tasting Food, Tasting Freedom: Excursions into Eating, Culture, and the Past.** *Sidney W. Mintz.* Beacon Press, 1996. \$22.

This collection of eight essays ranges widely over various aspects of food. Emphasis is rather more on eating than on food, per se, as might be expected from an author whose professional specialty is anthropology. The writing style is appealing.

### Ronald Geballe

**The Inflationary Universe: The Quest for a New Theory of Cosmic Origins.** *Alan H. Guth.* Addison-Wesley Longman, 1997. \$25.

The Big Bang theory has become standard because it seems to explain the behavior of the universe from a very early time. It begs some important questions: Why is there matter instead of no matter? Why so many electrons, protons, neutrons at the time of the Big Bang? Why is the universe so homogeneous when averaged over large distances? It was necessary to accept some of these features as unexplained "initial conditions." Another question concerned the conditions under which the three forces, strong, weak, and electromagnetic, that govern particle physics could be seen as manifestations of a single one. These conditions could have occurred only when the universe was very hot and very young. Thus, cosmology and particle physics were brought together.

The young Guth's provocative contribution was a proposal, coming from his particle theoretic considerations, that the very young universe went through a brief period of almost inconceivably rapid expansion that provided the conditions needed by the usual Big Bang theory. Other people played important roles, and Guth's original idea has been modified several times. There is still neither experimental nor observational evidence for the validity of inflation, but it does explain some of the puzzles. Guth's autobiographical book sets forth the ideas without equations. He provides, to quote from the Foreword, "an honest portrait of a personal career in science as well as the human and scientific history of a major discovery." ■





# Phi Beta Kappa in Literature and History



From the essay "On Self Respect," in *Slouching Towards Bethlehem*, by Joan Didion.

Once, in a dry season, I wrote in large letters across two pages of a notebook that innocence ends when one is stripped of the delusion that one likes oneself. Although now, some years later, I marvel that a mind on the outs with itself should have nonetheless made painstaking record of its every tremor, I recall with embarrassing clarity the flavor of those particular ashes. It was a matter of misplaced self-respect.

I had not been elected to Phi Beta Kappa. This failure could scarcely have been more predictable or less ambiguous (I simply did not have the grades), but I was unnerved by it: I had somehow thought myself a kind of academic Raskolnikov,

curiously exempt from the cause-effect relationships which hampered others. Although the humorless nineteen-year-old that I was must have recognized that the situation lacked real tragic stature, the day that I did not make Phi Beta Kappa nonetheless marked the end of something, and innocence may well be the word for it.

*Contributed by Cheryl Dragel, Austin, Tex.*

From *Truman*, by David McCullough.

[Truman's staff] liked his sense of humor. "An economist," he told them, "is a man who wears a watch chain with a Phi Beta Kappa key at one end and no watch at the other."

## More Multigeneration Phi Beta Kappa Families

**Editor's note:** We are delighted that so many readers have reported having three or more Phi Beta Kappas in their families; please note that although we hope to continue to print the names we receive as space permits, the lag between receipt of the information and publication now exceeds 18 months.

Rena Seidel, Swarthmore College, 1915; her son-in-law, Sheldon H. Gross, University of Pennsylvania, 1941; and Sheldon's son, Daniel Ben Gross, Vassar College, 1978.

Lorenzo Mason Clarke, Amherst College, 1880, and his brother, John Mason Clarke, Western Reserve University, 1877; Lorenzo's children, Laura Clarke, Vassar College, 1914, and Merrill Fowler Clarke, Amherst, 1909; Laura's son, Mason Gaffney, Reed College, 1948; and Mason's daughter, Ann Gaffney Shores, Washington University, 1978.

Joyce Meta Jaeger Bartell, University of Wisconsin—Madison, 1938; her daughter, Laura Beth Bartell, Stanford University, 1974, and her daughter-in-law, Angela Gina Baldi Bartell, University of Wisconsin—Madison, 1969; and Angela's daughter, Carey Laurel Bartell, Wesleyan University, 1995.

Hattie Solomon Burger, alumna member, and her daughter, Marjorie Burger Wyzan, Hunter College, 1921 and 1949; and Marjorie's sons, Michael Louis Wyzan, Miami University, 1975, and Daniel Stuart Wyzan, University of Delaware, 1979.

Carleton Sterne Lentz, Vanderbilt University, 1941; her son, Perry Carlton Lentz, Kenyon College, 1963; his daughter, Emily Anderson Lentz Hollis, Bowdoin College, 1992; and Emily's first cousin, Elizabeth Bond Lentz, Carleton College, 1996.

Southgate Leigh Jr., University of Virginia, 1927; his daughter, Winborne Leigh Hamlin, Sweet Briar College, 1958; and her son, John Southgate Hamlin, Dartmouth College, 1987.

Sidney Musher, Johns Hopkins University, 1925; his two sons, Jeremy Israel Musher and Daniel Michael Musher, Harvard University, 1957 and 1959; and Jeremy's son, Joshua Musher, Massachusetts Institute of Technology, 1987.

Harriet Lange Rheingold, Cornell University, 1928; her son, Paul David Rheingold, Oberlin College, 1955; and Paul's daughter, Susan R. Rheingold, Dartmouth College, 1988.

Robert C. Poole, Carleton College, 1950, and his wife, Mary Helen Durey Poole, University of Minnesota, 1953; and their daughters, Lauren E. Poole, Macalester College, 1975; Diana M. Poole, Colorado College, 1979; and Anne-Marie Poole, Carleton, 1983.

George A. Cram, University of Michigan, 1911; his granddaughter, Sharon Cooper Schwarze, Smith College, 1965; and Sharon's daughter, Margaret L. Schwarze, Colby College, 1989.

Paul Hill Saunders, University of Alabama, honorary member, 1933; his daughter, Maridel Saunders, granddaughter, Maude Saunders Sharp, and great-granddaughter, Katherine Thomas Sharp, all at Newcomb College, Tulane University, 1928, 1955, and 1980.

Lawrence Evans Thompson, Dartmouth College, 1941, and his sister, Barbara Jean Thompson, UCLA, 1945; Lawrence's daughter, Christina Abbott Thompson, Dartmouth, 1981; and his granddaughter, Rachel Ida Massey, University of Chicago, 1993.

Bernard Wolfman and his son, Brian, University of Pennsylvania, 1946 and 1978; Bernard's wife, Toni Grotta Wolfman, Smith College, 1964; and Bernard's daughter-in-law, Shereen Arent, Stanford University, 1980.

Conrad H. Christopherson and his wife, Effie Jacobson Christopherson, University of Minnesota, 1898 and 1899; their son, Paul Christopherson, Carleton College, 1923; and their great-grandson, David V. Christopherson, Davidson College, 1996.

Benjamin Francis Sledd, College of William and Mary, honorary member, 1912; his son, Hassell B. Sledd, University of North Carolina, 1948; and Hassell's daughter, Meredith Ann Sledd, Gustavus Adolphus College, 1983.

Ruth Clouse Chance and her sister, Naomi Clouse Champion, University of California, 1927; Ruth's daughter, Shirley Chance Schwamm, Stanford University, 1957; and Shirley's son, Justin M. Schwamm Jr., and his wife, Alice Ann Moore, Carleton College, 1990.

Gertrude Mercedes Wittenfeld Klug, University of Illinois, 1929; her brother, William Norman Wittenfeld, and his wife, Paula Morf Wittenfeld, University of Illinois, 1933; their daughter, Wilma Wittenfeld Heston, University of Oregon, 1955; and Wilma's daughter, Laura Heston Ahmed, University of Michigan, 1983.

Ida DeNelsky Frankel, Drake University, alumna member, 1924; her daughter, Ruth Frankel Boorstin, Wellesley College, 1938; Ruth's husband, Daniel J. Boorstin, Harvard University, 1934; and their sons: Paul Boorstin, Princeton University, 1965; and Jonathan Boorstin and David Boorstin, Harvard, 1967 and 1971.

All at Indiana University: Agate Nesaule, 1960; Agate's mother, Valda Nesaule, 1962; and Agate's brother-in-law, Uldis Kukainis, 1963.



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The spring issue will also feature the inaugural essay by our new editor, Anne Fadiman, a winner of the National Magazine Award for Reporting and the author of *The Spirit Catches You and You Fall Down*, who has been praised by *The New Yorker* for her "extraordinary skill" and by *The New York Times* for her "novelist's grace."

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## Flanagan Named to '98-99 Romanell-ΦBK Professorship

Owen Flanagan, professor of philosophy at Duke University, has been named the Romanell-Phi Beta Kappa Professor of Philosophy for 1998-99. The professorship, endowed by a donation from Patrick and Edna Romanell in 1984, recognizes the recipient's "distinguished achievement and potential contribution to the public understanding of philosophy" and carries a stipend of \$7,500.

## THE KEY REPORTER

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