



# The KeyReporter

Phi Beta Kappa  
Founded 1776

Fall 2001 Volume 67, Number 1

## John Churchill Selected as Secretary of Phi Beta Kappa

By Joseph W. Gordon  
President of the Phi Beta Kappa Society

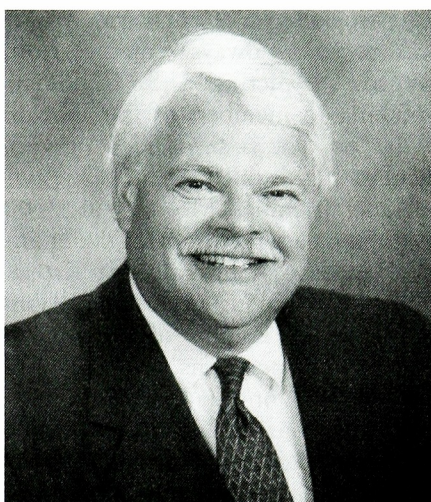
On behalf of my colleagues on the Executive Committee, it gives me great pleasure to announce that we have completed the search for the next Secretary and Chief Executive Officer of the Phi Beta Kappa Society.

After reviewing many first-rate applications, the Executive Committee in September invited seven candidates to Washington for interviews—women and men from across the country, working in a range of professions, active in numerous ways in support of liberal education, and representing the many constituencies of our Society.

Out of this impressive group of Phi Beta Kappans, we believe that we have found a new Secretary with the professional experience that fully prepares him for the current demands of the job, and the wisdom, articulateness, temperament, and energy to make the most of its possibilities.

At the meeting in Williamsburg in December, the Executive Committee will formally ask the Senate to endorse and ratify as Secretary our selection of Dr. John Churchill, currently Interim President of Hendrix College in Conway, Arkansas, and Vice-President for Academic Affairs and Dean of the College there. He is also Professor of Philosophy at Hendrix. Some of you already know him through his current membership on the Committee on Qualifications, and others may remember him from his participation in recent Triennial Councils. John Churchill was the leader of the drive to obtain a charter for a chapter at Hendrix, which culminated at the Triennial Council in Chicago in 1997.

John Churchill was elected to Phi Beta Kappa at Southwestern at Memphis (now Rhodes College), where he received a bachelor's degree in philosophy. In addition to his academic honors there, he was also captain of the varsity football team and conference champion at throwing the discus. He was selected as a Rhodes Scholar and took a second



John Churchill

bachelor's degree in the Final Honour School of Philosophy and Theology at the University of Oxford. Returning to the United States, he earned his Ph.D. in philosophy at Yale, writing a dissertation on Wittgenstein and the philosophy of religion.

Throughout his career, John Churchill has been a devoted teacher and a productive scholar. In over twenty years of teaching, he has offered a wide range of courses in logic, ethics, and the history of philosophy. Beyond his own classroom, he has overseen the development of a research-based curriculum in the sciences at Hendrix, and designed strong mentoring programs for undergraduates. In addition to publishing

extensively in scholarly journals, he has been the author of essays, addressed to the broader public, that reflect on the state of liberal education and, in the title of one of them, on "The Humanities in Public Conversation."

Locally, regionally, and nationally, John has taken the lead in such "public conversations," whether by developing a textbook of readings for the Arkansas Governor's School for the

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# Tragic Events of Sept. 11 Strengthen ΦBK Society's Dedication to its Mission

*By Susan Howard  
Executive Secretary ad interim*

Since the tragic events of September 11, 2001, each of us has tried to come to terms, individually and collectively, personally and professionally, with their magnitude, and to measure our lives against the framework of those images of twisted steel. What does this mean for Phi Beta Kappa? We will celebrate in December our 225th anniversary, the Society born at the same time as our country, in an atmosphere of turmoil. Born precisely because in the midst of that turmoil there were those who knew the most important thing the new republic could foster was freedom, including freedom of inquiry. As we gather together in Colonial Williamsburg, we will undoubtedly think of the spirit of revolution that fostered our founding.

I am also reminded of a photograph many of you have seen, taken in 1938 in the ballroom of the Astor Hotel in New York, marking the occasion of the founding of the Phi Beta Kappa Associates, now called the Fellows.

These members came together to ensure, both financially and with their commitment to principle, that free inquiry would not be threatened in the face of the threat of Nazism and world war. The Fellows will gather in Williamsburg as well.

At our anniversary celebration this December, bright debaters from The College of William & Mary will deliberate in the context of two very different centuries the question of society's responsibility to educate its youth. I am struck by a recent cartoon—for humor will always emerge from tragedy—depicting U.S. diplomats speaking to members of the Taliban: "Give us Osama bin Laden or we'll send your girls to college!"

Our Triennial Meeting in 2000 began with a symposium on the "glorious" uselessness of Phi Beta Kappa. The Society has just begun, in collaboration with a number of like-minded national associations, to create a framework in preparation for our hosting a national deliberation on the social value of liberal learning. A number of our chapters and associations

will participate in this work; the results of these conversations will be reflected upon at our 2003 Triennium.

The work of Phi Beta Kappa to defend freedom of inquiry—both on our campuses and in society—is more important than ever in the light of September 11. The Senate, that body empowered to mold the shape of the organization and its activities, will be at work in Williamsburg. And the Senate has taken some extraordinary steps since October 2000. The Society has purchased a new building to be the permanent headquarters of the national office. The selection committee will present to the Senate for ratification in December its nominee for Executive Secretary, John Churchill, to lead the operation in this 21st century. And the Senate in its last session passed a resolution that allows for colleges and universities outside the United States to apply to shelter chapters of Phi Beta Kappa. This extraordinary action, in these extraordinary times, allows for the possibility for the mission, purposes and significance of the Society to be an institutional influence outside our country's borders.

The Society can be proud, now as throughout its history, of the role it continues to play to defend freedom of thought and to promote liberal learning.



*Tours of historic Raleigh Tavern will be offered during the Society's anniversary celebration.*

## Williamsburg to Host ΦBK's 225th Anniversary Celebration

Phi Beta Kappa will celebrate its 225th anniversary in December at the historic site of its founding on Dec. 5, 1776. The nation's oldest academic honor society was created by five students at the College of William & Mary in Williamsburg, Va., during the American Revolution.

This year also marks the 75th anniversary of the dedication of Phi Beta Kappa Hall, by John D. Rockefeller, Jr., on the William & Mary campus. Rockefeller's visit led to his collaboration with Dr. W. A. R. Goodwin, rector of Bruton Parish Church, on the restoration of Colonial Williamsburg.

The ΦBK Senate, its Executive Committee, other committees and the Society Fellows will conduct sessions Thursday through Saturday, Dec. 6–8.

Honored guests at the celebration will be members of the 1776 Society, who have contributed \$10,000 to Phi Beta Kappa's permanent endowment.

All members of the Society are invited to gather Saturday afternoon in front of the Raleigh Tavern for an anniversary tribute to Colonial Williamsburg, followed by tours of the tavern.



# From the Editor

The Spring 1984 issue of *The Key Reporter*—Volume XLIX—looks just like the previous one. Its eight pages include a lively report by actor, director and author Arnold Moss on his year as a  $\Phi$ BK Visiting Scholar. Jean Hagstrum contributed an essay, “‘Esteem Enlivened by Desire’: The Ideal of Friendship between Men and Women in Western Culture.” There are many book reviews, and a brief item on the new members selected by the Society’s 234 chapters.

What is different about that issue is its editor: Priscilla S. Taylor. She would continue in this role for 70 more editions—expanding the publication to 16 pages, overseeing re-designs, adding color photography, reporting on the dramatic expansion of Phi Beta Kappa activities, its growth to 262 campus chapters, and the increase in regional associations to 60 across the country. From Volume I, Number 1 in 1935 until the Summer issue of 2001 (the real new millennium, as we pedants still insist on noting), Priscilla was responsible for more than a quarter of the *Key Reporters* published by Phi Beta Kappa.

As she observed in a graceful farewell message in the last issue, circulation in 1984 was 170,000, and limited to members who had made financial contributions to the Society. Today *The Key Reporter* is mailed free to all  $\Phi$ BK members who keep the national office informed of where they live. The circulation of 470,000 is an impressive figure by any measure, but especially considering the criteria that determine who qualifies as a subscriber. (I know from friends’ anecdotes that other household members expand the readership considerably.)

This issue includes news that promises a dynamic future for Phi Beta Kappa, from the new leadership of John Churchill as national secretary to the Society’s move to its own building.

The weekend’s highlight will be at 5:30 p.m. Saturday, when a formal debate is staged in the House of Burgesses. Varsity debaters from William & Mary will confront an issue that the Society’s founders discussed in the spring of 1777: “Whether a wise State hath any Interest nearer at Heart than the education of the Youth.” The moderator will be Douglas Foard,  $\Phi$ BK’s former secretary, the chief executive officer. Two of the debaters, in colonial garb, will address the question from an 18th century perspective. Two others, in contemporary clothes, will speak from a 21st century viewpoint. Seating in the House of Burgesses is limited, so a live telecast will be shown in nearby rooms.

The evening will conclude with a festive 18th century dinner at Shields Tavern. Members may make reservations for the dinner by calling Cameron Curtis at the  $\Phi$ BK national offices at (202) 265-3808.

Reservations for accommodations at Colonial Williamsburg may be made by calling 1-800-261-9530, extension 5200, between 9 a.m. and 5 p.m. Monday through Friday.



*The University of South Carolina Alpha chapter of Phi Beta Kappa celebrated its 75th anniversary this year. Participating, from left, were Gunther Holst, Ellen Potter, USC President and former chapter president John M. Palms, John Skvortez, Lynne Bolt Hansen, Allen Stokes, Lorraine Aun, Ann Kingsolver, Megan Titas, Sara Wise, former national secretary Douglas Foard, and Jan Cambre.*

Just as significant is the volume of letters from members—published or not—that reflect their intellectual energy, commitment to the Society’s mission, and engagement with issues of the day. *The Key Reporter* will remain a vital medium for dialogue between  $\Phi$ BK members, around the nation and the globe, and the national officers and staff. As we wish Priscilla a rewarding retirement, we welcome your suggestions on innovative ways to continue and enrich that dialogue.

— Barbara Haddad Ryan

## New National Secretary

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

Gifted and Talented, chairing the Council of Deans for the Associated Colleges of the South, or serving on the Board of Directors of the American Conference of Academic Deans. He has extensive experience in directing institutional planning projects, and in helping to secure the funds from foundations and individual donors to realize those plans.

John is married to Jean Hill Churchill and is the father of three children, ranging in age from 24 to 18. And he proudly holds a blue ribbon for pickled okra from his local county fair.

John Churchill is expected to begin his duties full-time as of December 1, and will of course attend the Senate meeting a few days later.

Let me say how grateful the members of the Executive Committee and I are to Dr. Susan Howard, who has been serving both in her usual capacity as Associate Secretary and as Secretary *ad interim* since Doug Foard’s resignation early this summer. We have asked Susan Howard to continue to serve as Secretary *ad interim* until John Churchill officially takes up the post of Secretary.



# Liberal Arts College Founded in Berlin

**Editor's Note:** *Phi Beta Kappa members have had leadership roles at the new European College of Liberal Arts (ECLA) in Berlin. Henry Louis Gates of Harvard is a trustee, and among the senior advisors are Robert C. Darnton of Princeton and Gerald Holton and Gregory Nagy of Harvard. The visiting professors have included ΦBK members James Engell, Charles Maier and Elaine Scarry, all from Harvard, and Robert Pippin of the University of Chicago. Stephan Gutzeit, the ECLA provost, studied chemistry and philosophy at Stanford and Harvard before becoming a consultant at the Berlin subsidiary of McKinsey & Co., Inc. This is the first report about the ECLA to appear in a U.S. publication.*

## By Stephan Gutzeit

In the winter of 1999, the American Academy of Arts and Sciences published an issue of *Daedalus* entitled, "Distinctively American: The Residential Liberal Arts Colleges." Yet just a few months later, such a college was founded in Europe, and not just anywhere: the European College of Liberal Arts (ECLA) is located in the former heartland of Prussia—in Berlin, Germany.

This location is less incongruous than it appears to be. What Americans call "liberal education" is not an American invention. It derives from Greek and Roman antiquity: the tutorial descends from the Socratic dialogue, the liberal arts from the *artes liberales*, the goal of a well-rounded education from that of an *enkyklios paideia*.

Later on in Europe, the concept of a broad-based higher education (rather than narrow "higher training") flourished not just at Oxford and Cambridge, but also among the humanists in Renaissance Florence. And it was revived again in early 19th century Berlin by Wilhelm von Humboldt, the great Prussian education reformer. Humboldt was steeped in Greek philosophy and literature, and was a friend to Goethe, Schiller, and Friedrich August Wolf, the leading classical scholar at the time. In 1810, Humboldt founded the University of Berlin according to neo-humanist principles.

Today the ideas of Wilhelm von Humboldt are virtually dead at the state-run universities in Germany (and virtually all German universities are state-run). At ECLA, however, they are

in for a homecoming. ECLA opened its gates in 2000, founded by scientists, scholars, and managers in their early thirties who had received their academic training at leading universities in the English-speaking world.

The initial idea dates back to the early 1990s, when several European students at Stanford University met in the campus coffeehouse to discuss two questions: Why, despite all efforts at European unification, was there no European university anywhere on the continent? And why did young Europeans have to emigrate to the United States to study, in their freshman year, a "great books curriculum" covering the classics of European thought? Having been infected by the American entrepreneurial spirit, we decided to do something about it. But being Stanford students, we decided to complete our degrees first.

That done, we set to work to establish the institution we envisioned. ECLA, housed on an early 20th century English-style campus, is entirely pri-



*Physics major Bernd Hezel exercises the other side of his brain.*



*James Engell, past president of Harvard's ΦBK chapter, lectured at ECLA.*

vately funded. It receives financial support from eight foundations, among them the Christian A. Johnson Endeavor Foundation in New York City. Our trustees include Norbert Walter, the chief economist of Deutsche Bank; Josef Joffe, editor and publisher of *Die Zeit*, the leading weekly newspaper in Germany; and Henry Louis Gates of Harvard University. Among the professors who have taught at ECLA are James Engell, Patrice Higonnet, and Elaine Scarry of Harvard, Terry Eagleton and Malcolm Bowie of Oxford University, Russell Berman of Stanford, and Robert Pippin of the University of Chicago.

We cooperate with Central European University in Budapest, which was founded by the philanthropist George Soros, with Bard College in New York State, and with several research centers in Berlin. We are exploring possibilities for cooperation with such other first-rate American institutions as Swarthmore College.

ECLA is committed to the same philosophical principles as U.S. liberal arts colleges, but it is not a carbon copy. Not only are we indebted to German neo-humanism as well—we are developing a European version of the liberal education that we once received. For instance, we are highly international: our students hail from Germany (25 percent), elsewhere in Western Europe (20 percent), Eastern Europe (20 percent), the United States (25 percent), and other countries (10 percent).

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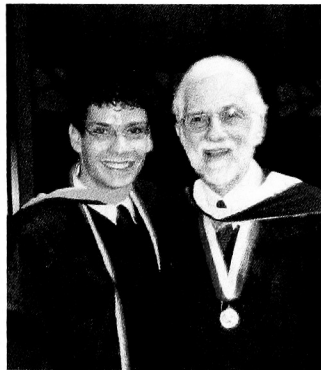
# Associations Start in Maine and Boston

New **ΦBK** associations have been organized this fall in Maine and Boston. Both are provisional associations, the term selected last summer by the Committee on Associations to describe groups in the first stage of formation. Later they will request unchartered status, the second step before the Senate grants chartered status.

The Maine association drew 33 members to its inaugural meeting in September at Bowdoin College. The speaker was Douglas Foard, the Society's former secretary, and two members of the **ΦBK** New England District's executive committee attended: Katherine Soule, the committee secretary, and **ΦBK** Senator Don Wyatt. The association's founding committee included acting president Kathleen Gensheimer, Carol O'Donnell, and **ΦBK** Senator Gordon Weil.

Plans for the Boston association have been developed by Matthew Hochstetler, working with the nation-

al Society staff and the New England District officers. Hochstetler graduated in May from Georgetown University in Washington, D.C., and moved to Boston in October. Because the number of **ΦBK** members in the metropolitan Boston area is so large, he has focused his initial efforts on those within the city limits.



*Matthew Hochstetler, shown with Prof. Andrew Steigman of Georgetown, is forming a Boston association.*

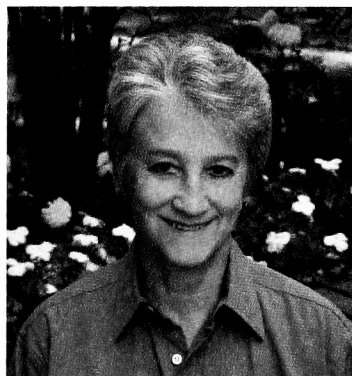
**ΦBK** members outside the city who would like to be on the Boston association mailing list may contact Hochstetler at (617) 767-6288 or hochstem@georgetown.edu. He also looks forward to hearing from potential volunteers. Senator Wyatt has noted that the large concentration of Society members in Cambridge suggests the potential for a "twin" association, which could collaborate with the Boston group on some events and activities.

Inquiries about organizing an association in Cambridge or other communities may be directed to Barbara Ryan at national headquarters.

## Coppock-Bland Named **ΦBK** Chapter Liaison

Nan Coppock-Bland will join the staff of Phi Beta Kappa in December to become the primary liaison between the Society's 262 campus chapters and the national office. She will work closely with the Senate's Committee on Chapters and the Committee on Qualifications, which evaluates colleges and universities that apply for **ΦBK** chapters.

Coppock-Bland has served on the Society's Committee on Chapters since 1998, and has been secretary and treasurer of the **ΦBK** chapter at the University of Oregon, where she earned both B.A. and M.A. degrees in English literature. After seven years as production editor for the university's



*Comparative Literature* journal, she moved to the Office of University Publications, where she has been catalog editor, associate director of publications, and university editor.

Estate planning specialists recommend that individuals revise their wills every three years. The Phi Beta Kappa Society is prepared to assist members who may consider including **ΦBK** among their preferred charities as they review plans for their estates. Such contributions play a significant role in the fulfillment of the Society's mission.

Ed Maurer, director of development, invites queries from members about estate planning opportunities, as well as requests for **ΦBK**'s brochure, *Making A Difference*.

## THE KEY REPORTER

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*Editor:* Barbara Haddad Ryan

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# Society Buys New D.C. Headquarters

The Phi Beta Kappa Society has purchased a 19th century building near its current offices that will become its national headquarters late this winter. The new address for the Society, *The Key Reporter*, and *The American Scholar* will be 1606 New Hampshire Avenue, N.W., Washington, D.C. 20009.

Built around 1885 to be the home of a U.S. Navy surgeon, the building was designed by the architectural firm of Hornblower & Marshall. (A decade later, the same firm designed the residence that today houses the Phillips Collection.)

The four-story structure stayed in the surgeon's family until the Depression. During World War II it became a boarding house for women. After the war, it was a medical building

until 1985, when it was completely renovated and turned into offices. The property includes parking areas and a detached two-story carriage house.

Until 1921, the Society was based wherever the executive secretary lived. For the next three decades, the staff rented an office in New York City. In 1951 the College of William & Mary invited the Society to move to Phi Beta Kappa Memorial Hall on its campus in Williamsburg, Va. That structure had been constructed during ΦBK's 150th anniversary in 1926 as a memorial to its founding members, and became a center for the college's cultural and academic events.

In 1954, the Phi Beta Kappa Foundation bought the Society's first permanent home, on Q Street in Washington. In the fall of 1998, the



Society moved a few blocks away to its current headquarters in a building owned by the National Trust for Historic Preservation.

## *A Special Invitation*

To help Phi Beta Kappa set its direction and promote liberal arts education in the 21st century...

As The Phi Beta Kappa Society prepares to celebrate its 225<sup>th</sup> anniversary this December, so too we look forward to examining our proper role in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. The Senate has undertaken a strategic planning initiative, welcoming suggestions from our chapters, associations and members. The Society has enhanced its long-standing outreach programs and embarked on collaborative projects with other associations and agencies to promote the value of liberal learning in our society. William Sullivan asks in *The University as Citizen*, "Can the academy reinvigorate its central mission amid difficult and confusing circumstances?...Higher education has chosen such resourcefulness in the past, renewing its dedication to bringing the powers of cultivated intellect to bear on the economic, social and cultural life of American democracy."

Phi Beta Kappa, with assistance from the Kettering Foundation and the National Issues Forum, is framing for deliberation the topic of the social value of liberal learning, to be carried out in a series of forums across the nation by our chapters, our associations, our affiliate organizations and a variety of civic groups. We hope to inform ourselves and others as to the broader public's view of the liberal arts and their relevance. A team of colleagues meeting to formulate the framework under which the deliberation will be held has asked for response to the following questions to aid them in their work:

### **Please review and respond to the following questions:**

- ❖ What do you value about your own education?
- ❖ What do you think other Americans value about their education?
- ❖ Do you think those things will be important to the next generation?
- ❖ What changes have you experienced in your life?
- ❖ What would help you (or others) deal better with change?
- ❖ Do you feel your education prepared you for changes (in the job market/other changes)? How?
- ❖ Do you participate in civic life? How well did your education prepare you to participate in civic life?

We would like to have the input of as many of our members to the framing of this issue as possible. We invite you to respond by mail, by fax (202) 986-1601, by email [info@pbk.org](mailto:info@pbk.org), or by visiting our web site [www.pbk.org](http://www.pbk.org) to complete the form on-line. We will keep you advised through *The Key Reporter* and the website as specific activity and information on this deliberation progress.





# Phi Beta Kappa in the News

The *Wichita Eagle* (Sept. 14) published "Wichitans' Daughter Walks Away from Carnage" by Roy Wenzl. It describes how Jordan Esbrook, age 22, a **ΦBK** graduate of Grinnell College, survived the collapse of the World Trade Center in New York City. A researcher at the U.S. Department of Justice in Chicago, she was in New York to help interview a figure in an antitrust case. She had taken an elevator from her room on the ninth floor to the lobby of the Marriott Hotel, between the towers, when the first tower was hit.

Later Esbrook recalled living as a child near Valley Forge, Penna., and playing at the Revolutionary War site. "I wondered what it would be like to be right in the middle of something that big," she said. "I wondered what I would do. But now I know. Now I know that those soldiers must have been scared. And I think I know now how they got through it. I know now that when you're in the middle of something so big that your mind can't get around it, you do just one thing. You put one foot in front of the other. And you try your best to stay alive."

The *Philadelphia Inquirer* (Sept. 12) interviewed Josiah Bunting III, superintendent of Virginia Military Institute, a **ΦBK** graduate of the College of William & Mary, about his fourth novel, "All Loves Excelling" (Bridge Works). It is described as "a savage commentary on the culture of today's high-powered private schools." A former headmaster of the Lawrenceville School, Bunting said that "there is almost nothing in the world more tragic than sacrificing a child to gratify a parent's ambition."

"To hold up admission to one of 10 or 15 universities and the achievement of certain SAT scores as the means by which we are going to evaluate a child's worth is a very dangerous thing to do, and we do it all the time," said Bunting. "We are refusing to allow kids the time and space to expand their horizons on their own, and we are insisting on judging them according to criteria that have almost nothing to do with their abilities

to become successful adults, citizens and professionals."

The *Richmond Times-Dispatch* (Sept. 9) published a column by Ray Wallace praising a Commencement address by Douglas Foard, former **ΦBK** secretary, at Hampden-Sydney College. "It was an illuminating address beyond the banality of congratulatory gesture," Wallace said. "Foard addresses the difficulties of university and college administrators in making the case for liberal arts education in today's society."

"Influential members of the business and economic community often are more interested in 'workforce development,' [Foard] says. Training seems to be replacing education. 'Workforce' burdens the undergraduate curriculum with a bevy of tech-training demands. With such a technological glut, students are left uncultured, intellectually shallow, and without real freedom to become a whole person."

The *Christian Science Monitor* (August 31) also quoted Douglas Foard, in an editorial called "Back-to-College Basics" that deplores the decline in popularity of a liberal arts education. The editorial starts with this statement from Foard: "It's imperative to communicate to faculty and students that they must learn how to live a life, rather than simply have the skill to earn a living."

The *Buffalo News* (June 18) published an article by Peter Simon about Cory Hill, winner of the Western New York Phi Beta Kappa Association scholarship for 2001. Simon wrote that Hill spent his first five years in foster care, and at age 17 has lived in 35 different homes. Yet he graduated sixth in his class at Burgard Vocational High School. He previously attended Buffalo's Native American Magnet School.

Hill was a peer counselor and a mentor for special education students at Burgard, helped produce films, took classes at the Albright-Knox Art Gallery, was active in his church group,

spent three years in the Army Junior ROTC program, and taught himself to play the piano, while holding down a part-time job. Now enrolled at the University of Buffalo, he hopes to become a pediatric orthodontist.

The *New Yorker* magazine (May 21) featured a report on the student occupation of a Harvard University building to protest the wages of janitors and dining hall staff. After 21 days, administrators agreed to labor reforms and the students emerged triumphant.

"When the rally ended," wrote Philip Gourevitch, "Benjamin McKean, a junior social studies major from Los Angeles, realized that he was late for his Phi Beta Kappa induction dinner, and he hurried over to what he called 'this room of Harvard people in coats and ties,' still dressed in the Chili John's restaurant T-shirt that he had worn throughout the sit-in. Everyone applauded, and he said, 'It was nice to have hot food that I wasn't eating off the floor, and to be talking to people I hadn't been talking to for 24 hours a day for 21 days.'"

## Phi Beta Kappa in Popular Culture

In the 1952 film version of William Inge's "Come Back, Little Sheba," Burt Lancaster plays Dr. Delaney, a chiropractor living a life of quiet desperation with his loving but maddeningly shallow wife, Lola, portrayed by Shirley Booth.

As their seductive teenage boarder, played by Terry Moore, walks down the street with Lancaster, she notices the Phi Beta Kappa key hanging from his watch chain against his vest. She remarks that this means he's very intelligent. He modestly accepts her compliment. But his demeanor makes it obvious that the key is yet another symbol of the promising future he anticipated as a brilliant physician, which he sacrificed to marry Lola when she announced that she was pregnant.

—Submitted by Myra B. Shays of Providence, R.I.





# Among Our Key People

**Editor's Note:** *Justine Korman Fontes, the author of more than 300 books for children, has a B.A. in English (ΦBK, New York University, 1979). She and her husband produce beginning readers, novelty books, biographies, historical fiction, and novels based on movies. They live in Readfield, Maine. Priscilla Taylor, who retired as The Key Reporter's editor in September, conducted this interview.*

**Q. How did you become an author?**

A. I wrote early and often. In second grade, I wrote my first story, about our cat, from her point of view. In high school I wrote theater reviews for the school paper.

While I was in college I got part-time jobs at publishing houses. I learned proofreader's marks and whatever else I could about the business. After graduating I became an editorial assistant at Golden Books, where I met my future husband, Ron. He was working in the comic book department, and also wanted to be a writer.

I was on my way to becoming an editor, so I had to make the transition to the other side of the desk. I quit at Golden and got a job as a part-time secretary while I wrote picture books and a children's novel.

Meanwhile two of my publishing friends were promoted to positions where they could give me my first writing assignments—a Superman coloring book and an Inspector Gadget Golden Book. I'd never thought about writing coloring books and almost didn't take the job, but Ron said, "You want to be a writer? Write." He handed me a stack of Superman comics and coloring books and said, "Learn."

Ron also helped with the Inspector Gadget book. He made me focus on the format (how many pages, how many lines per page), and do an outline and page breakdown before I just jumped into writing. He taught me to take criticism and do rewrites. Ron had been a freelance artist since he was a kid. I benefited a lot from his experience.

Shortly after we moved to Maine, we became full-time writers, that is,

people who never know where their next meal is coming from.

**Q. Was there a particular teacher who influenced you?**

A. I went to good schools in Great Neck, NY, and enjoyed learning. But I was too shy about my writing to bring it to a teacher's attention.

The Lakeville Elementary School librarian made the library a wonderful place to be, and that helped me love books. School assignments taught me how to do research, and I always turned them in on time. But I think that had more to do with my parents, who are very punctual. And though it seems trivial, making deadlines is key to success as a professional writer.

**Q. Did you take writing courses in college?**

A. Just one, and it wasn't particularly helpful. I figured writing would come once I had something to say.

**Q. What do you tell people who want to break into your field?**

A. Many people think it would be fun to write children's books, and it is. But it's harder than it looks. Publishers put out only a limited number of "originals" a year. The rest are assigned to professional writers who are willing to write what they are told, within very specific formats, with strict deadlines.

**Q. Why do you publish a newsletter?**

A. When we were thinking about leaving New York City, Ron said, "You're going to have to call editors all the time or you'll never get any more work." I knew he was right, but I was way too shy to keep begging for work over the phone.

As I was walking to the subway from my part-time secretary job, it hit me; "I don't have to call editors. I'll write to them." That's how we came up with a newsletter to mail out as a reminder to hire us, and a monthly deadline for original work.

"The Grumpy Bunny" first appeared in *critter news* as "The Greedy Easter Bunny." Then an editor at Troll Books called and said, "If you give this bunny a happy ending, we might publish the book." So Hopper learned his lesson and became not greedy, just grumpy—and now there are 13 Grumpy Bunny books, dolls, rubber stamps, and even a Chinese edition.

[*critter news* is on the Web at [crittertainment.com](http://crittertainment.com).]

**Q. How do you choose what to write about?**

A. Ideas pop into my head, sometimes directly inspired by things that happen, like getting poison ivy, but often the process is more mysterious, and not something I question, just chasing mental fireflies, I guess.

Sometimes we get fun assignments; for example, "Our marketing department came up with the title *Stinky Socks*; can you write a book for it?" And sometimes we get assignments we think won't be any fun at all, and they turn out to be quite inspiring.

I never would have chosen to write about trucks on my own, but thanks to the Tonka series I've connected with a topic close to the hearts of many young readers.

**Q. What is your favorite kind of book to write?**

A. I love doing research for nonfiction. But fiction is the most fun, the purest return to the pleasure of play.

I like happy endings, so I guess I'm in the right business. But I like stories in which evil is punished, love triumphs, and everyone lives happily ever after—until the next silly thing happens.

**Q. How do you select your illustrators?**

A. I don't. That's always a surprise to people outside of publishing. Most





of the time I don't even see the illustrations until I receive the printed book in the mail.

Just as an editor assigns a book to me (or some other lucky writer), the art director assigns it to an illustrator. Of course, original books can be submitted with or without pictures, and editors often like to see illustrations. Recently, Ron and I started sending out my stories with his art—and crossing our fingers.

**Q. Who edits your work? What editing can an editor do to children's stories?**

A. We work with lots of different editors, many of whom are very creative writers themselves. They ask good questions that point up plot problems.

**Q. Have you found equal success with different kinds of books for kids?**

A. So far our biggest sellers are tie-ins to successful movies, like *The Lion King*. I'm not sure if there's a pattern to success: Fiction, nonfiction, older or younger kids. We don't know sales figures for most of our books. Since the vast majority are flat fee, not royalty, we don't get reports from publishers—just the occasional listing in *Publishers Weekly* or the newspapers.

**Q. What pitfalls do you try to avoid while writing?**

A. The hardest thing for me to learn was not to rush into details and dialogue before I'd finished the outline and page breakdown. I still have to discipline myself to see the whole book first. But there's no sense icing a cake you haven't baked yet.

**Q. How do you know what pleases kids?**

A. I'm not grown-up. I still love cartoons and toys. I'm as bored as any kid when the news comes on. If I'm very tired and have been paying too many bills, my mind sometimes fills up with the details of adulthood. But most of the time I have no trouble thinking like a kid. My trouble is dealing with the grown-up aspects of the job: contracts, lawyers, spelling.



*Justine Korman Fontes*

**Q. How many books have you written?**

A. I've lost count. Some books get canceled before they're printed. Publishers change their minds. Counting canceled books, Ron and I have written over 350.

It helps to have a partner. There's no way I could have written all these books by myself. And I depend on Ron for the tough ones, like the historical novels. He has read all kinds of history books, and even taught history for a while. I didn't get interested in history until quite recently.

**Q. Do you get lots of commissions connected with movies?**

A. The tie-in business has shrunk in the past few years, but we still write some books based on movies and cartoon shows. The thing that always surprises people outside publishing is that we don't get to see the movies until long after we've turned in the manuscript.

We do our best to imagine the movie from the brief descriptions in the screenplay. Occasionally we get still photos from live-action movies or character drawings from animated films.

**Q. What's your favorite thing to write about?**

A. It sounds corny, but I love to write about love—the power it has to

break through our grumpy shells and make us appreciate the wonder of being alive. But I also love writing stuff that's funny.

Maybe I'm just a stooge, but my life is full of slapstick. I'm always trying to do too many things at once, like a juggler with too many balls. So, of course, balls fall and . . . that's funny.

**Q. Do you seek to teach a lesson? How do you avoid being didactic?**

A. I'm not big on teaching lessons, maybe because I still have more of a kid's perspective than a parent's. Besides, I don't think it's necessary. All I have to do is create characters who are true to themselves, with logical consequences to their actions. Experience is the teacher.

Reading is a way to walk many paths without having to leave your chair. As a storyteller, I don't need to scold a kid for splashing through the puddles. If I've written a careless character well, the kid's feet will already be soggy with regret, or they'll be tingling with the triumph of having climbed the mountain top through hard work and perseverance.

**Q. Do you write only for young kids?**

A. So far we've written everything from very simple board books for kids who are more likely to chew the book than read it to junior novels for twelve-year-olds and up.

For the past four years we've been developing a series for teens (and adults) called *Tales of the Terminal Diner* about a naive kid from Maine who goes to the city to become a comicbook artist. There Sam finds a magic ring linked to Genie X, who both owns and is the Terminal Diner.

Diners are great because anyone can wind up there, and that allows us to tell all kinds of stories.

**Q. What do you think it means to be a writer?**

A. Even if you write fiction, I think a writer's job is telling the truth, to observe and report, to imagine with an honest heart—and, of course, to entertain.



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FAQ

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KRAU01

## ΦBK Plans National Public Dialogue

Representatives of five national academic organizations convened in October at Phi Beta Kappa's national headquarters to begin planning for a nation-wide public dialogue on "The Social Value of Liberal Learning."

Joining Phi Beta Kappa in the planning sessions were representatives of the Association of American Colleges and Universities, the Federation of State Humanities Councils, the National Humanities Alliance, and Phi Theta Kappa, the academic honor society for two-year colleges.

Also participating were representatives of the Kettering Foundation of Dayton, Ohio, which has supported

public discussions of significant social issues for more than two decades.

The public dialogues will be coordinated by Phi Beta Kappa, which will invite its chapters and associations to host forums within their communities (See "A Special Invitation" on page 6).

Hunter College in New York City and the Northern California Association have agreed to make the project a centerpiece of their annual symposium for 2002. Other ΦBK affiliates may contact Susan Howard, ΦBK associate secretary and executive secretary *ad interim*, regarding participation.

The project will conclude with a report in August, 2003, at the 40th Triennial Council of Phi Beta Kappa.

## ECLA

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 4

We also strive to combine practice with theory: our students complete a mini-MBA, a consulting internship, and other demanding practice modules alongside their theoretical studies. Unlike some U.S. colleges, we do not follow the "academic supermarket" model, where students just pick and choose whatever they like: our curricula are carefully and tightly structured to ensure that all undergraduates receive a solid foundation. On the

other hand, much instruction takes place in tutorials, which take into account the individual needs and interests of each student.

So far, ECLA has organized two international summer universities. Starting next fall, we will offer year-long interdisciplinary, international, intensive "great books" courses in an undergraduate version (for credit) and an M.A. version. From 2003 onward, we will offer B.A. programs in several fields across the arts and sciences. Phi Beta Kappa members are invited to learn more about our institution at [www.ecla.de](http://www.ecla.de).



The Middle Georgia Phi Beta Kappa Association received its charter from ΦBK Senator Harvey Klehr at a meeting at Mercer University in Macon, GA. Admiring the document, from left, are outgoing association president Miranda Pratt, Klehr, Mercer president Kirby Godsey, and new association president Mary Alice Morgan.





# Letters to the Editor

**Editor's Note:** *The Spring 2000 issue of The Key Reporter featured an article by Molly Ness, a 1999 ΦBK graduate of Johns Hopkins University. It chronicled her challenging first year in the Teach For America program at a middle school in East Oakland, Calif. In the Summer 2001 issue, she described and evaluated her second year in the program in "Teaching for America Revisited." Ness's views on her experience—and the subject of U.S. K-12 education in general—inspired many thoughtful letters. Here is a selection from those submitted. Both articles may be read on the Society's website, [www.pbk.org](http://www.pbk.org).*

I was impressed to read that Molly Ness committed herself to two years with Teach For America. (Summer 2001). It was disappointing to hear of the reception she received in Oakland, with "no mentor teacher, no coaching, no effective strategies to implement in the classroom and no observation" to provide feedback. Even if funds and supplies are low, guidance and advice must be available.

However, all of the problems Molly encountered cannot be attributed solely to inequality in the school system. How is it that Jason, Juan and Tae, who had greater obstacles to surmount than the average, had enough determination to accomplish their school work? How is it that they, and countless children in developing nations who attend schools that are in worse shape than the poorest districts in the U.S., are able to complete their studies without using profanity toward their teachers, stealing or vandalizing other people's property, [or] engaging in violence toward one another?

Is it fair to blame the school system alone for students' inability or unwillingness to resolve conflict, behave civilly, display self-respect and understand the benefits of education? If material poverty were the sole cause of conflict at school, then the school systems of the developing world would be a huge battlefield, which they are not.

Perhaps there is more than one culprit to the situation in Oakland.

*Wendy K. Lanz, Columbia, S.C.*

I am a 1997 graduate of the University of Pennsylvania as well as a 1997 Teach For America Baltimore corps member. I also served as a school director for the Teach For America 2000 Summer Institute. Based on my experience working with Teach For America and urban public schools, I would like to offer a response to "Teaching for America Revisited," by Molly Ness.

Not "all Teach for [sic] America recruits" go to their placement sites "straight out of college, with no previous teaching experience and no teaching credential." Some Teach For America corps members matriculate to Teach For America years after graduating from college, and some are already certified teachers when they matriculate. Second, it is important to note that our nation does not have a single "public school system." In fact, we have a multitude of public school systems.

Not all Teach For America corps members leave their classrooms immediately after completing their two-year commitments. Among the Teach For America alumni who do leave classroom teaching, many begin careers in which they take responsibility for leading efforts to improve education for children who live in poverty. There are now Teach For America alumni who serve as administrators in schools and other educational programs; who lead others to manage existing schools and start new ones; and who hold public office to improve education policies. In spite of the many challenges that we alumni have faced while working in under-resourced public schools, many of us are still fully committed to, and now much better equipped for, improving education for children who live in poverty.

*Jason Botel, Marlton, NJ*

Molly Ness's article, "Teaching for America Revisited" brings us a tragedy in American education.

How sad that such an idealistic young teacher had to quit in the face of inhumane conditions. And how sad for the many young persons who could have benefited from her education and commitment. It is gratifying that she took some flowers of hope from the trash heap of her disappointment.

As someone who grew up in Marin County, I didn't particularly appreciate her speculation that "rich kids in Marin County don't attend schools like this." I don't think this kind of class warfare rhetoric helps a constructive dialog on education.

Be that as it may, I felt acute sorrow after reading about her experience in East Oakland and wish her the best in her new career at Columbia School of Journalism. I will also say a prayer for the brave students of Roosevelt Middle School. May they never be denied their chance at the American Dream.

*Robert S. Marrin, Topeka, KS*

CONTINUED ON PAGE 14

Several members have expressed interest in responding to Jessica Jackson's request [*Key Reporter*, Spring 2001] for books that would be useful for her students in Uzbekistan. A reader also wrote about M-bags [*Key Reporter*, Summer 2001], which he described as the cheapest way to send printed matter overseas, and which are available at U.S. post offices.

Priscilla Taylor, *Key Reporter* editor emerita, has an additional suggestion. She said that books may be donated to universities in China by sending them to a ΦBK member in the United States:

Alex Lee  
Bridge to Asia  
Foreign Trade Services  
Pier 23  
San Francisco CA 94111





# Recommended Reading

## BOOK COMMITTEE

**Humanities:** Svetlana Alpers, Michael Griffith

Robert P. Sonkowsky, Eugen Weber

**Social Sciences:** Thomas McNaugher, Josephine Pacheco

Anna J. Schwartz, Larry J. Zimmerman

**Natural Sciences:** Germaine Cornélissen, Jay M. Pasachoff

### By Svetlana Alpers

**Beyond the Easel: Decorative Painting by Bonnard, Vuillard, Denis and Roussel, 1890–1930.** Gloria Groom, with an essay by Nicholas Watkins and contributions by Jennifer Paoletti and Thérèse Barruel. Yale University Press, 2001. \$65.

Like so many art books these days, this one was produced to accompany an exhibit. In this instance, the book stands magnificently on its own. The subject is the mural-type paintings done by a group of French painters as decoration for the homes of their wealthy patrons. The exhibition brought works from private collections out into view, and brought works together that have long been separated. But with the help of many period photographs, the book gives one a sense of how they looked in their original architectural and cultural settings. It provides a fascinating case study in the social history of art.

Some reviewers have objected to an art made to satisfy the domestic life of the wealthy at a period when the world was in crisis. But when is the world free of turmoil? And art can serve different purposes. An interest of these richly inventive landscapes and cityscapes with figures is that the artists, a bit like fresco painters in the Renaissance, were not only painting on commission, but were making paintings to hang on the walls of particular sites. Although collecting and collectibles for the rich are still the name of the game, few painters today are given this kind of opportunity.

It is an indication of the lasting impact of modernism in art that

authors find it necessary to come up with a theoretical account for an alternative “decorative aesthetic.”

Surely, however, decoration is one of the oldest functions of European painting. And what is striking here is the extraordinary inventiveness and skill that Bonnard and Vuillard brought to weaving painted fantasies around the lives of their patrons. It is striking that after 1930, even without their patrons, the two of them went on painting in this high and moving decorative manner well into World War II.

**As Painting: Division and Displacement.** Philip Armstrong, Laura Lisbon, and Stephen Melville. MIT Press, 2001. \$39.95.

This is another catalogue/book about art in France. But the case couldn't be more different. The art on view here was made from roughly the 1960s on—art, let us say, made well after Bonnard and Vuillard. These artists are not working for patrons. They work only for themselves and for art. Bonnard and Vuillard were late-comers who continued comfortably in an established tradition almost up to the middle of the 20th century. These artists are radicals. For them, painting like that, as well as the modernism and abstraction that superseded them, will no longer do.

How and in what form, they ask in works and in words, can painting still be made to matter? In the face of the difficulties posed by the question, some stopped making anything at all.

We are shown (mostly) French (mostly) non-representational painting. The “mostlys” refer to the fact that

the white on white paintings of the American Robert Ryman, an originating figure for the rest, some other Americans, a few Germans, a bit of sculpture, and a photographer are all seen as fitting the project of “as” painting. But the discovery for American readers is going to be the works of these not-so-well-known French artists. It turns out that non-representational art is not just a great American thing. It is also a European thing.

This elegantly produced book is not for the faint of heart or for the faint of mind. The analytic catalogue entries are preceded by demanding position papers written by two of the professors (of art and art history) who organized the exhibit at the Peter Eisenman-designed Wexner Center for the Arts at Ohio State University. The book ends with a substantial dossier of newly translated French materials by and on these artists.

To my eyes, much of the interest is how very well these works of art stand up despite all the conceptual words.

**Gothic Architecture.** Paul Frankl, revised by Paul Crossley. Yale University Press: *The Pelican History of Art*, 2000. \$80; paper, \$35.

This book offers an incomparable introduction to Gothic architecture as well as to the way in which it has been studied.

It was published originally in 1962 by Penguin Books in Nikolaus Pevsner's ambitious series, which surveyed all the then-important art history fields. The entire series is now being reissued by Yale University Press in a large format and with greatly enhanced illustrations. This volume has a fine introduction, copious new notes, and bibliography by Crossley, who succeeds in bringing Frankl up to date, and bringing us back to the art historical universe in which he lived and worked.

Frankl's life encapsulates time past and the intellectual past of a discipline. Born in Prague in 1878, he studied with Wölfflin in Munich, was a professor in Halle, dismissed by the Nazis and, in time, invited, like the more famous Erwin Panofsky, to the





Institute for Advanced Study in Princeton. He died in 1962 on the day after he finished this book.

He conceived his topic in pan-European rather than national terms: church architecture in Europe from Ireland to Italy, from Portugal to Poland, and stretching for four hundred years from about 1100 to 1500. This is exemplary. But while the coverage was broad, his address to it might now seem narrow. Style not context was his concern, though he did not flinch from pondering the relationship between the two.

Frankl was a genius at attending to and describing the visual characteristics of Gothic churches. For this alone the text is a wonderful read. He combined great and unequalled empirical knowledge with skill at visual analysis. But, against current taste, it was Frankl's historicist assumptions (Hegelian, as they are here a bit loosely referred to) that provided the rationale for the close looking and heightened describing that have not been matched since.

The brilliance of Crossley's edition is to make one realize that the problem of establishing a basis for visual attention to architecture is still with us. The brilliance of Frankl's text is as an instance of highly educated looking.

By Anna J. Schwartz

**The Elusive Quest for Growth: Economists' Adventures and Misadventures in the Tropics.** William Easterly. MIT, 2001. \$29.95.

In this engaging book, the author, a World Bank adviser, illustrates the reasons, with examples drawn from the experiences of poor tropical countries, for the failure of programs that economists have advocated to raise their standards of living. Aid, investment, education, population control, adjustment lending, debt forgiveness, each in turn boomeranged. The programs failed in the author's view because poor people, their governments, and the donors lacked the right incentives to turn poverty into development.

Getting incentives right for governments, donors, and people isn't easy,

the author notes, but he believes that four decades of experience have taught economists what worked and what didn't, and they have developed some new insights into growth.

The new insights explain both why growth sometimes occurs and sometimes fails. Future high income is a powerful incentive for growth, but bad luck and initial poverty can trap the poor. Buzzwords introduced by the new view are *leaks*, *matches*, *traps*, and *increasing returns*. Investment in knowledge leaks from one person to another and reaches its potential when high-skilled individuals match with each other. The more existing knowledge there is, the higher is the return to each new bit of knowledge, so there are increasing returns to investment in knowledge.

Low-skilled people, however, can get left out of the process and stuck in a trap. A country can get stuck in a trap from which there is no escape when there is no incentive to invest in knowledge because the little knowledge there earns a low rate of return. A feature of traps is that expectations offer a way out of the trap. If everyone believed that others would invest in knowledge, everyone would do so and thus reach a skill level above the poverty threshold. Poverty persists because markets don't coordinate expectations, but governments, if their bad policies are not themselves the cause of the trap, can subsidize all forms of knowledge and capital accumulation, to get an economy out of a trap.

Governments, therefore, can be the problem rather than the solution if they create incentives that destroy economies and free markets through bad policies or corruption. Governments that act in the interest of a particular class or ethnic group may choose destructive policies. Acting in the interest of the nation requires governments to supply health, education, and infrastructure services.

The author reserves his comments on the incentives of donors until the final pages of his book. The IMF and the World Bank left to themselves, he writes, may reward bureaucrats for the act of making loans directed to the

Mobutus of this world, to justify next year's aid budget, rather than the act of helping the poor in each country. He proposes publicly visible "aid contests" in which governments vie for loans from a common pool that will help the poor the most.

By Robert Sonkowsky

**A Bishop's Tale: Mathias Hovius Among His Flock in Seventeenth Century Flanders.** Craig Harline and Eddy Put. Yale, 2000. \$27.95.

**The Burdens of Sister Margaret: Inside a Seventeenth-Century Convent.** Abridged edition. Craig Harline. Yale, 2000. \$12.95.

Both of these books are as absorbing and digestible as novels, but both are also works of professional scholarship. The second is more gracefully written. The delightful page-turning force of both derives primarily from their authors' excitement in biographical discovery and narration.

Harline and Put describe in an afterword how they found the final and only surviving volume of the day-book kept by Mathias Hovius, archbishop of Mechelen in the state of Brabant in the Netherlands from 1596 to 1620. This document and many others enabled them over many years to lay out his intriguing story, with its many complex turns of plot, problems, defeats, victories, so that one is entertained as well as educated about details of the history and the mores of the age of church reformation.

The second book is based primarily on the letters of the nuns of the convent Bethlehem in Leuven, which was in Hovius's archbishopric; but Margaret's career as a young nun from 1604 to 1616 is not well documented and the care and handling of her later travails were rarely noticed at the top of the hierarchy. Her fascinating story reveals the human side of convent life amid and against the rules of cloistering. The scholarship is judicious.



## Letters to the Editor

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 11

Ms. Ness describes well the difficult lives of her students, large classes, and inadequate administrative support as reasons for leaving the teaching profession. But where in her article does she question the inadequacy of her Teach For America training as a possible reason that she will not remain as a classroom teacher? It is surprising that she does not question the basic premise of Teach For America: that very brief training of well-educated middle to upper middle-class college graduates for difficult inner city schools will help solve the crisis in urban education.

There is something inherently racist and classist in the Teach For America program. There are few suburban or middle-class city school districts which would entertain putting novices with

little training into classrooms. Few middle-class parents would tolerate their children being placed with an unskilled (albeit broadly educated) new teacher with little knowledge of classroom management, on-going diagnosis and evaluation of learning, adjustments for special education needs, pacing and adjusting lessons. I doubt that few parents of the Teach For America candidates would have accepted that kind of teacher.

"Rich Kids in Marin County don't attend schools like this" Molly Ness writes. To that statement, I would add "Rich kids in Marin County don't attend school where new teachers have so little training for working successfully with difficult classrooms." Only when we demand well-educated, specifically trained teachers for all students will educational equity be achieved.

Anita Page, South Hadley, MA

The premise of Teach For America appears to be that some children don't learn because the "best and the brightest" aren't going into teaching. Therefore, the Teach For America recruits, after having had only six weeks of training, will come in to show the way. This tends to discount people who may be second or third generation teachers, who have known from their childhoods that they wanted to be teachers, have spent four to six years to learn their craft in order to achieve this status, and have dedicated their lives (not just two years of it) to public education. Now that Ms. Ness has met some of the problems and frustrations that "ordinary teachers" face, she realizes that in addition to overcrowded schools with inadequate facilities and materials, students' social and learning problems are often insurmountable.

Instead of engaging in the national pastime of blaming the teachers when children don't learn or can't behave, the public must realize that the greatest responsibility for children must be assumed by their families. Those of us who are in it for the long run know that the schools can't substitute for mothers and fathers, who are good role models of respect for others and love of learning. Due to breakdowns in American families, parents may not have the skills and capabilities to assume proper caretaking for generations to come. Nevertheless, until ownership of the problem is rightfully designated, no meaningful changes can take place.

Ina Winick, Hastings-on-Hudson, NY

Ms. Ness's departure from teaching is a sad commentary on urban American education today. Her story underscores the lack of proper teacher training and the lack of value placed on pupils and teachers. Ms. Ness also points out the severe social and economic problems that are prevalent in schools today.

The idea that anyone can teach is false. Teaching is an art that should be supported by a realistic training program, not only in class management, but in methods and strategies that establish a teacher's proficiency. It is

CONTINUED ON PAGE 15

### Phi Beta Kappa Pens, Rings, Wall Display

As part of its expanded line of membership items bearing the Phi Beta Kappa insignia, the Society offers pens, signet rings and a popular wall display. Each of the heavy gold-plated pens comes with a medium blue ball-point Cross-style insert and is engraved with the member's name, chapter and year of election. The pen is also available with a matching mechanical pencil, as a set. The 10-karat gold signet rings are available in two styles. The ring gauge printed below can be cut out and wrapped around the finger you wish to measure. The wall display combines a membership certificate and a large gold-plated key in 12 x 16 inch walnut frame.

To order, complete the form below and mail it with your payment and a copy of your mailing label from the back cover showing your  $\Phi$ BK membership number to Hand & Hammer, 2610 Morse Lane, Woodbridge, VA 22192. You may place an order or request the complete product brochure by calling (703) 491-4866 or by faxing (703) 491-2031. You may order online at [www.hand-hammer.com](http://www.hand-hammer.com).

- \_\_\_ Phi Beta Kappa pen & mechanical pencil, gold plate...\$ 64
- \_\_\_ Phi Beta Kappa pen, gold plate.....\$ 32
- \_\_\_ Large signet ring (available only in sizes 8,9,10,11)....\$195
- \_\_\_ Small signet ring (available only in sizes 4,5,6,7).....\$150
- \_\_\_ Custom half sizing.....\$ 25
- \_\_\_ Wall display (key and certificate framed 12"x16").....\$ 79

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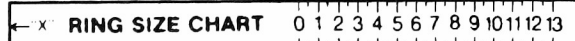
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also evident that one does not become a teacher overnight.

In addition, one realizes the need for ethical and knowledgeable administrators who support teachers in their efforts to educate youngsters. Ms. Ness's supervisors took advantage of her and created an untenable situation. It is to her credit that she persisted for two years. Even a veteran teacher would have had a tough time.

It is sad that children will not have Ms. Ness as their teacher. Perhaps, Teach For America, other "quickie" training programs, and yes, many universities ought to restructure their thinking before they sacrifice well-meaning volunteers and the children they are supposed to be helping. It would also be beneficial if American citizenry recognized that a good education does not come without a price.

*Shirley R. Finkelstein, Cresskill, NJ*

## Of Majors and Missions

In "Phi Beta Kappa Launches Honor Society Alliance," [Summer 2001] it is stated that the "goal of the Alliance . . . is to counter the increasing numbers of students who elect to enter career-training programs rather than pursue undergraduate degrees in the liberal arts".

Do we really want to "counter" these students? Similar to the desire to "counter" pollution or "counter" communism?

More generally, the quoted statement in my view reflects very badly on all involved in it. What is the definition of "career-training programs"? Engineering, science, mathematics, medicine, nursing? Do you really want to discourage students from going into these areas? What about, heaven forbid, a student who follows a liberal arts program and uses what he/she has learned to build a career as a museum curator, teacher, political scientist, novelist, or psychologist?

I don't think Phi Beta Kappa should be "countering" or discouraging any student from going into any program of studies. Instead, Phi Beta Kappa



*The D.C. Area Phi Beta Kappa Association sponsored a reception in October on Capitol Hill, hosted by Sen. Richard Lugar (R-Ind.), a ΦBK Fellow. Lugar, left, with association president Eddie Eitches, addressed the group, which included many recent ΦBK graduates.*

should be helping young people who are not in college to go to college.

Another "take" on what you are trying to say is this: Maybe what you are saying is that you want people to study liberal arts for four years before going into a "career-oriented" program. This approach is impractical on two grounds: the cost of the total studies program becomes overwhelming; the tremendous length of the studies program may wear people out before they can complete it.

Another unfortunate statement in the article tells us that we are "channeling more and more of our brightest students into the narrow field of technology". I don't think Phi Beta Kappa should take the position of belittling any field of study as "narrow". Phi Beta Kappa officials may be forgetting who their constituents are. I am not aware that only liberal arts students receive Phi Beta Kappa keys.

The statement also belittles students who have chosen liberal arts. The statement implies that liberal arts students are students who could not get into technology programs or failed out of them.

Phi Beta Kappa should be "building bridges" to students in "career-oriented" programs and encouraging them to take a liberal arts course each term. As an engineer, I am one of your "nar-

row" people but I still remember very well, after over 40 years, the excellent liberal arts courses I took, including modern European literature, history of architecture, and others.

*Edward J. Farkas, Toronto, Canada*

## **The Key Reporter asked Douglas W. Foard, former ΦBK secretary, to respond to Edward Farkas:**

In the almost 12 years that I served as the Society's secretary, I attended many initiation ceremonies, and, indeed, observed that some engineering, computer science, and even business majors earned the right to wear Phi Beta Kappa's key. They are, however, exceptional students because in addition to the demanding requirements of such majors, they also met the Society's standard of at least 90 hours of liberal arts courses. In several of these instances, those students had either carried a terrific overload of courses to become eligible for membership or extended their undergraduate studies beyond the traditional four years.

As we will all be reminded by our 225th anniversary celebrations at Williamsburg, Phi Beta Kappa has always been about the freedom and breadth of inquiry. To borrow Linda Pratt's words [*Academe*, November-December 1994] once more: "These

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## Letters to the Editor

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are the objectives of liberal education, and though they may not seem to sell well in the marketplace, they are in the end the best collateral we have to secure the future."

### That Cartoon Critique

I am a retired professor of surgery and pediatrics, and I'd like to twit my fellow  $\Phi$ BK [quoted in the introduction to "Some Philosophical Thoughts about Jokes," Summer 2001] for being so exercised over a cartoon which depicted a physician as buffoon.

Those born with traits they can't change, and others with less obvious traits that they honor and won't change, rightfully resent "ethnic jokes". But we medical educators must bear the odium of having irresponsibly loosed on the world the twerps who place golf, womanizing, money or whatever before their calling and so make a joke of our profession.

Until we oust the on-call neurosurgeon who finished his paddle tennis before he came in to treat an extradural hematoma, we professors haven't finished our job. We've no right to call foul as long as episodes such as this one, from my own experience, continue to occur. Sputtering about a cartoon only attacks the messenger. We should direct our wrath against the yahoos who practice a third-rate sort of engineering rather than medicine.

A medical school recruited me from private practice to assume a double professorship in a burgeoning new compound discipline. Prior to making the move, I had hung only two essential certificates in my office. When I first set up in the new place, I propped



these on a bookcase until my suitemate called attention to his handsomely mounted nine diplomas and prestigious fellowships. There was an order of blimpiness based on such wallpaper. To prick [my colleagues'] balloons, I brought the four 'honoraries' ( $\Phi$ BK etc.) from home and eleven more hard-earned certificates from my files, making seventeen in all. The result was gratifying: I became top blimp. But I was soon shot down by a radiologist who posted only seven, but the elaborately framed centerpiece of his lot was a gaudy certificate for excellence in penmanship in the fifth grade.

*Charles Klippel, Paxton, Mass.*

I found the quote from the Phi Beta Kappa alumnus of the University of Pennsylvania regarding the *Key Reporter's* Spring 2001 cartoon unsettling.

Since high school, I have admired and respected Phi Beta Kappa. In

1993, I earned the right to wear its key. I remain a sustaining member and look upon my election as one of my greatest achievements. However, I place my membership in Phi Beta Kappa in proper perspective. I do not associate any elitist status with the key, nor do I encourage such thoughts in others. At various functions while I attended law school, I would wear the key on my tie simply because I liked the way it looks (I still do).

The inability to find humor in the cartoon conveys to me an elitist state of mind. As in, "I am a physician AND a PHI BETA KAPPA member . . . how dare you poke fun at me or anyone like me." Both in law school and now professionally, people feel a need to share lawyer jokes with me. And you know what? I like them. I usually have the ability to top them with some of my own.

*Thomas R. Graham, Greenfield, MA*

### THE KEY REPORTER

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