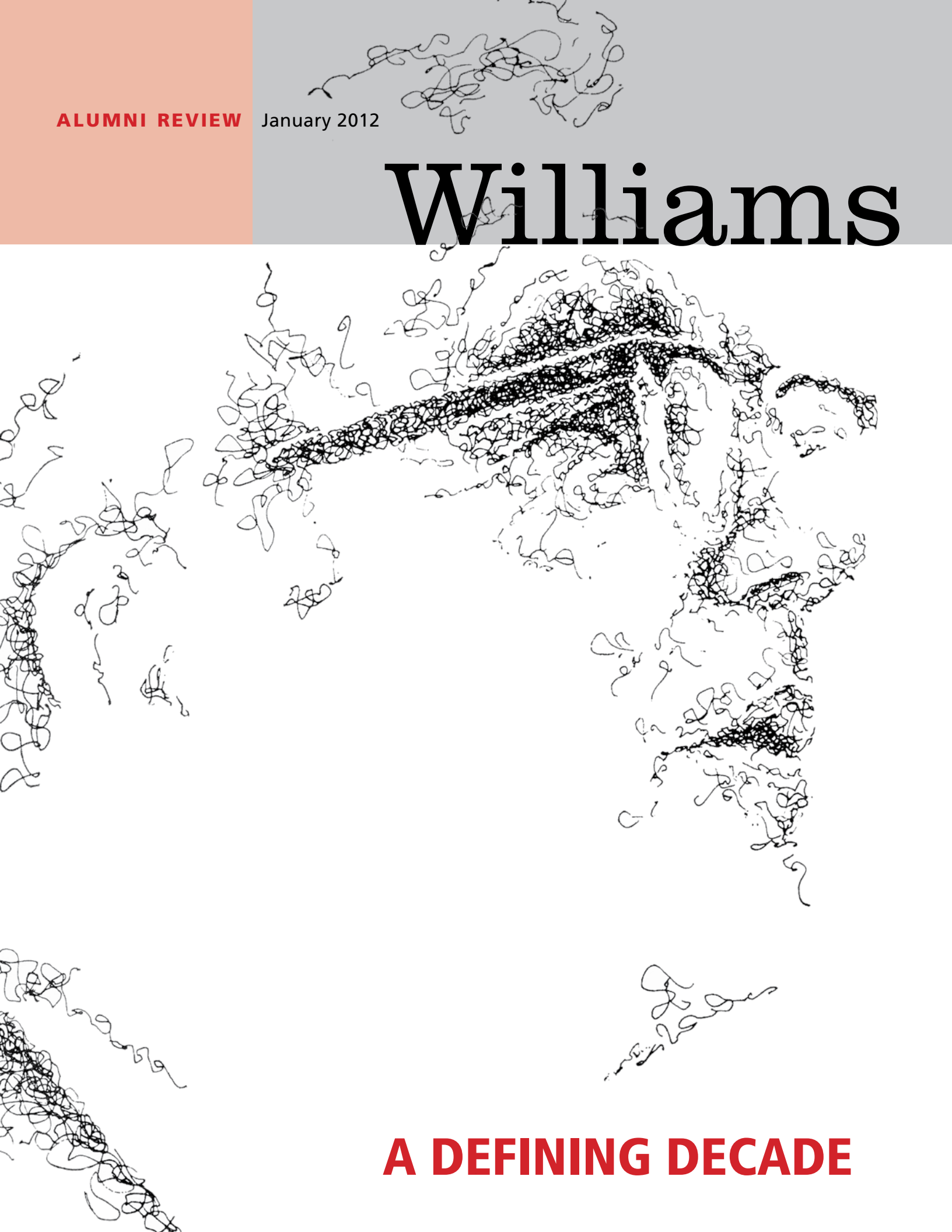


ALUMNI REVIEW

January 2012

Williams



A DEFINING DECADE



ALUMNI REVIEW

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departments

Opinions & Expressions

President Adam Falk discusses expectations and change. ...

Letters from readers.

4

Scene & Herd

News of Williams and beyond.

6

Life of the Mind

Renowned author and visiting professor Aminatta Forna "reads" Africa. ... Nashville's Marcus Hummon '84 tells stories through music. ... English professor Lawrence Raab explains how to notice a poem.

26



12



30



26



22

Williams

features

January 2012

A Sense of Self

How the liberal arts shaped the life of Bicentennial Medalist Navjeet K. Bal '84.

9

A Defining Decade

Historian Michael Beschloss '77 and President Emeritus John Chandler discuss the leadership of Jack Sawyer.

12

The Red Jacket

Piecing together an artifact of Williams history.

20

Community Roots

Twenty percent of Northern Berkshire households have limited access to nutritious food. Michael Gallagher '06 and his Square Roots Farm are helping to change that.

22

On the cover

President Jack Sawyer
1972 portrait by George Rebh '73

Go to back cover



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On Expectations and Change

by President Adam Falk

As the legacy of legendary professor Bob Gaudino reminds us, learning is often most powerful in times of discomfort and even pain.

I'm reminded of that as the Williams community has been responding to the discovery of a horrible, racist message on a wall inside Prospect House. Photos of the events that followed, along with directions to fuller coverage, are on p. 7.

As the investigation into that incident continues, the college is engaged in serious conversations about larger campus issues

and social challenges, having learned more fully in the wake of this one act the extent to which instances of discrimination happen here, as they do everywhere.

We have seen a powerful and thoughtful response among a broad cross-section of students, faculty, staff, alumni and parents, and I've benefited from the resulting deeper sense of the college's cultural evolution over the past half century.

We at Williams expect a great deal from each other and from this place, and we do not shirk from holding ourselves to higher standards than we see in our society at large. When our expectations aren't met, it rightfully upsets us. We know racism exists in America, and we know race is an issue that's too rarely talked about honestly and productively. But that's not what we want for Williams. Our aim, as I said in my remarks at an all-campus forum Nov. 14, is a Williams community that is free of racism, free of sexism, free of homophobia, free of fear. There's nothing we can aspire to that is more important to who we are and to what Williams is. The idea, of course, is not only to create that community on campus but also to foster in all of our students the sense that

they can then go out into the world and make it a better place. That is how Williams, over time and over generations, brings change to society as a whole. I'm confident that by harnessing our currently heightened energy we'll effect a more rapid evolution of our college culture toward the day when the slights and injustices we've learned about recently are things of the past. The work of fully realizing the community we aspire to is urgent, but for all our commitment, history teaches us that the realization of our goals will be neither quick nor easy.

Our college's evolution, especially over the last half-century, has been defined in large part by this kind of community-driven leadership. In fact, today's Williams was shaped tremendously by a string of fundamental and farsighted college decisions over several years, beginning in the early 1960s, that led Williams to:

- increase in size by 50 percent
- begin to admit women and to diversify the student body by race, ethnicity and religion
- overhaul the curriculum and
- move from a fraternity-based to a house-based system of residential life.

We intend to celebrate these 50-year anniversaries, as befits a college, with scrutiny and analysis.

We've begun by asking historian Michael Beschloss '77 to interview President Emeritus John Chandler, who as dean of the faculty and then as a Williams board member was a central eyewitness to these times. Their conversation (beginning on p. 12) focuses on the leadership style of Jack Sawyer, who served as president during those years.

It's clear, though, that changes of this size were not the work of one person; many people and factors played roles. Over the next few years we'll have conversations on campus and in these pages that explore the broader social context, the campus dynamic and the individual people and processes that came to bear.

Understanding more deeply these important parts of our past will inform the essential work we do together now to help Williams continually evolve to meet the future.



JUSTIN KNIGHT

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LETTERS

Bethany McLean '92 ("Devils in the Details," September 2011) is trying to wake Americans up to what is being done to our country. Something is profoundly wrong when so much wealth is directed into speculation and asset capture instead of real asset creation. We have forgotten that the economy is a tool, a set of organizing principles enforced with laws, to provide the Utilitarian "greatest good for the greatest number." Instead, we made it a god, a Moloch to which we sacrifice the old, the young, the weak, the ill, the poor, to feed its insatiable maw. Laws can be changed and the economy returned to servitude instead of rapacious mastery. This is the task of our generation. Bethany and courageous folk like her are showing the way.

—Ron Hodges '80, Montgomery Village, Md.

During my time at Williams I was often surprised by how limited the institutional memory of students, myself included, could be. Because much of what we knew about our school was what we had witnessed, I wondered if we were leaving with only a thin, blurry concept of the world we'd been so fortunate to inhabit. Then a story like "One More Huddle" (September 2011) comes along. Reading about how Mike Reily's '64 retired number cropped up in a grubby box in Cole Field House nearly 50 years after his death, kindling a reunion

details

among his dispersed classmates, I was struck: What an unexpected reminder that, even if as students we were too distracted by the demands of the day to notice, we walked among what legends left behind. Packed in among the accoutrements of the everyday are signs, like Mike's jerseys, of lives well lived. I'd look forward to reading more stories like this that rise from the college's dusty corners, reminding us of Williams at its best.

—Amanda Korman '10, Pittsfield, Mass.

Mike Reily '64 was the president of Alpha Delta Phi when I joined and when he was clearly ill. I was unfortunate that I did not get to know him better; nonetheless I was impressed that he carried himself with quiet dignity. I want to share the information that Hodgkin's disease is today highly curable in greater than 80 percent of the cases. The overwhelming likelihood is that today Mike would have been cured to go on to play further games and live a full life.

—David Harrison '66, M.D., Loomis, Calif.

Jay Pasachoff's wonderful article in the September 2011 issue ("9 Things You Should Know About Our Universe") made me wish I were back in his class at Williams. Thank you, Professor Pasachoff, for keeping us looking at the sky!

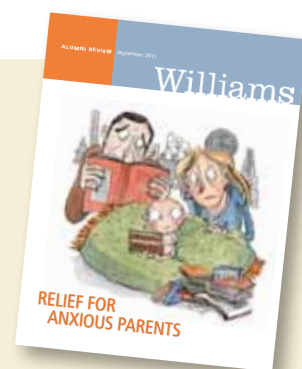
—David Wagner '86, Boston, Mass.

community

In "The Community We Aspire to Be" (June 2011), President Falk notes the greater diversity of students and that neither diversity nor tolerance alone are enough. He says the College's "mission to prepare leaders must surely include engaging students with the diverse society they will graduate to serve." Left unanswered though, is how.

Neither study abroad nor community service programs are enough. Falk's goals echo those of Professor Robert Gaudino and Presidents Sawyer and Chandler more than 40 years ago. Gaudino developed rigorous off-campus home- and work-stay programs outside students' comfort zones—to not just have experience but also to use it to move to greater understanding, motivation and empathy. After working

letters continue on next page



The Williams Alumni Review welcomes letters relating to articles or items that have appeared in recent issues of the magazine. Please email comments to alumni.review@williams.edu or send them to the Alumni Review, P.O. Box 676, Williamstown, MA 01267-0676. Letters may be edited for clarity and space.

letters continued from previous page

five years with Williams students in a Gaudino-esque Winter Study project called “Resettling Refugees in Maine,” I am convinced that in a campus and world more diverse, connected and wired than when we were born, ironically there is a greater need to push away from TV, computer and PDA screens and to get outside our comfort zones—to actively listen to and learn from

people, ideas and situations very different from ours. Offering rigorous Gaudino-esque projects off campus is one tool to maximize the benefits of community and diversity.

—Jeff Thaler '74, Yarmouth, Maine

I am glad to see that informal Williams singing groups are flourishing (“Eph Cappella,” June 2011). But the sidebar assumed

song

there were no such groups in the 1950s. To the contrary, the Williams Octet continued its concerts, drawing members from the more formally organized Williams College Choir and the Williams Glee Club. The Octet continued in the Hunke tradition and used some of his arrangements when singing before the Society of Alumni and other audiences.

—William S. Dudley '58, Easton, Md.



SPENCER ELECTED PRESIDENT OF BATES

A. Clayton Spencer '77, who has served on the Williams College board of trustees since 2003, was elected president of Bates College in December. Spencer currently serves as vice president for policy at Harvard University and has worked for four Harvard presidents to shape key initiatives over the past 15 years. She also was chief education counsel to the U.S. Senate Committee on Labor and Human Resources, working for the late Sen. Edward M. Kennedy. In 1997 she received a Bicentennial Medal from Williams for her achievement in the field of education policy. Spencer will begin her tenure as Bates' eighth president on July 1.

BIG THINKING

On Nov. 1, the campus was treated to another installment of the Williams Thinking lecture series. Questions explored by faculty this time around were:

WHAT WAS THE GREATEST REVOLUTION?

The Iranian revolution “brought back religion as an entity, as a force to be reckoned with in politics and in government. ... It changed how we fight wars. ... [It] really brought religion into the battlefield and convinced people to fight differently than people had essentially fought before.” —*Magnus Bernhardsson, history professor and chair of international studies, speaking about “The Greatest Revolution”*

HOW DOES LANGUAGE INFLUENCE ART?

“These images are beautiful and powerful, however the language of the time refers to these ... as savage, as primitive, as barbaric. ... As an artist who is falling in love with the beauty of these images, I am struggling ... to find a place in my heart to allow them to live and ... instruct me as to why [Herman Rosse] was attracted

to the same ... depiction of the black body in motion and space and time that, as a dancer, I am perpetually in love with and inspired by.” —*Sandra Burton, Lipp Family Director of Dance, referring to materials in Chapin Library’s Rosse archive, in her talk “Quarreling with Herman Rosse”*

WHY DOES MATH STILL MATTER?

“Find the surprises. Find the fallible flags. Identify underlying relations causing these senses of surprise. ... Then you’re starting to really take seriously that mathematics might be the structure of the universe, which I secretly believe, even though I don’t know what those words mean.” —*Thomas Garrity, William R. Kenan Jr. Professor of Mathematics, speaking about “Truth = Math = Beauty”*

Watch video of the series at www.williams.edu/williamsthinking

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JUAN BAENA '06

FROM HURT COMES HOPE

In the days following the discovery of a racist and violent message scrawled on a wall inside Prospect House, more than 1,000 students, faculty and staff came together to support each other and work toward building a stronger, more inclusive community. The crime was still under investigation by Campus Safety and Security, Williamstown Police and the FBI as of December. Meanwhile classes and athletic practices were canceled Nov. 14 to make room for a series of student-led events as well as an all-campus meeting, held on Chapin Lawn, at which President Adam Falk, other administrators and students spoke in response to the incident. For links to photos and video from the day, as well as more details about the incident, visit <http://bit.ly/uhkn3v>.

CHOMSKY LEADS OFF PUBLIC AFFAIRS FORUM

Is there such a thing as humanitarian



intervention? It's a question public intellectual and activist Noam Chomsky pondered during a September lecture that packed the '62 Center for Theatre and Dance's MainStage. Humanitarian

intervention, Chomsky argued, has become inherently political, rarely carried out without ulterior motives. In the past,

he said, the argument was that it "was necessary to carry out the interventions so that the world would be safe." Yet by 1990, "the pretext was gone."

Chomsky led off a series of lectures in the fall that were part of the Class of '71 Public Affairs Forum, which explores humanitarian issues and action. Other featured speakers were Anat Biletzki, a well-known Israeli peace activist; Mike Wilson, a Native American human-rights activist; and Fiona Terry, noted for her work with Doctors Without Borders and the International Committee of the Red Cross.

Chomsky's talk "Getting it Right" can be viewed at <http://bit.ly/s0Lhap>.

READING "FUN HOME"

Over Winter Study, students, faculty and staff are exploring Alison Bechdel's award-winning graphic memoir, *Fun Home: A Family Tragicomic*, for Williams Reads, now in its sixth year. Check out <http://bit.ly/wmsreads> for a full schedule of lectures, discussions and other events related to the book.



RACE TO FIRST PLACE

Cross country runner Chiara Del Piccolo '14 finished the 2011 season with the Div. III NCAA Cross Country Championship title and a 6-kilometer time of 20:52.08. But Del Piccolo didn't begin the season as the number-one Eph. In fact, over the last year she's improved from 55th in the nation to number one.



KRIS DUFOUR

Del Piccolo says she doesn't attribute her success to "any one thing" but tries to "do a lot of little things, like lifting and general strength exercises in addition to running." She also has a few non-traditional training methods that no doubt had an impact on her speedy rise to the top, including:

- Massaging her leg muscles with a PVC pipe;
- Staying relaxed before races by relying on routines, including doing organic chemistry problem sets, which, she says, are "particularly useful for staying focused";
- Training with the men's cross country team once per week;
- Maintaining a competitive edge as a year-round, three-sport athlete (indoor and outdoor track & field). In her first indoor track appearance of the season, at Smith College in December, she recorded a time of 16:57.98—second fastest ever for Williams—automatically qualifying her for the NCAA Div. III Championships.

For details on Del Piccolo's season and accomplishments, visit <http://bit.ly/delpiccolo>. For the latest sports news and standings visit <http://athletics.williams.edu>.

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Looking for books, CDs and DVDs by Williams alumni and faculty? Visit <http://ephsbookshelf.williams.edu>. To have your recent work listed, please send information and cover images to alumni.review@williams.edu or mail a copy to the *Alumni Review*, P.O. Box 676, Williamstown, MA 01267-0676.



FURTHER AFIELD

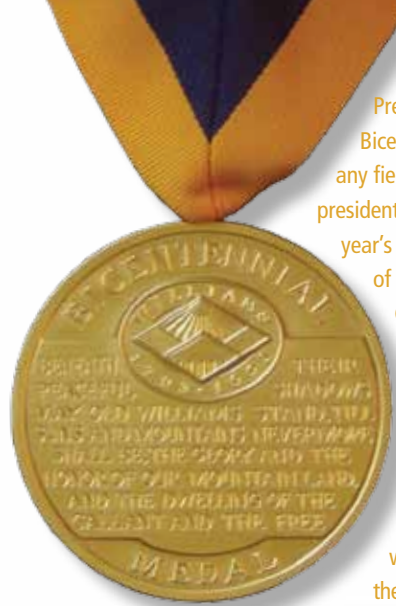
Williams professors in the news

Blacks were taught in their homes, churches and schools how to handle discrimination from whites—"how they had to be quiet, how to talk back with their eyes, how to resist or to fight back without actually raising a hand or raising their voices," history professor [Leslie Brown](#) says in a Nov. 25 [National Public Radio](#) interview discussing her work on Duke University's "Behind the Veil," considered the [world's largest collection of Jim Crow-era oral histories](#). Meanwhile, Brown's book *Living with Jim Crow: African American Women and Memories of the Segregated South* won the 2011 Oral History Association biennial book award in October.

"Rather than trying to attract the very rich, it might be more helpful to encourage middle class families to move to a poor neighborhood and [hope that genuine social interaction and sustainable integration occurs](#)," says economics professor [Tara Watson](#) in a Nov. 22 [Kansas City Star](#) article about the push for gentrification by Cincinnati city leaders.

Powerful storm waves, not tsunamis triggered by earthquakes, are the likely explanation behind the inland movement of massive boulders along the rugged coast of Ireland's Aran Islands, geosciences professor [Ronadh Cox](#) says in an [MSNBC](#) interview on Nov. 8. "[The waves can just climb these cliffs in amazing ways.](#)"

In a Sept. 21 [Columbia Journalism Review](#) article about how [audience reaction distorts political debates](#), psychology professor [Steven Fein](#) says cheers, applause and other favorable responses "can suggest to the audience [watching at home] that there is much more consensus about a particular point than there really is."



Presented to alumni during Convocation Weekend, Bicentennial Medals celebrate distinguished achievement in any field of endeavor. In a panel discussion led by Chris Giglio '89, president of the Executive Committee of the Society of Alumni, this year's five medalists shared their life experiences with members of the Williams community. Pictured below (from left) are Giglio; Frederick Rudolph '42, a celebrated historian of American undergraduate education; Michael F. Roizen '67, chief wellness officer at the Cleveland Clinic; Wilfred Chabrier '77, general manager of tunnels and bridges for the Port Authority of N.Y. and N.J.; Navjeet K. Bal '84, until recently commissioner of revenue for the Commonwealth of Massachusetts; and Bethany McLean '92, financial writer and *Vanity Fair* contributing editor. Watch videos of all the medalists at <http://alumni-awards.williams.edu/>

“Leave this place better than how we found it.”

That's how Navjeet K. Bal '84 summed up her guiding philosophy—over the course of a life spanning several continents and careers—during a presentation with fellow Williams Bicentennial Medalists on campus in September. When she learned that the college had selected her for the honor, which celebrates distinguished achievement in “any field of endeavor,” Bal, a public finance lawyer who spent three years as Massachusetts' commissioner of revenue, said she initially struggled to define what her chosen field is.

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On the following pages, in an excerpt from her talk, Bal shares how the process of defining her life's work got her “thinking about this award, about my Williams education, my professional life and how it all fits together.” *Read on...*





A SENSE OF SELF

My favorite reaction when I told Williams alums about this [award] came from my brother ... Teji '86, now a successful physician at the Cleveland Clinic. His reaction was, "Congratulations, Sis. That's great. What exactly *is* your chosen field of endeavor?" Which I thought was a very valid question.

I started out life in Nakuru, Kenya ... and we moved to England, where my brother was born. We lived in Ethiopia for a couple of years and then Zambia. I moved to this country right before I

started high school, to Syracuse, N.Y. So I started Williams at the age of 16 ... and I was really just beginning to figure out what it meant to be an American. I'd been in this country for about five years. I actually became a U.S. citizen after my freshman year in college. For the first time in my life, my citizenship was aligned with the country I was living in. Williams' liberal arts education was a great, great luxury. My parents, who grew up in post-colonial India and Kenya—for them education was really



Clockwise from left: Speaking at Williams during Convocation Weekend; playing with a lion cub in Gondar, the former capital of Ethiopia (where she lived with her mother, father (pictured, left) and brother Teji (right) from 1969-71); Victoria Falls in Zambia, where Bal and her family moved in 1971.

the means to an end in both medicine and teaching. They entered those colleges when they were still teenagers.

The great luxury of my Williams education ... is that it was a four-year period of intellectual growth and personal development. I learned how to think, how to ask questions and how to engage in public discourse. And on a more visceral level, the college's intellectual and educational history has become a part of my sense of self. Having the imprimatur of a Williams education and all that it implies has been my passport ... to becoming a part of American society, to being accepted and welcomed into a particular slice of American culture, and it really is the foundation on which I have constructed a sense of place, a sense of belonging and

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Learning also took place in the many, many activist groups that I gravitated toward in my junior and senior years. ... I learned leadership skills, the art of conciliation and the importance of taking a stand for one's principles. In the early 1980s ... the campus issue was divestment from South Africa, and I joined the Williams anti-apartheid club. Between meetings and educating myself about South African politics and history, I fell in love with my best friend and husband-to-be, Eric Fernald '83.

I graduated from Williams with a B.A. in philosophy and a minor in African studies. I went to law school and started working at a large law firm in Boston (Mintz Levin), stayed there for 17 years working as a bond lawyer, which I loved because it gave me a chance to work with public sector and nonprofit clients including Williams. ... It was a great career.

At Mintz Levin, I co-founded the firm's domestic violence project as a first-

year attorney. We trained lawyers and paralegals to provide legal representation to indigent women who were trying to obtain restraining orders against their abusers. We worked closely with Greater Boston Legal Services and other law firms in town to put that program together. That was back in 1989. That program

is still the signature pro bono effort of Mintz Levin, and it's still going strong today. ... I'm on the board of LARC (the Legal Advocacy Resource Center), a legal services hotline, as a point of entry for poor people trying to access legal services in Greater Boston. I was appointed by the Massachusetts Supreme Judicial Court to the Access to Justice Commission, tasked with assessing the delivery of legal services in Massachusetts. I was on the Gaudino Fund here at Williams. I'm on

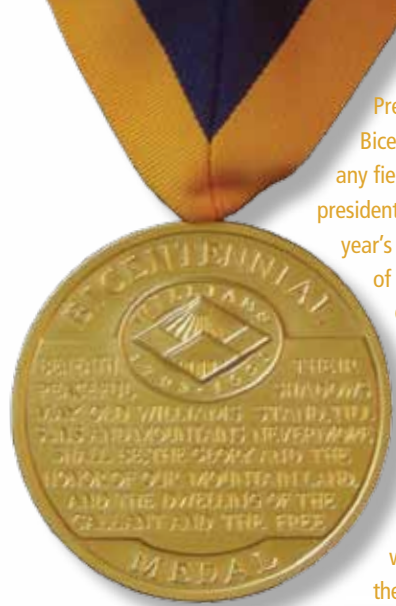
the South Asian Bar Association Board in Boston and the Lawyers' Committee for Civil Rights, and I'm now on the Boston Bar Association Council.

So what does that all mean? What is my chosen field of endeavor? How does it all fit together? It came to me earlier this week as I was obsessing about this presentation. I was at a meeting with Governor Patrick, and in response to a question, he said, "You know, at the end of the day, we just want to leave this place better than how we found it." Now that doesn't seem like a terribly complicated goal, but I think in this case, simplicity really helps. Just leave this place better than how you found it. That's really an excellent summary of what my liberal arts education has been for me. It's given me the tools and the hunger to leave this world a better place than it was before. So perhaps, Teji, *that's* my chosen field of endeavor.

Navjeet K. Bal '84 joined the law firm Nixon Peabody's public infrastructure and finance divisions in Boston last fall after three years as Massachusetts commissioner of revenue.



Bal, receiving a Bicentennial Medal from Williams President Adam Falk, at convocation Sept. 10.



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is still the signature pro bono effort of Mintz Levin, and it's still going strong today. ... I'm on the board of LARC (the Legal Advocacy Resource Center), a legal services hotline, as a point of entry for poor people trying to access legal services in Greater Boston. I was appointed by the Massachusetts Supreme Judicial Court to the Access to Justice Commission, tasked with assessing the delivery of legal services in Massachusetts. I was on the Gaudino Fund here at Williams. I'm on


the South Asian Bar Association Board in Boston and the Lawyers' Committee for Civil Rights, and I'm now on the Boston Bar Association Council.

So what does that all mean? What is my chosen field of endeavor? How does it all fit together? It came to me earlier this week as I was obsessing about this presentation. I was at a meeting with Governor Patrick, and in response to a question, he said, "You know, at the end of the day, we just want to leave this place better than how we found it." Now that doesn't seem like a terribly complicated goal, but I think in this case, simplicity really helps. Just leave this place better than how you found it. That's really an excellent summary of what my liberal arts education has been for me. It's given me the tools and the hunger to leave this world a better place than it was before. So perhaps, Teji, *that's* my chosen field of endeavor.

Navjeet K. Bal '84 joined the law firm Nixon Peabody's public infrastructure and finance divisions in Boston last fall after three years as Massachusetts commissioner of revenue.



Bal, receiving a Bicentennial Medal from Williams President Adam Falk, at convocation Sept. 10.

A photograph of two men in suits walking on a paved path outdoors. The man on the left is younger, with dark hair, wearing a dark suit and a blue tie. The man on the right is older, with white hair and glasses, wearing a dark suit and a striped tie. They are both looking towards the right. In the background, there are green trees and a brick building with white columns.

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A Defining Decade

A conversation about Jack Sawyer's Williams presidency with his successor and friend, John Chandler.

Introduction and Interview by Michael Beschloss '77

When my classmates and I arrived in Williamstown in September 1973, we took for granted certain aspects of college life. Fraternities were no longer the center of residential life. Williams was coeducational. Its curriculum was cutting edge. I don't think any of us understood at the time how major these developments were or how much they were owed to the students, faculty, staff and alumni working for change under the leadership of the just-departed president, Jack Sawyer—that bespectacled, wily, ambitious, shrewd, strong-willed and farsighted leader—who has since been called “the most transforming leader Williams has ever had.”

Those words belong to his successor, John Chandler, president during my time at Williams. Chandler worked closely with Sawyer while serving as the college's Cluett Professor of Religion, acting provost and dean of the faculty. When the *Williams Alumni Review* asked me to interview President Chandler on the occasion of the 50th anniversary of Sawyer's own installation as president, I was happy to do it. On an unusually balmy afternoon for autumn in Williamstown, we sat down to talk about Jack Sawyer's leadership and his legacy to Williams. Here is an excerpt from our conversation.

Michael Beschloss: Why was Jack Sawyer chosen as a Williams trustee at 34? Wasn't that a little odd in those days?

John Chandler: It *was* odd. He was extraordinarily young. But I think that relates very much to the fact that at that time, President [James Phinney] Baxter regarded Jack as his successor. Anne [Sawyer] told me that Jack was embarrassed when he attended his first trustee meeting because, in introducing him, President Baxter said something to the effect of: “Meet my successor.” Knowing how process-oriented Jack was, Jack would immediately have thought—I'm surmising—“The trustees pick the president.”

MB: He might have been worried that it could damage his chances to be president?

JC: Absolutely.

MB: Did you know much about Sawyer before he became president?

JC: The scuttlebutt among the young faculty was that he was very conservative, very cautious. I was at Yale



Opposite page: Historian Michael Beschloss '77 (left) and former president John Chandler discuss the legacy of John Edward Sawyer (pictured above, outside Griffin Hall, in 1972).

giving a talk on the day President Baxter announced at a faculty meeting who his successor was. When I got back and heard the news, the people with whom I talked—other young faculty—said, “There was a kind of funereal quality to the announcement.” You could tell that Baxter wasn't all that enthusiastic. A lot of us had figured out that by then Vince Barnett [professor of political science] had become his preference. As a trustee, Jack had been critical of President Baxter's failure to take action regarding fraternities. Anne Sawyer says that Jack was also unhappy with Phinney because Phinney had very low aspirations for fundraising and wasn't very active. In 1961, just before he retired, President Baxter announced the successful completion of a capital campaign in which he raised \$4 million. Less than two years later, Jack announced a campaign of \$14.6 million. And he raised it. Baxter certainly was devoted to fraternities. He frequently said that he came in with 15 fraternities and that he expected to leave with 15, and he held to his vow—with great difficulty.



As Sawyer (right) prepared to retire and turn over the Williams presidency to Chandler, "He told me," Chandler recalls, "that I would not be hearing from him very much, but any time I wanted to talk with him, feel free to call. And that's pretty much the way we operated." The two are pictured here in 1973, just three months before Chandler became the college's 13th president.

MB: So when the trustees chose Sawyer, do you think they expected him to ultimately bring women in and get rid of the frats and change the curriculum dramatically? Did they have any idea?

JC: No. Of course, the trustees knew him well by that point. And I think they trusted him as a person of great loyalty to Williams, as a person with good judgment

more pronounced role at Williams than at Amherst or Wesleyan.

MB: Why were fraternities so important here? For those younger generations who didn't have that experience—for example, I came here five years after fraternities were abolished. How central was their role in college life?

...high principle and low cunning

who wasn't going to do anything that would be harmful to the college. I'm doubtful that they had in mind that *that* would be his agenda.

MB: Where do you think his strong feeling about fraternities really came from? It's almost the last thing you'd expect from the former president of a Williams fraternity, whose background was hardly radical.

JC: Jack was certainly well aware that Williams had fallen behind Amherst and Wesleyan pretty substantially in its endowment—and that fraternities had a much

JC: Williams drew very heavily from Deerfield, Andover, Exeter and so forth. Just a little before that era of the 1960s, students were rushed from the moment they got off the train. Many students came to Williams largely because of the fraternities.

MB: How did the people who were rushing get information about who was coming?

JC: Some they would get from talking with alumni of the schools they were coming from. Later, when rushing had been postponed to the sophomore year, they depended

upon junior advisors. If your fraternity had a few well-placed JAs, you were going to bring in prime candidates.

MB: What kind of selection criteria would they use?

JC: I would say being an athlete was a definite plus. Frankly, being good-looking, socially affable, sometimes the school you attended. And of course, on the negative side, there was clear discrimination against blacks and Jewish students. I'd say about half of the fraternities had sizable contingents of Jews, but there were some that had secret agreements with their national organizations requiring them to discriminate. In some cases those were ignored, but the pressure was there.

MB: So Sawyer assumes the presidency and immediately has to deal with this student petition demanding the abolition of fraternities.

JC: The way that Jack reacted to the petition, which was literally there on his desk when he took office, shows how strategic he was in thinking.

MB: What was that phrase he liked to use?

JC: Oh, "high principle and low cunning." He was usually ahead of almost everybody. And so instead of panicking, he'd say, "Ah, opportunity!" To examine the problem, he appointed the Angevine Committee, which was very brilliantly, strategically done. As members he chose people who would have credibility with alumni in particular as well as knowledge of what fraternities had actually become. Older alumni had very romantic notions of fraternities, based upon a lot of outdated experience. So it was a matter of educating the alumni.

MB: So he knew it was going to be a big change, and he wanted it to happen with the help of older, respectable and, in many cases, conservative lawyers.

JC: Right. I remember once asking Jack why he had so many lawyers on the Williams board, and he said that they think things through carefully, and if they tell you it's O.K. to make this move, usually it's O.K.

MB: And he took the precaution of persuading several trustees to make up the difference in case alumni withheld financial contributions.

JC: Yes.

MB: So who in the Williams community would have been for abolishing fraternities and who would have been against it?

JC: By and large, the majority of students were against getting rid of fraternities. But there was a very vocal minority that worked much harder to get rid of them than the proponents worked to keep them. Of course, a lot of Jewish alumni, who'd been the victims of discrimination, were in favor of getting rid of them. And the faculty was overwhelmingly in favor of getting rid of them. They saw the downside of fraternities in the same light that Jack did—that they occupied far too much time. And that some of them had become sort of animal houses.



Sawyer in 1961, just after the college put the finishing touches on the new hockey rink.

MB: Did anyone make the argument that this was now keeping Williams from becoming as great a college as it could be? Pulling us backward and downward?

JC: Very much so, yes. When I received the offer to come to Williams to teach in 1955, I had friends tell me, "This is a big mistake if you go there." And I remember a friend pulling out that *Life* magazine article on Williams in 1949—"Life Goes to College"—and he said to me, "Look, every hand has a glass. This place is afloat in alcohol!"

MB: Abolishing fraternities was a major social revolution at Williams. Did it happen abruptly?

JC: Not exactly. Within days of the Angevine report, Kappa Alpha—President Baxter's fraternity—offered to turn over the keys to its house to the college. Baxter himself played a large role in facilitating that offer. But in the end the fraternities gradually melted away. By the time they were truly abolished by the trustees in 1968, only about 10 percent of the upperclass students were in

fraternities. After they were abolished, we found that alumni who had been estranged from the college began to reconnect. This was particularly true of Jewish alumni. Someone who was not Jewish but who certainly illustrated this was Elia Kazan '30, the great film director, who began to pay attention to Williams. And it made a financial difference too. People who hadn't given to the college began to give again. And there was a new sense of pride in the college.

MB: What about on the other side? How many alumni would say, "I'm not giving to Williams anymore?"

JC: Initially there were a lot of alumni who said that. There were some holdouts, and a few of them, as a matter of fact, were behind a couple of clandestine fraternities that continued to operate up in Pownal, Vt. But they just didn't get much of a following from fellow alumni and finally just lost interest. Furthermore, the college continued to remind students that *that* behavior was unacceptable, and the students were motivated primarily by free beer parties, so they fell away.

MB: So what leadership lessons could we suggest to other college and university presidents from the way Jack Sawyer handled this issue?

JC: Don't dilly-dally. Be decisive. And a very important lesson was develop a cadre of leadership from each essential constituency. He was very careful to cultivate members of Gargoyle, which was a more powerful organization then than it is now, editors of the *Williams Record*, the College Council, alumni leaders who were respected.

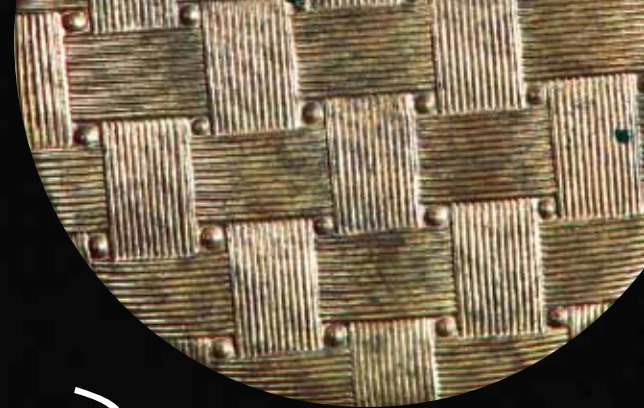
MB: The second social change he presided over was bringing in women as Williams students. How did that start?

JC: There is a kind of debate about whether Jack came in with a grand vision, first eliminating fraternities, then bringing in women. I must say it didn't quite feel that way. There was a widespread pattern, particularly in the Northeast—with Harvard-Radcliffe and so forth—that led Williams to consider establishing a separate, coordinate college. Mount Hope Farm had been acquired in the midst of everything else that was going on, and there were at least two conversations with Vassar. It was well-known that Yale was trying to entice them to move to New Haven, and Jack had a better idea—Mount Hope Farm.

MB: And the coordinate college-to-be was confidentially referred to as "Mary College," as in "Williams and Mary."



Chandler (left) and Beschloss in Griffin Hall in October.



Piecing together
an artifact of
Williams history.

The Red Jacket

By Suzanne A. Silitch

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Every year, costume director Deborah Brothers gets at least one request from someone wanting to dress up as Col. Ephraim Williams Jr., the college's founder. Now, thanks to the help of classics major Mattie Mitchell '12, she is much closer to being able to create an authentic set of period clothing for the colonel.

A few years ago, Brothers learned that the college archives had what was thought to be a military jacket belonging to Ephraim Williams' younger brother Thomas. The jacket, a gift to the college in 1911, was too small and fragile to be worn, but its deep red broadcloth was in remarkably good shape. Little else was known about it.

That all changed last summer, when Mitchell, a Class of '57 Summer Research Fellow who loves to sew, approached Brothers with a proposal to research the jacket's history. The two spent 10 weeks poring over art and history books, contacting historians and seamstresses and even visiting Fort Ticonderoga in New York and Historic Deerfield in Western Massachusetts. Their goal was to get a sense of the materials and tailoring techniques used around the time Ephraim Williams was killed in September 1755, during what's known as the "Bloody Morning Scout" near Lake George.

It turns out the jacket actually dated to the 1790s, too late to have belonged to Thomas Williams. Brothers and Mitchell also determined it was more likely a hunting jacket than part of a military uniform. Looking into the Williams family tree, Mitchell found that Thomas had a grandson of the same name. The jacket may have belonged to the youngster.

Brothers and Mitchell created a pattern out of the jacket that will be used to fashion a replica by hand, as was done in the 18th century.

Meanwhile, Brothers, who last year designed about 70 costumes (often with the help of students) for theater department productions, is continuing her work to accurately "dress" Col. Williams. "The plan," she says, "is to apply what we can learn from the inventories of what Ephraim had in his chest of clothes at the Bloody Morning Scout and the inventory of personal property of what he had in his will."

Mitchell says the project is exactly the kind of research she'd like to do for museums in the future, "so that we can preserve the history of these garments as well as the artistry that created them."

Among the details that helped costume director Deborah Brothers and Mattie Mitchell '12 date the mysterious jacket to the 1790s are (this page, clockwise from top left): large, brass decorative buttons and uncut buttonholes; narrow cuffs relative to earlier styles; two sets of hook-and-eye fasteners that keep the front of the jacket closed; back pleating; and what Brothers calls the "unique" upward flap of the pocket. A 1789 oil painting of U.S. Sen. Elijah Boardman of Connecticut features a very similar jacket (see <http://bit.ly/similarjacket>).





Before Williams became fully coeducational in 1971, Sawyer arranged for exchange students from women's colleges and for female transfer students to attend. "The college learned a great deal about how to make this transition [to coeducation]," Chandler says. "And doing it that way was so typically Jack. Do it carefully, deliberately. Don't have any surprises."

JC: That's right. That was the code name. But we eventually veered away from that. Jack came in as president with a conviction that there could be considerable economies of scale if we increased the student body from 1,200 to 1,800.

JC: Yes, and he was very sensitive to that. That's why he made the promise to alumni that bringing in women would not entail any cutting of the number of male students. As it turned out, I was the one who broke the promise.

...instead of panicking he'd say, "Ah, opportunity!"

MB: He felt that way, independent of whether or not women were admitted?

JC: Yes. Now whether Jack, in his cagey way, had the issue of admitting women in the back of his mind, I don't know.

MB: Wouldn't he also have known that women would be more easily accepted here if their arrival would not require the number of male slots at Williams to be cut by 50 percent?

MB: Did anyone make an issue of that when it happened? Did they notice?

JC: They noticed. I remember a meeting of alumni in Buffalo, where one alumnus whom I knew quite well, who had been a football player at Williams, said, "What's going to happen to the football team?" And the other alumni told him, "Oh shut up!" So I knew that war was over.

MB: [Joking] Well, have you noticed any problem in our beating Amherst in football over the last four decades?

JC: [Laughing] No.

MB: So I guess it turned out well. Before Jack Sawyer brought women to Williams, did any prominent people try to stop it?

JC: I suspect some of the women's colleges were nervous, and it did have pretty serious implications for them. The first fully coeducational class was the Class of 1975. There were also two vanguard groups of women—exchange students from women's colleges and transfer students who came in as juniors. And the college learned a great deal about how to make this transition. Doing it that way was so typically Jack. Do it carefully, deliberately. Don't have any surprises.

MB: And do it so smoothly that people almost don't realize what's happened. Did he also argue that since other great historically male colleges were taking in women, for Williams to refuse would leave us very much left behind?

JC: Oh yes. Yale, Princeton, Amherst—many colleges were making the same move. We would've been at a considerable disadvantage.

MB: So the third large change under President Sawyer was the curriculum, which had last been revised in about 1911. What was the impetus to change it?

JC: Jack was very much aware that the curriculum was brought in by President [Harry] Garfield [Class of 1885], who had essentially taken over his friend Woodrow Wilson's curriculum from Princeton.

MB: Wilson attended Garfield's inauguration here in 1908.

JC: Yes. In the late 1960s, there were new fields coming on—anthropology and sociology, for example—and the old model just didn't work very well anymore. Many of the courses were yearlong courses, and the major was all mapped out for you. The first year you took *this* course, second year *this* and the final year—the senior year—there was a senior major capstone course. So you sort of marched through with your fellow history majors or philosophy or whatnot. The new curriculum entailed doing away with most of the so-called “hyphenated” yearlong courses, except in the languages. And it provided a lot more flexibility and built more elective content into the major. Winter Study was brought in at that point. As an educational leader, Jack did so much. He immediately saw the great educational advantage of establishing close ties with the Clark Art Institute. One of his first moves was to bring onto the Williams board Talcott M. Banks '31, chair of the Clark board. Williams also was a pioneer in environmental studies. He was very close to the leaders of the National Academy of Sciences.

John Edward Sawyer: A Snapshot

The son of a Williams alumnus (Class of 1908) who ran the Sawyer Lumber Co. of Worcester, Mass., Jack Sawyer was born in 1917, attended Deerfield Academy and was a member of the Williams Class of 1939 (which included three other future members of the college faculty—political scientist James MacGregor Burns, economist William Gates and professor of French John Savacool). After a wartime tour choosing strategic bombing targets under the Office of Strategic Services in Europe, Sawyer served as a junior fellow at Harvard and associate professor at Yale. At age 34, he was named a permanent member of the Williams College Board of Trustees before being appointed in 1961 as the college's youngest president of the 20th century. He succeeded James Phinney Baxter, Class of 1914, who had once served as Sawyer's history thesis adviser. Soon after taking office, Sawyer named the Angevine Committee to study the 15 Williams fraternities, which led to the trustees' decision to replace them with a new system for housing, dining and social life. After leaving Williams in 1973, Sawyer served as president of the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation for 12 years before retiring to the home he and his wife Anne kept on Cape Cod. He died in 1995.

...in so many ways, he had such vast peripheral vision



Though Sawyer (pictured here in 1970) never went into the family lumber business, Chandler recalls that he often used to say, "Better to measure twice and saw once than measure once and saw twice."

I remember Jack talking about global warming back when it was barely mentioned. In so many ways, he had such vast peripheral vision. He looked at Berkshire County—and Pittsfield at that time was a very prosperous city. GE had 12,000 employees. They're all gone now. The population of Pittsfield has probably fallen by about 20,000 people. Jack was concerned that the character of south Berkshire was going to leap or creep up to this part of the county, and he wondered, "Is this going to be good for Williams?" That's why when Mount Hope Farm became available he got the money from a foundation and acquired it.

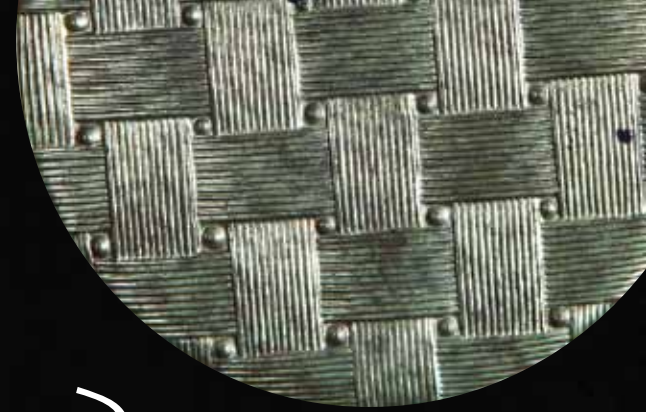
MB: You have said Jack Sawyer was the most transforming leader Williams has ever had. What were the essentials?

JC: Well, the strategic thinking, the vast knowledge. It's very interesting that he never finished his Ph.D. I mean, he had so many interests. He knew so many people. He used to talk about Alfred North Whitehead, the great British philosopher who was on the Harvard faculty. He knew people in literature and the arts, and he was constantly reaching out. And that gave him leverage with the faculty. You know, the faculty felt a little intimidated. Jack seemed to be ahead of them. He was very active in identifying potential candidates for appointment to the faculty in a way that presidents now might get in trouble for doing. Some faculty would probably look upon that as an intrusion into their turf. But Jack was listened to. He would encourage faculty members. He once told me, "O.K. You're teaching religion. What do you know about Hinduism or Buddhism?" So I decided that maybe I'd better get a Fulbright and go to India and see what's going on. The curriculum was internationalized tremendously during his presidency. And he also was a wonderful counselor to people in other places. NESAC was one of his babies—a great method for small liberal arts colleges to organize and manage athletic competition. Some people didn't like working for Jack in the sense that they felt that he was too much of a driver. My wife used to wonder about that too, occasionally. Jack was on the phone constantly. But I must say I loved working for him because I learned so much all the time.

MB: He showed you how to sail when you and Mrs. Chandler used to visit the Sawyers during the summer at Woods Hole on Cape Cod.

JC: Oh yes. He'd say, "Here, sit down, take the wheel. See that?" He would make sure I understood where I was aiming for. Then he would say, "O.K., get us there!"

Historian Michael Beschloss '77, who received an honorary degree from Williams in 2003, is the author of 10 books on the American presidency and, most recently, provided the introduction and annotations for *Jacqueline Kennedy: Historic Conversations on Life with John F. Kennedy* (Hyperion, 2011).



The Red Jacket

Piecing together
an artifact of
Williams history.

By Suzanne A. Silitch

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PHOTOGRAPHY BY ROMAN IWASIWKA

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COMMUNITY ROOTS

By Lauren Shuffleton '12

**Twenty percent of Northern
Berkshire households
have limited access
to nutritious food.**

**Michael Gallagher '06
and his Square Roots
Farm are helping to
change that.**

[>> Click here for text only](#)

At the end of Daniels Road in Clarksburg, Mass., near the bottom of a mountain, is a flat, open plot of land. Vestiges of its prior use are scattered across the 53 acres: a rusted, retired tractor from a 1950s dairy; the rubble of a never-completed residence hall for the Massachusetts College of Liberal Arts.

When Michael Gallagher '06 first visited the property several years ago, looking to start a community supported agriculture (CSA) program, it had been three decades since a farmer tilled the soil. Gallagher envisioned harvesting a bounty of vegetables and raising free-range livestock. He pictured a bustling farm stand where CSA members would stop by each week to pick up their allotment of asparagus, melons and spinach.

What he couldn't have foreseen, however, was that his Square Roots Farm, now two years old, would also do its part to support the community—providing low-income families in North Berkshire County with fresh, healthy, sustainably grown food.

FINDING THE RIGHT FIT

In a typical CSA program, members purchase shares of a farm in the winter, before the planting season, and then receive a portion of the crops as they are harvested throughout the year. Though the model allows farmers to disperse risk and to develop strong relationships with the people who join, the shares needed to keep a farm running can be expensive—costing members upwards of \$500 annually—and often must be paid for in a lump sum.

As a result, “CSAs tend to get focused on affluent populations,” says Gallagher. As an aspiring farmer, he remembers wondering: “How do we serve the needs of the people here?”

Gallagher graduated from Williams the same year the Food Bank of Western



Michael Gallagher '06 (far left) introduces Williams students to Square Roots Farm during first-year orientation. Scattered across the 53-acre property are remnants of the farm's prior use, including a never-completed dorm for Massachusetts College of Liberal Arts (pictured in the background).

Massachusetts released the results of its yearlong study of North Berkshire County. Among the findings, 11 percent of households had experienced moderate or severe hunger in the previous year. And despite doubling and then tripling the distribution of meals through local food pantries over the previous decade, nearly 20 percent of households had limited access to nutritious food.

Target:Hunger, an offshoot of the food bank, began holding community discussions about how to address the problems highlighted by the study. Kendell Newman '08, who joined the group with several other Williams students in 2006, says she recalls one particular brainstorming session with "dozens and dozens of ideas written on posters all over the walls: more affordable supermarkets; better transportation; new food pantries; a CSA for low-income families."

Newman, who had become interested in sustainable agriculture

after an internship with a farm in California, says she "put a big star next to the CSA idea." She and three other seniors taking the 300-level workshop "Environmental Planning" with Sarah Gardner, associate director of Williams' Center for Environmental Studies, decided to research the feasibility of starting such a program. Their final, 64-page report included surveys of local residents, interviews with area farmers, comparisons of different CSA models and recommendations for funding as well as potential sites based on soil testing.

"Already," the students wrote in the conclusion, "Target:Hunger's previous work and our project's research have excited and inspired landowners, community members and potential partners and set important conversations in motion."

Those conversations would eventually include Gallagher, who, after Williams, headed south to join the Mississippi Teacher Corps, a Teach for America-

style program. A biology and Russian major just two classes shy of completing a math major as well, he taught math and coached soccer in a critical-needs school in an impoverished community while working on his master's degree. But the work took its toll. As he struggled to figure out what he might do once his two-year commitment was up, his thoughts kept returning to farming.

A native of Cheshire, Mass., Gallagher had spent three summers baling hay at a nearby farm in Lanesborough during high school. His employer had worked a full-time job on top of his farm duties, so Gallagher "didn't exactly get the impression that it was a viable lifestyle option."

But as he researched current farming practices, he found a wealth of "alternative ideas" that seemed feasible financially and environmentally. In particular, Caretaker Farm in Williamstown, with ties to both the college and surrounding community, was a "huge inspiration" for him.

Within a week of completing his teaching program, Gallagher returned to the northeast to apprentice for a year with the owners of Homestead Farms, a 100-member CSA program near Troy, N.Y. He also spent a season at Maple Wind Farm in Vermont, where he met Ashley Amsden, who would become his girlfriend and business partner.

The two set about finding land of their own and ended up in Clarksburg, at a property owned by Paul and Carolyn Marshall. Gallagher recalls several visits spent shoveling cow manure with Paul, who, despite his affinity for the lifestyle, had never been a full-time farmer. Slowly they solidified the details: Gallagher and Amsden would lease three-and-a-half acres of the long-defunct dairy from the Marshalls and rent the mobile home across the street.

Meanwhile, the Hoosac Harvest group, an outgrowth of Target:Hunger, had come up with a plan to help make

CSA membership more affordable. In addition to raising money to cover up to 85 percent of the cost of farm shares for low-income families, Hoosac Harvest arranged for participants to pay the remainder in small installments or with food stamps. Regardless, the farmer would get the full share price up front.

"The model, in retrospect, seems utterly simple," says Sharon Wyrick, a Williamstown playwright, filmmaker and member of Hoosac Harvest. "A farmer has no time to figure [the subsidies] out and needs to get full price for his goods. So our job is to find a way to make up the difference, promote the availability of shares and do whatever is needed by the farmer to make it work."



All Hoosac Harvest needed was to find a farmer interested in its model. When Gallagher received a copy of the group's proposed job description through a mutual friend of his and Newman's, the pieces fell into place.

STRENGTH IN NUMBERS

Darlene Ellis is carving a jack-o'-lantern as her 13-year-old son Nathan pops the cut-out pieces of pumpkin into his mouth, whole. He eats only raw vegetables, so his mother is particularly excited about making the weekly trip to the stand at Square Roots Farm now that the family has a membership.

Ellis, who helped develop the model for the subsidized CSA program, says her family never could have joined at the full share price.

"It's changed a lot for us," says the community activist, whose husband is the night operations manager at the Williams Inn.

Ellis stopped serving the bland, processed canned vegetables she used to purchase at the grocery store. Her 10-year-old daughter Natalie, who last season helped farm volunteers pick peas, garlic, green beans and potatoes, is toying with the idea of becoming a vegetarian now that she has a better understanding of where her food comes from.

Meanwhile, the number of shares offered to low-income families is growing while Square Roots Farm expands. In



SANDRA THOMAS



How to Pay Attention to a Poem

with Lawrence Raab

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Sarah McNair

Stopping by Woods on a Snowy Evening

by Robert Frost

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He will not see me stopping here

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My little horse must think it queer

To stop without a farmhouse near

Between the woods and frozen lake

The darkest evening of the year.

He gives his harness bells a shake

To ask if there is some mistake.

The only other sound's the sweep

Of easy wind and downy flake.

The woods are lovely, dark and deep,

But I have promises to keep,

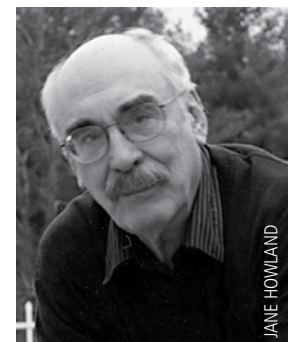
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First-year students Becky Tseytkin (left) and Wei Li help clean onions at Square Roots Farm as part of their service project for the Where Am I?! EphVentures program during orientation.

2011, 10 of the farm's 52 shares were subsidized by Hoosac Harvest (up from eight of the farm's 40 shares in 2010).

Serving low-income families "is definitely not something we'd be able to do if not for Hoosac Harvest group," says Gallagher, who also puts out a box at each pickup for members to donate portions of their produce to local food pantries. "It's great to have that be a part of the farm's identity right off the bat."

Throughout the winter, Gallagher says he and Amsden will be busy moving snow, cleaning up the land and preparing "for hours on end on our Excel spreadsheets, trying to figure out how much to plant, trying to make plans."

Still, there have been and will be surprises. Paul Marshall died unexpectedly in fall 2010, so Gallagher and Amsden "sort of inherited" all 53 acres instead of the few they originally agreed to lease. As



a result, the couple decided to stop raising cows and start hiring apprentices to help.

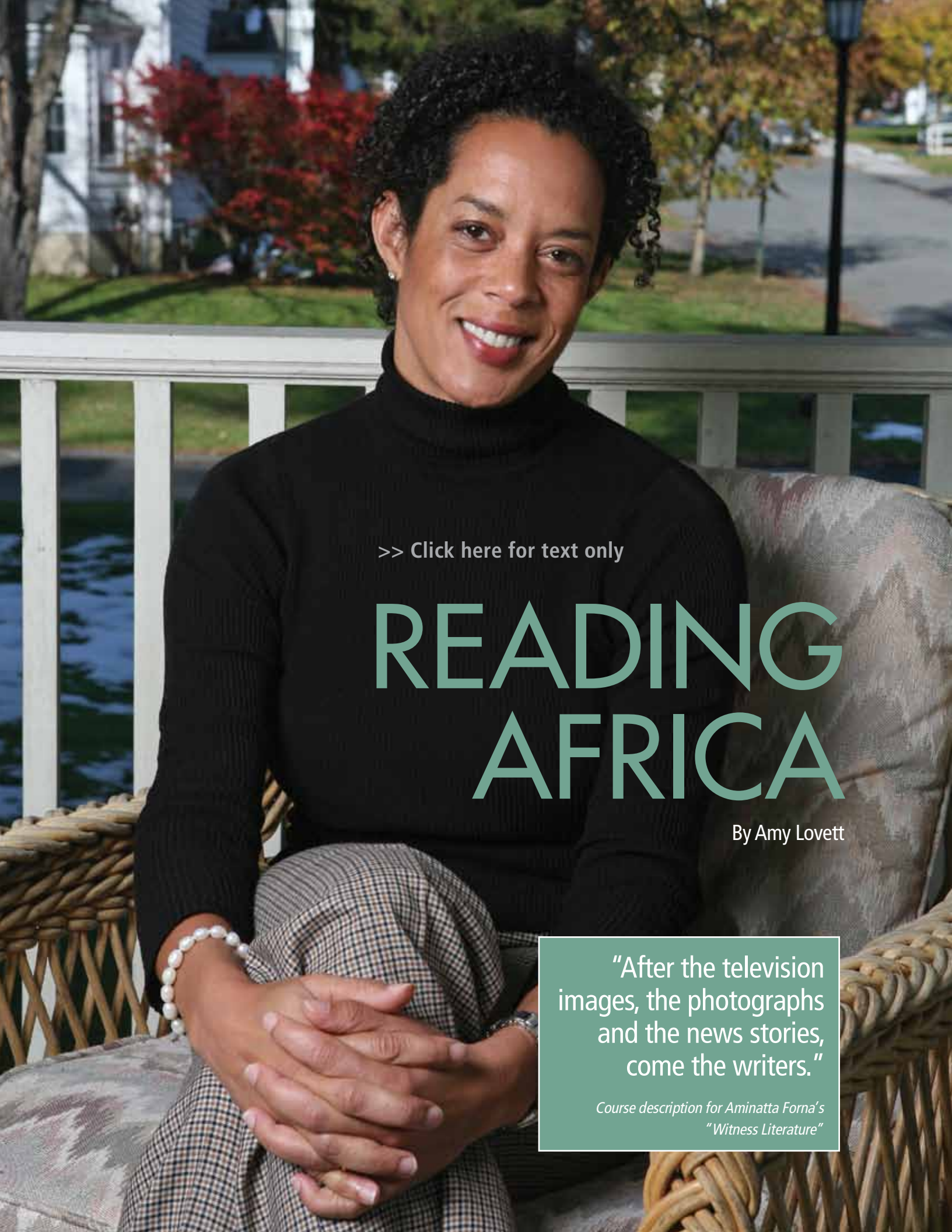
And planning only goes so far. Last season a bull ate all the bok choy picked by volunteers. The year before, Gallagher forgot to vent the greenhouse and ended up losing 30 flats of young plants.

Yet Gallagher remains enthusiastic about the building, repairing, feeding and pig wrestling that now are part of his daily life. He has an abundance of support from fellow farmers in the area and a strong, devoted membership. The farm's Facebook page has more than 350 followers, and members post photos of their families and the culinary creations they've made with their produce. Gallagher, meanwhile, shares photos of pigs and newborn lambs along with farm updates.

"On a traditional farm," he says, "if my stuff doesn't grow, I can't sell, and I won't have any money. You already have the money in a CSA setup, but the idea of disappointing people I know and care about encourages me to work more."

"Maybe that keeps me from sleeping that extra hour some mornings," he adds. "We landed in a good spot."

Lauren Shuffleton '12 is an American studies and English major from East Hampstead, N.H., who has done community organizing in the Berkshires, specifically around food security issues.



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READING AFRICA

By Amy Lovett

"After the television images, the photographs and the news stories, come the writers."

*Course description for Aminatta Forna's
"Witness Literature"*

In researching her latest novel, *The Memory of Love*, Aminatta Forna came across an unsettling statistic about her homeland. According to Doctors Without Borders, more than 90 percent of Sierra Leone's population suffered from post-traumatic stress disorder as a result of the country's 11-year civil war.

"This struck me as questionable," Forna says. Not in the sense of the deep and lasting impact of the war, which killed 50,000 people between 1991 and 2002. But, rather, in the sense of the largely Western perspective underlying the aid organization's finding.

"One has to think very hard about what life was like in Sierra Leone before the war," says Forna, who spent the fall semester as the college's Sterling Brown '22 Visiting Professor of Africana Studies. "Life in one of the poorest countries of the world is, by definition, traumatic. At what point do you say this is a psychosis or do you say, 'Actually, this is life? *Pain* is life?'"

It's one of many questions the acclaimed novelist and memoirist explored with the two dozen Williams students in her class, "Introduction to African Literature: Witness Literature," as they studied not only the writings but also the history, politics and geography of the world's second-largest continent.

Forna says there is a "distinct witness voice" flourishing in Africana writing, much of which is less than half a century old. That voice includes her own work, beginning with 2002's *The Devil that Danced on the Water*, a memoir of how the execution of her dissident father at the hands of the Sierra Leonean government shaped both her life and that of her country. She was 10 years old when he died.

Her next two books, *Ancestor Stones* (2006) and *The Memory of Love* (2010), were "fiction woven out of the truth," inspired by the wealth of research she compiled for her memoir. *Ancestor Stones*, Forna says, portrays how women in rural Sierra Leone lived, "how they painted their nails, how they prepared for their wedding day. ... This voice had never been heard before in fiction. I felt I had to capture their experiences."

The Memory of Love, which won the Commonwealth Writers Prize Best Book Award in 2011, evolved out of Forna's interviews with people who she says turned a blind eye to the fate of dissidents like her father. "I was fascinated by the group who hadn't done anything. ... Is that really a neutral act?" she asks. "We were brought up to stand up, and we paid the price for it."

Historian Shanti Singham, chair of Williams' Africana studies program, says Forna's three books reveal that she is "both a very engaged political writer—political with a small 'p,' she would say—and an activist herself."

"Politics, activism and a meticulous, expressive use of language to move the human soul—these three characteristics are qualities of the best African thinkers and of Aminatta Forna," adds Singham, who contacted Forna in London last year to propose the idea of introducing an African literature class to the Williams curriculum. "She was a natural fit with our program."

For senior Nicole Shannon, a biology and anthropology major, Forna's class was a revelation. "I knew I would gain a lot from reading the academic literature," says the Auburn, Ala., native who, despite her Nigerian heritage, "never learned much in a classroom setting about African history or culture."

The works of fiction they studied, Shannon says, "present a face of Africa that is not 'dumb, mindless, poor and helpless' but is dynamic and unique from country to country, as it should be taught."

Sophomore Rose Courteau of Arkansas says the class left her thinking more deeply about "the tension between integrating cultures and beliefs into a globalizing world without compromising them."

Says Courteau, who's interested in non-Western cultures but felt, as a white woman, "self-conscious about trying to understand them" before taking Forna's class, "I definitely plan to take Africana studies next semester."

READING LIST

"It's been said that if you want to know a country—in this case a continent—read its writers," says Aminatta Forna. On the syllabus for her course "Witness Literature" last semester: **Things Fall Apart** (1958): Chinua Achebe's look at Nigerian tribal life before and after colonialism, widely considered to be a foundational text of postcolonial studies; **A Grain of Wheat** (1967): Ngugi wa Thiong'o tells stories within stories portraying villagers transformed by the Kenyan Emergency of 1952-60; **A Dry White Season** (1979): Afrikaner André Brink explores racial intolerance in South Africa; **So Long a Letter** (1981):

Mariama Ba's epistolary novel sheds light on African women; **Say You're One of Them** (2009): Uwem Akpan's starkly modern fables bring to life the issues facing children; **Harare North** (2009): Brian Chikwava's novel about life as a Zimbabwean refugee in London; **The Memory of Love** (2010): Aminatta Forna presents a fictional family coming to grips with the fact that their father failed to stand up to an oppressive regime; **Oil on Water** (2011): Helon Habila's fictional journalists explore the human cost of the oil industry in the Niger delta.

A NASHVILLE CAT

By Hugh Howard

There are the hits: “Cowboy Take Me Away,” recorded by the Dixie Chicks. Wynonna Judd’s “Only Love.” Rascal Flatts’ “Bless the Broken Road.” Then there’s *Tut*, an oratorio-dance hybrid about Howard Carter’s discovery of Tut’s tomb. And *Surrender Road*, a play about a boxer with passages from Shakespeare blended with contemporary lyrics.

And at the creative center of it all is singer-songwriter Marcus Hummon ’84, who has spent much of his life, as he puts it, “finding a range of musical solutions to telling a story.”

Though his home base is Nashville, Hummon’s influences and inspirations extend beyond the country music culture of central Tennessee. He spent his childhood in the Philippines, Botswana and Saudi Arabia (his father worked for the Agency for International Development). He landed at Williams, where he majored in political science, starred on the football field and, with guitar in hand, he says, “played at the Log incessantly,” sometimes accompanied by his sister Sarah Hummon Stevens ’87.

After a brief time in Los Angeles after graduation—“I wanted to be a musician-poet and paint my own album covers, you know, Joni Mitchell, Cat Stevens”—Hummon moved to Nashville. Descended from a family of Ohio farmers whose annual reunions spanned nearly a century, he felt an immediate connection to the city’s “rich tradition” of remembering.

He spent a decade writing and performing before he got his first break. After hearing his song “Only Love,” Wynonna Judd, then at the pinnacle of her career, called to say she wanted to record it. When Hummon heard that the song reached number three on Billboard’s country songs list in 1993, he says he “left a recording session and just ran and ran in the rain.”

His song “Ready to Run” won a Grammy for the Dixie Chicks. Alabama’s take on Hummon’s “The Cheap Seats” became a

“I experienced a love of music at full-moon parties where musicians and pickers went to a great old antebellum house and played music. It was almost otherworldly.”

Marcus Hummon ’84, on finding a creative home in Nashville

ZACH GOODYEAR

classic baseball song. His “One of These Days” was a hit for Tim McGraw in 1997. And Rascal Flatts’ cover of his ballad “Bless the Broken Road” spent five weeks at the top of Billboard’s country charts and won Hummon a 2005 Grammy for Best Country Song.

“Sometimes it happens in a whoosh,” Hummon says, words that sum up the arc of his career as much as they do his writing process. He and Martie Maguire of the Dixie Chicks wrote “Cowboy Take Me Away,” another number-one Billboard country single, “in about 20 minutes. We couldn’t get the ink on paper fast enough.”

As award-winning songwriter Darrell Scott, with whom Hummon shares several credits, says, “Marcus is the most nimble collaborator, able to turn any direction with music and lyric in a heartbeat.”

Though Hummon tried life on the road in the mid-90s as a solo artist and again in 2001 as half of the duo The Raphaels (paired with Stuart Adamson, formerly of the Scottish band Big



Country), he found spending 200 days out of the year away from home a hard grind with little payoff. When Adamson, fresh from rehab, resumed drinking and then hanged himself in a Honolulu hotel room, "That was the end of it for me," Hummon says. "It was the darkest side of going out on the road. I decided at that point that I needed something wide-ranging."

He turned to writing theater pieces. In addition to *Surrender Road* and *Tut*, which ran for four days at the New York Musical Theatre Festival this past fall, Hummon has written a musical drama, *Warrior*, which recounts the story of Jim Thorpe (considered one of the most versatile athletes of modern sports). Hummon's Celtic-inflected *The Piper* takes place in immigrant Boston in the mid-19th century. His shows have garnered critical acclaim in productions at a variety of venues, from the Hartford Conservatory to Imagine Theatre in Manchester, England.

With the release of his solo CD *Rosanna* in 2010, Hummon seems to have come full circle. The compilation includes his

personal takes on songs others have covered—"Only Love," "Bless the Broken Road," "Cowboy Take Me Away" and "Born to Fly," which was co-written with Darrell Scott and made into a hit by Sara Evans. And there are new tracks like "Rosanna," about an immigrant girl from Honduras sold into the sex trade. The song owes its origin to the work of Hummon's wife, the Rev. Becca Stevens, Episcopal chaplain at Vanderbilt University and founder of Magdalene House, a residential program for women escaping prostitution and addiction.

"The place of the songwriter is one part prophet, one part village idiot," Hummon says. "It really began to happen for me when I began to follow this path. No one ever went wrong by becoming too much themselves."

Watch Marcus Hummon '84 performing "Rosanna" live in Manchester, England, at <http://vimeo.com/11235873>.



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with Lawrence Raab

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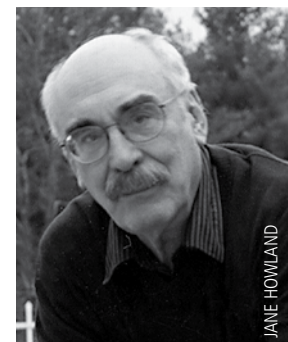
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Critic Supporter
(this is who we are).

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comes **together.**

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FELLOWSHIPS
COORDINATOR

KATYA KING,
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FELLOWSHIPS



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