

Minnesota ALUMNI

UNIVERSITY OF MINNESOTA ALUMNI ASSOCIATION

SPRING 2016



TO WIT

*The worlds of alumni comedians
Andy Erikson (right), Maria
Bamford, and others*



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Spring 2016



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Thoughts of an Area Woman



A COMMENT ABOUT *Minnesota Alumni* recently came my way from a reader who was disgruntled that we seem to write only about highly accomplished alumni: the CEO of the billion-dollar company, the extraordinary humanitarian, the scientist who's made an earth-shattering discovery, the young superstar, etc., etc., etc., *ad nauseam*. Where, he wondered, are the stories about the regular folk who go about their day with diligence and integrity, take care of their families and friends, and have a positive, though unsung, presence in their communities?

As an Average Josephine, I sympathize with this hero-weary reader. I suspect most of us more readily identify with the *Onion's* proverbial "Area Man" than with the prodigy who spends his days kicking up dust on the road to greatness. (See recent *Onion* headline, "Report: Someone Needs to Get Chips and Dip Away From Area Man." Are there other Area Men and Women out there who think that headline was written for them?)

Many of my peers nationwide are discussing and writing about this tendency to focus on and inflate success stories at the expense of authentically portraying the Average Joe. One critic dubbed it Alumni Magazine Syndrome. She described feeling deflated every few months when her magazine arrived and she felt the inadequacy of her life up against the alumni who were profiled. Ouch.

I applaud this discussion. It implicitly recognizes and values the infinite textures of alumni lives, even as it acknowledges that writers and editors can fall short in translating them into stories. Some of this discussion revolves around the question of how to write about failure: an important question, to be sure, but to my mind, lurching from stories about one extreme—outrageous success—to its opposite still doesn't quite honor the messy middle where life is lived.

So I understand and respect where our disgruntled reader is coming from. He poses a worthy challenge. But I would also offer the observation that readers can fall into assuming that anyone who appears in print must be larger than life or they wouldn't be in print. This is just not true. When I was editor of a different publication, a reader once expressed this sentiment upon meeting me for the first time with a crestfallen look and the comment, "I thought you'd be taller." Well, so did I, but I was sorry to disappoint nonetheless. The comment drove home how we all create ideas about and assign attributes to the person behind the photo and the story that bear no resemblance to reality.

The messy middle also happens to be where humor resides. This issue of the magazine showcases alumni comedians: artists of the messy middle who cast a quirky gaze on human foibles and hold them up as invitations to see life from a different perspective. Are the alumni we've written about superstars? I can guarantee you they don't think so. They're more on the side of Area Men and Women who have just followed their hearts. What could be more extraordinary than that?

Cynthia Scott (M.A. '89) can be reached at scott325@umn.edu.

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The Facts on Student Debt



WE AT THE UNIVERSITY OF MINNESOTA are defying the national narrative around student debt. Our story is filled with fewer students in debt and reduced debt for those who need to borrow. Our success is tied to dramatically improved four-year graduation rates and our aggressive investment in financial aid for those who need it most.

Horror stories dominate the media, such as the \$100,000 debt hanging like an albatross around a student's neck, forcing her to work two low-wage jobs to pay it off. Or the young graduates who can't afford mortgages and delay starting families because of loan burdens.

Unfortunately, these anecdotes scare some families into believing their children can't afford to attend the University. But nothing could be further from the truth for most families, even the lowest income ones.

- For students at the lowest income level, we provide \$15,335 in need-based aid—that is, without any loans—which is nearly \$1,500 more than tuition and fees.
- Forty percent of all of our Twin Cities undergraduate students graduate with zero debt from University sources—and if they graduate in four years, then it's 42 percent with no debt. Of the 60 percent who graduate with debt, the average last year was \$26,091—down almost \$1,500 per student since 2011.
- Those who completed their undergraduate degrees in four years graduated with an average debt of \$24,966—20 percent less than the \$31,000 average for students at other colleges statewide.
- Horror stories? Our most recent graduating class of 7,387 students had a grand total of four students with debt of \$100,000 or more. Four.

Don't get me wrong, facing \$25,000 of debt is daunting. But that didn't purchase a product with depreciating value, like a new car. A four-year college degree in 2016 appreciates: It's worth at least \$1 million more than a high school diploma over the course of a person's career. I'd take that 40:1 return on investment any day.

How did we defy the national narrative? We emphasized the importance of graduating in four years because, on average, student debt increases nearly 20 percent for those who take five years to graduate. With the help of the legislature and governor, along with a two-year tuition freeze, over the past five years we held tuition increases below the rate of inflation. Including loans, we provide \$500 million a year in financial aid. We organized course offerings to ensure students can get classes they need to graduate on time, and we waived tuition for credits beyond 13 per semester; students now are averaging 15 credits per semester. We increased advising to keep students on pace to graduate, saving them a total of \$7.7 million in potential loan debt over four years. No wonder our four-year graduation rate has more than doubled over the past 15 years to 63 percent—and is rising every year.

Which leads to Convocation, our annual celebration for incoming students. As they enter Mariucci Arena we hand each of them an envelope. Inside they find maroon-and-gold tassels with a charm that simply states the year of their graduation date, always four years hence.

My message to students is clear: We're thrilled you're here, and we want your experience to be filled with academic excellence, maturity, and fun. But four years is *the* goal because it limits debt.

Of course we have work to do to continue to defy the national narrative. As is true for so many things, it's better in Minnesota. 

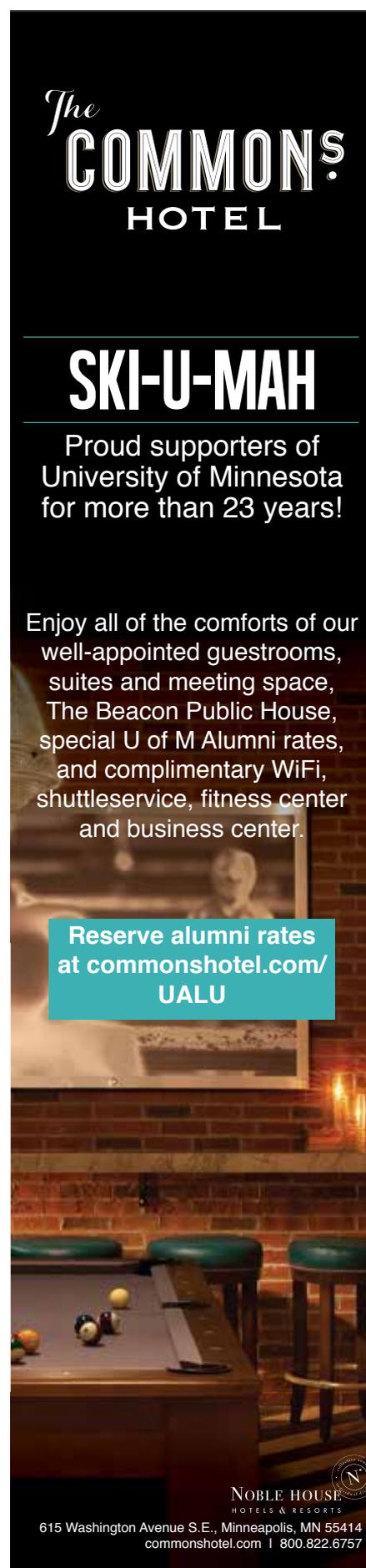
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Memories of Mulford Q.

Thank you for Tim Brady's tribute to Professor Mulford Sibley [Winter 2016]. I was fresh out of the Army with the GI Bill and rather conservatively inclined. I was immediately drawn to this tall, modest, scholarly teacher with his socialist and pacifist views, and my conservatism turned decisively left. I extended my graduate years to two, knowing I could fit all of his courses into my Russian Area Studies major.

On my masters degree committee, chaired by Harold Deutsch, Sibley's first question was, "are you a Marxist?" My negative reply and stumbling justification didn't bother him in the least. I subsequently became a high school teacher in suburban Chicago. After returning from a teacher exchange program in Russia, I discovered that three of my colleagues were accused of Communist sympathies. A school board meeting brought them to the stage to be excoriated by John Birchites, then exonerated by the board. Afterward one of them joked that the real Communist—fresh from Russia—was in the audience laughing: me. I modeled myself after Mulford Sibley in a variety of ways.

D. Stanley Moore (M.A. '56), Park Forest, Illinois

I wonder how Mulford would have stood on the many campus protests that have denied conservative speakers the opportunity to present their thoughts on campus? These student protests have occurred multiple times around the country and have been successful in protecting the "safe space" that keeps at bay ideas that may not be in sync with liberal thinking.

My recollection of Professor Sibley is one of arrogance and dismissiveness to anyone who didn't see his point of view. Perhaps he would fall right in line with these current protests.

Tom Johnson (B.A. '65), Visalia, California

How wonderful to be reminded of Mulford Q. Sibley and of that time 50 years ago when he taught a generation of students about the role of irony in a democratic society, of the importance of free academic discourse, and of the tone-deafness of politicians.

I (Susan) appreciated him in another way. He taught a class on extra sensory perception, a topic which some considered non-academic. But as a psychology major I thought there might be things we didn't understand that should be investigated. Following in that vein, I became an anthropologist. While some may have ridiculed such a class, Professor Sibley taught us how to evaluate reports of ESP in a scientific way. In today's bizarre atmosphere of political posturing and prevarication—much of it about the same scary topics Mulford addressed in his letter to the *Daily*—we can be thankful for that gentle, powerful intellect.

*Doug Davis (B.A. '65) and Susan Schaefer Davis (B.A. '65)
Haverford, Pennsylvania*

"I wonder how Mulford would have stood on the many campus protests that have denied conservative speakers the opportunity to present their thoughts on campus?"

While I never experienced Mulford Q. Sibley's political science classes during my undergraduate days, I routinely saw him standing somewhere between Folwell Hall and the Armory along University Avenue with a picket sign. Dressed in his dark suit, white shirt, and colorful tie, he stood out because of his canvas tennis shoes—discordant dress for a discordant time! A military service break in my undergraduate work found me back at a quieter campus as the Vietnam war faded from the news. To my surprise, Professor Sibley was the teacher of an evening class I took entitled Introduction to Psychical Phenomena. He was fun to be in a room with and an engaging teacher, regardless of the subject!

Dan Erkkila (B.S. '77, M.S. '82, Ph.D. '91), Grand Rapids, Minnesota

Great Redesign, But...

The new name, *Minnesota Alumni*, is appropriate, descriptive, and attractive. However, are the articles published in a smaller, lighter, less easy-to-read print than those in previous issues? Or am I seeing this through the aging eyes of an alumna?

Elizabeth Behnke (B.S. '60), Manitowoc, Wisconsin

Editor's reply: We heard from many readers who expressed the same concern as Mrs. Behnke about our new text font. We agreed that the new style needed tweaking. We hope you find the improvements in this issue reader-friendly and inviting. Thank you everyone for your comments!

I made two changes in 1978 when I became editor of the now-called *Minnesota Alumni* magazine. I switched from a tabloid newspaper called the *University of Minnesota Alumni News* to a magazine format and renamed the publication *Minnesota Magazine*. I applaud the name change to *Minnesota Alumni* and hope that the magazine will continue in its excellent direction to keep alumni informed about our great University.

Richard D. Haines (M.A. '76), Hopkins, Minnesota



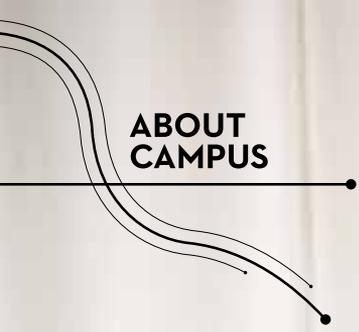
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ABOUT CAMPUS



Backstage at the 48th annual College of Design's student Apparel Design Fashion Show on February 6. Pictured left to right are model Sarah Engwall, designer Lee Tran, stage manager Dustin Dorris, and models Honorine Kadima and Lauren Shibley.

Photo by Sara Rubinstein





'Tiny Curators' Visit the Bell

When budding scientists Miller and Maria Williams, ages 9 and 10, decided to stage their own Tiny Natural History Museum with more than 100 objects on display near their home in Minnetrista, they decided to donate half of their gate—\$125.71—to the Bell Museum of Natural History. To show their thanks, the Bell staff treated them to a special tour of the museum and its scientific collections on February 15. They also presented Miller and Maria with magnifying loupes, U of M backpacks, and certificates proclaiming them each an honorary Bell Museum Tiny Curator.

Looking on are their parents, Anna (B.S. '97) and Nick Williams (B.E.E. '98, M.B.A. '08).



@UMNAlumni
Alumni Spotlight: Wells Fargo Chairman and CEO John Stumpf (MBA '80) was chosen by investment research firm Morningstar as the 2015 CEO of year!

UMNAnthropology
A huge congratulations to Gilliane Monnier, who won a Fulbright award for next academic year! She will be in Israel.

@HHHSchool
Congrats Judge Margaret Chutich (B.A. '80), former associate dean at Humphrey School, named to Minnesota's highest court.

@kobebryant
Congrats on the 60 @ rachelbanham15 From what I've seen I don't think it will be the last time you hit that mark



He's No. 1

In December, the American Volleyball Coaches Association (AVCA) named the Gophers' **Hugh McCutcheon** national Coach of the Year, just a few weeks after he won Big Ten and AVCA North Region coach of the year honors. The recognitions come on the heels of the Gophers' first Big Ten championship since 2002. The team rode a school-record conference-winning

streak of 15 matches to the title and earned a No. 2 seed in the NCAA tournament, falling to Texas in the semifinals. McCutcheon has compiled a 105-31 record at Minnesota.

Gophers Daly Santana, Hannah Tapp, Samantha Seliger-Swenson, and Paige Tapp were named to the AVCA All-America team, the most ever for the program in a single season.

McCutcheon: Christopher Mitchell/Sport Shot Photo • Curators: Patrick O'Leary

JUST WONDERING

What can we learn from the history of toilet paper? A lot, says **Barry Kudrowitz**, assistant professor and director of the College of Design's product design program.

Your research focuses on understanding creativity. What's the state of creativity in the United States?

I agree with other researchers who say we're in a creativity crisis. One of the most well-known creativity tests is the Torrance Test of Creative Thinking, developed here at the University in the 1960s by psychology Professor Paul Torrance. It's used to evaluate an individual's level of creativity, not based on what they produce but on how they think. Some research shows we are in serious creative decline based on creativity test scores. That's a problem because we want to be innovative leaders globally.

Why the decline?

It could be a result of the emphasis on STEM [science, technology, engineering, and mathematics]. STEM is important because we need engineers and technical-minded scientists. But we also need to encourage the arts, creative thinking, and play. In order to invent new things you have to have a creative mindset in addition to technical skills. That kind of mindset evolves from being encouraged to play, build, and think in different ways. Creative people aren't afraid to try new things and make unusual combinations of ideas and disciplines.

What role does society play?

We like things to be different, but not too different. Industrial designer Raymond Loewy called this the MAYA (Most Advanced Yet Acceptable) principle: The public won't necessarily accept logical innovations if those items are too far outside what we're used to. We prefer incremental innovation to radical innovation, meaning that we love small advances, like when we make a product faster, less expensive or smaller. Radical innovation involves changing our daily routines, and that's more difficult to adapt to.

What's an example?

Toilet paper was once a radical innovation. Colonial Americans used corncobs to wipe themselves after defecating until the 1700s when newspapers became available. Newspapers were replaced by the Sears



catalog, which did a serviceable job until the 1930s when Sears began printing on glossy paper. People complained about that. By then, toilet paper had been around since the mid-1880s, but people thought it was strange and taboo.

Now, more than 120 years later, it's crazy that toilet paper is still the norm. It's clearly not very practical or sanitary yet we persist in using it as long as companies keep making it softer, with more layers, and for a lower cost. Other countries, like Japan and parts of Europe, have used bidets or combo bidet-style toilets for decades. They're more hygienic and environmentally friendly, but Americans think they're weird.

The easiest way to get people to accept radical innovation is to slowly change things over time, usually with the help of early adopters. Electric cars, which began with hybrids using some gas, are familiar to us now. Nissan's Leaf is all electric, but it still looks like a regular car on the outside even though the interior functionality is different. Tesla is now making it cool and a luxury to have an electric car. Eventually others will follow.

—Meleah Maynard

"I JUST ABOUT
FELL OVER
WHEN I READ
MY EMAIL."

Gopher baseball coach JOHN ANDERSON (B.S. '77) upon learning that a lifelong fan left \$419,000 to the program.

9/11 Victims to be Honored

The University of Minnesota will honor the victims of the 9/11 attacks with a moment of recognition on September 11, 2016, and on future anniversaries.

Among those killed were alumni Tom Burnett (B.S.B. '86), Clarin Schwartz (J.D. '73), and Gary Koecheler (B.A. '66, J.D. '72). Scott Wallace (B.S.B. '80) and Mark Lewis (B.S.B. '71, M.B.A. '79) survived.

The Minnesota Student Association (MSA) voted on November 24 to support the remembrance. Alumni Association past chair Jim Du bois (B.A. '87) spoke on behalf of the Alumni Association and urged approval of the statement of support. The Alumni Association has offered its assistance in implementing the remembrance.

Student representatives of the College Republicans, College of Liberal Arts, and Hillel authored the statement of support, with cosponsorship from Al-Madinah Cultural Center, College Republicans at the University of Minnesota, and the Muslim Student Association.



Monumental Alumni

A NEW SECTION of the Scholars Walk pays tribute to the lives and work of more than 20 University of Minnesota alumni. Their monuments, pictured here, join those that celebrate the University's Nobel Laureates, Pulitzer Prize winners, national academies inductees and others of exceptional intellectual achievement. The Scholars Walk stretches from Walnut Street near the McNamara Alumni Center west to Appleby Hall and Pleasant Street.

Among the honored alumni are composer Libby Larsen; photographer Judy Olausen; architect Sarah Susanka; Justice Alan Page; astronaut Donald "Deke" Slayton; and surgeon Norman Shumway. Plan to visit it next time you're on campus.

THE LEDGER

16

Record number of new startups in 2015 based on University research

754

Millions of dollars in externally sponsored research awards given to University researchers in 2015

5.5

Percent decrease in federal research awards

78

Number of donors, in thousands who made gifts, pledges, and commitments to the U in fiscal year 2015

351

Number of dollars, in millions, those 78,000 gave—the highest total in University history

1

The U's ranking in the Most Innovative Public University in the Nation category in the fourth annual Innovation and Prosperity University Awards, sponsored by the Association of Public Land Grant Universities



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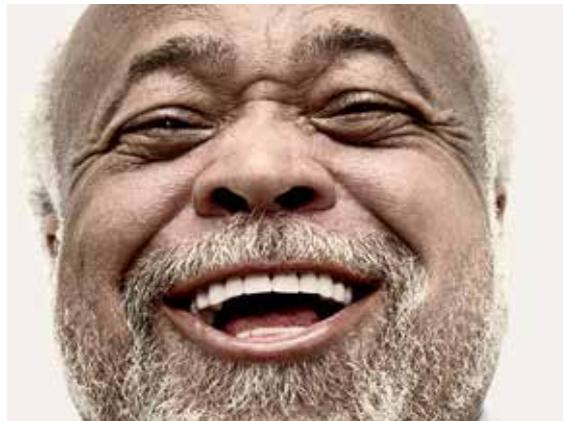
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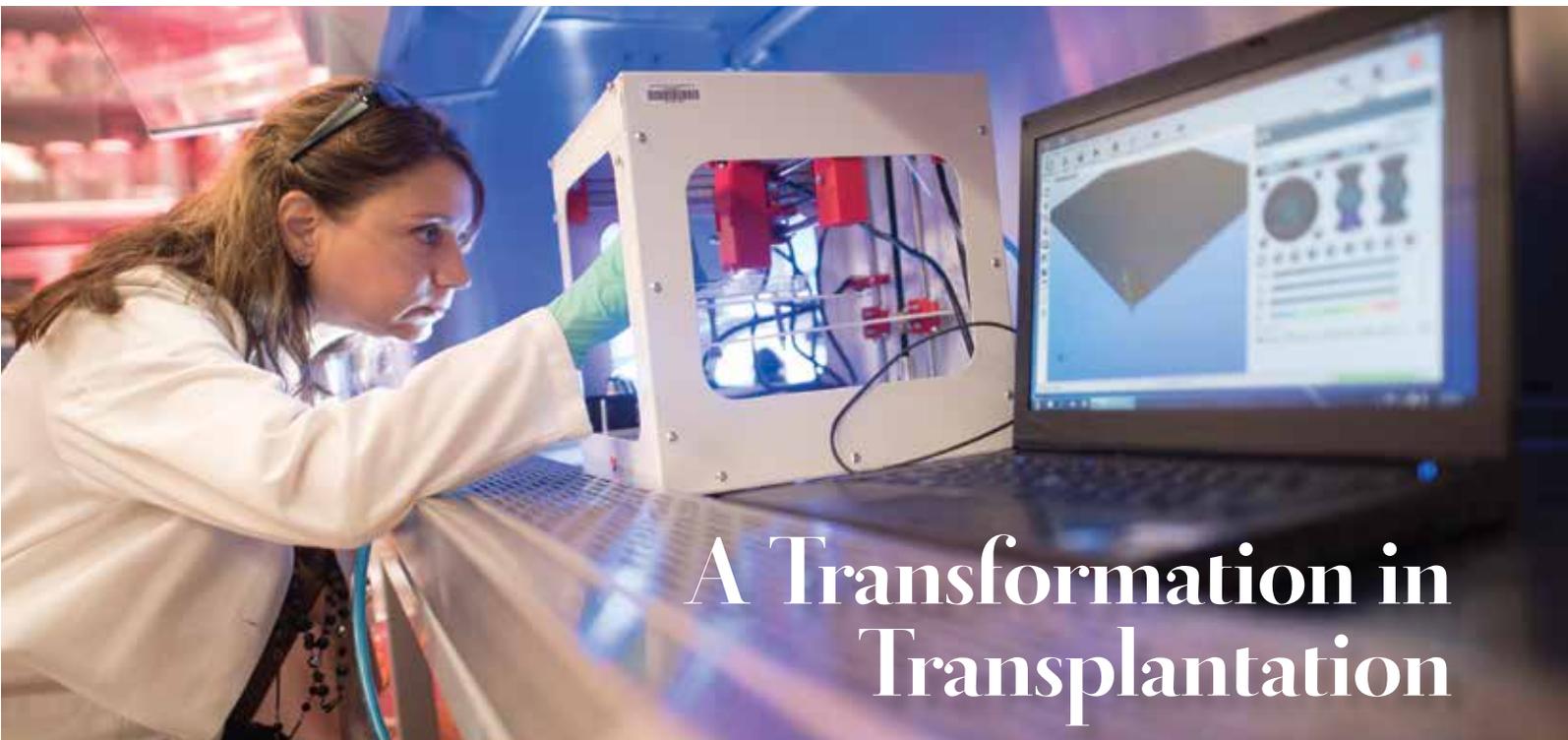
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A Transformation in Transplantation

3D bioprinting is a "game-changer" in regenerative medicine.

By Meleah Maynard

Angela Panosklatsis-Mortari at the U's 3D Bioprinting Facility

The idea of printing body parts for human application sounds like science fiction. But transplant specialist Angela Panosklatsis-Mortari, a professor of pediatrics and medicine at the University of Minnesota, believes it's likely we will see production of at least basic parts—bones, skin, tendons, noses, ears, and blood vessels—on three-dimensional bioprinters within the next decade. Further into the future, she predicts 3D bioprinting may also make it possible to create more complex organs such as livers, kidneys, and hearts.

"This is a game changer that's as revolutionary to medicine as the internet was to communication," says Panosklatsis-Mortari, who heads the University's 3D Bioprinting Facility, which opened in July. "Just like 3D printing changed manufacturing, 3D bioprinting will make it possible for surgeons to transplant an organ printed to the exact size and shape for the patient." Researchers hope they will eventually be able to make some parts using an individual's own cells, eliminating the problem of transplant rejection.

Eventually, the technology could help ease problems like long waiting lists for organs and struggles to find matching donors. "It doesn't mean that the whole organ donor system would go away," she explains. "But this would be an alternative for people who could not get an organ they needed or a

body part that can't be transplanted currently from a deceased or living donor."

Unlike traditional 3D printing, which has been around since the mid-1980s, primarily for making manufacturing prototypes. Bioprinting uses organic material rather than wax or plastic. Using a 3D image as its guide, the print head slowly scrolls back and forth laying down thin layers of a special type of ink that can be combined with living cells and biomaterials, such as collagen and elastin.

Researchers are already using conventional 3D printing technology to create models of hearts and other organs for teaching purposes. They also use models to explain procedures to patients, evaluate surgical procedures, and help create medical devices. And patients are currently using 3D printed prosthetic arms, orthotics, and braces.

Bioprinting, though, is still in early stages. Panosklatsis-Mortari explains that researchers are using 3D bioprinting to make small models of tissue that pharmaceutical companies are experimenting with to test drugs. And it is already possible to print biocompatible scaffolds to help support organs, keep an airway open, or serve as a guide for nerves that have been severed.

Last year, a national team led by University of Minnesota professor of mechanical engineering

Michael McAlpine developed the first 3D printed guide to help regrow the sensory and motor functions of injured nerves. Implanted in a lab rat with biochemical cues to aid in nerve regeneration, the guide improved the rat's ability to walk within weeks. McAlpine's hope is to one day create custom nerve guides for patients whose nerves have been damaged by injury or disease.

For years, Panoskaltis-Mortari had been thinking about the possibilities 3D bioprinting could offer patients. Then, last year, the U.S. technology startup BioBots selected her lab as one of 20 research facilities worldwide to receive a 3D bioprinter at a deeply discounted price. The new printer made it possible for her team to produce a piece of biocompatible esophagus that will soon be transplanted into a pig. Having the ability to successfully transplant a bioprinted portion of esophagus, trachea, or bronchus could dramatically change the way doctors treat patients with congenital defects or advanced disease, she says.

Researchers are also working on ways to bioprint specific cells on demand, such as skin cells for burn patients or bone for patients with severe bone damage. For now, though, researchers like Panoskaltis-Mortari have many questions to answer. How thick can printed parts be? What kinds of biocompatible materials can hold sutures? How will 3D bioprinted parts and tissues support cell growth? And how will bioprinted parts function in the long-term?

It may be decades, but she believes that eventually the University's 3D Bioprinting Facility, along with a handful of others around the country, will be capable of producing even complex organs for transplant. Still, much remains to be done. "Even when we are ready, before we can get approval, organs must be tried in large animals like pigs

and sheep," she explains. Once the transplants are successful on animals, it may be possible to do limited human transplants, mostly likely for patients with no other options who might qualify for compassionate use. "We've got to ensure that bioprinted parts are going to be functional over the long term or be sure that in some cases they can be used as a bridge between a conventional transplant."

Since its inception, the 3D Bioprinting Facility has acquired two more bioprinters—another from BioBots and one that McAlpine and some of his mechanical engineering students made. An additional laser 3D bioprinter is currently being built and should be operational in a few months. The laser will allow doctors to print one cell at a time and has been used to print new skin and bone directly on rats' wounds in the lab. "It's like when you see a sci-fi movie and someone puts their injured arm in a machine and it comes out fine again," Panoskaltis-Mortari says, explaining that the machine would use a scanned 3D image of the arm to guide the printer as it rebuilt the injured area.

In addition to her team, researchers in many disciplines on campus will use the new lab, including biomedical engineers, biologists, stem cell scientists, surgeons, computer engineers, biophysicists, and many others. "There's a lot of interdisciplinary work being done here beyond making organs," she says. "There is potential to generate knowledge and understand so many meaningful things, like cell behavior and how well we can approximate the natural environment that a cell finds itself in in the body. Up until now we've only been able to study cells in two-dimensional environments even though cells normally interact in a 3D environment in our bodies. This could change a lot of what we know." ■

Helping Birds Fly Free

Sixty percent of all North American birds will use the Mississippi River Flyway during the spring migration about to commence. Many of those birds are vulnerable to injury or death from colliding with windows and glass walkways across campus. But this spring, birds might get a different sort of break. A partnership between the U and researchers at the San Diego Zoo is testing the effectiveness of window film with alternating ultraviolet (UV) reflecting stripes.

The film, along with video monitoring equipment, has been applied to glass in three locations on the West Bank and St. Paul campuses that are known to be among the most deadly for bird collisions.

The effectiveness of UV patterns in preventing bird collisions is highly debated: Early field tests in artificial conditions have had promising results, but this is the first time it has ever been tested in a real-world setting.

A photograph of a Tennessee Warbler from the collection of Miranda Brandon (M.F.A. '14) that depicts birds at or just after the fatal moment of impact with buildings



Miranda Brandon



People who feel that work interferes with family often experience a discrepancy between what they hope to accomplish at work and what they actually do during work hours, according to recent studies by Carlson School of Management Professor Theresa Glomb and Assistant Professor Colleen Manchester.

Glomb, who has spent two decades studying workplace-related issues, teamed up with Manchester to study faculty members at a large public university. They found that while most people expressed a preference for spending time on meaningful, ongoing projects such as research, faculty who felt depleted by conflicting work/family demands were more likely to spend their time on small tasks that produced instant gratification.

To counter the effects of these self-sabotaging behaviors, which harm workers' ability to meet goals and advance their careers, Glomb advises people to structure workdays so that energy goes toward key projects first. "Think about ways you can get ready for the day to avoid getting sucked into those tasks that aren't at the top of your list," she says.

The study was published in the May issue of *Journal of Applied Psychology*.

A study led by researchers at the University of Minnesota concludes that marijuana use does not lead to a decline in intellectual function in adolescents. The research, coauthored by professor of psychology William Iacono (Ph.D. '78) and postdoc Joshua Isen (currently a lecturer at Loyola Marymount University in Los Angeles), looked at two sets of data for 3,066 twins from southern California and Minnesota. Their baseline intelligence was measured at ages 9 to 12, prior to any marijuana use. They were then asked about marijuana use every two or three years through middle and high school, then took follow-up intelligence tests at ages 17 to 20.

Results showed that while adolescent marijuana users underperformed on some measures of IQ compared to nonusers, particularly vocabulary, marijuana use and lower IQ scores co-occurred due to other factors. The study was not designed to uncover those factors, but Isen speculates that it could be conditions related to delinquency, such as truancy or a lack of parental monitoring. In the strongest test for a direct causal effect on intellectual functioning, the researchers examined twin pairs in which one had used marijuana frequently and the other had never used. They found no significant differences in IQ between members of twin pairs.

The work is published online in the January 21 *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences*.



Handling money makes young children work harder and give less, according to new research coauthored by Kathleen Vohs of the Carlson School of Management and colleagues at the University of Illinois in Chicago and the University of Social Sciences and Humanities in Poland.

The effect was observed in children who lacked concrete knowledge of money's purpose and persisted regardless of the denomination of the money. Researchers conducted a series of experiments that observed the behaviors of 550 Polish children ages 3 through 6 who were asked to handle money, buttons, or candy in various situations. They measured both social behavior such as generosity and helpfulness and market behavior such as performance and effort. Results showed that handling money, compared with handling the other objects, increased laborious effort and impaired generosity and helpfulness. The study is the first to demonstrate that young children tacitly understand the market mode and also understand that money is a cue to shift into it.

The research was published January 19 in *Psychological Science*.

Using tanning beds at a young age significantly raises a woman's risk of developing melanoma, a deadly form of skin cancer, before age 50. That's the conclusion of a study led by researcher DeAnn Lazovich at the University of Minnesota School of Public Health.

In the United States, melanoma incidence is rising more steeply among women than men younger than age 50. This is the first study to examine age- and gender-specific associations between indoor tanning and melanoma to determine if these trends could be due to greater indoor tanning use among younger women.

The study found that all women who use indoor tanning are at risk of melanoma, but the strongest risk was among women who tanned in their 20s, who were about six times more likely to develop the disease than women who didn't tan indoors. Researchers could not establish an association between indoor tanning and men.

The study was published in the January 27 *JAMA Dermatology*.



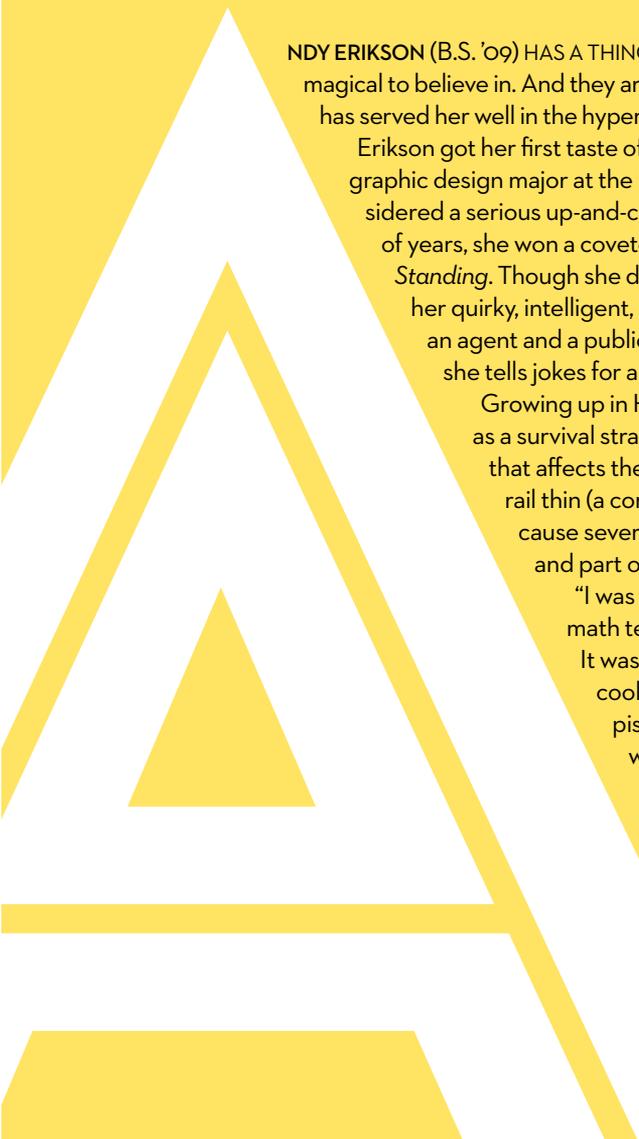
Photograph by Rick Dublin
Drawings by Eric Hanson



FUNNY

DREAMS DO COME TRUE

Go ahead, laugh at them. These alumni love it.



NDY ERIKSON (B.S. '09) HAS A THING FOR UNICORNS. "I like having something beautiful and magical to believe in. And they are WAY cooler than horses," she says. That fanciful outlook has served her well in the hyper-competitive world of comedy, as well as in her personal life.

Erikson got her first taste of performing standup when she was an undergraduate graphic design major at the U. Though relatively new to the comedy scene, she is considered a serious up-and-comer: After doing shows at Twin Cities clubs for a couple of years, she won a coveted spot on season 9 of the NBC talent show *Last Comic Standing*. Though she didn't win, she impressed the judges and the audience with her quirky, intelligent, offbeat (think Emo Philips) jokes. Her performance won her an agent and a publicist, which other comics have to toil for years to earn. Today, she tells jokes for a living.

Growing up in Ham Lake, a Twin Cities suburb, Erikson employed humor as a survival strategy. She lives with Marfan syndrome, a genetic disorder that affects the heart, blood vessels, bones, joints, and eyes. She's tall and rail thin (a common sign of Marfan), and because the syndrome can also cause severe scoliosis, she wore a back brace through middle school and part of high school.

"I was teased," says the brainy Erikson, who found a home on the math team and in National Honor Society. "I'm 6-foot-1. I stood out. It was hard for me. But I always had friends, too, people who were cool and weird like me." She also had allies, like the school therapist who told her the kids who made fun of her back brace were jealous because she had a cool place to put magnets.

Among that crew of loyal friends, Erikson was known for cracking everyone up. "Maybe it was a defense mechanism," she says now. "The fat kid is always super funny. Why can't the tall girl with the back brace be funny, too?"

Though she understood more than anyone the hidden power of humor, Erikson never considered comedy a viable career choice, even though

her friends always said she should. Then one day she just changed her mind.

It was 2007, Erikson heard that *Last Comic Standing* was holding auditions in Minneapolis. She screwed up her courage, skipped her typography and design class, and went to the audition cold. "I waited in line all morning," she recalls. But she was too late: "I didn't even make it into the club." When she got back to campus, Erikson's professor, Steven McCarthy, found out why she didn't make it to class. "He said, 'I won't count you tardy if you do your jokes in front of class.' So my first standup gig was in McNeal Hall."

From that humble beginning, Erikson was inspired. She read books on comedy ("They all basically said you have to get onstage," she says, wryly), wrote a set of one-liners, fine-tuned her onstage persona—think kooky-smart little girl—took a deep breath, and boldly stepped out in front of a mike. Her first show was at Acme Comedy Company in Minneapolis.

"It went really well," Erikson recalls. "It was a packed audience. At first, people were like, 'Who is this girl? What is she doing?' They didn't know if it was an act. I'm up there giggling and telling my jokes. It was fun. It went well. I got laughs. I was surprised."

Surprised and a little nervous.

"Everybody told me, 'Don't go over your time,' so when my time was up, I ran offstage," Erikson laughs. "My shoe fell off, but I just kept running. I figured, 'I'm a comedian. I don't need my shoe.'"

And it turns out she didn't need her shoe or anything else. After that first appearance, Erikson became a staple on the local comedy circuit. She joined the University's then-fledgling comedy team and helped them win a national title. And when *Last Comic Standing* came back to town, she snagged an audition. The rest is history.

Erikson lives in Hollywood with her husband, fellow comedian Alex Stein (B.S. '10). She's on the road almost constantly, performing at colleges, comedy festivals, in casinos, and on television. She'd love to one day get a role on a sitcom, become a television writer, or, best of all, host her own late-night show à la Jimmy Fallon.

Until then, she is content to keep honing her craft until she is as razor-sharp as Tig Notaro, who used her keen humor to famously talk about her breast cancer diagnosis in front of a packed comedy-club crowd. "People don't always realize that in order to be funny you have to be intelligent," Erikson says. "There isn't a single comedian who is really funny but not smart. The two go together. That's what makes humor so powerful."

—Andy Steiner

WHEN DEREK HUGHES (B.A. '95) returned to Minnesota last Thanksgiving to perform at the Acme Comedy Club in Minneapolis, he couldn't resist the opportunity to get in a few light-hearted jabs at his parents. Hughes, who last year was a semifinalist on *America's Got Talent*, stays in his old room when he's in town, and he calls it "a fitness graveyard"—filled with dusty, unused exercise equipment. "But my mom really is trying!" he says, pausing for a beat. "No, she's not."

The joke is, of course, a joke. Audiences love Hughes's one-liners, but they always leave a show wowed by the other skill he brings to the stage: magic, a craft he's been honing since age 10. Hughes appears to read minds, make glass bottles disappear into thin air, and cause playing cards to jump from a deck in his hand to his coat pocket. His work is well beyond pull-a-quarter-from-your-ear illusion: Hughes is a regular performer at the prestigious Magic Castle in Hollywood.

His beginnings weren't so auspicious. Though talented enough as a teenager to land paying gigs as a magician, Hughes's lax attitude toward high school in Roseville, Minnesota, caught up to him and he almost didn't graduate. It was only when he proposed a last-ditch effort to earn credits through the Chavez College of Manual Dexterity and Prestidigitation—no joke, it really exists—that he sidestepped

HIS TRICKS ARE HIS TRADE

failure. At 17, he stayed for weeks in a hotel room in Battle Creek, Michigan, learning magic during the day and practicing at night. "I felt so cool at the time," he says, "but blowing off school is not something I'd necessarily recommend to my sons." With diploma in hand from Chavez, he decided to pursue a degree in theater arts at the University of Minnesota.

While many magicians use a little bit of comedy to lighten their act, Hughes has made it a particular focus of his work. He's trademarked the phrase "Standup Magician" to describe his act; there are plenty of similarities between the two skills, which each start with a setup and end with a punchline of sorts. "A good joke and a good magic trick both require a completely inevitable yet totally surprising climax," he says. "The real trick is not letting your audience get there before you do. But when you do arrive, you want them to think, 'of course.'"

The difference in reactions, though, can be striking. While a great joke will always get a laugh, a perfect illusion might spark a laugh, a gasp, or even astonished silence. "At first, [if the audience went silent], I worried that people weren't reacting," he says. "But then I realized, sometimes they're just thinking 'What the...?' And that's great."

Hughes got his start grinding away in clubs, but regular stints on television have boosted both his name recognition and his opportunities. In addition to playing Logan on the sitcom *Grown Ups* and Jamie in the comedy series *As If*, he has guest starred on several shows, including *CSI: NY*, appeared in

Adam Sandler's film *Mr. Deeds*, done some work for Jay Leno, and served as a "celebrity magic coach" on VH1's *Celebracadabra*.

After his Thanksgiving visit to Minnesota, he headed to Atlanta, where he's developing many of the illusions and stories for the *The Carbonaro Effect*, a part prank, part illusion show on truTV!

Eventually, he hopes to develop a Broadway show—a venue where he'll be able to take his magic and comedy to a new level while seeing the audience's reaction in the moment. "In some ways, magic on television just seems like a special effects trick, because everything is possible with the right edit," he says. "But when people see something live, when they know there's not an edit or a trick camera, they feel that they've really witnessed something. Getting there—that's my dream."

—Erin Peterson





SERIOUSLY FUNNY

A COMEDIAN'S OPENING BIT is perhaps the most critical moment to warm up a skeptical audience. And for **Munazza Humayun** (B.A. '06), who started her stage career wearing a hijab, the traditional head covering of Muslim women, the stakes were even higher. "I don't know how many of you can tell, but I'm a member of a minority group that's constantly portrayed negatively in the media," she'd say as she walked on stage, pausing for dramatic effect. "I'm a lawyer."

After landing that first laugh, Humayun could joke about anything, from religion and culture to her major in sociology. But making sure the audience was on her side right away was essential. "If you're a member of an underrepresented group and you want people to see you in a different light, there's no faster way than to make them genuinely laugh," she says. "It brings down so many barriers."

For years, Humayun performed successfully at venues including the Joke Joint in St. Paul and Acme Comedy Company in Minneapolis. But now, with a full-

time job as a judge for the Minnesota Department of Human Services, she can't swing the 9 p.m. weeknight start times for performances. (And, after dropping her hijab and embracing atheism last year, she also didn't have a go-to opener.) Still, she hasn't given up on humor as a tool to achieve larger goals. She's working on a series of very short humor essays—along the lines of the *New Yorker's* Shouts & Murmurs—that she plans to collect in a book. Combining her thoughts on religion and what she's learned in her years as a state employee, she's already got the title: *God is a Bureaucrat*.

Humayun hopes to accomplish a goal that's even bigger than laughter: getting people to talk about tough issues without resorting to inflammatory rhetoric. "Humor can be a really effective tool for making people think about serious issues without confronting them in a way that that makes them shut down," she says. "I want people to think about things that they may have taken for granted, but do it in a gentler way."

—Erin Peterson

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Heatscape

With live orchestra

Classical technique meets
modern movement in this
sizzling and sultry repertoire





LAST YEAR, University of Minnesota English Professor Julie Schumacher was awarded the Thurber Prize for American Humor for her novel *Dear Committee Members* (Anchor Books, 2014), joining the likes of previous recipients David Sedaris, Calvin Trillin, and Ian Frazier. She is the first woman ever to win.

The book features a series of letters written by disgruntled Professor Jason T. Fitger, who teaches creative writing at the aptly named Payne University. He has a penchant for inappropriately expressing his frustration with feckless students and his own life in the more than 1,300 missives he's written for students over the years.

Here are some excerpts from the book. Read them in a place where it's all right to laugh out loud.

—Meleah Maynard

DEAR COMMITTEE MEMBERS...

For a student Fitger is genuinely trying to help:

"This letter is intended to bolster the application to Wexler Foods of my former student John Leszcynski, who completed the Junior/Senior Creative Writing Workshop three months ago. Mr. Leszcynski received a final grade of B, primarily on the basis of an eleven-page short story about an inebriated man who tumbles into a cave and surfaces from an alcoholic stupor to find that a tentacles monster—sort of a fanged and copiously salivating octopus, if memory serves—is gnawing through the flesh of his lower legs, the monster's spittle burbling ever closer to the victim's groin. Though chaotic and improbable even within the fantasy/horror genre, the story was solidly constructed: dialogue consisted primarily of agonized groans and screaming; the chronology was relentlessly clear."

For a student Fitger is genuinely *not* trying to help:

"Dear Admissions Committee Members—and Janet: This letter recommends Melanie deRueda for admission to the law school on the well-heeled side of the campus. I've known Ms. deRueda for eleven minutes, ten of which were spent in a fruitless attempt to explain to her that I write letters of recommendation only for students who have signed up for and completed one of my classes. This young woman is certainly tenacious, if that's what you're looking for. A transfer student, she appears to be suffering under the delusion that a recommendation from any random faculty member within our august institution will be the key to her application's success."

On the state of his department and the building in which it is housed:

"To the matter at hand: though English has traditionally been a largish department, you will find there are very few viable candidates capable of assuming the mantle of DGS [director of graduate studies]. In fact, if I were a betting man, I'd wager that only 10 percent of the English instruction list will answer your call for nominations. Why? First, because more than a third of our faculty now consists of temporary (adjunct) instructors who creep into the building under cover of darkness to teach their graveyard shifts of freshman comp; they are not eligible to vote or to serve. Second, because the remaining two-thirds of the faculty, bearing the scars of disenfranchisement and long-term abuse, are busy tending to personal grudges like scraps of carrion on which they gnaw in the gloom of their offices. Long story short: your options aren't pretty."

"I'm not sure that you noticed, but the Econ faculty were, in early August, evacuated from the building—as if they'd been notified, *sotto voce*, of an oncoming plague. Not so the faculty in English. With the exception of a few individuals both fleet of foot and quick-witted enough to claim status as asthmatics, we have been Left Behind, almost biblically, expected to begin our classes and meet with students while bulldozers snarl at the door."



Tim Rummelhoff

NO TALENT? NO PROBLEM



Trevor's Calling

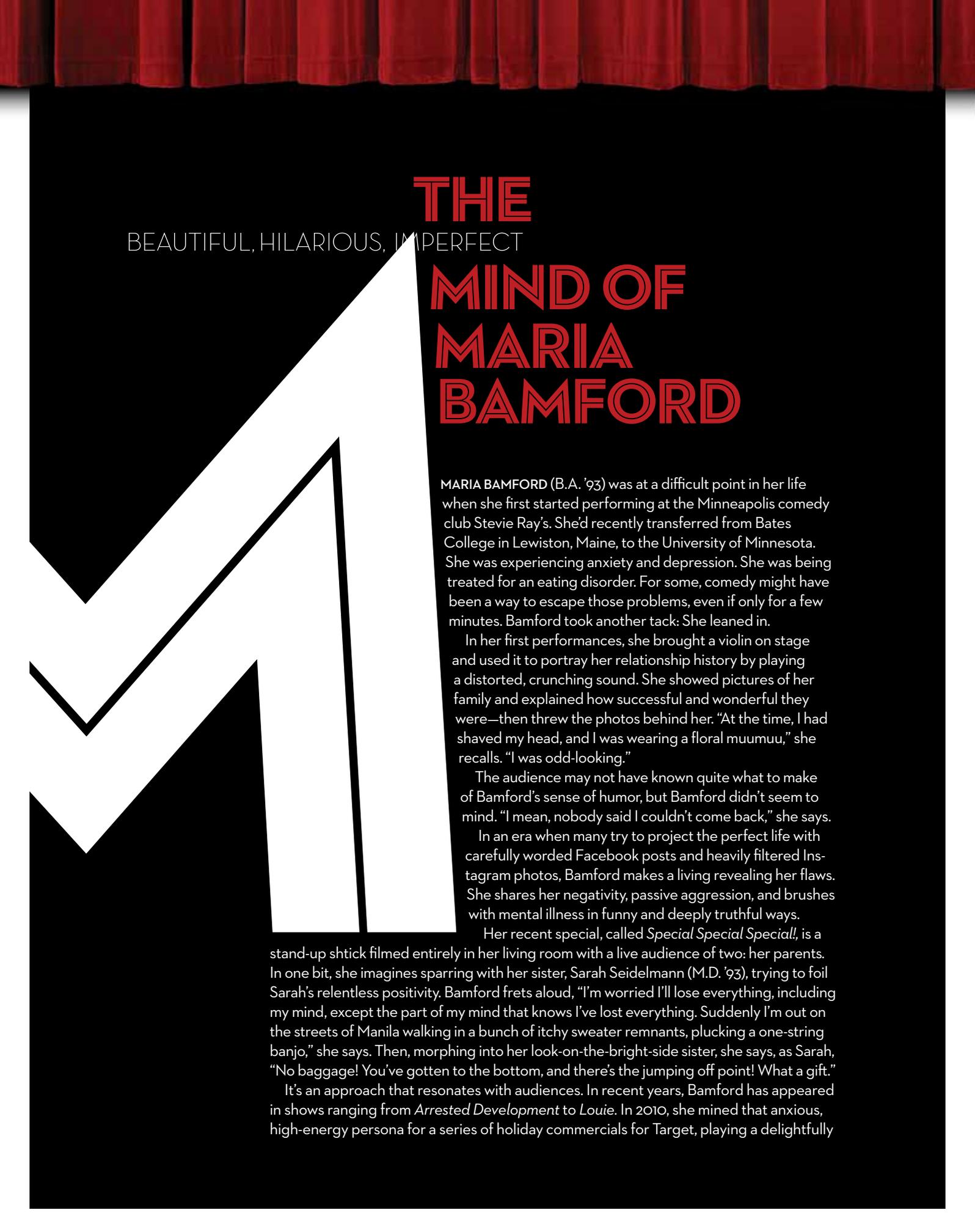
If you want to try your hand at stand-up—and who doesn't?—the charming and very funny Trevor Anderson (B.A. '10) cohosts a comedy open mic every Sunday at Brit's Pub in downtown Minneapolis. Anderson, who began his comedy career while studying music at the U, is also a regular at Acme Comedy Company. He and Andy Erikson (B.S. '09, see cover story) were both members of the University of Minnesota comedy team that won the 2009 championship at Rooftop Comedy's National College Comedy Competition.

THE UNIVERSITY OF MINNESOTA LAW SCHOOL'S Theatre of the Relatively Talentless (T.O.R.T.) will present its 14th annual production, *Minnesota Jones and the Law School of Doom*, on April 8 and 9 at 7 p.m. at Pantages Theatre in Minneapolis.

T.O.R.T.'s much-anticipated annual performances have included *Law Wars*, *A Midsemester Night's Dream*, and *Harry Torter and the Magical Law School*, among others. Productions occasionally feature cameo appearances by Minnesota Supreme Court Justices, Walter Mondale (B.A. '51, J.D. '56), and other luminaries.

T.O.R.T. describes itself as "open to all law students without regard to race, religion, color, sex, national origin, disability, age, sexual orientation, veteran status, creed, marital status, public assistance status, class standing, political preferences, bluebooking skill, journal or moot court membership (or neither), current job offer, propensity to chase ambulances, originalist views, or ability to use the term *a fortiori* in a sentence." The organization's motto is *non plaudite, modo pecuniam jacite* (don't applaud, just throw money).

Visit law.umn.edu for information on tickets.



THE BEAUTIFUL, HILARIOUS, IMPERFECT MIND OF MARIA BAMFORD

MARIA BAMFORD (B.A. '93) was at a difficult point in her life when she first started performing at the Minneapolis comedy club Stevie Ray's. She'd recently transferred from Bates College in Lewiston, Maine, to the University of Minnesota. She was experiencing anxiety and depression. She was being treated for an eating disorder. For some, comedy might have been a way to escape those problems, even if only for a few minutes. Bamford took another tack: She leaned in.

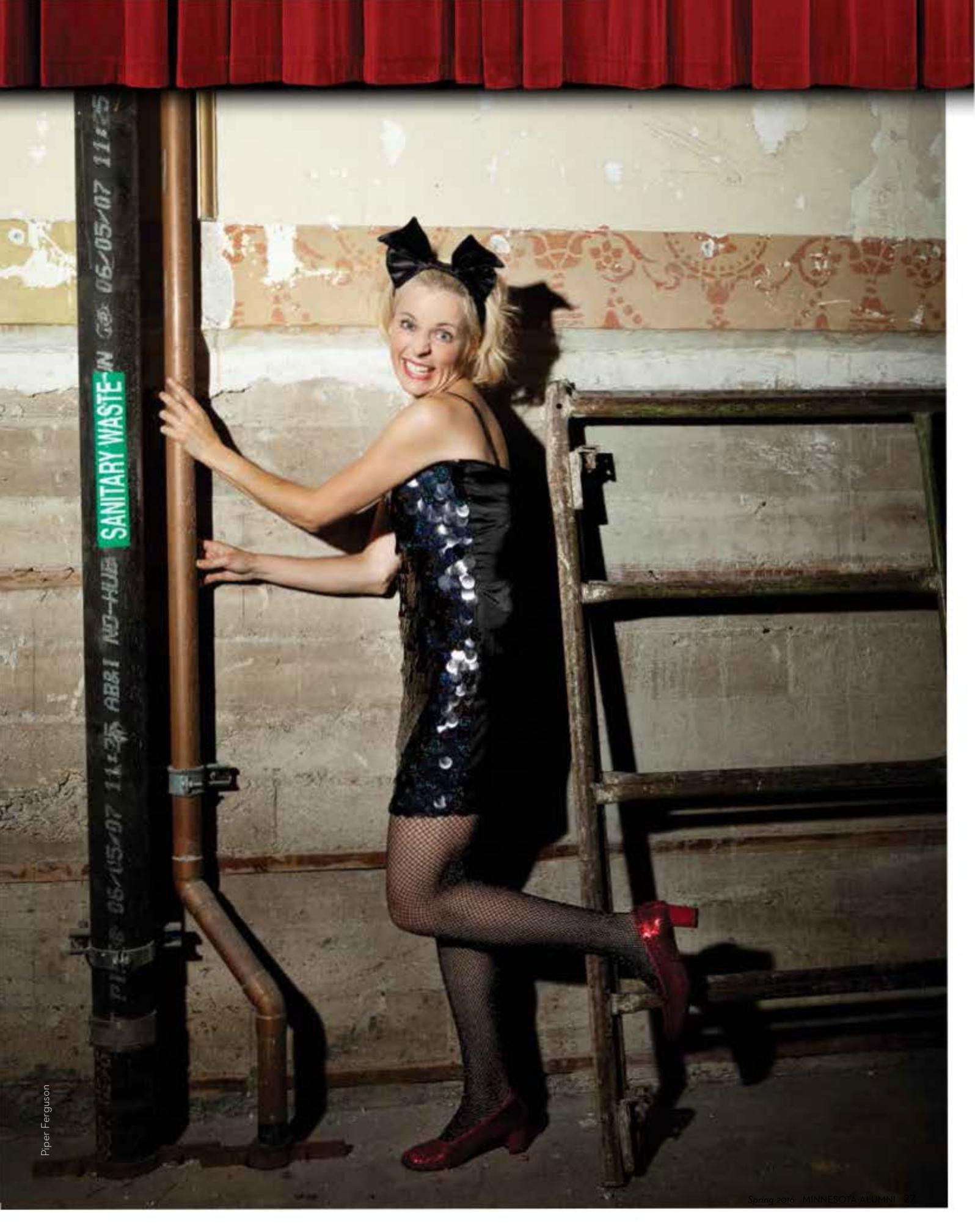
In her first performances, she brought a violin on stage and used it to portray her relationship history by playing a distorted, crunching sound. She showed pictures of her family and explained how successful and wonderful they were—then threw the photos behind her. "At the time, I had shaved my head, and I was wearing a floral muumuu," she recalls. "I was odd-looking."

The audience may not have known quite what to make of Bamford's sense of humor, but Bamford didn't seem to mind. "I mean, nobody said I couldn't come back," she says.

In an era when many try to project the perfect life with carefully worded Facebook posts and heavily filtered Instagram photos, Bamford makes a living revealing her flaws. She shares her negativity, passive aggression, and brushes with mental illness in funny and deeply truthful ways.

Her recent special, called *Special Special Special!*, is a stand-up shtick filmed entirely in her living room with a live audience of two: her parents. In one bit, she imagines sparring with her sister, Sarah Seidemann (M.D. '93), trying to foil Sarah's relentless positivity. Bamford frets aloud, "I'm worried I'll lose everything, including my mind, except the part of my mind that knows I've lost everything. Suddenly I'm out on the streets of Manila walking in a bunch of itchy sweater remnants, plucking a one-string banjo," she says. Then, morphing into her look-on-the-bright-side sister, she says, as Sarah, "No baggage! You've gotten to the bottom, and there's the jumping off point! What a gift."

It's an approach that resonates with audiences. In recent years, Bamford has appeared in shows ranging from *Arrested Development* to *Louie*. In 2010, she mined that anxious, high-energy persona for a series of holiday commercials for Target, playing a delightfully



Piper Ferguson

unhinged shopper eager to take advantage of Black Friday deals.

Bamford knows she walks a fine line with her humor. In today's easy-to-outrage world, tackling a tripwire topic like mental illness requires serious finesse. An audience member with a cell phone camera can capture one clunky move on stage, upload it to the world, and send an entire career off-kilter. But Bamford's carefully constructed jokes often have the effect of pulling people closer. She frequently speaks with people at her shows who have experienced mental illness in their own lives or families, and they are grateful for her perspective. "I think it makes people feel less alone and less secretive," she says. "And in a selfish way, if I were having a bad time again, there are a bunch of people I could tell, because everything is so public."

Though her work is deeply personal, it is informed by a vast curiosity about the world and the human condition. She has a voracious appetite for books and ideas. During an hour-long conversation, she casually drops in a reference to Socrates' ideas about the meaning of life and weaves in a point from a recent article in the *New Yorker*. She says she's been reading *Book of Ages*, a biography of Benjamin Franklin's sister, Jane. "She was so smart, but she had 12 kids—so much of her time was spent in having and taking care of her children. People then believed women shouldn't learn to read, because it might take away from their housework," she marvels. "You can see her start to realize that the game is rigged."

That unfair playing field is something she thinks about today. She realizes that, as someone who wants to be noticed on the biggest stage of all, Hollywood, she hit the genetic jackpot: She's blonde, thin, and attractive. Still,



Bamford as the delightfully unhinged Target Lady

she's noticed that people seem uncomfortable with her age. "There are tons of pictures of me as a 45-year-old woman, but in promotional materials, people almost always use a young picture of me," she says.

Bamford will take her work to an even higher level this spring, when she stars in *Lady Dynamite*, a 13-episode Netflix series produced by *Arrested Development* creator Mitch Hurwitz. Though Netflix contracts demand Bamford stay mum about the particulars until closer to air date, she says it's "an extremely semi-autobiographical show, with heavy emphasis on the extreme."

Though Bamford is happy for the opportunity that *Lady Dynamite* presents, she's not interested in continuing to seek ever-larger platforms. Instead, she wants to find the most authentic ones: those that let her build real relationships with the fans who recognize themselves in her stories. "When you work smaller venues, you can find connection and meaning with the audience; it's easy to lose that in larger place," she says. "What I really want is to find my way back there."

—Erin Peterson

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Young gardeners dig in to learning at the Minnesota Landscape Arboretum.

WHAT DRIVES CAWO ABDI TO THINK SHE CAN OPEN BORDERS BY OPENING EYES?



Imagine having to flee the world you know and risk everything for an uncertain future in a place you've never been. Now, imagine not being wanted there, or anywhere. That's what drives Cawo Abdi and her colleagues at the University of Minnesota to educate citizens about refugee and migrant populations and the challenges they face; eliminating needless fear while promoting justice and a sense of belonging for everyone. "Immigrants should never be seen as a threat," Abdi says, "after all, didn't immigrants build America?"

umn.edu/abdi



UNIVERSITY OF MINNESOTA

Driven to DiscoverSM

Crookston Duluth Morris Rochester Twin Cities

One prolific School of Journalism
alumnus gave us Dobie Gillis and a
host of other iconic characters of the 1950s and 60s:

MIA



By Tim Brady

Illustration by Mitchell Vizensky

X

SHULMAN.

FOR A TELEVISION SERIES that aired for only four seasons more than half a century ago, *The Many Loves of Dobie Gillis* has surprising durability. The characters Max Shulman (B.A. '42) created became almost immediate icons of a generation that rested somewhere between the crew cut and bobby sox era of post-war America and the coffee shop and beatnik poses of late 1950s subculture.

The Many Loves of Dobie Gillis was originally a pair of short story collections that Shulman wrote in 1951. They centered on a hapless University of Minnesota student

characters. The unresolved zaniness of its eccentric figures helped give rise to a brand of CBS comedies in the early 1960s that featured the sort of highly exaggerated characters and situations that were Shulman's bread-and-butter, from *The Beverly Hillbillies* and *Gilligan's Island* to *Green Acres* and *Hogan's Heroes*.

Shulman produced the series and wrote a number of its episodes. The eponymous hero, Dobie, played by Dwayne Hickman, was a frustrated young man who pined for popularity, success, and unattainable young women,

DIG IT?

named Dobie Gillis, muddling his way through a less than stellar college career. With references galore to Minnesota, the Twin Cities, and the U campus, the stories offer a unique and humorous portrait of the campus of the day, as well as its students and faculty—all exaggerated, of course.

It was in the wake of Shulman's second book, *I Was a Teen-Age Dwarf*, that he and his production partners went to 20th Century Fox with the idea for a television series based on the Dobie Gillis stories. CBS bought the pilot and began airing the series in 1959. It became an immediate hit. The program was a novelty to television because it centered on the lives of teenage characters living and interacting outside the family. Though Dobie's parents were major figures in the series and Dobie lived for a time in the family home, the central characters were primarily the students who peopled Dobie's life. Grownups rarely if ever supplied plot resolutions, in contrast to other popular sitcoms of the day like *Father Knows Best* and *Leave It to Beaver*.

The series was decidedly apolitical at a time when the country was on the verge of intense social unrest, but there was a definite nonconformity in its storylines and

not necessarily in that order. His best friend, Maynard G. Krebs, played by Bob Denver of *Gilligan's Island* fame, favored berets, had a goatee strapped to his chin, and liked to play bongo drums beneath one of the standard props of the series: a statue of

The Thinker planted on the campus. Maynard's eccentricities and deep fear of work were in sharp and humorous contrast to Dobie's determinedly hapless pursuits of fortune and romance.

Other characters were Milton Armitage (Warren Beatty), a campus rich kid and rival to Dobie; Thalia Menninger (Tuesday Weld), the stunningly beautiful, aspirational love of Dobie's life; and Zelda Gilroy (Sheila James), a brainy and eager young pragmatist, who continually pursued Dobie despite his protests that he was not interested.

The characters evolved out of Shulman's experiences as a college student at the University of Minnesota. A St. Paul kid born in 1919 and raised in the Selby-Dale neighborhood, Shulman grew up poor, hardworking, and with a habit of making up stories. With a vague idea of studying literature, he began his education at the University of Minnesota in 1936 but dropped out for a year to work at a grocery store. When he returned, it was to study journalism "because the English department was so dismal," Shulman said in a 1988 interview. "Robert Penn Warren and Allen Tate came after I left."

Shulman's gifts as a writer were quickly recognized in the journalism school, which happened to be loaded with talent. Sharing the main spotlight with Shulman at the time was Tom Heggen (B.A. '41), an Iowan and nephew of novelist Wallace Stegner, who was building a reputation as a quirky columnist at the *Minnesota Daily*. Shulman also wrote a column for the *Daily* and later for *Ski-U-Mah*, a journal of humor published at the U. Shulman's columns featured humor that typically centered on befuddled

campus figures whose everyday trials and tribulations were heightened with overstatement and exaggeration. Besides writing columns for the *Daily*, Shulman also specialized in pranks, like the time he filled out a ballot for All-American football players that had arrived at the paper with the name of a fictitious Gopher tackle named Wally Stuneros. Observant readers will note that Stuneros spelled backwards reads “sore nuts.”

Shulman and Heggen were competitive writers in the small world of campus columnists in the early 1940s, both with high ambitions for fame in the world of publishing. Shulman was first to get the siren call. An editor from Doubleday came to Minneapolis in 1942, hunting for writing talent. Shulman’s name came up and the editor asked him to send some clips. On the basis of those, Doubleday offered him a contract for a humorous book on college life. Three months later, just before he entered the U.S. Army for the duration of World War II, the young writer presented Doubleday with a satire of college life at the University of Minnesota called *Barefoot Boy With Cheek*. The book became a surprise bestseller and launched Shulman’s career.

His wartime service consisted of writing public relations copy for the Army Air Force, work that gave him ample opportunity to continue his creative writing on the side. He cranked out two more novels before the end of the war, and, once mustered out of the Army, spent time working on a Broadway musical version of *Barefoot Boy*. Then it was off to Hollywood for a two-year stint as a writer for the movies. He settled down to raise a family in Connecticut in 1953, where, coincidentally, he became a neighbor and close friend of Robert Penn Warren, the

esteemed poet, novelist, and former U English professor whose tenure in the English Department Shulman had just missed as an undergraduate.

In Connecticut, Shulman worked on another Broadway success called *The Tender Trap*, which was made into a movie starring Frank Sinatra and Debbie Reynolds. He also did an uncredited polish on a screenplay based on the novel *Mister Roberts*, written by his old *Daily* competitor and friend, Tom Heggen. (Heggen died tragically in 1949 after penning *Roberts*, which became a Best Picture nominee in 1956 and won an Oscar for Jack Lemmon.)

Meanwhile, Shulman wrote a bestselling novel called *Rally 'Round the Flag, Boys!* which was made into a popular movie starring Paul Newman, Joanne Woodward, and Joan Collins. It was during this period that he wrote *The Many Loves of Dobie Gillis. I Was a Teen-age Dwarf* was published in 1959.

The Many Loves of Dobie Gillis was cancelled in 1963, but Shulman’s writing career continued for many years after. He wrote a number of novels through the 1960s and 1970s, remained an active member of the Writers’ Guild, and wrote the screenplay for another major movie, *House Calls*, with Walter Matthau and Glenda Jackson. *House Calls* had a follow-up television series that ran from the late 1970s to the early 1980s.

After his graduation from the U, Shulman made only occasional trips back to the Twin Cities, but a son, Daniel Shulman, has spent many years as an attorney in Minneapolis for the Gray, Plant, Mooty Law firm.

Max Shulman died in Los Angeles in 1988. Daniel, informs us that though his father’s books are out of print, all of them will soon be reissued in e-book form. **■**



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Tender Was Their Fight

By Laura Silver

In 1966, Michael McConnell and Jack Baker (J.D. '72) fell in love. McConnell was the adored son and brother of a big, close-knit family he describes as a “Norman Rockwell painting.”

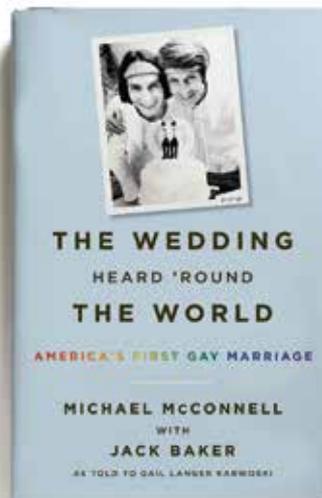
Baker was clean-cut and ambitious, an orphan who had been raised in a Catholic boarding school, served the Air Force, and was working as a field engineer. They were introduced at a Halloween party near Norman, Oklahoma, McConnell’s hometown.

Was it McConnell’s optimism, shaped by his loving family, or Baker’s maturity forged by an independent childhood that led the two, on September 3, 1971, to exchange vows in the first legal same-sex wedding in the United States? Either way, to say the two were ahead of their time is an understatement. “What I like to say is, we jerked people 45 years into the future and then waited for them to catch up,” McConnell says.

Now, less than a year since the U.S. Supreme Court legalized same-sex marriage, McConnell and Baker tell their story in a delightful memoir, *The Wedding Heard 'Round the World: America's First Gay Marriage* (University of Minnesota Press, 2016). Written from McConnell’s point of view with help from writer Gail Langer Karwoski, the book speaks most pointedly to a young adult audience, but all readers will find an inspirational love story as well as a fascinating look back at the early days of the gay rights struggle.

Why did the couple—still together and enjoying a quiet life of retirement in the Twin Cities—decide it was time to write a memoir? Says McConnell, “We felt we needed to tell the story so that others could know the truth and the facts. It didn’t start in Massachusetts [the first state to legalize gay marriage]. It didn’t start with a lawsuit in Hawaii. It started right here in Minneapolis, and it was engendered and supported by a group on the University of Minnesota campus.”

McConnell and Baker were already activists by the time their big day arrived. Baker was fighting



the Air Force’s unexpected decision to replace his honorable discharge with a general discharge, causing him to lose his job at a military facility. He had also promised McConnell he’d find a way for the two to legally marry. Law school seemed the best way to prepare for the battles ahead, so Baker accepted a spot at the University of Minnesota’s law school, while McConnell, a librarian, accepted a job at the University Libraries.

In Minneapolis, they dove into gay life on campus. Baker was twice elected student body president, the first openly gay university student body president in the nation—news so big that Walter Cronkite reported it on the *CBS Evening News*. They helped reinvigorate the U’s gay student organization, Fight Repression of Erotic Expression

Michael McConnell, left, and Jack Baker

(FREE), which held the nation's first gay student dance.

One day Baker told McConnell he'd made an exciting discovery at the law library: Minnesota's statutes did not explicitly forbid marriage between two men. After being denied a marriage license in Hennepin County, the two, with a bit of ingenious maneuvering, obtained a license in Blue Earth County. Soon thereafter, Rev. Roger Lynn, a Methodist minister, conducted their small wedding ceremony in a friend's south Minneapolis apartment. Meanwhile, their historic lawsuit filed against Hennepin County, *Baker v. Nelson*, traveled to the United States Supreme Court, where it was ultimately dismissed and became a precedent for all subsequent gay marriage cases.

The wedding brought the couple a new level of fame, most of it positive:

●

MCCONNELL CALLS
HIS FIRING FROM THE
UNIVERSITY OF MINNESOTA
"A DARK CLOUD THAT HUNG
OVER ME FOR OVER 30
YEARS." RAPPROCHEMENT
WITH THE U CAME THIS
PAST FALL.

●

They were featured in *Look* magazine, appeared on Phil Donahue's and David Susskind's television shows, and received letters from all over the world. But soon the other shoe dropped: The University of Minnesota's Board of Regents voted to deny McConnell his library job, stating his "personal conduct, as represented in the public and the University news media,

is not consistent with the best interest of the University." Devastated, McConnell filed a second lawsuit that, again, made its way to the U.S. Supreme Court and was dismissed without review.

Hundreds attended a campus rally in front of Morrill Hall to support McConnell, including Allan Spear, a then-closeted U history professor who years later was elected to the Minnesota Senate and became one of the first openly gay legislators in the nation. Spear later called the McConnell rally life changing. Yet McConnell's own life was on hold. He took part-time jobs at Dayton's department store and a gay bar to make ends meet and helped cofound a gay community center. He would eventually return to his profession, and had a satisfying 37-year career at Hennepin County Library.

McConnell calls his firing from the U "a dark cloud that hung over me for over 30 years." Rapprochement with the U came this past fall, when the couple agreed to donate their papers—more than 60,000 pages of documents, photos, letters, and legal briefs—to the Jean-Nickolaus Tretter Collection for Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual, and Transgender Studies at the University of Minnesota Libraries. President Eric Kaler (Ph.D. '82) apologized for the "reprehensible" treatment McConnell received from the University. The apology, McConnell says, "was a huge relief for me personally. That was a powerful and very welcome thing."

With the release of their memoir and the Tretter donation, Baker and McConnell are back in the spotlight, this time in a celebratory mode. They've recently been profiled in *Time* magazine, the *New York Times*, the *Star Tribune*, and on MPR, among other outlets.

The two agree that while their fight took longer than expected, the outcome was never in doubt. "I think when you start talking about sexuality, people kind of duck their heads," says McConnell. "But when you talk about love and commitment and family, people understand what you're saying." ■



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Servant, Mentor, CEO

ALISON PAGE (M.S. '96, M.H.A. '96) is a CEO who's comfortable getting her hands dirty. Literally. Page, who leads Baldwin Area Medical Center (BAMC), an independent hospital and clinic in western Wisconsin, recently found herself in suit and high heels wielding a shovel near the facility's entrance. She was responding to a patient's complaint about milkweed that had been removed from the medical center grounds. The patient was on her way into the clinic, and noticed that the milkweed had been pulled and was laying there like a pile of weeds. "She was very concerned: 'Don't people know? The migrating monarchs need the milkweed!'"

So two days later, Page personally planted new milkweed that another employee harvested from her lake property. Signs reading "Please protect me," with a picture of milkweed and a monarch butterfly, are now posted in the area. "I'm very involved in this organization, from top to bottom and left to right—as is everyone who works here," Page says with a smile.

Page, who is the chair of the Alumni Association board of directors, first stepped on campus nearly 25 years ago as a 35-year-old mom of five young kids. The River Falls native—she lives there today with her husband David—wanted to earn an advanced degree that would help further her goal: making the world a better place for children and families.

"You're really, really lucky in this life if you can align your [paid] job with your life's work. I get to do that." And, she adds, "I want to help everybody here align their job with their life's work."

Page takes immense pleasure in encouraging employees to grow and contribute in new ways. That's one of the delights of working in a small, independent health care system, explains the youthful grandmother of seven.

BAMC's size and independence allow it to be responsive to the community and to promote a culture where "no one's sphere of influence is limited," Page says. "If one of our nurses or doctors or [other staffers] has an idea, we get a small group

of people together in a room, and we do it. There are no barriers. That makes for a fun workplace.” Case in point: several years ago, BAMC’s social worker suggested the center needed a transport van, since the community does not have a taxi or bus. So BAMC raised the money through grants and donations to buy one.

Daughter of “the old town doctor” in River Falls, Page—whose first job, at age 12, was candy striper at the hospital—was destined for a career in health care. Just not the kind she originally envisioned. In nursing school at Marquette, she found that while she admired and valued good patient care, she felt drawn more to big-picture questions.

“I discovered pretty quickly that while I loved health care, I wasn’t necessarily cut out to be a nurse. I was always thinking about, why did they build that this way, and why aren’t we doing this that way? I discovered I really wanted to *run* the hospital.”

After raising her children to school age, Page decided to apply for graduate school. Personal tragedy at age 26—she lost a baby in pregnancy, and, because of a medical error, nearly lost her own life as well—shaped how she viewed her life. “I’m not here forever. I’m here for a finite period of time. And it develops a sense of urgency, that there’s stuff I want to get done, there’s a difference I want to make. That hits everybody, maybe at different points; I feel fortunate that it came to me at a young age.”

Giving back to the U has been a no-brainer for Page from the start. In her first role after finishing her degree, as an administrative fellow with Fairview Health Services’ chief operating officer, she brought postgrad students from the School of Public Health’s masters in healthcare administration (MHA) program to Fairview and served as their onsite preceptor.

She frequently lectures in Academic Health Center classes. “I loved graduate school, and I love graduate students. They’re a blast; they’re very energizing,” Page says. “Grad school is like being at the airport: Everyone’s on their way somewhere. They’ve got ideas, they’ve got plans, and being a part of shaping their perspective and how they approach things is fun—really fun.”

The benefits of mentorship flow in both directions, she says. At BAMC, Page has worked with MHA students from the U on key endeavors like

finding an ideal new location for the medical center’s new 106,000-acre health and wellness campus, slated to open this summer. Similarly, years ago MHA students helped Page develop a strategic plan for the BAMC, which is still in use.

“I tell them, yes I love to help the University of Minnesota—and I love the help I get from the University of Minnesota,” she continues. “I could’ve paid a consulting firm \$100,000 to come out here and select a site, but the students did a stellar job. If you give students an opportunity to do great work, that always comes back to you.”

When Page joined the Alumni Association board nine years ago, the lifelong Wisconsinite had some brushing up to do on Gopher culture. “I had five young kids at home when I was in grad school. I didn’t go to football games, I didn’t go to the bars; I was taking care of little kids. I didn’t know Ski-U-Mah. So when I first joined the Alumni Association, I was so puzzled; I asked, ‘Why are all your Ws upside down?’”

Page’s optimistic approach to work and to life is summed up in a three-part mantra: Assume goodness, choose joy, and proceed with grace. That philosophy is taking root across the medical center, with staffers putting it on signs around the building and on email signatures.

In 2008, Page, who has always been interested in public policy, ran for the Wisconsin state senate seat in her district. Although she lost to the incumbent, she doesn’t rule out a future run for political office. “I love what I do now. I don’t know what’s next. I think you go where life takes you, and you always scan the horizon for an opportunity to make a difference in the world.” ❧

—Susan Maas

“IT IS IMPORTANT THAT THE COURT REFLECT THE COMMUNITY IT SERVES, AND I ALSO THINK SYMBOLISM IS VERY IMPORTANT. IF THERE ARE GAY ATTORNEYS, GAY PEOPLE THINKING ABOUT GOING TO LAW SCHOOL, I THINK IT’S IMPORTANT THAT THEY KNOW THERE AREN’T BARRIERS TO THEIR DREAMS.”

MARGARET CHUTICH (B.A. ’80), who was appointed to the Minnesota Supreme Court in January. She is the first openly gay justice on the Minnesota Supreme Court. Chutich is the former associate dean of the Humphrey School.

“Well, he wrote *Huckleberry Finn* and I didn’t. There’s one difference.”



GARRISON KEILLOR (B.A. ’66), in an interview on CNN in response to a question about comparisons between his storytelling and Mark Twain’s.

Teaching As an Act of Love

IN ASYANA EDDY'S letter nominating her high school English teacher, **Tom Rademacher** (B.A. '04, M.A. '07) for Minnesota's 2014 Teacher of the Year, she wrote that he "will do anything in his power to help his students succeed. . . . He gives us the freedom to approach his subjects in the most creative ways possible, he teaches us that our thoughts matter, and that we are capable of anything we want to do with our lives."

For Rademacher, who was named Teacher of the Year from among 10 finalists, it would be impossible to teach any other way. Growing up in Milwaukee, he saw how satisfied his mom seemed after a day spent teaching special education. Her mom had also been a teacher and, like them, he sees teaching as a public service. "I really believed my mom helped save the lives of some of her students," he recalls. "Teaching is one of the few professions where you actually get to help shape someone's life, and I saw the potential for what teaching could be."

After earning his master's degree in English education in 2007, Rademacher started teaching at the Fine Arts Interdisciplinary Resources (FAIR) School in downtown Minneapolis. First, though, he took a year off after being one of eight students in his writing program at the U chosen to have dinner with writer Garrison Keillor (B.A. '66). "I told him I'd wanted to be a writer all my life and asked what his number one piece of advice for writers would be," he says. "He said to take a year off after college to work the crummiest job I could get by on and to spend the rest of the time writing, so I did that," spending a year working the closing shift at a campus coffee shop.

When he started his teaching career, Rademacher chose the FAIR School because he wanted to teach at an art school. He chose English not only because he loves writing, but because he considers it the only core subject

that is also an art form. After first being "obsessed" with the content he wanted to get across to students, he soon figured out what he thinks is the most important about teaching. "I realized that it isn't about what you're teaching, it's how you're there for kids when they need you and how you help them make sense of things."

Last year, for example, his students focused on issues of social justice. The Black Lives Matter campaign came up frequently in the classroom. Rademacher helped students express their feelings in writing. "Once you make your classroom a safe space for students to express themselves, and that's hard work to do, they will engage and share their feelings and perspectives. It's an amazing thing to watch," he says. "Kids have come back and told me that conversations they had in class helped them decide what they wanted to do for the rest of their lives, and that's incredible."

Because of their unique access to students, teachers are often the closest adults, after family, in kids' lives, Rademacher says. It's a heavy responsibility that keeps him awake some nights, even after a decade of teaching. Earlier this year, after nine years at the FAIR School, he accepted a new job as a teacher coach and instructional specialist at Anishinabe Academy, a Minneapolis public school with a primarily Native American student body. The position allows him to share with others what he's learned about teaching. His aim is not to have people emulate his methods but rather be the best that they can be. "At its core, I think teaching is both an act of social justice and an act of love," he says. "The amount of love teachers show students every day is a staggering thing, and if you walk around schools looking for it, you'll see that the real service teachers provide is pouring care into students." ❧

—Meleah Maynard

Tom Rademacher talks with student KhaLani Freemont



Sara Rubinstein



“Once you make your classroom a safe space for students to express themselves, and that’s hard work to do, they will engage and share their feelings and perspectives. It’s an amazing thing to watch.”



Mark Lunenburg

Play the Race Card

JOURNALIST MICHELE NORRIS (B.A. '05) has left NPR after 13 years to devote more time to The Race Card Project (TRCP), which she founded in 2010 to foster candid conversations about race and identity. It rests on a simple idea: Ask people to think about the word “race” and write a six-word essay about it.

The idea for TRCP began to percolate while Norris, a Minneapolis native, was on a nationwide tour for her book *The Grace of Silence*, a memoir that digs into her family’s history and raises questions about its racial legacy. [See the Winter 2011 issue of *Minnesota*]. During the tour she assumed she would need to help audience members overcome their reluctance to talk about race, so she came up with the idea of giving out postcards on which people could distill their thoughts into six words. To her surprise, dozens of postcards started arriving in her mailbox week after week. She also discovered that many people, after hearing her story, wanted to tell their own.

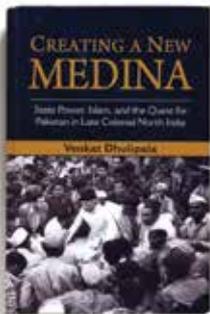
“Despite all the talk about America’s consternation or cowardice when it comes to talking about race, I seemed to have found auditorium after auditorium full of people who were more than willing to unburden themselves on this prickly topic,” Norris says.

To date the project has received tens of thousands of six-word stories from all over the world, many of which are posted on the Race Card Wall at the TRCP website. To read them and to add your own, visit theracecardproject.com.

—Cynthia Scott

"PHENOMENAL"

Alumnus Venkat Dhulipala's book *Creating a New Medina: State Power, Islam, and the Quest for Pakistan in Late Colonial North India* was named one of *Newsweek* magazine's most illuminating global nonfiction books of 2015. Calling the book possibly the most important history book of 2015, *Newsweek* says that Dhulipala (Ph.D. '08) "upends decades of conventional wisdom" about the creation of Pakistan in a "phenomenal work of history."



She Feeds the Beasts

"HALF MY JOB is just dealing with picky eaters," says **Devan Paulus Compart** (M.S. '12, Ph.D. '14), pointing to the diet sheet on her computer screen. As the animal nutritionist for the Lincoln Park Zoo in Chicago—the oldest zoo in the nation—Compart spends a lot of time researching and formulating diets to ensure the animals stay healthy. On this morning, she's working on the menu for a Hoffman sloth couple that recently had a baby. With the infant growing and mom lactating, family members need more food to meet their energy needs. Next, she'll be turning her attention back to tweaking primate diets so they no longer get sugary fruits, which are causing obesity and dental issues. "Our fruit has much more sugar in it than fruit they would eat in the wild, so like a few other zoos, we're starting to move to fruit-free diets," she explains, adding that another plus is that the animals may fight less over food because fruit-free diets are less tasty.

Gone are the days when zoos allowed visitors to put spare change into machines that dispense

cereal or dry kibble to toss to animals in the enclosures. Today, as more is learned about what animals should and shouldn't eat to stay healthy in captivity, zoos are paying more attention to nutrition. But while all zoos have a nutrition center, few are staffed by a nutritionist. Compart, who started work at the Lincoln Park Zoo shortly after graduating from the University in 2014, figures she is one of fewer than 20 animal nutritionists working at U.S. zoos.

But that's changing, because nutritionists are saving zoos money by keeping animals healthier and reducing food costs, Compart says. At the Lincoln Park Zoo, a small zoo where admission is free, Compart manages an annual food budget of \$400,000. And with bamboo for just two of the zoo's red pandas running about \$400 a week, it takes some creativity to make her numbers.

Though Compart didn't set out to become a zoo nutritionist, she settled on that path while doing her graduate work in the Department of Animal Science. Growing up in North Bend,



Fruit, starchy vegetables, and skewers of additional fare are ready for fruit bats. Mealworms in front are for the armadillo.

Washington, she spent time out in the field with her dad, a wildlife biologist. At home, she conducted her own experiments, and her parents have Polaroids of her setting up feeding trials to discover what her pet rat most liked to eat—oats. By age 10, she was riding horses and working at a stable. Five years later she started giving horseback riding lessons, and she initially studied equine science at the U before switching to livestock after just one quarter. “I was working with cattle professor Alfredo DiCostanzo and got really interested in nutrition,” she recalls. The more she learned about animal nutrition and the possibility of working in zoos, the more she decided that was the job for her.

Though much is known about what domestic species like pigs and cows eat, designing diets for exotic zoo creatures, such as reptiles, birds, meerkats, and polar bears is trickier because their nutritional needs are less understood. “Zoos have for a long time been feeding polar bears fat because they eat seals in the wild and they are high in fat,” she explains. “But animals know what their bodies need, and research has shown that they eat the meat, too,

especially when they need more protein for growth. As nutritionists, we need to be looking at what animals are really eating, not feeding them what we think they eat.”

In addition to creating diets for all of the zoo’s animals, Compart also conducts quarterly body condition scoring evaluations to assess whether animals are overweight, underweight, or possibly pregnant. She also specifies what caretakers who look after the animals can use as enrichment foods. Most of the animals in the zoo receive these foods, which are literally meant to enrich animals’ lives by encouraging behaviors like foraging, which they would engage in daily were they not in enclosures. Foods vary by species, with Diana monkeys getting things like frozen, unsweetened blueberries, jungle food pellets, peanut butter, and waxworms, while meerkats enjoy egg whites and an occasional frozen pinky mouse.

“Animals need to be stimulated and have things to do, just like they would in the wild,” Compart says. “So the keepers scatter enrichment foods, or smear them around, or hide them so the animals have to work to get at them. It’s not about nutrition as much as fun mental stimulation, which is important for their health too.”

—Meleah Maynard

“Over the past decade or so, we have noticed as many gaps in the conversations about the Mississippi as there are fruitful connections. We want to address these gaps by making a space for community people and scholars to learn from and with each other. Native Americans, whose experience of the Mississippi has extended back millennia, will be heard here, as well as voices of other groups not commonly thought of as having a ‘river story.’”

PATRICK NUNNALLY (M.S. '03), editor of the Institute for Advanced Studies' new interdisciplinary online journal *Open Rivers: Rethinking the Mississippi*, in the inaugural issue. Find it at editions.lib.umn.edu/openrivers.

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The spring **Alumni Webinar Series** features two discussions that focus on finances.

Liberty Mutual Insurance presents **Get the Most Out of Your Insurance** on March 17, noon to 1 p.m. (CST). You'll learn everything you need to know about auto, renters', and home insurance.

Credible presents **Student Debt Management: What Makes the Most Sense for You** on May 19, noon to 1 p.m. (CST). Learn if refinancing is the right option for you and learn how managing your student loan affects other parts of your life, including your credit and mortgage. MinnesotaAlumni.org/webinars

NETWORK



Graduates from the last decade are encouraged to sign up now for the next **Emerging Professionals Network** event at Lakes & Legends Brewing Company in Minneapolis on March 29, 5:30 p.m. Expand your professional network and connect with other recent grads in a fun, casual atmosphere. Alumni Association members receive a special rate on registration. MinnesotaAlumni.org/EPN

MAKE A DIFFERENCE

THE POWER OF ALUMNI VOICES

Alumni make a critical difference in determining what level of support the state gives to the University of Minnesota. This year the U has requested \$236.3 million, including funding to maintain and repair infrastructure, build a new health care training facility, renovate Pillsbury Hall, and more. The complete request can be found at Govrelations.umn.edu.

The single most important step you can take is to let your legislator know why the U matters to you. "Your voice matters," says

District 64A Representative Erin Murphy. "Visiting your lawmaker, sending a letter, and making a phone call are all effective ways to make your mighty voice heard."

What's your U story? Share it with your legislators. And plan to attend the 2016 Support the U Day on March 29.

Questions? Alumni Association Advocacy Director Adam Yust (B.A. '09, UMM) is here to help. Contact him at 612-625-7526 or adamyust@umn.edu.



AROUND THE WORLD



In January, President Eric Kaler and Karen Kaler hosted 22 alumni and friends on a tour of Vietnam, one of many offerings of the Alumni Travel Program. In addition to sightseeing, the trip included dinners with U alumni and students in Hanoi and Ho Chi Minh City. Pictured below are travelers wearing traditional Vietnamese clothing during a boat cruise in Halong Bay.

The Alumni Travel Program has dozens of domestic and international destinations. Dream big. Travel happy. Join us. MinnesotaAlumni.org/travel



Alumni travelers Paul Warren, Kent Horsager, Ian Drummond, Sue Drummond, Mara LaRock, Mary LaRock, Sue Huebsch, Doug Huebsch, Carol Shapiro, Vida Scarpello, Jane Ranum, Beth Horsager, Eric Kaler Nancy Kiskis, Karna Berg, Christine Warren, and Karen Kaler

FAREWELL AND THANKS, MARK



We bid a fond farewell to veteran staff member Mark Allen B.A. '86), who is retiring after more than three decades of service to the University of Minnesota, 23 of them at the Alumni Association.

Mark's long and fruitful tenure as national outreach director was spent working with chapters throughout the United States, supporting events, helping

organize programs, and developing leadership. "I have enjoyed working with all of you and consider many of you to be my friends. Thank you for all your partnership and for your work in our efforts," he says.

Mark's last day at UMAA is April 1. Thank you, Mark for all you have given. We wish you a long, happy, and healthy retirement.

Make a Note of It



Kathryn Pearson, University of Minnesota associate professor of political science, will be the featured guest speaker at the *Alumni Association's 2016 Annual Celebration* at 5:30 p.m. on April 15 at the McNamara Alumni Center.

Dinner will be served. Watch your inbox for more information.

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*Reflects October 9, 2015 through January 8, 2016



Lifelong learning and connecting with U of M friends are two passions of mine. Fortunately, I am able to do both as an Alumni Association member and attendee of the ever-popular annual Minne-College in Southwest Florida where we hear from the best and the brightest about the University's programs and breakthrough research.

Lynne Groth
(M.A. '89), Life Member



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Seeing Gray

By Lisa Westberg Peters

Normally I hate dilemmas, but as a writer I love them. I tried to keep that in mind a few years back when my father's death brought me one step closer to a predicament: His North Dakota mineral rights passed to my mother and someday they'll come to me, at which point I'll profit from fracked oil wells. The money would be great, but I'm also a conservationist who believes we should keep most of the rest of the world's fossil fuel in the ground.

The solution seemed simple: Sell my mineral rights and wash my hands of fracking and oil drilling. But when I began to research my family's Great Plains history for my book, *Fractured Land: The Price of Inheriting Oil*, I found a wrenching tale of misery: bankruptcies, foreclosures, and death by childbirth, tuberculosis, and other infectious diseases. I also discovered that my grandfather purchased North Dakota farmland in 1941 not for the wheat, but for the oil he knew was coming. His savvy and successful gamble effectively vanquished decades of suffering. A copy of his first oil check sits in the family files.

This was going to be harder than I thought.

And there was more. I talked with many western North Dakotans—farmers, families, geologists, and fracking consultants—and their worries, frustrations, and reasoned opinions introduced gray into what had seemed a black-and-white issue.

My editor hoped my book would contribute to the national conversation about energy. And it did, in ways I didn't expect. Readers started sending me long, heartfelt messages: *I, too, feel conflict as I drive my car or read by electric lights and I work for the Oklahoma oil industry and I feel like I'm straddling a line and I'm a mineral rights owner and we always dreamed about an oil well. Now I'm not so sure.*

Book clubs invited me to join their discussions. One northern Minnesota group asked if I would donate oil royalties to fight a proposed pipeline. Another group of well-to-do St. Paulites avoided all mention of environ-

mental dilemmas—mine or theirs—for an hour and a half. Later one member said to me privately, *Loved your book. Just don't take away my flights.*

A North Dakota mineral rights owner asked me to speak at a conference of mineral owners. Carry on this conversation in the lion's den? Forget it! But I was too curious not to accept. One of the speakers denounced the fracking bans, protests, and regulations popping up across the country. We need to fight anti-development forces! she said. Write to your congressman! A hundred people who profit from oil development applauded, and then turned their attention to lunch and the next speaker: me.

I was so nervous, I lost both my appetite and my grip on caution. I told them I agreed with the previous speaker. Be pro-development, but let's support the next energy industry with our oil money. My family did, I said, and I showed them pictures of our geo-thermal system.

The conversation sputtered, stopped, then turned hostile. *Are you aware that solar panels require rare earth minerals? (yes) How would you like a wind turbine in your back yard? (no) Are you aware of the environmental impacts of wind farms? (yes)*

I just wanted to get out of there, but the conversation wasn't over; it went underground. Mineral owners sidled up to me saying: *I like to scuba dive, but these days I feel guilty flying to Indonesia for such a frivolous pursuit and We needed to hear your point of view and You were just the right person to speak here because you're one of us.* I wished we could have expressed our common ground in public.

How did I resolve my own dilemma? I devote whole scenes in my book to that task, but one of the lions in the den had the best advice in just two words: Live simply. If we actually listened to him, his oil income—and eventually, mine—would plunge.

But I hope to try. 



Lisa Westberg Peters (B.A. '74) is an award-winning author and writing tutor living in Minneapolis.

Illustration by Ilana Blady



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